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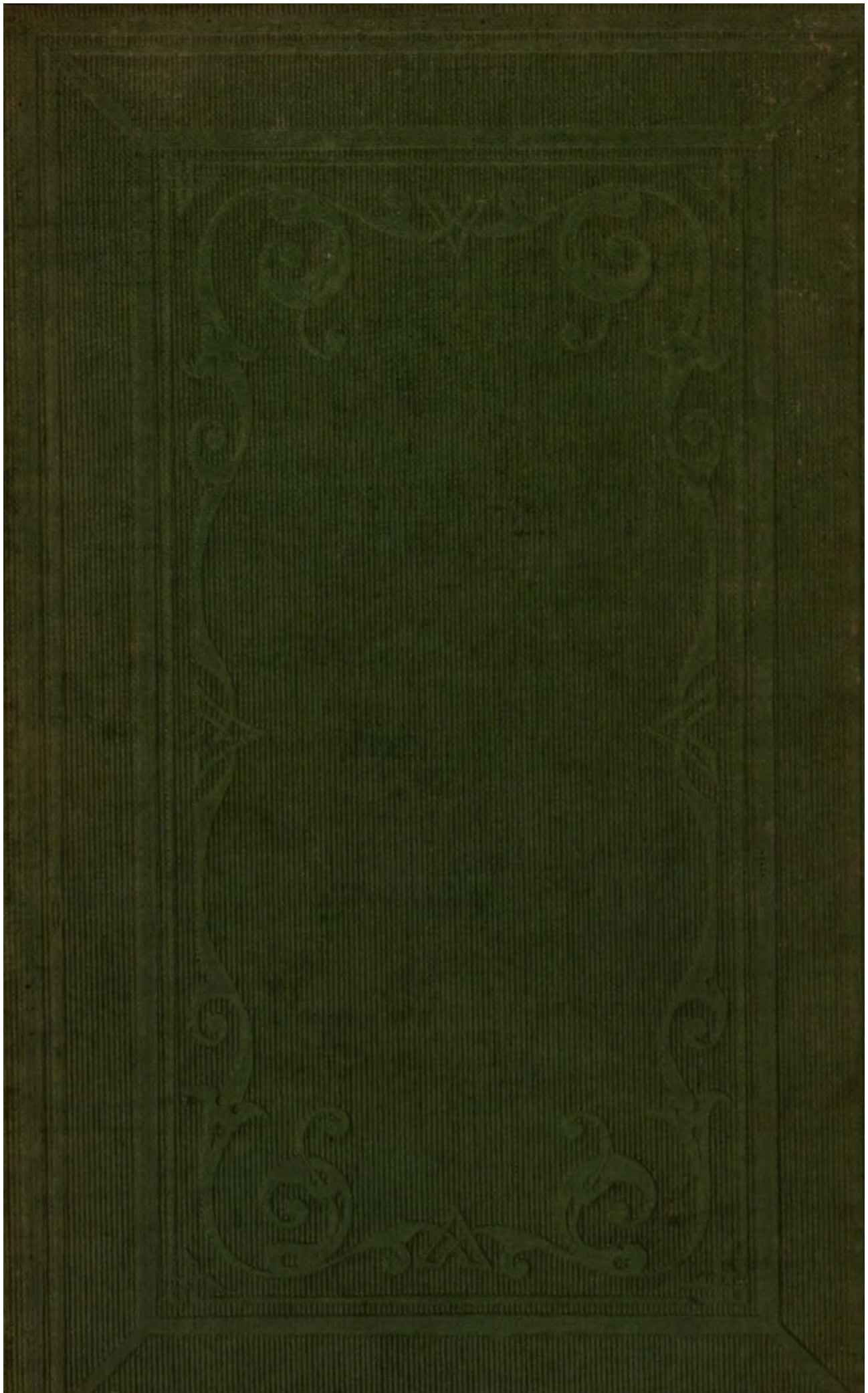
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## PROLOGUE.

—♦—

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.

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 jettied 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 ; otherwhere  
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 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,



We seven stay'd at Christmas up to read ;  
And there we took one tutor as to read :  
The hard-grain'd Muses of the cube and square  
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 ?



