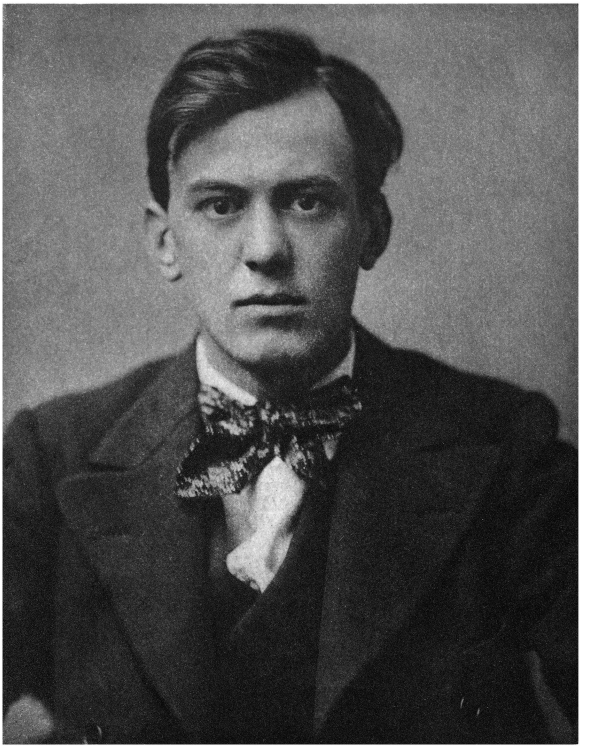
THE WORKS OF

ALEISTER CROWLEY

VOLUME I

NE VARIETUR



Aleister Crowley

Travellers' Edition

THE WORKS

OF

ALEISTER CROWLEY

WITH PORTRAITS

VOLUME I

FOYERS
SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF
RELIGIOUS TRUTH
1905

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PREFACE

IT is not without some misgiving that I have undertaken to edit the collected writings of Aleister Crowley. The task has been no easy one. His numerous references to the obscurer bypaths of classical mythology, and his not less frequent allusions to the works of Qabalistic writers, have demanded much elucidation. In making the explanatory notes, I have endeavoured to strike a golden mean between the attitude of Browning, when he published "Sordello," and that of Huxley, who took it for granted that his readers were entirely ignorant: and only such passages or phrases have been annotated as were thought likely to present any difficulty to the student of ordinary intelligence.

It is no part of the duty of an editor to assume the rôle of critic. But I must explain that I am conscious of Crowley's weaknesses. They are in the main the outcome of his astonishing perversity; nowhere more strikingly demonstrated than in "The Poem," throughout which there is a struggle for the supremacy between his sense of the ridiculous and his sense of the sublime.

I am also aware that his views on religious matters will be found unpalatable in some quarters. But it should be remembered that these writings represent the ideas of a man of an unconventional mind brought up in conventional surroundings. When he came to man's estate he not unnaturally revolted: and the result has been, as in many such cases, that his search for the truth has led him to investigate the religious beliefs of many nations; nor have those investigations tended to lessen the gulf which separates him from the orthodox point of view.

The edition is authorised, and, as such, complete: therein are contained all the important works of Aleister Crowley.

I. B.

LONDON, *March* 1905.

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TABLE OF CORRESPONDENCES . . . . . *End of volume*

The Table of Correspondences has been delayed owing to the extreme complexity of the subject, and mechanical difficulty in diagrammatizing. It will be issued with Vol. II., but should be bound up in its proper place, at the end of this volume.

ACELDAMA,

A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS IN.

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM.

1898.

[The poems collected in Volume I. comprise the whole of the first period of Crowley's life; namely, that of spiritual and mystic enthusiasm. The poet himself would be inclined to class them as Juvenilia. A few other early poems appear in "Oracles," Vol. II., chosen as illustrative of the progress of his art. The great bulk of the early MSS. from 1887 to 1897 have been sedulously sought out and destroyed. They were very voluminous.]

ACELDAMA.

"I contemplate myself in that dim sphere
Whose hollow centre I am standing at
With burning eyes intent to penetrate
The black circumference, and find out God."

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—ST. JOHN xii. 24, 25.

IT was a windy night, that memorable seventh night of December, when this philosophy was born in me. How the grave old Professor[1] wondered at my ravings! I had called at his house, for he was a valued friend of mine, and I felt strange thoughts and emotions shake within me. Ah! how I raved! I called to him to trample me, he would not. We passed together into the stormy night. I was on horseback, how I galloped round him in my phrenzy, till he became the prey of a real physical fear! How I shrieked out I know not what strange words! And the poor good old man tried all he could to calm me; he thought I was mad! The fool! I was in the death struggle with self: God and Satan fought for my soul those three long hours. God conquered—now I have only one doubt left—which of the twain was God? Howbeit, I aspire!

"And falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. . . . Insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say—the field of blood."—ACTS i. 18, 19.

[1] C. G. Lamb, Demonstrator of Engineering at Cambridge.

DEDICATION.

DIVINE PHILOSOPHER![1] Dear Friend![2]
Lover and Lord![3] accept the verse
That marches like a sombre hearse,
Bearing Truth's coffin, to the end.

Let man's distorted worships blend
In this, the worthier and the worse,
And penetrate the primal curse.
Alas! They will not comprehend.

Accept this gospel of disease
In wanton words proclaimed, receive
The blood-wrought chaplet that I weave.

Take me, and with thine infamies
Mingle my shame, and on my breast
Let thy desire achieve the rest.

ACELDAMA.

"Six months and I sit still and hold
In two cold palms her cold two feet;
Her hair, half grey half ruined gold,
Thrills me and burns me in kissing it.

Love bites and stings me through to see
Her keen face made of sunken bones.
Her worn-out eyelids madden me,
That were shot through with purple once."
SWINBURNE, "The Leper,"
Poems and Ballads, 1866.

[1] Von Eckartshausen.
[2] An adept who was in correspondence with the author.
[3] Christ.

ACELDAMA.

DARK night, red night. This lupanar[1]
Has rosy flames that dip, that shake,
Faint phantoms that disturb the lake
Of magic mirror-land. A star
Like to a beryl, with a flake
Of olive light
Struck through its dull profound, is steadfast in the night.

I.

I AM quite sane, quite quiet. Sober thought
Is as a woof to my mad dreams. My brain
Beats to the double stroke; the double strain
Warps its gray fibres; all the dream is wrought
A spider-tapestry; the old blood-stain
Spreads through the air
Some hot contagious growth to slay men unaware.

II.

I have discovered God! His ghastly way
Of burning ploughshares for my naked feet
Lies open to me—shall I find it sweet
To give up sunlight for that mystic day
That beams its torture, whose red banners beat
Their radiant fire
Into my shrivelled head, to wither Love's desire?

III.

I was a child long years ago, it seems,
Or months it may be—I am still a child!
They pictured me the stars as wheeling wild
In a huge bowl of water; but my dreams
Built it of Titan oak, its sides were piled
Of fearful wood
Hewn from God's forests, paid with sweat and tears and blood.

[1] Brothel.

IV.

I crept, a stealthy, hungry soul, to grasp
Its vast edge, to look out to the beyond;
To know. My eyes strained out, there was no bond,
No continuity, no bridge to clasp,
No pillars for the universe. Immond,[1]
Shapeless, unstayed,
Nothing, Nothing, Nothing, Nothing! I was afraid.

V.

That was my sanity. Brought face to face
Suddenly with the infinite, I feared.
My brain snapped, broke; white oarage-wings[2] appeared
On stronger shoulders set, a carapace,
A chariot. I did essay that weird
Unmeasured dome;
Found in its balance, peace; found in its silence, home.

VI.

That was my madness. On bright plumage poised
I soared, I hovered in the infinite;
Nothing was everything; the day was night,
Dark and deep light together, that rejoiced
In their strange wedlock. Marvellously white
All rainbows kissed
Into one sphere that stood, a circumambient mist.

VII.

I climbed still inwards. At the moveless point
Where all power, light, life, motion concentrate,
I found God dwelling. Strong, immaculate,
He knew me and he loved! His lips anoint
My lips with love; with thirst insatiate
He drank my breath,
Absorbed my life in His, dispersed me, gave me death.

[1] Unclean—from the French *immonde*.
[2] *Cf.* Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi. 20.

VIII.

This is release, is freedom, is desire;
This is the one hope that a man may gain;
This is the lasting ecstasy of pain
That fools reject, the dread, the searching fire
That quivers in the marrow, that in vain
Burns secretly
The unconsuméd bush where God lurks privily.

IX.

This was a dream—and how may I attain?
How make myself a worthy acolyte?
How from my body shall my soul take flight,
Being constrained in this devouring chain
Of selfishness? How purge the spirit quite
Of gross desires
That eat into the heart with their corrupting fires?

X.

Old Buddha gave command; Jehovah spake;
Strange distant gods that are not dead to-day
Added their voices; Heaven's desart way
Man wins not but by sorrow—let him break
The golden image with the feet of clay![1]
Let him despise
That earthen vessel which the potter marred[2]
—and rise!

XI.

As life burns strong, the spirit's flame grows dull;
The ruddy-cheeked sea-breezes shame its spark;
Wan rainy winds of autumn on the dark
Leafless and purple moors, that rage and lull
With a damned soul's despair, these leave their mark,
Their brand of fire
That burns the dross, that wings the heart to its desire.

[1] *Vide* Daniel ii.
[2] Oriental symbol for the body.

XII.

No prostitution may be shunned by him
Who would achieve this Heaven. No satyr-song,
No maniac dance shall ply so fast the thong
Of lust's imagining perversely dim
That no man's spirit may keep pace, so strong
Its pang must pierce;
Nor all the pains of hell may be one tithe as fierce.

XIII.

All degradation, all sheer infamy,
Thou shalt endure. Thy head beneath the mire
And dung of worthless women shall desire
As in some hateful dream, at last to lie;
Woman must trample thee till thou respire
That deadliest fume;[1]
The vilest worms must crawl, the loathliest vampires gloom.[2]

XIV.

Thou must breathe in all poisons; for thy meat,
Poison; for drink, still poison; for thy kiss,
A serpent's lips! An agony is this
That sweats out venom; thy clenched hands, thy feet
Ooze blood, thine eyes weep blood; thine anguish is
More keen than death.
At last—there is no deeper vault of hell beneath!

XV.

Then thine abasement bringeth back the sheaves
Of golden corn of exaltation,
Ripened and sweetened by the very sun

[1] The concrete expression of the horror of the individual.
[2] Morbid imaginations, which ever torment the traveller upon the path of asceticism.

Whose far-off fragrance steals between the leaves
Of the cool forest, filling every one
That reaps yon gold
With strange intoxications mad and manifold.

XVI.

Only beware gross pleasure—the delight
Of fools: the ecstasy, the trance of love—
Life's atom-bonds must strain—aye, and must move,
And all the body be forgotten quite,
And the pure soul flame forth, a deathless dove,
Where all worlds end!
If thou art worthy God shall greet thee for a friend.

XVII.

I am unworthy. In the House of Pain
There are ten thousand shrines. Each one enfolds
A lesser, inner, more divine, that holds
A sin less palpable and less profane.
The inmost is the home of God. He moulds
Infinity,
The great within the small, one stainless unity!

XVIII.

I dare not to the greater sins aspire;
I might—so gross am I—take pleasure in
These filthy holocausts, that burn to sin
A damnéd incense in the hellish fire
Of human lust—earth's joys no heaven may win;
Pain holds the prize
In blood-stained hands; Love laughs, with anguish in His eyes.

XIX.

These little common sins may lead my lust
To more deceitful vices, to the deeds
At whose sweet name the side of Jesus bleeds
In sympathy new-nurtured by the trust
Of man's forgiveness that his passion breeds—
These petty crimes!
God grant they grow intense in newer, worthier times!

XX.

Yet—shall I make me subject to a pang
So horrible? O God, abase me still!
Break with Thy rod my unrepentant will,
Lest Hell entrap me with an iron fang!
Grind me, most high Jehovah, in the mill
That grinds so small!
Grind down to dust and powder Pride of Life—and all!

XXI.

In every ecstasy exalt my heart;
Let every trance make loose and light the wings
My soul must shake, ere her pure fabric springs
Clothed in the secret dream-delights of Art
Transcendant into air, the tomb of Things;
Let every kiss
Melt on my lips to flame, fling back the gates of Dis![1]

XXII.

Give me a master! not some learned priest
Who by long toil and anguish has devised
A train of mysteries, but some despised
Young king of men, whose spirit is released
From all the weariness, whose lips are prized
By men not much—
Ah! let them only once grow warm, my lips to touch.

XXIII.

Ah! under his protection, in his love,
With my abasements emulating his,
We surely should attain to That which Is,

[1] A name contracted from Dives, sometimes given to Pluto and hence also to the lower world. But *vide* Dante, *Inferno*, Canto xxxiv.

And lose ourselves, together, far above
The highest heaven, in one sweet lover's kiss,
So sweet, so strong,
That with it all my soul should unto him belong.

XXIV.

An ecstasy to which no life responds,
Is the enormous secret I have learned:
When self-denial's furnace-flame has burned
Through love, and all the agonising bonds
That hold the soul within its shell are turned
To water weak;
Then may desires obtain the cypress crown they seek.

XXV.

Browning attained, I think, when Evelyn Hope
Gave no response to his requickening kiss;
In the brief moment when exceeding bliss
Joined to her sweet passed soul his soul, its scope
Grew infinite for ever. So in this
Profane desire
I too may join my song unto his quenchless quire.

XXVI.

When Hallam died, did Tennyson attain
When his warm kisses drew no answering sigh
From that poor corpse corrupted utterly,
When four diverse sweet dews exude to stain
With chaste foul fervour the cold canopy?
Proud Reason's sheath
He cast away; the sword of Madness flames beneath!

XXVII.

Read his mad rhymes; their sickening savour taste;
Bathe in their carnal and depraving stream:
Rise, glittering with the dew-drops of his dream,
And glow with exaltation; to thy waist
Gird his gold belt; the diamond settings gleam
With fire drawn far
Through the blue shuddering vault from some amazing star.

XXVIII.

Aubrey[1] attained in sleep when he dreamt this
Wonderful dream of women, tender child
And harlot, naked all, in thousands piled
On one hot writhing heap, his shameful kiss
To shudder through them, with lithe limbs defiled
To wade, to dip
Down through the mass, caressed by every purple lip.

XXIX.

Choked with their reek and fume and bitter sweat
His body perishes; his life is drained;
The last sweet drop of nectar has not stained
Another life; his lips and limbs are wet
With death-dews! Ha! The painter has attained
As high a meed
As his who first begot sweet music on a reed.

XXX.

And O! my music is so poor and thin!
I am poor Marsyas[2]; where shall I find
A wise Olympas and a lover kind
To teach my mouth to sing some secret sin,
Faint, fierce, and horrible; to tune my mind,
And on a reed
Better beloved to bid me discourse at his need?

[1] Aubrey Beardsley. The dream is authentic.

[2] Marsyas, a Satyr, inventor of the pastoral flute; Olympas, his favourite pupil. It will be seen that the names are carelessly transposed.

XXXI.

Master![1] I think that I have found thee now :
Deceive me not, I trust thee, I am sure
Thy love will stand while ocean winds endure.
Our quest shall be our quest till either brow
Radiate light, till death himself allure
Our love to him
When life's desires are filled beyond the silver brim.

XXXII.

Here I abandon all myself to thee,
Slip into thy caresses as of right,
Live in thy kisses as in living light,
Clothed in thy love, enthronéd lazily
In thine embrace, as naked as the night,
As love and lover
More pure, more keen, more strong than all my dreams discover.

[1] Christ.

EPILOGUE.

My heavy hair upon my olive skin
(*Baise la lourde crinière !*)
Frames with its ebony a face like sin.
My heavy hair !

You touched my lips and told me I was fair ;
It was your wickedness my love to win.
(*Baise la lourde crinière !*)
Your passion has destroyed my soul—what care
If you desire me, and I hold you in
My arms a little, and you love for lair
My heavy hair !

It is a fatal web your fingers spin.
(*Baise la lourde crinière !*)
Let our love end as other loves begin,
Or, slay me in a moment, unaware !
Nay? Kiss in double death-pang, if you dare !
Or one day I will strangle you within
My heavy hair !

THE TALE OF ARCHAIS.

A ROMANCE IN VERSE.

1898.

TO

THE WHITE MAIDENS OF ENGLAND

THIS TALE OF GREECE IS DEDICATED.

THE AUTHOR'S BALLADE OF HIS TALE.

Go to the woodlands, English maid,
  Or where the downs to seaward bend,
When autumn is in gold arrayed,
  Or spring is green, or winters send
  A frosty sun, or summers blend
Their flowers in every dainty dye,
  And take, as you would take a friend,
This pleasant tale of Thessaly.

Lie on the greensward, while the shade
  Shortens as morning doth ascend
The gates of Heaven, and bud and blade
  Laugh at the dawn, while breezes lend
  Their music, till you comprehend
The meaning of the world, and sigh—
  Yet love makes happy in the end
This pleasant tale of Thessaly.

Turn from my book, the poet prayed,
  And look to Heaven, an hour to spend
Before His throne who spake and bade
  The fountains of the deep descend,
  And bade the earth uproot and rend
To pitch like tents the mountains high,
  And gave him language who hath penned
This pleasant tale of Thessaly.

ENVOI.

Fair maiden, who hast rightly weighed
  The message of the morning sky,
Think kindly of the man who made
  This pleasant tale of Thessaly.

THE TALE OF ARCHAIS.

PART I.

SHE lay within the water, and the sun
Made golden with his pleasure every one
Of small cool ripples that surround her throat,
Mix with her curls, and catch the hands that float
Like water-lilies on the wave; she lay
And watched the silver fishes leap and play,
And almost slept upon the soughing breast
That murmured gentle melodies of rest,
And touched her tiny ear, and made her dream
Of sunny woods above the sacred stream
Where she abode (her home was cool and dark
That no small glow-worm with his tender spark
Might lighten till the moon was down, a nook
Far from the cool enticements of the brook,
And hidden in the boskage close and green.)
So dreamed she, smiling like a faëry queen;
So the bright feet and forehead of the breeze
Lured her to sleep, and shook the morning trees
Clear of the dewfall, and disturbed the grass,
So that no rustle, should a serpent pass,
Might rouse her reverie. So then, behold,
Chance leant from Heaven with feet and face of gold,
And hid the iron of her body bare
With such warm cloudlets as the morning air

Makes to conceal the fading of the stars:
Chance bowed herself across the sunny bars,
And watched where through the silence of the lawn
Came Charicles, the darling of the dawn,
Slowly, and to his steps took little heed;
He came towards the pool, his god-wrought reed
Shrilling dim visions of things glorious,
And saw the maiden, that disported thus,
And worshipped. Then in doubt he stood, grown white
And wonderful, with passion's perfect might
Firing his veins and tingling in his brain,
He stood and whitened, and waxed red again.
His oat[1] unheeded glanced beneath the wave,
His eyes grew bright and burning, his lips clave—
A sudden cry broke from him: from the height
His swift young body, like a ray of light,
Divides the air, a moment, and the pool
Flings up the spray like dew, divinely cool:
A moment, and he flashed towards her side
And caught her trembling, as a tender bride
At the first kiss; he caught her, and compelled
Her answer, in his arms securely held.
And she no word might say; her red lips quailed,
Her perfect eyelids drooped, her warm cheek paled,
A tear stole over it. His lips repent
With vain weak words—O iron firmament!
How vain, how cold are words!—his lips repeat
Their faint sweet savour, but her rosy feet
Held in his hands and touched with reverent lips
Revived her soul more perfectly. Soon slips
Her gentle answer; now her timid eyes
So tender with the lifted lashes rise
To meet his gaze.
He spoke: "Have pity on me
Who wronged thee for my perfect love of thee,
My perfect love, O love! for strange and dread
Delights consume me; I am as one dead
Beating at Heaven's gate with nerveless wing,
Wailing because the song the immortals sing
Is so fast barred behind the iron sky.
Speak but thine anger quickly; let me die!"
"But I forgive thee, thou art good and kind."
"O love! O love! O mistress of my mind,
You love me!" "Nay, I was awhile afraid,
Being so white and tender; for a maid
I lived alone with flower and brook, nor guessed
Another dwelt within the quiet nest
That these woods build me; hold my trembling hand,
Teach me to love; I do not understand."
He clasped her to him, but no word might say,
And led her from the pool a little way,
And there he laid her on the flowery mead,
And watched her weeping. His forgotten reed
Floated away, a ship for fairy folk,
Along the limpid rivulet. Then broke
From smitten heart and ravished lips the tongue
Of fire that clad its essence with the robe of song.

[1] Panpipe.

Song of Charicles.

Man's days are dim, his deeds are dust,
His span is but a little space,
He lusts to live, he lives to lust,
His soul is barren of love or trust,
His heart is hopeless, seeing he must
Perish, and leave no trace;
With impious rage he mocks the bounds
Of earth, albeit so wholly base;
His ears are dead to subtle sounds,
His eyes are blind, for Zeus confounds
His vain irreverence, and astounds
High Heaven with wrathful face.

But I am born of gods, and turn
My eyes to thee, thyself divine.
My vigorous heart and spirit yearn
With love, my cheeks with passion burn—
As thy clear eyes may well discern
By gazing into mine.
Thy heart is cool, thy cheeks are pale,
Nor blush with shame like winter wine
To understand my amorous tale,
For words and looks of Love must fail
To touch thee, since a snowy veil
Is 'twixt my mind and thine.

Dear goddess, at whose early breast
I drank in all desires and woes;
Most reverend god, who oft caressed
Her pale chaste wifehood, and who pressed
Upon my forehead kisses blest;
Bid blossom out this rose,
This fair white bud whose heart is pure,
Whose bosom fears not, neither knows
The long vague mysteries that endure
Of life uncertain, of love sure,
Teach her the mystic overture
To Love's transcendant throes.

He ceased: but out of Heaven no sound of might,
No tongue of flame gave answer. Still as night,
Silence and sunlight, stream and mead, possessed
The whole wide world. The maid's reluctant breast
Heaved with soft passion nowise understood,
And her pulse quickened. Through the quiet wood
Her answer rang: "My voice with thine shall break
The woodland stillness, for the fountain's sake.
I'll sing thee—Lamia! mother, I obey!"
In vain the desperate boy pursued the way
With awful eyes; no bruiséd flower betrayed
The tender footsteps of a goddess maid;
No butterfly flew frightened; on the pool
No ripple spoke of her; the streamlet cool
Had no small wreath of amber mist to mark
Her flight; she was not there, the silver spark
Had flashed and faded; all the field was bare,
No wave of wing bestirred the sultry air,
Save only where the noontide lark rose high
To chant his liberty. The vaulted sky
Was one blue cupola of rare turquoise
That shimmered with the heat.
His pulses pause
For his despair ineffable. Her name
He called; she was not, and the piercing flame
Of love struck through him, till his tortured mind
Drove his young limbs, the wolf that hunts the hind,
Far through the forest. Lastly sleep, like death,
With strong compulsion of his labouring breath
Came on him dreamless.
When he woke, the day
Stooped toward the splendour of the western bay,
And he remembered. Like a wild bird's cry
The song within him flamed, a melody
Dreadful and beautiful. The sad sea heard
And echoed over earth its bitter word.

SONG.

Ere the grape of joy is golden
With the summer and the sun,
Ere the maidens unbeholden
Gather one by one,
To the vineyard comes the shower,
No sweet rain to fresh the flower,
But the thunder rain that cleaves,
Rends and ruins tender leaves.

Ere the wine of perfect pleasure
From a perfect chalice poured,
Swells the veins with such a measure
As the garden's lord
Makes his votaries dance to, death
Draws with soft delicious breath
To the maiden and the man.
Love and life are both a span.

Ere the crimson lips have planted
Paler roses, warmer grapes,
Ere the maiden breasts have panted,
And the sunny shapes
Flit around to bless the hour,
Comes men know not what false flower:
Ere the cup is drained, the wine
Grows unsweet, that was divine.

All the subtle airs are proven
False at dewfall, at the dawn
Sin and sorrow, interwoven,
Like a veil are drawn
Over love and all delight;
Grey desires invade the white.
Love and life are but a span;
Woe is me! and woe is man!

The sound stood trembling in the forest dim
Lingering a little, yet there taketh him
A strong man's one short moment of despair.
He fell, the last of Titans, his loose hair
Tangled in roses; while his heart and mind
Broken and yet imperishable, blind,
Hateful, desire they know not what, and turn
Lastly to pray for death; his wild eyes burn,
And bitter tears divide his doubtful breath.
So grew his anguish to accomplish death,
Had not the goddess with the rosy shoon
Stoop'd o'er the silver surface of the moon
To touch his brow with slumber, like a kiss
Whose dreams perfused the name of Archais,
Till the sweet odour dulled his brain, and sleep
Loosened his limbs, most dreamless and most deep.
The mosses serve him for a bed; the trees
Wave in the moonlight, daughters of the breeze;
Hardly the pleasant waters seem to shake,
And only nightingales, for slumber's sake,
Lull the soft stars and seas, and matchless music make.

And now the sun is risen above the deep;
The mists pass slowly on the uplands steep;
Far snows are luminous with rosy flecks
Of lambent light, and shadow tints and decks
Their distant hollows with black radiance,
While the delivered fountains flash and glance
Adown the hills and through the woods of pine
And stately larch, with cadences divine
And trills and melodies instinct with light and wine.

The sun, arising, sees the sleeping youth
And lumes his locks with evanescent gold,
While birds and breezes, watching, hold them mute,
And light and silence, the twin-born of truth,
Reign o'er the meadow, and possess the wold.
The poet bows his head, and lays aside his lute.

PART II.

