ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

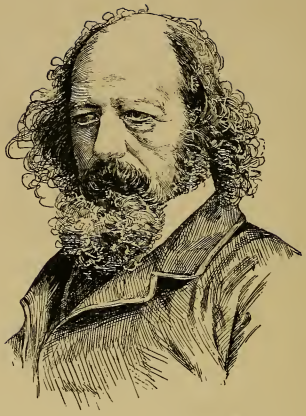
THE PRINCESS

A MEDLEY

BY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

AMERICAN · BOOK · COMPANY
NEW YORK · CINCINNATI · CHICAGO



Tennyson

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W. P. I

INTRODUCTION.

ALFRED TENNYSON was born on the 6th of August, 1809, at Somersby, a little village of Lincolnshire, England. His father, who was rector of the village, is said to have been a man of great physical strength and considerable accomplishment in music and the languages. "Tennyson's mother," writes Mrs. Ritchie, the poet's friend, "was a sweet, gentle, and most imaginative woman." Of the children, several were gifted with the imaginative temperament. Two sons older than Alfred became known as poets.

The boys were educated for the most part at home. They were sturdy lads, leading an open-air life, wandering over the famous Lincolnshire wolds, sometimes far enough to look out upon the North Sea, and telling one another tales of marvelous adventure. "Their village," says Howitt, "is in a pretty pastoral district of soft, sloping hills and large ash trees. . . . There are also two brooks in the valley, which flow into one at the bottom of the glebe field, and by these the young poet used to wander and meditate."

There is a legend that in their early boyish days the older brother Charles one time gave Alfred "a slate, and bade him write verses about the flowers in the garden." The tablet was soon covered. "Yes, you can write," said the elder, as he handed

it back. "Poems by Two Brothers," Charles and Alfred, appeared in 1826. "Haec nos novimus esse nihil"[1] was the motto of the book.

In 1828 Alfred entered Cambridge, at a most fortunate moment, it afterward seemed; for Thackeray was there, and James Spedding, Kinglake, Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Richard C. Trench, and others of coming renown. Moreover, in Cambridge was Arthur Hallam, son of Hallam the historian, who was to form a friendship with Tennyson of which all the world should hear; for, years after, to commemorate his friend, who died in the very promise of early manhood, Tennyson wrote "In Memoriam."

Tennyson left Cambridge without taking his degree, and brought out, in 1830, "Poems, chiefly Lyrical." "They demonstrate the possession of powers," wrote John Stuart Mill, in the "Westminster Review," upon their appearance. "Their originality will prevent their being generally appreciated for a time."

It was in this decade that the great reform movement of this century began to stir the English nation. Reforms in politics, in religion, and in general social conditions were everywhere talked of. The humanitarianism of the movement seized Tennyson and affected his poetic spirit. To the influence of this agitation are doubtless traceable the tender sympathy and interest which add grace to some of his poems. He became, as he said of another, "no Sabbath drawler of old saws," but a poet who reflected the spirit of his time, albeit conservatively, and was of his time even in his endeavor after scientific phrase and analysis.

Three years after the first appeared another volume, and from that time forward others, as "The Princess" (1847), "In Memoriam" (1850), "Maud" (1855), "Idyls of the King" (1859–85),

[1] "We know these things to be nothing."

"Enoch Arden" (1864), "Queen Mary" and "Harold" (1877), "The Promise of May" (1882), "The Falcon" and "Becket" (1884).

In 1850, upon the death of Wordsworth, Tennyson was made poet laureate. In 1884 it was announced by an official gazette of Great Britain that he had been made Baron of Aldworth and Farringford. On the 6th of October, 1892, he died.

Tennyson lived in seclusion and much apart from the world, conscious all his life that what Milton said of himself he might also say: "My genius is such that no delay, no rest, no care or thought almost of anything, holds me aside until I reach the end and round off, as it were, some period of my studies." "What God has resolved concerning me I know not, but this I know at least, —he has instilled into me a vehement love of the beautiful."

Tennyson was an Englishman who wrote for Englishmen, and, most happily for him, of the calm skies and tracts of shady pasture, "terrace-lawns" and "homes of ancient peace." "He had," says one of his critics, "little faculty of piercing through the husk of the conventional to the living thoughts and passions of man which throb beneath." But he was, as he wrote, "devoured with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love." He had the great gift also of the spirit of honor and duty and reverence, and of these he was never weary of singing.

In diction Tennyson is always musical and pellucid. By the very clear and musical quality of his verse, and the perfection of its phrasing, line and stanza fasten themselves in mind and become a part of the treasures of memory.

His poetry is rich in ornament. Indeed, its elaboration now and then detracts from its strength and vigor and human appeal. But in this patient working out is evident the dominant artistic

spirit of the poet, and the desire of beauty that would let nothing go before the world without the very last polishing touch. Not infrequently the finished roll of vowel sound or the music of recurring liquids faintly suggests what the poetry itself describes.[1]

"A lovelier story than 'The Princess' has not often been recited," says E. C. Stedman. "After the idyllic introduction, the body of the poem is composed in semi-heroic verse. Other works of our poet are greater, but none is so fascinating as this romantic tale,—English throughout, yet combining the England of Cœur de Lion with that of Victoria in one bewitching picture. Some of the author's most delicately musical lines—'jewels five words long'—are herein contained, and the ending of each canto is an effective piece of art."

Tennyson wrote "The Princess" "among the fogs and smokes of Lincoln's Inn," Mrs. Ritchie bears witness. He called it "A Medley." In the Prologue[2] he says it is

> "To suit with time and place,
> A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
> A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
> A feudal knight in silken masquerade."

The poem was doubtless written to help to the establishment of better relations between men and women, and the true idea of marriage as Tennyson conceived it. He had written in "Locksley Hall,"

> "Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,
> Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine;"

[1] See Prologue, line 20; Canto VII. lines 206, 207.

[2] See also Conclusion, lines 9–28.

and this idea seems always to have colored his opinion. He is never quite free from it even in the most rapt and exalted idealism of the Prince.[1]

The relations of women to modern life were touched upon by Shelley in his "Revolt of Islam" thirty years before "The Princess" was published. "Can man," he asked, "be free if woman be a slave?" With this poem writers on Tennyson's genius are apt to associate his prompting to treat the modern conditions of marriage. It may be; but the idea of the changing status of women had been fermenting the life of the world much earlier and most profoundly. It came as a result of the proclamation of the rights of man by the French Revolution, and was a natural sequence of the declaration of the 4th of July, 1776. "The Princess" is but a poetic outburst of the large view which moved the popular mind, which impelled parliamentary action to better English laws regarding women, and incited the legislatures of the United States to declare that a married woman might own, manage, control, and devise by will, property belonging to her, that she might carry on a trade and have the control of her earnings, and that she had certain rights and possession in her children. Laws which seem to us, fifty years later, the barest justice were opposed, debated, and, happily, passed in our American legislative halls, and in the English parliament also, in the fifth decade of this nineteenth century. At that time Tennyson was writing "The Princess."

The idea of high schools for girls had in those days hardly sent down firm roots in the popular mind. The first public high school for young women which was attempted in Boston, in 1825, was closed after a year and a half. Report said that there were

[1] See Canto VII. lines 239 to end.

two reasons for shutting its doors: it had proved too costly ($4,500 had been expended); and it seemed as if the girls would not leave its walls, so great was their craving for instruction.

But the idea is still older than this experiment in our country. Mary Wollstonecraft, a hundred years ago, was writing in England: "I still insist that the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, . . . and that women, considered not only as moral but rational creatures, ought to endeavor to acquire human virtues, . . . instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of half-being."

And to educate women was not new in England. Had we not Margaret Roper and Catherine Parr and Elizabeth Tudor?—and Jane Grey, who said to Schoolmaster Ascham, "My book . . . bringeth daily to me more pleasure and more, that in respect of it all other pleasures, in very deed, be but trifles and troubles unto me."

This was in England, where the witty divine, Thomas Fuller (1608–61), when writing of girls in what he called the "she-schools" of his time, said: "The sharpness of their wits and the suddenness of their conceits, which their enemies must allow unto them, might by education be improved into a judicious solidity, and that adorned with arts which now they want, not because they cannot learn, but are not taught them." It was in England where Daniel Defoe (1661–1731), in projecting an academy for women, begged that they might be "taught all sorts of breeding suitable to both their genius and their quality."

But upon the Continent there had been Margaret of Navarre in France, Vittoria Colonna, Renée of Ferrara, and Olympia Morata in Italy. Hundreds of such women must have lived and died, who are now unknown to us. The names of a few have been

preserved because of some associations with which their lives were interwoven. Through such preservation their full, strong characters gleam from the pages of history. It has never been questioned that their womanly strength was in great measure due to the amplitude and robustness of their studies. But besides these, to go still farther back, we have the nuns of centuries before Luther, who, like Héloïse, in the retirement of the cloister translated Scripture from the Hebrew and the Greek, and essayed in the sciences of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* courses of study in mediæval universities.

"But we have now far more data to go upon than Tennyson possessed," says Stopford A. Brooke in his work on Tennyson. "The steady work of women during these fifty years, and the points they have so bravely won, have added element after element to our experience. But all that has been gained has made more plain that

> "'The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
> Together.'

One is the equal half of the other; the halves are diverse forever; each complements each; both united in diversity make the perfect humanity; their work must be together in difference. . . .

"But this does not cover all. In our complex and crowded society, there are thousands of women who have no home, who are not wives and mothers, but who are hungry to become themselves, to realize themselves in work, to live outside of themselves in the life and movement of the whole. These scarcely come into Tennyson's outlook at the end of 'The Princess.' For these, the education in knowledge and the training of their powers to all kinds of work, which Ida established in her college, are neces-

sary. . . . When that is possible—when we shall have applied to all the problems of society the new and as yet unused elements which exist in womanhood—all results will be reached twice as quickly as they are now reached, all human work will be twice as quickly done. And then, perhaps, some new poet will write a new 'Princess.'"

The story of "The Princess" is that of a prince who had been betrothed while yet a child to a child princess in the South. He had in all his growing years worn her portrait and made her his ideal. Upon his coming to manhood, his father, the king, sends an embassy and claims the maid for his son. But the Princess Ida refuses to marry, having conceived the idea of carrying on a college for women and educating them to nobler lives than they have to her time led.

The Prince determines to seek the Princess, and, with two friends from his father's court, and in disguise, he penetrates the retirement of the college. The men are discovered, but are kept from the fate threatened in the sentence upon the gate, "Let no man enter here on pain of death," by the Prince's saving Lady Ida's life in the confusion which follows the disclosure.

The Princess refuses to acknowledge the bond of her betrothal, and calls upon her brothers to vindicate her will. All agree to settle the question by a mediæval tournament, in which fifty knights on either side engage. The Prince is wounded and unhorsed. The Princess, overcome by her love for a child whose fate appeals to her, opens the college to the wounded, sends the students to their homes, and, becoming nurse to the Prince, ends the tale by losing her heart to him and promising marriage.

"The scenery, too, of the piece is delightful," says Stopford A.

Brooke, "full of sunshine, gaiety, and grace. The college, with its grounds and high-wrought architecture, courts and gardens, walls and fountains, brightened with glancing girls and silken-clad professors, is charmingly imagined. . . . Nature is not described for her own sake, but inwoven, in Tennyson's manner, with the emotions of those who are looking upon it. . . . The nature touches are chiefly in the comparisons; and this is fitly so, for the human interest is manifold."

"Finally, with regard to the poem as distinguished from the social question it speaks of, beauty is kept in it preëminent.

"It is first in Tennyson's as it ought to be in every artist's heart. The subject matter is bent to the necessity of beauty. The knowledge displayed in it, the various theories concerning womanhood, the choice of scenery, the events, are all chosen and arranged so as to render it possible to enshrine them in beautiful shapes. This general direction toward loveliness is never lost sight of by the poet. It is not that moral aims are neglected, or the increase of human good, or the heightening of truth, or the declaring of knowledge; but it is that all these things are made subservient to the manifestation of beauty. It is the artist's way, and it is the highest way. . . .

"The woman's question is not by itself a lovely thing; but it is made beautiful in 'The Princess' because every one of its issues is solved by love, by an appeal to some kind or another of love,—to filial love, to motherly love, to the associated love of friendship, to the high and sacred love between a maiden and her lover, to the natural love which without particular direction arises out of pity for the helpless, and to the love we feel for the natural world. . . .

"But he [Tennyson] was so exalted by this abiding in love that

he could not help at times in the poem breaking out into lyric songs, in which he might express a keener feeling of beauty and reach a higher range of poetry than in the rest of the poem. . . . So he wrote in the midst of the poem two love songs,—one of the sorrow of love passed by forever, of the days that are no more; another, of the joyful hope of love, of the days that were to come. The first of these, 'Tears, Idle Tears,' as I have already said, represents more nearly than any of the songs of Tennyson, but chiefly in the last verse, one phase, at least, of the passion of love between man and woman." The second song "is lovely in movement; its wing-beating and swift-glancing verse is like the flight of the bird that has suggested it.

"Both songs are unrhymed, yet no one needs the rhyme, so harmoniously is their assonance arranged, not so much at the end of each line as in the body of the lines themselves. 'Tears, Idle Tears,' is a masterpiece of the careful employment of vowels."

The poet "celebrates love in six of its various phases,—in six delightful and happy songs inserted in the third edition between the main divisions of the poem. They were, he says, ballads or songs to give the poets breathing space. . . . They are all of a sweet and gentle humanity, of a fascinating and concentrated brevity, of common moods of human love, made by the poet's sympathy and art to shine like the common stars we love so well. The falling out of wife and husband reconciled over the grave of their child, the mother singing to her babe of his father coming home from sea, the warrior in battle thinking of his home, the iron grief of the soldier's wife melted at last into tears by his child laid upon her knee, the maiden yielding at last to the love she had kept at bay,—these are the simple subjects of these songs. . . .

"Among these the cradle song,

> "'Sweet and low, sweet and low,
> Wind of the western sea,'

is the most beautiful, and writes, as it were, its own music; but the song,

> "'The splendor falls on castle walls,
> And snowy summits old in story,'

is the noblest,—a clear, uplifted, softly ringing song. . . . These are the songs of this delightful poem, and it is with some difficulty that we turn away from them."[1]

[1] Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life, by Stopford A. Brooke.

THE PRINCESS:

A MEDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

Sir Walter Vivian[1] all a summer's day
Gave his broad lawns until the set of sun
Up to the people. Thither flock'd at noon
His tenants, wife and child, and thither half
The neighboring borough, with their Institute[2]
Of which he was the patron. I was there
From college, visiting the son,—the son
A Walter too,—with others of our set,—
Five others: we were seven at Vivian-place.

And me that morning Walter show'd the house,
Greek, set with busts; from vases in the hall
Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than their names,[3]
Grew side by side; and on the pavement lay

[1] The prototype of Sir Walter Vivian was Edmund Henry Lushington, to whose son Tennyson dedicated The Princess. For "Vivian-place" the home of the Lushington family near Maidstone is described.

[2] A society or association organized for literary, scientific, or educational and social work; here probably a mechanics' institute.

[3] Their scientific names, which, to all but a botanist, are often meaningless and ungraceful.

Carv'd stones of the abbey ruin [1] in the park,
Huge ammonites,[2] and the first bones of time;[3]
And on the tables every clime and age
Jumbled together,—celts [4] and calumets,[5]
Claymore [6] and snowshoe, toys in lava,[7] fans
Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,
Laborious orient ivory, sphere in sphere,[8]
The curs'd Malayan crease,[9] and battle clubs
From the isles of palm; and higher on the walls,
Betwixt the monstrous horns of elk and deer,
His own forefathers' arms and armor hung.

And "This," he said, "was Hugh's at Agincourt;[10]
And that was old Sir Ralph's at Ascalon,[11]—
A good knight he! we keep a chronicle
With all about him,"—which he brought, and I
Div'd in a hoard of tales that dealt with knights,

[1] Parliament, acting on the report of an examining commission, abolished the smaller monasteries in 1536 and the larger in 1538. This was during the reign of Henry VIII. The deserted buildings in many places fell into ruins.

[2] The fossil shells of a kind of cuttlefish. They are coiled in a spiral like a ram's horn.

[3] "First bones of time," i.e., the fossil bones of the earliest animals preserved to us.

[4] Stone or bronze ax blades or chisels.

[5] Tobacco pipes used by the Indians of North America. They were of soapstone bowl and a long reed tube trimmed with feathers.

[6] The heavy two-handed sword used by the Scottish Highlanders.

[7] "In lava," i.e., cut out of lava stone.

[8] "Laborious orient ivory," etc., i.e., ivory balls, one within another, elaborately wrought by the Chinese. This line describing them shows the same elaboration, and seems by the rolling of sound to suggest their motion (see Introduction, p. 8).

[9] A heavy dagger with a waved blade.

[10] A battle in which Henry V. gained a victory over the French in 1415.

[11] A city on the Mediterranean, southwest of Jerusalem. It was taken by the crusaders in 1099, and a second time in 1192, when Richard Cœur de Lion gained a great victory over the Saracens led by Saladin.

Half legend, half historic, counts and kings
Who laid about them[1] at their wills and died;
And mixt with these, a lady, one that arm'd
Her own fair head, and, sallying thro' the gate,
Had beat her foes with slaughter from her walls.

"O miracle of women," said the book,
"O noble heart who, being strait-besieg'd
By this wild king to force her to his wish,
Nor bent, nor broke, nor shunn'd a soldier's death,
But now, when all was lost or seem'd as lost,—
Her stature more than mortal in the burst
Of sunrise, her arm lifted, eyes on fire,—
Brake[2] with a blast of trumpets from the gate,
And, falling on them like a thunderbolt,
She trampled some beneath her horses' heels,
And some were whelm'd with missiles of the wall,
And some were push'd with lances from the rock,
And part were drown'd within the whirling brook.
O miracle of noble womanhood!"

So sang the gallant, glorious chronicle;
And, I all rapt in this, "Come out," he said,
"To the abbey; there is aunt Elizabeth
And sister Lilia with the rest." We went
(I kept the book and had my finger in it)
Down thro' the park. Strange was the sight to me;
For all the sloping pasture murmur'd, sown
With happy faces and with holiday.
There mov'd the multitude, a thousand heads;
The patient leaders of their Institute
Taught them with facts. One rear'd a font of stone,

[1] "Laid about them," i.e., struck on all sides. This line refers to certain habits of mediæval times when fighting was pleasantry and recreation.

[2] An old form of "broke."

And drew, from butts of water on the slope,
The fountain of the moment, playing now
A twisted snake, and now a rain of pearls,
Or steep-up[1] spout, whereon the gilded ball
Danc'd like a wisp.[2] And somewhat lower down
A man with knobs and wires and vials[3] fired
A cannon; Echo[4] answer'd in her sleep
From hollow fields. And here were telescopes
For azure views; and there a group of girls
In circle waited, whom the electric shock
Dislink'd[5] with shrieks and laughter. Round the lake
A little clockwork steamer paddling plied,
And shook the lilies; perch'd about the knolls
A dozen angry models jetted steam;
A petty railway ran; a fire balloon
Rose gemlike up before the dusky groves
And dropt a fairy parachute and past;
And there thro' twenty posts of telegraph
They flash'd a saucy message to and fro
Between the mimic stations; so that sport
Went hand in hand with science; otherwhere
Pure sport: a herd of boys with clamor bowl'd
And stump'd[6] the wicket; babies roll'd about
Like tumbled fruit in grass; and men and maids
Arrang'd a country dance, and flew thro' light
And shadow, while the twangling violin
Struck up with "Soldier-laddie," and overhead

[1] Ascending steeply.

[2] A meteoric light which dances above the ground, chiefly in marshy places. In legend it is a lamp carried by Will-o'-the-wisp, or Jack-o'-lantern, to lead travelers into dangerous places.

[3] For forming and conducting electricity.

[4] In Greek legend Echo was a mountain nymph.

[5] Unlinked; separated.

[6] In the game of cricket, to "stump the wicket" is to knock down the stumps of the wicket.

The broad ambrosial[1] aisles of lofty lime
Made noise with bees and breeze from end to end.

Strange was the sight and smacking of the time;
And long we gaz'd, but satiat'd at length
Came to the ruins. High-arch'd and ivy-claspt,
Of finest Gothic, lighter than a fire,[2]
Thro' one wide chasm of time and frost they gave[3]
The park, the crowd, the house; but all within
The sward was trim as any garden lawn.
And here we lit on aunt Elizabeth,
And Lilia with the rest, and lady friends
From neighbor seats;[4] and there was Ralph himself,
A broken statue propt against the wall,
As gay as any. Lilia, wild with sport,
Half child, half woman as she was, had wound
A scarf of orange round the stony helm,[5]
And rob'd the shoulders in a rosy silk,
That made the old warrior from his ivied nook
Glow like a sunbeam. Near his tomb a feast
Shone, silver-set; about it lay the guests,
And there we join'd them. Then the maiden aunt
Took this fair day for text, and from it preach'd
An universal culture for the crowd,[6]
And all things great; but we, unworthier, told
Of college: he[7] had climb'd across the spikes,
And he had squeez'd himself betwixt the bars,[8]

[1] Fragrant; of the quality of ambrosia, the food of the gods.

[2] Gothic architecture is characterized by lightness and delicacy. It prevailed in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

[3] Gave a view of the park, etc., through a rent in the wall.

[4] Country houses. [5] Helmet.

[6] The mass of the people.

[7] "He . . . he" here means one . . . another.

[8] Of the college walls.