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 feudal 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 gilt-head cane,  
And paw'd his beard, and call'd it 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 reverenced 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.

---

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.

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.

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## 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 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 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. 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;

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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 plummetts 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 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 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.

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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.

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## 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.

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 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,  
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

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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  
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 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 ambassadresses  
From him to me ? we give you, being strange,  
A license : speak, and let the topic die.'

I stammer'd that I knew him—could have wish'd—  
' Our king expects—was there no precontract ?  
There is no truer-hearted—ah, you seem  
All he 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 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 lift 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 præeminence 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 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 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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The splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story :  
The long light shakes across the lakes  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle ; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

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

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

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## 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, blossom, viand, 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

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Wiser to weep a true occasion lost,  
But trim our sails, and let old by-gones be,  
While down the streams that float us each and all  
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 shaft, 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: ' 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 is the South,  
And dark and true and tender is the North.

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

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

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

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

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

‘ 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 hold 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.  
Poor soul ! I had a maid of honour once ;  
She wept her true eyes blind for such a one,  
A rogue of canzonets and serenades.  
I loved her. Peace be with her. She is dead.  
So they blaspheme the muse ! but great is song  
Used to great ends : ourself have often tried  
Valkyrian hymns, or into rhythm have dash'd  
The passion of the prophetess ; for song  
Is duer unto freedom, force and growth

Of spirit than to junketing and love.  
Love is it? Would this same mock-love, and this  
Mock-Hymen 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 owed 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,  
Cyril, with whom the bell-mouth'd flask had wrought,  
Or master'd by the sense of sport, began  
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' and thro' with wrath and love,  
I smote him on the breast ; he started up ;  
There rose a shriek as of a city sack'd ;  
Melissa clamour'd ' Flee the death ; ' ' To horse '   
Said Ida ; ' home ! to horse ! ' and fled, as flies  
A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk,  
When some one batters at the 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 ; they cried ' 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 woods, and less from Indian craft  
Than beelike instinct hiveward, found at length

The garden portals. Two great statues, Art  
And Science, Caryatids, lifted up  
A weight of emblem, and betwixt were valves  
Of open-work in which the 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 glowworm, 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, 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,  
How came you here?' I told him: 'I' said he  
'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 Psyche, she affirm'd not, or denied:  
From whence the Royal mind, familiar with her,  
Easily gather'd either guilt. She sent  
For Psyche, but she was not there; she call'd  
For Psyche's child to cast it from the doors;

She sent for Blanche to accuse her face to face ;  
And I slipt out : but whither will you now ?  
And where are Psyche, Cyril ? both are fled.  
What, if together ? that were not so well.  
Would rather we had never come ! I dread  
His wildness, and the chances of the dark.'

' And yet,' I said, ' you wrong him more than I  
That struck him : this is proper to the clown,  
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 the musky-circled 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 hook'd 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 wail'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 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,  
To me you froze : 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 came to tell you ; found that you had gone,  
Ridd'n to the hills, she likewise : now, I thought,  
That surely she will speak ; if not, then I :  
Did she ? These monsters blazon'd what they were  
According to the coarseness of their kind,  
For thus I hear ; and known at last (my work)  
And full of cowardice and guilty shame,  
I grant in her some sense of shame, she flies ;  
And I remain on whom to wreak your rage,  
I, that have lent my life to build up yours,  
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 take 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 rush'd  
Among us, out of breath, as one 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, 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 :  
Render 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, zealous it should be  
All that it might be : hear me, for I bear,  
Tho' man, yet human, whatsoe'er your wrongs,  
From the flaxen curl to the gray lock a life  
Less mine than yours : my nurse would tell me of you ;  
I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,  
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 inmost south  
And blown to 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, had you 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

My boyish dream 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 at her feet : a tide of fierce  
Invective seem'd to wait behind her lips,  
As waits a river level with the dam  
Ready to burst and flood the world with foam :  
And so she would have spoken, but there rose  
A hubbub in the court of half the maids  
Gather'd together ; from the illumined 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 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 hold a great convention : then shall they  
That love their voices more than duty, learn  
With whom they deal, dismiss'd in shame to live  
No wiser than their mothers, household stuff,  
Live chattels, mincers of each other's fame,  
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 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 our good 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 servants, 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 yourself are hateful 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. While I listen'd came  
On a sudden the weird seizure and the doubt :  
I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts ;  
The Princess with her monstrous woman-guard,  
The jest and earnest working side by side,  
The cataract and the tumult and the kings  
Were shadows ; and the long fantastic night

With all its doings had and had not been,  
And all things were and were not.