WHEN God bethought Him, and the world began,
He made moist clay, and breathed on it, that man
Might be most frail and feeble, and like earth
Shrink at Death's finger from the hour of birth;
And like the sea by limits of pale sand
Be utterly confined; but so He planned
To vivify the body with the soul,
That fire and air were wedded to control
The heavy bulk beneath them, so His breath
Touched the warm clay and violated death,
Gave to the spirit wings and bade it rise
To seek its Maker with aspiring eyes,
Gave to the body strength to hold awhile
The spirit, till the passions that defile
Should waste and wither, and the free soul soar.
But evil lusted with the soul, and bore
A thousand children deadlier than death;
The sin that enters with the eager breath
Of perfect love; the sin that seeks its home
In lights and longings frailer than the foam;
The sin that loves the hollows of the night,
The sin that fears; the sin that hates the light;
The sin that looks with wistful eyes; the sin
That trembles on the olive of the skin;

The sin that slumbers; these divide the day
And all the darkness, and deceive, and slay.
And these regather in the womb of hell
To marry and increase, and by the spell
Of their own wickedness discover sin
Unguessed at, by slow treason creeping in,
To spread corruption, and destroy the earth.
But in the holy hour and happy birth
That swam through stars propitious, meadows white,
And fresh with newer flowers of the night
In the pale fields supernal, when his sire
Took from the nurse the child of his desire,
A man, the prayers of many maidens sent
So sweet a savour through the firmament
That no false spirit might draw nigh. And still
His angel ministers defend from ill
The head they nurtured. Evil dreams and spells,
Cast at the dimmest hour, the sword repels
And drives them down the steep of Hell. But dim
Sweet faces of dead maidens drew to him;
Quiet woods and streams and all the mountains tall,
Cool valleys, silver-streaked with waterfall,
Came in his slumbers, chaste and musical,
While through their maze his mind beheld afar
Dim and divine, Archais, like a star.

It was no dream, or else the growing dawn
Deepened the glory of the misted lawn,
For to his eyes, half open now, there seems
A figure, fairer than his dearest dreams.
He sprang, he caught her to his breast, the maid
Smiled and lay back to look at him. He laid
Her tender body on the sloping field,
And felt her sighs in his embraces yield
A sweeter music than all birds. But she,
Lost in the love she might not know, may see
No further than his face, and yet, aware
Of her own fate, resisted like a snare
Her own soft wishes. As she looked and saw
His eager face, the iron rod of law
Grew like a misty pillar in the sky.
In all her veins the blood's desires die,
And then—O sudden ardour!—all her mind
And memory faded, and looked outward, blind,
Beyond their bitterness. Her arms she flung
Around him, and with amorous lips and tongue
Tortured his palate with extreme desire,
And like a Mænad maddened; equal fire
Leapt in his veins; locked close for love they lie,
The heart's dumb word exprest without a sigh
In the strong magic of a lover's kiss,
And the twin light of love; but Archais
Felt through her blood a sudden chill; her face
Blanched and besought a moment's breathing space;
Her heart's desire welled up, and then again
Whitened her cheeks with the exceeding pain
Of uttermost despair. At last her strength
Failed, and she flung her weary body at length
Amid the bruiséd flowers; while from her eyes
Surged the salt tears; low moans she multiplies
Because her love is blasphemous; the wind
Sighs for all answer, sobs and wails behind
Among the trees; the stream grows deadly pale
Hearing her weep, and like a silver sail
The fading moon drifts sorrowful above.
Then Charicles must ask his weeping love
To lead him to the fountain of her tears.
But she, possessed by vague and violent fears,
Spake not a little while, and then began:
"O thou, a child of Heaven, and a man,
Even so my lover, shall my woeful song
So move thy spirit for my bitter wrong
(God-nurtured though thou be) against the rods
Laid on me by my mother, whom the gods

Righteous in anger, doomed, for fiery sin
Kindled by hell-flames, cherishéd within
Her lustful heart, for sin most damnable,
To suffer torment in remotest hell,
Where the grim fiend grinds down with fiery stones
The unrepentant marrow of men's bones,
Or chills their blood with poisonous vials of death,
Or dooms them to the tooth and venomous breath
Of foul black worms; and on the earth to dwell
For a long space, and there (most terrible!)
To change her shape at times, and on her take
The fierce presentment of a loathly snake
To wander curst and lonely through the dire black brake.
And this thing is my mother, whose foul tomb
Is a black serpent, spotted with the gloom
Of venomous red flecks, and poisonous sweat,
While on her flat lewd head the mark is set
Of utter loathsomeness; and I, her child
Born of incestuous lust, and sore defiled
With evil parentage, am now (Most just
Unpitying Zeus!) condemned with her, I must
The hated semblance of a serpent wear
When noon rides forth upon the crystal air."
While yet she spake, the dwindling shadow ran
Beneath the feet of Charicles, the wan
Waste water glinted free, and to the deep
Cool pebbles did the kiss of sunshine creep;
The busy lark forgot for joy to sing,
And all the woods with fairy voices ring;
The hills in dreamy languor seem to swoon
Through the blue haze! behold, the hour of noon!

And lo! there came to pass the dreadful fate
Her lips had shuddered out; her pulses bate
Their quick sweet movement; on the ground she lies
Struggling, and rending Heaven with her cries.
Like light, in one convulsive pang the snake
Leapt in the sunlight, and its body brake
With glistening scales that golden skin of hers,
And writhing with pure shame, the long grass whirrs
With her sharp flight of fury and despair.
Then Charicles at last became aware
Of the fell death that had him by the throat
To mar his music; like one blind he smote
The quivering air with cries of sorrow; then,
Disdaining fear and sorrow, cried to men
And gods to help him; then, resolved to dare
All wrath and justice, he rose up to swear
(Lifting his right hand to the sky, that glowed
Deadly vermilion, like the poisonous toad
That darts an angry red from out its eye,)
By sword and spear, by maze and mystery,
By Zeus' high house, and by his godhead great,
By his own soul, no ardour to abate
Until he freed Archais. Like a star
Rebellious, thrust beyond the morning's bar,
Erect, sublime, he swore so fierce an oath
That the sea flashed with blasphemy, and loath
Black thunder broke from out the shuddering deep.
He swore again, and from its century's sleep
Earthquake arose, and rocked and raved and roared.
He swore the third time. But that Heaven's Lord
Curbed their black wrath, the stars of Heaven's vault
Had rushed to whelm the sun with vehement assault.

The heavens stood still, but o'er the quaking earth,
That groaned and shrank with the untimely birth
Of fury and freedom, Charicles strode on
With fervid foot, to Aphrodite's throne
In seagirt Paphos, to exact her aid—
The sun stood still, creation grew afraid
At his firm step and mien erect and undismayed.

Strident the godlike hero called aloud
Blaspheming, while that sombre bank of cloud
Witnessed the wrath of Zeus; the thunder broke
From purple flashes vanished into smoke
That rolled unceasingly through heaven; the youth
Cried out against high Zeus, "The cause of Truth,
Freedom, and Justice!" and withal strode on
To the vast margin of the waters wan
That barred him from his goal; his cloak he stripped,
Then in the waves his sudden body dipped
And with his strenuous hands the emerald water gripped.

Long had he struggled (for Poseidon's hand
Heaped foam against him) toward the seemly strand,
But that Love's Mother,[1] journeying from Rome,
Passed in her car the swimmer, while her home
Scarce yet was glimmering o'er the waste wide sea
Against whose wrath he strove so silently;
Whom now beholding, checked her eager team,
Dipped to the foam from which she sprang, whose gleam
Bore the sweet mirage of her eyes, and bent
Over the weary Charicles. Content
With him she spake, and he, still buffeting
The waves, looked never up, but with the swing
Of strong fierce limbs, clove through the water gray.
Hearing her voice, he answered, "Ere the day
Has fallen from his pinnacle must I
Reach sea-girt Paphos, with a bitter cry
To clasp the knees of Cytherea, and pray
That she will aid me." Then the billows lay
Fondly quiescent while she answered him:
"Yea, are thine eyes with weeping grown so dim
Thou canst not see who hovers over thee?
For I am she thou seekest. Come with me
And tell me all thy grief; thy prayer is heard
Before thy spirit clothes in wintry word
The fire it throbs with." So her eager doves
Waited. From seas grown calm the wanton loves
Lifted the hero to the pearly car,
Whose floor was azure and whose front a star
Set in seven jewels girt with ivory.

Then the light rein the goddess left to lie
Unheeded, and the birds flew on apace,
Until the glint and glory of the place
Grew o'er the blue dim line of ocean.
It was a temple never built of man,
Being of marble white, and all unhewn,
Above a cliff, about whose base were strewn
Boulders of amethyst or malachite.
Save these the cliffs rose sheer, a dazzling white,
Six hundred feet from ocean; so divine
Was the tall precipice, that from the shrine
A child might fling a stone and splash it in the brine.
Within whose silver courts and lily bowers
The Queen of Love led Charicles; white flowers
Blushed everywhere to scarlet, as her feet,
Themselves more white, did touch them. On a seat,
White with strewn rose, and leaves of silver birch,
Remote from courts profane, and vulgar search,
They rested, till the hero's tale was told.
Then Aphrodite loosed a snake of gold
From her arm's whiteness, and upon his wrist
Clasped it. Its glittering eyes of amethyst
Fascinate him. "Even so," the goddess cried,
"I will bind on thy arm the serpent bride

[1] Aphrodite.

Free from her fate, and promise by this kiss
The warmer kisses of thy Archais."
She spake, and on his brow, betwixt her hands
Pressed softly, as a maid in bridal bands,
Kissed him a mother's kiss. Then Charicles
Gave her due thanks, and bent his ear to seize
Her further words. And she: "Not many days
Shall flame and flicker into darkened ways
Before the wings of night, ere Hermes fly
Hither, the messenger of Zeus. But I
Bid thee remain beneath the temple gate
While I consider of our war on Fate.
Till then, and I will tell thee everything
That thou must do; but now let song take wing
Till the pale air swoon with the deep delight
That makes cool noontide from the sultry night.
What are your dreams, my maidens? Your young dreams?
Are they of passion, or of rocks and streams,
Of purple mountains, clad about with green,
Or do their lamps grow dim in the unseen?
Sing to this hero; sing, lure slumber to your queen."

SONG OF APHRODITE'S HANDMAIDENS

My dreams are sweet, because my heart is free,
  Because our locks still mingle and lips meet,
Because thine arms still hold me tenderly,
  My dreams are sweet.

Visions of waters rippling by my feet,
  Trees that re-weave their branches lovingly,
Birds that pass passionate on pinions fleet:

Such quiet joys my eyes in slumber see—
  Let death's keen sickle wander through the wheat!
I love not life o'ermuch; since loving thee
  My dreams are sweet.

Sing, little bird, it is dawn;
  Cry! with the day the woods ring;
Now in the blush of the morn
    Sing!

Love doth enchain me and cling,
  Love, of the breeze that is born,
Love, with the breeze that takes wing.

Love that is lighter than scorn,
  Love, that is strong as a king,
Love, through the gate that is horn,[1]
    Sing!

Then Charicles rejoicing quickly ran
And chose a lyre, and thus his song began
Rippling through melodies unheard of man.

SONG OF CHARICLES.

Wake, fairy maid, for the day
  Blushes our curtain to shake;
Summer and blossoms of May
    Wake!

Lilies drink light on the lake,
  Laughter drives dreamland away,
Kisses shall woo thee, and slake

Passion with amorous play,
  Clip thee and love, for Love's sake.
Wake and caress me, I pray,
    Wake!

Snow-hills and streams, dew-diamonded,
  Call us from silvery dreams
To where the morning kindles red
  Snow-hills and streams.

See, breezes whisper, sunlight gleams
  With gentle kissings; flowers shed
Pale scents, the whole sweet meadow steams.

Forth, glittering shoulders, golden head,
  And tune our lutes to tender themes
Among the lost loves of the dead,
  Snow-hills and streams.

1 The gate through which true dreams are perceived.

The queen clapped dainty hands, caressed of dew,
And bade the love-lorn wanderer sing anew.
His muse came trembling, soon through starry air it flew.

SONG OF CHARICLES.

Within the forest gloom
There lies a lover's bower,
A lotus-flower
In bloom.

O lotus-flower too white,
Starred purple, round and sweet,
Rich golden wheat
Of night!

I'll kiss thee, lotus-flower,
I'll pluck thee, yellow grain,
Once and again
This hour.

There coos a dove to me
Across the waves of space;
O passionate face
To see!

I'll woo thee, silver dove,
Caress thee, lotus-flower;
It is the hour
Of Love.

Cypris blushed deep; albeit for love did swoon
At the song's sweetness, while the cold dead moon
Was still and pale; her nymphs are fain to sigh
With sudden longing filled, and like to die
For vain delight, for still across the sea
Stole sensuous breaths of Sapphic melody
From the far strand of Lesbos; then there came
Into their eyes a new and awful flame
Suddenly burning; now upon the beach
The waves kept tune in unexpressive speech
As the sad voice drew nigh; the hero shrank
Like one in awe; the flame shot up and sank
From the crimson-vestured altar; then the song
Found in the wavering breeze from over sea a tongue.

Here, on the crimson strand of blood-red waters,
We, Cypris, not thy daughters,
Clad in bright flame, filled with unholy wine,
O Cypris, none of thine!—

Here, kissing in the dim red dusk, we linger,
Striking with amorous finger
Our lyres, whose fierce delights are all divine—
O Cypris, none of thine!

Quenchless, insatiable, the unholy fire
Floods our red lips' desire;
Our kisses sting, as barren as the brine—
O Cypris, none of thine!

Our songs are awful, that the heavens shrink back
Into their void of black.
We worship at a sad insatiate shrine—
O Cypris, none of thine!

Scarcely the song did cease when out of heaven
A little cloud grew near, all thunder-riven,
Scarred by the lightning, torn of ravaging wind;
Upon it sate the herald, who should find
The home of Aphrodite, and should bring
A message from high Zeus. The mighty king
Had bidden him to speed. His wings drew nigh
And hushed the last faint echoed melody
With silver waving. As the messenger
Of mighty Zeus descending unto her
He stood before her, and called loud her name,
Wrapped in a cloud of amber-scented flame
Befitting his high office; but his word,
Too terrible for mortals, passed unheard

To Cypris' ear alone. She bowed her head
And bade her nymphs prepare a royal bed
Where he should rest awhile; and, being gone,
Cypris and Charicles were left alone.
An aureole of purple round her brow
Flames love no more; but fierce defiance now
Knotted the veins, suffused them with rich blood,
And wrath restrained from sight the torrid flood
Of tears; her eyes were terrible; she spake:
"Rise for thy life, and flee. Arise, awake,
And hide thee in the temple; Zeus hath spoken
To me—me, Queen of Love—O sceptre broken!—
O vainest of all realms! that thou must die.
This only chance is left thee yet, to fly
Within that sanctity even he not dares
To touch with impious hand; thus unawares
Creep in among the columns to a gate
My hand shall show thee; it will open straight
And thou must lie forgotten till his rage
Have lost its first excess—then may we wage
A more successful war against his power."
But Charicles: "Shall I for one short hour
Fly from his tyranny? Am I such man
As should flee from him? Let the pale and wan
Women have fear—in strength of justice, I
His vain fierce fury do this hour defy!"
There shot through Heaven an awful tongue of fire,
Attended by its minister, the dire
Black thunder. In clear accents, cold and chill,
There sounded: "Boldest mortal, have thy will!
I do reverse the doom of Archais
And lay it on thyself; nor ever this
Shall lift its curse from off thee, this I swear."
And Cypris looked upon him and was ware
His form did change, and, writhing from her clasp,
Fled hissing outward, a more hateful asp
Than India breeds to-day, so terrible
Was his despair, so venomous as hell
The sudden hate that filled him. So away,
Knowing not whither, did he flee, till day
Dropped her blue pinions, and the night drew on,
And sable clouds banked out the weary sun.

Part III

Long days and nights succeeded in despair.
Each noon beheld his doom—too proud for prayer,
And scorning Aphrodite's help—he strayed
Through swamps and weary bogs, nor yet betrayed
His anguished countenance to mortal men.
There was so keen an hour of sorrow, when
He had destroyed himself; but Heaven's hand,
Stretched out in vengeance, held him back. The land,
Where rest is made etérnal, slipped his clutch;
He wandered through the world and might not touch
The sceptre of King Death. In vain he sought
Those fierce embraces, nor availed him aught
To numb the aching of his breast. The maid
He loved, now freed from doom, no longer prayed
For anything but to discover him,
And her large eyes with weeping grew more dim
Than are the mists of Autumn on the hills.
She sought him far and near; the rocks and rills
Could tell her nought; the murmur of the trees
Told her their pity and no more; the breeze
That cooled its burning locks within the sea,
And dared not pass o'er the dank swamps where he
Was hid, knew nothing; nor the soughing waves,
Through all the desolation of those caves

The sea-nymphs haunt, could say a word of him;
No stars, to whom she looked, had seen the grim
Abodes of Charicles, for deadly shade
Lowered o'er their top, nor any light betrayed
The horror of their core. Despairing then
Of nature's prophets, and of gods and men,
She cast her arms wide open to the sky,
Cried loud, and wept, and girt herself to die.

It was a pinnacle of ivory
Whereon she stood, the loftiest of three fangs
Thrust up by magic, in the direst pangs
Of Earth, when Earth was yet a whirling cloud
Of fire and adamant, a ceaseless crowd
Of rushing atoms roaring into space,
Driven by demons from before the Face.
And these gleamed white, while Helios lit the heaven,
Like tusks; but at the coming of the even
Were visions wonderful with indigo;
And in the glory of the afterglow
Were rosy with its kiss; and in the night
Were crowned with that unutterable light
That is a brilliance of solemn black,
Glistening wide across the ocean track
Of white-sailed ships and many mariners.
So, on the tallest spire, where wakes and whirrs
The eagle when dawn strikes his eyrie, came
The maiden, clad in the abundant flame
Of setting sun, with shapely shoulders bare,
And even the glory of her midday hair
Was bound above her head; so, naked pure,
Fixed in that purpose, which the gods endure
With calm despair, the purpose to be passed
Into the circle, that, serene and vast,
Girds all, and is itself the All—to die—
So stood she there, with eyes of victory
Fixed on the sun, about to sink his rays
Beneath the ocean, that the pallid bays
Fringed with white foam. But, as in pity, yet
The sun forgot his chariot, nor would set,
Since as he sank the maiden thought to leap
Within the bosom of the vaulted deep
From that high pedestal. And seeing this,
That yet an hour was left her, Archais
Lift up her voice and prayed with zeal divine
To Aphrodite, who from her far shrine
Heard and flew fast to aid over the night-clad brine.

Prayer of Archais.

O Mother of Love,
By whom the earth and all its fountains move
In harmony,
Hear thou the bitter overwhelming cry
Of me, who love, who am about to die
Because of love.

O Queenliest Shrine,
Keeper of keys of heaven, most divine
Yet Queen of Pain,
Since Hell's gates open, and close fast again
Behind some servants of thy barren and vain
Though queenliest shrine.

I am of those
Who hear their brazen clanging as they close
Fastward on life.
I wane to-night, wearied with endless strife,
A lover alway, never yet a wife,
Lost in love's woes.

Not unperceived of Cypris did her song
Die fitfully upon her tremulous tongue,
Nor fell the melody on cruel ears:
The bright-throat goddess sped through many spheres
Of sight, beyond the world, and flamed across
All space, on wings that not the albatross
Might match for splendour, stretch, or airy speed,
From cluster unto cluster at her need
Of stars, wide waving, and from star to star
Extended, in whose span the heavens are.
So came she to the maiden, and unseen
Gazed on her rapt. So sighed the amorous queen

"For her indeed might Charicles despair!"
Yet of her presence was the maiden 'ware,
Although her mortal eyes might see her not;
So she knelt down upon that holy spot
And greeted her with tears; for now at last
The fountains of her sorrow, vague and vast,
Burst from the strong inexorable chain
Of too great passion, and a mortal pain
Beyond belief, and so in sudden waves
Tears welled impatient from their crystal caves.
(Men say those barren pinnacles are set
Since then with jewels; the white violet
Was born of those pure tears; the snowdrop grew
Where wakening hope her agony shot through,
And where the Queen of Love had touched her tears,
The new-born lily evermore appears.)
So Cypris comforts her with tender words
That pierce her bosom, like dividing swords,
With hopes and loves requickened, and her breath
Grew calm as worship's, though as dark as death
Her soul had been for weary days no few;
Now, lightened by the spirit thrust anew
As into a dead body breath of life,
She gave sweet thanks with gentle lips that ope,
Like buds of roses on the sunny slope
Of lily gardens falling toward a stream
That flashes back the intolerable beam
Of sunlight with light heart.

They fled away
At Cypris' word, beyond the bounds of day
Into the awful caverns of the night,
Eerie with ghosts imagined, and the might
Of strange spells cast upon them by the dead.
So, ere the dying autumn-tide was fled,
There, in a lonely cleft of riven rock,
Whose iron fastnesses disdain and mock
Fury and fire with impassivity,
Archais rested, there alone must she
Wait the event of Aphrodite's wiles.
There, like a statue, 'mid the massy piles
Of thunder-smitten stone, as motionless
As Fate she sat, in manifold distress,
Awaiting and awaiting aye the same
One strong desire of life, that never came.

For Aphrodite sought in vain the woods,
The silent mountains, and impetuous floods
In all the world, nor had she knowledge of
Such dens as him concealed; (for what should Love
Know of such vile morasses?) in despair
Waved angry wings, and, floating through the air,
Came unto Aphaca, lewd citadel
Of strange new lusts and devilries of hell,
Where god Priapus dwelt; to him she came—
She, Love!—and, hiding her fair face for shame,
Nor showing aught the quivering scorn that glowed
Through all her body, her desire showed
In brief sharp words, and the lewd god gave ear
(For he shook terribly with bastard fear
Of being cast beneath the hoof of Time)
And answered her: "O mightiest, O sublime
White deity of heaven, a swamp is known
To me, so vile, so more than venomous grown
With filthy weeds; yea, all lewd creatures swarm
Its airless desolation through; and warm
Sick vapours of disease do putrefy
Its feverish exhalations; yet do I
With some fond band of loyal worshippers
Often draw thither; and black ministers
Of mine therein do office; I have seen
This being cursed of Zeus, a snake unclean
With its unholy neighbourhood; at morn
A fair bright youth, whose large eyes well might scorn
The wanton eyes of Ganymede, whose tongue
Reiterates ill curses idly strung
In circles meaningless high Zeus to move,
Yet has twain other cries; the one is 'Love!'
The other 'Archais!'" The Paphian lips
Smiled with a splendour potent to eclipse

The large-lipped drawn-out grinning of that court
That mouthed and gibbered in their swinish sport.
So with meet words of gratitude the dame
That rules our lives withdrew, triumphant flame
Kindling in her bright eyes and sunwarmed hair,
Burning in dawny cheeks as the fresh air
Kissed, cleansing them from that infested den
Of obscene deities and apish men,
Rivalling their gods in petty filthiness.
So Love's white-bosomed Queen gat full success
In the first season of her sojourning.

Then, on the verge of night, she went a-wing
To that most damnèd pestilence-rid marsh,
And, changing her bright shape, she donned the harsh
Vile form of woman past the middle age,
Who hath not virtue that may charm the sage
When the desire of folly is gone by,
And wrinkles yield to no false alchemy.
So, lewd of countenance, dressed all in rags,
She waited, fit mate of hell's filthiest hags,
Within a little hut upon the marge
Extreme of that bad swamp, whereby a barge,
Rotted with years and pestilence, lay moored.
The rusty chain men meant to have secured
Its most unwieldy hulk was eaten through
Of sharp-tongued serpents, and the poisonous dew
That the foul damp let fall at evening
Rotted it even to its core. A ring
Of silver girt it to the landing-stage,
Yet brimstone joined in wedlock with foul age
To burn into its vitals; thus the breath
Of Satyrs wantoning at noon with Death
Strained it, and all but cast it loose; the night
Drew on the outer world; no change of light
Was known within those depths, but vermin knew
By some strange instinct; forth the unholy crew
Of vampires and swamp-adders drew them out.
Alone amid the pestilential rout
Charicles' crest did glimmer red with wrath,
And, stealing from the barge, he drew him forth
And writhed into the hut, for latterly
So dark his soul had grown that never he
For shame and sorrow wore the form of man.
So to the hut on writhing coils he ran
With angry head erect, and passed within
Its rotten doorway. Then the thing of Sin
That mocked the name of woman fondled him,
Stroked his flat head, his body curved and slim,
And from the fire brought milk. He drank it up
From the coarse pewter of the borrowed cup
And cried: "In eating, swear. I have vowed to make
The gods infernal on their couches quake
With fear before I die; I have vowed to live
With one aim only; never to forgive
The wrong the gods do me, and in my form
Love his high self, by whom the earth is warm
To-day, by whose defiance the universe
Would crash in one inextricable curse
To primal chaos. Hear me, I have sworn."
Then, suddenly, more glorious than the morn
Tipping the golden tops of autumn hills
With light, more countless than the myriad rills
Of bright dew running off the bracken leaves,
With gold more saturated than the sheaves
In the red glow that promises the day
Shall glory when the night is fled away
In bonds, a captive; so more glorious
Than the supreme ideal dreams of us
Mortals, he sprang forth suddenly a man.
Wherefore the hag, triumphant, then began
Likewise to change. The writhled visage grew
Fouler and fiercer, blacker in its hue;
The skewed deformities became more vile,
The rags more rotten, till a little while,

And all was changed to a putrescent heap
Of oily liquid on the floor asleep,
Like poisonous potency of mandragore
Ready to strike. And then a change came o'er
Its turbid mass, that shook, and grew divine,
A million-twinkling ocean of bright brine
That seemed to spread beyond the horizon,
Whence, stirred by strange emotions of the sun,
Waves rolled upon it, and a wind arose
And lashed it with insatiable blows
Into a surging labyrinth of foam,
Boiling up into heaven's unchanging dome
Of brightest æther; then, its womb uncloses
To bring to birth a garden of white roses,
Whence, on a mystic shell of pearl, is borne
A goddess, bosomed like the sea at morn,
Glittering in all the goodlihead and grace
Of maiden magic; her delicious face
Grew more and more upon the hero's sight,
Till all the hut was filled with rosy light,
And Charicles' grey eyes were luminous
With love-reflections multitudinous
As lilies in the spring. Again was seen
As in a mirror, like the ocean green,
The admirable birth of Love's eternal Queen.