And he had breath'd the proctor's dogs;[1] and one
Discuss'd his tutor, rough to common men,
But honeying[2] at the whisper of a lord;
And one the master,[3] as a rogue in grain
Veneer'd with sanctimonious theory.

But while they talk'd, above their heads I saw
The feudal warrior lady-clad, which brought
My book to mind; and opening this I read
Of old Sir Ralph a page or two that rang
With tilt and tourney; then the tale of her
That drove her foes with slaughter from her walls,
And much I prais'd her nobleness; and "Where,"
Ask'd Walter, patting Lilia's head (she lay
Beside him), "lives there such a woman now?"

Quick answer'd Lilia: "There are thousands now
Such women, but convention[4] beats them down;
It is but bringing up, no more than that.
You men have done it — how I hate you all!
Ah, were I something great! I wish I were
Some mighty poetess, I would shame you then,
That love to keep us children! Oh, I wish
That I were some great princess, I would build
Far off from men a college like a man's,
And I would teach them all that men are taught;
We are twice as quick!" And here she shook aside
The hand that play'd the patron with her curls.

And one said smiling: "Pretty were the sight
If our old halls could change their sex, and flaunt

[1] "Breath'd the proctor's dogs," i.e., made the attendants of the proctor run until they were out of breath. A proctor is a university or college officer whose duty it is to keep good order.

[2] Becoming mild and affable.

[3] The head of the college.

[4] Custom; common opinion.

With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,
And sweet girl graduates in their golden hair.
I think they should not wear our rusty gowns,
But move as rich as emperor-moths,[1] or Ralph
Who shines so in the corner; yet I fear,
If there were many Lilias in the brood,
However deep you might embower the nest,
Some boy would spy it."
At this upon the sward
She tapt her tiny silken-sandal'd foot:
"That's your light way; but I would make it death
For any male thing but to peep at us."

Petulant she spoke, and at herself she laugh'd;
A rosebud set with little willful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her, she;
But Walter hail'd a score of names upon her,
And "petty ogress," and "ungrateful puss,"
And swore he long'd at college, only long'd—
All else was well—for she-society.[2]
They boated and they cricketed; they talk'd
At wine, in clubs, of art, of politics;
They lost their weeks;[3] they vext the souls of deans;
They rode; they betted; made a hundred friends,
And caught the blossom of the flying terms,
But miss'd the mignonette of Vivian-place,
The little hearth-flower Lilia. Thus he spoke,
Part banter, part affection.
"True," she said,
"We doubt not that. O yes, you miss'd us much.
I'll stake my ruby ring upon it you did."

[1] A splendid kind of moth.

[2] An old usage of "she," meaning here woman's (see Introduction, p. 8).

[3] "Lost their weeks," i.e., were irregular in attendance. To gain a degree at the university, residence for a certain number of terms, and a certain part of each term, is necessary.

She held it out; and as a parrot turns
Up thro' gilt wires a crafty, loving eye,
And takes a lady's finger with all care,
And bites it for true heart and not for harm,
So he with Lilia's. Daintily she shriek'd,
And wrung it. "Doubt my word again!" he said.
"Come, listen! here is proof that you were miss'd:
We seven stay'd at Christmas up[1] to read;
And there we took one tutor, as to read.[2]
The hard-grain'd muses of the cube and square[3]
Were out of season; never man, I think,
So molder'd in a sinecure as he;
For while our cloisters echo'd frosty feet,
And our long walks were stript as bare as brooms,
We did but talk you over, pledge you all
In wassail; often, like as many girls,—
Sick for the hollies and the yews[4] of home,—
As many little trifling Lilias,—play'd
Charades and riddles as at Christmas here,
And *what's my thought* and *when* and *where* and *how*,
And often told a tale from mouth to mouth
As here at Christmas."

She remember'd that;
A pleasant game, she thought; she lik'd it more
Than magic music, forfeits, all the rest.
But these,—what kind of tales did men tell men,
She wonder'd, by themselves?

A half-disdain
Perch'd on the pouted blossom of her lips;

[1] "Stay'd . . . up," i.e., stayed at college instead of going home.

[2] "As to read," i.e., as if to study. "To read" is an expression used in English universities for "to study."

[3] "The hard-grain'd muses," etc., i.e., the severe divinities presiding over mathematics.

[4] Holly and yew are Christmas greens.

And Walter nodded at me: "*He* began;
The rest would follow, each in turn; and so
We forg'd a sevenfold story. Kind? what kind?
Chimeras, crotchets, Christmas solecisms,
Seven-headed monsters only made to kill
Time by the fire in winter."
"Kill him now,
The tyrant! kill him in the summer too,"
Said Lilia. "Why not now?" the maiden aunt.
"Why not a summer's as a winter's tale?
A tale for summer as befits the time,
And something it should be to suit the place,
Heroic,—for a hero lies beneath,—
Grave, solemn!"
Walter warp'd his mouth at this
To something so mock-solemn that I laugh'd,
And Lilia woke with sudden-shrilling mirth
An echo like a ghostly woodpecker,
Hid in the ruins; till the maiden aunt
(A little sense of wrong had touch'd her face
With color) turn'd to me with: "As you will;
Heroic if you will, or what you will,
Or be yourself your hero if you will."

"Take Lilia, then, for heroine," clamor'd he,
"And make her some great princess, six feet high,
Grand, epic,[1] homicidal;[2] and be you
The prince to win her!"
"Then follow me, the prince,"
I answer'd; "each be hero in his turn!
Seven and yet one, like shadows in a dream.
Heroic seems our princess as requir'd,
But something made to suit with time and place,

[1] Of heroic character; imposing.

[2] Refers to the sentiments expressed in Lilia's speech (lines 127–137).

A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experiments
For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt them all,[1]—
This *were* a medley! we should have him[2] back
Who told the 'Winter's Tale' to do it for us.
No matter; we will say whatever comes.
And let the ladies sing us, if they will,
From time to time, some ballad, or a song,
To give us breathing space."
So I began,
And the rest follow'd; and the women sang
Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind.
And here I give the story and the songs.

[1] Sir Ralph, who was at Ascalon (line 26). The experiments told of in lines 59–80 would in the middle ages have been looked upon as witchcraft or the invention of the devil, and the practicers would have been burned, or have met with some other terrible punishment.

[2] Shakespeare.

CANTO I.

A Prince I was, blue-eyed, and fair in face,
Of temper amorous as the first of May,
With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl,
For on my cradle shone the Northern star.[1]

There liv'd an ancient legend in our house:
Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt
Because he cast no shadow,[2] had foretold,
Dying,[3] that none of all our blood should know
The shadow from the substance, and that one
Should come to fight with shadows and to fall;
For so, my mother said, the story ran.
And, truly, waking dreams were, more or less,
An old and strange affection of the house.
Myself, too, had weird seizures, Heaven knows what:
On a sudden, in the midst of men and day,
And while I walk'd and talk'd as heretofore,
I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts,
And feel myself the shadow of a dream.
Our great court-Galen[4] pois'd his gilt-head cane,

[1] "For on my cradle," etc., i.e., for I was born in the North.

[2] And was therefore a wizard or magician.

[3] The gift of prophecy was supposed to belong to the dying.

[4] Galen (130–200) was the most eminent physician of his time, and for more than a thousand years the leading medical authority of Europe. A cane, headed with gold or other rich material, was an indispensable bit of furniture in a doctor's practice at one time in England. Poor Goldsmith, for instance, when seeking the practice of his profession, first bought himself a cane.

And paw'd his beard, and mutter'd, "Catalepsy."
My mother, pitying, made a thousand prayers;
My mother was as mild as any saint,
Half canoniz'd by all that look'd on her,
So gracious was her tact and tenderness.
But my good father thought a king a king;
He car'd not for the affection of the house;
He held his scepter like a pedant's [1] wand,
To lash offense, and with long arms and hands
Reach'd out, and pick'd offenders from the mass
For judgment.
Now it chanc'd that I had been,
While life was yet in bud and blade, betroth'd
To one, a neighboring Princess; she to me
Was proxy-wedded [2] with a bootless calf
At eight years old; and still from time to time
Came murmurs of her beauty from the South,
And of her brethren, youths of puissance;[3]
And still I wore her picture by my heart,
And one dark tress; and all around them both
Sweet thoughts would swarm, as bees about their queen.

But when the days drew nigh that I should wed,
My father sent ambassadors with furs
And jewels, gifts, to fetch her. These brought back
A present, a great labor of the loom;
And therewithal an answer vague as wind:
Besides, they saw the king; he took the gifts;

[1] An old use of the word in the sense of "schoolmaster."

[2] Wedded to a substitute who represented the Prince. Such marriages sometimes took place in the middle ages, and so late as at the end of the fifteenth century. "With a bootless calf" refers to a part of such ceremony which was occasionally undertaken, the substitute or proxy of the bridegroom appearing in the presence of the bride with "his leg stript naked to the knee."

[3] Strength; vigor.

He said there was a compact, that was true;
But then she had a will; was he to blame?
And maiden fancies; lov'd to live alone
Among her women; certain, would not wed.

That morning in the presence room[1] I stood
With Cyril and with Florian, my two friends:
The first, a gentleman of broken means
(His father's fault), but given to starts and bursts
Of revel; and the last, my other heart,
And almost my half-self, for still we mov'd
Together, twinn'd as horse's ear and eye.

Now, while they spake, I saw my father's face
Grow long, and troubled like a rising moon,[2]
Inflam'd with wrath. He started on his feet,
Tore the king's letter, snow'd it down, and rent
The wonder of the loom thro' warp and woof
From skirt to skirt; and at the last he sware[3]
That he would send a hundred thousand men,
And bring her in a whirlwind; then he chew'd
The thrice-turn'd cud of wrath, and cook'd his spleen,[4]
Communing with his captains of the war.

At last I spoke: "My father, let me go.
It cannot be but some gross error lies
In this report, this answer of a king
Whom all men rate as kind and hospitable;
Or, maybe, I myself, my bride once seen,

[1] "Presence room," i.e., the room in which the king received his guests.

[2] The moon appears red, or "troubled," when near the horizon and seen through the mist and dust of the lower air.

[3] Old form of "swore."

[4] "Cook'd his spleen," i.e., nursed and kept warm his wrath. The phrase is Homeric, and refers to the old belief that the seat of anger is in the spleen.

Whate'er my grief to find her less than fame,
May rue the bargain made." And Florian said:
"I have a sister at the foreign court,
Who moves about the Princess; she, you know,
Who wedded with a nobleman from thence;
He, dying lately, left her, as I hear,
The lady of three castles in that land.
Thro' her this matter might be sifted clean."
And Cyril whisper'd: "Take me with you, too."
Then, laughing, "What if these weird seizures come
Upon you in those lands, and no one near
To point you out the shadow from the truth!
Take me; I'll serve you better in a strait;
I grate on rusty hinges here." But "No!"
Roar'd the rough king, "you shall not; we ourself
Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead
In iron gauntlets; break the council up."

But when the council broke, I rose and past
Thro' the wild woods that hung about the town,
Found a still place, and pluck'd her likeness out;[1]
Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying bath'd
In the green gleam of dewy-tassel'd trees.
What were those fancies? wherefore break her troth?
Proud look'd the lips; but while I meditated
A wind arose and rush'd upon the South,
And shook the songs, the whispers, and the shrieks
Of the wild woods together; and a Voice
Went with it, "Follow, follow, thou shalt win."

Then, ere the silver sickle of that month
Became her golden shield,[2] I stole from court

[1] "Pluck'd her likeness out," i.e., drew out the likeness from some keeping place about him.

[2] "Ere the silver sickle," etc., i.e., before the new moon had grown full.

With Cyril and with Florian, unperceiv'd,
Cat-footed thro' the town, and half in dread
To hear my father's clamor at our backs,
With "Ho!" from some bay window shake the night;
But all was quiet. From the bastion'd walls,
Like threaded spiders, one by one we dropt,
And, flying, reach'd the frontier; then we crost
To a livelier land; and so by tilth and grange,[1]
And vines, and blowing bosks[2] of wilderness,
We gain'd the mother-city,[3] thick with towers,
And in the imperial palace found the king.

His name was Gama; crack'd and small his voice,
But bland the smile that, like a wrinkling wind
On glassy water, drove his cheek in lines;
A little dry old man, without a star,[4]
Not like a king. Three days he feasted us,
And on the fourth I spake of why we came,
And my betroth'd. "You do us, Prince," he said,
Airing a snowy hand and signet gem,[5]
"All honor. We remember love ourself
In our sweet youth. There did a compact pass
Long summers back, a kind of ceremony,—
I think the year in which our olives fail'd.
I would you had her, Prince, with all my heart,
With my full heart; but there were widows here,
Two widows, Lady Psyche, Lady Blanche;
They fed her theories, in and out of place
Maintaining that with equal husbandry[6]

[1] "Tilth and grange," i.e., tillage ground and farmhouse.
[2] "Blowing bosks," i.e., blossoming thickets.
[3] The Anglo-Saxon translation of the Greek word *metropolis*.
[4] A decoration indicating military life.
[5] "Signet gem," i.e., upon the stone was cut his seal.
[6] Care and diligence; but the word is also used suggestively.

The woman were an equal to the man.
They harp'd on this; with this our banquets rang;
Our dances broke and buzz'd in knots of talk;
Nothing but this; my very ears were hot
To hear them. Knowledge, so my daughter held,
Was all in all;[1] they had but been, she thought,
As children; they must lose the child, assume
The woman.[2] Then, sir, awful odes she wrote,—
Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,
But all she is and does is awful,—odes
About this losing of the child; and rhymes
And dismal lyrics, prophesying change
Beyond all reason. These the women sang;
And they that know such things,—I sought but peace,
No critic I,—would call them masterpieces;
They master'd *me*. At last she begg'd a boon,
A certain summer palace which I have
Hard by your father's frontier. I said "No,"
Yet, being an easy man, gave it; and there,
All wild to found an University
For maidens, on the spur she fled; and more
We know not,—only this: they see no men,
Not even her brother Arac, nor the twins.
Her brethren, tho' they love her, look upon her
As on a kind of paragon; and I
(Pardon me saying it) were much loath to breed
Dispute betwixt myself and mine. But since
(And I confess with right) you think me bound
In some sort, I can give you letters to her;
And yet, to speak the truth, I rate your chance
Almost at naked nothing."

[1] What had been denied her would, she thought, accomplish the betterment for women which she sought.

[2] "Lose the child," etc., i.e., put away childish things, and live as a reasonable being responsible for her acts.

Thus the king;
And I, tho' nettled that he seem'd to slur
With garrulous ease and oily courtesies
Our formal compact,[1] yet, not less, (all frets[2]
But chafing me, on fire to find my bride,)
Went forth again with both my friends. We rode
Many a long league back to the North. At last,
From hills that look'd across a land of hope,
We dropt with evening on a rustic town
Set in a gleaming river's crescent curve,
Close at the boundary of the liberties;[3]
There enter'd an old hostel,[4] call'd mine host
To council, plied him with his richest wines,
And show'd the late-writ letters of the king.

He, with a long, low sibilation,[5] star'd
As blank as death in marble; then exclaim'd,
Averring it was clear against all rules
For any man to go; but as his brain
Began to mellow, if the king, he said,
Had given us letters, was he bound to speak?
The king would bear him out; and at the last,—
The summer of the vine[6] in all his veins,—
No doubt that we might make it worth his while.
She once had past that way; he heard her speak;
She scar'd him; life! he never saw the like;
She look'd as grand as doomsday, and as grave.
And he, he reverenc'd his liege lady there;

[1] Of the early proxy wedding. [2] Hindrances; obstacles.
[3] The estate within which the associates of the college were free to move.
[4] Inn.
[5] Not expressive of disfavor, as the hiss is interpreted, but more like a whistle of surprise.
[6] "The summer of the vine," i.e., the warmth of the summer stored in the juice of the grape which "mine host" had been drinking.

He always made a point to post[1] with mares;
His daughter and his housemaid were the boys;[2]
The land, he understood, for miles about
Was till'd by women; all the swine were sows,
And all the dogs—
But while he jested thus,
A thought flash'd thro' me which I cloth'd in act,
Remembering how we three presented[3] Maid,
Or Nymph, or Goddess, at high tide of feast,
In mask or pageant, at my father's court.
We sent mine host to purchase female gear;
He brought it, and himself, a sight to shake
The midriff of Despair with laughter, holp[4]
To lace us up, till, each, in maiden plumes
We rustled. Him we gave a costly bribe
To guerdon[5] silence, mounted our good steeds,
And boldly ventured on the liberties.

We follow'd up the river as we rode,
And rode till midnight, when the college lights
Began to glitter fireflylike in copse
And linden alley; then we past an arch,
Whereon a woman-statue rose with wings
From four wing'd horses dark against the stars;
And some inscription ran along the front,
But deep in shadow. Further on we gain'd
A little street, half garden and half house;
But scarce could hear each other speak for noise
Of clocks and chimes, like silver hammers falling
On silver anvils, and the splash and stir
Of fountains spouted up and showering down
In meshes of the jasmine and the rose;

[1] To travel, or to arrange the service of stage for those who travel.
[2] Postilions.
[3] Took the part of; represented.
[4] The old past tense of "help."
[5] Reward.

And all about us peal'd the nightingale,
Rapt in her song, and careless of the snare.

There stood a bust of Pallas[1] for a sign,
By two sphere lamps blazon'd like heaven and earth
With constellation and with continent,[2]
Above an entry. Riding in, we call'd;
A plump-arm'd ostleress and a stable wench
Came running at the call, and help'd us down.
Then stept a buxom hostess forth, and sail'd,
Full-blown, before us into rooms which gave[3]
Upon a pillar'd porch, the bases lost
In laurel. Her we ask'd of that and this,
And who were tutors.[4] "Lady Blanche," she said,
"And Lady Psyche." "Which was prettiest,
Best-natured?" "Lady Psyche." "Hers are we,"
One voice, we cried; and I sat down and wrote,
In such a hand as when a field of corn
Bows all its ears before the roaring East:[5]

"Three ladies of the northern empire pray
Your Highness would enroll them with your own,
As Lady Psyche's pupils."
This I seal'd;
The seal was Cupid bent above a scroll,
And o'er his head Uranian Venus hung,

[1] Pallas Athene, the Greek goddess of wisdom.

[2] "Blazon'd like heaven and earth," etc., i.e., embellished with devices, the one showing the face of the earth, the other the map of the sky.

[3] Opened.

[4] In English universities, officers who have care of undergraduates, advising them in their studies, expenditures, etc.

[5] The handwriting of women was formerly sloping or running, and hence the Prince's adoption of such script. This simile is from Homer's Iliad, Book II. lines 147, 148.

And rais'd the blinding bandage from his eyes.[1] 240
I gave the letter to be sent with dawn;
And then to bed, where half in doze I seem'd
To float about a glimmering night, and watch
A full sea, glaz'd with muffled moonlight,[2] swell
On some dark shore just seen that it was rich.[3]

As thro' the land at eve we went,
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,
We fell out, my wife and I,
O we fell out, I know not why,
And kiss'd again with tears.
And blessings on the falling out
That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears!
For when we came where lies the child
We lost in other years,
There above the little grave,
O there above the little grave,
We kiss'd again with tears.[4]

[1] Over Cupid, the son of Love, or Venus, hung Spiritual Love, or Uranian Venus, and by her purifying presence made him, who was blind, see.

[2] Of this line Tennyson wrote to Mr. Dawson, the author of "Study of 'The Princess:'"

"There was a period in my life when, as an artist—Turner for instance—takes rough sketches of landskip, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in nature. I never put these down, and many and many a line has gone away on the north wind; but some remain, e.g.:

A full sea, glazed with muffled moonlight.

Suggestion: The sea one night at Torquay, when Torquay was the most lovely sea village in England, though now a smoky town. The sky was covered with thin vapor and the moon was behind it."

[3] "Just seen that it was rich," i.e., just recognized as being rich.

[4] See Prologue, lines 236–239; Conclusion, line 15; Introduction, p. 14.

CANTO II.

At break of day the college portress came;
She brought us academic silks, in hue
The lilac, with a silken hood to each,
And zon'd with gold; and now when these were on,
And we as rich as moths from dusk cocoons,
She, curtsying her obeisance, let us know
The Princess Ida waited. Out we pac'd,
I first, and, following thro' the porch that sang [1]
All round with laurel, issued in a court
Compact of lucid [2] marbles, boss'd [3] with lengths
Of classic frieze, with ample awnings gay
Betwixt the pillars, and with great urns of flowers.
The Muses and the Graces,[4] group'd in threes,
Enring'd a billowing fountain in the midst;
And here and there on lattice edges lay
Or book or lute; but hastily we past,
And up a flight of stairs into the hall.

There at a board by tome and paper sat,
With two tame leopards couch'd beside her throne,
All beauty compass'd in a female form,
The Princess; liker to the inhabitant
Of some clear planet close upon the sun,
Than our man's earth; such eyes were in her head,
And so much grace and power, breathing down

[1] Referring to the murmuring or humming of the wind through the leaves.

[2] Means here shining; bright; resplendent.

[3] Embossed; bestudded.

[4] In Greek mythology, the Muses, who were nine in number, presided over literature, art, and the sciences. The Graces were three goddesses of loveliness and joy in nature and human life.

