

THE VESTAL VIRGIN

LEPIDUS. She was a paragon of virtue, Nysia!
Compact of all that best becomes Rome's mat-
ronhood,
Chaster than Lucrece, gracious as Brutus' Portia,
A porcelain filled with essences divine.
Her sister being a Vestal, nought would please
But the achieving of that high estate for thee,
With all the honors budding forth from thence.

NYSIA. My destiny a Vestal's!

LEPIDUS. So 'twas planned.
Two summers had scarce ripened in thy blood,
Thy gums but just the parent breast forsook,
(Filled with these laughing pearls) ere thou
wast laid
In Vesta's arms, her novice to become
Mongst yon bright crowd that tends the holy fire,
Lest dire extinction overwhelm old Rome.

NYSIA. This tidings stuns me with amazement,
though

It matches well with certain pictures dim
That much of late have crossed my memory,—
Starting anew from childhood's corridors
Where Nature's cunning art had made and hung
them.

I tremble to hear more—how loosed you Vesta's
bond?

How opened troth plight unto Lucio? Speak!

LEPIDUS. Twas sickness, child; whether thy weak-
ness pined,

Pent up in those chill walls, sick with the want
Of green fields and warm air and children's
laughing games