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18476

Mary Olivia Porter.

16 Jan^y 1848.

from M.P.

Annie Tisdal Porter
in remembrance of.

Mary Olivia Ormrod.

Died June 21. 1853.

Watch and pray

THE PRINCESS;

A MEDLEY.



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THE PRINCESS;

A MEDLEY.

BY

ALFRED TENNYSON.

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THE PRINCESS:

A MEDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

SIR WALTER VIVIAN 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 neighbouring borough with their Institute
Of which he was the patron. I was there
From college, visiting the son,—the son
A Walter too,—with others of our set.

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,
Grew side by side ; and on the pavement lay
Carved stones of the Abbey-ruin in the park,
Huge Ammonites, and the first bones of Time ;
And on the tables every clime and age
Jumbled together ; celts and calumets,
Claymore and snowshoe, toys in lava, fans
Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,
Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere,
The cursed Malayan crease, 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 armour hung.

And ' this ' he said ' was Hugh's at Agincourt ;
And that was old Sir Ralph's at Ascalon :
A good knight he ! we keep a chronicle
With all about him '—which he brought, and I
Dived in a hoard of tales that dealt with knights

Half-legend, half-historic, counts and kings
Who laid about them 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.

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 moved the multitude, a thousand heads :
The patient leaders of their Institute
Taught them with facts. One rear'd a font of stone
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 spout whereon the gilded ball

Danced like a wisp : and somewhat lower down
A man with knobs and wires and vials fired
A cannon : Echo 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 with shrieks and laughter : round the lake
A little clock-work 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 gem-like 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
With Science hand in hand went ; elsewhere
Pure sport : a herd of boys with clamour bowl'd
And stump'd the wicket ; babies roll'd about
Like tumbled fruit in grass ; and men and maids

Arranged a country dance, and flew thro' light
And shadow, while the twangling violin
Struck up with Soldier-laddie, and overhead
The broad ambrosial 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 gazed, but satiated at length
Came to the ruins. High-arch'd and ivy-claspt,
Of finest Gothic, lighter than a fire,
Thro' one wide chasm of time and frost they gave
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 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,
And robed 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,
And all things great ; but we, unworthier, told
Of college : he had climb'd across the spikes,
And he had squeez'd himself betwixt the bars,
And he had breathed the Proctor's dogs ; and one
Discuss'd his tutor, rough to common men
But honeying at the whisper of a lord ;
And one the Master, as a rogue in grain
Vener'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 praised her nobleness, and 'Where,'
Ask'd Walter, 'lives there such a woman now?'

Quick answer'd Lilia 'There are thousands now
Such women, but convention beats them down :
It is but bringing up ; no more than that :
You men have done it : how I hate you all !
O were I some great Princess, I would build
Far off from men a college of my own,
And I would teach them all things : you should see.'

And one said smiling 'Pretty were the sight
If our old halls could change their sex, and flaunt
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, or Ralph
Who shines so in the corner ; yet I fear,
If there were many Lilies 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 wilful 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.
They boated and they cricketed ; they talk'd
At wine, in clubs, of art, of politics ;
They lost their weeks ; they vex't 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. ’

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 to read ;
 We seven took one tutor. Never man
 So moulder'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 of home—
 As many little trifling Lilies—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.'

‘ I remember that :

A pleasant game,’ she said ; ‘ I liked it more
 Than magic music, forfeits, all the rest.
 But these—what kind of tales do men tell men,
 I wonder, by themselves ? ’

A half-disdain,

Perch'd on the pouted blossom of her lips :
 And Walter nodded at me ; ‘ *He* began,
 The rest would follow ; so we tost the ball :
 What kind of tales ? why, such as served to kill
 Time by the fire in winter.’

‘ Kill him now !

Tell one ' she said : ' kill him in summer too.'
And ' tell one ' cried the solemn 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,
Grave, moral, solemn, like the mouldering walls
About us.'

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 an April woodpecker,
Hid in the ruins ; till the maiden aunt
(A little sense of wrong had touch'd her face
With colour) turn'd to me : ' Well—as you will—
Just as you will,' she said ; ' be, if you will,
Yourself your hero.'

' Look then ' added he
' Since Lilia would be princess, that you stoop
No lower than a prince.'

To which I said,
' Take care then that my tale be follow'd out
By all the lieges in my royal vein :
But one that really suited time and place
Were such a medley, we should have him back
Who told the Winter's Tale to do it for us :
A Gothic ruin, and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,
And there with shrieks and strange experiments,
For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt them all,
The nineteenth century gambols on the grass.
No matter : we will say whatever comes :
Here are we seven : if each man take his turn
We make a sevenfold story : ' then began.

I.

A PRINCE I was, blue-eyed, and fair in face,
With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl,
For on my cradle shone the Northern star.
My mother was as mild as any saint,
And nearly canonized by all she knew,
So gracious was her tact and tenderness :
But my good father thought a king a king ;
He held his sceptre like a pedant's wand
To lash offence, and with long arms and hands
Reach'd out, and pick'd offenders from the mass
For judgment.

Now it chanced that I had been,
While life was yet in bud and blade, betroth'd
To one, a neighbouring Princess : she to me
Was proxy-wedded 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, knights of puissance ;
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 labour of the loom ;
And therewithal an answer vague as wind :
Besides, they saw the king ; he took the gifts ;
He said there was a compact ; that was true :
But then she had a will ; was he to blame ?
And maiden fancies ; loved to live alone
Among her women ; certain, would not wed.

That morning in the presence room 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,
My shadow, my half-self, for still we moved
Together, kin as horse's ear and eye.

Now while they spake I saw my father's face
Grow long and troubled like a rising moon,
Inflamed 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
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
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,
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.'
Then whisper'd Cyril : ' Take me with you too.
Trust me, I 'll serve you better in a strait ;
I grate on rusty hinges here : ' but ' No !'
Replied the king, ' you shall not ; I myself
Will crush these 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 ;
Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying bathed

In the green gleam of dewy-tassell'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, I stole from court
With Cyril and with Florian, unperceived.
Down from the bastion'd walls we dropt by night,
And flying reach'd the frontier : then we crost
To a livelier land ; and so by town and thorpe,
And tilth, and blowing bosks of wilderness,
We gain'd the mother-city thick with towers,
And in the imperial palace found the king.
His name was Gama ; crack'd and small his voice ;
A little dry old man, without a star,
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,
' All honour. We remember love ourselves
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
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. Last, my daughter 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,—have not been ; they see no men,
Not ev'n 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 loth 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.'

Thus the king ;

And I, tho' nettled that he seem'd to slur
With garrulous ease and oily courtesies
Our formal compact, yet not less all frets
But chafing me on fire to find my bride,
Set out once more with those two gallant boys ;
Then pushing onward under sun and stars

Many a long league back to the North, we came,
When the first fern-owl whirr'd about the copse,
Upon a little town within a wood
Close at the boundary of the liberties ;
There entering in an hostel 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, stared
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 in all his veins—
' No doubt that we might make it worth his while.
For him, he revered his liege-lady there ;
He always made a point to post with mares ;
His daughter and his housemaid were the boys.