From over her arch'd brows, with every turn
Liv'd thro' her to the tips of her long hands,
And to her feet. She rose her height, and said:

"We give you welcome. Not without redound[1]
Of use and glory to yourselves ye come,
The first fruits of the stranger; after time,
And that full voice which circles round the grave,
Will rank you nobly, mingled up with me.
What! are the ladies of your land so tall?"
"We of the court," said Cyril. "From the court,"
She answer'd; "then ye know the Prince?" And he:
"The climax of his age! as tho' there were
One rose in all the world, your Highness that,
He worships your ideal."[2] She replied:
"We scarcely thought in our own hall to hear
This barren verbiage, current among men,
Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.
Your flight from out your bookless wilds would seem
As arguing love of knowledge and of power;
Your language proves you still the child. Indeed,
We dream not of him; when we set our hand
To this great work, we purpos'd with ourself
Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
The tricks which make us toys of men, that so,
Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may with those self-styl'd our lords ally
Your fortunes, justlier balanc'd, scale with scale."

At those high words, we, conscious of ourselves,
Perus'd the matting; then an officer
Rose up, and read the statutes, such as these:

[1] Return; result.
[2] "Your ideal," i.e., his idea or conception of you.

Not for three years to correspond with home;
Not for three years to cross the liberties;
Not for three years to speak with any men;
And many more, which hastily subscrib'd,
We enter'd on the boards.[1] And "Now," she cried,
"Ye are green wood; see ye warp not. Look, our hall!
Our statues! —not of those that men desire,
Sleek Odalisques,[2] or oracles of mode,
Nor stunted squaws of West or East; but she[3]
That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she[4]
The foundress of the Babylonian wall,
The Carian Artemisia[5] strong in war,
The Rhodope[6] that built the pyramid,
Clelia,[7] Cornelia,[8] with the Palmyrene[9]

[1] "Enter'd on the boards," i.e., entered our names on the college register.

[2] Female slaves in the East.

[3] Egeria, one of the prophetic nymphs of ancient Italy, from whom Numa Pompilius, second king of Rome, received instruction regarding forms of worship. He was a Sabine by birth.

[4] Semiramis, the mythical founder of the Assyrian Empire. The building of Babylon, with all its wonders, is referred to her.

[5] Queen of Halicarnassus, the strongest city in all Caria. She was a vassal of the Persian empire, and joined Xerxes in his expedition against Greece in 480 B.C. At the battle of Salamis she distinguished herself by her courage and perseverance, and upon her destruction of a ship Xerxes is said to have exclaimed: "My men have become women; my women, men."

[6] A Greek slave who lived in the seaport of ancient Egypt, and to whom, on account of her beauty and fame, the building of the third pyramid was referred. History has contradicted her right to the foundation, and declares it to have been made by the beautiful Egyptian queen Nitocris.

[7] A Roman maiden, one of the twenty hostages given Lars Porsena, King of Clusium, when he withdrew his troops from Rome. She escaped from the Etruscans and swam across the Tiber. The Romans sent her back, but Porsena dismissed her with a part of the hostages; and later her countrymen honored her with a statue.

[8] The daughter of Scipio Africanus and mother of the Gracchi.

[9] Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, who, upon the death of her husband, in 266, became regent for her sons. She led her troops in martial attire and

That fought Aurelian, and the Roman brows
Of Agrippina.[1] Dwell with these, and lose
Convention,[2] since to look on noble forms
Makes noble thro' the sensuous organism
That which is higher. O lift your natures up;
Embrace our aims; work out your freedom. Girls,
Knowledge is now no more a fountain seal'd;
Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,
The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite
And slander, die. Better not be at all
Than not be noble. Leave us; you may go.
To-day the Lady Psyche will harangue
The fresh arrivals of the week before;
For they press in from all the provinces,
And fill the hive."
She spoke, and bowing wav'd
Dismissal. Back again we crost the court
To Lady Psyche's. As we enter'd in,
There sat along the forms, like morning doves
That sun their milky bosoms on the thatch,
A patient range of pupils; she herself
Erect behind a desk of satinwood,[3]
A quick brunette, well molded, falcon-eyed,
And on the hither side,[4] or so she look'd,
Of twenty summers. At her left, a child,
In shining draperies, headed like a star,[5]
Her maiden babe, a double April old,

shared their toils. Conquered at last by the Emperor Aurelian, she was shackled with gold and led in the emperor's triumph along the Sacred Way.

1 Daughter of the Emperor Augustus and wife of Germanicus. She was gifted with a noble mind and character.

2 See Note 4, p. 22.

3 The wood of an Indian tree, which takes a high polish.

4 "On the hither side," i.e., less than.

5 "Headed like a star," i.e., with shining golden hair.

Aglaïa[1] slept. We sat; the Lady glanc'd;
Then Florian, but no livelier than the dame
That whisper'd "Asses' ears" among the sedge:[2]
"My sister." "Comely, too, by all that's fair,"
Said Cyril. "O hush, hush!" and she began:

"This world was once a fluid haze of light,[3]
Till toward the center set the starry tides,
And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast
The planets; then the monster, then the man,
Tattoo'd or woaded,[4] winter-clad in skins,
Raw from the prime, and crushing down his mate;[5]
As yet we find in barbarous isles, and here
Among the lowest."

Thereupon she took
A bird's-eye view of all the ungracious past;
Glanc'd at the legendary Amazon[6]
As emblematic of a nobler age;
Apprais'd the Lycian custom;[7] spoke of those

[1] A Greek word meaning beauty, brightness. It was the name of one of the Graces.

[2] The Phrygian king, Midas, told the secret of the changing of his ears (because of Apollo's anger at his decision in a trial of musical skill) to his wife. She, unable to hold the secret, told it to the waters of a marsh, and the growing sedges whispered it to the world (see Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale, and Ovid's Metamorphoses).

[3] This is the theory of the origin of the world known as the Nebular Hypothesis.

[4] Dyed with the blue of the woad plant, with which the ancient Britons stained their bodies.

[5] "Raw from the prime," etc., i.e., raw from the beginning, and knocking down his mate in order to gain her in marriage.

[6] According to Greek story the Amazons were a race of women who lived to the north of the Black Sea, and gave themselves to war and the chase.

[7] "Apprais'd," etc., i.e., praised the custom of the Lycians, who took the name from the mother and not from the father, and, when asked to give an account of parentage, named mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, etc.

That lay at wine with Lar and Lucumo;[1]
Ran down the Persian, Grecian, Roman lines
Of empire,[2] and the woman's state in each,
How far from just; till, warming with her theme,
She fulmined[3] out her scorn of laws Salique[4]
And little-footed China,[5] touch'd on Mahomet[6]

[1] "Lay at wine with," etc., i.e., shared the banquet with lord and priest. Lar and Lucumo were titles of honor among the Etruscans. That women enjoyed freedom in public feasting is shown in the sculptures which remain to us. It was customary at their banquets for the guests to lie upon couches about the table.

[2] In ancient Persia women had little independence, and were looked upon as chattels. In Homeric Greece their independence was as marked as in the feudal times of Europe, but in later Greece they were secluded and deprived of every sort of social freedom. Thucydides said that woman was happiest who was least talked of. The very opposite conditions were in Rome; e.g., Agrippina, Cornelia, Hortensia, etc.

In 1694 Master William Wotton wrote in his Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning, after the manner of his times: "When Learning first came up [at the beginning of the Renaissance], men fancied that everything could be done by it, and they were charm'd with the Eloquence of its Professors, who did not fail to set forth all its Advantages in the most engaging Dress. It was so very modish that the Fair Sex seemed to believe that Greek and Latin added to their Charms; and Plato and Aristotle, untranslated, were frequent Ornaments of their Closets. One would think by the Effects that it was a proper Way of Educating them, since there are no Accounts in History of so many truly great Women in any one Age as are to be found between the Years MD. and MDC."

[3] Fulminated; uttered in a vehement manner.

[4] The Salic law excluded women from inheriting certain lands. The code of which it is a part is supposed to have originated with the Salian Franks (Teutons) in the fourth or fifth century. Its discrimination against woman proprietorship preserved the phrase "Salic law" to modern times. In the fourteenth century women were by its application excluded from the throne of France.

[5] Women of the upper classes in China have their feet deformed in early years by tight bandaging.

[6] The founder of Mohammedanism, who denied that women had souls, upheld polygamy, and permitted divorce at the will of the husband.

With much contempt, and came to chivalry,[1]
When some respect, however slight, was paid
To woman, superstition all awry.
However, then commenc'd the dawn; a beam
Had slanted forward, falling in a land
Of promise; fruit would follow. Deep, indeed,
Their debt of thanks to her who first had dar'd
To leap the rotten pales of prejudice,
Disyoke their necks from custom, and assert
None lordlier than themselves but that which made
Woman and man. She had founded; they must build.
Here might they learn whatever men were taught;
Let them not fear. Some said their heads were less;
Some men's were small; not they the least of men;
For often fineness compensated size.
Besides, the brain was like the hand, and grew
With using; thence the man's, if more was more;
He took advantage of his strength to be
First in the field; some ages had been lost;
But woman ripen'd earlier, and her life
Was longer; and albeit their glorious names
Were fewer, scatter'd stars, yet since in truth
The highest is the measure of the man,
And not the Kaffir, Hottentot, Malay,
Nor those horn-handed breakers of the glebe,
But Homer, Plato, Verulam;[2] even so
With woman; and in arts of government

[1] The system of military and social privileges which prevailed in Europe during the middle ages. By inculcating an ideal standard of action for men,—courtesy, generosity, valor, and honor, and a defense of the weak and oppressed by the strong,—chivalry raised the estimate of women, as well as the manners of men.

[2] Homer, the chief of epic poets; Plato (born 427 B.C.), the greatest of philosophers; Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam (1561–1626), the leader in the reformation of modern science. The speaker takes these three as representative of the wise in ancient and modern times.

Elizabeth [1] and others;[2] arts of war,
The peasant Joan [3] and others;[4] arts of grace,
Sappho [5] and others [6] vied with any man:
And, last not least, she who had left her place,
And bow'd her state to them, that they might grow
To use and power on this oasis, lapt [7]
In the arms of leisure, sacred from the blight
Of ancient influence and scorn.
At last
She rose upon a wind of prophecy
Dilating on the future: "Everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
Of science and the secrets of the mind;
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more;
And everywhere the broad and bounteous earth
Should bear a double growth of those rare souls,
Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world."

She ended here, and beckon'd us; the rest
Parted;[8] and, glowing full-faced welcome, she

[1] Queen of England from 1558 to 1603, and central figure in the great intellectual and material energy and preëminence of England at that time.

[2] Semiramis, Dido, Catherine de' Medici, Catherine II. of Russia, Maria Theresa of Austria, etc.

[3] Joan of Arc, a French peasant girl who, while tending sheep, conceived the notion of ridding her country of the English army of the Hundred Years' War. She led the French to victory, and crowned Charles VII. King of France in 1429.

[4] Artemisia, Zenobia, Boadicea, and Mary Ambree and the Maid of Saragossa, who are celebrated by poets.

[5] This poet of Greece, and one of the greatest of the world, lived in the sixth century B.C. Fragments which still exist attest the splendor of her genius.

[6] Erinna, Corinna, Myrto, Margaret of Navarre, Vittoria Colonna, Renée of Ferrara, Olympia Morata, etc. [7] Infolded. [8] Departed.

Began to address us, and was moving on
In gratulation, till as when a boat
Tacks, and the slacken'd sail flaps, all her voice
Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she cried:
"My brother!" "Well, my sister." "O," she said,
"What do you here? and in this dress?—and these?
Why, who are these? A wolf within the fold!
A pack of wolves! the Lord be gracious to me!
A plot, a plot, a plot, to ruin all!"
"No plot, no plot," he answer'd. "Wretched boy,
How saw you not the inscription on the gate,
LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF DEATH?"
"And if I had," he answer'd, "who could think
The softer Adams of your Academe,[1]
O sister, sirens[2] tho' they be, were such
As chanted on the blanching bones of men?"
"But you will find it otherwise," she said.
"You jest; ill jesting with edge-tools! My vow
Binds me to speak, and O that iron will,
That axlike edge unturnable, our Head,
The Princess." "Well then, Psyche, take my life,
And nail me like a weasel on a grange
For warning;[3] bury me beside the gate,
And cut this epitaph above my bones:
'Here lies a brother by a sister slain,
All for the common good of womankind.'"
"Let me die too," said Cyril, "having seen
And heard the Lady Psyche."
I struck in:
"Albeit so mask'd, madam, I love the truth.

[1] Academy; the grove and gymnasium near Athens where Plato taught. The paradisical nature of the place is suggested by the word "Adams."

[2] Sea nymphs of Greek legend who fascinated those who came within hearing of their singing, and then destroyed them.

[3] Refers to the hanging of weasels and mice upon a granary as a warning of the same fate to like filchers.

Receive it; and in me behold the Prince
Your countryman, affianc'd years ago
To the Lady Ida. Here, for here she was,
And thus (what other way was left?) I came."
"O sir, O Prince, I have no country—none;
If any, this; but none. Whate'er I was
Disrooted, what I am is grafted here.
Affianc'd, sir? love-whispers may not breathe
Within this vestal[1] limit, and how should I,
Who am not mine, say live? The thunderbolt
Hangs silent; but prepare: I speak; it falls."
"Yet pause," I said: "for that inscription there,
I think no more of deadly lurks therein
Than in a clapper clapping in a garth,[2]
To scare the fowl from fruit; if more there be,
If more and acted on, what follows? War;
Your own work marr'd; for this your Academe,
Whichever side be victor, in the halloo
Will topple to the trumpet down, and pass
With all fair theories only made to gild
A stormless summer." "Let the Princess judge
Of that," she said; "farewell, sir—and to you.
I shudder at the sequel, but I go."

"Are you that Lady Psyche," I rejoin'd,
"The fifth in line from that old Florian,
Yet hangs his portrait in my father's hall
(The gaunt old baron with his beetle[3] brow
Sun-shaded in the heat of dusty fights)
As he bestrode[4] my grandsire, when he fell,
And all else fled. We point to it, and we say,

[1] A word derived from the name Vesta, the Roman goddess of the sacred fire and hearth. Vestals were maidens of spotless life, who served the goddess.

[2] "A clapper," etc., i.e., a windmill clapping in a garden.

[3] Prominent or overhanging. [4] In order to defend.

'The loyal warmth of Florian is not cold,
But branches current yet in kindred veins.'"
"Are you that Psyche," Florian added; "she
With whom I sang about the morning hills,
Flung ball, flew kite, and rac'd the purple fly,
And snar'd the squirrel of the glen? Are you
That Psyche, wont to bind my throbbing brow,
To smooth my pillow, mix the foaming draught
Of fever, tell me pleasant tales, and read
My sickness down to happy dreams? Are you
That brother-sister Psyche, both in one?
You were that Psyche, but what are you now?"
"You are that Psyche," Cyril said, "for whom
I would be that forever which I seem,
Woman, if I might sit beside your feet,
And glean your scatter'd sapience."
Then once more,
"Are you that Lady Psyche," I began,
"That on her bridal morn, before she past
From all her old companions, when the king
Kiss'd her pale cheek, declar'd that ancient ties
Would still be dear beyond the southern hills;
That were there any of our people there
In want or peril, there was one to hear
And help them? Look! for such are these and I."
"Are you that Psyche," Florian ask'd, "to whom,
In gentler days, your arrow-wounded fawn
Came flying while you sat beside the well?
The creature laid his muzzle on your lap,
And sobb'd, and you sobb'd with it, and the blood
Was sprinkled on your kirtle,[1] and you wept.
That was fawn's blood, not brother's, yet you wept.
O by the bright head of my little niece,
You were that Psyche, and what are you now?"

[1] Petticoat.

"You are that Psyche," Cyril said again,
"The mother of the sweetest little maid
That ever crow'd for kisses."
"Out upon it!"
She answer'd; "peace! and why should I not play
The Spartan mother[1] with emotion, be
The Lucius Junius Brutus[2] of my kind?
Him you call great. He for the common weal,
The fading politics of mortal Rome,
As I might slay this child, if good need were,
Slew both his sons. And I, shall I, on whom
The secular[3] emancipation turns
Of half this world,[4] be swerv'd from right to save
A prince, a brother? A little will I yield.
Best so, perchance, for us, and well for you.
O hard, when love and duty clash! I fear
My conscience will not count me fleckless;[5] yet—
Hear my conditions: promise (otherwise
You perish) as you came, to slip away
To-day,—to-morrow,—soon. It shall be said,
'These women were too barbarous, would not learn;
They fled, who might have sham'd us.' Promise, all."

What could we else? we promis'd each; and she,
Like some wild creature newly cag'd, commenc'd
A to-and-fro, so pacing till she paus'd
By Florian, holding out her lily arms
Took both his hands, and smiling faintly said:

[1] In the teaching of ancient Sparta all existed for the state, and private feeling must be subordinate to public good. Anecdotes are common which show the devotion of mothers to this system.

[2] A consul of early Rome, who, having detected his two sons in a plot against the republic, condemned them to death.

[3] Means here, living for ages; permanent.

[4] "Of half this world," i.e., of women.

[5] Blameless; innocent.

"I knew you at the first; tho' you have grown
You scarce have alter'd. I am sad and glad
To see you, Florian. *I* give thee to death,
My brother! it was duty spoke, not I.
My needful seeming harshness, pardon it.
Our mother, is she well?"
With that she kiss'd
His forehead, then, a moment after, clung
About him, and betwixt them blossom'd up
From out a common vein of memory
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,
And far allusion, till the gracious dews[1]
Began to glisten and to fall; and while
They stood so rapt, we gazing, came a voice:
"I brought a message here from Lady Blanche."
Back started she, and turning round we saw
The Lady Blanche's daughter where she stood,
Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,
A rosy blonde, and in a college gown,
That clad her like an April daffodilly
(Her mother's color[2]), with her lips apart,
And all her thoughts as fair[3] within her eyes
As bottom agates seen to wave and float
In crystal currents of clear morning seas.

So stood that same fair creature at the door.
Then Lady Psyche: "Ah—Melissa—you!
You heard us?" And Melissa: "O pardon me!
I heard, I could not help it, did not wish;
But, dearest Lady, pray you fear me not,
Nor think I bear that heart within my breast,
To give three gallant gentlemen to death."

[1] Tears. [2] The color worn by the students of Lady Blanche.
[3] Clear; distinct.

"I trust you," said the other, "for we two
Were always friends, none closer, elm and vine;
But yet your mother's jealous temperament—
Let not your prudence, dearest, drowse, or prove
The Danaïd[1] of a leaky vase, for fear
This whole foundation ruin,[2] and I lose
My honor, these their lives." "Ah, fear me not,"
Replied Melissa; "no—I would not tell,
No, not for all Aspasia's[3] cleverness;
No, not to answer, madam, all those hard things
That Sheba[4] came to ask of Solomon."
"Be it so," the other, "that we still may lead
The new light up, and culminate in peace;
For Solomon may come to Sheba yet."
Said Cyril: "Madam, he the wisest man
Feasted the woman wisest then, in halls
Of Lebanonian[5] cedar; nor should you,
(Tho', madam, *you* should answer, *we* would ask,)
Less welcome find among us, if you came
Among us, debtors for our lives to you,
Myself for something more." He said not what,
But "Thanks," she answer'd. "Go; we have been too long
Together. Keep your hoods about the face;
They do so that affect abstraction here.
Speak little; mix not with the rest; and hold
Your promise; all, I trust, may yet be well."

[1] The fifty Danaïdes, or Danaïds, daughters of Danaus, King of Argos, who, in Greek mythology, married the fifty sons of Ægyptus, King of Egypt, and who (all but one) killed their husbands on their wedding night, were condemned to carry water in sieves forever.

[2] "This whole foundation ruin," i.e., the whole college fall to ruin.

[3] A woman of strong intellect and personality, who exercised a considerable influence in Athens during the age of Pericles.

[4] For an account of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, see 1 Kings x. 1–13.

[5] From Mount Lebanon in Palestine.

We turn'd to go, but Cyril took the child,
And held her round the knees against his waist,
And blew the swoll'n cheek of a trumpeter,
While Psyche watch'd them, smiling, and the child
Push'd her flat hand against his face and laugh'd;
And thus our conference clos'd.
And then we stroll'd
For half the day thro' stately theaters
Bench'd crescentwise. In each we sat, we heard
The grave professor. On the lecture slate
The circle rounded under female hands
With flawless demonstration. Follow'd then
A classic lecture, rich in sentiment,
With scraps of thunderous epic lilted out[1]
By violet-hooded doctors, elegies
And quoted odes, and jewels[2] five words long
That on the stretch'd forefinger of all Time
Sparkle forever. Then we dipt in all
That treats of whatsoever is,—the state,
The total chronicles of man, the mind,
The morals, something of the frame,[3] the rock,
The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the flower,
Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
And whatsoever can be taught and known;
Till like three horses that have broken fence,
And glutted all night long breast-deep in corn,
We issued gorg'd with knowledge, and I spoke:
"Why, sirs, they do all this as well as we."
"They hunt old trails," said Cyril, "very well;
But when did woman ever yet invent?"[4]

[1] "Lilted out," i.e., uttered in a sprightly, animated, tripping manner.

[2] Means here, sayings, aphorisms, precepts, proverbs,—wisdom which Time holds as a gem on his hand.

[3] The human frame.

