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The People's Edition

The Princess

A Medley

I

G. L.

The
Poetical Works
of
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

The Princess
A Medley
I

London
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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,
Five others : we were seven at Vivian-place.

And me that morning Walter show'd the house,
Greek, set with busts : from vases in the hall
Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than their names,
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.

'O miracle of women,' said the book,
'O noble heart who, being strait-besieged
By this wild king to force her to his wish,

Nor bent, nor broke, nor shunn'd a soldier's death,
But now when all was lost or seem'd as lost—
Her stature more than mortal in the burst
Of sunrise, her arm lifted, eyes on fire—
Brake with a blast of trumpets from the gate,
And, falling on them like a thunderbolt,
She trampled some beneath her horses' heels,
And some were whelm'd with missiles of the wall,
And some were push'd with lances from the rock,
And part were drown'd within the whirling brook :
O miracle of noble womanhood !'

So sang the gallant glorious chronicle ;
And, I all rapt in this, 'Come out,' he said,
'To the Abbey : there is Aunt Elizabeth
And sister Lilia with the rest.' We went
(I kept the book and had my finger in it)
Down thro' the park : strange was the sight to me ;
For all the sloping pasture murmur'd, sown
With happy faces and with holiday.
There 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
Went hand in hand with Science ; 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 lady friends
From neighbour seats : and there was Ralph himself,
A broken statue propt against the wall,
As gay as any. Lilia, wild with sport,
Half child half woman as she was, had wound
A scarf of orange round the stony helm,
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 squeezed 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
Veneer'd with sanctimonious theory.

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

Quick answer'd Lilia ' There are thousands now
Such women, but convention beats them down ;
It is but bringing up ; no more than that :
You men have done it : how I hate you all !
Ah, were I something great ! I wish I were
Some mighty poetess, I would shame you then,
That love to keep us children ! O I wish

That I were some great princess, I would build
Far off from men a college like a man's,
And I would teach them all that men are taught ;
We are twice as quick ! ' And here she shook aside
The hand that play'd the patron with her curls.

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

Were out of season : never man, I think,
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.'

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

A half-disdain
Perch'd on the pouted blossom of her lips :
And Walter nodded at me ; ' *He* began,
The rest would follow, each in turn ; and so
We forged a sevenfold story. Kind ? what kind ?
Chimeras, crotchets, Christmas solecisms,
Seven-headed monsters only made to kill
Time by the fire in winter.'

‘ Kill him now,
The tyrant ! kill him in the summer too,’
Said Lilia ; ‘ Why not now ? ’ the maiden Aunt.
‘ Why not a summer’s as a winter’s tale ?
A tale for summer as befits the time,
And something it should be to suit the place,
Heroic, for a hero lies beneath,
Grave, solemn ! ’

Walter warp’d his mouth at this
To something so mock-solemn, that I laugh’d
And Lilia woke with sudden-shrilling mirth
An echo like a ghostly woodpecker,
Hid in the ruins ; till the maiden Aunt
(A little sense of wrong had touch’d her face
With colour) turn’d to me with ‘ As you will ;
Heroic if you will, or what you will,
Or be yourself your hero if you will.’

‘ Take Lilia, then, for heroine ’ clamour’d he,
‘ And make her some great Princess, six feet high,
Grand, epic, homicidal ; and be you
The Prince to win her ! ’

‘ Then follow me, the Prince,’
I answer’d, ‘ each be hero in his turn !
Seven and yet one, like shadows in a dream.—

Heroic seems our Princess as required—
But something made to suit with Time and place,
A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudál knight in silken masquerade,
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experiments
For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt them all—
This *were* a medley ! we should have him back
Who told the "Winter's tale" to do it for us.
No matter : we will say whatever comes.
And let the ladies sing us, if they will,
From time to time, some ballad or a song
To give us breathing-space.'

So I began,
And the rest follow'd : and the women sang
Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind :
And here I give the story and the songs.

I

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

There lived an ancient legend in our house.
Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt
Because he cast no shadow, had foretold,
Dying, that none of all our blood should know
The shadow from the substance, and that one
Should come to fight with shadows and to fall.
For so, my mother said, the story ran.
And, truly, waking dreams were, more or less,
An old and strange affection of the house.
Myself too had weird seizures, Heaven knows what :
On a sudden in the midst of men and day,
And while I walk'd and talk'd as heretofore,
I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts,
And feel myself the shadow of a dream.
Our great court-Galen poised his guilt-head cane,
And paw'd his beard, and mutter'd 'catalepsy.'
My mother pitying made a thousand prayers ;
My mother was as mild as any saint,
Half-canonized by all that look'd on her,
So gracious was her tact and tenderness :
But my good father thought a king a king ;
He cared not for the affection of the house ;
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, youths 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,
And almost my half-self, for still we moved
Together, twinn'd as horse's ear and eye.