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 clothed in act,
Remembering how we three presented Maid
Or Nymph, or Goddess, at high tide of feast,
In masque or pageant at my father's court.
We sent mine host to purchase female gear ;
Which brought and clapt upon us, we tweezer'd out
What slender blossom lived on lip or cheek
Of manhood, gave mine host a costly bribe
To guerdon silence, mounted our good steeds,
And boldly ventured on the liberties.

We rode till midnight when the college lights
Began to glitter firefly-like in copse
And linden alley ; and then we past an arch
Inscribed too dark for legible, and gain'd

A little street half garden and half house ;
But could not 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 :
And all about us peal'd the nightingale,
Rapt in her song, and careless of the snare.

There stood a bust of Pallas for a sign,
By two sphere lamps blazon'd like Heaven and Earth
With constellation and with continent,
Above an archway : 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
Upon a pillar'd porch, the bases lost
In laurel : her we ask'd of that and this,
And who were tutors. ' Lady Blanche ' she said,

‘ And Lady Psyche.’ ‘ Which was prettiest
Best natured ? ’ ‘ Lady Psyche.’ ‘ Her pupils 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 ;

‘ Three ladies of the Northern empire pray
Your Highness would enroll them with your own,
As Lady Psyche’s pupils.’

This I seal’d

(A Cupid reading) 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 glazed with muffled moonlight, swell
On some dark shore just seen that it was rich.

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 zoned with gold ; and now when these were on,
And we as rich as moths from dusk cocoons,
She, curtseying her obeisance, let us know
The Princess Ida waited : out we paced,
I first, and following thro' the porch that sang
All round with laurel, issued in a court
Compact of lucid marbles, boss'd with lengths
Of classic frieze, with ample awnings gay
Betwixt the pillars, and with great urns of flowers.
The Muses and the Graces, 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
From over her arch'd brows, with every turn
Lived 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
Of fame and profit unto yourselves ye come,
The first-fruits of the stranger : aftertime,
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 : ’ and she replied :
‘ We did not think in our own hall to hear
This barren verbiage, current among men,
Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.
We think not of him : when we set our hand
To this great work, we purposed with ourselves
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-styled our lords ally
Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with scale.’

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

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 subscribed,
We enter'd on the boards : 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, or oracles of mode,
Nor stunted squaws of West or East ; but she
That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she
The foundress of the Babylonian wall,
The Carian Artemisia strong in war,
The Rhodope that built the pyramid,
Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene
That fought Aurelian, and the Roman brows
Of Agrippina. 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.'

So saying, she bow'd and waved
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 satin-wood,
A quick brunette, well-moulded, falcon-eyed,
And on the hither side, or so she look'd,
Of twenty summers. At her left, a child,
In shining draperies, headed like a star,
Her maiden babe, a double April old,
Aglaïa slept. We sat : the Lady glanced :
Then Florian, but no livelier than the dame
That whisper'd ' Asses' ears ' among the sedge,
' 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,
Till toward the centre set the starry tides

And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast
The planets : then the monster, then the man ;
Tattoo'd or woaded, winter-clad in skins,
Raw from the prime, and crushing down his mate ;
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 ;
Glanced at the legendary Amazon
As emblematic of a nobler age ;
Appraised the Lycian custom, spoke of those
That lay at wine with Lar and Lucumo ;
Ran down the Persian, Grecian, Roman lines
Of empire, and the woman's state in each,
How far from just ; till warming with her theme
She fulminated out her scorn of laws Salique
And little-footed China, touch'd on Mahomet
With much contempt, and came to chivalry :
When some respect, however slight, was paid

To woman, superstition all awry :

However then commenced 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 dared

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 Caffre, Hottentot, Malay,
 Nor those horn-handed breakers of the glebe,
 But Homer, Plato, Verulam ; even so
 With woman : and in arts of government
 Elizabeth and others ; arts of war
 The peasant Joan and others ; arts of grace
 Sappho and others vied with any man :
 And she, tho' last not least, who had left her place,
 And bow'd her state to them, that they might grow
 To use and power on this Oasis, lapt
 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 ; and, glowing full-faced welcome, she
Began to address us, and was moving on
In gratulation, till as when a boat
Tacks, and her 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,

O sister, Sirens 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 ! I am bound

To tell her. O, she has an iron will,

An axelike edge unturnable, our Head,

The Princess.’ ‘ Well then, Psyche, take my life,

And nail me like a weasel on a grange

For warning : 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 ;

Receive it ; and in me behold the Prince
Your countryman, affianced 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.
Affianced, Sir ? love-whispers may not breathe
Within this vestal 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,
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 brow
Sun-shaded in the heat of dusty fights)
As he bestrode my Grandsire, when he fell,
And all else fled: we point to it, and we say,
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 raced the purple fly,
And snared the squirrel of the glen? are you
That Psyche, wont to bind my throbbing brow,
To smoothe 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 for ever which I seem,
A 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, declared 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, 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 ?'
' 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 with emotion, be
The Lucius Junius Brutus 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 emancipation turns
Of half this world, be swerved 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 ; 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 shamed us : promise, all.'

What could we else, we promised each ; and she,
 Like some wild creature newly-caged, commenced
 A to-and-fro, so pacing till she paused
 By Florian ; holding out her lily arms
 Took both his hands, and smiling faintly said :

' You are grown, and yet I knew you at the first.
 I am very glad, and I am very vexed
 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, and 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

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 colour) with her lips apart,

And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,

As bottom agates seem 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 mean :
But, dearest Lady, I pray you fear me not,
Nor think I bear that heart within my breast,
To give three gallant gentlemen to death.’
‘ 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 of a leaky vase, for fear
This whole foundation ruin, and I lose
My honour, these their lives.’ ‘ Ah, fear me not ’
Replied Melissa ‘ no—I would not tell,
No, not for all Aspasia’s cleverness,
No, not to answer, Madam, all those hard things
That Sheba came to ask of Solomon.’
‘ Be it so ’ the other ‘ that we may live to 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 cedar : nor should you
(Tho’ madam *you* should answer, *we* would ask)
Less welcome find among us, if e’er 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.’

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 closed.

And then we stroll'd
From room to room : 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 thundrous Epic lilted out
By violet-hooded Doctors, elegies
And quoted odes, and jewels five-words-long
That on the stretch'd forefinger of all Time
Sparkle for ever : 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, 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 gorged 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 ?'

'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,

The Head of all the golden-shafted firm,

The long-limb'd lad that had a Psyche too ;

He cleft me thro' the stomacher ; and now

What think you of it, Florian ? will it hold ?