[4] Having by convention been debarred from instruction and from the

"Ungracious!" answer'd Florian; "have you learnt
No more from Psyche's lecture, you that talk'd
The trash that made me sick, and almost sad?"
"O trash," he said, "but with a kernel in it.
Should I not call her wise who made me wise?
And learnt? I learnt more from her in a flash
Than if my brainpan were an empty hull,
And every Muse tumbled a science in.
A thousand hearts lie fallow in these halls,
And round these halls a thousand baby loves
Fly, twanging headless arrows at the hearts,
Whence follows many a vacant pang; but O
With me, sir, enter'd in the bigger boy,[1]
The head of all the golden-shafted firm,
The long-limb'd lad that had a Psyche too;
He cleft me thro' the stomacher;[2] and now
What think you of it, Florian? do I chase
The substance or the shadow? will it hold?
I have no sorcerer's malison[3] on me,
No ghostly hauntings like his Highness. I
Flatter myself that always everywhere
I know the substance when I see it. Well,
Are castles[4] shadows? Three of them? Is she,
The sweet proprietress, a shadow? If not,
Shall those three castles patch my tatter'd coat?
For dear are those three castles to my wants,
And dear is sister Psyche to my heart,
And two dear things are one of double worth;

freedom necessary to develop their originating and inventive faculties, and never having created a great school in literature or art, women, even with instruction and untrammeled conditions, never will,—is Cyril's position.

[1] Eros, or Cupid, who cast golden arrows. In mythology, Psyche, the personified soul, a fair girl with the wings of a butterfly, was beloved of Eros.

[2] Used here for the woman's bodice which Cyril was wearing.

[3] Curse. [4] See Canto I. line 78.

And much I might have said, but that my zone
Unmann'd me. Then the doctors! O to hear
The doctors! O to watch the thirsty plants
Imbibing! Once or twice I thought to roar,
To break my chain, to shake my mane;—but thou
Modulate me, soul of mincing mimicry!
Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my throat;
Abase those eyes that ever lov'd to meet
Star-sisters answering under crescent brows;
Abate the stride which speaks of man, and loose
A flying charm of blushes o'er this cheek,
Where they, like swallows coming out of time,
Will wonder why they came.—But hark, the bell
For dinner; let us go!"
And in we stream'd
Among the columns, pacing staid and still
By twos and threes, till all from end to end,
With beauties every shade of brown and fair,
In colors gayer than the morning mist,
The long hall glitter'd like a bed of flowers.[1]
How might a man not wander from his wits
Pierc'd thro' with eyes, but that I kept mine own
Intent on her who, rapt in glorious dreams,
The second sight of some Astræan[2] age,
Sat compass'd with professors; they, the while,
Discuss'd a doubt and tost it to and fro;
A clamor thicken'd, mixt with inmost terms

[1] Tennyson says, in a letter to Mr. Rolfe: "Lady Psyche's 'side' (that is a Cambridge equivalent of 'pupils') wore lilac robes, and Lady Blanche's, robes of daffodil color. These two made the long hall glitter 'like a bed of flowers.'"

[2] "The second sight," etc., i.e., the prophetic sight of a golden age. Astræa, daughter of Zeus and the goddess of justice, lived among men during the golden age, and was the last of the divinities to leave the earth in the iron age. She would be the first to return, it was said, when time should bring back the age of gold.

Of art and science. Lady Blanche alone,
Of faded form and haughtiest lineaments,
With all her autumn tresses falsely brown,
Shot sidelong daggers at us, a tiger cat
In act to spring.
At last a solemn grace
Concluded, and we sought the gardens. There
One walk'd reciting by herself, and one
In this hand held a volume as to read,
And smooth'd a petted peacock down with that;
Some to a low song oar'd a shallop by,
Or under arches of the marble bridge
Hung, shadow'd from the heat; some hid and sought
In the orange thickets; others tost a ball
Above the fountain jets, and back again
With laughter; others lay about the lawns,
Of the older sort, and murmur'd that their May
Was passing; what was learning unto them?
They wish'd to marry; they could rule a house;
Men hated learned women. But we three
Sat muffled like the Fates;[1] and often came
Melissa, hitting all we saw with shafts
Of gentle satire, kin to charity,
That harm'd not. Then day droopt; the chapel bells
Call'd us. We left the walks; we mixt with those
Six hundred maidens clad in purest white,[2]
Before two streams of light from wall to wall,
While the great organ almost burst his pipes,
Groaning for power, and rolling thro' the court
A long melodious thunder to the sound

[1] The three divinities who, in classic mythology, presided over the birth, life, and death of mortals.

[2] From the letter quoted in Note 1, p. 53: "They were in white at chapel, as we Cantabs were at our Trinity College chapel in Cambridge." "Cantabs" is an abbreviated form of "Cantabrigians" (students at Cambridge).

Of solemn psalms and silver litanies,
The work of Ida, to call down from heaven
A blessing on her labors for the world.

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
  Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
  Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
  Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
  Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
  Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
  Under the silver moon;
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.[1]

CANTO III.

Morn, in the white wake of the morning star,
Came furrowing all the orient into gold.
We rose, and each by other drest with care,
Descended to the court, that lay three parts
In shadow; but the Muses' heads[2] were touch'd
Above the darkness from their native East.

There while we stood beside the fount, and watch'd
Or seem'd to watch the dancing bubble, approach'd
Melissa, ting'd with wan[3] from lack of sleep,

[1] See Introduction, p. 14.
[2] See Canto II. line 13.
[3] Pallor; an adjective used as a noun.

Or grief, and glowing round her dewy eyes
The circled Iris[1] of a night of tears.
And "Fly," she cried, "O fly, while yet you may!
My mother knows." And when I ask'd her "How?"
"My fault," she wept, "my fault! and yet not mine;
Yet mine in part. O hear me, pardon me!
My mother, 'tis her wont from night to night
To rail at Lady Psyche and her side.
She says the Princess should have been the Head,
Herself and Lady Psyche the two arms;
And so it was agreed when first they came;
But Lady Psyche was the right hand now,
And she the left, or not or seldom used;
Hers more than half the students, all the love.
And so last night she fell to canvass you:
Her countrywomen! she did not envy her.
'Who ever saw such wild barbarians?
Girls!—more like men!' and at these words the snake,
My secret, seem'd to stir within my breast;
And oh, sirs, could I help it, but my cheek
Began to burn and burn, and her lynx eye
To fix and make me hotter, till she laugh'd:
'O marvelously modest maiden, you!
Men! girls, like men! why, if they had been men
You need not set your thoughts in rubric[2] thus
For wholesale comment.' Pardon, I am sham'd
That I must needs repeat for my excuse
What looks so little graceful. 'Men' (for still
My mother went revolving on the word),
'And so they are,—very like men indeed,—

[1] Iris, in Greek mythology, was the goddess of the rainbow, a beautiful maiden especially attached to Hera or Juno. The word is used here for the band of color round the eyes after sleeplessness and tears.

[2] Red. In old manuscripts and books, comments, injunctions, directions, etc., were often put in red characters. Melissa's blushes are here meant.

And with that woman closeted for hours!'
Then came these dreadful words out one by one:
'Why—these—*are*—men!' I shudder'd; 'and you know it!'
'O, ask me nothing,' I said. 'And she knows too,
And she conceals it.' So my mother clutch'd
The truth at once, but with no word from me;
And now thus early risen she goes to inform
The Princess. Lady Psyche will be crush'd;
But you may yet be sav'd, and therefore fly;
But heal me with your pardon ere you go."

"What pardon,[1] sweet Melissa, for a blush?"
Said Cyril; "Pale one, blush again. Than wear
Those lilies, better blush our lives away.
Yet let us breathe for one hour more in heaven,"
He added, "lest some classic angel[2] speak
In scorn of us, 'They mounted, Ganymedes,[3]
To tumble, Vulcans,[4] on the second morn.'
But I will melt this marble[5] into wax
To yield us farther furlough;" and he went.

Melissa shook her doubtful curls, and thought
He scarce would prosper. "Tell us," Florian ask'd,
"How grew this feud betwixt the right and left."
"O, long ago," she said, "betwixt these two
Division smolders hidden; 'tis my mother,
Too jealous, often fretful as the wind

[1] Supply "is necessary."

[2] "Some classic angel," i.e., some member of the college learned in the classics.

[3] Ganymede was a beautiful Trojan youth who was carried to heaven to be cupbearer to Zeus.

[4] Vulcan was cast from heaven and fell to the earth (see Pope's Homer's Iliad, Book I. lines 760–765, and Milton's Paradise Lost, Book I. lines 740–746).

[5] Lady Blanche's set purpose.

Pent in a crevice; much I bear with her.
I never knew my father, but she says
(God help her!) she was wedded to a fool;
And still she rail'd against the state of things.
She had the care of Lady Ida's youth,
And from the Queen's decease she brought her up.
But when your sister came she won the heart
Of Ida. They were still together,—grew
(For so they said themselves) inosculated;[1]
Consonant chords that shiver to one note;[2]
One mind in all things. Yet my mother still
Affirms your Psyche thiev'd her theories,
And angled with them for her pupils' love.
She calls her plagiarist,—I know not what.
But I must go, I dare not tarry," and light
As flies the shadow of a bird, she fled.

Then murmur'd Florian, gazing after her,
"An open-hearted maiden, true and pure.
If I could love, why this were she. How pretty
Her blushing was, and how she blush'd again,
As if to close with Cyril's random wish!
Not like your Princess cramm'd with erring pride,
Nor like poor Psyche whom she drags in tow."

"The crane," I said, "may chatter of the crane,
The dove may murmur of the dove, but I,
An eagle, clang an eagle to the sphere.[3]
My princess, O my princess! true, she errs,
But in her own grand way. Being herself

[1] Blended in one; united.

[2] Like chords in instruments of the same kind when placed near each other, the one vibrating when the corresponding chord in the other is struck.

[3] "To the sphere," i.e., to the upper air. There is a comparison similar to these three lines in Theocritus, Idyll IX. line 31.

Three times more noble than three score of men,
She sees herself in every woman else,
And so she wears her error like a crown
To blind the truth and me. For her, and her,
Hebes[1] are they to hand ambrosia, mix
The nectar; but—ah, she—whene'er she moves
The Samian Herè[2] rises, and she speaks
A Memnon smitten with the morning sun."[3]

So saying, from the court we pac'd, and gain'd
The terrace rang'd along the northern front,
And leaning there on those balusters, high
Above the empurpled champaign, drank the gale
That, blown about the foliage underneath,
And sated with the innumerable rose,
Beat balm upon our eyelids. Hither came
Cyril, and yawning, "O hard task," he cried;
"No fighting shadows[4] here! I forc'd a way
Thro' solid opposition crabb'd and gnarl'd.
Better to clear prime[5] forests, heave and thump
A league of street in summer solstice down,
Than hammer at this reverend gentlewoman.
I knock'd and, bidden, enter'd; found her there
At point to move,[6] and settled in her eyes
The green, malignant light of coming storm.
Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-oil'd
As man's could be; yet maiden-meek I pray'd
Concealment. She demanded who we were,

[1] Hebe was the goddess of youth and spring, who handed about cups to the gods till Ganymede was borne to heaven.

[2] Hera or Juno, queen of heaven, had especial love for the island of Samos.

[3] The colossal statue of Memnon, son of the dawn, at Thebes in Egypt, gave out musical sound when touched with the morning sunbeams.

[4] Referring to the curse upon the royal family. [5] Primeval.

[6] "At point to move," i.e., about to leave her room.

And why we came. I fabled nothing fair,[1]
But, your example pilot, told her all.
Up went the hush'd amaze of hand and eye.
But when I dwelt upon your old affiance,
She answer'd sharply that I talk'd astray.
I urg'd the fierce inscription on the gate,
And our three lives. True—we had lim'd[2] ourselves
With open eyes, and we must take the chance.
But such extremes, I told her, well might harm
The woman's cause. 'Not more than now,' she said,
'So puddled[3] as it is with favoritism.'
I tried the mother's heart: shame might befall
Melissa, knowing, saying not she knew.
Her answer was, 'Leave me to deal with that.'
I spoke of war to come and many deaths,
And she replied, her duty was to speak,
And duty, duty, clear of consequences.
I grew discourag'd, sir; but since I knew
No rock so hard but that a little wave
May beat admission in a thousand years,
I recommenc'd: 'Decide not ere you pause.
I find you here but in the second place,
Some say the third,—the authentic foundress you.
I offer boldly: we will seat you highest.
Wink at our advent, help my Prince to gain
His rightful bride, and here I promise you
Some palace in our land, where you shall reign
The head and heart of all our fair she-world,[4]
And your great name flow on with broadening time
Forever.' Well, she balanc'd this a little,
And told me she would answer us to-day,
Meantime be mute; thus much, nor more, I gain'd."

[1] "Fabled nothing fair," i.e., made no fine fable or story.
[2] Entangled; insnared, as birds with viscous substance.
[3] Made muddy or foul. [4] See Note 2, p. 23.

He ceasing, came a message from the Head:
That afternoon the Princess rode to take
The dip[1] of certain strata to the north.
Would we go with her? We should find the land
Worth seeing, and the river made a fall
Out yonder; then she pointed on to where
A double hill ran up his furrowy forks
Beyond the thick-leaved platans[2] of the vale.

Agreed to, this, the day fled on thro' all
Its range of duties to the appointed hour.
Then summon'd to the porch we went. She stood
Among her maidens, higher by the head,
Her back against a pillar, her foot on one
Of those tame leopards. Kittenlike he roll'd
And paw'd about her sandal. I drew near;
I gaz'd. On a sudden my strange seizure came
Upon me, the weird vision of our house:
The Princess Ida seem'd a hollow show,
Her gay-furr'd cats a painted fantasy,
Her college and her maidens empty masks,
And I myself the shadow of a dream,
For all things were and were not. Yet I felt
My heart beat thick with passion and with awe;
Then from my breast the involuntary sigh
Brake,[3] as she smote me with the light of eyes
That lent my knee desire to kneel, and shook
My pulses, till to horse we got, and so
Went forth in long retinue following up
The river as it narrow'd to the hills.

I rode beside her and to me she said:
"O friend, we trust that you esteem'd us not

[1] The angle which the strata made with the horizontal plane.
[2] Plane trees. [3] Old form of "broke."

Too harsh to your companion yestermorn;
Unwillingly we spake." [1] "No—not to her,"
I answer'd, "but to one of whom we spake
Your Highness might have seem'd the thing you say."
"Again?" she cried; "are you ambassadresses
From him to me? We give you, being strange,
A license; speak, and let the topic die."

I stammer'd that I knew him—could have wish'd—
"Our king expects—was there no precontract?
There is no truer-hearted—ah, you seem
All he prefigur'd, and he could not see
The bird of passage flying south but long'd
To follow. Surely, if your Highness keep
Your purport, you will shock him ev'n to death,
Or baser courses, children of despair."

"Poor boy," she said, "can he not read—no books?
Quoit, tennis, ball—no games? nor deals in that
Which men delight in, martial exercise?
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl,
Methinks he seems no better than a girl,
As girls were once, as we ourself [2] have been.
We had our dreams; perhaps he mixt with them.
We touch on our dead self, nor shun to do it,
Being other—since we learnt our meaning here,
To lift the woman's fall'n divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man."

She paus'd, and added with a haughtier smile:
"And as to precontracts, we move, my friend,
At no man's beck, but know ourself and thee,
O Vashti, noble Vashti! [3] Summon'd out,

[1] Old form of "spoke."
[2] The royal style, which expressed the dignity of the Princess.
[3] See Esther i.

She kept her state, and left the drunken king
To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms."

"Alas, your Highness breathes full east," [1] I said,
"On that which leans to you. I know the Prince,
I prize his truth; and then how vast a work
To assail this gray [2] preëminence of man!
You grant me license; might I use it? Think:
Ere half be done perchance your life may fail;
Then comes the feebler heiress of your plan,
And takes and ruins all; and thus your pains
May only make that footprint upon sand
Which old-recurring waves of prejudice
Resmooth to nothing. Might I dread [3] that you,
With only Fame for spouse, and your great deeds
For issue, yet may live in vain, and miss,
Meanwhile, what every woman counts her due,
Love, children, happiness?"
And she exclaim'd:
"Peace, you young savage of the northern wild!
What! tho' your Prince's love were like a god's,
Have we not made ourself the sacrifice?
You are bold indeed,—we are not talk'd to thus.
Yet will we say for children, would they grew
Like field flowers everywhere! we like them well.
But children die; and let me tell you, girl,
Howe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die;
They with the sun and moon renew their light
Forever, blessing those that look on them.
Children,—that men may pluck them from our hearts,
Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves,[4]—

[1] "Breathes full east," i.e., is of the character of the east wind, chilling and blasting tender shoots.
[2] Hoary; ancient. [3] "Might I dread," i.e., may I dare to say.
[4] "With ourselves," i.e., in our affection for our children.

O—children—there is nothing upon earth
More miserable than she that has a son
And sees him err. Nor would we work for fame;
Tho' she perhaps might reap the applause of Great,[1]
Who learns the one POU STO[2] whence after hands
May move the world, tho' she herself effect
But little. Wherefore up and act, nor shrink
For fear our solid aim be dissipated
By frail successors. Would, indeed, we had been,
In lieu of many mortal flies, a race
Of giants, living each a thousand years,
That we might see our own work out, and watch
The sandy footprint harden into stone."

I answer'd nothing, doubtful in myself
If that strange poet-princess with her grand
Imaginations might at all be won.
And she broke out interpreting my thoughts:

"No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you;
We are us'd to that; for women, up till this
Cramp'd under worse than South-sea-isle taboo,[3]
Dwarfs of the gynæceum,[4] fail so far
In high desire, they know not—cannot guess
How much their welfare is a passion to us.
If we could give them surer, quicker proof—
O if our end were less achievable
By slow approaches than by single act
Of immolation, any phase of death,

[1] Great discoverer, or great benefiter of mankind.

[2] "Pou sto," i.e., a place to stand on. "Give me," said Archimedes of Syracuse (287–212 B.C.), "where I may stand, and I will move the world."

[3] Restraint or exclusion; among races of the South Pacific a system by which persons and things are placed under a ban or curse.

[4] Apartments in a Greek house set aside for the use of women.

We were as prompt to spring against the pikes,
Or down the fiery gulf, as talk of it,
To compass our dear sisters' liberties."

She bow'd as if to veil a noble tear;
And up we came to where the river slop'd
To plunge in cataract, shattering on black blocks
A breadth of thunder. O'er it shook the woods,
And danc'd the color,[1] and, below, stuck out
The bones of some vast bulk that liv'd and roar'd
Before man was. She gaz'd awhile and said,
"As these rude bones to us, are we to her
That will be." "Dare we dream of that," I ask'd,
"Which wrought us, as the workman and his work,
That practice betters?"[2] "How," she cried, "you love
The metaphysics! read and earn our prize,
A golden brooch: beneath an emerald plane
Sits Diotima, teaching him that died
Of hemlock;[3] our device; wrought to the life;
She rapt upon her subject, he on her;
For there are schools for all." "And yet," I said,
"Methinks I have not found among them all
One anatomic."[4] "Nay, we thought of that,"
She answer'd, "but it pleas'd us not. In truth
We shudder but to dream our maids should ape
Those monstrous males that carve the living hound,

[1] The woods shook in the stirring air, and the rainbow of the falling water danced.

[2] Is it not impious to dream that the Creator who made us will improve his work by practice?

[3] The brooch contains a plane tree made of emerald, under which Diotima, a wise woman of Mantinea, is teaching Socrates. "The father of ethical philosophy" was condemned to death after defending himself on a charge of corrupting the youth of Athens and teaching of new gods, and drank hemlock at the command of the state in 399 B.C.

[4] Of anatomy.

And cram him with the fragments of the grave;[1]
Or in the dark dissolving human heart,
And holy secrets of this microcosm,[2]
Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful jest,
Encarnalize[3] their spirits. Yet we know
Knowledge is knowledge, and this matter hangs.
Howbeit ourself, foreseeing casualty,
Nor willing men should come among us, learnt,
For many weary moons before we came,
This craft of healing. Were you sick, ourself
Would tend upon you. To your question now,
Which touches on the workman and his work.
Let there be light, and there was light:[4] 'tis so;
For was, and is, and will be, are but is;[5]
And all creation is one act at once,
The birth of light. But we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this, now that,
And live, perforce, from thought to thought, and make
One act a phantom of succession. Thus
Our weakness somehow shapes the shadow, Time;
But in the shadow will we work, and mold
The woman to the fuller day."

She spake
With kindled eyes. We rode a league beyond,
And, o'er a bridge of pine wood crossing, came

[1] The reference is to vivisection, and a rumor that dogs kept for such purpose were fed with fragments of dissected bodies.

[2] Little world; applied to man as an epitome, physically and morally, of the great world.

[3] Make carnal; sensualize.

[4] See Gen. i. 3.

[5] "She becomes really profound," says Dawson, "in her analysis of our notions of creation as stages of successive acts. Our minds, she teaches, are so constituted that we must *of necessity* apprehend everything in the form and aspect of successive time; but in the Almighty fiat, 'Let there be light,' the whole of the complex potentialities of the universe were in fact hidden."

On flowery levels underneath the crag,
Full of all beauty. "O how sweet," I said
(For I was half oblivious of my mask),
"To linger here with one that lov'd us." "Yea,"
She answer'd, "or with fair philosophies
That lift the fancy; for indeed these fields
Are lovely. Lovelier not the Elysian lawns,[1]
Where pac'd the demigods[2] of old, and saw
The soft white vapor streak the crowned towers
Built to the sun;"[3] then, turning to her maids,
"Pitch our pavilion here upon the sward;
Lay out the viands." At the word, they rais'd
A tent of satin, elaborately wrought
With fair Corinna's[4] triumph; here she stood,
Engirt with many a florid maiden cheek,
The woman conqueror; woman-conquer'd there
The bearded victor of ten thousand hymns,
And all the men mourn'd at his side. But we
Set forth to climb; then, climbing, Cyril kept
With Psyche, with Melissa Florian, I
With mine affianc'd. Many a little hand
Glanc'd like a touch of sunshine on the rocks,
Many a light foot shone like a jewel set
In the dark crag. And then we turn'd, we wound
About the cliffs, the copses, out and in,
Hammering and clinking, chattering stony names
Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and tuff,

[1] "Elysian lawns," i.e., lawns of Elysium, the abode of the blessed after death.