So Charicles a moment was amazed.
A moment; then, contemptuous, he gazed
With curling lip on her, and sourly scorns
Her petty miracle: "The deed adorns
Too well a queen whose promises are foam."
And she, indignant, would have hied her home
And left him to despair, but pitying
His soul struck through with darts: "A bitter thing"
(She cried) "thou sayest, yet perchance my power
Is not as great as thine, for while I cower
Under the lash of Zeus, stand thou upright,
And laugh him to his beard for all his spite."
"I, even now beneath his doom?" "Even thou!
For learn this law, writ large upon the brow
Of white Olympus, writ by him who made
Thee, yea and Zeus, of whom is Zeus afraid,
Graven by Him with an eternal pen,
The first law in the destiny of men:
He whom Zeus wrongfully once injures may not be
Hurt by his power again in the most small degree.
Thus, thy Archais"—"Mine! ah nevermore!"
"Peace, doubter!—is made free from all the sore
Oppressions of the past, nor may again
Zeus lay on her the shadow of a pain."
"But I, but I"—"Yea, verily, fear not
But stratagem may lift thy bitter lot
From thy worn shoulders. Thus for half the day
Thou art as free as air, as woodland fay
Treading the circle of unearthly green,
By maiden eyes at summer midnight seen.
These hours of freedom thou may'st use to free
Love from his toils, and joy and goodly gree[1]
Shall be thy guerdon. Listen! I have power
To change thy semblance in thy happier hour;
Thou shalt assume the countenance of Love's
Divinest maiden in the darkling groves
Of Ida. There shalt thou meet happily
With Zeus himself. I leave the scheme to thee."

The flash of her desire within his brain
Came as a meteor through the wildered train
Of solemn spheres of night's majestic court.
He kissed the extended hand, and lastly sought
A blessing from the kindly Queen of Love.
Then, smiling, she was bountiful thereof,
And bade him haste away, when at the gate—
Twin witch-oaks that presided o'er the state
Of that detested realm—he felt a change,
Half pleasant, only beyond wonder strange,
A change as from a joy to a delight,
As from broad sunshine to the fall of night,
As from strong action to endurance strong,
As from desire to the power to long,

[1] Gladness.

From man to woman with a strange swift motion,
Like tide and ebb upon a summer ocean.
Thus he went forth a girl; his steps he presses
Through sickly wastes and burning wildernesses
To the lascivious shade of Ida's deep recesses.

Part IV.

Fairer than woman blushing at the kiss
Of young keen Phoibos, whose lips' nectar is
More fresh than lilies, whose divine embrace
Flushes the creamy pallor of her face,
And, even in those depths of azure sea
Where her eyes dwell, bids them glint amorously,
While the intense hushed music of his breath
Sighs, till her longing grows divine as death—
So, fairer far, drew dawn on Ida's grove.
The young sun rose, whose burning lips of love
Kissed the green steeps, whose royal locks of flame
Brushed o'er the dewy pastures, with acclaim
Of tuneful thrushes shrill with mountain song,
And noise of nightingales, and murmur long—
A sigh half-sad, as if remembering earth
And all the massy pillars of her girth;
Half-jubilant, as if foreseeing a world
Fresher with starlight and with waters pearled,
Sunnier days and rivers calm and clear,
And music for four seasons of the year,
And pleasant peoples with glad throat and voice
Too wise to grieve, too happy to rejoice.
So came the dawn on Ida to disclose
Within her confines a delicious rose
Lying asleep, a-dreaming, white of brow,
Stainless and splendid. Yea, and fair enow
To tempt the lips of Death to kiss her eyes
And bid her waken in the sad surprise
Of seeing round her the iron gates of hell
In gloomy strength: so sweet, so terrible,
So fair, her image in the brook might make
A passionless old god his hunger slake
By plunging in the waters, though he knew
His drowning body drowned her image too.
Yet she seemed gentle. Never thorn assailed
The tender finger that would touch, nor failed
The strong desire of Zeus, who wisely went,
As was his wont, with amorous intent
Among those pastures, and fresh fragrant lawns,
And dewy wonder of new woods, where dawns
A new flower every day, a perfect flower,
Each queenlier than her sister, though the shower
Of early dew begemmed them all with stars,
Diamond and pearl, between the pleasant bars
Of cool green trees that avenued the grove.
Zeus wandered through their bounds, and dreamt of love.
Weary of women's old lascivious breed,
The large luxurious lips of Ganymede,
He, weary of tainted kiss and feverish lust,
Esteeming love a desert of dry dust
Because he found no freshness, no restraint,
No virgin bosom, lips without a taint
Of lewd imagining, yet passed not by
With scorn of curled lip and contempt of eye
The chaste abandon of the sleeping maid,
But looked upon her lips, checked course, and stayed,
And noted all the virginal fresh air
Of Charicles, the maiden head half bare
To Phoibos' kiss, half veiled by dimpled arms
Within whose love it rested, all her charms
Half-shown, half-hidden, amorous but chaste.
And so, between the branches interlaced
And all the purple white-starred undergrowth,
Zeus crept beside the maiden, little loath
To waken her caresses, and let noon
Fade into midnight in the amorous swoon
Of long delight, and so with gentle kiss
Touched the maid's cheek, and broke her dream of bliss.
And she, more startled than the yearling fawn
As the rude sun breaks golden out of dawn,

One swift sharp beam of glory, leapt aside
And made as if to flee, but vainly plied
Her tender feet amid the tangled flowers.
For Zeus, enraptured, put forth all his powers,
And caught her panting, timid, tremulous.
And he with open lips voluptuous
Closed her sweet mouth with kisses, and so pressed
Her sobbing bosom with a manlier breast
That she was silent; next, with sudden force,
Implacable, unshamed, without remorse,
Would urge his further suit; but so she strove
That even the power of Zeus, made weak for love,
Found its last limit, and, releasing her,
Prayed for her grace, a raptured worshipper,
Where but a moment earlier had he striven
A sacrilegious robber. And all heaven
Seemed open to his eyes as she looked down
Into their love, half smiling, with a frown
Coquetting with her forehead. Then a change,
Angry and wonderful, began to range
Over her cheeks; she bitterly began:
"I will not yield to thee—a mortal man
Alone shall know my love. No God shall come
From his high place and far immortal home
To bend my will by force. Freeborn, I live
In freedom, and the love that maidens give
To men I give to one, but thou, most high,
(For woman's wits through your deceptions spy
And know ye for Olympians) shalt know
A maiden's heart no lover may win so.
Farewell, and find a fairer maid to love!
Farewell!" But he: "Through all the silent grove
I sought thee sighing—for thy love would I
Consent to be a man, consent to die,
Put off my godhead." "If thou sayest sooth,
And thy fair words bedew the flowers of truth
Nor wander in the mazy groves of lying,
I will be thine—speak not to me of dying
Or abdication, sith I deem so far
To tempt thee were unwise—we mortals are
Chary to ask too much—didst thou refuse
Either my honour or thy love to lose
Were a hard portion, for in sooth I love."
"Ah happy hour, sweet moment! Fairest grove
Of all fair Ida, thou hast sealed my bliss!"
Then with one long intense unpitying kiss
Pressed on her bosom, he arose and swore
By heaven and earth and all the seas that roar
And stars that sing, by rivers and fresh flood,
By his own essence, by his body and blood,
To lay his godhead down, till night drew nigh,
To be a mortal till the vesper cry
Of dying breezes. So the morning past
And found them linked inexorably fast
Each in the other's arms. Their lips are wed
To drink the breezes from the fountain-head
Of lovers' breath. Now Zeus half rises up,
Sips once again from that moon-curvéd cup,
And, in his passion gazing on the flower,
Darker and riper for Love's perfect hour,
His clear voice through the silent atmosphere
Burst rich and musical upon her ear.

Song of Zeus.

O rosy star
Within thy sky of ebony shot through
With hints of blue
More golden and more far
Than earthly stars and flowers
That beam lasciviously through night's empurpled hours!

O well of fire!
O fountain of delicious spurting flame
Grown sad with shame,
Whose imminent desire
Drinks in the dew of earth,
Gives its own limpid streams to quench man's deathly dearth.

O gardened rose!
The fern-fronds gird thy fragrant beauty round.
Thy ways are bound
With petals that unclose
When the sun seeks his way
Through night and sleep and love to all the dreams of day.

Love, sleep, and death!
The three that melt together, mingle so
Man may not know
The little change of breath
(Caught sigh that love desires,)
When love grows sleep, and sleep at last in death expires.

O lamp of love!
The hissing spray shall jet thee with desire
And foaming fire,
And fire from thee shall move
Her spirit to devour,
And fuse and mingle us in one transcendent hour.

Godhead is less
Than mortal love, the garland of the spheres,
Than those sweet tears
That yield no bitterness
To the luxurious cries
That love shrills out in death, that murmur when love dies.

Love dies in vain.
For breezes hasten from the summer south
To touch his mouth
And bid him rise again,
Till, ere the dawn-star's breath,
Love kisses into sleep, Sleep swoons away to Death.

So Zeus in her sweet arms slept daintily
Till the sun crept into the midmost sky,
And his own curse came back to sleep with him.
Through the noon's haze the world was vast and dim,
The streams and trees and air were shimmering
With summer heat and earth's cool vapouring,
When, round his limbs entwined, a fiery snake
Hissed in his frightened ear the call "Awake."
And Zeus arisen strives vainly to release
His valiant body from the coils, nor cease
His angry struggles in their cruel hold.
But all implacable, unyielding, cold,
Their sinuous pressure on his breast and thighs,
The white teeth sharp and ready otherwise
In one fierce snap to slay. There hissed "Beware!
Fear Charicles avenging, and despair!"

And Zeus beheld the springe his foot was in,
And, once more wise, being out of love, would win
His freedom on good terms. His liberty
For Charicles' he bartered. Willingly
The boy accepts, yet in his eye remains
A tender woman-feeling, and his pains,
And even Archais' woes he did forget
In the sweet Lethe, that his lips had set
To their ripe brim, that he had drained. But now,
Freedom regained, more manly grows the brow;
He is again the free, the bold, the lover!
Far o'er the green his new-starred eyes discover
A kirtle glancing in the breeze, a foot
That lightly dances, though the skies be mute
Of music. Forth she flies, the distant dove,
And calls the woodland birds to sing of love;
Forth leaps the stag and calls his mates; the stream
Flashes a silver sunbeam, a gold gleam
Of leaping laughter, that the fish may know
The goodly tidings; all the woodlands glow
With olive and pure silver and red gold,
And all sweet nature's marvels manifold
Combine together in the twilight dim
To harmonise in the thalamic hymn.

HYMN.

O Lord our God !
O woodland king ! O thou most dreadful God !
Who chasest thieves and smitest with thy rod,
That fearful rod, too sharp, too strong
For thy weak worshippers to bear !
Hear thou their murmured song
Who cry for pardon ; pity, and prepare
For pain's delight thy votaries who kiss thy rod,
O high Lord God !

O Lord our God !
God of green gardens ! O imperious god !
Who as a father smitest with thy rod
Thine erring children who aspire
In vain to the high mysteries
Of thy most secret fire.
Beat us and burn with nameless infamies !
We suffer, and are proud and glad, and kiss thy rod,
O high Lord God !

O Lord our God !
O despot of the fields ! O silent god !
Who hidest visions underneath thy rod,
And hast all dreams and all desires and fears,
All secrets and all loves and joys
Of all the long vague years
For lightsome maidens and desire-pale boys
Within thy worship. We desire thy bitter rod,
O high Lord God !

Thus that most reverend sound through all the vale
Pealed in low cadences that rise and fail,
And all the augurs promise happy days,
And all the men for Archais have praise,
And all maids' eyes are fixed on Charicles.
Then, to the tune of musical slow seas,
The wind began to murmur on the mead,
And he, unconscious, drew his eager reed
From the loose tunic ; now they seat themselves
On moss worn smooth by feet of many elves
Dancing at midnight through them, and their voice
Bids all the woodland echoes to rejoice
Because the lovers are made one at last.
Then Charicles began to play ; they cast
Tunic and snood and sandal, and began
To foot a happy measure for a span,
While still Archais at his feet would sit,
Gaze in his eyes, by love and triumph lit,
And listen to the music. And the fire
Of his light reed so kindled her desire
That she with new glad confidence would quire
A new song exquisite, whose tender tune
Was nurtured at the bosom of the moon
And kissed on either cheek by sun and rain.
She trembled and began. The troop was fain
To keep pure silence while her notes resound
Over the forest and the marshy ground.

ARCHAIS.

Green and gold the meadows lie
In the sunset's eye.
Green and silver the woods glow
When the sun is low,
And the moon sails up like music on a sea of breathing snow.

Chain and curse are passed away ;
Love proclaims the day.
Dawned his sunrise o'er the sea,
Changing olive waves to be
Founts of emerald and sapphire ; he is risen, we are free.

Light and dark are wed together
Into golden weather ;
Sun and moon have kissed, and built
Palaces star-gilt
Whence a crystal stream of joy, love's eternal wine, is spilt.

CHARICLES.

Join our chorus, tread the turf
To the beating of the surf.
Dance together, ere we part,
And Selene's dart
Give the signal for your slumber and the rapture of our heart.

Semi-Chorus of Men.

Exalted with immeasurable gladness;
Bonds touched with tears and melted like the snow:—
Wake the song loudly; loose the leash of madness,
Beat the loud drum, and bid the trumpet blow!

Semi-Chorus of Women.

Let the lute thrill divinely low,
Let the harp strike a tender note of sadness;
Louder and louder, till the full song flow,
One earth-dissolving stream of utter gladness!

CHORUS.

Free! ye are free! Delight, thou Moon, to hear us!
Smile, Artemis, thy virgin leaves thy fold!
Star of the morning, fling thy blossom near us!
Phoibos, re-kindle us with molten gold!
Starbeams and woven tresses of the ocean,
Flowers of the rolling mountains and the lea,
Trees, and innumerable flocks and herds,
Wild cattle and bright birds,
Tremble above the sea
With song more noble, the divinest potion
Of poet's wonder and bard's melody.

ARCHAIS.

Cold is the kiss of the stars to the sea,
The kiss of the earth to the orient grey
That heralds the day;
Warmer the kiss of a love that is free
As the wind of the sea,
Quick and resurgent and splendid.

CHARICLES.

Night her bright bow-string has bended;
Fast flies her arrow unsparing
Through the beech-leaves,
Æther it cleaves
Rapid and daring.
Ah! how it strikes as with silver! how the sun's laughter is ended!

ARCHAIS.

How the moon's arms are extended!

Semi-Chorus of Men.

Rejoicing, inarticulate with pleasure,
Joy streams a comet in the strong control
Of the sun's love; weave, weave the eager measure,
Fill the sea's brim from pleasure's foaming bowl!

Semi-Chorus of Women.

Weave, weave the dance; the stars are not your goal.
Freed slaves of Fortune, love's your only treasure.
While the gold planets toward the sunlight roll,
Weave, weave the dance! Weave, weave the eager measure!

CHARICLES.

Of your revels I'll be king,

ARCHAIS.

I the queen of your array.
Foot it nimbly in the ring,

CHARICLES.

Strewn with violet and may.

ARCHAIS.

Apple-blossom pile on high,
Till the bridal bed is duly
Panoplied with blooms that sigh.

CHARICLES.

Not a flower of them shall die,
Every one shall blossom newly;
Stars shall lend them of their beauty,
Rain and sunshine know their duty.

ARCHAIS.

Not a flower of them shall die
That compose our canopy;
Beech and chestnut, poplar tall,
Birch and elm shall flourish all
Dewed with ever-living spring.
Song and dance shall close the day,

CHORUS.

Close this happy, happy day.

CHARICLES.

Of your revels I'll be king,

ARCHAIS.

I the queen of your array.

Both.

Foot it nimbly in the ring!

CHORUS.

Stay, stars, and dance with us! Our songs compel
The very gods to tremble,
Banish the ill ghosts of hell,
Make fiends their shape dissemble.
Freedom forbids their tyrannous reign here,
Flee to their prison must they, nor deceive;
Love has a lightning that shall strip them clear,
Truth through the curtain of the dark shall reave.
Ye love, O happy ones and chaste,
Ye love, and light indwells your eyes;
Truth is the girdle of your waist,
Ye play before the gates of pearl of Paradise.
Happy lovers, dwell together
In the isles of golden weather,
Free of tyranny and tether,
Roam the world, linked hand in hand,
Moonlight for your sleep, and breezes
Fresh from where the Ocean freezes,
And the cold Aurora stands
With new lilies in her hands.
Happy lovers, twilight falls.
Let us leave you for awhile,
Guarding all the golden walls
With the weapon of a smile.
Silver arrows from the maiden
With new labours laden
Shall be shot at bold intruders who would violate your peace;
Lightning shall keep watch and warden through the sea-born isles of Greece.
Sleep! Sleep!
Sleep, ye happy lovers, sleep,
Soft and dreamless, sweet and deep,
Sleep! Sleep!

We will steal away
Till the break of day.

ARCHAIS.

In the arms of love at last
Love is anchored fast,
Firm beyond the rage of Heaven, safe beyond the ocean blast.

CHARICLES.

In the arms of love close prest!
O thy tender breast
Pillows now my happy head; softly breezes from the west

Both.

Stir the ring-dove's nest.
In the arms of love we lie;
Music from the sky
Tunes the hymeneal lyre that will echo till we die.
God we feel is very nigh;
Soft, breeze, sigh
While we kiss at last to slumber,
And the varied number
Of the forest songsters cry:
This is immortality; this is happiness for aye.

Hush ! the music swells apace,
Rolls its silver billows up
Through the void demesne of space
To the heavens' azure cup !
Hush, my love, and sleep shall sigh
This is immortality !

EPILOGUE.

In Hollow Stones, Scawfell.

Blind the iron pinnacles edge the twilight ;
Blind and black the ghylls of the mountain clefted,
Crag and snow-clad slope in a distant vision
Rise as before me.

Here (it seems) my feet by a tiny torrent
Press the moss with a glad delight of being :
Here my eyes look up to the riven mountain
Split by the thunder.

Rent and rifted, shattered of wind and lightning,
Smitten, scarred, and stricken of sun and tempest,
Seamed with wounds, like adamant, shod with iron,
Torn by the earthquake.

Still through all the stresses of doubtful weather
Hold the firm old pinnacles, sky-defying ;
Still the icy feet of the wind relentless
Walk in their meadows.

Fields that flower not, blossom in no new spring-tide ;
Fields where grass nor herb nor abounding darnel
Flourish ; fields more barren, devoid, than ocean's
Pasture ungarnered.

Deserts, stone as arid as sand, savannahs[1]
Black with wrecks, a wilderness evil, fruitless ;
Still, to me, a land of the bluest heaven
Studded with silver.

Castles bleak and bare as the wrath of ocean,
Wasted wall and tower, as the blast had risen,
Taken keep and donjon, and hurled them earthward,
Rent and uprooted.

Such rock-ruins people me tribes and nations,
Kings and queens and princes as pure as dawning,
Brave as day and true ; and a happy people
Lulled into freedom ;

Nations past the stormier times of tyrants,
Past the sudden spark of a great rebellion,
Past the iron gates that are thrust asunder
Not without bloodshed :

Past the rule of might and the rule of lying,
Free from gold's illusion, and free to cherish
Joys of life diviner than war and passion—
Falsest of phantoms.

Only now true love, like a sun of molten
Glory, surging up from a sea of liquid
Silver, golden, exquisite, overflowing,
Soars into starland.

Sphere on sphere unite in the chant of wonder ;
Star to star must add to the glowing chorus ;
Sun and moon must mingle and speed the echo
Flaming through heaven.

Night and day divide, and the music strengthens,
Gathers roar of seas and the dirge of moorlands ;
Tempest, thunder, birds, and the breeze of summer
Join to augment it.

[1] Spanish term for wide, grassy plains.

So the sound-world, filled of the fire of all things,
Rolls majestic torrents of mighty music
Through the stars where dwell the avenging spirits
Bound in the whirlwind . . .

So the cliffs their Song . . . For the mist regathers,
Girds them bride-like, fit for the sun to kiss them;
Darkness falls like dewfall about the hillsides;
Night is upon me.

Now to me remain in the doubtful twilight
Stretches bare of flower, but touched with whispers,
Grey with huddled rocks, and a space of woodland,
Pine-tree and poplar.

Now a stream to ford and a stile to clamber;
Last the inn, a book, and a quiet corner . . .
Fresh as Spring, there kisses me on the forehead
Sleep, like a sister.

NOTE.—With the exception of this epilogue, and one or two of the lyrics, Crowley wished to suppress the whole of "The Tale of Archais." But it was thought inadvisable to form a precedent of this kind, as the book was regularly published. On the other hand, by adhering to this rule any poem not appearing in this edition may be definitely discarded as spurious.

SONGS OF THE SPIRIT.*

1898.

SONGS OF THE SPIRIT.

"A fool also is full of words."
Ecclesiastes.

DEDICATION

To J. L. Baker.

THE vault of purple that I strove
To pierce, and find unchanging love,
Or some vast countenance[1] above
All glory of the soul of man,
Baffled my blind aspiring gaze
With sunlight's melancholy rays,
And closed with iron hand the ways
That sunder space, divide the days with fiery fan.

Thine was the forehead mild and grave
That shone throughout the azure nave
Where Monte Rosa's silence gave
The starry organ's measured sound.
Where for an altar stood the bare
Mass of Mont Cervin,[2] towering there;
And angels dwelt upon the stair,
And all the mountains were aware that stood around.

Thine was the passionless divine
High hope, and the pure purpose thine,
Higher and purer than stars shine,
And thine the unexpressed delight
To hold high commune with the wind
That sings, in midnight black and blind,
Strange chants, the murmurs of the mind,
To grasp the hands of heaven and find the lords of light.

Mine was the holy fire that drew
Its perfect passion from the dew,
And all the flowers that blushed and blew
On sunny slopes by little brooks.
Mine the desire that brushed aside
The thorns, and would not be denied,
And sought, more eager than a bride,
The cold grey secrets wan and wide of sacred books.

Thine was the hand that guided me
By moor and mountain, vale and lea,
And led me to the sudden sea
That lies superb, remote, and deep,
Showed me things wonderful, unbound
The fetters that beset me round,
Opened my waking ear to sound
That may not by a man be found, except in sleep.

Thy presence was as subtle flame
Burning in dawny groves; thy name
Like dew upon the hills became,
And all thy mind a star most bright;
And, following with wakeful eyes
The strait meridian of the wise,
My feet tread under stars and skies;
My spirit soars and seeks and flies, a child of light.

Thus eager, may my purpose stand
Firm as the faith of honest hand,
Nor change like castles built of sand
Until the sweet unchanging end.
Happy not only that my eye
Single and strong may win the sky,
But that one day the birds that fly
Heard your fair friendship call me by the name of friend.

[1] The supreme Deity is shadowed by Qabalists in this glyph. See Appendix, "Qabalistic dogma," for a synthesized explanation of this entire philosophy.

[2] Commonly known as the Matterhorn.

* In this volume and throughout Crowley's works the visions, ordeals, etc., are, as a rule, not efforts of imagination, but records of (subjective) fact.

THE GOAD.

ἀν' ὑγρὸν ἀμπταίην
αἰθέρα πόρσω γαίας Ἑλλανίας
ἀστέρας ἑσπέρους
οἷον, οἷον ἄλγος ἔπαθον, φίλαι.
EURIPIDES.

AMSTERDAM, *December 23rd*, 1897.

LET me pass out beyond the city gate.
All day I loitered in the little streets
Of black worn houses tottering, like the fate
That hangs above my head even now, and meets
Prayer and defiance as not hearing it.
They lean, these old black streets! a little sky
Peeps through the gap, the rough stone path is lit
Just for a little by the sun, and I
Watch his red face pass over, fade away
To other streets, and other passengers,
See him take pleasure where the heathen pray,
See him relieve the hunter of his furs,
All the wide world awaiting him, all folk
Glad at his coming, only I must weep:
Rise he or sink, my weary eyes invoke
Only the respite of a little sleep;
Sleep, just a little space of sleep, to rest
The fevered head and cool the aching eyes;
Sleep for a space, to fall upon the breast
Of the dear God, that He may sympathise.
Long has the day drawn out; a bitter frost
Sparkles along the streets; the shipping heaves
With the slow murmur of the sea, half lost
In the last rustle of forgotten leaves.
Over the bridges pass the throngs; the sound,
Deep and insistent, penetrates the mist—
I hear it not, I contemplate the wound
Stabbed in the flanks of my dear silver Christ.
He hangs in anguish there; the crown of thorns
Pierces that palest brow; the nails drip blood;
There is the wound; no Mary by Him mourns,
There is no John beside the cruel wood;
I am alone to kiss the silver lips;
I rend my clothing for the temple veil;
My heart's black night must act the sun's eclipse;
My groans must play the earthquake, till I quail
At my own dark imagining; and now
The wind is bitterer; the air breeds snow;
I put my Christ away; I turn my brow
Towards the south stedfastly; my feet must go
Some journey of despair. I dare not turn
To meet the sun; I will not follow him:
Better to pass where sand and sulphur burn,
And days are hazed with heat, and nights are dim
With some malarial poison. Better lie
Far and forgotten on some desert isle,
Where I may watch the silent ships go by,
And let them share my burden for awhile.
Let me pass out beyond the city gate
Where I may wander by the water still,
And see the faint few stars immaculate
Watch their own beauty in its depth, and chill
Their own desire within its icy stream.
Let me move on with vacant eyes, as one
Lost in the labyrinth of some ill dream,
Move and move on, and never see the sun
Lap all the mist with orange and red gold,
Throw some lank windmill into iron shade,
And stir the chill canal with manifold
Rays of clear morning; never grow afraid
When he dips down beyond the far flat land,
Know never more the day and night apart,
Know not where frost has laid his iron hand
Save only that it fastens on my heart;
Save only that it grips with icy fire
These veins no fire of hell could satiate;
Save only that it quenches this desire.
Let me pass out beyond the city gate.

IN MEMORIAM A. J. B.[1]

THE life (by angels' touch divinely lifted
From our dim space-bounds to a vaster sphere),
The spirit, through the vision of clouds rifted,
Soars quick and clear.

Even so, the mists that roll o'er earth are riven,
The spirit flashes forth from mortal sight,
And, flaming through the viewless space, is given
A robe of light.

As when the conqueror Christ burst forth of prison,
And triumph woke the thunder of the spheres,
So brake the soul, as newly re-arisen
Beyond the years.

Far above Space and Time, that earth environ
With bands and bars we strive against in vain,
Far o'er the world, and all its triple iron
And brazen chain,

Far from the change that men call life fled higher
Into the world immutable of sleep,
We see our loved one, and vain eyes desire
In vain to weep.

Woeful our gaze, if on lone Earth descendent,
To view the absence of yon flame afar—
Yet in the Heavens, anew, divine, resplendent,
Behold a star!

One light the less, that steady flamed and even
Amid the dusk of Earth's uncertain shore;
One light the less, but in Jehovah's Heaven
One star the more!