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,
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 come,
Modulate me, soul of mincing mimicry !
Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my throat ;
Abase those eyes that ever loved 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 colours gayer than the morning mist,
The long hall glitter'd like a bed of flowers.
How might a man not wander from his wits
Pierced thro' with eyes, but that I kept mine own
Intent upon the Princess, where she sat
Among her grave Professors, scattering gems
Of Art and Science : only Lady Blanche,
A double-rouged and treble-wrinkled Dame,
With all her faded Autumns 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 smoothed 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 : and to us came
Melissa, hitting all we saw with shafts
Of gentle satire, kin to charity,
That harm'd not : so we sat ; and now when day
Droop'd, and the chapel tinkled, mixt with those
Six hundred maidens clad in purest white,
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
Of solemn psalms, and silver litanies,
The work of Ida, to call down from Heaven
A blessing on her labours for the world.

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 were touch'd
Above the darkness from their native East.
And while we stood beside the fount, and watch'd
Or seem'd to watch the dancing bubble, approach'd
Melissa, tinged with wan from lack of sleep,
Or sorrow, and glowing round her dewy eyes
The circled Iris of a night of tears ;
' And fly ' she cried, ' O fly, while yet you may !
' My mother knows : ' and we demanding ' 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 marvellously modest maiden, you !
Men ! girls, like men ! why, if they had been men,
And in their fulsome fashion woo'd you, child,
You need not take so deep a rouge : like men—

And so they are,—very like men indeed—

And closeted with her for hours. Aha ! ”

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 saved, and therefore fly :

But heal me with your pardon ere you go.’

‘ What pardon, 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 speak

In scorn of us, “ they mounted, Ganymedes,

To tumble, Vulcans, on the second morn.”

But I will melt this marble 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 smoulders hidden : 'tis my mother,
Too jealous, often fretful as the wind
Pent in a crevice : much I bear with her :
I never knew my father, but she says
(God pardon 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 love
Of the Princess : they were still together, grew
(For so they said themselves) inosculated ;
Consonant chords that shiver to one note ;
One mind in all things : only Lady Blanche

Affirms your Psyche thieved her theories,
And angled with them for the Royal heart :
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.
My princess, O my princess ! true she errs ;
For being, and wise in knowing that she is,
Three times more noble than threescore 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,
They are Hebes meet to hand ambrosia, mix
The nectar ; but—ah she—whene'er she moves
The Samian Herè rises and she speaks
A Memnon smitten with the morning Sun.'

So saying from out the court we paced, and gain'd
The terrace ranged 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,
' Better to clear prime forests, heave and thump
A league of street in summer solstice down,
Than hammer at this reverend gentlewoman.
I knock'd and bidden went in : I found her there

At point to sally, and settled in her eyes
The green malignant light of coming storm.
Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-oil'd,
As man could be ; yet maiden-meeke I pray'd
Concealment : she demanded who we were,
And why we came ? I minted nothing false,
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 urged the fierce inscription on the gate,
And our three lives. She said we had limed 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 as it is with favouritism."
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 discouraged, Sir ; but since I knew
No rock so hard but that a little wave
May beat admission in a thousand years,
I recommenced ; “ 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
A palace in our own land, where you shall reign
The head and heart of all our fair she-world,
And your great name flow on with broadening time
For ever.” Well, she balanced this a little,
And told me she would answer us to-day,
Meantime be mute : thus much, nor more I gain’d.’

He ceasing, came a message from the Head.

‘ In the afternoon the Princess rode to take

The dip 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 dark-blue forks
Beyond the full-leaved platans 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:
My heart beat thick with passion and with awe,
And from my breast the involuntary sigh
Broke, as she smote me with the light of eyes
That lent my knee desire to kneel, and shook
My pulses, till to horse we clomb, 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
 Too harsh to your companion yestermorn ;
 Unwillingly we spake.’ ‘ 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 ambassadors
 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 prefigured, 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 exercises ?
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl,
Methinks he seems no better than a girl ;
As girls were once, as we ourselves 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 uplift the woman’s fall’n divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man.’

She paused and added with a haughtier smile
‘ And as to precontracts, we move, my friend,
At no man’s beck, but know ourselves and thee,
O Vashti, noble Vashti ! Summon’d out
She kept her state, and left the drunken king
To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms.’

‘ Alas your Highness breathes full East,’ 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 præminence 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 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 ourselves 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
For ever, blessing those that look on them :
Children—that men may pluck them from our hearts,
Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves—
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,
Who learns the one POU STO whence after-hands
May move the world, though she herself effect
But little : wherefore up and act, nor shrink
For fear our solid aim be dissipated
Of 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 maiden could at all be won.
And she broke out interpreting my thoughts :

‘ No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you :
We are used to that ; for women, up till this
Cramp'd under worse than South-sea-isle taboo,
Dwarfs of the gynecæum, 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—
Oh if our end were less achievable
By slow approaches, than by single act
Of immolation, any phase of death,
We were as prompt to spring against the pikes,
Or down the fiery gulf as talk of it,
To compass our dear sister's liberties.’

She bow'd as if to veil a noble tear ;
And up we came to where the river sloped

To plunge in cataract, shattering on black blocks
A breadth of thunder. O'er it shook the woods,
And danced the colour, and, below, stuck out
The bones of some vast bulk that lived and roar'd
Before man was. She gazed 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?' 'How,' she cried, 'you love
The metaphysics! read and earn our prize,
A golden broach: beneath an emerald plane
Sits Diotima, teaching him that died
Of hemlock; 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.' 'Nay we thought of that,'
She answer'd, 'but it pleased us not: in truth
We shudder but to dream our maids should ape
Those monstrous males that carve the living hound,

And cram him with the fragments of the grave,
Or in the dark dissolving human heart,
And holy secrets of this microcosm,
Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful jest,
Encarnalize their spirits : yet we know
Knowledge is knowledge, and this matter hangs :
Howbeit ourselves, foreseeing casualty,
Nor willing men should come among us, learnt,
For many weary moons before we came,
This craft of healing. Were you sick, ourselves
Would tend upon you. To your question now,
Which touches on the workman and his work.
Let there be light and there was light : 'tis so :
For was, and is, and will be, are but is ;
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 mould
The woman to the fuller day.'

She spake

With kindled eyes : we rode a little higher
To cross the flood by a narrow bridge, and came
On flowery levels underneath the crag,
Full of all beauty ; and ' O how sweet ' I said
(For I was half-oblivious of my mask)
' To linger here with one that loved us ' ' Yea '
She answer'd ' or with fair philosophies
That lift the fancy ; for indeed these fields
Are lovely, lovelier not the Elysian lawns,
Where paced the Demigods of old, and saw
The soft white vapour streak the crowned towers
Built to the Sun : ' then, turning to her maids,
' Pitch our pavilion here upon the sward ;
Lay out the viands.' At the word, they raised
A tent of satin, elaborately wrought
With fair Corinna's 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, Florian with the other, and I
With mine affianced. Many a little hand
Glanced 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,
Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the Sun
Grew broader toward his death and fell, and all
The rosy heights came out above the lawns.

IV.