[2] Demigods were men who partook of divine nature either by descent from an immortal, or by gift of virtues.

[3] "Built to the sun," i.e., rising toward the sun; lofty.

[4] Corinna, a Grecian poetess, is said to have won five prizes over the great Pindar (522–443 B.C.). He was "the bearded victor of ten thousand hymns," many of which have come down to us.

Amygdaloid and trachyte,[1] till the sun
Grew broader toward his death, and fell, and all
The rosy heights came out above the lawns.

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying;
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying;
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.[2]

CANTO IV.

"There sinks the nebulous star we call the sun,[3]
If that hypothesis of theirs be sound,"
Said Ida; "let us down and rest;" and we,
Down from the lean and wrinkled precipices,
By every coppice-feather'd chasm and cleft,
Dropt thro' the ambrosial gloom to where below,
No bigger than a glowworm, shone the tent,
Lamp-lit from the inner. Once she lean'd on me,

[1] These names are of rocks of various natures and structures, and are used here in amused and playful irony.

[2] See Introduction, p. 14.

[3] See Canto II. lines 101–104.

Descending; once or twice she lent her hand,
And blissful palpitations in the blood,
Stirring a sudden transport, rose and fell.

But when we planted level feet, and dipt
Beneath the satin dome and enter'd in,
There, leaning deep in broider'd down, we sank
Our elbows; on a tripod in the midst
A fragrant flame rose, and before us glow'd
Fruit, blossom, viand, amber wine, and gold.[1]

Then she: "Let some one sing to us; lightlier move
The minutes fledg'd[2] with music;" and a maid,
Of those beside her, smote her harp, and sang:

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean;
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

"Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the under world,[3]
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge,—
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

"Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square,—
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

"Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,—
O death in life, the days that are no more."[4]

[1] Gold drinking cups and other table service.
[2] Winged.
[3] "Under world," i.e., the world below the horizon.
[4] See Introduction, p. 14.

She ended with such passion that the tear
She sang of shook and fell, an erring[1] pearl
Lost in her bosom. But with some disdain
Answer'd the Princess: "If indeed there haunt
About the molder'd lodges of the past
So sweet a voice and vague, fatal to men,
Well needs it we should cram our ears with wool[2]
And so pace by. But thine are fancies hatch'd
In silken-folded idleness; nor is it
Wiser to weep a true occasion lost,
But trim our sails, and let old bygones be,
While down the streams that float us each and all
To the issue,[3] goes, like glittering bergs of ice,
Throne after throne, and molten on the waste
Becomes a cloud. For all things serve their time
Toward that great year of equal mights and rights;
Nor would I fight with iron laws, in the end
Found golden; let the past be past; let be
Their cancel'd babels.[4] Tho' the rough kex[5] break
The starr'd mosaic, and the beard-blown[6] goat
Hang on the shaft, and the wild fig tree[7] split
Their monstrous idols, care not while we hear
A trumpet in the distance pealing news
Of better, and Hope, a poising eagle, burns
Above the unrisen morrow. Then to me:
"Know you no song of your own land?" she said;

[1] Wandering.

[2] The allusion is to the hero of the Odyssey, who stopped the ears of his comrades with wax that they might not be enchanted with the singing of the sirens.

[3] "To the issue," i.e., to the ultimate result; end of life.

[4] Confusions; disorders. [5] Hemlock.

[6] The reference is to "the wind blowing the beard on the height of the ruined pillar."

[7] The wild fig has often been noticed springing in ruins and splitting the stones of the structure.

"Not such as moans about the retrospect,
But deals with the other distance and the hues
Of promise; not a death's head at the wine."[1]

Then I remember'd one myself had made,
What time I watch'd the swallow winging south
From mine own land, part made long since, and part
Now while I sang; and maidenlike as far
As I could ape their treble, did I sing:

"O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying south,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

"O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

"O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

"O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died!

"Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself when all the woods are green?

"O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown.
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

"O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

[1] It was the Egyptian custom, according to Herodotus, to carry the miniature image of a dead body, made as like as possible, to each person at a feast, with the exhortation to enjoy, for when he was dead he would be like this.

" O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe, and woo her, and make her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee." [1]

I ceas'd, and all the ladies, each at each,
Like the Ithacensian suitors [2] in old time,
Star'd with great eyes, and laugh'd with alien lips,
And knew not what they meant; for still my voice
Rang false. But smiling, " Not for thee," she said,
" O Bulbul,[3] any rose of Gulistan [4]
Shall burst her veil; marsh divers,[5] rather, maid,
Shall croak thee sister, or the meadow crake [6]
Grate her harsh kindred in the grass. And this
A mere love poem! O for such, my friend,
We hold them slight; they mind us of the time
When we made bricks in Egypt.[7] Knaves are men,
That lute and flute fantastic tenderness,
And dress the victim to the offering up,
And paint the gates of Hell with Paradise,
And play the slave to gain the tyranny.
Poor soul! I had a maid of honor once;
She wept her true eyes blind for such a one,
A rogue of canzonets [8] and serenades.

[1] See Introduction, p. 14.

[2] During the years Ulysses was absent from Ithaca, his wife Penelope was beset by many suitors. At his return in disguise they laughed in a constrained and nervous way (" with other men's jaws," says Homer) under the spell of Athena, vaguely conscious of the approaching disclosure and their fate.

[3] The Persian name for the nightingale.

[4] Persian for rose garden.

[5] " Marsh divers," i.e., water rails.

[6] " Meadow crake," i.e., the land rail or corncrake. Both this bird and the water rail have unmusical notes.

[7] " They mind us," etc., i.e., they remind us of the time when in bondage, before a Moses came to lead us out, we, the chosen people, made bricks (see Exod. i. 8–14).

[8] Short songs.

I lov'd her. Peace be with her; she is dead.
So they blaspheme the muse! But great is song
Us'd to great ends. Ourself have often tried
Valkyrian hymns,[1] or into rhythm have dash'd
The passion of the prophetess; for song
Is duer unto freedom, force and growth
Of spirit, than to junketing and love.
Love is it? Would this same mock love, and this
Mock Hymen,[2] were laid up like winter bats,[3]
Till all men grew to rate us at our worth,
Not vassals to be beat, nor pretty babes
To be dandled,—no, but living wills, and spher'd
Whole in ourselves and ow'd to none.[4] Enough!
But now to leaven play with profit, you,
Know you no song, the true growth of your soil,
That gives the manners of your countrywomen?"

She spoke, and turn'd her sumptuous head with eyes
Of shining expectation fixt on mine.
Then, while I dragg'd my brains for such a song,
Cyril, with whom the bell-mouth'd glass[5] had wrought,
Or master'd by the sense of sport, began
To troll a careless, careless[6] tavern catch
Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences
Unmeet for ladies. Florian nodded at him,

[1] "Valkyrian hymns," i.e., such hymns as the Valkyrs sang. In Norse mythology the Valkyrs were handmaidens of Odin. They rode through the air to every battle, and with their spears pointed out the heroes who should fall. These they afterward led to Valhalla and ministered to them at banquets.

[2] Hymen was the Greek god of marriage.

[3] Bats sleep through the winter.

[4] "But living wills," etc., i.e., with wishes and powers like other human beings, rounded, complete in ourselves, and bound under obligations to no one.

[5] "Bell-mouth'd glass," i.e., wineglass.

[6] Repeated for emphasis.

I frowning; Psyche flush'd and wann'd[1] and shook;
The lilylike Melissa droop'd her brows.
"Forbear," the Princess cried; "Forbear, sir," I;
And, heated thro' and thro' with wrath and love,
I smote him on the breast; he started up;
There rose a shriek as of a city sack'd;
Melissa clamor'd, "Flee the death;" "To horse,"
Said Ida; "home! to horse!" and fled, as flies
A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk,
When some one batters at the dovecot doors,
Disorderly the women. Alone I stood
With Florian, cursing Cyril, vext at heart,
In the pavilion. There, like parting hopes,
I heard them passing from me; hoof by hoof,
And every hoof a knell to my desires,
Clang'd on the bridge; and then another shriek,
"The Head, the Head, the Princess, O the Head!"
For blind with rage she miss'd the plank, and roll'd
In the river. Out I sprang from glow to gloom.
There whirl'd her white robe like a blossom'd branch
Rapt[2] to the horrible fall. A glance I gave,
No more, but, woman-vested as I was,
Plung'd; and the flood drew; yet I caught her; then
Oaring one arm, and bearing in my left
The weight of all the hopes of half the world,[3]
Strove to buffet to land in vain. A tree
Was half-disrooted from his place and stoop'd
To drench his dark locks in the gurgling wave
Mid-channel. Right on this we drove and caught,
And grasping down the boughs I gain'd the shore.

There stood her maidens glimmeringly group'd
In the hollow bank. One reaching forward drew

[1] Grew pale. [2] Seized and carried.
[3] This line is replete with irony and tenderness.

My burden from mine arms; they cried, "She lives!"
They bore her back into the tent. But I,
So much a kind of shame within me wrought,
Not yet endur'd to meet her opening eyes,
Nor found my friends; but push'd alone on foot
(For since her horse was lost I left her mine)
Across the woods, and less from Indian craft[1]
Than beelike instinct hiveward,[2] found at length
The garden portals. Two great statues, Art
And Science, caryatids,[3] lifted up
A weight of emblem, and betwixt were valves[4]
Of openwork in which the hunter[5] rued
His rash intrusion, manlike, but his brows
Had sprouted, and the branches thereupon
Spread out at top, and grimly spik'd the gates.

A little space was left between the horns,
Thro' which I clamber'd o'er at top with pain,
Dropt on the sward, and up the linden walks,
And, tost on thoughts that chang'd from hue to hue,
Now poring on the glowworm, now the star,
I pac'd the terrace, till the Bear[6] had wheel'd
Thro' a great arc his seven slow suns.
A step
Of lightest echo, then a loftier form
Than female, moving thro' the uncertain gloom,
Disturb'd me with the doubt, "If this were she,"

[1] The skill of the Indian in finding his way through untracked forests.

[2] "Beelike instinct hiveward," i.e., the instinct by which bees fly straight to their hive from a long distance.

[3] Figures of women draped in long robes, which serve as columns to support an entablature or other superincumbent weight. [4] Gates.

[5] Actæon, a hunter, was, in the old myth, turned into a stag by Diana, having by accident come upon her and her nymphs while bathing.

[6] The Great Bear, Charles's Wain, the Dipper, are all names for this constellation, composed of seven stars near the North Star.

But it was Florian. "Hist, O hist," he said,
"They seek us; out so late is out of rules.
Moreover, 'Seize the strangers' is the cry.
How came you here?" I told him. "I," said he,
"Last of the train, a moral leper,[1] I,
To whom none spake, half sick at heart, return'd.
Arriving all confus'd among the rest,
With hooded brows I crept into the hall,
And, couch'd behind a Judith,[2] underneath
The head of Holofernes peep'd and saw.
Girl after girl was call'd to trial; each
Disclaim'd all knowledge of us. Last of all,
Melissa; trust me, sir, I pitied her.
She, question'd if she knew us men,[3] at first
Was silent; closer prest, denied it not;
And then, demanded[4] if her mother knew,
Or Psyche, she affirm'd not, or denied;
From whence the royal mind, familiar with her,
Easily gather'd either guilt. She sent
For Psyche, but she was not there; she call'd
For Psyche's child to cast it from the doors;
She sent for Blanche to accuse her face to face;
And I slipt out. But whither will you now?
And where are Psyche? Cyril? both are fled.
What if together? that were not so well.
Would rather we had never come! I dread
His wildness, and the chances of the dark."

"And yet," I said, "you wrong him more than I
That struck him. This is proper to the clown,

[1] "Moral leper," i.e., one shunned and despised for his disguise and untruth.

[2] A statue of Judith, the woman who cut off the head of Holofernes, the chief captain of Nebuchadnezzar, as he slept in his tent (see Judith viii.–xvi).

[3] Supply "to be" before "men."

[4] Being asked.

Tho' smock'd, or furr'd and purpled,[1] still the clown,
To harm the thing that trusts him, and to shame
That which he says he loves. For[2] Cyril, howe'er
He deal in frolic, as to-night,—the song
Might have been worse and sinn'd in grosser lips
Beyond all pardon,—as it is, I hold
These flashes on the surface are not he.
He has a solid base of temperament;
But as the water lily starts and slides
Upon the level in little puffs of wind,
Tho' anchor'd to the bottom, such is he."[3]

Scarce had I ceas'd when from a tamarisk[4] near
Two proctors leapt upon us, crying, "Names!"
He, standing still, was clutch'd; but I began
To thrid the musky-circled mazes,[5] wind
And double in and out the boles,[6] and race
By all the fountains. Fleet I was of foot.
Before me shower'd the rose in flakes; behind
I heard the puff'd[7] pursuer; at mine ear
Bubbled[8] the nightingale and heeded not;

[1] "Proper to the clown," etc., i.e., characteristic of the clown, whether clad in laborer's smock or royal purple. [2] As for.

[3] In a letter to Mr. Dawson, Tennyson says this illustration was suggested to him from "water lilies in my own pond, seen on a gusty day. . . . They did start and slide in the sudden puffs of wind, till caught and stayed by the tether of their own stalks."

[4] A small tree of southern Europe and Asia, sometimes called flowering cypress.

[5] "Thrid," etc., i.e., thread the network of paths in the sweet-scented air.

[6] "Wind and double," etc., i.e., wind in and out among the tree trunks.

[7] Breathing heavily from violent exertion.

[8] "Once Mr. Tennyson . . . heard a nightingale singing with such a frenzy of passion that it was unconscious of everything else, and not frightened, though he came and stood quite close beside it; he could see its eye flashing and feel the air bubble in his ear through the vibration."—MRS. ANNE THACKERAY RITCHIE.

And secret laughter tickled all my soul.
At last I hook'd my ankle in a vine,
That claspt the feet of a Mnemosyne,[1]
And falling on my face was caught and known.

They haled[2] us to the Princess where she sat
High in the hall. Above her droop'd a lamp,
And made the single jewel on her brow
Burn like the mystic fire[3] on a masthead,
Prophet of storm. A handmaid on each side
Bow'd toward her, combing out her long black hair
Damp from the river; and close behind her stood
Eight daughters of the plow, stronger than men,
Huge women blowz'd[4] with health, and wind, and rain,
And labor. Each was like a Druid rock;[5]
Or like a spire of land that stands apart
Cleft from the main, and wail'd about with mews.[6]

Then, as we came, the crowd dividing clove[7]
An advent to the throne; and therebeside,
Half naked, as if caught at once from bed
And tumbled on the purple footcloth, lay
The lily-shining child; and on the left,
Bow'd on her palms and folded up from wrong,
Her round white shoulder shaken with her sobs,
Melissa knelt; but Lady Blanche erect
Stood up and spake, an affluent orator:

1 The Greek goddess of memory, and mother of the Muses.

2 Hauled.

3 "Mystic fire," i.e., the appearance of electricity on the tip of a ship's mast, commonly called "St. Elmo's fire."

4 Made ruddy and coarse-complexioned.

5 Strong pillars of stone exist in England (as at Stonehenge), and are supposed to be the remnants of the Druid worship.

6 "Cleft from the main," etc., i.e., cut off from the mainland and wailed about by sea gulls.

7 A past tense of cleave.

"It was not thus, O Princess, in old days;
You priz'd my counsel, liv'd upon my lips.
I led you then to all the Castalies;[1]
I fed you with the milk of every Muse;
I lov'd you like this kneeler, and you me,
Your second mother. Those were gracious times.
Then came your new friend; you began to change,—
I saw it and griev'd,—to slacken and to cool;
Till, taken with her seeming openness,
You turn'd your warmer currents all to her,
To me you froze; this was my meed for all.
Yet I bore up, in part from ancient love,
And partly that I hop'd to win you back,
And partly conscious of my own deserts,
And partly that you were my civil head,
And chiefly you were born for something great,
In which I might your fellow-worker be,
When time should serve; and thus a noble scheme
Grew up from seed we two long since had sown;
In us true growth, in her a Jonah's gourd,[2]
Up in one night and due to sudden sun.
We took this palace; but even from the first
You stood in your own light and darken'd mine.
What student came but that you plan'd her path
To Lady Psyche, younger, not so wise,
A foreigner, and I your countrywoman,
I your old friend and tried, she new in all?
But still her lists were swell'd and mine were lean;
Yet I bore up in hope she would be known.
Then came these wolves. *They* knew her; *they* endur'd,
Long closeted with her the yestermorn,
To tell her what they were, and she to hear;
And me none told. Not less to an eye like mine,

[1] Castaly, or Castalia, was the fountain on Parnassus sacred to the Muses.
[2] See Jonah. iv.

A lidless [1] watcher of the public weal,
Last night their mask was patent, and my foot
Was to you;[2] but I thought again; I fear'd
To meet a cold 'We thank you, we shall hear of it
From Lady Psyche.' You had [3] gone to her,
She told, perforce; and winning easy grace,
No doubt, for slight delay, remain'd among us
In our young nursery [4] still unknown, the stem
Less grain than touchwood;[5] while my honest heat
Were all miscounted as malignant haste
To push my rival out of place and power.
But public use [6] requir'd she should be known;
And since my oath was ta'en for public use,
I broke the letter of it to keep the sense.[7]
I spoke not then at first, but watch'd them well,
Saw that they kept apart, no mischief done;
And yet this day (tho' you should hate me for it)
I came to tell you; found that you had gone,
Ridd'n to the hills, she likewise. Now, I thought,
That surely she will speak; if not, then I.
Did she? These monsters blazon'd what they were,
According to the coarseness of their kind,
For thus I hear; and known at last (my work),
And full of cowardice and guilty shame,—
I grant in her some sense of shame,—she flies;
And I remain on whom to wreak your rage,
I, that have lent my life to build up yours,

[1] Sleepless.

[2] "My foot was to you," i.e., I was about to go to you.

[3] Would have.

[4] "Young nursery," i.e., nursery for young trees.

[5] Decayed wood, called touchwood from its burning like tinder.

[6] Good; welfare.

[7] Lady Blanche claims that she broke the exact promise of loyalty to keep the spirit, thinking that the lesson from Psyche's disloyalty would be the stronger from delay.

I, that have wasted here health, wealth, and time,
And talent, I—you know it—I will not boast.
Dismiss me, and I prophesy your plan,
Divorc'd from my experience, will be chaff
For every gust of chance, and men will say
We did not know the real light, but chas'd
The wisp that flickers where no foot can tread."[1]

She ceas'd; the Princess answer'd coldly, "Good;
Your oath is broken. We dismiss you; go.
For this lost lamb (she pointed to the child)
Our mind is chang'd; we take it to ourself."

Thereat the lady stretch'd a vulture throat,
And shot from crooked lips a haggard smile.
"The plan was mine. I built the nest," she said,
"To hatch the cuckoo.[2]—Rise!" and stoop'd to updrag
Melissa. She, half on her mother propt,
Half drooping from her, turn'd her face, and cast
A liquid look on Ida, full of prayer,
Which melted Florian's fancy as she hung,
A Niobëan[3] daughter, one arm out,
Appealing to the bolts of Heaven; and while
We gaz'd upon her came a little stir
About the doors, and on a sudden rush'd
Among us, out of breath, as one pursu'd,
A woman post in flying raiment. Fear
Star'd in her eyes, and chalk'd[4] her face, and wing'd

[1] See Note 2, p. 20.

[2] The cuckoo does not build for itself, but lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, and leaves to the foster mother the task of rearing its young.

[3] Queen Niobe of Thebes, according to Greek legend, had twelve children, and boasted over Latona, who had but two. Thereupon these two, Apollo and Artemis, cast arrows from heaven and slew each of the twelve. Niobe herself was changed by Zeus into stone, and ever continued to weep for her sad fate.

[4] Whitened; made pale.

Her transit to the throne, whereby she fell,
Delivering seal'd dispatches which the Head
Took half amaz'd, and in her lion's mood
Tore open; silent we with blind surmise
Regarding, while she read, till over brow
And cheek and bosom brake the wrathful bloom
As of some fire against a stormy cloud,
When the wild peasant rights himself,[1] the rick
Flames, and his anger reddens in the heavens;
For anger most it seem'd, while now her breast,
Beaten with some great passion at her heart,
Palpitated, her hand shook, and we heard
In the dead hush the papers that she held
Rustle. At once the lost lamb at her feet
Sent out a bitter bleating for its dam.
The plaintive cry jarr'd on her ire; she crush'd
The scrolls together, made a sudden turn
As if to speak, but, utterance failing her,
She whirl'd them on to me, as who[2] should say,
"Read;" and I read—two letters, one her sire's:

"Fair daughter, when we sent the Prince your way
We knew not your ungracious laws, which learnt,
We, conscious of what temper you are built,
Came all in haste to hinder wrong, but fell

[1] "And, indeed, in 1847, the state of the agricultural laborer, here [in The Princess] pictured on one day of holiday and feasting in the year, under the generosity of Sir Walter, 'a great, broad-shoulder'd, genial Englishman,' was scarcely an inch better than it was in the year 1830, when all rural England was a cry of misery. One of the similes in The Princess is derived from the rick-burning into which the horrors of starvation and disease had driven the people. Of all this, Tennyson had either little conception,—only a few cared then, and he was of his time,—or he was absorbed in the glory of that English country life in hall and park and comfortable farm, which he paints so well, as if that included more than a tenth of the rural population."—STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

[2] One who.