Now, while they spake, I saw my father's face
Grow long and troubled like a rising moon,
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.'
And Cyril whisper'd : 'Take me with you too.'
Then laughing 'what, if these weird seizures come
Upon you in those lands, and no one near
To point you out the shadow from the truth !
Take me : I'll serve you better in a strait ;
I grate on rusty hinges here :' but 'No !'
Roar'd the rough king, 'you shall not ; we ourself
Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead
In iron gauntlets : break the council up.'

But when the council broke, I rose and past
Thro' the wild woods that hung about the town ;
Found a still place, and pluck'd her likeness out ;
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,
Cat-footed thro' the town and half in dread
To hear my father's clamour at our backs
With Ho ! from some bay-window shake the night ;
But all was quiet : from the bastion'd walls
Like threaded spiders, one by one, we dropt,
And flying reach'd the frontier : then we crost
To a livelier land ; and so by tilth and grange,
And vines, 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,
But bland the smile that like a wrinkling wind
On glassy water drove his cheek in lines ;
A little dry old man, without a star,
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 : knowledge, so my daughter held,
Was all in all : they had but been, she thought,
As children ; they must lose the child, assume
The woman : then, Sir, awful odes she wrote,
Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,
But all she is and does is awful ; odes
About this losing of the child ; and rhymes
And dismal lyrics, prophesying change
Beyond all reason : these the women sang ;
And they that know such things—I sought but peace ;
No critic I—would call them masterpieces :
They master'd *me*. At last she begg'd a boon,

A certain summer-palace which I have
Hard by your father's frontier : I said no,
Yet being an easy man, gave it : and there,
All wild to found an University
For maidens, on the spur she fled ; and more
We know not,—only this : they see no men,
Not 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)
Went forth again with both my friends. We rode
Many a long league back to the North. At last
From hills, that look'd across a land of hope,
We dropt with evening on a rustic town
Set in a gleaming river's crescent-curve,

Close at the boundary of the liberties ;
There, enter'd an old 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.
She once had past that way ; he heard her speak ;
She scared him ; life ! he never saw the like ;
She look'd as grand as doomsday and as grave :
And he, 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 ;
He brought it, and himself, a sight to shake
The midriff of despair with laughter, help
To lace us up, till, each, in maiden plumes
We rustled : him we gave a costly bribe
To guerdon silence, mounted our good steeds,
And boldly ventured on the liberties.

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

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 entry : riding in, we call'd ;
A plump-arm'd Ostleress and a stable wench
Came running at the call, and help'd us down.
Then stept a buxom hostess forth, and sail'd,
Full-blown, before us into rooms which gave
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.' 'Hers are we,'
One voice, we cried ; and I sat down and wrote,
In such a hand as when a field of corn
Bows all its ears before the roaring East ;

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

This I seal'd :

The seal was Cupid bent above a scroll,
And o'er his head Uranian Venus hung,

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

II

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

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 use and glory to 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 :’ she replied :
‘We scarcely thought in our own hall to hear
This barren verbiage, current among men,
Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.
Your flight from out your bookless wilds would seem
As arguing love of knowledge and of power ;
Your language proves you still the child. Indeed,
We dream not of him : when we set our hand
To this great work, we purposed with ourself
Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
The tricks, which make us toys of men, that so,
Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may with those self-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. Dwell with these, and lose
Convention, since to look on noble forms
Makes noble thro' the sensuous organism
That which is higher. O lift your natures up :
Embrace our aims : work out your freedom. Girls,
Knowledge is now no more a fountain seal'd :
Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,

The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite
And slander, die. Better not be at all
Than not be noble. Leave us : you may go :
To-day the Lady Psyche will harangue
The fresh arrivals of the week before ;
For they press in from all the provinces,
And fill the hive.'

She spoke, and bowing 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 Kaffir, 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, last not least, she who had left her place,

And bow'd her state to them, that they might grow
To use and power on this Oasis, lapt
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 the slacken'd sail flaps, all her voice
Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she cried
' My brother ! ' ' Well, my sister.' ' O,' she said,
' What do you here ? and in this dress ? and these ?