[1] A maternal aunt of the poet.

THE QUEST.

APART, immutable, unseen,
Being, before itself had been,
Became. Like dew a triple queen
Shone as the void uncovered:
The silence of deep height was drawn
A veil across the silver dawn
On holy wings that hovered.[1]

The music of three thoughts became
The beauty, that is one white flame,
The justice that surpasses shame,
The victory, the splendour,
The sacred fountain that is whirled
From depths beyond that older world
A new world to engender.[2]

The kingdom is extended.[3] Night
Dwells, and I contemplate the sight
That is not seeing, but the light
That secretly is kindled,
Though oft time its most holy fire
Lacks oil, whene'er my own Desire
Before desire has dwindled.

I see the thin web binding me
With thirteen cords of unity[4]
Toward the calm centre of the sea.
(O thou supernal mother!)[5]
The triple light my path divides
To twain and fifty sudden sides[6]
Each perfect as each other.

[1] A qabalistic description of Macroprosopus. "Dew," "Deep Height," etc., are his titles.
[2] Microprosopus.
[3] Malkuth, the Bride. In its darkness the Light may yet be found.
[4] The Hebrew characters composing the name Achd, Unity, add up to 13.
[5] Binah, the Great Deep: the offended Mother who shall be reconciled to her daughter by Bn, the Son.
[6] Bn adds to 52.

Now backwards, inwards still my mind
Must track the intangible and blind,
And seeking, shall securely find
  Hidden in secret places
Fresh feasts for every soul that strives,
New life for many mystic lives,
  And strange new forms and faces.

My mind still searches, and attains
By many days and many pains
To That which Is and Was and reigns
  Shadowed in four and ten,[1]
And loses self in sacred lands,
And cries and quickens, and understands
  Beyond the first Amen.[2]

THE ALCHEMIST.

THIS POEM WAS INTENDED AS THE PROLOGUE TO A PLAY—AT PRESENT UNFINISHED.[3]

An old tower, very lofty, on a small and rocky islet. In the highest chamber a man of some forty years, but silver-haired, looks out of the window. Clear starry night, no moon. Chamber furnished with books, alchemic instruments, etc. He gazes some minutes, sighs deeply, but at last speaks.

THE world moves not. I gaze upon the
  abyss,
Look down into the black unfathomed vault
Of starland and behold—myself.
  The sea
To give a sense of motion or of sound
Washes the walls of this grey tower in vain;
I contemplate myself in that dim sphere
Whose hollow centre I am standing at
With burning eyes intent to penetrate
The black circumference, and find out God—
And only see myself. The walls of Space
Mock me with silence. What is Life? The
  stars
Are silent. O ye matchless ministers
That daily pass in your appointed ways
To reach—we know not what! How meaningless
Your bright assemblage and your steady task
Of doubtful motion. And the soul of man
Grapples in death-pangs with your mystery,
And fails to wrestle down the hard embrace
That grips the thighs of thought. And so he
  dies
To pass beyond ye—whither? To find God?
All my life long I have gazed, and dreamed,
  and thought,
Unless my thought itself were but a dream,
A little, troubled dream, a dream of death
Whence I may wake—ah, where? In some
  new world
Where Consciousness doth touch the Infinite,
And all the strivings of the soul be found
Sufficient to beat back the waves of doubt,
To pierce the void, and grasp the glorious,
To find out Truth? Would God it might be
  so,
Since here is nothing for the soul to love
Or cling to beyond self. My chamberlain
Once showed me a pet slave, dwarf, savage,
  black,
A vile, lewd creature, who would cast a staff[1]
Far wheeling through the air:—'twould
  suddenly
Break its swift course, and curving rapidly
Come hard upon himself who threw. Even so
These vile deformities—our souls—cast forth
Missiles of thought, and seek to reach some
  end
With swift imagining—and end in self.
What sage[2] called God the image of man's
  self
He sees cast dimly on a bank of cloud,
Thrice his own size? And I whose life has
  been
[*Cry without.*

[1] Jehovah, the name of 4 letters. 1+2+3+4=10.

[2] The first Amen is=91 or 7×13. The second is the Inscrutable Amoun.

[3] "The Poisoners," finished later, but discarded as over-Tourneuresque.

[1] A boomerang.

[2] The image is Crowley's own, drawn from the Spectre of the Brocken.

One bitter fight with nature and myself
To find Him out, turn, terrible, to-night
[*Cry without.*
To see myself—myself—myself.
[*Cry without.*
Hush! Hark!
Methought I heard a cry. The seamew wails
Less humanly than that—I will go down
And seek the stranger.
[*Making as to leave room.*
E'en this rocky isle
Shall prove a friend——
A Voice.[1] Stand still.
Philosopher. Again! Is this
The warning of a mind o'er-strained?
[*Moving towards door.*
Voice. Stand still
And see salvation in Jehovah's hands.
Ph. Is this the end of life?
Voice. Thy Life begins.
Ph. Strange Voice, I hear thee, and obey. Perchance
I have not lived so far. Perchance to-day,
Like a spring-flower that slowly opens out
Its willing petals to the tender dawn,
My soul may open to the knowledge of
A dawn of new thought that may lead——
Voice. To God.
Ph. Hope hardly dared to name it!

Enter Messenger.

Mess. My lord, the king's command!
Ph. I heed it not.
See thou disturb not my high meditation.
Away!
Voice. With meditations centred in thyself.
Mess. Who spoke?
Ph. Speak thou. I obey the king.
Mess. My lord,
He bids thee to his court, to hold the reins
Tight on the fretful horses of the state
Whose weary burden makes them slip—nay, fall
On the stern hill of war. Thou art appointed,
Being the wisest man in all the realm,
(So spake the king) the second to himself——
Ph. Thy vessel waits?
Mess. For dawn.
Ph. Then hasten thee
To tell them I am ready. The meanwhile
I will devote to prayer.
Mess. At dawn, my lord.
[*Exit* Messenger.
Ph. [*Turns to window.*] O Maker and O Ruler of all worlds,
Illimitable power, immortal God,
Vague, vast, unknown, dim-looking, scarcely spied
Through doubtful crannies of the Universe,
Unseen, intangible, eluding sense
And poor conception, halting for a phrase
Of weak mind-language, O Eternity,
Hear thou the feeble word, the lame desire,
The dubious crying of the pinioned dove,
The wordless eloquent emotion
That speaks within a man, despite his mind!
Hear, who can pray for naught, unknowing aught
Whereof, for what to pray. But hear me, thou!
Hear me, thou God, who fettered the bleak winds
Of North and East, and held in silken rein
The golden steeds of West and South, who bade
The tireless sea respect its narrow bounds,
And fixed the mountains, that eternal ice
Might be thy chiefest witness, and who wove
The myriad atoms of Infinitude
Into the solid tapestry of night,
And gave the sun his heat, and bade him kiss
The lips of Death upon the moon's dark face,
So that her silver lustre might rejoice
The fiery lover, the sharp nightingale,
And those pale mortals whom the day beholds
Asleep, because the many bid them slave

[1] This voice is again heard, using the identical words, at the last great crisis of his life.

From dusk to dawn, being poor; and braided up
The loose hair of all trees and flowers, and made
Their one white light divide to red and green
And violet[1] and the hues innumerable
Lesser than these, and gave man hope at last
With the invariable law of death
Abundant in new life, and having filled
The world with music, dost demand of us
"Is my work meaningless?" O thou, supreme,
Thou, First and Last, most inconceivable
All-radiating Unity, thou sphere
All-comprehensive, all-mysterious,
Spirit of Life and Death, bow down and hear!

[*Bends deeper and prays silently. The flame grows duller, and finally leaves the room in absolute darkness. Curtain.*

SONNETS TO NIGHT.

I.

O NIGHT! the very mother of us all,
For from thy hollow womb we children came,
A little space to flicker as a flame,
And then within thy tender arms to fall
Tired, fain of nothing but to lie at last
Upon thy bosom, and gaze in thine eyes
Clear, calm, dispassionate, supremely wise,
And pass with thee the gates that must be passed.[2]

O Night, on thee is set our only hope,
Because our eyes, too tender for the day,
Are dazed with sunlight, and poor fingers grope
For those far truths that mock our vague endeavour,
Whilst we may find in thee the secrets grey
Of all things God would fain have hid for ever.

[1] Chosen in accordance with the theory of Young and Helmholz.

[2] Compare this octet with that of the "Sonnet to Sleep" of P. B. Marston, which Crowley had not at this time read.

II.

All things grow still before thine awful face.
Now fails the lover's sigh; Sleep's angel clings
About the children with her dreamy wings,
And all the world is silent for a space.
The waving of thy dusky plumes in heaven
Alone breathes gentle music to mine ears,
So that despair is fain to flee, and fear
Cowers far away amid the shades of even.

"Hope," is thy whisper, "hope, and trust in Night;
My realm is the eternal, and my power
The absolute. My child, gird on thy strength;
Clothe limbs with lustiness, and mind with might,
That, communing with me, though for an hour,
Thou mayest conquer when day comes at length."

THE PHILOSOPHER'S PROGRESS.

That which is above, is like that which is below; and that which is below, is like that which is above.

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

THAT which is highest as the deep
Is fixed, the depth as that above:
Death's face is as the face of Sleep;
And Lust is likest Love.

So stand the angels one by one
Higher and higher with lamps of gold:
So stand the shining devils; none
Their brightness may behold.

I took my life, as one who takes
Young gold to ruin and to spend ;
I sought their gulfs and fiery lakes,
And sought no happy end.

I said : the height is as the deep,
Twin breasts of one white dove ;
Death's face is as the face of Sleep,
And Lust is likest Love.

And with my blood I forced the door
That guards the palaces of sin ;
I reached the lake's cinereous[1] shore ;
I passed those groves within.

My blood was wasted in her veins,
To freshen them, who stood like death,
Our Lady of ten thousand Pains
With heavy kissing breath.

I said : Our Lady is as God,
Her hell of pain as heaven above ;
Death's feet, like Sleep's, with fire are shod,
And Lust is likest Love.

Our Lady crushed me in her bed ;
Between her breasts my life was wet ;
My lips from that sweet death were fed ;
I died, and would forget.

But so God would not have me die ;
Her deadly lips relax and fade,
Her body slackens with a sigh
Reluctant, like a maid.

I said : O vampire[2] Lover, weep,
Who cannot follow me above,
Though Death may masquerade as Sleep,
And Lust laugh out like Love.

But God's strong arms set under me
Lifted my spirit through the air
Beyond the wide supernal sea,[3]
Beyond the veil of vair.

God said : My ways are sweet and deep ;
The sceptres and the swords thereof
Change : for Death's face is fair as Sleep ;
And Lust is clean as Love.

I slept upon His breast ; and Death
Came like Sleep's angel, and I died,
And tasted the Lethean breath.
There was a voice that cried :

Behold, I stand above His head
With feet made white with whitest fire,
Above His forehead, that is red
As blood with His Desire.

I knew that Voice was more than God,
And echo trembled for its trust :
Sleep's feet, like Death's, with fire are shod,
And Love is likest Lust.

So I returned and sought her breast,
Our Lady of ten thousand Pains ;
I drank her kisses, and possessed
Her pale maternal veins.

I said : Drain hard my sudden breath,
Be cruel for the vampire thrust !
Let Sleep's desire be sweet as Death,
And Love be clean as Lust !

I died amid her kisses : so
This last time I would not forget—
So I attained The Life ;[1] and know
Her lips and God's have met.

For in Those Hands[2] above His head
The Depth is one with That Above,
And Sleep and Death and Life are dead,
And Lust is One with Love.

[1] Ash-covered.
[2] Any being who, under the guise of love, draws the strength from another.
[3] Binah.

[1] *I.e.*, that state of mind which perceives the hidden unity.
[2] A hand is here used as a symbol of the Infinite Point because Yod—the Greek Iota—means a hand.

SONNET.

THE woods are very quiet, and the stream
Hardly awakes the stilled ear with its word;
The voice of wind above like dawn is heard,
And all the air moves up, a sultry steam,
Here in the flower-land, where I lie and dream
And understand the silence of the bird;
My sorrow and my weakness are interred
In the deep water where the pebbles gleam.

I rouse the force persistent of my will
To compel matter to the soul's desire,
To make Heaven aid the mind that would aspire
To touch its borders, and to drink their fill
At those far fountains whence one drop of dew[1]
Descends upon my head from yonder blue.

AN ILL DREAM.

IN the grim woods when all the bare black branches
Creak out their curses like a gallows-tree,
When the miasmal pestilence-light dances,
A spectre-flame, through midnight's infamy,
My blood grows chill and stagnant with my shame,
O Love, to speak thy name!

O Life! O Heaven! O dreams long dead!
Ye Spirits
Rising unbidden from Hope's cobwebbed[2] door,
Ye quick desires that every soul inherits,
Leave me to weep, and torture me no more!
My face grows grey with sheer despair; I shrink
From dreams; I dare not think.

I had a poet's dreams. My soul was yearning
To grasp the firmament and hold it fast,
To reach toward God, and, from His shrine returning,
To sing in magic melodies the vast
Desires of God towards man—O dreams! O years
Drowned in these bitter tears!

I felt the springs of youth within me leaping,
Let loose my pleasure, never guessed that pain
Was worth the holding—now, my life is weeping
Itself away, those agonies to gain
Which are my one last hope. that by some cross
Eld may avenge youth's loss!

Yet still youth burns! The hours its pleasure wasted
Compel their bitter memories to grow sweet;
Like some warm-perfumed poison if I tasted,
Felt its fierce savour pulse, and burn, and beat;
Yet in my veins its sleepy fire might bring
Strange dreams of some sweet thing.

Half a regret and half a shuddering terror,
The past lies desolate and yet is here,
Half guide, half tempter toward the stream of error,
On whose fresh bosom many a mariner
Puts out with silken sail—to find his grave
In its voluptuous wave.

Here are few rocks whereon a ship hath peril;
No storms may ruffle its insidious stream;
Only, no fish invade its waters sterile,
No white-winged birds above it glance and gleam,
Only, it hath no shore, no wave, but gloom
Wraps it within her womb.

[1] The Amrita, or Elixir of Immortality.
[2] Because long shut, as in the story of Bruce and the spider.

No sun is mirrored in its treacherous water,
Only the false moon flickers and flits by
Like to the bloodless phantom shape of slaughter
Laughing a lipless laugh—a mockery,
A ghastly memory to wake and weep
—Should Sorrow let me sleep.

No current draws a man, to his fair seeming,
Yet all the while he whirls a stealthy sweep
Narrower, nearer, where the wave is steaming
With the slight spray tossed from that funnel deep
Which dips, one wide black shaft, most horrible,
Down to the nether Hell.

Yet there seems time. God's grief has not forgotten
His mighty arm, and with His pitying breath
A strong wind woke me ere my boat grew rotten
With venom of the stream, that quivereth
Now as He blew upon it—fish and bird
Live at that silent word!

And I arose to seek the oars of Lying
Wherewith I had embarked—the wind had torn
Their wood to splinters—"Jesus! I am dying!
Send me Thy cross to fashion some unborn
Oarage of Truth to quit this stream of Death!"
O vain, O wasted breath!

I have no strength. Upright I kneel, lamenting
The days when Love seemed fair, the bitter years
When pain might have found truth, ere unrelenting
I shipwrecked Life! O agony of tears!
Vain tears! In silence, with abated breath
I drift, drift on to Death!

THE PRIEST SPEAKS.

(*Boccaccio. Day IV. Tale VIII.*)

Lay them together for the sake of Love
Within a little plot of piteous earth,
When life's last flower is faded in the sun.
Lay them together in the tender ground
That summer showers may shed a trembling tear,
And summer breezes whisper melodies
Of pity. Lay them there, and when the sky
Opens a lingering eyelash of deep cloud,
And the sea sparkles out from under it
To kiss the earth into awakening
From the dream-slumbers that its fancies weave—
Fancies of starlight on the lucent sea
Gleaming from wide horizon to the feet
Of Cynthia's bow, all silver-shot with fire,
That virgin flame that lingers evermore
In the sweet phantasies of subtle sleep—
Fancies of lonely shadows darkly strewn
About the leaves of autumn in the woods,
Where the small floweret, hidden by the maze
Of the dying children of the copper-beech,
Lifts a blue forehead to the sun to kiss—
Fancies of old romance too pitiful
For any delicate quill to light upon—
Yes, when the sky from stainless ebony
Merges in azure, like as if the light
Of stars had melted into all the black
To gladden it, O then the solemn hush
Of morning shall behold the silent grave,
And wait a moment in rich worshipping
Of Love, creator of the world's delight,
Till the full chorus of the spirits of fire
(Whose mighty shoulders and wide-flashing wings
Bear the proud sun from his luxurious bed
Of rosy fleeces in the West low lying
Into the staircase of the jealous day)
Burst on the silence of the world beyond
And bid the listening poet catch the strain
Of their half-echoed hymn. But come, my friends,

Lay them together, breast to maiden breast,
Limb linked with limb, and lips to pallid lips,
So beautiful in death—the moth o' th' mind
Tells the grief-numbèd senses "'Tis but sleep.
See! the pale glimmer of a ghostly arm
Flashes a spot of light!" Ah! weary day!
'Tis but the flickering of the candle-light
And the unmanning sorrow of the heart
That lends the reins to fancy's charioteer.
Lay them together, let us leave them there!
There comes a vision to my mortal eyes
Of things immortal. Hark! the growing swell
Of some wild clarion through the dazzling night,
Whose fairy æther suddenly illumes
With silver meteors innumerable
And golden showers of stars—lost worlds of thought
And poets' dreams, and jewels of virgin sighs.
Hark! the broad rings of sound go wavering on
Eddying and rippling through the desart sky
That now is peopled with the diamond wings
That float through all the palaces of God.
O now to join them rise the armies vast
Of the lone spirits of the empty tomb,
And there I see the lovers piteous
Splendidly flash within the silver sphere
Of light, and there I lose them at the last
Most wonderfully passed within the veil
Of Time; caught up into the Infinite.
Lay them together. And the hollow hill
Shall echo me "together," and the sky,
And the wide sea, and all the fragrant air,
Shall linger in the tumult of the dawn.
Lay them together. And the still small voice
Shall whisper "Peace," and in the evening
"Peace."

THE VIOLET'S LOVE-STORY.

AMONG the lilies of the sacred stream
There grew a violet, like a maiden's dream,
And when the wind passed over them, it stirred
Their white soft petals with its quiet word.
The sun looked on them and their leaves were glad;
Only the purple blossom there, that had
No kindred by the stream, let fall a tear,
Half wishing for the autumn of the year.

But when the summer came, the violet guessed
By some slow dream that thrilled her gentle breast,
That some sweet thing might come to her; she thought
Through the long days of how her dream was wrought:

She guessed it woven of the spider's thread,
And coloured like the river's changing bed
Where polished pebbles shine; she guessed it frail
And perfect, with pure wings, like silver pale.

So there, behind the leaves and stems, her lids
Grew deep with veins of love, and Bassarids[1]
Racing the dim woods through, beheld her face,
Whispered together, and desired the place.

The grey was blushing in the Eastern sky
When there drew near a child of poesy
With full lips very tender, and grave eyes
Where deep thoughts dwelt in some delicious wise.

He looked upon the lilies, and a tear
Dropped on their blossom; but a little fear
Came to the bosom of the violet
Lest he see not, or see her, and forget.

But he did see her, and drew close, and said:
"O perfect passion of my soul, O dead
Living desire, O sweet unspoken sin,
Leave thou the lilies; they are not thy kin.

[1] Votaries of Bacchus, so called from the Bassara, or long mantle, which they wore.

"Within my heart one slow sweet whisper stole
Consuming and destroying all my soul
Lest, if the pure cold mind should conquer it,
I might not know, although it still were sweet.

"My pure desires arose and cast out love
That flew away, most like a wounded dove,
Only the drops were mine its bosom bled.
Now the last time it hovers by my head:

"Now the last time I turn and go to her."
The violet smiled at him; his fingers fair
Plucked the sweet blossom to his breast; his eyes
Mused like delight, and like desire were wise.

There was a maiden like the sun, to whom
His footsteps turned amid the myriad bloom
Of flowers and leafy pathways of the wood,
Where, in a dell of roses white, she stood.

He came to her and looked so dear and deep
Into her eyes, the wells and woods of sleep,
And took the violet from his breast, and stood
A glad young god within the golden wood.

He kissed the blossom, and bent very low,
And put it to her lips—and even so
His lips were set on them; the flower sighed
For deep delight, and in the long kiss died.

Years fled and faded, yet a flower was seen
Gracious and comely in its nest of green,
And tender hands would water it and say:
"O happy sister, she that went away!

"For she brought back my lover to my heart,
And knew her work was perfect, and her part
Most perfect when she died between the breath,
And in the bridal kisses kissed to death."

So grew the newer blossom and was glad:
Sweet little hopes her faint fair forehead had
That one day such a death might crown her days.
And so God too was glad, the story says.

THE FAREWELL OF PARACELSUS TO APRILE.[1]

THOU Sun, whose swift desire to-day is dull,
And all ye hosts of heaven, whose lips are mute,
And trees and flowers and oceans beautiful
Among whose murmurs I have struck this lute
With joy supreme or agony acute,
And love transcending everything alway,
Pity me, pity, since the poisonous root
Of parting strikes the beauty of the day;
We meet for the last time beside the ocean gray.

Soul of my soul, we never can forget—
But, is our parting burnt across the skies?
Is the last word said? Must our lips be set
Not to new song, but to the bitter sighs
As of a child whose flower-garden dies,
Who knows no hope of some enduring spring?
Is the last song made, whose faint melodies
Brushed the pale air with an archangel's wing?
Is Hope divorced, our queen? Is Love discrowned, our King?

Far o'er the Ocean sets a fiery star
And meteors cross the angry horizon;
A comet blazes, reddening the bar
Of silver water where the moonlight shone,
And, as I stand upon the cliff like one

[1] *Paracelsus.* I am he that aspired to KNOW: and thou?
Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved.
BROWNING, *Paracelsus.*

But Crowley here opposes Browning.

Amazed, a shape seems always at my back
To whisper wickedness, o'erheard of none,
And stealthily to follow on my track,
And cloke my lifted eyes with suffocating black.

Vainly I turn to seek him, for my eyes
Are dimmed with saltness never born of brine;
Vainly I fight the air; he sneers, and lies.
He laughs at all this agony of mine.
He chills my heart, and desecrates the shrine
Where Love his holy incense used to burn.
He mocks those thoughts, those songs, those looks divine
While his lewd visage no man may discern,
And baffling darkness hides his terror if I turn.

Fighting and falling ever, weariest
Even of beating off the tempter's blows,
Struggling in vain to what one hopes the best,
A distant river over many snows,
On whose green bank the purple iris glows,
And the anemone in some wild cleft,
With the white violet, and the briar rose,
And the blue gentian from the heavens reft—
Lo! 'Twas that golden bank but yester morn I left.

O river where we dwelt! Yon summer sward
Whereon we lay, two kings of earth and air;
For whom ten thousand angels had drawn sword
At our light bidding. Surely, surely, there
We might float ever to the sea, and spare
The dainty plumage of that perfect place.
O God! O Life! O Death, thou would'st not wear
Such evil mask upon thy golden face—
O Mary, pity me of thine abounding grace.

Those days are dead, and hope no newer birth.
I left thy shores, blue stream, at His command
Who reared the mountains from the shaken earth;
Who holds the lightning in His holy hand,
And binds the stars in adamantine band,
And yearns towards the children of His mind.
I left their summer and their dewy strand
To pass a life of work, alone, unkind,
To fight a way toward heaven, mute, desolate, and blind.

The dusty desert glimmers in the night;
A solitary palm-tree shades the well;
I am alone, a weary eremite
Striving the secrets of the stars to tell,
And every blade of grass that makes the dell
Is counted and divined by me, who stare
With eyes half blinded by the fires of Hell
That my wild brain imagines everywhere,
Roaring and raging round with red infernal glare.

The yellow sand toward the deep sky extends:
A dusky mirage would confuse my view;
Far, far away, where desolation ends,
There is a water of serenest blue;
And by it stands, as patient and as true
As in the past, his form to whom I turn,
And break my bondage and would touch anew
His holy lips; my body and spirit yearn;
He fades away, and fires of Hell within me burn.

Still, as I journey through the waste, I see
A silver figure more divine arise;
The Christ usurps the horizon for me,
And He requickens the forgotten skies;
His golden locks are burning on my eyes,
And He with rosy finger points the way,
The blood-wrought mystic path of Paradise
That leads at last through yonder icy spray
Of Death to the blue vaults of the undying day.

But oh! this desert is a weary land!
Poisons alone their prickly heads lift high;
The sun, a globe of fury, still doth stand
In the dark basin of the burning sky.
There is no water, no, nor herb, and I
Faint at his anger who compels the herd
To fall upon the waste, so fierce and dry
That none may pass it, not the very bird.
Throughout the vast expanse no single sound is heard.

Only the moaning of the dying ox,
And my parched cry for water from cracked lips;
In vain the stern impenetrable rocks
Mock my complaint: the empty pitcher dips
Into the empty well; the water drips,
Oozing in tiny drops caught up again
By the sun's heat, that brooks not his eclipse
And dissipates the welcome clouds of rain.
God! have Thou pity soon on this amazing pain.

If but a lion stirred with distant roar
The silence of the world, perchance at last
I might find honey in his mouth, and store
His tawny flanks until the sand were past.[1]
Nay, but these wastes intolerably vast,
Like glowing copper raging for the heat,
Stretch and stretch on and leave me all aghast
Straining my eyes in horror and defeat
Toward the long vista seen where rescue seems to greet.

The vessel fills with brackish foam. I drink,
Drink to the end, and stagger on alone
Without a staff to hold me if I sink
In the hot quagmires of untrusty stone.
Foodless and beastless, so despairing grown,
I know not, care not, only trust that soon
The sun's dominion may be overthrown,
And o'er the wilderness appear the moon
With cold lips to bestow the inestimable boon.

[1] See the story of Samson.

Still I have never prayed for death, but rather
Would be found fighting toward the goal I seek,
Stretching both hands toward a loving father,
And struggling toward some barren voiceless peak
With feet made stedfast, if God made them weak;
So, on the journey, in the hottest fight
I would be found by Death, whose palace bleak
Should be a resting-place until the night
Broke, and I met my God, and stood within His sight.