‘ THERE sinks the nebulous star we call the Sun,
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 glow-worm shone the tent
Lamp-lit from the inner. Once she lean’d on me,
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, viand, blossom, and amber wine and gold.

Then she ' Let some one sing to us : lightlier move
The minutes fledged 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 underworld,
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.”

She ended with such passion that the tear,
 She sang of, shook and fell, an erring pearl
 Lost in her bosom : but with some disdain
 Answer'd the Princess ‘ If indeed there haunt
 About the moulder'd lodges of the Past
 So sweet a voice and vague, fatal to men,
 Well needs it we should cram our ears with wool
 And so pace by : but thine are fancies hatch'd
 In silken-folded idleness ; nor is it

Wiser to weep a true occasion gone,
But trim our sails, and let the old proverb serve
While down the streams that buoy each separate craft
To the issue, 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 might and rights,
Nor would I fight with iron laws, in the end
Found golden : let the past be past ; let be
Their cancell'd Babels : tho' the rough kex break
The starr'd mosaic, and the wild goat hang
Upon the pillar, and the wild figtree split
Their monstrous idols, care not while we hear
A trumpet in the distance pealing news
Of better, and Hope, a poisoning eagle, burns
Above the unrisen morrow : ' and then to me ;
' Know you no song of your own land,' she said,
' 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.'

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~~^{subtle} is the South,
 And ~~dark~~ and true and tender is the North.
cold stern mighty

' 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.

‘ 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.’

I ceased and all the ladies, each at each,
Like the Ithacensian suitors in old time,
Stared 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, any rose of Gulistan
Shall burst her veil : marsh-divers, rather, maid,
Shall croak thee sister, or the meadow-crake
Grate her harsh kindred in the grass : and this
A mere love-poem ! O for such, my friend,
We prize them slight : they mind us of the time
When we made bricks in Egypt. 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.
Love is it ? I would this same mock-love, and this
Mock-Hymen were laid up like winter bats,
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 sphered
Whole in ourselves and due to none. 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,
Did Cyril with whom the bell-mouth'd flask had wrought,
Or master'd by the sense of sport, begin
To troll a careless, careless tavern-catch
Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences
Unmeet for ladies. Florian nodded at him,
I frowning ; Psyche flush'd and wann'd and shook ;
The lilylike Melissa droop'd her brows ;
' Forbear ' the Princess cried ; ' Forbear, Sir ' I ;
And heated thro' & 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 clamour'd ' Flee the death ; ' ' To horse '
Said Lady Ida ; and fled at once, as flies
A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk,
When some one batters at the dovecote-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 to the horrible fall : a glance I gave,
No more ; but woman-vested as I was
Plunged ; 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,
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
My burthen from mine arms, and crying ' she lives '
They bore her back into the tent : but I,
So much a kind of shame within me wrought,
Not yet endured 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 thicket, and less from Indian craft
Then beelike instinct hiveward, found at length
The gates of the garden. Two great statues, Art
And Science, Caryatids, lifted up
A weight of emblem, and betwixt were valves
Of open metal in which the old hunter rued
His rash intrusion, manlike, but his brows
Had sprouted, and the branches thereupon
Spread out at top, and grimly spiked 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 changed from hue to hue,
Now poring on the glow-worm, now the star,
I paced the terrace, till the bear had wheel'd
Thro' a great arc his seven slow suns.

A step

Of lightest echo, and then a loftier form
Than female, moving thro' the uncertain gloom
Disturb'd me with the doubt 'if this were she'
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.
I found the key in the doors : how came you here ?
Last of the train, a moral leper, I,
To whom none spake, half-sick at heart, return'd.
Arriving all confused among the rest
With hooded brows I crept into the hall,
And, couch'd behind a Judith, 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, at first
Was silent ; closer prest, denied it not :
And then, demanded if her mother knew,
Or Lady Psyche, 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,
Tho' smock'd, or furr'd and purpled, still the clown,

To harm the thing that trusts him, and to shame
 That which he says he loves : for 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 waterlily starts and slides
 Upon the level in little puffs of wind,
 Tho' anchor'd to the bottom, such is he.'

Scarce had I ceased when from a tamarisk near
 Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying, ' Names '
 He, standing still, was clutch'd ; but I began
 To thrid thro' all the musky mazes, wind
 And double in and out the boles, 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 pursuer ; at mine ear
 Bubbled the nightingale and heeded not,

And secret laughter tickled all my soul.
At last I took my ancle in a vine,
That claspt the feet of a Mnemosyne,
And falling on my face was caught and known.

They haled 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 on a mast-head,
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 plough, stronger than men,
Huge women blowzed with health, and wind, and rain
And labour. Each was like a Druid rock ;
Or like a spire of land that stands apart
Cleft from the main, and clang'd about with mews.

Then, as we came, the crowd dividing clove
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.

‘ It was not thus, O Princess, in the old days :
You prized my counsel, lived upon my lips :
I led you then to all the Castalies ;
I fed you with the milk of every Muse ;
I loved 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 grieved—to slacken and to cool ;
Till taken with her seeming openness
You turn'd your warmer currents all to her,
You froze to me : this was my meed for all.
Yet I bore up in part from ancient love,

And partly that I hoped 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,
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 planed 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* endured,
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,
A lidless watcher of the public weal,
Last night, their mask was patent, and my foot
Was to you : but I thought again : I fear'd
To meet a cold ' We thank you, we shall hear of it
From Lady Psyche : ' you had gone to her,
She told, perforce ; and winning easy grace,
No doubt, for slight delay, remain'd among us
In our young nursery still unknown, the stem
Less grain than touchwood, while my honest heat
Were all miscounted as malignant haste
To push my rival out of place and power.
But public use required she should be known ;
And since my oath was ta'en for public use,
I broke the letter of it to keep the sense.
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 judg'd it best to speak ; but you had gone,
Ridden to the hills, she likewise : now, I thought,

That surely she will tell you ; 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 the merit of shame, she flies ;
And I remain on whom to wreak your rage,
I, that have lent my life to build up yours,
I that have wasted here health wealth and time
And talents, I—you know it—I will not boast :
Dismiss me, and I prophesy your plan,
Divorced from my experience, will be chaff
For every gust of chance, and men will say
We did not know the real light, but chased
The wisp that flickers where no foot can tread.'

She ceased : 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 changed : we assume it to ourselves.'

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. 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 daughter, one arm out,
Appealing to the bolts of Heaven ; and while
We gazed upon her came a little stir
About the doors, and on a sudden ran in
Among us, all out of breath, as pursued,
A woman-post in flying raiment. Fear
Stared in her eyes, and chalk'd her face, and wing'd
Her transit to the throne, whereby she fell
Delivering seal'd dispatches which the Head
Took half-amazed 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, and 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 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

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 :
 Deliver him up unscathed : give him your hand :
 Cleave to your contract : tho' indeed we hear
 You hold the woman is the better man ;
 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.