Why who are these ? a wolf within the fold !
A pack of wolves ! the Lord be gracious to me !
A plot, a plot, a plot, to ruin all !'
' No plot, no plot,' he answer'd. ' Wretched boy,
How saw you not the inscription on the gate,
LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF DEATH ?'
' And if I had,' he answer'd, ' who could think
The softer Adams of your Academe,
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 ! my vow
Binds me to speak, and O that iron will,
That 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,
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:
'I knew you at the first: tho' you have grown
You scarce have alter'd: I am sad and glad
To see you, Florian. I give thee to death
My brother! it was duty spoke, not I.
My needful seeming harshness, pardon it.
Our mother, is she well?'

With that she kiss'd
His forehead, then, a moment after, clung

About him, and betwixt them blossom'd up
From out a common vein of memory
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,
And far allusion, till the gracious dew
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 seen to wave and float
In crystal currents of clear morning seas.

So stood that same fair creature at the door.
Then Lady Psyche, 'Ah—Melissa—you !
You heard us ?' and Melissa, 'O pardon me
I heard, I could not help it, did not wish :
But, dearest Lady, pray you fear me not,
Nor think I bear that heart within my breast,
To give three gallant gentlemen to death.'
'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 still may lead
The new light up, and culminate in peace,
For Solomon may come to Sheba yet.'
Said Cyril, 'Madam, he the wisest man
Feasted the woman wisest then, in halls
Of Lebanonian cedar : nor should you
(Tho', Madam, *you* should answer, *we* would ask)
Less welcome find among us, if you came
Among us, debtors for our lives to you,
Myself for something more.' He said not what,
But 'Thanks,' she answer'd 'Go : we have been too
long
Together : keep your hoods about the face ;
They do so that affect abstraction here.

Speak little ; mix not with the rest ; and hold
Your promise : all, I trust, may yet be well.'

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
For half the day thro' stately theatres
Bench'd crescent-wise. 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 ? do I chase
The substance or the shadow ? will it hold ?
I have no sorcerer's malison on me,
No ghostly hauntings like his Highness. I
Flatter myself that always everywhere
I know the substance when I see it. Well,
Are castles shadows ? Three of them ? Is she
The sweet proprietress a shadow ? If not,
Shall those three castles patch my tatter'd coat ?
For dear are those three castles to my wants,
And dear is sister Psyche to my heart,
And two dear things are one of double worth,
And much I might have said, but that my zone
Unmann'd me : then the Doctors ! O to hear
The Doctors ! O to watch the thirsty plants
Imbibing ! once or twice I thought to roar,
To break my chain, to shake my mane : but thou,
Modulate me, Soul of mincing mimicry !
Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my throat ;
Abase those eyes that ever 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 on her, who rapt in glorious dreams,
The second-sight of some Astræan age,
Sat compass'd with professors : they, the while,
Discuss'd a doubt and tost it to and fro :
A clamour thicken'd, mixt with inmost terms
Of art and science : Lady Blanche alone
Of faded form and haughtiest lineaments,
With all her autumn tresses falsely brown,
Shot sidelong daggers at us, a tiger-cat
In act to spring.

At last a solemn grace
Concluded, and we sought the gardens : there
One walk'd reciting by herself, and one
In this hand held a volume as to read,
And 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 : but we three
Sat muffled like the Fates ; and often came
Melissa hitting all we saw with shafts
Of gentle satire, kin to charity,
That harm'd not : then day droopt ; the chapel bells
Call'd us : we left the walks ; we mixt with those
Six hundred maidens clad in purest white,
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

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

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

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.

There 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 grief, 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 when I ask'd her 'how,'
'My fault' she wept 'my fault ! and yet not mine ;
Yet mine in part. O hear me, pardon me.
My mother, 'tis her wont from night to night
To rail at Lady Psyche and her side.
She says the Princess should have been the Head,
Herself and Lady Psyche the two arms ;
And so it was agreed when first they came ;
But Lady Psyche was the right hand now,
And she the left, or not, or seldom used ;
Hers more than half the students, all the love.
And so last night she fell to canvass you :
Her countrywomen ! she did not envy her.
" Who ever saw such wild barbarians ?
Girls ?—more like men ! " and at these words the
snake,
My secret, seem'd to stir within my breast ;
And oh, Sirs, could I help it, but my cheek
Began to burn and burn, and her lynx eye
To fix and make me hotter, till she laugh'd :

