

A Perfect Strain

Isabella Valancy Crawford

O bid the minstrel tune his harp,
 And bid the minstrel sing;
And let it be a perfect strain
 That round the hall shall ring:
A strain to throb in lady's heart,
 To brim the warrior's soul,
As dew fills up the summer rose
 And wine the lordly bowl!

O let the minstrel's voice ring clear,
 His touch sweep gay and light;
Nor let the light of ruddy June
 Shine in his joyous eyes,
If he would wake the only strain
 That never fully dies!

O what the strain that woos the knight
 To turn from steed and lance,
The page to turn from hound and hawk,
 The maid from lute and dance;
The potent strain, that nigh would draw
 The hermit from his cave,
The dryad from the leafy oak,
 The mermaid from the wave;
That almost might still charm the hawk
 To drop the trembling dove?
O ruddy minstrel, tune thy harp,
 And sing of Youthful Love!

Crawford (b. Dublin 1850, d. Toronto 1887) seems to be an acquired taste. I've acquired it. Her verse is pretty high cholesterol, so one might take a little at a time, but there's nutrition lurking in it, as well as the delights of an extravagant imagination. You'll be hearing more from her; it may surprise you. [GWL]