Only my brain grows feebler with the toil,
And clearer runs the river I forsook;
Now in clear pools its myriad fountains boil,
Now there runs singing to its breast a brook;
Now it flows gently to a little nook
Where I once rested—Ah! I clench my hand
And turn away with yet undaunted look,
Setting my face toward the distant land
That must lie somewhere far beyond this world of sand.

About me are the bones of many men
Who turned to God their rapt adoring eyes,
And cast away the love within their ken
For this vague treasure-house beyond the skies—
Whither I turn, like a dumb beast that dies,
A wistful look, and breathe a dumb complaint.
Lo! they have cast away the mask of lies
And not found Truth. So he would be a saint
Whose skeleton lies here because his soul did faint!

I will not turn toward Sodom any more,
Lest its ripe glades of fruit waft up their scent,
And draw me to them, what time heavens pour
Brimstone and fire from out the firmament,
And all my substance in its fall be spent;
Lest I lie there beneath a barren sea
Forgotten of high God, until there went
The final trumpet of the dead, who flee
Vainly that fearful blast of judgment. Woe is me!

My feet, in spite of me, in circles bend;
I meet my own tracks often, all in vain
I seek some tower or cliff to make an end,[1]
I find no object on the distant plain;
Misty distortions crowd upon my brain,
And spectre fountains gurgle on the ground;
I drop to drink, and hear the horrid strain
Of chuckling devils, that grimace around,
And think I catch the note of Hell's three-headed Hound.

Up still and staggering to the doubtful goal,
Feet dragging horribly behind, I move
Deathlike for dearth and for despair of soul;
At last I drop. From Heaven there comes a Dove
Bearing the semblance of the Man I love,
And fountains and fresh grass by magic spell
Are suddenly around me. And above
I hear the voice my visions know so well:
"Well striven all this day against the power of Hell!"

I know these mercies still diviner grow
Each day I strive. But should I sit and rest
One hour of dawn, and cry, "I will not go
Another step without more sleep," that blest
Dove flies away, the fountains are repressed,
The grass is withered, and the angry sky
Rages more fierce that day, and from the crest
Of black foul mountains comes a bitter cry:
"He that returneth now shall in destruction die."

So I press on. Fresh strength from day to day
Girds up my loins and beckons me on high.
So I depart upon the desert way,
So I strive ever toward the copper sky,
With lips burnt black and blind in either eye.
I move for ever to my mystic goal
Where I may drain a fountain never dry,
And of Life's guerdon gather in the whole,
And on celestial manna satisfy my soul.

Each night new failure and each day fresh strength,
A sense of something nearer day by day;
Though the ill road's intolerable length,
League upon league, fling back the torrid ray
Of the fierce sunlight night can scarce allay
With the incessant beating of cool wings,
And men's bleached skeletons infest the way;
Yet Hope her passion like a flower brings,
And Courage ranks me with unconquerable kings.

So, in the power of these who guard my path,
I hope one day to earn a loftier crown
Than that pale garland fresh from summer scath
That I called Love, and lie delighted down
Beside the fountains, fled the roaring town,
Where we were happy all the summer through,
And merry when the autumn tinged with brown
The glades, and in the winter thought we knew
Behind the cloudy weather some far sky was blue.

[1] *I.e.*, to serve as a direction.

That crown I hope for shall be garlanded
Of deathless flowers of equal bloom. And thou,
O thou true lover, thou beloved head
And marble pallor of a prince's brow,
At the cliff's edge we stand together now;
The parting of our ways has come at last.
Mine is the bitterest journey, as I trow,
A man may take, so solitary, so vast,
It binds the future now, and stultifies the past.

Only the hope that God may reunite
Our ways diverging, and make one again
The deathless love that burns a beacon bright
On the black deeps, the irremeable main,
That men must launch on, the exalted plain
Of Life. We sever, and our tears are few,
Knowing perchance beyond the moment's pain
We shall regather where the skies are blue,
And live and love for aye, pure, passionate, and true.

Also before my eyes there gleams from Heaven
The likeness of a Man in glory set;
The sun is blotted, and the skies are riven—
A God flames forth my spirit to beget;
And where my body and his love are met
A new desire possesses altogether
My whole new self as in a golden net
Of transcendental love one fiery tether,
Dissolving all my woe into one sea of weather.

So I am ready to assume the Cross,
Start on my journey with the last word said;
Turn my back resolute on dung and dross,
And face the future with no twitch of dread,
But dare to converse with the holy dead,
And taste the earnest of the church's bliss.
Love, God be with you! He is overhead
And watches us, that nothing be amiss—
Love! our hearts bleed as one in the last lingering kiss.

Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye! the echo rings
A harsh, jarred sound in my self-tortured ears,
And agony, a fount of blood, upsprings
And tears our bosoms with dividing fears.
The cruel sea its final billow rears
And I must pass to seek an unknown sky;
We dare not see each other's face for tears,
And the last kisses—Did we only die!
Love! Ah! One kiss! One kiss! One kiss!
Good-bye, Good-bye!

A SPRING SNOWSTORM IN WASTDALE.[1]

On rocky mountain bare
Of grass, and meadows fair,
Angels their trumpets blow upon the night.
While o'er the shrinking dale
The insatiable gale
Roars with unconquered and impassive might.
Their robes of snow they rend,
And their deep voices blend
With tempest, like that angry Amphitrite,[2]
Her hair blown wild and loose
On windy Syracuse,
Lashing the waves with words of wrath, a terror of bright light.

Here the thick snowflakes fall,
Till mountain in their pall,
And stream beneath their curtain are embraced;
They drive and beat and hiss,
Till their cold maiden kiss
Touches the lake's intolerable waste,
And from the wave is born
A maiden like the morn,
In sudden foam, an Aphrodite chaste,
Clean as the cold wind blown
From each abyss of stone,
Where the north whirlpool rushes down with wreckage interlaced.

[1] Crowley was one of the pioneers of rock-climbing among the Cumbrian fells.
[2] Goddess of the Mediterranean Sea.

Here on the bank I stand
In this grey barren land
Of winter, and the doubtful glint of spring
If on the hills there glow
Through the thick mist of snow
Sunshine from westward in the evening;
While in a dell appear
Violets and snowdrops clear,
Buds of the larch, and swallows on the wing,
Ere once again the storm
Lofty and multiform
Close the bright glimpse of summer and the hope of everything.

Silence her throne assumes,
Stars mount the sky, and looms
The misty monarch of the dale on high:
About the silver feet
I worship, as is meet,
The warrior God that fixed the curvéd sky,
Rent the cavernous earth,
Moulded in awful birth
The terror of the cloudy canopy,
And tore from underground
The lake's immense profound,
And clad the mountains now with this faint snow embroidery.

Now the white flakes decrease.
Wastwater lies in peace,
Kissed by the breezes where the wind once bit;
Gable alone doth stand,
A Pyramid more grand
Than Pharaoh's pride exalted, or the wit
Of magian shepherds built
Who sought his land and spilt
Blood of ten million slaves to conquer it.[1]
Clad in sparse robes of white
The mountain beckons Night
Her tracery of azure with the cold moon-rays to knit.

Armoured with secret might
I stand on earth upright,
Strong in the power of Him who welded earth,
Barred in the sky with steel,
And breathed upon the wheel
Of this vast scheme of stars, and made Him mirth
In the poor dreams of us
Who strive mysterious
To pierce the bands of sense, and break the girth
Of our own minds' desire,
Till He relume the fire
Lost at our fall, not kindled fresh till that diviner birth.

IN NEVILLE'S COURT, TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.[1]

I THINK the souls of many men are here
Among these cloisters, underneath the spire
That the moon silvers with magnetic fire;
But not a moon-ray is it, that so clear
Shines on the pavement, for a voice of fear
It hath, unless it be the breeze that mocks
My ear, and waves his old majestic locks
About his head. There fell upon my ear:

"O soul contemplative of distant things,
Who hast a poet's heart, even if thy pen
Be dry and barren, who dost hold Love dear,
Speed forth this message on the fiery wings
Of stinging song to all the race of men:
That they have hope; for we are happy here."

[1] The reference is to the "Shepherd Kings" of Abydos, who, says one theory, built Ghizeh.

[1] The "Voice" is that of Lord Tennyson, whose rooms were in this court.

SUCCUBUS.[1]

WHO is Love, that he should find me as I strive,
Pale and weary, dumb and blind, where curses thrive,
Fold my sleep within his wings, and lead my dreams
Through a land of pleasant things, of woods and streams,
Bind my slumber with a chain of pure delight,
Though the canker of it stain at death of night,
Fill with passion and distaste and wakened pleasure
All the moments run to waste that else were treasure?
Who is Love? a fury red with all men's blood
On his cruel altars shed, a deadly flood?
Or a veiléd vision black with shame and fear,
Whose most loathliest attack at night is near,
When the gates of spirit tense with angel's tread
Close, and all the gates of sense swing wide instead,
When the will of men is sleeping, and when the mind
Hears no sobs of spirits weeping above the wind,
All the subtle paths are clear for wicked breath,
And no angel warns the ear that this is death?
Is this fiend the Love that came when youth rose up
Purple with its holy flame, and flower-fair cup,
Gave me of his burning wine to fire my heart,
Filled me with desires divine toward my art?
Is he then the Love who robs me of my aim,
Doubts me if my heart still throbs with that cold flame,
Calm and eager purpose yet to reach the goal
That high hopes have sternly set before my soul,
To know, will, dare for man's sake if man may,
Grasp the secret of the plans that rule the way
Of stars and suns, that shape the tiniest blade
Of grass whose frailties 'scape the passing maid,
Whose light foot brushes fern and moss? But Love
Comes a thief to men who turn toward things above
To set snares, by night, and makes afraid
The spirit's holy might with one slight maid
Visioned and unsubsisting save in foreign thought,
To its own strength a slave by witchcraft brought!
This is not Love but Lust, not Life but Death is found :—
All the halls of sense with strife cry and resound.
The Brain awakes in wrath; behold! the foemen flee,
All the earth is clad with gold, and all the sea;
Driven back the demons yield, falter and cease;
For a little while the shield of sleep is peace.
Clear and bright the lamp burns; clean and sharp the sword,[1]
While I watch their paths between before the Lord.

[1] The Succubus, and its male counterpart the Incubus, bulk largely in mediæval literature and philosophy. The poem explains itself.

A RONDEL.

REST, like a star at sea
Thrice loved, thrice blest,
Burns. Will there come to me
Rest?

[1] Common magical implements. The lamp signifies Illumination and the sword Will.

By these suppressed
Desires my soul must flee,
By heaven's crest,

I pray that secretly
Toward God's breast
I draw, to find, maybe,
Rest!

NIGHTFALL.

THE seas that lap the sand
Where lilies fill the land
Are silent, while the moon ascends to span the curvéd leaves.
The lordly stars arise
With pity in their eyes
So large and clear and wise,
And angels yearn toward the world that wonders, wakes, and grieves.

Sleep holds the hand of life,
And, as a loving wife
Moves not for fear the sufferer should wake before his hour,
So sleep is deadly calm,
And fills with perfect balm
The night's unquiet psalm
That wanders all too trembling up, and quivers as a flower.

The wise man opens wide
His casement, as a bride
Flings her bright arms to meet her spouse homeward who hasteneth;
He trims his lamp, and brings
The books of many kings
To spread their holy wings
About his head, and sing to him the secret ways of death.

He knows, and doth not fear;
His will is keen and clear;
His lips are silent to protect the secret mysteries.

No tempter spreads his net
So that his thoughts forget
The glory they have set
Before their face, nor loose their hold upon the perfect prize.

My hands no longer write:
Communion with the night
Is built, a bridge of fiery truth across the subtle mind.
God's angels, and His fire,
Consume the soul's desire,
And strike a lighter lyre.
I seek; the angels lead me on, all light and truth to find.

THE INITIATION.

THERE is a bare bleak headland which the sea
Incessantly devours,
A rock impregnable, where herb and tree
Are not. A vision of it came to me
In night's most ghastly hours.

I who desire, beyond all named desire,
To pass the envious bounds of air and fire,
And penetrate the bosom of the night,
Saw in a vision such a neophyte
Stand on the forehead of the rock; I saw
The armies of unalterable law
Shudder within their spheres, as to him came
His master's spirit, like a tongue of flame,
To touch his lips and ears and eyes and hands
With that pale amber that divides the lands
Of sense and spirit, and beheld him quail
As fell from all his shaken soul the veil.
Then on the night began the awful gale
That did assume a voice
Whereat the air was peopled with such forms
As ride abroad upon the path of storms,
And in the awe rejoice.
They gather, chanting, round that noble head.
The master of the prisons of the dead
Loosens the bonds and bids the furies spring
For their last struggle ere they own a king.
This pæan of the sky they sing.

We ride upon the fury of the blast,
Fast, fast.
We race upon the horses of the wind:
The tameless thunder follows hard behind,
Fast, and too fast.
The lightning heralds us; the iron blast
Lends us its splendour for a steed fire-shod,
The steed of God!

From all the caverns of the hollow sea,
And all the fortresses that guard the air,
And all the fearful palaces of fire,
And all the earth's dwarf-ridden secrecy,
They come, they gather, and they ride, to bear
Destruction and disorder and desire;
They cling to him who braves the gale of night,
And mock his might.
They rush upon him like a wave, and break
In fiery foam against him, and they shake
Life in its citadel.
They open Hell
To let the Furies and the Fates spring forth
On their wild chargers of the icy North
To quench the holy lamp.
His spirit and his life within him quail,
And all the armaments of sin assail
With deadly tramp
And swordless fury. Hell devours and tears
The heart of any a man, whom heavenly airs
Shield and lead on afar,
Where beyond storm and passion is the sky,
And where the sacred hand of the Most High
Holds out a star.
He stands amid the storm, a mighty rock;
His long hair blows about, the demons mock
His entry to their kingdom, and despair.
Groans in the blackness, infamous and bare,
And hateful shapes and eyes surround his head—
O for the magic of those mightier dead
To scatter them, and utterly destroy
Their likeness, and to penetrate the joy
Of yonder places past the realm of fear!
O that some mighty seer
Came to avenge, that might deliver him
From this grim fight, whose horrid ranks are dim
With mist of spuméd blood, whose long chill hour
Beats out each second with the ghastly power,
Reluctant till the morning. Shall they cease,
These black battalions, and the dawn bring peace
To a head holier? Or shall he succumb,
Fight through long agonies and perish dumb,
Sword gripped hard to the last? or shall he fall
Recreant, coward, and no more at all
Reach the dim martyr-hall of heroes? Yet
The surging shapes gape hideous, to beget
Fresh arméd foemen to destroy the king.
And first, on black imperishable wing,
That Nameless Thing.

Darkness, a dragon, now devours
The vision of those deadly powers,
The legions of the lords of sin.
It is an hour ere dawn begin.

ISAIAH.

A SONNET.

THE world is dusk, expectant of its doom.
Foulness is rampant; purity is dumb;
Despair stalks terrible. But I am come,
God-nurtured, in the void abyss of gloom;
The Spirit of my God is set on me;
He hath anointed me to preach glad news
Unto the meek; the broken heart to loose,
To utter to the captive liberty,
The prison's opening to all the bound,
And unto all men to proclaim aloud
The year acceptable before the Lord.
Therefore He fills my voice with silvery sound,
And by His spirit, a pillar of fire and cloud,
My eyes are lightning, and my tongue a sword.

THE STORM.

In the storm that divides the wild night from the passionate kiss of the morning
Stands there a tower by the sea unshaken by wave and by wind;
Lightning assails, and the sea breaks vain on the battlements, scorning
Even to fling back the foam shattered before and behind;
Save for one window its height rears up unbroken and blind.
Here may a man gaze out to the night by the stars of it stricken,
Out to the blind black air that the lightning divides, and is dumb;
Here, and look back in the tower where pallid shades murmur and quicken:
Low laughs leap in the silence, sink to a sigh ere there come,
Far from the feet of the storm, a pulse like the beat of a drum.
Throbs the wild sound through the storm, and the wings of it waken and quiver,
Only the watcher, unmoved, looks on the face of the night;
Sees the strong hosts that unite, a fervent implacable river
Foaming from heaven and hell, two armies of crimson and white;
Flecked is the sky with their blood shed as by sabres of light.
Now they are clutching his arms, the phantoms that throng there behind him,
Foul and distorted, whose sight may not on men ever dawn;
Now they entice and entreat, now strive with fresh fury to bind him,
Cords that are cut by an angel whose sword is unceasingly drawn,
Glitters, and bids them fall back as if struck by the eye of the morn.
Would he but turn he should see a woman laid naked before him,
Stretching her arms to his breast, reaching her lips to his face,
Lips that should grant but one kiss ere the demons descended and tore him
Limb from wet limb, and devoured, and bore his stained soul into space
Far from the regions of hope and the lands that are holy with grace.
Alway the battle proceeds and alway the tempest re-quickens,
Pregnant with thunder, delivered when the swift knife is let flash;
Alway the wind has its will and the slaughter-steam rises and thickens;
Alway the sea is a lion, enraged by the wind and its lash;
Alway the heavens resound with the thunder's reverberate crash.
Heaven has conquered, behold! and the hosts of the demons are fleeing;
Dawn drives before her fair feet the feather-light wings of the gale;
Silent the tower rears aloft its front into beauty and seeing.
Only the window is dark; only there hangs like a veil
Sleep on the chamber and clings. Heard I a woman-fiend wail?
Heard I the sound of a kiss? Has man been destroyed in the daylight,
Man whom the night could not quell? What angel fled weeping away?
There in the East there extends a white light devouring the grey light,
There the sun rises and brings hope with the dawn of the day.
Silence hides certainty—surely voices of angels that pray,
Surely the sound of delight, and of praise, and unspeakable glory
Rings in the wind like a bell, and wakes the white air of the lea;
All the bright sea is aflame, and the caps of it, golden or hoary,
Leap in the light of the sun, in the light of the eyes of the sea.
Triumph is born like a flower, and the soul of the adept is free.

WHEAT AND WINE.

CLEAR, deep, and blue, the sky
  Is silvered by the morn,
And where the dewdrop's eye
Catches its brilliancy
  Strange lights and hues are born:
I have seen twelve colours hover on a single
    spray of thorn.

There is a great grey tower[1]
  Cut clear against the deep;
In the sun's wakening hour
I think it has the power
  To touch the soul of sleep
With its tender thought, and bid me to awake
    for joy—and weep.

This night I am earlier.
  No drowsy thoughts drew nigh
At eve to make demur
That I be minister
  To Cynthia maidenly:
All night I have watched her sail through a
    black and silver sky.

Within my soul there fight
  Two full and urgent streams,
Work's woe and dream's delight:
Like snow and sun they smite,
  Days battle hard with dreams:
On a world of misty beauty the Aurora
    clearly beams.

So labour fought with pride,
  And love with idleness,
My soul was torn and tried
With the impassioned tide
  Of storm and deathly stress—
I had never dreamed a lily should arise amid
    the press.

[1] St. John's Chapel, Cambridge, which Crowley's rooms in 16 St. John's Street overlooked. It was his habit to work from midnight to dawn, when he could no longer be disturbed by visits from friends.

Yet such a flower sprang here
  Within this soul of mine,
When foemen bade good cheer
To foemen, grew one clear
  Concept, ideal, divine,
Of a god of light and laughter, of a god of
    wheat and wine.

Work on, strong mind, devise
  The outer life aright!
Dream, subtle soul, and arise
To noblest litanies
  That pierce the mask of night—
In a man work lifts his eyelids, but his dreams
    lend eyes their light.

So dreams and days are wed,
  And soul and body lie
Ambrosial in Love's bed.
See, heaven with stars is spread—
  So glad of life am I
If an angel came to call me I am sure I
    would not die.

A RONDEL.

THE wail of the wind in the desolate land
  Lifts voice where the heaven lies pallid and
    blind;
Sweeps over the hills from the sea and the
    sand
      The wail of the wind.

The earth gives a bleak echo back, and
    behind
  Lurk sorrows and sins in the grasp of a
    hand,
And love and despair are the lords of man-
    kind.

The mountains are steadfast; immutably
    grand,
  Bid me to their bosom the chain to unbind:
At peace and at pity I now understand
      The wail of the wind.

THE VISIONS OF THE ORDEAL.

THE mind with visions clouded,
(Asleep? Awake?)
By bloodless shades enshrouded,
(By whom, and for whose sake?)
With visions dimly lighted,
By its own shade affrighted,
In its own light benighted,
The doors of hell may shake.

Unbidden spring the spectres
(Whence come, where bound?)
To baffle those protectors
Whose wings are broad around.
Uprise they and upbraid,
Till life shrinks back afraid,
And death itself dismayed
Sinks back to the profound.

Unholy phantom faces
(Of self? Of sin?)
Grin wild in all the places
Where blood is trodden in:
The ground of night enchanted
With deadly blooms is planted,
Where evil beasts have panted
And snakes have shed their skin.

With poison steams the air,
And evil scent
Is potent everywhere;
Creation waits the event:
In silence, without sighing,
The living and the dying,
Oppressed and putrefying,
Curse earth and firmament.

What dreams disturb my slumber,
Or what sights seen?
Foul orgies without number
In dens and caves obscene,
Accurst, detestable,
In which I laugh with hell,
And furies chant the knell
Of all things clean.

Ah God! the shapes that throng!
Ah God! what eyes!
The souls grown sharp and strong
That my lips made their prize,
The ruined souls, the wrecks
Of bodies fair of flecks
Long since, ere God did vex
My soul with sacrifice.

These press upon my lips
What lips of flame
To burn me, unless slips
Some cooler kiss, from shame
Washed clean by God's desire,
To save me from their fire—
Those kiss me and respire
The perfume of the Name.[1]

Remorse and terror banished
By pitying lovers,
Who from my eyes have vanished,
(The Lidless Eye[2] discovers),
Repenting souls that turn,
Whose hearts with pity burn
For me, who now discern
Their love around me hovers.

Their love wards from my head
The furious hate
Of those loves doubly dead
That may not pass the gate:
By their entreating prayer
The angels fill the air
To guard my steps, to bare
The veil inviolate.

The visions leave me now;
I sink to sleep;
Calm and content my brow;
My eyes are large and deep.
The morning shall behold
On feet and plumes of gold
My spirit soon enfold
The flocks on heaven's steep.

[1] Jehovah, here and throughout, unless expressly stated to the contrary.
[2] That of Macroprosopus, who "neither slumbers nor sleeps."

Refreshed, encouraged, lightened,
Sent on the Way
Whose Sun and Star have brightened
From dawning into day,
I set my face, a flint,
Toward where the holy glint
Of lamps affords the hint
That leads me—where it may.

POWER.

THE mighty sound of forests murmuring
In answer to the dread command;
The stars that shudder when their king[1]
Extends his hand,

His awful hand to bless, to curse; or moves
Toward the dimmest den
In the thick leaves, not known of loves
Or nymphs or men;

(Only the sylph's frail gossamer may wave
Their quiet frondage yet,
Only her dewy tears may lave
The violet;)

The mighty answer of the shaken sky
To his supreme behest; the call
Of ibex that behold on high
Night's funeral,

And see the pale moon quiver and depart
Far beyond space, the sun ascend
And draw earth's globe unto his heart
To make an end;

The shriek of startled birds; the sobs that tear
With sudden terror the sharp sea
That slept, and wove its golden hair
Most mournfully;

The rending of the earth at his command
Who wields the wrath of heaven, and is dumb;
Hell starts up—and before his hand
Is overcome.

[1] G. C. Jones, then of Basingstoke, a profound mystic.

I heard these voices, and beheld afar
These dread works wrought at his behest:
And on his forehead, lo! a star,
And on his breast.

And on his feet I knew the sandals were
More beautiful than flame, and white,
And on the glory of his hair
The crown of night.

And I beheld his robe, and on its hem
Were writ unlawful words to say,
Broidered like lilies, with a gem
More clear than day.

And round him shone so wonderful a light
As when on Galilee
Jesus once walked, and clove the night,
And calmed the sea.

I scarce could see his features for the fire
That dwelt about his brow,
Yet, for the whiteness of my own desire,
I see him now;

Because my footsteps follow his, and tread
The awful bounds of heaven, and make
The very graves yield up their dead,
And high thrones shake;

Because my eyes still steadily behold,
And dazzle not, nor shun the night,
The foam-born lamp of beaten gold
And secret might;

Because my forehead bears the sacred Name,
And my lips bear the brand
Of Him[1] whose heaven is one flame,
Whose holy hand

Gathers this earth, who built the vaults of space,
Moulded the stars, and fixed the iron sea,
Because His[1] love lights through my face
And all of me.

[1] Jehovah.

Because my hand may fasten on the sword
If my heart falter not, and smite
Those lampless limits most abhorred
Of iron night,

And pass beyond their horror to attack
Fresh foemen, light and truth to bring
Through their untrodden fields of black,
A victor king.

I know all must be well, all must be free;
I know God as I know a friend;
I conquer, and most silently
Await the end.

VESPERS.

THE incense steams before the Christ;
It wraps His feet with grey,
A perfumed melancholy mist,
Tears sacred from the day;
An awe, a holiness, I wist,
More sweet than man may say.

I bend my head to kiss the brow,
Scarred and serene and wide,
The bosom and the loin-cloth now
And where the blood has dried,
The blood whose purple tide doth flow
From out the smitten side.

The fragrance of his skin begets
Desire of holy things;
Through the dim air a spirit frets
His closely woven wings;
Like love, upon my brow he sets
The crowns of many kings.

(The trembling demons of the sea
Before the poet bend;
He greets the angels quietly
As one who greets a friend;
He waiteth, passionless, to be
A witness of the end.)

I chant in low sweet verses still
A mystic song of dread,
As one imposing all his will
Upon the expectant dead;
And lights dip down, and shadows fill
The dreams that haunt my head.

I sing strange stories of that world
No man may ever see;
My lips with strong delight are curled
To kiss the sacred knee,
And all my soul is dewed and pearled
With tears of poetry.

The strong mysterious spell is cast
To bind and to release;
To give the devils hope at last,
To the unburied peace;
To gladden the reluctant past
With silent harmonies.

The song grows wilder now and strives
All heaven to enchain,
As who should grasp a thousand lives,
And draw their breath again
Into some cavern where he dives,
A hell of grisly pain.

And now behold! the barren Cross
Bursts out in vernal flowers;
The music weeps, as on the moss
The summer's kissing showers,
And there sweep, as sweeps an albatross,
The happy-hearted hours.