‡ O not to pry and peer on your reserve

But led by golden wishes and a hope
The child of regal compact, did I break
Your precinct ; not a scorner of your sex
But venerator, and willing 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,
Vague brightness ; when a boy, you stoop'd to me
From all high places, lived in all fair lights,
Came in long breezes rapt from the inmost south
And blown to the inmost north ; at eve and dawn
With Ida, Ida, Ida, rang the woods ;
The leader wildswan in among the stars
Would clang it and lapt in wreaths of glowworm light
The mellow breaker murmur'd Ida. Now,
Because I would have reach'd you, tho' you had been
Sphered up with Cassiopëia, or the enthroned
Persephone in Hades, now at length,

Those winters of abeyance all worn out,
A man I came to see you : but, indeed,
Not in this frequency can I lend full tongue,
O noble Ida, to those thoughts that wait
On you, their centre : let me say but this,
That many a famous man and woman, town
And landskip, have I heard of, after seen
The dwarfs of presage ; tho' when known, there grew
Another kind of beauty in detail
Made them worth knowing ; but in you I found
Mine old ideal involved and dazzled down
And master'd, while that after-beauty makes
Such head from act to act, from hour to hour,
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 ; who desire you more
Than growing boys their manhood ; dying lips,
With many thousand matters left to do,
The breath of life ; O 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 unauthorized
Behold your father's letter.'

On one knee

Kneeling, I gave it, which she caught, and dash'd
Unopen'd on the marble : 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 of half the maids
Gather'd together ; from the illumin'd hall
Long lanes of splendour 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,
And some they cared not ; till a clamour 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
Robed in the long night of her deep hair, so
To the open window moved, remaining there
Fixt like a beacon-tower above the waves
Of tempest, when the crimson-rolling eye
Glares ruin, and the wild sea-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 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 of our cause,
Die : yet I blame ye not so much for fear ;
Six thousand years of fear have made ye that
From which I would redeem ye : but for those
That stir this hubbub—you and you—I know
Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow morn
We meet to elect new tutors ; 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,
Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks 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,
For ever slaves at home and fools abroad.'

She, ending, waved her hands : thereat the crowd
Muttering, dissolved : then with a smile, that look'd
A stroke of cruel sunshine on the cliff
When all the glens are drown'd in azure gloom
Of thunder-shower, 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 have saved 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 the wholesome hive,
You would-be quenchers of the light to be,

Barbarians, grosser than your native bears—
O would I had his sceptre for one hour !
You that have dared to break our bound, and gull'd
Our tutors, wrong'd and lied and thwarted us—
I wed with thee ! *I* bound by precontract
Your bride, your bondslave ! 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 your face are loathsome to us :
I trample on your offers and on you :
Begone : we will not look upon you more.
Here, push them out at gates.'

In wrath she spake.

Then those eight mighty daughters of the plough
Bent their broad faces toward us and address'd
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 ; till upon my spirits
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy,
Which I shook off, for I was young, and one
To whom the shadow of all mischance but came
As night to him that sitting on a hill
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun,
Set into sunrise : then we moved away.

V.

Now scarce three paces measured from the mound
We stumbled on a stationary voice
And ‘ Stand, who goes ? ’ ‘ Two from the palace ’ I.
‘ The second two : 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, until 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
Dazed me half-blind : I stood and seem’d to hear,
As in a poplar grove when a light wind wakes
A lispings of the innumerable leaf and dies,

Each hissing in his neighbour's ear ; and then
A strangled titter, out of which outbrake
On all sides, clamouring etiquette to death
Unmeasured 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 heaved 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 ' You are free, O King !
We did but keep you surety for our son,
If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin, thou,
That tends her bristled grunners in the sludge :'
For I was drench'd with ooze, and torn with briers,
More crumpled than a poppy from the sheath,
And all one rag, disprinc'd from head to heel :
' But hence ' he said ' indue yourselves like men.
Your Cyril told us all '

As boys that slink

From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,
Away we stole, and transient in a trice
From what was left of faded woman-slough
To sheathing splendours and the golden scale
Of harness, issued 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 peace, whereon
Follow'd his tale. Amazed 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

A stone-shot off : we entered in, and there
Among piled arms and rough accoutrements,
Pitiful sight, wrapt in a soldier's cloak,

Like some sweet sculpture draped 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 moved,
 She moan'd, a folded voice ; and up she sat,
 And raised the cloak from brows as pale and smooth,
 As those that mourn half-shrouded over death
 In deathless marble. 'Her' she said 'my friend—

Parted from her—betray'd her cause and mine—
Where shall I breathe ? why kept ye not your faith ?
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 !
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—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 mother that I was to leave her there,
To lag behind, scared 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 for ever, 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 raced the scouts
With rumour of Prince Arac hard at hand.
We left her by the woman, and without

Found the gray kings at parle : and ' Look to it ' cried
 My father ' that our compact is performed :
 You have spoilt this girl ; she laughs at you and man :
 She shall not legislate for Nature, king,
 But yields, or war.'

Then Gama turn'd to me :
 ' We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy time
 With our strange child : 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,
 The smouldering homestead, and the household flower
 Torn from the lintel—all the common wrong—
 A smoke go up thro' which I loom to her
 Three times a monster : now she lightens scorn
 At the enemy of 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,
Like almost all the rest if men were wise,
By gentleness than war. I want her love.
What were I nigher this altho' we dash'd
Your cities into shards with catapults,
And dusted down your domes with mangonels ;
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 little chance
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,
Not to be molten out.'

And roughly spake

My father, ' Tut, you know them not, the girls :
They prize hard knocks and to be won by force.
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,
To trip a tigress with a gossamer,
Were wisdom to it.'

' 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 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,
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,
Glorifying clown and satyr ; whence they need
More breadth of culture : is not Ida right ?
They worth it ? truer to the law within ?
Severer in the logic of a life ?
Twice as magnetic to sweet influences
Of Earth and Heaven ? and she of whom you speak,
My mother, looks as whole 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,
Not like strong bursts of sample among men,
But all one piece : 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 easily 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 ourselves
In our sweet youth : we did not rate him then
This red-hot iron to be shaped 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—you used 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 robbed 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 : something may be done—
I know not what—and ours shall see us friends.
You, likewise, our late guests, if so you will,
Follow us : who knows ? we four may build some plan
Foursquare to opposition.'

Here he reach'd

White hands of farewell to my sire, who growl'd
An answer which, half-muffled in his beard,
Let so much out as gave us leave to go.

Then rode we with the old king across the lawns
Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of Spring
In every bole, a song on every spray
Of birds that piped their Valentines, and woke
Desire in me to infuse my tale of love
In the old king's ears, who promised help, and oozed
All o'er with honey'd answer as we rode ;
And blossom-fragrant slipt the heavy dews
Gather'd by night and peace, with each light air
On our mail'd heads : but other thoughts than Peace
Burnt in us, when we saw the embattled squares,
And squadrons of the Prince, trampling the flowers
With clamour : for among them rose a cry
As if to greet the king ; they made a halt ;
The horses yell'd ; they clash'd their arms ; the drum
Beat ; merrily-blowing shrill'd the martial fife ;
And in the blast and bray of the long horn
And serpent-throated bugle, undulated
The banner : anon to meet us lightly pranced
Three captains out ; nor ever had I seen

Such thews of men : the midmost and the highest
Was Arac : all about his motion clung
The shadow of his sister, as the beam
Of the East, that play'd upon them, made them glance
Like those three stars of the airy Giant's zone,
That glitter burnished by the frosty dark ;
And as the fiery Sirius alters hue,
And bickers into red and emerald, shone
Their morions, wash'd with morning, as they came.