“ O marvellously modest maiden, you !
Men ! girls, like men ! why, if they had been men
You need not set your thoughts in rubric thus
For wholesale comment.” Pardon, I am shamed
That I must needs repeat for my excuse
What looks so little graceful : “ men ” (for still
My mother went revolving on the word)
“ And so they are,—very like men indeed—
And with that woman closeted for hours ! ”
Then came these dreadful words out one by one,
“ Why—these—*are*—men : ” I shudder'd : “ and you
know it.”
“ O ask me nothing,” I said : “ And she knows too,
And she conceals it.” So my mother clutch'd
The truth at once, but with no word from me ;
And now thus early risen she goes to inform
The Princess : Lady Psyche will be crush'd ;
But you may yet be 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 help her) she was wedded to a fool ;
And still she rail'd against the state of things.
She had the care of Lady Ida's youth,
And from the Queen's decease she brought her up.
But when your sister came she won the heart
Of Ida : they were still together, grew
(For so they said themselves) inosculated ;
Consonant chords that shiver to one note ;
One mind in all things : yet my mother still
Affirms your Psyche thieved her theories,
And angled with them for her pupil's love :
She calls her plagiarist ; I know not what :

But I must go : I dare not tarry,' and light,
As flies the shadow of a bird, she fled.

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

' The crane,' I said, ' may chatter of the crane,
The dove may murmur of the dove, but I
An eagle clang an eagle to the sphere.
My princess, O my princess ! true she errs,
But in her own grand way : being herself
Three times more noble than three score of men,
She sees herself in every woman else,
And so she wears her error like a crown
To blind the truth and me : for her, and her,
Hebes are they 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 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 :
' No fighting shadows here ! I forced a way
Thro' solid opposition crabb'd and gnarl'd.
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, enter'd ; found her there
At point to move, and settled in her eyes
The green malignant light of coming storm.
Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-oil'd,
As man's could be ; yet maiden-meek I pray'd
Concealment : she demanded who we were,
And why we came ? I fabled nothing fair,
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. True—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
Some palace in our 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.
'That 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 furrowy forks
Beyond the thick-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 ;
I gazed. On a sudden my strange seizure came
Upon me, the weird vision of our house :
The Princess Ida seem'd a hollow show,
Her gay-furr'd cats a painted fantasy,
Her college and her maidens, empty masks,
And I myself the shadow of a dream,

For all things were and were not. Yet I felt
My heart beat thick with passion and with awe ;
Then from my breast the involuntary sigh
Brake, as she smote me with the light of eyes
That lent my knee desire to kneel, and shook
My pulses, till to horse we got, and so
Went forth in long retinue following up
The river as it narrow'd to the hills.

I rode beside her and to me she said :
'O friend, we trust that you esteem'd us not
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 exercise?
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl,
Methinks he seems no better than a girl;
As girls were once, as we ourself have been:
We had our dreams; perhaps he mixt with them:
We touch on our dead self, nor shun to do it,
Being other—since we learnt our meaning here,
To lift the woman's fall'n divinity
Upon an even pedestel 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 ourself 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 preëminence of man!

You grant me license ; might I use it ? think ;
Ere half be done perchance your life may fail ;
Then comes the feebler heiress of your plan,
And takes and ruins all ; and thus your pains
May only make that footprint upon sand
Which old-recurring waves of prejudice
Resmooth to nothing : might I dread that you,
With only Fame for spouse and your great deeds
For issue, yet may live in vain, and miss,
Meanwhile, what every woman counts her due,
Love, children, happiness ?'

And she exclaim'd,
'Peace, you young savage of the Northern wild !
What ! tho' your Prince's love were like a God's,
Have we not made ourself the sacrifice ?
You are bold indeed : we are not talk'd to thus :
Yet will we say for children, would they grew
Like field-flowers everywhere ! we like them well :
But children die ; and let me tell you, girl,
Howe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die ;
They with the sun and moon renew their light
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, tho' she herself effect
But little : wherefore up and act, nor shrink
For fear our solid aim be dissipated
By frail successors. Would, indeed, we had been,
In lieu of many mortal flies, a race
Of giants living, each, a thousand years,
That we might see our own work out, and watch
The sandy footprint harden into stone.'

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

'No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you ;
We are used to that : for women, up till this
Cramp'd under worse than South-sea-isle taboo,
Dwarfs of the gynæceum, 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 sisters' 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 brooch : 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 ourself, foreseeing casualty,
Nor willing men should come among us, learnt,
For many weary moons before we came,
This craft of healing. Were you sick, ourself
Would tend upon you. To your question now,
Which touches on the workman and his work.
Let there be light and there was light : '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 league beyond,
And, o'er a bridge of pinewood crossing, came
On flowery levels underneath the crag,
Full of all beauty. 'O how sweet' I said
(For I was half-oblivious of my mask)
'To linger here with one that 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, with Melissa Florian, 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.

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