My rapt eyes grow more eager now,
God smites within the host,
White fires illuminate my brow
Lit of the Holy Ghost;
I see the angel figures bow
On Heaven's silent coast.

Eternity, a wheel of light,
And Time, a fleece of snow,
I saw, and deep beyond the night,
The steady mystic glow
Of that lamp's flame unearthly bright
That watches Earth below.

Long avenues of sleepy trees
And bowers arched with love,
And kisses woven for a breeze,
And lips that scarcely move,
Save as long ripples on the seas,
That murmur like a dove.

I saw the burning lips of God
Set fast on Mary's face,
I saw the Christ, with fire shod,
Walk through the holy place,
And the lilies rosier where he trod
Blushed for a little space.

I saw myself, and still I sang
With lips in clearer tune,
Like to the nightingale's that rang
Through all those nights of June;
Such nights when stars in slumber hang
Beneath the quiet moon.

Still, in those avenues of light,
No maid, with golden zone,
And lily garment that from sight
Half hides the ivory throne,
Lay in my arms the livelong night
To call my soul her own.

The Christ's cold lips my lips did taste
On Time's disastrous tide;
His bruiséd arms my soul embraced,
My soul twice crucified;
And always then the thin blood raced
From out the stricken side.

The incense fumes, the chant is low,
Perfume around is shed;
I am as one of Them who know
The secrets of the dead:
The sorrows that walk to and fro,
The love that hides his head.

O living Head! whose thorns are keen
To bruise and pierce and slay;
O Christ! whose eyes have always been
Fixed fast upon the way,
Where dim Jerusalem was seen
A city cold and grey!

The flowers of fire that grow beneath
And blossom on the Tree
Are fed from his despair and death
Who sings of land and sea,
And all those mountains where thy breath,
Jehovah, still must be.

The censer swings to slower time;
The darkness falleth deep:
My eyes, so solemn and sublime,
Relent, and close, and weep:
And on the silence, like a chime,
I heard the wings of Sleep.

BY THE CAM.

TWILIGHT is over, and the noon of night
Draws to its zenith. Here beyond the stream
Dance the wild witches that dispel my dream
Of gardens naked in Diana's sight.
Foul censers, altars desecrated, blight
The corpse-lit river, whose dank vapours teem
Heavy and horrible, a deadly steam
Of murder's black intolerable might.

The stagnant pools rejoice; the human feast
Revels at height; the sacrament is come;
God wakes no lightning in the broken East;
His awful thunders listen and are dumb;
Earth gapes not for that sin; the skies renew
At break of day their vestiture of blue.

ASTROLOGY.

A LONELY spirit seeks the midnight hour,
When souls have power
To cast away one moment bonds of clay,
And touch the day
With pallid wistful lips beyond the earth,
And bring to birth
New thoughts with which life long has travailed;
As if one dead

Should rise and utter secrets of the tomb,
And from hell's womb
Or heaven's breast bring all the load of fears,
Toils of long years,
Sorrows of life and agonies of death,
Hard caught-up breath,
The labouring hands of love, the cheeks of shame,
The gloomy flame
Of lust, the cruel torment of desire
More than hell fire,
And bid them fade, as if the bryony
Let her flower die,
And banished them through space, as if a star
Dropped through the far
Vault of the sky, and, as a lamp extinct
With blood-red tinct,
Went out. So lonely in mysterious night
A wild, strange light
Flickers around the sacred head of man,
And bids him scan
The scroll of heaven, and see if there be not,
Black with no blot
Of cloud, but golden lettered on the blue
That mothers dew,
This message of good hope, good trust, good fate
And good estate:
"Work on, hope ever, let your faith be built
Of gold ungilt;
Your love exceed the starry vault for height,
The heaven for might;
Your faith wax firmer than a ship at sleep
On the grey deep,
Anchored in some most certain anchorage
From ocean's rage;
Your patience stand when mountains shake and quail
Before the gale
Of God's great tribulation. Make thee sure
Thou canst endure!
And work, work ever, sleep not, gird thy head
With garlands red
Of blood from swollen veins forced in bitter toil
To win some spoil
Of knowledge from the caverns of the deep!
So shall the steep
Pathways of heaven gleam with loftier fires
Than earth's desires.
So shalt thou conquer Space, and lastly climb
The walls of Time,
And by the golden path the great have trod
Reach up to God!"

DÆDALUS.

THE scorpion kisses and the stings of sin
Cling hard within
The heart whose fibres, like a slender vine,
Earth's hopes entwine,
And all the furies of the air caress
The sorceress
Whose bosom beats in unison with shame,
A flower of flame
Whose root most secretly made fast in hell
Is watered by the seraphim that fell.

The heart wherein is lit the sacred fire
Of high desire,
Burnt clean from all untruth and sacrilege,
Her wings may fledge,
And fly a little in the broad sweet air,
Till unaware
The Spirit of Jehovah, like a dove
On wings of love,
Breathe the sweet kiss, a sacrament untold,
And clothe the heart's desire with flames of gold.

No rash Icarian wing this passion plies,
But sanctifies,
As if a censer (that a cherub swings)
Blossomed with wings
And floated up, an incense-breathing bird,
With songs half heard

Before the throne of God. Even so this life
Of sordid strife
Is made most holy, beautiful, and pure,
By this desire, if this desire endure.

So to the altar of the Highest aspire
Those souls whose fire
Has on it cast one grain of pure incense,
(Who guesses—whence?)
Those souls that cast their trammels off, and spring
On eager wing,
Immaculate, new-born, toward the sky,
And shall not die
Until they cleave at last the lampless dome,
And lose their tent because they find their home.

EPILOGUE.

Like snows on the mountain, uplifted
By weather or wind as it blows,
In hollows the heaps of it drifted,
The splendour of fathomless snows;
So measure and meaning are shifted to fashion a rose.

The garland I made in my sorrow
Was woven of infinite peace;
The joy that was white on the morrow
Made music of viols at ease;
The thoughts of the Highest would borrow the roar of the seas.

This pastime of hope and of labour
Fled singing through bountiful hours,
With sleep for a bride, for a neighbour
With Death in the blossoming bowers
That slays with his merciless sabre the passion of flowers.

This pastime had hope for its metre,
And trust in high God for the tune,
And passion of sorrow made sweeter
Than loves of the leafiest June,
When Artemis' arrows are fleeter than rays of the moon.

My hope in the ocean was founded,
Nor changed for the wind and the tide;
My love by the heaven was bounded,
And knew not a barrier beside;
My faith beyond heaven was grounded, as God to abide.

Though death be the stain on our roses,
The roses of heaven are white;
Though day on the world of us closes
The stars only dream of the night
As of music that roars and reposes and dies in delight.

Dead stars in the season of sighing,
Lost worlds of unspeakable pain,
White winds in the winter-tide dying,
Or pestilence risen from rain;
So thoughts are that perish for lying and rise not again.

Blue waves in the summer uncrested,
New homes for the fair and the free,
Bright breezes in forest-leaves nested,
Sweet birds in the flowering tree;
So thoughts that by truth have been tested sing down to the sea.

But weak as the flowers of summer
Are the flowers that float on my stream;
My song-birds to others are dumber
Than voices half heard in a dream;
My muse, louder gods overcome her, the eyes of them gleam.

The sorrow that woke me to singing
Is deeper than songs that I sing;
The birds that fresh music are bringing
No chords for my memory bring;
Those lips like a soul that are clinging most silently cling.

Take thought for these verses, though time be
So sure and so swift for thy feet,
Though far from this England thy clime be[1]
In years that sway slow as the wheat,
Take thought, for an hour let my rhyme be not wholly unsweet.

[1] Julian Baker expected at this time to be abroad for some years.

For truth and desire and devotion
May lend through the verses a voice,
They tremble with violent motion,
They yearn to be fair for thy choice
As billows and winds of the ocean that roar and rejoice.

For winds that are shaken and riven
I bound by my power unto me;
For these have I battled and striven
With winds that are rapid and free;
With weapons of words I have driven the pulse of the sea.

There steals through my coldness a fire,
Between my slow words is a sword,
One lit by the heart of desire,
One sharp in the hand of the Lord;
To these that sink, sleep, and expire, your welcome accord.

With wrath or repose for its raiment
Your power, like a pyramid, stands;
My love, with no claim, as a claimant
Came seeking out truth in the sands,
Found truth, and must place in poor payment this book in your hands.

THE POEM.

A LITTLE DRAMA IN FOUR SCENES.

1898.

I dedicate this play * to the gentleman who, on the evening of June 24th, 1898, turned back in Shaftesbury Avenue to give a halfpenny to a little girl, and thereby suggested to me the idea here rendered.

SCENES.

I. THE ANGEL OF PITY.
II. THE ANGEL OF LOVE.
III. THE ANGEL OF DEATH.
IV. THE FORM OF THE FOURTH WAS LIKE THE SON OF GOD.[1]

PERSONS.

PERCY BRANDON (*a Poet*).
ESMÉ VAUGHAN.
MR. VAUGHAN (*her Father*).
MR. BRANDON (*Father of Percy*).
A FRIEND TO VAUGHAN.
Butler, Footmen, etc., etc.

SCENE I.

Shaftesbury Avenue, 8.30 *p.m.* *A gentleman walking with a friend, both in evening dress. A little ragged girl. A young man. The gentleman stops and gives the little girl a halfpenny. The young man smiles.*

The gentleman notices the smile, and sees how great a sadness underlies it.

VAUGHAN.

[*Turning to the young man.*]
AND you — what are you doing here? Excuse my rudeness—you seem so sad.

PERCY.

I am sad to-night. I am very lonely in this place.

VAUGHAN.

There are plenty of people about.

PERCY.

People—mere shells, husks of the golden wheat that might grow even here.

VAUGHAN.

Why do you stay here?

PERCY.

I cannot think at home.

VAUGHAN.

Why think, if thinking makes you sad?

PERCY.

That I may write. I have not long to live, and I must write, write always.

FRIEND [*aside to Vaughan*].

Il me semble qu'il a faim.

PERCY.

I am hungry for a little love, a little pity. To-night you have shown me your soul, and I am not hungry any more.

[1] See Daniel iii. 25.

* Like all plays of this form, it may be read as a delicate idyll or a screaming parody, according to the nature and mood of the reader.

VAUGHAN.

But, boy, you are starving physically. Come home with me and have some dinner. Only my daughter will be there.

PERCY.

You are very kind. Thank you.

FRIEND [*aside*].

He is a gentleman.

VAUGHAN.

But what are you doing to be alone in London?

PERCY.

Where should I go?

VAUGHAN.

Your father—

PERCY.

Has shown me the door.

VAUGHAN.

How have you quarrelled?

PERCY.

Because I must write.

VAUGHAN.

What do you write about that he dislikes?

PERCY.

He calls it waste of time.

VAUGHAN.

He may be right. What do you write about?

PERCY.

I write about all the horrible things I see, and try to find beauty in them, or to make beauty; and I write about all the beautiful things I only dream of. I love them all; yes, even that woman yonder.

VAUGHAN.

Do you find beauty in her?

PERCY.

No, but I see in her history a poem, to which I trust that God will write an end.

VAUGHAN.

What end can come but evil?

PERCY.

O! if I had no hope for her I should have none for myself.

VAUGHAN.

How? Have you then fallen?

PERCY.

Oh, yes, I have fallen. I am older every hour. I have wasted time, I have wasted love.

VAUGHAN.

Perhaps it is not all waste after all. There is a use for everything, nothing is destroyed —believe so, anyhow!

FRIEND.

What about this dinner of yours, Vaughan? Esmé will think us a long while gone.

VAUGHAN.

Hansom! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A year later. VAUGHAN'S *house in Mayfair.* PERCY'S *bedroom. Moonlight streams through an open window in the corridor.* PERCY *asleep. He dreams uneasily, and after a little wakes up with a start and a cry.*

PERCY.

OH! I had such a bad dream. I dreamt I was straining out after a beautiful bird, and suddenly it stopped, and then I held it in

my hands, and it was happy, and then I dropped down somehow into the darkness and the bird had gone—only it got so confused, and I woke up. I hear steps!

ESMÉ [*in corridor*].

Did you call, Percy? I heard a cry as if you were in pain.

PERCY.

Esmé, I will come and talk to you in the moonlight. I want to say something that I couldn't say before, because my heart choked me.

ESMÉ.

Come out, Percy, the moon is so white, looking out of the black sky. The sky is quite black near the moon; only far down where there are no more bright stars it is a deep, deep blue. It is bluer and deeper than the sea.

PERCY.

It is like your eyes. [*Comes out into corridor.*] Esmé! I have looked into your eyes as your eyes look into Heaven, and there I have found my Heaven. O serene depths! O faultless face of my desire! O white brow too clear! I sin against your holiness by my presence. Only the moon should see you, Esmé.

ESMÉ [*half in tears*].

You don't mean like that, Percy, quite. Why do you say that?

Enter VAUGHAN *in shadow. He draws back and stands watching.*

PERCY.

Oh, you are crying, my heart! Do you cry because I have spoken and touched with fire the sweet child-love we have lived in all this year? Or is it that you do not understand? Or are you sorry? Or are you glad?

ESMÉ.

I am very, very glad. [*They kiss. A little cloud passes across the moon without dimming its brightness.*] Percy! Percy!

PERCY.

My wife, my own wife, will you kiss me?

ESMÉ.

I am too happy to kiss you!

PERCY.

Esmé, my Esmé. And we will write our poem now together.

ESMÉ.

I cannot write; we will live our poem now together.

PERCY.

Dear heart, dear heart! And she will give us light, our dear moon out yonder, always a pure cold light: and our life shall answer a purer, warmer flame. She is like a maiden covered with lilies; your lilies have kissed roses.

ESMÉ.

And when the moon's light fails, the light of your song.

PERCY.

Let that light be drawn from Heaven too!

ESMÉ.

Oh, Percy, I am so glad, so glad!

PERCY.

Esmé!

ESMÉ.

When will you begin your great poem—now?

PERCY [*as if in pain*].

Ah! my poem. I am in despair! It is so great, and I am so little; it is so pure, and I am so dull of understanding. When I write I feel as it were the breath of an angel covering me with holiness, and I know —then! But now—I only write mechanically. I force myself. To-day I tore up all I wrote last night.

ESMÉ.

Let us ask God to send you the angel, shall we?

[*They kneel, with arms intertwined, at the open window, and bow their heads silently.* VAUGHAN *also prays, with arms outspread in blessing. Curtain.*

SCENE III.

Six months later.

The dining-room. PERCY, VAUGHAN, ESMÉ *at dinner.*

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER.

IF you please, sir, a gentleman has called; he says he must see you at once.

VAUGHAN.

Have you told him we are at dinner?

BUTLER

Yes, sir; but he would not take that; begging your pardon, sir, he said it was only an excuse, and he wouldn't stand any nonsense.

VAUGHAN.

An excuse! Who is the fellow?

BUTLER.

I think he is a friend of Mr. Percy's, sir.

PERCY [*alarmed*].

It might be my father. [*Aside.*] And I could have finished to-night—the very last word. Something has been singing in me all day.

VAUGHAN.

I will come and speak to him.

[*Exit. The voices are heard outside.*

BRANDON [*stout, purple, "knobbed," and ill-tempered*].

Yes, sir. Either I see my son now, or I fetch in a policeman. Kidnapper! Yes, sir, that's what I call you! Yes, sir! my name *is* Brandon. And your damned name is Vaughan, sir! And I'll drag your damned name through a police-court, sir, as soon as —as—Where's my son?

[*Is heard to move towards dining-room.*

VAUGHAN.

John! shut that door. Mr. Brandon, my daughter is at dinner in that room. I cannot allow you to enter.

BRANDON.

That's where he is, you scoundrel. Out of the way, fool! [*Knocking* JOHN *over, bursts the door open and enters.*] There you are, you snivelling little swine. My God! to think that damned puppy's my son! Come out of it!

VAUGHAN [*who has entered and rung the bell for the servants*].

I shall have you locked up for assaulting my servant.

BRANDON.

And you for abducting my son. He's coming with me now or there'll be a fuss. Mark my words, you rascal!

[*Enter two Footmen.*

VAUGHAN.

Seize that man. [*They seize and hold him after a struggle.*] Esmé! go away to your room; this is no place for you. Now, sir, say all you have to say!

[ESMÉ *waits in the doorway.*

BRANDON.

Give me my son, and be damned to you! That's all; and it's plain enough, I hope.

PERCY.

Father, I am leaving Mr. Vaughan's house, as I shall only get him into trouble if I stay. But I will not come home with you, you who broke my mother's heart, and turned me from your doors penniless.

BRANDON.

Unnatural puppy!

PERCY.

My mother's spirit forgives you, and in my heart is no longer the desire for vengeance. So far have I risen, but not far enough to forget that you are the most abominable villain that plagues God's beautiful world with his infesting life.

BRANDON [*with sudden calmness*].

This to his father! What does the Bible say, you wretch?

PERCY [*to* VAUGHAN].

I will go, my true new father. Kiss Esmé for me a hundred times!

BRANDON [*breaking from the Footmen*].

Damn you; that's your game, is it? No, you go with me, Sir Poet.

[*Rushing at his son, strikes.* PERCY, *warding off the unexpected blow, staggers.* BRANDON, *maddened by the idea of fighting, snatches up a knife and drives it into his heart. He falls with a low cry.* VAUGHAN *dashes forward and strikes* BRANDON *heavily. He falls; footmen drag him off insensible.*

VAUGHAN [*bending over* PERCY].

Are you hurt?

PERCY.

Oh, hardly hurt at all! Only my head a little, and I wanted so to finish the poem to-night.

ESMÉ.

Let me come to him, father. Oh, Percy, Percy, look at me, look at me; you're not hurt, are you?

PERCY.

Am I ever hurt with your arms round me?

ESMÉ.

Oh, but you grow whiter; you must be hurt.

VAUGHAN.

A knife! He must have stabbed him. Fetch a doctor, one of you, sharp!

[*Exit a man.*

ESMÉ.

It is his heart; see, my hand is all covered with blood. Give me a handkerchief. Here, I will staunch the wound. [*She attempts to prevent the bleeding with her handkerchief.*] Oh! Percy! [*A pause.*] Oh! Percy!

PERCY.

I am going away, Esmé. I shall see you often. When you think of me I shall always be with you. One day you will come to me, Esmé! Kiss me! Your kisses must finish my poem. One day your pen must finish it.

ESMÉ.

You know I cannot write a line. Oh, how sorry I am for that!

PERCY [*to* VAUGHAN].

Good-bye, my dear, dear friend. Take care of Esmé for me. I shall watch over her myself, I and God together. She is so frail and white, and she understands. She sees my soul, and Heaven is always open to her eyes when she looks up, and she is so beautiful. Will it seem long, Esmé, till we kiss again beyond the moon there—it is the moon, isn't it, come to see that Esmé is not too sad about my dying? Be kind to her always, moon, when I am gone beyond you! You must finish my poem, Esmé; there is only a little to do. Kiss me the last time! Good-bye, my dear friends. I wish I could take your hands, but I am so weak. Kiss me, Esmé, quickly. I feel the voice of God come like a shudder in my blood; I must go to Him. Esmé! Esmé! Esmé! I am so happy! [*Dies.*

[ESMÉ *flings herself passionately on to the body, weeping and kissing the dead face. Curtain.*

SCENE IV.

The next morning. ESMÉ *in bed asleep.*

Enter VAUGHAN.

VAUGHAN.

Poor child, poor child, how are you? You have not slept, I know. Why, she is still asleep! Hush! How calmly and regularly she breathes! How fresh she looks! How she smiles! It is wonderful! It is impossible! Esmé! Esmé! it is a pity you cannot always sleep so, and never wake up to the cruel sorrow of yesterday. Ah me! When we all thought to be so happy. And in a month he would have married her: in a day he would have finished the poem. What a wonderful poem it was! One could hear, above the angels that sang, the voice of God in that awful music that made his lines quiver and shimmer like live coals. And the end was to have been so perfect: there was on the last passage of his work a hush, a silence almost as if the world—his world—awaited the voice of some great one. And now the silence is not broken. Perhaps men were not ready for those final chords. Perhaps to hear them would be to pass where he has passed! But oh! the pity! To leave his greatest task undone! To be stricken down in the last charge, a good soldier to the end! Would God he could come back only for an hour to put the keystone to his palace that he built of running brooks and trees and buds and the sound of the sea, and all the lights of heaven to window it. [ESMÉ's *eyes open.*] Esmé! you must wake up and kiss father!

ESMÉ [*half awake*].

He sang to me all night, not his voice only, but a deeper voice that I understood so well as I never understood, a voice like his poem, only more beautiful even than that, and I can't remember one word, only that he kissed me all the night; and there was as it were a vapour, an incense-cloud, about me, and I could not see—and I am so happy.

VAUGHAN.

Esmé, I am here, your father.

ESMÉ.

Ah! it comes back. He is dead. Oh, God! Oh, God! And we were to have been married a month to-day.

VAUGHAN.

And he left the poem and could not finish it.

ESMÉ [*pointing to scattered papers on a table*].

What have you been doing with those papers, father?

VAUGHAN [*astonished*].

They are not mine, child. I did not see them till you showed me. [*Taking papers.*] Why, they are in your handwriting; what are they? [*Reading, gradually becomes aware that something strange has happened.*] It is finished—it is finished! [*Curtain.*

1899.

TO

GERALD KELLY,

POET AND PAINTER,

I DEDICATE THIS TRAGEDY.

CAMBRIDGE, *November*, 1898.

JEPHTHAH.

"Let my Lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely Tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphear
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those Dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With Planet, or with Element.
Some time let Gorgeous Tragedy
In Sceptr'd Pall come sweeping by."
Il Penseroso.

Τάδε νῦν ἑταίραις
Ταῖς ἔμαισι τέρπνα κάλως ἀείσω.
SAPPHO.

"It need not appear strange unto you that this Book is not at all like unto so many others which I have, and which are composed in a lofty and subtle style."—*The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage.*

PRELIMINARY INVOCATION.

TO A. C. S.

IN the blind hour of madness, in its might,
When the red star of tyranny was highest;
When baleful watchfires scared the witless night,
And kings mocked Freedom, as she wept:
"Thou diest!"
When priestcraft snarled at Thought: "I crush thee quite!"
Then rose the splendid song of thee,
"Thou liest!"
Out of the darkness, in the death of hope,
Thy white star flamed in Europe's horoscope.

The coffin-nails were driven home: the curse
Of mockery's blessing flung the dust upon her:
The horses of Destruction dragged the hearse
Over besmirchéd roads of Truth and Honour:
The obscene God spat on the universe:
The sods of Destiny were spattered on her:—
Then rose thy spirit through the shaken skies:
"Child of the Dawn, I say to thee, arise!"

Through the ancestral shame and feudal gloom,
Through mediæval blackness rung thy pæan:
Let there be light!—the desecrated tomb
Gaped as thy fury smote the Galilean.
Let there be light! and there was light: the womb
Of Earth resounded, and the empyréan
Roared: and the thunder of the seas averred
The presence of thy recreating word.

The stone rolls back: the charioted night,
Stricken, swings backwards on her broken pinions:
Faith sickens, drunken tyranny reels, the spite
Of monarchs, ruinous of their chained dominions:

The splendid forehead, crowned with Love and Light,
Flames in the starry air : the fallen minions
Drop like lost souls through horrid emptinesses
To their own black unfathomable abysses !

Now Freedom, flower and star and wind and wave
And spirit of the unimagined fire,
Begotten on the dishonourable grave
Of fallen tyranny, may seek her sire
In the pure soul of Man, her lips may lave
In the pure waters of her soul's desire,
Truth : and deep eyes behold thine eyes as deep,
Fresh lips kiss thine that kissed her soul from sleep.

See Italy, the eagle of all time,
Triumphant, from her coffin's leaden prison,
Soar into freedom, seek the heights sublime
Of self-reliance, from those depths new-risen,
Stirred by the passion of thy mighty rhyme :
Eagle, and phœnix : shrill, sharp flames bedizen
The burning citadel, where crested Man
Leaps sword in hand upon the Vatican.

Those dire words spoken, that thine hammer beat,
Of fire and steel and music, wrath god-worded,
Consuming with immeasurable heat
The sties and kennels of priest and king, that girded
The loins of many peoples, till the seat
Of Hell was shaken to its deep, and herded
Hosts of the tyrant trembled, faltered, fled,
When none pursued but curses of men dead :—

See, from the Calvary of the Son of Man,[1]
Where all the hopes of France were trodden under ;
See, from the crucifixion of Sedan
Thy thought the lightning, and thy word the thunder !
See her supreme, kingly, republican,
New France arisen, with her heart in sunder—
Yet throned in Heaven on ever-burning wheels,
Freedom resurgent, sealed with seven seals.

The seal of Reason, made impregnable :
The seal of Truth, immeasurably splendid :
The seal of Brotherhood, man's miracle :
The seal of Peace, and Wisdom heaven-descended :
The seal of Bitterness, cast down to Hell :
The seal of Love, secure, not-to-be-rended :
The seventh seal, Equality : that, broken,
God sets His thunder and earthquake for a token.

Now if on France the iron clangours close,
Corruption's desperate hand, and lurking treason,[1]
Or alien craft,[2] or menace of strange blows
Wrought of her own sons,[3] in this bitter season :
Lift up thy voice, breathe fury on her foes,
Smite bigots yet again, and call on Reason,
Reason that must awake, and sternly grip
The unhooded serpent of dictatorship ![4]

Or, if thou have laid aside the starry brand,
And scourge, whose knots with their foul blood are rotten
Whom thou didst smite ; if thine unweary hand
Sicken of slaughter ; if thy soul have gotten
Its throne in so sublime a fatherland,
Above these miscreants and misbegotten ;
If even already thy spirit have found peace,
Among the thronged immortal secrecies ;

If with the soul of Æschylus thy soul
Talk, and with Sappho's if thy music mingle ;
If with the spirit infinite and whole
Of Shakespeare thou commune ; if thy brows tingle
With Dante's kiss ; if Milton's thunders roll
Amid thy skies ; if thou, supreme and single,
Be made as Shelley or as Hugo now,
And all their laurels mingle on thy brow—

Then (as Elijah, when the whirling fire
Caught him) stoop not thy spiritual splendour,
And sacred-seeking eyes to our desire,
But mould one memory yet, divinely tender,

[1] Napoleon III.