And I that prated peace, when first I heard
War-music, felt the blind wildbeast of force
Whose home is in the sinews of a man
Stir in me as to strike : then took the king
His three broad sons ; with now a wandering hand
And now a pointed finger, told them all :
A common light of smiles at our disguise
Broke from their lips, and Arac turning said ;

‘ Our land invaded, life and soul ! himself

Your captive, yet my father wills not war :
But, Prince, the question of your troth remains ;
And there 's a downright honest meaning in her :
She ask'd but space and fairplay for her scheme ;
She prest and prest it on me ; life ! I felt
That she was half-right talking of her wrongs ;
And I 'll stand by her. Waive your claim, or else
Decide it here : why not ? we are three to three.'

I lagg'd in answer loth to strike her kin,
And 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 ' Three to three ?
But such a three to three were three to one.'
A boast that clench'd his purpose like a blow !
For fiery-short was Cyril's counter-scoff,
And sharp I answer'd, touch'd upon the sense
Where idle boys are cowards to their shame,
And tipt with sportive malice to and fro

Like pointed arrows leapt the taunts and hit.

Then spake the third ' But three to three ? no more ?

No more, and in our noble sister's cause ?

More, more, for honour : every captain waits

Hungry for honour, angry for his king,

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 ' answered I ' for this wild wreath of air,

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest

Foam of men's deeds—this honour, if ye will,

It needs must be for honour if at all :

Since, what decision ? if we fail, we fail,

And if we win, we fail : she would not keep

Her compact.' ' We will send to her ' Arac said,

' A score of 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 ; 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 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 plough
Came sallying thro’ the gates, and caught his hair,
And so belabour’d him on rib and cheek
They made him wild : not less one glance he caught
Thro’ the open doors of Ida station’d there
Unshaken, clinging to her purpose, firm
Tho’ compass’d by two armies and the noise
Of arms ; and standing like a stately Pine
Set in a cataract on an island-crag,

When storm is on the heights, and right and left
Suck'd from the dark heart of the long hills roll
The torrents, dash'd to the vale : and yet her will
Bred will in me to overcome it or fall.

But when I told the king that I was pledged
To fight in tourney for my bride, he clash'd
His iron palms together with a cry ;
Himself would tilt it out among the lads :
But overborne by all his bearded lords
With reasons drawn from age and state, perforce
He yielded, wroth and red, with fierce demur :
And many a bold knight started up in heat,
And sware to combat for my claim till death.

All on this side the palace ran the field
Flat to the garden-wall : and likewise here,
Above the garden's glowing blossom-belts,
A column'd entry shone and marble stairs,
And great bronze valves, emboss'd with Tomyris

And what she did to Cyrus after fight,
But now fast barr'd : so here upon the flat
All that long morn the lists were hammer'd up,
And all that morn the heralds to and fro,
With message and defiance went and came ;
Last, Ida's answer, in a royal hand,
But shaken here and there, and rolling words
Oration-like. I kiss'd it and I read.

‘ You have known, O brother, all the pangs we felt,
What heats of moral anger when we heard
Of those that iron-cramp'd their women's feet ;
Of lands in which at the altar the poor bride
Gives her harsh groom for bridal-gift a scourge ;
Of living hearts that crack within the fire
Where smoulder their dead despots ; and of those,—
Mothers,—that, all prophetic pity, fling
Their pretty maids in the running flood, and swoops
The vulture, beak and talon, at the heart
Made for all noble motion : and I saw

That it was little better in better times
With smoother men : the old leaven leaven'd all :
Millions of throats would bawl for civil rights,
No woman named : therefore I set my face
Against all men and lived but for mine own.
Far off from men we built a fold for them :
We stored it full of rich memorial :
We fenced it round with gallant institutes,
And biting laws to scare the beasts of prey,
And prosper'd ; till a set of saucy boys
Brake on us at our books, and marr'd our peace,
Mask'd like our maids, blustering we know not what
Of insolence and love, some pretext held
Of old affiance, invalid, since our will
Seal'd not the bond—the striplings !—for their sport !—
We have tamed our leopards : shall we not tame these ?
Or you ? or we ? for since you think we are touch'd
In honour—nay, we would not aught of false—
Is not our cause pure ? and whereas we know
Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's blood

You draw from, fight ; we abide what end soe'er,
You failing : but we know you will not. Still
You must not slay him : he risk'd his life for ours,
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 armour hallow'd, and your statues
Rear'd, sung to, when this gad-fly brush'd aside,
We plant a solid foot into the Time,
And mould a generation strong to move
With claim on claim from right to right, till she
The woman-phantom, she that seem'd no more
Than the man's shadow in a glass, her name
Yoked in his mouth with children's, know herself,
And knowledge liberate her, nor only here,
But 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

Since our arms fail'd—this Egypt-plague of men !

Almost our maids were better at their homes,

Than thus man-girdled here : indeed we 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.

We took it for an hour this morning to us,

In our own bed : the tender orphan hands

Felt at our heart, and seem'd to charm from thence

The wrath we nursed against the world : farewell.'

I ceased ; he said : ' Stubborn, but she may sit

Upon a king's right hand in thunder-storms

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 to it : the gray mare
Is ill to live with, when her whinny shrills
From tile to scullery, and her small goodman
Shrinks in his arm-chair while the fires of Hell
Mix with his hearth : but take and break her, you !
She 's yet a colt. Well groom'd and strongly curb'd
She might not rank with those detestable
That to the hireling leave their babe, and brawl
Their rights or wrongs like potherbs in the street.
They say she's comely ; there 's the fairer chance :

I like her none the less for rating at her !
Besides, the woman wed is not as we,
But suffers change of frame. A lusty brace
Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy,
The bearing and the training of a child
Is woman's wisdom.'

Thus the hard old king :

I took my leave : it was the point of noon :
The lists were ready. Empanoplied and plumed
We enter'd in, and waited, fifty there
To fifty, till the terrible trumpet blared
At the barrier—yet a moment, and once more
The trumpet, and again : at which the storm
Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of spears
And riders front to front, until they closed
In the middle with the crash of shivering points,
And thunder. On his haunches rose the steed,
And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,
And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.