This went by

As strangely as it came, and on my spirits  
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy ;  
Not long ; I shook it off ; for spite of doubts  
And sudden ghostly shadowings I was one  
To whom the touch of all mischance but came  
As night to him that sitting on a hill  
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun  
Set into sunrise : then we moved away.



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

So Lilia sang : we thought her half-possess'd,  
She struck such warbling fury thro' the words ;  
And, after, feigning pique at what she call'd  
The raillery, or grotesque, or false sublime—  
Like one that wishes at a dance to change  
The music—clapt her hands and cried for war,  
Or some grand fight to kill and make an end :  
And he that next inherited the tale  
Half turning to the broken statue, said,  
' Sir Ralph has got your colours : if I prove

Your knight and fight your battle, what for me ?'  
It chanced, her empty glove upon the tomb  
Lay by her like a model of her hand.  
She took it and she flung it. 'Fight' she said,  
'And make us all we would be, great and good.'  
He knightlike in his cap instead of casque,  
A cap of Tyrol borrow'd from the hall,  
Arranged the favour and assumed the Prince.

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## 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, till we heard  
The drowsy folds of our great ensign shake  
From blazon’d lions o’er the imperial tent  
Whispers of war.

Entering, the sudden light  
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 there brake  
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 'King, you are free!  
We did but keep you surety for our son,  
If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin, thou,  
That tends her bristled grunTERS in the sludge:'  
For I was drench'd with ooze, and torn with briers,  
More crumpled than a poppy from the sheath,  
And all one rag, disprinc'd from head to heel.  
Then some one sent beneath his vaulted palm  
A whisper'd jest to some one near him 'Look,  
He has been among his shadows.' 'Satan take  
The old women and their shadows! (thus the King

Roar'd) make yourself a man to fight with men.  
Go : Cyril told us all.'

As boys that slink

From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,  
Away we stole, and transient 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 enter'd 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 you ' cried  
 My father ' that our compact be fulfill'd :  
 You have spoilt this child ; she laughs at you and man :  
 She wrongs herself, her sex, and me, and him,  
 But red-faced war has rods of steel and fire ;  
 She yields, or war.'

Then Gama turn'd to me :

' We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy time  
 With our strange girl : and yet they say that still  
 You love her. Give us, then, your mind at large :  
 How say you, war or not ?'

' Not war, if possible,

O king,' I said, ' lest from the abuse of war,  
 The desecrated shrine, the trampled year,  
 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 him that mars her plan, but then would hate

(And every voice she talk'd with ratify it,  
And every face she look'd on justify it)  
The general foe. More soluble is this knot,  
By gentleness than war. I want her love.  
What were I nigher this altho' we dash'd  
Your cities into shards with catapults,  
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.  
Boy, when I hear you prate I almost think

That idiot legend credible. Look you, Sir !  
Man is the hunter ; woman is his game ;  
The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,  
We hunt them for the beauty of their skins ;  
They love us for it, and we ride them down.  
Wheedling and siding with them ! Out ! for shame !  
Boy, there 's no rose that 's half so dear to them  
As he that does the thing they dare not do,  
Breathing and sounding beauteous battle, comes  
With the air of the trumpet round him, and leaps in  
Among the women, snares them by the score  
Flatter'd and fluster'd, wins, tho' dash'd with death  
He reddens what he kisses : thus I won  
Your mother, a good mother, a good wife,  
Worth winning ; but this firebrand—gentleness  
To such as her ! if Cyril spake her true,  
To catch a dragon in a cherry net,  
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 the piebald miscellany, man,  
 Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire,  
 But whole and one : and take them all-in-all,  
 Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,  
 As truthful, much that Ida claims as right  
 Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly theirs  
 As dues of Nature. To our point : not war :  
 Lest I lose all.'