[1] Ultramontanism.
[2] Dreyfusardism.
[3] Militarism.
[4] At the time this poem was written, French patriots looked with a distrustful eye on General de Gallifet.

Of earth, and leave thy mantle, and thy lyre,
A double portion of thy spirit to render,
That yet the banner may fling out on high,
And yet the lyre teach freemen how to die!

Master, the night is falling yet again.
I hear dim tramplings of unholy forces:
I see the assembly of the foully slain:
The scent of murder steams: riderless horses
Gallop across the earth, and seek the inane:
The sun and moon are shaken in their courses:
The kings are gathered, and the vultures fall
Screaming, to hold their ghastly festival.

Master, the sons of Freedom are but few—
Yea, but as strong as the storm-smitten sea,
Their forehead consecrated with the dew,
Their heart made mighty: let my voice decree,
My spirit lift their standard: clear and true
Bid my trump sound, "Let all the earth be free!"
With thine own strength and melody made strong,
And filled with fire and light of thine own song.

Only a boy's wild songs, a boy's desire,
I bring with reverent hands. The task is ended—
The twilight draws on me: the sacred fire
Sleeps: I have sheathed my sword, my bow unbended:
So for one hour I lay aside the lyre,
And come, alone, unholpen, unbefriended,
As streams get water of the sun-smit sea,
Seeking my ocean and my sun in thee.

Yea, with thy whirling clouds of fiery light
Involve my music, gyring fuller and faster!
Yea, to my sword lend majesty and might
To dominate all tumult and disaster,
That even my song may pierce the iron night,
Invoking dawn in thy great name, O Master!
Till to the stainless heaven of the soul
Even my chariot-wheels on thunder roll.

And so, most sacred soul, most reverend head,
The silence of deep midnight shall be bound,
And with the mighty concourse of the dead
That live, that contemplate, my place be found,
Even mine, through all the seasons that are shed
Like leaves upon the darkness, where the sound
Of all high song through calm eternity
Shall beat and boom, thine own maternal sea.

For in the formless world, so swift a fire
Shall burn, that fire shall not be comprehended;
So deep a music roll, that our desire
Shall hear no sound; shall beam a light so splendid
That darkness shall be infinite: the lyre
Fashioned of truth, strung with men's heart-strings blended,
Shall sound as silence: and all souls be still
In wisdom's high communion with will.

JEPHTHAH.

A TRAGEDY.

"O Jephthah! judge of Israel!"—HAMLET.

CHARACTERS.

JEPHTHAH.
ADULAH, *his Daughter.*
JARED, *A Gileadite, cousin to* Jephthah.
A Prophet of the Lord.
ELEAZAR, *Chief of the Elders of Israel.*
AHINOAM, *an aged Priest.*
First Messenger.
Second Messenger.
First Herald.
Second Herald.
Soldiers of Jephthah.
Soldiers of Israel.
Chorus of Elders of Israel.
Maidens of Israel.

SCENE:—*An Open Place before Mizpeh. In the midst an Altar.*

TIME:—*The duration of the play is from noon of the first day to dawn of the third.*

JEPHTHAH.

Eleazar. Prophet. Chorus.

CHORUS.

NOW is our sin requited of the Lord.
For, scorning Jephthah for an harlot's son,
We cast him forth from us, and said: Begone,
Thou shalt not enter in with us; thy throat

Shall thirst for our inheritance in vain ;
Thou hast no lot nor part in Gilead.
And now, he gathers to himself vain men,
Violent folk, and breakers of the law,
And holds aloof in rocky deserts, where
The land, accurst of God, is barren still
Of any herb, or flower, or any tree,
And has no shelter, nor sweet watersprings,
Save where a lonely cave is hollow, and where
A meagre fountain sucks the sand. Our folk
Are naked of his counsel and defence
Against the tribe of Ammon, and stand aghast ;
Our feeble arms sway doubtfully long swords,
And spears are flung half-heartedly ; and he
With warlike garrison and stronger arms
Who might have helped us, laughs, and violence
Threatens the white flower of our homes : our wives,
Daughters, and sons are as a prey to them,
And where the children of the Ammonites
Throng not swift hoofs for murder, Jephthah's men
Blaspheme our sanctuaries inviolate,
And rob us of our dearest. Woe on woe
Hangs imminent to crush the slender sides
And battered bulwarks of our state. O thou
Whose hoary locks and sightless eyes compel
Our pity and our reverence, and whose mouth
Foams with the presence of some nearer god
Insatiate of thy body frail, give tongue,
If tongue may so far master deity
As give his fury speech, or shape thy words
From the blind auguries of madness.

PROPHET.

Ha !
The rose has washed its petals, and the blood
Pours through its burning centre from my heart.
The fire consumes the light ; and rosy flame
Leaps through the veins of blue, and tinges them
With such a purple as incarnadines
The western sky when storms are amorous
And lie upon the breast of toiling ocean,
Such billows to beget as earth devours
In ravening whirlpool gulphs. My veins are full,
Throbbing with fire more potent than all wine,
All sting of fleshly pangs and pleasures. Oh !
The god is fast upon my back ; he rides
My spirit like a stallion ; for I hate
The awful thong his hand is heavy with.

ELEAZAR.

Speak, for the god compels, and we behold.

PROPHET.

A harlot shall be mother of Israel.

CHORUS.

He speaks of her who sighed for Gilead.

PROPHET.

A maiden shall be slain for many men.

CHORUS.

A doubtful word, and who shall fathom it ?

PROPHET.

Thy help is from the hills and desert lands.

CHORUS.

Our help is from the hills : we know the Lord.

PROPHET.

Death rides most violently against the sun.

CHORUS.

And who shall bridle him, or turn his way ?
For Fate alone of gods, inflexible,
And careless of men's deeds, is firm in heaven.

PROPHET.

I see a sword whose hilt is to thy hand.

CHORUS.

But which of us shall wield the shining blade ?

PROPHET.

I see a dove departing to the hills.

CHORUS.

I pray it bring an olive-branch to us.

PROPHET.

The god has overcome me ; I am silent.

CHORUS.

He lies as one lies dead; none wakens him.
Nor life nor death must touch him now: beware !

ELEAZAR.

Beware now, all ye old wise men, of this.
For high things spoken and unjustly heard,
Or heard and turned aside, are fruitless words,
Or bear a blossom evil and abhorred,
Lest God be mocked. Consider well of this.

CHORUS.

A sword, a sword, to smite our foes withal !

ELEAZAR.

A help shall come from desert lands to us.

CHORUS.

Toward what end? For present help is much,
But uttermost destruction more, for we
Have no strong hope in any hand of man :
God is our refuge and our tower of strength.
In Him if any man abide—But if
He put his faith in horsemen, or the sword,
The sword he trusted shall be for an end.

ELEAZAR.

But evils fall like rain upon the land.

CHORUS.

Let us not call the hail to give us peace.

ELEAZAR.

Nor on the sun, lest he too eat us up.

CHORUS.

The heart of a man as the sea
Beats hither and thither to find
Ease for the limbs long free,
Light for the stormy mind,
A way for the soul to flee,
A charm for the lips to bind ;
And the struggle is keen as the strife to be,
And the heart is tossed by the thankless wind.

ELEAZAR.

Nay, for a man's sure purpose is of God.

CHORUS.

The large pale limbs of the earth are tanned
With the sun and the sea and the yellow sand ;
And the face of earth is dark with love
Of the lords of hell and the spirits above
That move in the foggy air of night,
And the spirit of God, most like a dove,
Hovers, and lingers, and wings his flight,
Spurned and rejected and lost to sight ;
But we desire him, a holy bird,
And we turn eyes to the hollow hills ;
For God is strong, and His iron word
Mocks at the gods of the woods and rills.

For our God is as a fire
That consumeth every one
That is underneath the sun.
We, for uttermost desire,
Must abase, with rent attire,
Souls and bodies to His throne,
Where above the starry choir
Stands the jasper, where alone
Vivid seraphim respire
Perfumes of a precious stone,
Where beneath His feet the dire
World of shells is pashed with mire,
And the evil spirits' ire
Steams and fumes within the zone
Girt with minaret and spire
Broken, burst, and overthrown,
Dusty, and defiled, and dun,
Palled with smoke of fruitless altars

Cast beneath the ocean now,
Ruined symbols, changéd psalters,
Where no lip no longer falters,
And the priest's deep brow
Pales not, flushes not for passion,
Clouds not with concealéd thought,
And the worshipper's eye, wrought
To the stars in subtle fashion,
By no magic is distraught.

Ay! our hope is in His holy
Places, and our prayers ascend
Fervent, and may sunder slowly
The blue darkness at the end.
For we know not where to send
For a sword to cleanse the land,
For a sharp two-edgéd brand,
All our homesteads to defend.
Now amid the desert sand
Lives an outcast of our race,
Strong, immutable, and grand,
And his mighty hand
Grips a mighty mace.
He would shatter, did we call,
Sons of Ammon one and all,
Did we fear not lest his eye
Turn back covetous to try
For our pleasances, to rule
Where the far blue Syrian sky
Stretches, where the clouds as wool
Mark the white Arabian border,
To become a tyrant king
Where his sword came conquering.
Out of chaos rises order
On her wide unwearying wing,
But the desolate marauder
Never over us shall swing
Such a sceptre as should bring
Sorrow to one home of ours.
Better bear the heavy hours
Under God's avenging breath,
Better brave the horrid powers,
Better taste the foreign death,
Humbling all our pride before
God's most holy throne, abasing
Every man's strong soul, and facing
All the heathen Ammon bore
On the angry shore,
Trusting to the mercy rare
Of Jehovah, than to bare
Hearts and bosoms to a friend
Who high truth and faith may swear,
And betray us at the end
To his robber bands.
So we clasp our humble hands,
Praying God to lift His sword
From our bleeding state, that stands
Tottering to its fall.
Though we call not Jephthah back
To repel the harsh attack,
Nor his followers call,
Hear thou, O Most High, give ear
To our pitiful complaint:
Under woes of war we faint.
Pity, Lord of Hosts, our fear!
Hear, Most High, oh, hear!

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

My lords, take heed now, prayer is good to save
While yet the foemen are far off; but now
They howl and clamour at our very gates.

ELEAZAR.

Blaspheme not God, but tell thy woeful news.

CHORUS.

I fear me for the sorrow that he speaks.

MESSENGER.

The tribe of Ephraim went forth to fight
Armed, and with bows, and turned them back to-day.
For in the South a cloud of many men,
And desert horsemen fiery as the sun,
Swarmed on the plains, a crescent from the hills
That girdle Mahanaim: and behold!
Our men were hemmed before the city gates,
The elders having fortified them: so
They fled about the city, and the horsemen,
Dashing, destroyed them as the wind that sweeps

Sere leaves before its fury: then the city
With arrows darkened all the air; and luck
Smote down some few pursuing; but their captain,
Riding his horse against the gate, drove in
His spear, and cried to them that followed him:
Who plucks my spear out shall be chief of all
That ply the short spear: and who breaks the gate
Shall lead my horsemen into Mizpeh: then,
Rushing, their spearmen battered in the gate
And overpowered the youths and agéd men,
That put up trembling spears, and drew slack bows,
And flung weak stones that struck for laughter's sake.
So now the city is the spoil of them,
And all our women-folk are slain or violate,
And all our young men murderously slain,
And children spitted on their coward spears.

CHORUS.

How heavy is Thy hand upon us, Lord!

MESSENGER.

Nor stayed they there; but, firing Mahanaim,
Sweep toward Mizpeh like a locust-cloud.

ELEAZAR.

Get thee to horse and carry me this message:
The Elders unto Jephthah, greeting: Help!
No single cry beyond that Help! Be gone!
[*Exit* Messenger.

CHORUS.

I fear me our necessity is sure.
But they come hither. Shall we rather flee?

ELEAZAR.

I stand here manly, and will die a man.

CHORUS.

For cowardice not pleases God, nor fear.
Shall we not take up weapons? Or shall He
Rather defend us with His Holy Arm,
We not presuming in our arrogance
To come with cunning, and defend ourselves?

ELEAZAR.

Nay, but God smites with sharpness of our swords.

CHORUS.

The sword is made sharp in our hands, but the point He shall guide;
We grasp the tough ash of the spear, but His hand is beside;
We drive in a cloud at the foe, but His chariots ride
Before us to sunder the spears.

We trust in His arms, and His prowess shall fledge our song's wing;
Our triumph we give to His glory, our spoil to the King;
Our battles He fights as we fight them, our victories bring
For His temple a tribute of tears.

Enter JEPHTHAH *amid his Soldiers, with many young men of Israel.*

JEPHTHAH.

Yea, for a man's sword should not turn again
To his own bosom, and the sword of fear
Smites not in vain the heart of cowardice.
But who hath called me hither to what end?

ELEAZAR.

For these, and for the sake of Israel.

JEPHTHAH.

And who are these? And who are Israel?

CHORUS.

Turn not thy face from us in wrath, for we
Are thine own father's children, and his loins
With double fervour gat a double flower;
And we indeed were born of drudging wives,

Pale spouses whom his heart despised, but thou
Wast of a fairer face and brighter eyes,
And limbs more amorous assuaged thy sire;
And fuller blood of his is tingling thus
Now in thy veins indignant at our sin.
But thou art strong and we are weak indeed,
Nor can we bear the burden, nor sustain
The fury of the Children of the East
That ride against us, and bright victory
Is thronéd in their banners, while on ours
Perches the hideous nightbird of defeat.
Mourn, mourn and cry; bow down unto the dust
O Israel, and O Gilead, for your son
Comes with unpitying eyes and lips compressed
To watch the desecration of thy shrine,
Jehovah, and the ruin of our hearth.

JEPHTHAH.

I am your outcast brother. At my birth
My father did not smile, nor she who bore
These limbs dishonourable did not smile,
Nor did my kisses soothe a mother's woe,
Because my thews grown strong were impotent
To reign or be a captain any more,
Though I might serve the children who had grown
Less godlike from his loins who made me god.
So when the day was ripe, my brethren turned
And gnashed upon me, mocking, with their teeth:
Thou art the son of a strange woman, thou!
Begone from honest folk!—and I in wrath
Smote once or twice with naked hand, and slew
Two gibing cowards, and went forth an outcast,
And gathered faithful servitors, and ruled
Mightiest in the desert, and was lord
Of all the marches where my spear might throw
Its ominous shadow between night and noon.
Yet always I considered my revenge,
And purposed, seeking out those kin of mine,
To make them as those kings that Gideon slew
Hard by the bloody waters of a brook.
And now ye call me to your help, forsooth!

CHORUS.

Let no ill memory of an ancient wrong,
Most mighty, edge thy sword
Against the prayer of this repentant song.
Dire sorrow of the Lord
Consumes our vital breath, and smites us down,
And desecrates the crown.
For we have sinned against thee, and our souls
Scathe and devour as coals,
And God is wroth because of thee, to break
The spirit of our pride, our lips to make
Reverent toward thee, as of men ashamed.
And now we pray thee for our children's sake,
And thine own pity's sake, to come untamed,
And furiously to ride against our foes,
To be our leader, till one sanguine rose
Spread from thy standard awful leaves of blood,
And thy swords pour their long insatiate flood
Through ranks of many dead! then, then to close
The wounds of all the land, and bid it bud
And blossom; as when two-and-thirty men,
The sons of Jair, on milk-white asses rode,
And judged us righteously, and each abode
Safe in the shadow of his vine; as when
The peace of Joshua lay upon the land,
And God turned not away His piteous eyes,
Nor smote us with the fury of His hand,
Nor clouded over His mysterious skies.
Then storm and wind had no more might at all,
And death and pestilence forgotten were;
Then angels came to holy men that call,
And gracious spirits thronged the happy air;
Then God was very gracious to all folk;
He lifted from us the Philistian yoke,
And all the iron power of Edom broke:—

Ah! all the Earth was fair!
Now, seeing that we are sinners, wilt not thou
Relent thy hateful brow,
Bend down on us a forehead full of peace,
Bidding thine anger cease,
Speaking sweet words most comfortable. O lose
The bitter memory of the wrong long dead!
O be the lord and prince we gladly choose
And crown the mercy of thy royal head!
Be thou the chief, and rule upon thy kin,
And be not wroth for sin.
For surely in the dusty days and years
There is a little river flowing still
That brings forgetfulness of woes and fears
And drinks up all the memory of ill.
Wherefore our tribute to thy feet we bring;
Conquer our foes, and reign our king!

JEPHTHAH.

Ye have no king but God: see ye to that!

ELEAZAR.

Behold, these people are as children, hiding
Thoughts beautiful and true in profuse words,
Not meaning all the lofty flight that fancy
And the strong urgement of a tune discover.
Be thou our judge, as Joshua long ago.

JEPHTHAH.

Swear by the Name unspoken that the truth
Flashes between the lips that tremble thus!
Ye love me not; ye fear me; ye might thrust
Some petty obstacle before my hands
When I would grasp your promise, and betray
Your faith for fear of me. I read thy thoughts,
Old man; I trust no word of thine; but these
Full-hearted mourners, them will I believe
Upon their oath most solemn and secure.
But take thou warning now! I shall not spare
Grey hairs or faltering limbs for treachery.

ELEAZAR.

Lift up your hands, all people of this land,
And swear with me this oath my lips pronounce:
By Wisdom, father of the world, we swear;
By Understanding, mother of the sea,
By Strength and Mercy, that support the throne,
By Beauty, Splendour, Victory, we swear,
And by the strong foundations, and the Kingdom,
Flower of all kingdoms, and by the holy Crown
Concealed with all concealments, highest of all,
We swear to be true men to thee and thine.

JEPHTHAH.

I thank you, people. Let the younger men
Gather their swords and spears, and pass before
This spear I strike into the earth, that so
I see how many fight for Israel.

CHORUS.

The young men are girded with swords;
The spears flash on high, and each shield
Gleams bright like the fury of lords
Through the steam of the well-foughten field.
The children of Ammon are broken, their
princes and warriors yield.

The captain is chosen for fight;
The light of his eye is as fire,
His hand is hardy of might
And heavy as dead desire;
The sword of the Lord and of Jephthah shall
build our dead women a pyre.

The people were sad for his wrath;
The elders were bowed with despair,
And death was the piteous path;
With ashes we covered our hair;
The voice of the singer was dumb, the voice
of the triumph of prayer.

But God had pity upon us,
Our evil and fallen way;
His mercy was mighty on us;
His lips are as rosy as day
Broken out of the sea at the sunrise, as fragrant as flowers in May.

Our sin was great in His sight:
We chased from our gates our brother,
We shamed his father's might,
We spat on the grave of his mother,
We laughed in his face and mocked, looking slyly one to another.

But God beheld, and His hand
Was heavy to bring us grief;
He brought down fire on the land,
And withered us root and leaf
Until we were utterly broken, lost men, without a chief.

But whom we scorned we have set
A leader and judge over all;
His wrong he may not forget,
But he pitieth men that call
From the heart that is broken with fear and the noise of funeral.

JEPHTHAH.

Are all these ready for their hearth and altars
To perish suddenly upon the field,
Pavilioned with the little tents at noon,
And ere the nightfall tented with the dead,
And every hollow made a sepulchre,
And every hill a vantage ground whereon
Hard-breathing fighting men get scanty sleep,
Till the dawn lift his eyebrows, and the day
Renew the battle? Will ye follow me
Through slippery ways of blood to Ephraim
To beat with sturdy swords unwearying
Our foemen to their Ammon, and to grapple
With red death clutching at the throat of us,
With famine and with pestilence, at last
To reach a barren vengeance, and perchance
An hundred of your thousands to return
Victors—so best God speed us—and for worst
Death round our cities horrible and vast,
And rape and murder mocking at our ghosts?

A SOLDIER.

Better they taunt our ghosts than us for cowards!
Live through or die, I will have my sword speak plain
To these damned massacring invaders. Say,
My fellows, will ye follow Jephthah? Hail!

SOLDIERS.

We follow Jephthah to the death. All hail!

JEPHTHAH.

Go then, refresh yourselves. Sleep well to-night!
I will send messages to their dread lord
[*Enter a Herald.*
Demanding his fell purpose, threatening
My present aid to you with men of valour
Chosen of all your tribes, and charging him
As he loves life, and victory, to content
His army with their present brief success,
Lest he pass by the barrier of our suffering,
And find our wrath no broken sword, and find
Despair more terrible than hope. Go now!

A SOLDIER.

We go, my lord, less readily to sleep
Than if you bade us march. No man of us
But stirs a little, I warrant, in his dreams,
And reaches out for sword-hilt. All hail, Jephthah!

SOLDIERS.

Jephthah! a leader, a deliverer. Hail!
[*Exeunt Soldiers and Young Men.*

JEPHTHAH.

Hearken, Jehovah, to thy servant now;
Fill Thou my voice with thine own thunders; fill
My swift sharp words with such a lightning-fork
As shall fall venomous upon the host
Of these idolatrous that thus invade
Our fencéd cities, these that put to sword
Our helpless. Hear the cry of widowed men!
Of young men fatherless! Of old men reft
Of children! Grant us victory to avenge
Their innocent shed blood, and ruined land.
So, to gain time for prayer and penitence
For grievous trespass of idolatry
Done to the accurséd Baalim (*aside*)—and time
To gather fugitives, and make them men,
And straggling herdsmen for our armament!—(*aloud*)
We send thee, herald, to the furious king
Who lies with all his power encamped somewhere
Hence southward toward Mahanaim. Say
Unto the king of Ammon: Thus saith Jephthah:
Why hast thou come with bloody hands against us?
Our holy God, that bound the iron sea
With pale frail limits of white sand, and said:
Thus far, and not one billowy step beyond!
Saith unto thee in like commandment: Thou
Who hast destroyed my people from the land
So far, shalt not encroach upon their places
One furlong more, lest quickly I destroy
Thee and thy host from off the earth. Say thus;
Ride for thy life, and bring me speedy word.
[*Exit Herald.*

CHORUS.

Not wingéd forms, nor powers of air,
Nor sundered spirits pale and fair,
Nor glittering sides and scales, did bring
The knowledge of this happy thing
That is befallen us unaware.
In likeness to the lips that sing
Ring out your frosty peal, and smite
Loud fingers on the harp, and touch
Lutes, and clear psalteries musical,
And all stringed instruments, to indite
A noble song of triumph, such
As men may go to fight withal.
For now a captain brave and strong
Shall break the fury of the thong
Wherewith the sons of Ammon scourge
Our country; and his war shall urge
Long columns of victorious men
To blackest wood and dimmest den,
Wherever fugitive and slave
Shall seek a refuge, find a grave;
And so pursue the shattered legions
Through dusty ways and desert regions
Back to the cities whence they came
With iron, massacre, and flame,
And turn their own devouring blade
On city fired and violate maid,
That Israel conquer, and men know
God is our God against a foe.

For the web of the battle is woven
Of men that are strong as the sea,
When the rocks by its tempest are cloven,
And waves wander wild to the lee;
When ships are in travail forsaken,
And tempest and tumult awaken;
When foam by fresh foam overtaken
Boils sanguine and fervent and free.

The sword is like lightning in battle,
The spear like the light of a star;
It strikes on the shield, and the rattle
Of arrows is hail from afar.
For the ways of the anger of lords
Are bloody with widowing swords,
And the roar of contention of chords
Rolls back from the heart of the war.

The fighters slip down on the dying,
And flying folk stumble on dead,
And the sound of the pitiless crying
Of slaughter is heavy and red,

The sound of the lust of the slayer
As fierce as a Persian's prayer,
And the sound of the loud harp-player
Like the wind beats to their tread.

A royal triumph is waiting
For the captain of Heaven's choice,
A noise as of eagles mating,
A cry as of men that rejoice.
For victory crowns with garlands
Of fame his valour in far lands,
And suns sing back to the starlands
His praise with a perfect voice.

JEPHTHAH.

Leave prophecy until I come again!

CHORUS.

A prophet told us thou shouldst fight for us
And save thy people from the Ammonites.

JEPHTHAH.

Why look you so? He told you other thing.

CHORUS.

Nay, lord, no saying that we understood.

JEPHTHAH.

Speak thou its purport; I may understand.
For, know you, in the desert where I dwelt
I had strange store of books obscure; books written
Not openly for fools, but inwardly
Toward the heart of wise men. And myself
Studied no little while upon these things,
And, seeking ever solitude, I went
Nightly upon a rock that stood alone
Threatening the sandy wilderness, and prayed
Where many visions came before mine eyes
So strange—these eyes have started from my head,
And every hair, grown fearful, like a steed
Reared in its frenzy: see, these lips of mine
Have blanched, these nails have bitten through my flesh
For sundry things I saw—and these informed
My open spirit by their influence,
And taught mine ears to catch no doubtful sound
Of prophecy, but fix it in my mind,
A lambent liquid fire of poetry
Full of all meaning as the very stars.
Yet of my own life they have never breathed
One chilly word of fear, or one divine
Roseate syllable of hope and joy.
Still less of love. For no sweet life of love
Lies to my hand, but I am bound by Fate
To the strong compulsion of the sword; my lips
Shall fasten on my wife's not much; nor those
Pure lips of innocent girlhood that call me
Father; but my lips must wreathe smiles no more,
But set in fearful strength of purpose toward
The blood of enemies, in horrid gouts
And hideous fountains leaping from great gashes,
Rather than that belovéd blood that wells
Fervent and red-rose-wise in loving breasts,
And little veins of purple in the arms,
Or cheeks that are already flushed with it,
To crimson them with the intense delight
Of eyes that meet and know the spirit dwells
Beyond their profound depth in sympathy.
Nay, my delight must find some dearest foe,
And cleave his body with a lusty stroke
That sets the blood sharp tingling in my arm.
Yet tell me if perchance I lay aside
One day the harness of cold iron, bind on
The lighter reins of roses deftly twined
By children loving me, to be a harness
To drive me on the road of happiness
To the far goal of heaven. Would to God
It might be so a little ere I die!

CHORUS OF ELDERS.

This doubtful word his fuming lips gave forth:
A maiden shall be slain for many men.
This only of his fury seemed obscure.

JEPHTHAH.

A maiden shall be slain for many men.
Surely, O people, and men of Israel,
The prophecy is happy to the end.
For see yon moon that creeps inviolate
Against the corner of the mountains so,
Slowly and gracefully to lighten us.
So, ere three nights be gone, the course of heaven
Shall be most monstrously o'erwhelmed for us
Ere sundown, as for Joshua, and the moon,
The maiden moon, be slain that we may see
By the large moveless sun to strike and slay,
More utterly proud Ammon to consume.
This is the omen. Shout for joy, my friends!
But who comes whirling in yon dusty cloud,
His eager charger dimly urging him
Toward our conclave? 'Tis our messenger.