Into his father's hands, who has this night,
You lying close upon his territory,
Slipt round and in the dark invested you,
And here he keeps me hostage for his son."

The second was my father's, running thus:
"You have our son; touch not a hair of his head;
Render him up unscath'd; give him your hand;
Cleave to your contract; tho' indeed we hear
You hold the woman is the better man;[1]
A rampant heresy, such as if it spread
Would make all women kick against their lords
Thro' all the world, and which might well deserve
That we this night should pluck your palace down;
And we will do it, unless you send us back
Our son, on the instant, whole."
So far I read;
And then stood up and spoke impetuously:

"Oh, not to pry and peer on your reserve,
But led by golden wishes, and a hope,
The child of regal compact,[2] did I break
Your precinct; not a scorner of your sex
But venerator, zealous it should be
All that it might be. Hear me, for I bear,
Tho' man, yet human, whatsoe'er your wrongs,
From the flaxen curl to the gray lock, a life
Less mine than yours. My nurse would tell me of you;
I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,

[1] "The better man," i.e., the better of mankind. There is also humorous allusion to the simpler meaning of the word "man."

[2] "The child of regal compact," i.e., the offspring of the sacred vow of the two kings. A compact between kings is more sacred than one between other men, because of the divine authority with which they rule—was the old faith.

Vague brightness;[1] when a boy, you stoop'd to me
From all high places, liv'd in all fair lights,
Came in long breezes rapt from inmost south
And blown to inmost north; at eve and dawn
With 'Ida, Ida, Ida,' rang the woods;
The leader[2] wild swan in among the stars
Would clang it, and lapt in wreaths of glowworm light[3]
The mellow breaker murmur'd 'Ida.' Now,
Because I would have reach'd you had you been
Spher'd up with Cassiopeia,[4] or the enthron'd
Persephone[5] in Hades, now at length,
Those winters of abeyance[6] all worn out,
A man I came to see you. But, indeed,
Not in this frequence[7] can I lend full tongue,
O noble Ida, to those thoughts that wait
On you, their center. Let me say but this,
That many a famous man and woman, town
And landskip,[8] have I heard of, after seen
The dwarfs of presage;[9] tho' when known, there grew
Another kind of beauty in detail
Made them worth knowing; but in you I found
My boyish dream involv'd and dazzled down
And master'd, while that after beauty makes
Such head from act to act, from hour to hour,

[1] "Vague brightness," i.e., brightness unknown and uncertain in character, as the splendor of the moon to babies.

[2] The leader flies at the point of the V-shaped figure in which swans take their higher flights.

[3] "Glowworm light," i.e., the phosphorescent light of the sea.

[4] In Greek myth an Ethiopian queen, who was taken to the skies and became the constellation which bears her name.

[5] Persephone, or Proserpina, was snatched from the earth by Pluto, who made her his wife and queen of the lower world.

[6] "Winters of abeyance," i.e., long periods of suspense.

[7] Crowd; throng. [8] Landscape.

[9] "Dwarfs of presage," i.e., they were smaller than I conceived them to be.

Within me, that except you slay me here,
According to your bitter statute book,
I cannot cease to follow you, as they say
The seal does music;[1] who desire you more
Than growing boys their manhood; dying lips,
With many thousand matters left to do,
The breath of life; Oh, more than poor men wealth,
Than sick men health,—yours, yours, not mine,—but half
Without you,—with you, whole,—and of those halves
You worthiest; and howe'er you block and bar
Your heart with system out from mine, I hold
That it becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clench'd antagonisms
To follow up the worthiest till he die.
Yet that I came not all unauthoriz'd
Behold your father's letter."

On one knee
Kneeling, I gave it, which she caught, and dash'd
Unopen'd at her feet. A tide of fierce
Invective seem'd to wait behind her lips,
As waits a river level with the dam,
Ready to burst and flood the world with foam.
And so she would have spoken, but there rose
A hubbub in the court[2] of half the maids
Gather'd together. From the illumin'd hall
Long lanes of splendor slanted o'er a press
Of snowy shoulders thick as herded ewes,
And rainbow robes, and gems and gemlike eyes,
And gold and golden heads. They to and fro
Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red, some pale,
All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the land,
And some that men were in the very walls,

[1] Many stories are told of seals being attracted by, and following, music.
[2] The court adjoined the hall in which the Princess sat.

And some they car'd not; till a clamor grew
As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse confounded. High above them stood
The placid marble Muses, looking peace.

Not peace she look'd, the Head; but rising up,
Rob'd in the long night of her deep hair, so
To the open window mov'd, remaining there
Fixt like a beacon tower above the waves
Of tempest, when the crimson-rolling eye[1]
Glares ruin, and the wild birds on the light
Dash themselves dead. She stretch'd her arms and call'd
Across the tumult, and the tumult fell:

"What fear ye, brawlers? am not I your Head?
On me, me, me, the storm first breaks; *I* dare
All these male thunderbolts; what is it ye fear?
Peace! there are those[2] to avenge us, and they come.
If not,—myself were like enough, O girls,
To unfurl the maiden banner of our rights,
And clad in iron burst the ranks of war,
Or, falling, protomartyr[3] of our cause,
Die. Yet I blame you not so much for fear;
Six thousand years of fear have made you that
From which I would redeem you. But for those
That stir this hubbub—you and you—I know
Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow morn
We hold a great convention; then shall they
That love their voices more than duty, learn
With whom they deal, dismiss'd in shame to live
No wiser than their mothers, household stuff,
Live chattels, mincers of each other's fame,

[1] "Crimson-rolling eye," i.e., the revolving light of the beacon. Birds, drawn by the light, dash themselves against the glass and are killed.
[2] Brothers of the Princess. [3] The first martyr or witness.

Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
The drunkard's football, laughingstocks of Time,
Whose brains are in their hands and in their heels,
But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to thrum,
To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to scour,
Forever slaves at home and fools abroad."

She, ending, wav'd her hands; thereat the crowd,
Muttering, dissolv'd. Then with a smile, that look'd
A stroke of cruel [1] sunshine on the cliff,
When all the glens are drown'd in azure gloom
Of thundershower, she floated to us and said:

"You have done well and like a gentleman,
And like a prince; you have our thanks for all.
And you look well too in your woman's dress;
Well have you done and like a gentleman.
You sav'd our life; we owe you bitter thanks.
Better have died and spilt our bones in the flood;
Then men had said—but now— What hinders me
To take such bloody vengeance on you both?—
Yet since our father— Wasps in our good hive,
You would-be quenchers of the light to be,
Barbarians, grosser than your native bears [2]—
Oh, would I had his scepter for one hour!
You that have dar'd to break our bound, and gull'd
Our servants, wrong'd and lied and thwarted us—
I wed with thee! *I* bound by precontract
Your bride, your bond slave! Not tho' all the gold
That veins the world were pack'd to make your crown,
And every spoken tongue should lord you. Sir,
Your falsehood and yourself are hateful to us;
I trample on your offers and on you.
Begone; we will not look upon you more.—

[1] Cruel because all below is dark and stormdriven.

[2] "Your native bears," i.e., the bears of the north of Europe.

Here, push them out at gates."
In wrath she spake.
Then those eight mighty daughters of the plow
Bent their broad faces toward us, and address'd[1]
Their motion. Twice I sought to plead my cause,
But on my shoulder hung their heavy hands,
The weight of destiny; so from her face
They push'd us, down the steps, and thro' the court,
And with grim laughter thrust us out at gates.

We cross'd the street and gain'd a petty mound
Beyond it, whence we saw the lights and heard
The voices murmuring. While I listen'd, came
On a sudden the weird seizure and the doubt.
I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts;
The Princess with her monstrous woman-guard,
The jest and earnest working side by side,
The cataract and the tumult and the kings
Were shadows; and the long fantastic night
With all its doings had and had not been,
And all things were and were not.
This went by
As strangely as it came, and on my spirits
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy.
Not long; I shook it off; for spite of doubts
And sudden ghostly shadowings, I was one
To whom the touch of all mischance but came
As night to him that, sitting on a hill,
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun
Set into sunrise.[2] Then we mov'd away.

[1] Directed; turned.

[2] Upon the Arctic circle the sun does not set on midsummer day, June 22, but remains above the horizon for twenty-four hours. Norway stands for the Northern country, because it is along its shores that travelers commonly coast to witness the midnight sun.

INTERLUDE.

Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands.
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

So Lilia sang; we thought her half possess'd,[1]
She struck such warbling fury thro' the words;
And, after, feigning pique at what she call'd
The raillery, or grotesque, or false sublime,—
Like one that wishes at a dance to change
The music,—clapt her hands and cried for war,
Or some grand fight to kill and make an end.
And he that next inherited the tale
Half turning to the broken statue, said,
"Sir Ralph has got your colors; if I prove
Your knight, and fight your battle, what for me?"
It chanc'd her empty glove upon the tomb
Lay by her like a model of her hand.
She took it and she flung it. "Fight," she said,
"And make us all we would be, great and good."
He, knightlike in his cap instead of casque,
A cap of Tyrol[2] borrow'd from the hall,
Arrang'd the favor, and assum'd the Prince.

[1] With an evil spirit.

[2] The Tyrolese, who live in the Alps south of Bavaria, wear gay-colored caps.

CANTO V.

Now, scarce three paces measur'd from the mound,
We stumbled on a stationary voice,[1]
And, "Stand, who goes?" "Two from the palace," I.
"The second two;[2] they wait," he said, "pass on;
His Highness wakes." And one, that clash'd in arms,
By glimmering lanes and walls of canvas led
Threading the soldier-city, till we heard
The drowsy folds of our great ensign shake
From blazon'd lions o'er the imperial tent
Whispers of war.
Entering, the sudden light
Daz'd me half blind. I stood and seem'd to hear,
As in a poplar grove when a light wind wakes
A lisping of the innumerous[3] leaf, and dies,
Each hissing in his neighbor's ear; and then
A strangled titter, out of which there brake
On all sides, clamoring etiquette to death,
Unmeasur'd mirth; while now the two old kings
Began to wag their baldness up and down,
The fresh young captains flash'd their glittering teeth,
The huge bush-bearded barons heav'd and blew,
And slain with laughter roll'd the gilded squire.

At length my sire, his rough cheek wet with tears,
Panted from weary sides, "King, you are free!

[1] "Stationary voice," i.e., the voice of a sentinel.
[2] Cyril and Psyche had already come.
[3] Innumerable.

We did but keep you surety for our son,
If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin,[1] thou,
That tends her bristled grunters in the sludge;"
For I was drench'd with ooze, and torn with briers,
More crumpled than a poppy from the sheath,[2]
And all one rag, disprinc'd from head to heel.
Then some one sent beneath his vaulted palm
A whisper'd jest to some one near him, "Look,
He has been among his shadows." "Satan take
The old women and their shadows!"—thus the king
Roar'd—"Make yourself a man to fight with men.
Go; Cyril told us all."

As boys that slink
From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,
Away we stole, and transient[3] in a trice
From what was left of faded woman-slough[4]
To sheathing splendors and the golden scale
Of harness, issu'd in the sun, that now
Leapt from the dewy shoulders of the Earth,
And hit the northern hills. Here Cyril met us,
A little shy at first, but by and by
We twain, with mutual pardon ask'd and given
For stroke and song, resolder'd[5] peace, whereon
Follow'd his tale. Amaz'd he fled away
Thro' the dark land, and later in the night
Had come on Psyche weeping. "Then we fell
Into your father's hand, and there she lies,
But will not speak, nor stir."

He show'd a tent

[1] A slattern who tends pigs in the mire.

[2] The silky petals of the poppy are limp and crumpled when the sepals fall apart.

[3] Passing.

[4] While slough means properly the skin of a serpent, it may refer to any part that is shed or molted, as here, of clothing.

[5] Soldered again; made whole again.

A stone-shot off. We enter'd in, and there
Among pil'd arms and rough accouterments,
Pitiful sight, wrapp'd in a soldier's cloak,
Like some sweet sculpture drap'd from head to foot,
And push'd by rude hands from its pedestal,
All her fair length upon the ground she lay;
And at her head a follower of the camp,
A charr'd and wrinkled piece of womanhood,
Sat watching like a watcher by the dead.

Then Florian knelt, and "Come," he whisper'd to her,
"Lift up your head, sweet sister; lie not thus.
What have you done but right? You could not slay
Me, nor your Prince. Look up; be comforted.
Sweet is it to have done the thing one ought,
When fall'n in darker ways." And likewise I:
"Be comforted; have I not lost her too,
In whose least act abides the nameless charm
That none has else for me?" She heard, she mov'd,
She moan'd, a folded voice;[1] and up she sat,
And rais'd the cloak from brows as pale and smooth
As those that mourn half shrouded over death
In deathless marble.[2] "Her," she said, "my friend—
Parted from her—betray'd her cause and mine—
Where shall I breathe? why kept ye not your faith?[3]
O base and bad! what comfort? none for me!"
To whom remorseful Cyril, "Yet I pray
Take comfort; live, dear lady, for your child!"
At which she lifted up her voice and cried:

"Ah me, my babe, my blossom! ah, my child,
My one sweet child, whom I shall see no more!

[1] "A folded voice," i.e., a voice from the midst of folds.

[2] Referring to the marble sculpture of monuments; the "deathless marble" of Michael Angelo's Pietà, in Rome, has been suggested.

[3] Promise to leave the college soon.

For now will cruel Ida keep her back;
And either she will die from want of care,
Or sicken with ill usage, when they say
'The child is hers'[1]—for every little fault,
'The child is hers'; and they will beat my girl,
Remembering her mother. O my flower!
Or they will take her, they will make her hard,
And she will pass me by in after life
With some cold reverence worse than were she dead.
Ill[2] mother that I was to leave her there,
To lag behind, scar'd by the cry they made,
The horror of the shame among them all.
But I will go and sit beside the doors,
And make a wild petition night and day,
Until they hate to hear me like a wind
Wailing forever, till they open to me,
And lay my little blossom at my feet,
My babe, my sweet Aglaïa, my one child!
And I will take her up and go my way,
And satisfy my soul with kissing her.
Ah! what might that man not deserve of me
Who gave me back my child!" "Be comforted,"
Said Cyril, "you shall have it." But again
She veil'd her brows, and prone she sank, and so
Like tender things that being caught feign death,
Spoke not, nor stirr'd.

By this a murmur ran
Thro' all the camp, and inward rac'd the scouts
With rumor of Prince Arac[3] hard at hand.
We left her by the woman, and without
Found the gray kings at parle;[4] and "Look you," cried

[1] Psyche's.
[2] Evil; wicked.
[3] See Canto I. line 152.
[4] "At parle," i.e., in parley; conference.

My father, "that our compact be fulfill'd.
You have spoilt this child; she laughs at you and man;
She wrongs herself, her sex, and me, and him.
But red-fac'd war has rods of steel and fire;
She yields, or war."
Then Gama turn'd to me:
"We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy time
With our strange girl; and yet they say that still
You love her. Give us, then, your mind at large;
How say you, war or not?"
"Not war, if possible,
O king," I said, "lest from the abuse of war,
The desecrated shrine, the trampled year,[1]
The smoldering homestead, and the household flower
Torn from the lintel,[2]—all the common wrong,
A smoke go up thro' which I loom to her
Three times a monster. Now she lightens scorn[3]
At him that mars her plan, but then would hate
(And every voice she talk'd with ratify it,
And every face she look'd on justify it)
The general foe. More soluble is this knot
By gentleness than war. I want her love.
What were I nigher this altho' we dash'd
Your cities into shards[4] with catapults?[5]
She would not love;—or brought her chain'd, a slave,
The lifting of whose eyelash is my lord?
Not ever would she love; but brooding turn
The book of scorn, till all my flitting chance

[1] Harvest.

[2] The horizontal timber or stone resting on the jamb of the door; it stands here for house, household, family life. The phrase, "household flower torn from the lintel," means the loss by violence of some member of the family.

[3] "Lightens scorn," i.e., flashes scorn, as lightning, from her eyes.

[4] Fragments.

[5] Military engines used to throw huge darts and stones and other missiles against walled towns and towers.

Were caught within the record of her wrongs,
And crush'd to death. And rather, sire, than this
I would the old god of war himself were dead,
Forgotten, rusting on his iron hills,
Rotting on some wild shore with ribs of wreck,
Or like an old-world mammoth bulk'd in ice,[1]
Not to be molten out."

And roughly spake
My father: "Tut, you know them not, the girls.
Boy, when I hear you prate I almost think
That idiot legend[2] credible. Look you, sir!
Man is the hunter; woman is his game.
The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,
We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;
They love us for it, and we ride them down.
Wheedling and siding with them! Out! for shame!
Boy, there's no rose that's half so dear to them
As he that does the thing they dare not do,
Breathing and sounding beauteous battle, comes
With the air of the trumpet round him, and leaps in
Among the women, snares them by the score
Flatter'd and fluster'd, wins, tho' dash'd with death
He reddens what he kisses. Thus I won
Your mother, a good mother, a good wife,
Worth winning; but this firebrand—gentleness
To such as her! if Cyril spake her true,
To catch a dragon in a cherry net,[3]
To trip a tigress with a gossamer,
Were wisdom to it."

[1] "With ribs of wreck," etc., i.e., like a wrecked ship, the ribs of which remain long after the lighter parts are fallen away; or like the mammoth, the huge elephant of former geologic age, still found embedded ("bulk'd") in the ice banks of Siberia.

[2] The legend of the sorcerer (see Canto I. line 5).

[3] "Cherry net," i.e., a net to protect cherries from the birds.

"Yea, but sire," I cried,
"Wild natures need wise curbs. The soldier? No;
What dares not Ida do that she should prize
The soldier? I beheld her, when she rose
The yesternight, and storming in extremes
Stood for her cause, and flung defiance down
Gagelike [1] to man, and had not shunn'd the death,—
No, not the soldier's. Yet I hold her, king,
True woman; but you clash them all in one,[2]
That have as many differences as we.
The violet varies from the lily as far
As oak from elm. One loves the soldier, one
The silken priest of peace, one this, one that,
And some unworthily; their sinless faith,
A maiden moon that sparkles on a sty,[3]
Glorifying clown and satyr; whence they need
More breadth of culture. Is not Ida right?
They worth it? truer to the law within? [4]
Severer in the logic of a life? [5]
Twice as magnetic [6] to sweet influences
Of earth and heaven? And she of whom you speak,
My mother, looks as whole [7] as some serene
Creation minted in the golden moods
Of sovereign artists; not a thought, a touch,
But pure as lines of green that streak the white
Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves; I say,

[1] Like a challenge to combat. In the days of chivalry it was customary for the challenger to cast on the ground a glove or gauntlet. He who took it up accepted the challenge.

[2] "Clash them," etc., i.e., bunch them roughly all in one.

[3] "Maiden moon," etc., i.e., the pure moon, that shines upon the meanest thing.

[4] The "law within" is the conscience; the moral sense; the sense of right and wrong.

[5] "Logic of a life," i.e., devotion to principle.

[6] Susceptible. [7] Complete.

Not like the piebald miscellany, man,
Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire,
But whole and one; and take them all in all,
Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,
As truthful, much that Ida claims as right
Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly theirs
As dues of Nature. To our point: not war,
Lest I lose all."

"Nay, nay, you spake but sense,"
Said Gama. "We remember love ourself
In our sweet youth; we did not rate him then
This red-hot iron to be shap'd with blows.
You talk almost like Ida; *she* can talk;
And there is something in it as you say.
But you talk kindlier; we esteem you for it.—
He seems a gracious and a gallant prince,
I would he had our daughter. For the rest,
Our own detention, why, the causes weigh'd,
Fatherly fears [1]—you us'd us courteously—
We would do much to gratify your Prince—
We pardon it; and for your ingress here
Upon the skirt and fringe of our fair land,
You did but come as goblins in the night,
Nor in the furrow broke the plowman's head,
Nor burnt the grange, nor buss'd the milking-maid,
Nor robb'd the farmer of his bowl of cream.
But let your Prince (our royal word upon it
He comes back safe) ride with us to our lines,
And speak with Arac. Arac's word is thrice
As ours with Ida.[2] Something may be done—
I know not what—and ours shall see us friends.—
You, likewise, our late guests, if so you will,

[1] "Our own detention," etc., i.e., we pardon our own detention, since the occasion of it was fatherly fears.

[2] "Is thrice," etc., i.e., has three times the force of ours with Ida.

And so I often told her, right or wrong.
And, Prince, she can be sweet to those she loves;
And, right or wrong, I care not; this is all:
I stand upon her side; she made me swear it—
'Sdeath—and with solemn rites by candlelight[1]—
Swear by St. something—I forget her name—
Her that talk'd down the fifty wisest men;[2]
She was a princess too; and so I swore.
Come, this is all; she will not; waive your claim.
If not, the foughten[3] field, what else, at once
Decides it, 'sdeath! against my father's will."

