

PYGMALION

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Pygmalion by Thomas Woolner

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THOMAS WOOLNER

PYGMALION

191497

P Y G M A L I O N

BY
THOMAS WOOLNER.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1881

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TO MY WIFE

Alice Gertrude

I OFFER THIS VISION OF THE PAST

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PRELUDE.

3 WHO can extract its secret from the rose,
Or tell us why the violet glows ;
Or tulips, why in mystic stripes they flame,
Why crimson poppies burn in shame ?

Who shall expound why man with open fate
Chooses for partner ash-faced Hate ;
When shy, soft, willing Love, deliciously,
In warmth and smiles stands blushing by ?

Who can say why bold rulers love to lie,
And mean ones love to mystify ?
By what perversity of logic led,
When truth would stand in better stead !

That Love should turn from Love and paradise
To riches, vanity, or vice ;
Barter the glory of a life's content,
Is marvel and bewilderment !

But I will leave to moralists the Why
Things unseen are not seen, and try
Wing'd venture into days remote and old,
Till I the mystery unfold

How passion deep, and Aphrodite's aid,
Resolved to life that wondrous Maid,
Pygmalion wrought in marble, by the stress
Of worship, to pure loveliness.

BOOK I.

PYGMALION ardent-eyed, of eager speech
Which even closest friends misunderstood,
Was sorely troubled with a passionate hope
To bring the Gods' own language, sculpture,
 down
For mortal exaltation.

 Thus mused he :

Men made in marble look but men, no more ;
But Gods in sculpture are immortal powers
To whom we kneel helplessly lost in awe.
Man wrought the men and also wrought the Gods.
In making Gods doth Pallas give device,
And Hermes put strange cunning in the hand,
And Hyperion fill the eyes with light,
Such greatness shows when mortals work for
 Gods ?

Thus wandered he in mazes : when perchance
He caught a seeming clue and onward strove,
Sudden a blank impossibility
Closed his advance and drove him wide again ;
Till effort breeding failure sickened him,
Who, like a squirrel in a turning cage,
Found himself where he was for all his pains.

By watchful constancy of tenderness,
By the melodious pathos of his voice,
And his refulgent presence day by day,
Pygmalion charmed his mateless mother's home.
Nor could her love have spared him, save for
high
And godlike quest, or service to the state.
Mindful, in woman's fondness, of the tall
Lithe form, smooth sinewy arms, those eyes so
full
Of gracious light and sweet attent, came back
The days ago ; when, with her lord alone,
Safe in the strength of his nerved arms' defence,