‘ Nay, nay, you spake but sense ’

Said Gama. ‘ We remember love 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 robb'd the farmer of his bowl of cream:  
But let your Prince (our royal word upon it,  
He comes back safe) ride with us to our lines,  
And speak with Arac: Arac's word is thrice  
As ours with Ida: 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 burnish'd 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, ere the windy jest  
Had labour'd down within his ample lungs,  
The genial giant, Arac, roll'd himself  
Thrice in the saddle, then burst out in words.

‘ Our land invaded, ’sdeath ! and he himself  
Your captive, yet my father wills not war :  
And, ’sdeath ! myself, what care I, war or no ?  
But then this question of your troth remains :  
And there ’s a downright honest meaning in her ;  
She flies too high, she flies too high ! and yet  
She ask'd but space and fairplay for her scheme ;  
She prest and prest it on me—I myself,  
What know I of these things ? but, life and soul !  
I thought her half-right talking of her wrongs ;  
I say she flies too high, ’sdeath ! what of that ?  
I take her for the flower of womankind,  
And so I often told her, right or wrong,  
And, Prince, she can be sweet to those she loves,

And, right or wrong, I care not: this is all,  
I stand upon her side: she made me swear it—  
'Sdeath—and with solemn rites by candle-light—  
Swear by St. something—I forget her name—  
Her that talk'd down the fifty wisest men;  
*She* was a princess too; and so I swore.  
Come, this is all; she will not: waive your claim:  
If not, the foughten field, what else, at once  
Decides it, 'sdeath! against my father's will.'

I lagg'd in answer loth to render up  
My precontract, and loth by brainless war  
To cleave the rift of difference deeper yet;  
Till one of those two brothers, half aside  
And fingering at the hair about his lip,  
To prick us on to combat 'Like to like!  
The woman's garment hid the woman's heart.'  
A taunt that clench'd his purpose like a blow!  
For fiery-short was Cyril's counter-scoff,  
And sharp I answer'd, touch'd upon the point

Where idle boys are cowards to their shame,  
'Decide it here : why not ? we are three to three.'

Then spake the third ' But three to three ? no more ?  
No more, and in our noble sister's cause ?  
More, more, for 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 ' answer'd 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.' ' 'Sdeath ! but we will send to her,'  
Said Arac, ' worthy reasons why she should  
Bide by this issue : let our missive thro',

And you shall have her answer by the word.'

'Boys!' shriek'd the old king, but vainlier than a hen  
To her false daughters in the pool; 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' 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.

‘ O brother, you have known the pangs we felt,  
What heats of indignation 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 equal baseness lived in sleeker 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 I built a fold for them :  
I stored it full of rich memorial :  
I fenced it round with gallant institutes,  
And biting laws to scare the beasts of prey,  
And prosper'd ; till a rout of saucy boys  
Brake on us at our books, and marr'd our peace,  
Mask'd like our maids, blustering I know not what  
Of insolence and love, some pretext held  
Of baby troth, invalid, since my will  
Seal'd not the bond—the striplings !—for their sport!—  
I tamed my leopards : shall I not tame these ?  
Or you ? or I ? for since you think me touch'd  
In honour—what, I would not aught of false—

Is not our cause pure? and whereas I know  
Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's blood  
You draw from, fight; you failing, I abide  
What end soever: fail you will not. Still  
Take not his life: he risk'd it for my own;  
His mother lives: yet whatso'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  
Whose name is yoked with children's, know herself;  
And Knowledge in our own land make her free,  
And, ever following those two crowned twins,  
Commerce and conquest, shower the fiery grain  
Of freedom broadcast over all that orbs



Between the Northern and the Southern morn.'