I lagg'd in answer, loath to render up
My precontract, and loath by brainless war
To cleave the rift of difference deeper yet;
Till one of those two brothers, half aside,
And fingering at the hair about his lip,
To prick us on to combat: "Like to like!
The woman's garment hid the woman's heart,"—
A taunt that clench'd his purpose like a blow!
For fiery short was Cyril's counter-scoff,[4]
And sharp I answer'd, touch'd upon the point[5]
Where idle boys are cowards to their shame:
"Decide it here; why not? we are three to three."

Then spake the third: "But three to three? no more?
No more, and in our noble sister's cause?
More, more, for honor! Every captain waits
Hungry for honor, angry for his king.

[1] "By candlelight," i.e., by the candlelight of the church.

[2] The reference is to St. Catherine of Alexandria. There is a legend that she confuted and converted to Christianity fifty wise men, whom a Roman emperor of the fourth century sent to dispute with her.

[3] An old form of "fought."

[4] Taunt in return.

[5] The moral courage to stand fast by calmer judgment.

More, more, some fifty on a side! that each
May breathe himself, and quick, by overthrow
Of these or those, the question settled, die."

"Yea," answer'd I, "for this wild wreath of air,
This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
Foam of men's deeds,—this honor, if ye will!
It needs must be for honor if at all;
Since, what decision? If we fail, we fail,
And if we win, we fail; she would not keep
Her compact." "'Sdeath! but we will send to her,"
Said Arac, "worthy reasons why she should
Bide by this issue; let our missive thro',
And you shall have her answer by the word."

"Boys!" shriek'd the old king, but vainlier than a hen
To her false daughters in the pool;[1] for none
Regarded, neither seem'd there more to say.
Back rode we to my father's camp, and found
He thrice had sent a herald to the gates,
To learn if Ida yet would cede our claim,
Or by denial flush[2] her babbling wells
With her own people's life. Three times he went.
The first, he blew and blew, but none appear'd;
He batter'd at the doors; none came. The next,
An awful voice within had warn'd him thence.
The third, and those eight daughters of the plow
Came sallying thro' the gates, and caught his hair,
And so belabor'd him on rib and cheek
They made him wild. Not less one glance he caught
Thro' open doors of Ida station'd there
Unshaken, clinging to her purpose, firm
Tho' compass'd by two armies and the noise

[1] "Her false daughters," etc., i.e., the ducklings which she has hatched.
[2] Means both to fill or drench copiously, and to redden.

And prosper'd; till a rout of saucy boys
Brake on us at our books, and marr'd our peace,
Mask'd like our maids, blustering I know not what
Of insolence and love, some pretext held
Of baby troth, invalid, since my will
Seal'd not the bond—the striplings!—for their sport!—
I tam'd my leopards; shall I not tame these?
Or you? or I? For since you think me touch'd
In honor—what! I would not aught of false—
Is not our cause pure? And whereas I know
Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's blood
You draw from, fight; you failing, I abide
What end soever; fail you will not. Still,
Take not his life; he risk'd it for my own;
His mother lives; yet whatsoe'er you do,
Fight and fight well; strike and strike home. O dear
Brothers, the woman's angel guards you, you
The sole men to be mingled with our cause,
The sole men we shall prize in the after time,
Your very armor hallow'd, and your statues
Rear'd, sung to, when, this gadfly brush'd aside,
We plant a solid foot into the time,
And mold a generation strong to move
With claim on claim from right to right, till she
Whose name is yok'd with children's,[1] know herself;
And Knowledge in our own land make her free,
And, ever following those two crowned twins,
Commerce and Conquest, shower the fiery grain
Of freedom broadcast over all that orbs
Between the northern and the southern morn."

Then came a postscript dash'd across the rest:
"See that there be no traitors in your camp.
We seem a nest of traitors—none to trust

[1] In the common phrase, "women and children."

Since our arms fail'd—this Egypt-plague of men![1]
Almost our maids were better at their homes
Than thus man-girdled here. Indeed I think
Our chiefest comfort is the little child
Of one unworthy mother, which she left.
She shall not have it back; the child shall grow
To prize the authentic mother of her mind.[2]
I took it for an hour in mine own bed
This morning; there the tender orphan hands
Felt at my heart, and seem'd to charm from thence
The wrath I nurs'd against the world. Farewell."

I ceas'd; he said, "Stubborn, but she may sit
Upon a king's right hand in thunderstorms,
And breed up warriors! See now, tho' yourself
Be dazzled by the wildfire Love to sloughs
That swallow common sense, the spindling king,
This Gama swamp'd in lazy tolerance!
When the man wants weight, the woman takes it up,
And topples down the scales; but this is fixt
As are the roots of earth and base of all:
Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword and for the needle she;
Man with the head and woman with the heart;
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion. Look you! the gray mare
Is ill to live with, when her whinny shrills
From tile to scullery;[3] and her small goodman
Shrinks in his armchair, while the fires of hell
Mix with his hearth.[4] But you—she's yet a colt—
Take, break her. Strongly groom'd and straitly curb'd,

[1] See Exod. viii–x.
[2] When Ida shall have reared her to her views.
[3] "From tile to scullery," i.e., from tile roof to back kitchen.
[4] Discord is in his house.

Among the thickest and bore down a prince,
And Cyril one. Yea, let me make my dream
All that I would. But that large-molded man,
His visage all agrin as at a wake,[1]
Made at me thro' the press; and, staggering back,
With stroke on stroke the horse and horseman came,
As comes a pillar of electric cloud,[2]
Flaying the roofs, and sucking up the drains,
And shadowing down the champaign till it strikes
On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and cracks, and splits,
And twists the grain with such a roar that Earth
Reels, and the herdsmen cry; for everything
Gave way before him. Only Florian, he
That lov'd me closer than his own right eye,
Thrust in between; but Arac rode him down.
And Cyril seeing it, push'd against the prince,
With Psyche's color round his helmet, tough,
Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at arms;
But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that smote
And threw him. Last I spurr'd; I felt my veins
Stretch with fierce heat; a moment hand to hand,
And sword to sword, and horse to horse we hung,
Till I struck out and shouted; the blade glanc'd,
I did but shear a feather, and dream and truth
Flow'd from me; darkness clos'd me, and I fell.

Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry;
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."

[1] A wake was a festival to celebrate the building of a parish church, and was kept by an all-night watch in the church. Tents near by afforded food to the watchers. In time devotion and reverence fell away, and the feasts became a mere fair and merrymaking.

[2] "Pillar of electric cloud," i.e., a cyclone cloud.

Then they prais'd him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be lov'd,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor mov'd.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face cloth from the face;
Yet she neither mov'd nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee;
Like summer tempest came her tears—
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."[1]

CANTO VI.

My dream had never died, or liv'd again.
As in some mystic middle state I lay;
Seeing, I saw not, hearing not, I heard;
Tho', if I saw not, yet they told me all
So often that I speak as having seen.

For so it seem'd, or so they said to me,
That all things grew more tragic and more strange;
That when our side was vanquish'd and my cause
Forever lost, there went up a great cry,
"The Prince is slain." My father heard and ran
In on the lists, and there unlac'd my casque,
And grovel'd on my body; and after him
Came Psyche, sorrowing for Aglaïa.

But high upon the palace Ida stood

[1] See Introduction, p. 14.

And follow'd up by a hundred airy does,
Steps with a tender foot, light as on air,
The lovely, lordly creature floated on
To where her wounded brethren lay; there stay'd;
Knelt on one knee,—the child on one,—and prest
Their hands, and call'd them dear deliverers,
And happy warriors, and immortal names,
And said, "You shall not lie in the tents but here,
And nurs'd by those for whom you fought, and serv'd
With female hands and hospitality."

Then, whether mov'd by this,—or was it chance,—
She past my way. Up started from my side
The old lion, glaring with his whelpless eye,
Silent. But when she saw me lying stark,
Dishelm'd and mute, and motionlessly pale,
Cold ev'n to her, she sigh'd; and when she saw
The haggard father's face and reverend beard
Of grisly twine all dabbled with the blood
Of his own son, shudder'd, a twitch of pain
Tortur'd her mouth, and o'er her forehead past
A shadow, and her hue chang'd, and she said:
"He sav'd my life; my brother slew him for it;"
No more; at which the king in bitter scorn
Drew from my neck the painting and the tress,[1]
And held them up. She saw them, and a day
Rose from the distance on her memory,
When the good queen, her mother, shore[2] the tress
With kisses, ere the days of Lady Blanche.
And then once more she look'd at my pale face;
Till, understanding all the foolish work
Of Fancy,[3] and the bitter close of all,

[1] See Canto I. lines 37, 38.
[2] The old past tense of "shear."
[3] Fanciful ideals, such as her own.

Her iron will was broken in her mind;
Her noble heart was molten in her breast.
She bow'd; she set the child on the earth; she laid
A feeling finger on my brows, and presently,
"O sire," she said, "he lives; he is not dead;
O let me have him with my brethren here
In our own palace. We will tend on him
Like one of these; if so, by any means,
To lighten this great clog[1] of thanks that make
Our progress falter to the woman's goal."

She said; but at the happy word "he lives"
My father stoop'd, refather'd,[2] o'er my wounds.
So those two foes above my fallen life,
With brow to brow, like night and evening, mixt
Their dark and gray, while Psyche ever stole
A little nearer; till the babe that by us,
Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden brede,[3]
Lay like a new-fall'n meteor on the grass,
Uncar'd for, spied its mother and began
A blind and babbling laughter, and to dance
Its body, and reach its fatling[4] innocent arms
And lazy lingering fingers. She the appeal
Brook'd not, but clamoring out, "Mine—mine—not yours,
It is not yours, but mine; give me the child,"
Ceas'd all on tremble;[5] piteous was the cry.
So stood the unhappy mother open-mouth'd,
And turn'd each face her way. Wan was her cheek
With hollow watch, her blooming mantle torn,
Red grief and mother's hunger in her eye,

[1] Encumbrance; that which makes motion difficult.
[2] Made again a father, his son having revived.
[3] Embroidery. [4] A diminutive of fat.
[5] "On tremble," i.e., a-tremble. For like usage of the early English "on" see "on sleep," Acts xiii. 36.

And down dead-heavy sank her curls, and half
The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst
The laces toward her babe; but she nor car'd
Nor knew it, clamoring on, till Ida heard,
Look'd up, and rising slowly from me, stood
Erect and silent, striking with her glance
The mother, me, the child. But he that lay
Beside us, Cyril, batter'd as he was,
Trail'd himself up on one knee; then he drew
Her robe to meet his lips, and down she look'd
At the arm'd man sideways, pitying as it seem'd,
Or self-involv'd;[1] but when she learnt his face,
Remembering his ill-omen'd song, arose
Once more thro' all her height, and o'er him grew
Tall as a figure lengthen'd on the sand
When the tide ebbs in sunshine; and he said:

"O fair and strong and terrible! Lioness
That with your long locks play the lion's mane!
But Love and Nature, these are two more terrible
And stronger. See, your foot is on our necks,
We vanquish'd, you the victor of your will.[2]
What would you more? Give her the child! Remain
Orb'd in your isolation. He is dead,
Or all as dead; henceforth we let you be.
Win you the hearts of women; and beware
Lest, where you seek the common love of these,
The common hate with the revolving wheel
Should drag you down, and some great Nemesis[3]

[1] Wrapped up in thought.

[2] "Victor of your will," i.e., victor in that which you wished.

[3] In Greek poetry the great retributive justice of the world; the goddess who saw that an exact proportion of individual prosperity was preserved, and that the one who became too prosperous, or too set up by his prosperity, was reduced or punished.

Break from a darken'd future, crown'd with fire,
And tread you out forever. But howsoe'er
Fix'd in yourself, never in your own arms
To hold your own, deny not hers to her;
Give her the child! Oh if, I say, you keep
One pulse that beats true woman, if you lov'd
The breast that fed or arm that dandled you,
Or own one port[1] of sense not flint to prayer,
Give her the child! Or if you scorn to lay it
Yourself in hands so lately clasp't with yours,
Or speak to her, your dearest, her one fault
The tenderness, not yours, that could not kill,
Give *me* it; *I* will give it her."
He said.
At first her eye with slow dilation roll'd
Dry flame, she listening; after, sank and sank
And, into mournful twilight mellowing, dwelt
Full on the child. She took it: "Pretty bud!
Lily of the vale! half-open'd bell of the woods!
Sole comfort of my dark hour, when a world
Of traitorous friend and broken system made
No purple in the distance![2] mystery,
Pledge of a love not to be mine, farewell!
These men are hard upon us as of old;
We two must part; and yet how fain was I
To dream thy cause embrac'd in mine, to think
I might be something to thee, when I felt
Thy helpless warmth about my barren breast
In the dead prime.[3] But may thy mother prove
As true to thee as false, false, false to me!
And, if thou needs must bear the yoke, I wish it

[1] Approach; entrance.

[2] "No purple in the distance," i.e., no color, no beauty, in the future. "In the distance" is as of a landscape.

[3] "The dead prime," i.e., the silent early morning.

Gentle as freedom"—here she kiss'd it; then—
"All good go with thee!—Take it, sir," and so
Laid the soft babe in his hard-mailed hands,
Who turn'd half round to Psyche as she sprang
To meet it, with an eye that swum in thanks,[1]
Then felt it sound and whole from head to foot,
And hugg'd and never hugg'd it close enough,
And in her hunger mouth'd and mumbled it,
And hid her bosom with it; after that
Put on more calm, and added suppliantly:

"We two were friends. I go to mine own land
Forever; find some other. As for me,
I scarce am fit for your great plans; yet speak to me,
Say one soft word and let me part[2] forgiven."

But Ida spoke not, rapt upon the child.
Then Arac: "Ida—'sdeath! you blame the man;
You wrong yourselves—the woman is so hard
Upon the woman.[3] Come, a grace[4] to me!
I am your warrior; I and mine have fought
Your battle; kiss her; take her hand, she weeps;
'Sdeath! I would sooner fight thrice o'er than see it."

But Ida spoke not, gazing on the ground;
And reddening in the furrows of his chin,
And mov'd beyond his custom, Gama said:

"I've heard that there is iron in the blood,
And I believe it. Not one word? not one?

[1] "Swum in thanks," i.e., swam in thankful tears.

[2] See note 8, p. 44.

[3] This fact Ida's scheme of broadening women's wisdom and sympathies would do away with. Much harsh judgment comes from narrowness of experience and lack of a knowledge of life.

[4] Favor.

Whence drew you this steel temper? Not from me;
Not from your mother, now a saint with saints.
She said you had a heart—I heard her say it—
'Our Ida has a heart'—just ere she died—
'But see that some one with authority
Be near her still;' and I—I sought for one—
All people said she had authority—
The Lady Blanche; much profit! Not one word?
No! tho' your father sues. See how you stand
Stiff as Lot's wife,[1] and all the good knights maim'd—
I trust that there is no one hurt to death—
For your wild whim. And was it then for this,
Was it for this we gave our palace up,
Where we withdrew from summer heats and state,
And had our wine and chess beneath the planes,
And many a pleasant hour with her that's gone,
Ere you were born to vex us? Is it kind?
Speak to her, I say. Is this not she of whom,
When first she came, all flush'd you said to me
Now had you got a friend of your own age,
Now could you share your thought, now should men see
Two women faster welded in one love
Than pairs of wedlock? she you walk'd with, she
You talk'd with, whole nights long, up in the tower,
Of sine and arc, spheroid and azimuth,
And right ascension,[2]—Heaven knows what. And now
A word, but one, one little kindly word,
Not one to spare her! Out upon you, flint!
You love nor her, nor me, nor any; nay,
You shame your mother's judgment too. Not one?
You will not? Well—no heart have you, or such
As fancies, like the vermin in a nut,

[1] After she became a pillar of salt (see Gen. xix. 15–26).

[2] These terms, used in the mathematics of astronomy, are piled up in derision by the scorn and impatience of the king.

Have fretted all to dust and bitterness."[1]
So said the small king, mov'd beyond his wont.

But Ida stood, nor spoke, drain'd of her force
By many a varying influence and so long.
Down thro' her limbs a drooping languor wept;[2]
Her head a little bent; and on her mouth
A doubtful smile dwelt like a clouded moon
In a still water. Then brake out my sire,
Lifting his grim head from my wounds: "O you,
Woman, whom we thought woman even now,
And were half fool'd to let you tend our son,
Because he might have wish'd it—but we see
The accomplice of your madness unforgiven,
And think that you might mix his draught with death,
When your skies change again; the rougher hand
Is safer.—On to the tents; take up the Prince."

He rose, and while each ear was prick'd to attend
A tempest, thro' the cloud that dimm'd her broke
A genial warmth and light once more, and shone
Thro' glittering drops on her sad friend:
"Come hither,
O Psyche," she cried out, "embrace me, come,
Quick, while I melt; make reconcilement sure
With one that cannot keep her mind an hour.
Come to the hollow[3] heart they slander so!
Kiss and be friends, like children being chid!
I seem no more; *I* want forgiveness too.
I should have had to do with none but maids
That have no links with men. Ah, false but dear,

[1] "As fancies," etc., i.e., your fancies have worn your heart to dust.

[2] "Down thro' her limbs," etc., i.e., her grief was expressed by a softening of her attitude.

[3] Referring to Gama's speech, lines 245–247.

Dear traitor, too much lov'd, why?—why? Yet see,
Before these kings[1] we embrace you yet once more
With all forgiveness, all oblivion,
And trust, not love, you less.—
And now, O sire,
Grant me your son, to nurse, to wait upon him,
Like mine own brother. For my debt to him,
This nightmare weight of gratitude, I know it;
Taunt me no more. Yourself and yours shall have
Free adit.[2] We will scatter all our maids
Till happier times, each to her proper[3] hearth;
What use to keep them here—now? Grant my prayer.—
Help, father, brother, help; speak to the king;
Thaw this male nature to some touch of that[4]
Which kills me with myself, and drags me down
From my fixt height to mob me up with all
The soft and milky rabble of womankind,
Poor weakling ev'n as they are."
Passionate tears
Follow'd. The king replied not; Cyril said:
"Your brother, Lady,—Florian,—ask for him
Of your great Head,—for he is wounded too,—
That you may tend upon him with the Prince."
"Ay so," said Ida, with a bitter smile,
"Our laws are broken; let him enter too."
Then Violet, she that sang the mournful song,[5]
And had a cousin tumbled[6] on the plain,
Petition'd too for him. "Ay so," she said,
"I stagger in the stream; I cannot keep
My heart an eddy from the brawling hour;
We break our laws with ease, but let it be."

[1] As witnesses most solemn and sacred (see Note 2, p. 83).
[2] Access. [3] Own. [4] Susceptibility; tenderness; pity.
[5] See Canto IV. lines 19, 20, etc.
[6] Unhorsed.

"Ay so?" said Blanche. "Amaz'd am I to hear
Your Highness; but your Highness breaks with ease
The law your Highness did not make; 'twas I.
I had been wedded wife, I knew mankind,
And block'd them out; but these men came to woo
Your Highness—verily I think to win."

So she, and turn'd askance a wintry eye.
But Ida, with a voice that like a bell
Toll'd by an earthquake in a trembling tower,
Rang ruin, answer'd full of grief and scorn:

"Fling our doors wide! all, all, not one, but all!
Not only he, but, by my mother's soul,
Whatever man lies wounded, friend or foe,
Shall enter, if he will. Let our girls flit,
Till the storm die! But had you stood by us,
The roar that breaks the Pharos[1] from his base
Had left us rock.—She fain would sting us too,
But shall not.—Pass, and mingle with your likes.
We brook no further insult, but are gone."

She turn'd; the very nape of her white neck
Was ros'd[2] with indignation. But the prince
Her brother came; the king her father charm'd
Her wounded soul with words; nor did mine own
Refuse her proffer, lastly gave his hand.

Then us they lifted up, dead weights, and bare
Straight to the doors. To them the doors gave way

[1] The lighthouse which stood on the island of Pharos, at the entrance to the port of Alexandria. It was built by Egyptian kings in the third century B.C., and is said to have been four hundred feet in height.

[2] Flushed; reddened.

Groaning,[1] and in the vestal entry shriek'd
The virgin marble under iron heels;
And on they mov'd and gain'd the hall, and there
Rested; but great the crush was, and each base,
To left and right, of those tall columns drown'd
In silken fluctuation and the swarm
Of female whisperers. At the further end
Was Ida by the throne, the two great cats[2]
Close by her, like supporters on a shield,
Bow-back'd with fear. But in the center stood
The common men with rolling eyes; amaz'd
They glar'd upon the women, and aghast
The women star'd at these, all silent, save
When armor clash'd or jingled; while the day,
Descending, struck athwart the hall, and shot
A flying splendor out of brass and steel
That o'er the statues leapt from head to head,—
Now fir'd an angry Pallas[3] on the helm,
Now set a wrathful Dian's[4] moon on flame,
And now and then an echo started up,
And shuddering fled from room to room, and died
Of fright in far apartments.

Then the voice
Of Ida sounded, issuing ordinance;
And me they bore up the broad stairs, and thro'
The long-laid galleries, past a hundred doors,
To one deep chamber shut from sound, and due[5]

[1] Groaning and shrieking at the desecration. The words are used humorously.

[2] The leopards upon either side, as in heraldry the figures of animals stand by a shield. The lion and unicorn are thus a part of the arms of England.

[3] See Note 1, p. 35.

[4] Diana, or Artemis, to whom was attributed authority over the moon, was the goddess of purity. In art she is represented as a maiden of noble and severe beauty. Her emblem was the crescent moon.

[5] Given over.