Part sat like rocks : part reel'd but kept their seats :
Part roll'd on the earth and rose again and drew :
Part stumbled mixt with floundering horses. Down
From those two bulks at Arac's side, and down
From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,
The large blows rain'd, as here and everywhere
He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing lists,
And all the plain, brand, mace, and shaft, and shield
Shock'd, like an iron-clanging anvil bang'd
With hammers ; till I thought, can this be he
From Gama's dwarfish loins ? if this be so,
The mother makes us most—and thinking thus
I glanced to the left, and saw the palace-front
Alive with fluttering scarfs and ladies' eyes,
And highest among the statues, statuelike,
Between a cymbal'd Miriam and a Jael,
With Psyche's babe, was Ida watching us,
A single band of gold about her hair,
Like a Saint's glory up in heaven : but she
No saint—inexorable—no tenderness—

Too hard, too cruel : yet she sees me fight,
Yea, let her see me die. With that I drave
Among the thickest, and bore down a Prince,
And Cyril, one ; but that large-moulded man
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,
Flaying off the roofs and sucking up the drains,
And shadowing down the champain till it strikes
On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and cracks, and splits,
And twists the grain with such a roar that the Earth
Reels and the herdsmen cry, for everything
Gave way before him : only Florian, he
That loved 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 colour round his helmet, tough,
Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at arms ;
But tougher, suppler, stronger, he that smote
And threw him : last I spurred ; 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 glanced ;
I did but shear a feather, and life and love
Flow'd from me ; darkness closed me ; and I fell.

VI.

WHAT follow'd, tho' I saw not, yet I heard
So often that I speak as having seen.

For when our side was vanquished and my cause
For ever lost, there went up a great cry
The Prince is slain. My father heard and ran
In on the lists, and there unlaced my casque
And grovell'd on my body, and after him
Came Psyche, sorrowing for Aglæia.

But high upon the palace Ida stood
With Psyche's babe in arm : there on the roofs
Like that great dame of Lapidoth she sang.

' Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : the seed

The little seed they laugh'd at in the dark,
Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk
Of spanless girth, that lays on every side
A thousand arms and rushes to the Sun.

‘ Our enemies have fall’n, have fall’n : they came ;
The leaves were wet with women’s tears : they heard
A noise of songs they would not understand.
They mark’d it with the red cross to the fall,
And would have strown it, and are fall’n themselves.

‘ Our enemies have fall’n, have fall’n : they came,
The woodmen with their axes : lo the tree !
But we will make it faggots for the hearth,
And shape it plank and beam for roof and floor,
And boats and bridges for the use of men.

‘ Our enemies have fall’n, have fall’n : they struck ;
With their own blows they hurt themselves, nor knew
There dwelt an iron nature in the grain :

The glittering axe was broken in their arms,
Their arms were shatter'd to the shoulder blade.

‘ Our enemies have fall’n, but this shall grow
A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth
Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power; and roll’d
With music in the Æonian breeze of Time,
The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs
Shall move the stony bases of the world.

‘ And now, O maids, behold our sanctuary
Is violate, our laws broken: fear we not
To break them more in their behoof, whose arms
Champion’d our cause and won it with a day
Blanch’d in our annals, and perpetual feast,
When dames and heroines of the golden year
Shall strip a hundred hollows bare of Spring,
To rain an April of ovation round
Their statues, borne aloft, the three: but come,
We will be liberal, since our rights are won.

Let them not lie in the tents with coarse mankind,
Ill nurses ; but descend, and proffer these
The brethren of our blood and cause, that there
Lie bruised and maim'd, the tender ministries
Of female hands and hospitality.'

She spoke, and with the babe yet in her arms,
Descending, burst the great bronze valves, and led
A hundred maids in train across the Park.
Some cowl'd, and some bare-headed, on they came,
Their feet in flowers, her loveliest : by them went
The enamour'd air sighing, and on their curls
From the high tree the blossom wavering fell,
And over them the tremulous isles of light
Slided, they moving under shade : but Blanche
At distance follow'd : so they came : anon
Thro' the open field into the lists they wound
Timorously ; and as the leader of the herd
That holds a stately fretwork to the Sun,
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 nursed by those for whom you fought, and served
With female hands and hospitality.'

Then, whether moved 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
Tortured her mouth and o'er her forehead past

A shadow, and all her hue changed, and she said :
‘ He saved 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,
And held them up : she saw them, and a day
Rose from the distance on her memory,
When the good Queen, her mother, shore 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, and the bitter close of all,
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 of thanks, that makes
Our progress falter to the woman’s goal.’

She said : but at the happy word ' he lives '
My father stoop'd, re-father'd 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,
Lay like a new-fall'n meteor on the grass,
Uncared for, spied its mother and began
A blind and babbling laughter, and to dance
Its body, and reach its fatling innocent arms
And lazy lingering fingers. She the appeal
Brook'd not, but clamouring out ' Mine—mine—not yours,
It is not yours, but mine : give me the child '
Ceased all on tremble : piteous was the cry :
So stood the unhappy mother open-mouthed,
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,
And down dead-heavy sank her curls, and half

The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst
The laces toward her babe ; but she nor cared
Nor knew it, clamouring 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 Cyril, who lay
Bruised, where he fell, not far off, much in pain,
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-involved ; 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.
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
Break from a darken'd future, crown'd with fire,
And tread you out for ever : but howsoe'er
Fix'd in yourself, never in your own arms
To hold your own, deny not her's to her,
Give her the child ! O if, I say, you keep
One pulse that beats true woman, if you loved
The breast that fed or the arm that dandled you,
Or own one part of sense not flint to prayer,
Give her the child ! or if you scorn to lay it,
Yourself, in hands so lately claspt with yours,
Or speak to her, your dearest, her one fault
The tenderness, not yours, that could not kill,

Give *me* it, and 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, 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 embraced in mine, to think
I might be something to thee, when I felt
Thy waxen warmth about my milkless breast
In the dead prime : 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
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 embrace it, with an eye that swum in thanks,
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
For ever : 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 forgiven.’

But Ida spoke not, rapt upon the child.
Then Arac. ‘ Soul and life ! you blame the man ;
You wrong yourselves—the woman is so hard
Upon the woman. Come, a grace to me !
I am your brother ; I advise you well :

I am your warrior ; I and mine have fought
Your battle : kiss her ; take her hand, she weeps ;
Life ! 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 moved beyond his custom, Gama said :

' I've heard that there is iron in the blood,
And I believe it. Not one word ? not one ?
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, and all the good knights maim'd

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, 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
Have fretted all to dust and bitterness.'
So said the small king moved 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 :
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 reconciliation sure
With one that cannot keep her mind an hour:
Come to the hollow 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,
Dear traitor too much loved, why?—why?—Yet see
Before these kings 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 ; we will scatter all our maids
 Till happier times each to her proper 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
 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
And had a cousin tumbled 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.'
'Ay so ?' said Blanche : 'I am all amaze 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.