Then came a postscript dash'd across the rest.  
' See that there be no traitors in your camp :  
We seem a nest of traitors—none to trust  
Since our arms fail'd—this Egypt-plague of men !  
Almost our maids were better at their homes,  
Than thus man-girdled here : indeed I think  
Our chiefest comfort is the little child  
Of one unworthy mother ; which she left :  
She shall not have it back : the child shall grow  
To prize the authentic mother of her mind.  
I took it for an hour in mine own bed  
This morning : there the tender orphan hands  
Felt at my heart, and seem'd to charm from thence  
The wrath I 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 you ! 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 you—she 's yet a colt—  
Take, break her : strongly groom'd and straitly curb'd  
She might not rank with those detestable  
That let the bantling scald at home, 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, for it was nearly noon :  
I pored upon her letter which I held,  
And on the little clause 'take not his life :'  
I mused on that wild morning in the woods,  
And on the 'Follow, follow, thou shalt win :'  
I thought on all the wrathful king had said,  
And how the strange betrothment was to end :  
Then I remember'd that burnt sorcerer's curse  
That one should fight with shadows and should fall ;  
And like a flash the weird affection came :  
King, camp and college turn'd to hollow shows ;  
I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts,  
And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,

To dream myself the shadow of a dream :  
And ere I woke it was the point of noon,  
The lists were ready. Empanoplied and plumed  
We enter'd in, and waited, fifty there  
Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared  
At the barrier like a wild horn in a land  
Of echoes, and 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 conflict with the crash of shivering points,  
And thunder. Yet it seem'd a dream ; I dream'd  
Of fighting. On his haunches rose the steed,  
And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,  
And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.  
A noble dream ! what was it else I saw ?  
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 in my dream  
I glanced aside, 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 fall ! with that I drave  
Among the thickest and bore down a Prince,  
And Cyril, one. Yea, let me make my dream

All that I would. But that large-moulded man,  
His visage all agrin as at a wake,  
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 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 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, heavier, stronger, he that smote  
And threw him : last I spurr'd ; I felt my veins  
Stretch with fierce heat ; a moment hand to hand,

And sword to sword, and horse to horse we hung,  
Till I struck out and shouted ; the blade glanced ;  
I did but shear a feather, and dream and truth  
Flow'd from me ; darkness closed me ; and I fell.

---

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

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

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

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

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## VI.

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

For so it seem'd, or so they said to me,  
That all things grew more tragic and more strange ;  
That when our side was vanquish'd and my cause  
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 Aglaïa.

But high upon the palace Ida stood

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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 growing 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' 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 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 make  
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-mouth'd,  
And turn'd each face her way : wan was her cheek  
With hollow watch, her blooming mantle torn,  
Red grief and mother's hunger in her eye,  
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 he that lay  
Beside us, Cyril, batter'd as he was,  
Trail'd himself up on one knee : then he drew  
Her robe to meet his lips, and down she look'd  
At the arm'd man sideways, pitying, as it seem'd,  
Or self-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 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; *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 helpless warmth about my barren 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 meet 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. 'Ida—'sdeath! you blame the man;  
You wrong yourselves—the woman is so hard  
Upon the woman. Come, a grace to me!  
I am your warrior; I and mine have fought  
Your battle: kiss her; take her hand, she weeps:  
'Sdeath! I would sooner fight thrice o'er than see it.'

But Ida spoke not, gazing on the ground,  
And reddening in the furrows of his chin,  
And 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,  
I trust that there is no one hurt to death,  
For your wild whim : and was it then for this,  
Was it for this we gave our palace up  
Where we withdrew from summer heats and state,  
And had our wine and chess beneath the planes,  
And many a pleasant hour with her that 's gone,  
Ere you were born to vex us ? Is it kind ?  
Speak to her I say : is this not she of whom,  
When first she came, all-flush'd you said to me  
Now had you got a friend of your own age,  
Now could you share your thought ; now should men see  
Two women faster welded in one love  
Than pairs of wedlock ; she you walk'd with, she  
You talk'd with, whole nights long, up in the tower,  
Of sine and arc, spheroid and azimuth,  
And right ascension, 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 judgement 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 : ‘ Amazed am I to hear  
Your Highness : but your Highness breaks with ease  
The law your Highness did not make : ’twas I.  
I had been wedded wife, I knew mankind,  
And block’d them out ; but these men came to woo  
Your Highness—verily I think to win.’

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

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

She turn’d ; the very nape of her white neck  
Was 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 on they moved 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.