To languid limbs and sickness; left me in it;
And others otherwhere they laid; and all
That afternoon a sound arose of hoof
And chariot, many a maiden passing home
Till happier times. But some were left of those
Held sagest, and the great lords out and in,
From those two hosts that lay beside the walls,
Walk'd at their will, and everything was chang'd.

Ask me no more. The moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more. What answer should I give?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye;
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more. Thy fate and mine are seal'd.
I strove against the stream and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main.
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.[1]

CANTO VII.

So was their sanctuary violated,
So their fair college turn'd to hospital;
At first with all confusion; by and by
Sweet order liv'd again with other laws;
A kindlier influence reign'd; and everywhere
Low voices,[2] with the ministering hand,

[1] See Introduction, p. 14.

[2] "Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low—an excellent thing in woman."
King Lear, act ii. sc. 3.

Hung round the sick. The maidens came, they talk'd,
They sang, they read; till she not fair began
To gather light, and she that was, became
Her former beauty treble; and to and fro
With books, with flowers, with angel offices,
Like creatures native unto gracious act,
And in their own clear element, they mov'd.

But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,
And hatred of her weakness, blent with shame.
Old studies fail'd; seldom she spoke; but oft
Clomb [1] to the roofs, and gaz'd alone for hours
On that disastrous leaguer,[2] swarms of men
Darkening her female field.[3] Void was her use,
And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main,[4] and sees a great black cloud
Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of night,
Blot out the slope of sea from verge to shore,[5]
And suck the blinding splendor from the sand,
And, quenching lake by lake and tarn [6] by tarn,
Expunge the world. So far'd she gazing there;
So blacken'd all her world in secret; blank
And waste it seem'd and vain; till down she came,
And found fair peace once more among the sick.

[1] The old past tense of climb.

[2] Camp. The word is allied to the German *lager* ("camp"), and to the English "lie," "lair," etc.

[3] "Female field," i.e., both the field belonging to the college estate and the cause of the higher education of women and celibate life, to which she had given her efforts.

[4] Tennyson said in a letter to Mr. Dawson that this simile was suggested by "a coming storm as seen from the top of Snowdon." It is also in the Iliad, Book IV. line 275.

[5] "The slope of sea," etc., i.e., the slope which the sea seems to make from the horizon to the shore.

[6] A small mountain lake.

And twilight dawn'd, and morn by morn the lark
Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres,[1] but I
Lay silent in the muffled cage of life;
And twilight gloom'd; and, broader grown, the bowers
Drew the great night into themselves, and heaven,
Star after star, arose and fell; but I,
Deeper than those weird doubts could reach me, lay
Quite sunder'd from the moving universe,
Nor knew what eye was on me, nor the hand
That nurs'd me, more than infants in their sleep.

But Psyche tended Florian. With her oft,
Melissa came; for Blanche had gone, but left
Her child among us, willing she should keep
Court favor. Here and there the small bright head,
A light of healing, glanc'd about the couch,
Or thro' the parted silks[2] the tender face
Peep'd, shining in upon the wounded man
With blush and smile, a medicine in themselves
To wile the length from languorous hours, and draw
The sting from pain. Nor seem'd it strange that soon
He rose up whole, and those fair charities
Join'd at her side; nor stranger seem'd that hearts
So gentle, so employ'd, should close in love,
Than when two dewdrops on the petal shake
To the same sweet air, and tremble deeper down,
And slip at once all fragrant into one.

Less prosperously the second suit obtain'd[3]
At first with Psyche. Not tho' Blanche had sworn
That after that dark night among the fields
She needs must wed him for her own good name,
Not tho' he built upon the babe restor'd,

[1] The lark sings as it rises in spiral turns.
[2] Hangings.
[3] Prevailed; succeeded.

Nor tho' she lik'd him, yielded she, but fear'd
To incense the Head once more; till on a day
When Cyril pleaded, Ida came behind,
Seen but of Psyche; on her foot she hung
A moment, and she heard, at which her face
A little flush'd, and she past on; but each
Assum'd from thence a half-consent involv'd
In stillness,[1] plighted troth, and were at peace.

Nor only these; Love in the sacred halls
Held carnival at will, and flying struck
With showers of random sweet on maid and man.[2]
Nor did her father cease to press my claim,
Nor did mine own, now reconcil'd; nor yet
Did those twin brothers, risen again and whole;
Nor Arac, satiate[3] with his victory.

But I lay still, and with me oft she sat.
Then came a change; for sometimes I would catch
Her hand in wild delirium, gripe it hard,
And fling it like a viper off, and shriek,
"You are not Ida!" clasp it once again,
And call her Ida, tho' I knew her not,
And call her sweet, as if in irony,
And call her hard and cold, which seem'd a truth.
And still she fear'd that I should lose my mind,
And often she believ'd that I should die;
Till, out of long frustration[4] of her care,
And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,
And watches in the dead, the dark, when clocks

[1] "Involv'd in stillness," i.e., signified or implied in silence.

[2] "Love in the sacred halls," etc., i.e., love cast at random among the maids and soldiers, as sweetmeats from one to another in Italian streets during carnival.

[3] Satiated; a shortened form, as "violate" in Canto VI. line 44.

[4] Disappointment; defeat.

Throbb'd thunder thro' the palace floors, or call'd
On flying Time from all their silver tongues;
And out of memories of her kindlier days,
And sidelong glances at my father's grief,
And at the happy lovers, heart in heart;
And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
And lonely listenings to my mutter'd dream,
And often feeling of the helpless hands,
And wordless broodings on the wasted cheek,—
From all a closer interest flourish'd[1] up,
Tenderness, touch by touch, and last, to these,
Love,[2] like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
But such as gather'd color day by day.

Last I woke sane, but well-nigh close to death
For weakness. It was evening; silent light
Slept on the painted walls, wherein were wrought
Two grand designs; for on one side arose
The women up in wild revolt, and storm'd
At the Oppian law.[3] Titanic shapes, they cramm'd
The forum, and, half crush'd among the rest,
A dwarf-like Cato cower'd. On the other side

[1] Bloomed; blossomed.

[2] Upon this word is the accent and climax of the whole description beginning at line 76.

[3] A sumptuary law proposed by Caius Oppius and passed (215 B.C.) during the public distress in Rome which succeeded Hannibal's march toward that city. It provided that no woman should have in her dress more than half an ounce of gold, nor wear a garment of different colors, nor ride in a carriage in the city or within a mile of it, unless at a public sacrifice. Eighteen years after, when the women demanded the repeal of the law, they went about the streets and pressed into the forum with petitions until they gained its annulment. Cato the Elder, who then was consul, opposed the repeal.

Hortensia[1] spoke against the tax; behind,
A train of dames; by ax and eagle[2] sat,
With all their foreheads drawn in Roman scowls,
And half the wolf's milk[3] curdled in their veins,
The fierce triumvirs; and before them paus'd
Hortensia, pleading; angry was her face.

I saw the forms; I knew not where I was;
They did but look like hollow shows; nor more
Sweet Ida. Palm to palm she sat; the dew
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape,
And rounder, seem'd. I mov'd; I sigh'd; a touch
Came round my wrist, and tears upon my hand.
Then all for languor and self-pity ran
Mine down my face, and with what life I had,
And like a flower that cannot all unfold—
So drench'd it is with tempest—to the sun,
Yet, as it may, turns toward him, I on her
Fixt my faint eyes, and utter'd whisperingly:

"If you be what I think you, some sweet dream,
I would but ask you to fulfill yourself;
But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
I ask you nothing; only, if a dream,
Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.
Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die."

I could no more, but lay like one in trance,

[1] Daughter of Hortensius, a Roman orator. After the assassination of Julius Cæsar (44 B.C.), when the second triumvirate had imposed a heavy tax on wealthy matrons to defray the expenses of their war, Hortensia came forward as the woman's advocate, and spoke so ably that a large part of the tax was remitted.

[2] The ax signifying civil power in the Roman republic, and the eagle,—the standard of the army,—military glory.

[3] The reference is to the legend of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus.

That hears his burial talk'd of by his friends,
And cannot speak, nor move, nor make one sign,
But lies and dreads his doom. She turn'd; she paus'd;
She stoop'd; and out of languor leapt a cry;
Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of death;
And I believ'd that in the living world [1]
My spirit clos'd with Ida's at the lips;
Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose
Glowing all over noble shame; and all
Her falser self [2] slipt from her like a robe,
And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
Than in her mold that other,[3] when she came
From barren deeps to conquer all with love;
And down the streaming crystal dropt; and she
Far-fleeted by the purple island sides,
Naked, a double light in air and wave,
To meet her Graces, where they deck'd her out
For worship without end. Nor end of mine,
Stateliest, for thee! But mute she glided forth,
Nor glanc'd behind her, and I sank and slept,
Fill'd thro' and thro' with love, a happy sleep.

Deep in the night I woke; she, near me, held
A volume of the Poets of her land.
There to herself, all in low tones, she read:

"Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The firefly wakens; waken thou with me.

[1] "The living world," i.e., the real world, not that of dreams or shadows.

[2] "Her falser self," i.e., her hard self, unsympathetic with human suffering.

[3] Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, who, in Greek myth, was born of the foam of the sea. Water ("streaming crystal") dropped from her body. She passed swiftly and lightly ("far-fleeted") by Cythera and Cyprus, the sides of which sprang into bloom at her coming, and entered Paphos. Here the Graces met her, and kept her always beautiful.

"Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost;
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

"Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars;[1]
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

"Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

"Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake;
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me."

I heard her turn the page; she found a small
Sweet idyl, and once more, as low, she read:

"Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height;
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
In height and cold, the splendor of the hills?
But cease to move so near the heavens, and cease
To glide, a sunbeam, by the blasted pine,
To sit, a star, upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,[2]
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors.[3]

[1] "Danaë to the stars," i.e., open to the light of the stars. In Greek story, Danaë, a princess, was confined in a tower. To her Zeus gained admittance by changing into a shower of gold.

[2] The imagery of the song is of Swiss scenery, and the silver horns (as Matterhorn) are white mountain tops.

[3] "The firths of ice," etc., i.e., glaciers which pile up ("huddle") ice in their downward passage, break in crevasses ("furrow-cloven"), and melt when they reach the lower and warmer parts of the mountain. The "dusky" discharge is dark by comparison with the ice and snow from which it issues.

But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air.
So waste not thou, but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I,
Thy shepherd, pipe, and sweet is every sound,—
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;—
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees."[1]

So she, low ton'd; while with shut eyes I lay
Listening; then look'd. Pale was the perfect face;
The bosom with long sighs labor'd; and meek
Seem'd the full lips, and mild the luminous eyes,
And the voice trembled, and the hand. She said
Brokenly that she knew it, she had fail'd
In sweet humility,—had fail'd in all;
That all her labor was but as a block[2]
Left in the quarry; but she still were loath,
She still were loath to yield herself to one
That wholly scorn'd to help their equal rights
Against the sons of men and barbarous laws.
She pray'd me not to judge their cause from her
That wrong'd it, sought far less for truth than power
In knowledge; something wild within her breast,
A greater than all knowledge, beat her down.

[1] "This beautiful song is," says J. Churton Collins, "a splendid illustration of Tennyson's method. Taking the framework from Theocritus [a part of the eleventh Idyl], he wreathes round, beneath, and over it such a wealth of original ornament that it is barely discernible. . . . The whole passage is a marvelous illustration of Tennyson's power of catching and rendering in English the charm of the best and sweetest Greek pastoral poetry."

[2] Of marble left unfinished by the laborers.

And she had nurs'd me there from week to week.
Much had she learnt in little time. In part
It was ill counsel had misled the girl
To vex true hearts; yet was she but a girl—
"Ah, fool, and made myself a queen of farce!
When comes another such? Never, I think,
Till the sun drop, dead, from the signs."[1]
Her voice
Chok'd, and her forehead sank upon her hands,
And her great heart thro' all the faultful past
Went sorrowing in a pause I dar'd not break;
Till notice of a change in the dark world
Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird,
That early woke to feed her little ones,
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light.
She mov'd, and at her feet the volume fell.

"Blame not thyself too much," I said, "nor blame
Too much the sons of men, and barbarous laws;
These were the rough ways of the world till now.
Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know
The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free.
For she that out of Lethe[2] scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet[3] in her hands,—
If she be small, slight-natur'd, miserable,
How shall men grow? But work no more alone!

[1] The signs of the zodiac.

[2] Oblivion; the river of oblivion in Hades. The souls of the dead who drank of this river, so the Greeks taught, might return again to earth to live in a new body. The phrase "out of Lethe" must here mean from her birth. See Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality: "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting."

[3] Generation; a planet is a star revolving in an orbit.

Our place is much; as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her,—
Will clear away the parasitic forms[1]
That seem to keep her up but drag her down,
Will leave her space to burgeon[2] out of all
Within her, let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms[3] distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelopt man,
But diverse; could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain. His dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind,[4]
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words.
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full summ'd in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the to-be,[5]
Self reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other ev'n as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden[6] back to men;

[1] "Parasitic forms," i.e., the empty shows of respect and reverence which sap her strength and check her growth, as a parasitic vine drags down an elm.

[2] Bud; put forth new branches.

[3] "Not harms" is a common order of words with Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and also in the prose of Milton.

[4] "Nor lose," etc., i.e., not lose faith and serenity and calmness in gaining knowledge of practical difficulties and larger human sympathies.

[5] See similar usage, line 335.

[6] The perfect joy of Eden before sin came into the world.

Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm;
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be!"
Sighing she spoke: "I fear
They will not."
"Dear, but let us type[1] them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal,[2] seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal; each fulfills
Defect in each, and always, thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life."
And again sighing she spoke: "A dream
That once was mine! What woman taught you this?"

"Alone," I said, "from earlier than I know,
Immers'd in rich foreshadowings of the world,
I lov'd the woman;[3] he that doth not, lives
A drowning life, besotted in sweet self,
Or pines in sad experience worse than death,
Or keeps his wing'd affections clipt with crime.
Yet was there one thro' whom I lov'd her, one
Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place, and yet

[1] Typify; show by example.

[2] "This proud watchword," etc., i.e., let us put aside this proud watchword of the equality of the sexes.

[3] Woman in the abstract; womankind.

On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
Sway'd to her from their orbits as they mov'd,
And girdled her with music.[1] Happy he
With such a mother! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay."

"But I,"
Said Ida, tremulously, "so all unlike—
It seems you love to cheat yourself with words;
This mother is your model. I have heard
Of your strange doubts; they well might be; I seem
A mockery to my own self. Never, Prince;
You cannot love me."

"Nay, but thee," I said,
"From year-long poring on thy pictur'd eyes,
Ere seen I lov'd, and lov'd thee seen, and saw
Thee woman thro' the crust of iron moods
That mask'd thee from men's reverence up, and forc'd
Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood. Now,
Giv'n back to life, to life indeed, thro' thee,
Indeed I love. The new day comes, the light
Dearer for night, as dearer thou for faults
Liv'd over. Lift thine eyes; my doubts are dead,
My haunting sense of hollow shows;[2] the change,
This truthful change in thee has kill'd it. Dear,
Look up, and let thy nature strike on mine,
Like yonder morning on the blind half-world;
Approach and fear not; breathe upon my brows;

[1] The music of the spheres was, according to the teaching of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, produced by the movement of the heavenly bodies the seven planets giving out the seven notes of the gamut. The melodies were thought most exquisite, and too delicate to be heard by the ears of men.

[2] Feeling that appearances of Ida were unreal.

In that fine air I tremble, all the past
Melts mistlike into this bright hour, and this
Is morn to more,[1] and all the rich to-come
Reels, as the golden autumn woodland reels
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds. Forgive me,
I waste my heart in signs; let be. My bride,
My wife, my life! O we will walk this world,
Yok'd in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro' those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee; come,
Yield thyself up; my hopes and thine are one.
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me."

[1] "Morn to more," i.e., the beginning of more.

CONCLUSION.

So clos'd our tale, of which I give you all
The random scheme as wildly as it rose.
The words are mostly mine; for when we ceas'd
There came a minute's pause, and Walter said,
"I wish she had not yielded!" then to me,
"What if you drest it up poetically!"
So pray'd the men, the women. I gave assent.
Yet how to bind the scatter'd scheme of seven
Together in one sheaf? What style could suit?
The men requir'd that I should give throughout
The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque [1]
With which we banter'd little Lilia first;
The women—and perhaps they felt their power,
For something in the ballads which they sang,
Or in their silent influence as they sat,
Had ever seem'd to wrestle with burlesque,
And drove us, last, to quite a solemn close—
They hated banter, wish'd for something real,
A gallant fight, a noble princess; why
Not make her true-heroic—true-sublime?
Or all, they said, as earnest as the close?
Which yet with such a framework scarce could be.
Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,
Betwixt the mockers and the realists;
And I, betwixt them both, to please them both,
And yet to give the story as it rose,

[1] Gigantic in character.

I mov'd as in a strange diagonal,
And maybe neither pleas'd myself nor them.

But Lilia pleas'd me, for she took no part
In our dispute. The sequel of the tale
Had touch'd her; and she sat, she pluck'd the grass,
She flung it from her, thinking; last, she fixt
A showery glance upon her aunt, and said,
"You—tell us what we are;" who might have told—
For she was cramm'd with theories out of books—
But that there rose a shout. The gates were clos'd
At sunset, and the crowd were swarming now,
To take their leave, about the garden rails.

So I and some went out to these. We climb'd
The slope to Vivian-place, and turning saw
The happy valleys, half in light and half
Far shadowing from the west, a land of peace.
Gray halls alone among their massive groves;
Trim hamlets; here and there a rustic tower
Half lost in belts of hop and breadths of wheat;
The shimmering glimpses of a stream; the seas;
A red sail, or a white; and far beyond,
Imagin'd more than seen, the skirts of France.

"Look there! a garden!" said my college friend,
The Tory[1] member's elder son, "and there!
God bless the narrow sea[2] which keeps her off,
And keeps our Britain, whole within herself,
A nation yet, the rulers and the rul'd—
Some sense of duty, something of a faith,
Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made,

[1] The Tory was the more conservative of the two great political parties in Great Britain. It is now called Conservative. "Member" is commonly used for "Member of Parliament."

[2] Strait of Dover.

Some patient force to change them when we will,
Some civic manhood firm against the crowd—
But yonder,[1] whiff! there comes a sudden heat,
The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
The king is scar'd, the soldier will not fight,
The little boys begin to shoot and stab,
A kingdom topples over with a shriek,
Like an old woman, and down rolls the world
In mock heroics stranger than our own;
Revolts, republics, revolutions, most
No graver than a schoolboys' barring out;
Too comic for the solemn things they are,
Too solemn for the comic touches in them,
Like our wild Princess with as wise a dream
As some of theirs. God bless the narrow seas!
I wish they were a whole Atlantic broad."

"Have patience," I replied, "ourselves are full
Of social wrong; and maybe wildest dreams
Are but the needful preludes of the truth.
For me, the genial day, the happy crowd,
The sport half science, fill me with a faith.[2]
This fine old world of ours is but a child
Yet in the gocart. Patience! Give it time
To learn its limbs; there is a hand that guides."

In such discourse we gain'd the garden rails,
And there we saw Sir Walter where he stood,

[1] In France. This passage did not appear in the first editions, not, indeed, till 1850. It was doubtless incited by the revolution of 1848, when Louis Philippe was forced from the French throne and a republic established in place of a monarchy. "The poem," says Dawson, "is not improved as a work of art by the insertion."

[2] "This strong faith runs through all of Tennyson's poems. . . . This beautiful hope pervading all his writings is one of the secrets of the poet's popularity and influence."—DAWSON.

Before a tower of crimson holly-oaks,[1]
Among six boys, head under head, and look'd
No little lily-handed baronet he,
A great, broad-shoulder'd, genial Englishman,
A lord of fat prize oxen and of sheep,
A raiser of huge melons and of pine,[2]
A patron of some thirty charities,
A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
A quarter-sessions chairman,—abler none;
Fair-hair'd, and redder than a windy morn;
Now shaking hands with him, now him, of those
That stood the nearest; now address'd to speech;
Who spoke few words and pithy, such as clos'd[3]
Welcome, farewell, and welcome for the year
To follow. A shout rose again, and made
The long line of the approaching rookery[4] swerve
From the elms, and shook the branches[5] of the deer
From slope to slope thro' distant ferns, and rang
Beyond the bourn of sunset,—oh, a shout
More joyful than the city roar that hails
Premier or king! Why should not these great Sirs
Give up their parks some dozen times a year
To let the people breathe?[6] So thrice they cried,
I likewise, and in groups they stream'd away.

But we went back to the abbey, and sat on,

[1] The holm, or evergreen, oak.

[2] Pineapples raised in hothouses.

[3] Inclosed; embraced.

[4] Means here the rooks themselves rather than their abiding place. They were returning at the end of the day.

[5] Antlers.

[6] See Note 1, p. 82. "The time thought little of them, neither did Tennyson; and the crowd round the abbey where 'The Princess' is invented are content to cry, and Tennyson seems to think it is enough for them to ask, 'Why should not these great Sirs,' etc."—STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

So much the gathering darkness charm'd. We sat
But spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie,
Perchance upon the future man. The walls
Blacken'd about us, bats wheel'd, and owls whoop'd,
And gradually the powers of the night,
That range above the region of the wind,
Deepening the courts of twilight, broke them up
Thro' all the silent spaces of the worlds,
Beyond all thought, into the heaven of heavens.

Last little Lilia, rising quietly,
Disrob'd the glimmering statue of Sir Ralph
From those rich silks, and home well pleas'd we went.

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