'What! in our time of glory when the cause
Now stands up, first, a trophied pillar—now

So clipt, so stinted in our triumph—barr'd
Ev'n from our free heart-thanks, and every way
Thwarted and vext, and lastly catechised
By our own creature ! one that made our laws !
Our great she-Solon ! her that built the nest
To hatch the cuckoo ! whom we call'd our friend !
But we will crush the lie that glances at us
As cloaking in the larger charities
Some baby predilection : all amazed !
We must amaze this legislator more.
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 from his base
Had left us rock. She fain would sting us too,
But shall not. Pass, and mingle with your likes.
Go, help the half-brain'd dwarf, Society,
To find low motives unto noble deeds,

To fix all doubt upon the darker side ;
Go, fitter thou for narrowest neighbourhoods,
Old talker, haunt where gossip breeds and seethes
And festers in provincial sloth : and, you,
That think we sought to practise on a life
Risk'd for our own and trusted to our hands,
What say you, Sir ? you hear us : deem ye not
'Tis all too like that even now we scheme,
In one broad death confounding friend and foe,
To drug them all ? revolve it : you are man,
And therefore no doubt wise ; but after this
We brook no further insult, but are gone.'

She turn'd ; the very nape of her white neck
Was rosed 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
Groaning, and in the Vestal entry shriek'd
The virgin marble under iron heels :
And they moved on 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
Close by her, like supporters on a shield
Bow-back'd with fear : but in the centre stood
The common men with rolling eyes ; amazed
They glared upon the women, and aghast
The women stared at these, all silent, save
When armour clash'd or jingled while the day,
Descending, struck athwart the hall and shot
A flying splendour out of brass and steel,
That o'er the statues leapt from head to head,
Now fired an angry Pallas on the helm,
Now set a wrathful Dian's 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

To languid limbs and sickness ; left me in it ;

And others elsewhere 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 changed.

VII.

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

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 to the roofs, and gazed alone for hours
On that disastrous leaguer, swarms of men
Darkening her female field : void was her use ;
And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main, 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,
And suck the blinding splendour from the sand,
And quenching lake by lake and tarn by tarn
Expunge the world : so fared 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.

And twilight dawn'd ; and morn by morn the lark
Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres, 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
Lay sunder'd from the moving Universe,
Nor knew what eye was on me nor the hand
That nursed 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-favour : here and there the small bright head,
A light of healing, glanced about the couch,
Or thro' the parted silks 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
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 though he built on what she said of the child ;
Nor tho' she liked him, would she yield, 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
Assumed from thence a half-consent involved
In stillness, 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.

Nor did her father cease to press my claim,
Nor did mine own now reconciled ; nor yet
Did those twin brothers, risen again and whole ;
Nor Arac, satiate 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 believed that I should die :
Till out of long frustration of her care,
And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,
And watches in the dead, the dark, when clocks
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 up
Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
Love, 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 colour 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. Titanic shapes, they cramm'd

The forum, and half-crush'd among the rest
A little Cato cower'd. On the other side
Hortensia spoke against the tax ; behind,
A train of dames : by axe and eagle sat,
With all their foreheads drawn in Roman scowls,
And half the wolf's-milk curdled in their veins,
The fierce triumvirs ; and before them paused
Hortensia, pleading : angry was her face.

I saw the forms : I knew not where I was :
Sad phantoms conjured out of circumstance,
Ghosts of the fading brain, they seem'd ; nor more
Sweet Ida : palm to palm she sat : the dew
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape
And rounder show'd : I moved : 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 fulfil 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,
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 paused ;
She stoop'd ; and with a great shock of the heart
Our mouths met : out of languor leapt a cry,
Crown'd Passion from the brinks of death, and up
Along the shuddering senses struck the soul,
And closed on fire 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 slipt from her like a robe,
And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
Than in her mould that other, 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 glanced 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 fire-fly wakens : waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
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 splendour of the hills?
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blâsted 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,
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 :
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.'

So she low-toned ; while with shut eyes I lay
Listening ; then look'd. Pale was the perfect face ;
The bosom with long sighs labour'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 labour was but as a block
Left in the quarry ; but she still were loth,

She still were loth 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.
And she had nursed 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.'

Her voice

Choked, and her forehead sank upon her hands,
And her great heart thro' all the faultful Past
Went sorrowing in a pause I dared 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 moved, 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 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 in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow ? We two will serve them both
In aiding her, strip off, as in us lies,
(Our place is much) the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—

Will leave her field to burgeon and to bloom
From all within her, make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelop't man
 ut diverse : could we make her as the man,
Sweet love were slain, whose 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 :
More as the double-natured Poet each :
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,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,

Distinct in individualities,

But like each other ev'n as those who love.

Then comes the statelier Eden back to men :

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 them now

In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest

Of equal ; seeing either sex alone

Is half itself, and in true marriage lies

Nor equal, nor unequal : each fulfils

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,
Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world
I loved the woman : 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 loved 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
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 moved
And girdled her with music. 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, 'so unlike, so all unlike—

It seems you love to cheat yourself with words :

This mother is your model. Never, Prince ;

You cannot love me.'

'Nay but thee' I said

'From yearlong poring on thy pictured eyes,

Or some mysterious or magnetic touch,

Ere seen I loved, and loved thee seen, and saw

Thee woman thro' the crust of iron moods

That mask'd thee from men's reverence up, and forced

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

Lived over : lift thine eyes ; doubt me no more ;

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 ;

In that fine air I tremble, all the past
Melts mist-like into this bright hour, and this
I scarce believe, and all the rich to come
Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels
Athwart the smoke of burning flowers. Forgive me,
I waste my heart in signs : let be. My bride,
My wife, my life. O we will walk this world,
Yoked 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.'

CONCLUSION.

HERE closed our compound story which at first
Had only meant to banter little maids
With mock-heroics and with parody :
But slipt in some strange way, crost with burlesque,
From mock to earnest, even into tones
Of tragic, and with less and less of jest
To such a serious end that Lilia fixt
A showery glance upon her Aunt and said
' You—tell us what we are ; ' who there began
A treatise, growing with it, and might have flow'd
In axiom worthier to be grav'n on rock,
Than all that lasts of old-world hieroglyph,
Or lichen-fretted Rune and arrowhead ;

But that there rose a shout : the gates were closed
At sundown, and the crowd were swarming now,
To take their leave, about the garden rails.
And I and some went out, and mingled with them.
And there we saw Sir Walter where he stood,
Before a tower of crimson holly-oaks,
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,
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 closed
Welcome, farewell, and welcome for the year
To follow : a shout arose again, and made

The long line of the approaching rookery swerve
From the elms, and shook the branches of the deer
From slope to slope thro' distant ferns, and rang
Beyond the bourn of sunset ; O, a shout
More joyful than the city-roar that hails
Premier or king ! Why don't these acred Sirs
Throw up their parks some dozen times a year
And let the people breathe ? So thrice they cried,
I likewise, and in groups they stream'd away.

But we went back to the Abbey, and sat on,
So much the gathering darkness charm'd : we sat
Saying little, 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 without sound,
Disrobed the glimmering statue of Sir Ralph
From those rich silks, and home well-pleased we went.

THE END.

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