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

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

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

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## 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,  
Deeper than those weird doubts could reach me, lay  
Quite sunder'd from the moving Universe,  
Nor knew what eye was on me, nor the hand  
That 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 tho' he built upon the babe restored ;  
Nor tho' she liked him, yielded she, but fear'd  
To incense the Head once more ; till on a day  
When Cyril pleaded, Ida came behind  
Seen but of Psyche : on her foot she hung  
A moment and she heard, at which her face  
A little flush'd and she past on ; but each  
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 dwarflike 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 :  
They did but seem as hollow shows ; 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 out of languor leapt a cry ;  
Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of death ;  
And I believed that in the living world  
My spirit closed 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 blasted Pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine ; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,  
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 ? but work no more alone !  
Our place is much : as far as in us lies  
We two will serve them both in aiding her—  
Will clear away the parasitic forms  
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—  
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all  
Within her—let her make herself her own

To give or keep, to live and learn and be  
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.  
For woman is not undeveloped man  
But diverse: could we make her as the man,  
Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this  
Not like to like, but like in difference.  
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;  
The man be more of woman, she of man;  
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;  
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,  
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;  
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, tremulously, ‘ so all unlike—  
It seems you love to cheat yourself with words :  
This mother is your model. I have heard  
Of your strange doubts : they well might be : I seem  
A mockery to my own self. Never, Prince ;  
You cannot love me.’

‘ Nay but thee ’ I said

‘ From yearlong poring on thy pictured eyes,  
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 ; my doubts are dead,  
My haunting sense of hollow shows : the change,  
This truthful change in thee has kill’d it. Dear,  
Look up, and let thy nature strike on mine

Like yonder morning on the blind half-world ;  
Approach and fear not ; breathe upon my brows ;  
In that fine air I tremble, all the past  
Melts mist-like into this bright hour, and this  
Is morn to more, and all the rich to-come  
Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels  
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds. Forgive me,  
I waste my heart in signs : let be. My bride,  
My wife, my life. O we will walk this world,  
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.

So closed our tale, of which I give you all  
The random scheme as wildly as it rose :  
The words are mostly mine ; for when we ceased  
There came a minute's pause, and Walter said,  
' I wish she had not yielded !' then to me,  
' What, if you drest it up poetically !'  
So pray'd the men, the women : I gave assent :  
Yet how to bind the scatter'd scheme of seven  
Together in one sheaf ? What style could suit ?  
The men required that I should give throughout  
The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque,  
With which we banter'd little Lilia first :  
The women—and perhaps they felt their power,  
For something in the ballads which they sang,  
Or in their silent influence as they sat,

Had ever seem'd to wrestle with burlesque,  
And drove us, last, to quite a solemn close—  
They hated banter, wish'd for something real,  
A gallant fight, a noble princess—why  
Not make her true-heroic—true-sublime?  
Or all, they said, as earnest as the close?  
Which yet with such a framework scarce could be.  
Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,  
Betwixt the mockers and the realists:  
And I, betwixt them both, to please them both,  
And yet to give the story as it rose,  
I moved as in a strange diagonal,  
And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.

But Lilia pleased me, for she took no part  
In our dispute: the sequel of the tale  
Had touch'd her; and she sat, she pluck'd the grass,  
She flung it from her, thinking: last, she fixt  
A showery glance upon her aunt and said  
'You—tell us what we are' who might have told,

For she was cramm'd with theories out of books,  
But that there rose a shout : the gates were closed  
At sunset and the crowd were swarming now,  
To take their leave, about the garden rails.

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

' Look there, a garden ! ' said my college friend  
The Tory member's elder son ' and there !  
God bless the narrow sea which keeps her off,  
And keeps our Britain, whole within herself,

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

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

In such discourse we gain’d the garden rails,  
And there we saw Sir Walter where he stood,  
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 rose 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 should not these great Sirs  
Give up their parks some dozen times a year  
To 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  
But spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie,  
Perchance upon the future man : the walls

Blacken'd about us, bats wheel'd, and owls whoop'd,  
And gradually the powers of the night,  
That range above the region of the wind,  
Deepening the courts of twilight broke them up  
Thro' all the silent spaces of the worlds,  
Beyond all thought into the Heaven of Heavens.

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

THE END.



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.



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