Re-enter Herald.

Sir, you ride well. I pray your news be good.

HERALD.

So spake the haughty and rebellious Ammon
Defying your most gentle words with scorn:
Tell Jephthah: Israel took away my land
When they came out of Egypt from the river
Of Ammon unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan.
Wherefore, I pray thee, sheathe thy sword, restore
Peaceably these my lands, and go in peace,
Lest wrath, being kindled, consume thee utterly.

JEPHTHAH.

Let yet another herald stand before me
[*Enter Second Herald.*
Fresh, and go thou, swiftest of messengers,
And sleep and eat a little, and to-morrow
Thou shalt have guerdon of thy faithfulness.
[*Exit Herald.*
But now, sir, go to this rebellious king
And say to him: Thus Jephthah, judge of Israel,
With gentle words answers thy greediness:
Israel took not thy land, nor that of Moab:
But, coming out of Egypt, through the sea
And over wilderness, to Kadesh came.
Our people sent a message unto Edom
Unto the king thereof, and prayed his grace,
To let them pass through his dominions
And unto Moab: and they answered Nay.
So Israel abode in Kadesh: then
Passing through all the desert round about
Edom and Moab, pitched their weary tent
Beyond the bank of Ammon; and they sent
Messengers thence to Sihon, Heshbon's king,
The lord of Amorites, and said to him:
I prithee, let us pass to our own place
Through thy dominions: but his crafty mind,
Fearing some treachery, that was not, save
In his ill mind that thought it, did determine
To gather all his people, and to pitch
Tents hostile in the plains before Jahaz.
And there he fought with Israel; but God
Delivered Sihon to our hands, and all
That followed him: whom therefore we destroyed
With many slaughters: so we dispossessed
The envious Amorites, and had their land,
A land whose borders were the Ammon brook
On the one hand, and on the other Jabbok
And Jordan: we, who slew the Amorites.
What hast thou, king of Ammon, here to do?
How thinkst thou to inherit their possessions
That the Lord God hath given us? Go to!
Chemosh your god hath given you your land;
Possess that peaceably; but whomsoever
The Lord our God shall drive before our spears,
His lands we will possess. And thou, O king,
Art thou now better than that bloody Balak
Whose iron hand was upon Moab? He,

Fought he against us, while three hundred years
We dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and Aroer
And her white cities, and by Ammon's coast?
Why therefore did ye not recover them
Then and not now? I have not sinned against thee;
But thou dost me foul wrong to bring thy sword
And torch of rapine in my pleasant land.
Between the folk of Ammon and the folk
Of Israel this day be God the judge.
[*Exit Second Herald.*

ELEAZAR.

Well spoken: but the ear that will not hear
Is deafer than the adder none may charm.

JEPHTHAH.

I know it, and will not await the answer.
But dawn shall see a solemn sacrifice,
And solemn vows, and long swords glittering,
And moving columns that shall shake the earth
With firm and manly stride; and victory
Most like a dove amid the altar-smoke.

CHORUS.

We, passing here the night in prayer, will wait
And with thee offer up propitious doves,
And firstling males of all the flocks of us.

JEPHTHAH.

Not so: but I will have you hence in haste
To gather food and arms and carriages,
That all our soldiers may have sustenance,
And fresher weapons. I alone will spend
The long hours with Jehovah, at His throne,
And wrestle with the accuser. So, depart!

CHORUS.

When the countenance fair of the morning
And the lusty bright limbs of the day
Race far through the west for a warning
Of night that is evil and gray;
When the light by the southward is dwindled,
And the clouds as for sleep are unfurled,
The moon in the east is rekindled,
The hope of the passionate world.
The stars for a token of glory
Flash fire in the eyes of the night,
And the holy immaculate story
Of Heaven is flushed into light.
For the night has a whisper to wake us,
And the sunset a blossom to kiss,
And the silences secretly take us
To the well of the water that is[1];
For the darkness is pregnant with being,
As earth that is glad of the rain,
And the eyes[2] that are silent and seeing
Are free of the trammels of pain.
Like light through the portals they[3] bounded,
Their lithe limbs with cruelty curled,
And the noise of their crying resounded
To kindle the death of the world.
For the heaven at sunset is sundered;
Its gates to the sages unclose,
And through waters that foamed and that wondered
There flashes the heart of a rose;
In its petals are beauty and passion,
In its stem the foundation of earth,
Its bloom the incarnadine fashion
Of blessings that roar into birth;
And the gates[4] that roll back on their hinges
The soul of the sage may discern,
Till the water[5] with crimson that tinges
Beyond them miraculous burn;
And the presence of God to the senses
Is the passion of God in the mind,
As the string of a harp that intenses
The note that its fire may not find.
For here in the tumult and labour
And blindness of cowering man,

[1] This emphatic use of "to be" as a principal verb is very common with Crowley, who thereby wishes to distinguish between the noumenon and the phenomenon.
[2] The eyes of Jehovah: they are 700,000 spirits. See Idra Rabba Qadishah, xxxi.
[3] The eyes.
[4] The gates of Binah—understanding.
[5] Binah, the great Sea. The colour of crimson is attributed to it by certain Qabalists.

The spirit has God for a neighbour,
And the wheels unreturning that ran
Return to the heart of the roses,
And curl in the new blossom now,
As the holiest fire that encloses
Gray flame[1] on the holiest brow.
So midnight with magic reposes,
And slumbers to visions bow.
For the soul of man, being free, shall pass the gates of God,
And the spirit find the Sea by the feet of Him[2] untrod,
And the flesh, a lifeless ember, in ashen fear grow cold,
As the lives before remember the perished hours of gold.

[*Exeunt all but* JEPHTHAH.

JEPHTHAH.

Surely, my God, now I am left alone
Kneeling before Thy throne,
I may grow beautiful, even I, to see
Thy beauty fair and free.
For on the vast expanses of the wold
I hear the feet of gold,
And over all the skies I see a flame
That flickers with Thy Name.
Therefore, because Thou hast hid Thy face, and yet
Given me not to forget
The foaming cloud that shaped itself a rose,
Whose steady passion glows
Within the secretest fortress of my heart,
Because, my God, Thou Art,
And I am chosen of Thee for this folk
To break the foreign yoke,
Therefore, Existence of Existence, hear!
Bend low Thine holy ear,
And make Thyself, unseen, most terrible
To these fierce fiends of hell
That torture holiest ears with false complaint:
Bend down, and bid me faint
Into the arms of night, to see Thine hosts
March past the holy coasts,
A wall of golden weapons for the land,
And let me touch Thy hand,
And feel Thy presence very near to-night!
I sink as with delight
Through places numberless with fervid fires
Of holiest desires
Into I know not what a cradle, made
Of subtle-shapéd shade,
And arms most perdurable.[1] I am lost
In thought beyond all cost—
Nay, but my spirit breaks the slender chain
That held it down. The pain
Of death is past and I am free. Nay, I,
This body, dead, must lie
Till Thou come home again, O soaring Soul.
The gates supernal roll!
Flash through them, O white-winged, white-blossom ghost!
Ah, God! for I am lost.

[JEPHTHAH *remains motionless.*[2]

[*Morning dawns.*

Enter JARED, *Soldiers*, *Prophet.*

SOLDIERS.

Hail, captain! We are ready now for death,
Or victory, if shining wings are fain
To hover over dauntless hearts. Behold
Our ready bands to follow to the fray.

JEPHTHAH.

Welcome! hail ye this happy dawn as one
That shall see freedom smile on us, and peace,
And victory, and new hours of happiness.

[1] The flame of Chokmah—wisdom—which is gray in colour. *Cf.* the Hindu Ajna.
[2] Microprosopus, who reacheth not so high as Understanding.

[1] Able to endure *to the end.*
[2] The description is of a certain spiritual exercise familiar to mystics.

CHORUS OF SOLDIERS.

Out of the waters of the sea
Our father Abraham beheld
The lamp of heaven arise to be
The monarch quenchless and unquelled;
But we on this far Syrian shore
See dawn upon the mountains pour.[1]

The limit of the snows is bright;
As spears that glitter shine the hills;
The foaming forehead of the light
All air with cloudy fragrance fills;
And, born of desolation blind,
The young sweet summer burns behind.

The Altar of the Lord is set
With salt and fire and fervid wine,
And toward the east the light is let
For shadow for the holiest shrine:
One moment hangs the fire of dawn
Until the sacrament be sworn.

Behold, the priest, our captain, takes
The sacred robes, the crown of gold,
The light of other sunlight[2] breaks
Upon his forehead calm and cold;
And other dawns more deep and wise
Burn awful in his holy eyes.

A moment, and the fire is low
Upon the black stone of the altar,
The spilt blood eagerly doth glow,
And lightnings lick the light, and falter,
Feeling the vast Shekinah[3] shine
Above their excellence divine.

The Lord is gracious to His own,
And hides with glory as a mist
The sacrifice and smitten stone,
And on the lips His presence kissed
Burn the high vows with ample flame
That He shall swear to by the Name.

[1] Abraham before his migration saw dawn rise over the Persian Gulf; but to the east of Palestine are mountains.
[2] *i.e.* the light of the Divine Presence.
[3] The presence of God.

JEPHTHAH.

Highest of Highest, most Concealed of all,
Most Holy Ancient One, Unnamable,
Receive for these Thy servants this our oath
To serve none other gods but Thee alone.
And for my own part who am judge of these
I vow beyond obedience sacrifice,
And for the victory Thou shalt give, I vow
To sacrifice the first of living things
That with due welcome shall divide the doors
Of my house, meeting me, an offering
Burnt before Thee with ceremony meet
To give Thee thanks, nor take ungratefully
This first of favours from the Hand Divine.

SOLDIERS.

A noble vow: and God is glad thereat.

PROPHET.

I charge you in the name of God, go not!
I see a mischief fallen on your souls
Most bitter. Aye! an evil day is this
If ye go forth with such a sacrifice,
And vows most hideous in their consequence.

SOLDIERS.

It is the prophet of the Lord.

JEPHTHAH.

Possessed
By Baal; scourge him hence; he lies, for God
With powerful proof and many lightnings came
Devouring up the offering at the altar.

PROPHET.

O Jephthah, it is thou on whom it falls,
The sorrow grievous as thy life is dear.

A SOLDIER.

He is the prophet of the Baalim.
We have enough of such: in God's name,
home! [*Stabbing him.*

PROPHET.

Thy spear shall turn against thyself, alas !
But welcome, death, thou looked-for spouse of mine !
Thy kiss is pleasant as the shaded well
That looks through palm leaves to the quiet sky. [*Dies.*

JEPHTHAH.

Thou didst no evil in the slaying him,
For God is a consuming fire ; high zeal
Against idolatry lacks not reward.
And now the sun is up : for Israel, march !

JARED.

Good luck be with your spears ; and home-coming
Gladden victorious eyes ere set of sun.
[*Exeunt* JEPHTHAH *and Soldiers.*

Enter ELEAZAR, AHINOAM, *Chorus of Elders.*

CHORUS.

The sun is past meridian. No sound
Of trampling hoofs assails the unquiet wind,
Nor trembles in the pillared echo-places,
And windy corridors of pathless snow.
But let us wait, expecting victory.
No fugitive returns, nor messenger :
They have not shocked together, or perchance
The grim fight rolls its sickening tide along
Homeward or southward, undecided yet ;
Or victory made certain but an hour
Lends no such wings to jaded horses as
May bear a jaded rider to our gates.
Wait only, friends, and calm our troubled mind,
Nor stir the languid sails of our desire
With breath of expectation or despair.
Rather give place to those untroubled thoughts
That sit like stars immobile in the sky
To fathom all the desolate winds of ocean,
And draw their secrets from the hidden mines
Whose gold and silver are but wisdom, seeking
Rather things incorruptible above
Than sordid hopes and fears. But look you, friends,
Where in the sun's eye rolls a speck of cloud
Lesser than the ephemeral gnat may make
Riding for sport upon a little whirl
Of moving breezes, so it glows and rolls,
Caught in the furnace of the sun, opaque
To eyes that seek its depth, but penetrable
By those long filaments of light beyond.
See, the spot darkens, and a horseman spurs
A flagging steed with bloody flanks, and waves
A cloudy sword to heaven—I am sure
He brings us eagle-wingéd victory,
And tiding of no battle lost for Israel.
Yes, he grows great before the sun, and stands
Now in his stirrups, and shouts loud, and waves
A blade triumphant. Now the weary horse
Stumbles with thundering strides along the last
Furlong, and greets us with a joyous neigh
As if he understood the victory.

Enter Second Messenger.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Rejoice, O Israel, for this day hath seen
Utter destruction overtake, and death
Ride furious over, trampled necks of men
Desperate in vain ; hath seen red hell gape wide
To swallow up the heathen. Victory
Swells the red-gleaming torrent of pursuit,
And Israel shakes her lazy flanks at last
A lion famished, and is greedy of death.

CHORUS.

O joyful day ! And where is Jephthah now ?

MESSENGER.

Faint with the heat of a hard battle fought,
But following hard after with the horse.
For from Aroer even unto Minnith
He smote them with a slaughter most unheard,
And twenty cities saw from trembling walls

Twice twenty thousand corpses; stragglers few
Call to the rocks and woods, whose dens refuse
Shelter and refuge to the fugitives,
But, in revolt against the natural order,
Gape like the ravening jaws of any beast
To let the furious invaders down
Into the bowels of the earth, and close
Upon those grisly men of war, whose life
Groans from the prison that shall crush it out.

CHORUS.

Be thou most blessed of the Lord for ever!

FIRST ELDER.

But what shall he that hath delivered us
Have for his guerdon when he comes in triumph?

SECOND ELDER.

A milk-white ass shall bear him through the city.

THIRD ELDER.

And wreaths of roses be instead of dust.

FOURTH ELDER.

And dancing girls—

FIFTH ELDER.

And feet of maidens most
Shall strike a measure of delight.

SIXTH ELDER.

And boys
With bright unsullied curls shall minister
Before him all the days of life God grants.

SEVENTH ELDER.

And all his platters shall be made of gold.

EIGHTH ELDER.

And jewels beyond price shall stud them all.

ELEAZAR.

What sayest thou, O wisest of our race,
Ahinoam, the aged priest of God,
Who weighest out the stars with balances,
And knowest best of men the heart of man?

AHINOAM.

Ye are as children, and nowise your tongues
Speak sense. I never hear your voice but know
Some geese are gabbling. Sing to him perchance!
The voice of old men is a pleasant thing.

CHORUS.

What say ye, brethren? Shall we sing to him
Some sweet low ditty, or the louder pæan?

AHINOAM.

They verily think I speak, not mocking them.

CHORUS.

Who shall uncover such a tongue for wiles,
And pluck his meaning from his subtle words?

AHINOAM.

Who shall speak plain enough for such as these
To understand? Or so debase his thought
As meet their minds, and seem as wisdom's self?

CHORUS.

Leave now thy gibing in the hour of joy,
And lend sweet wisdom to awaiting ears.
Thy voice shall carry it, thy words shall bear
Full fruit to-day. Speak only, it is done.

AHINOAM.

I am grown old, and go not out to wars.
But in the lusty days of youth my face
Turned from the battle and pursuit and spoil
Only to one face dearer than my soul,

And my wife's eyes were welcome more desired
Than chains of roses, and the song of children,
And swinging palm branches, and milk-white
—elders.

CHORUS.

Fie on thy railing! But his wife is sick,
And cannot leave the borders of her house.

AHINOAM.

But he hath one fair only daughter! Friends,
With maidens bearing trimbrels, and with
dances,
Let her go forth and bring her father home.

JARED [*aside*].

Horrible! I must speak and silence this
Monstrous impossible villainy of fate.

CHORUS.

O wise old man, thou speakest cleverly.

AHINOAM.

So do, and praise be given you from God.

ELEAZAR.

God, Who this day has slumbered not, nor
slept;
He only keepeth Israel: He is God!

CHORUS.

When God uplifted hands to smite,
And earth from chaos was unrolled;
When skies and seas from blackest night
Unfurled, twin sapphires set with gold;
When tumult of the boisterous deep
Roared from its slow ungainly sleep,
And flocks of heaven were driven to fold;
Then rose the walls of Israel steep,
For in His promise we behold
The sworded Sons of glory leap
Our tribes in peace to keep.

Deep graven in the rocky girth
Of Israel's mountains, in the sky,
In all the waters of the earth,
In all the fiery steeds that ply
Their champing harness, and excel
The charioteers of heaven and hell,
In all the Names writ secretly
And sacred songs ineffable;
In all the words of power that fly
About the world, this song they spell
He keepeth Israel.

AHINOAM.

Ye praise God of full heart: I would to God
Your minds were somewhat fuller, and could
keep
Discretion seated on her ivory throne.
What folly is it they will now be at,
Gray beards, and goatish manners? Hark to
them!

CHORUS.

In the brave old days ere men began
To bind young hearts with an iron tether,
Ere love was brief as life, a span,
Ere love was light as life, a feather,
Earth was free as the glad wild weather,
God was father and friend to man.

AHINOAM.

Then when with mildness and much joy our
judge
Draw hither, let us send to meet his steps
In sackcloth clad, with ashes on their heads,
His cruel brethren, that he spare their lives.

CHORUS.

In the heart of a conqueror mercy sits
A brighter jewel than vengeance wroken.
Grace is the web that his people knits,
And love is the balm for the hearts nigh
broken.
Peace is arisen, a dove for token;
Righteousness, bright as the swallow flits.

JARED [*aside*].

So, in his victory is our disgrace.

CHORUS.

Fair as the dawn is the maiden wise ;
  Pale as the poppies by still white water !
Sunlight burns in her pure deep eyes ;
  Love lights the tresses of Jephthah's daughter.
  Kissing rays of the moon have caught her,
Rays of the moon that sleeps and sighs.

JARED [*aside*].

In our disgrace, behold ! our vengeance strikes.
I am inspired with so profound a hate—
He shall not triumph : in the very hour
When his o'ermastering forehead tops the sky
I strike him to the earth. I need not move.
Silence—no more—and all accomplishes.
Leviathan, how subtle is thy path !

CHORUS.

Not now may the hour of gladness fade,
  The wheel of our fate spins bright and beaming.
God has fashioned a sun from shade.
  Mercy and joy in one tide are streaming.
  Fortune is powerless, to all good seeming.
Fate is stricken, and flees afraid.

JARED.

Bring me the sackcloth and the ashes now !

ELEAZAR.

Behold ! the crown of all our maiden wreath,
Adulah, white and lissome, with the flames
Of dawn forth blushing through her flower-crowned hair.

CHORUS.

Behold a virgin to the Lord !
  Behold a maiden pale as death,
Whose glance is silver as a sword,
  And flowers of Kedar fill her breath,
Whose fragrance saturates the sward,
  Whose sunny perfume floating saith :
From my ineffable desire is drawn
The awful glory of the golden dawn.

Behold her bosom bare and bold
  Whose billows like the ocean swing !
The painted palaces of gold
  Where shell-born maidens laugh and sing
Are mirrored in those breasts that hold
  Sweet odours of the sunny spring.
Behold the rising swell of perfect calm
In breezy dells adorable of balm !

Behold the tender rosy feet
  Made bare for holiness, that move
Like doves amid the waving wheat,
  Or swallows silver in the grove
Where sylph and salamander meet,
  And gnome and undine swoon for love !
Her feet that flit upon the windy way
Twin fawns, the daughters of the rosy day.

Behold, the arms of her desire
  Wave, weave, and wander in the air,
Vines life-endued by subtle fire
  So quick and comely, curving bare.
The white diaphanous attire
  Floats like a spirit pale and fair.
The dance is woven of the breeze ; the tune
Is like the ocean silvered by the moon.

Behold the maidens following !
  O every one is like a flower,
Or like an ewe lamb of the king
  That comes from water at the hour
Of even. See, the dancers swing
  Their censers ; see, their tresses shower
Descending flames, and perfumes teem divine,
And all the air grows one pale fume of wine.

Their songs, their purity, their peace,
  Glide slowly in the arms of God ;
His lips assume their sanctities,
  His eyes perceive the period
Of woven webs of lutes at ease,
  And measures by pure maidens trod,
Till, like the smoke of mountains risen at dawn,
The cloud-veils of the Ain[1] are withdrawn.

[1] The Negative, surrounded by a triple veil in the Theogony of the Qabalists, from which all things spring and to which all shall return. See "Berashith" in a subsequent volume.

Pure spirits rise to heaven, the bride.
Pure bodies are as lamps below.
The shining essence, glorified
With fire more cold than fresh-fallen snow,
And influences, white and wide,
Descend, re-gather, kindle, grow,
Till from one virgin bosom flows a river
Of white devotion adamant for ever.

Enter ADULAH *and her Maidens.*

ADULAH.

Fathers of Israel, we are come to you
With many maidens praising God, for this
The victory of my father. Happy girls!
Whose brothers struck to-day for Israel,
Whose fathers smote the heathen; happiest,
Ye blushing flowers, beyond your younger spring
That bends in you toward summer, faint and fair,
Whose lovers bared their swords to-day; and ye,
O reverend heads, most beautiful for gray,
The comely crown of age, that doth beseem
Your wise sweet beauty, as the ivy wreathes
The rugged glory of the sycamore,
Have ye heard aught of Jephthah's homecoming?
For our cheeks tingle with the expected kiss
Of hardy warriors dear to us, and now
By double kinship rendered doubly dear.
For O! my father comes to gladden me
With those enduring kisses that endow
Heart, hope, and life with gladness. Comes he soon?

ELEAZAR.

Maiden most perfect, daughter of our lord,
And ye, most fairest branches of our tree,
Maidens of Israel, we await you here
That ye, no other, may go forth to meet
The chief victorious. And after you
Those villains that once cast him out shall forth
In sackcloth to his feet, if haply so
He spare their vagabond and worthless lives.

ADULAH.

Not so, my father. In my father's name
I promise unto all great happiness,
And vengeance clean forgotten in the land;
"Vengeance is mine, Jehovah will repay."
My father shall not frown on any man.

JARED [*aside*].

She is most gracious: I must speak and save.
[*Aloud.*] Friends! [*Aside.*] Stay—Is this a tempter voice that soothes
My conscience? Art thou that Leviathan,
Thou lipless monster, gnashing at my soul
Abominable teeth? Art thou the fiend
Whom I have seen in sleep, and waking served?
O horrible distortion of all truth
That I must serve thee still!
Yet—dare I speak,
Those eyes upon me, torturing my soul
And threatening revenge? Those fingers gross,
Purple, and horrible, to blister me
With infamous tearing at my throat. O Hell!
Vomit thy monsters forth in myriads
To putrefy this fair green earth with blood,
But make not me the devilish minister
Of such a deed as this! No respite?—Must?
Irrevocable? I dare not call on God.
Thou, thou wilt serve me if I do this thing?
Oh, if this be a snare thou settest now,
Who hast once already mocked our pact, I swear
By God, I cast thee off. Leviathan!
Accept the bargain. And I seal it—thus.
[*Writing in the air.*
I will keep silence, though they tear my tongue
Blaspheming from my throat. My servant now!

ELEAZAR.

Mingled emotions quickly following
Fear upon fear, and joy and hope at last
Crowning, have maddened Jephthah's kinsman here.
Mark his lips muttering, and his meaningless
Furious gestures, and indignant eyes
Starting, and hard-drawn breath! Him lead away
Tenderly, as beseems the mercy shown
To his repentance by this maiden queen.
The Lord is merciful to them that show
Mercy, and all such as are pure of heart;
Thy crown, Adulah, wears a double flower
Of these fair blossoms wreathed in one device
Of perfect love in perfect maidenhood.

JARED [*recovering himself*].

Nay, but my voice must fill the song of joy
With gratitude, and meet thanksgiving. Me
More than these others it beseems, who love
Less dearly for their innocence than I,
Pardoned of my unpardonable sin.

ADULAH.

The flowers turn westerward; the sun is down
Almost among those clouds that kiss the sea
With heavy lashes drooping over it,
A mother watching her own daughter swoon
To sleep. But look toward the southern sky;
It is my father. Let us go to him,
Maidens, with song and gladness of full hearts.

SEMICHORUS OF MAIDENS I.

The conqueror rides at last
To home, to love;
The victory is past,
The white-wing dove
Sails through the crystal air of eve with a pæan deep and vast.
Jephthah!

SEMICHORUS OF MAIDENS II.

Forth, maidens, with your hands
White with new lilies!
Forth, maidens, in bright bands,
Virgins whose one sweet will is
To sing the victory of our God in all sky-girdled lands!
Jahveh!

SEMICHORUS I.

With dancing feet, and noise
Of timbrels smitten,
With tears and tender joys,
With songs unwritten,
With music many-mouthed, with robes in snowy equipoise.
Jephthah!

SEMICHORUS II.

With hearts infused of fire,
Eyes clear with many waters,
With lips to air that quire,
We, earth's desirous daughters,
Lift up the song of triumph, sound the lutes of our desire!
Jahveh!

SEMICHORUS I.

With branches strewn before us,
And roses flung
In all the ways, we chorus
With throat and tongue
The glory of our warrior sires whose victor swords restore us
Jephthah!

SEMICHORUS II.

With angels vast and calm
That keep his way,
With streams of holy balm,
The prayers of them that pray,
We go to bring him home and raise to Thee our holy psalm,
Jahveh!

ELEAZAR.

Go ye, make ready for the happy march.
[*Exeunt* ADULAH *and Maidens.*
And we too, changing these funereal vestments
Will clothe in moonlike splendour, candid robes
Of priestly purity, our joyous selves.
O fortunate day! O measured steps of noon,
Quicken, if once ye stayed for Joshua,
To keep sweet music to our hearts. Away!
[*Exeunt all but* JARED.

JARED.

I will await, and hide myself away
Behind yon bushes, to behold the plot
Bud to fulfilment. Then, Leviathan,
I am thy master. Mockery of a God
That seest this thing prosper—Ha! thine altar!
Let me give thanks, Jehovah! O thou God
That rulest Israel as sheep and slaves,
But over me no ruler; thou proud God
That marshallest these petty thunder-clouds
That blacken over the inane abyss
But canst not tame one fierce desire of mine,
Nor satiate my hatred, nor destroy
This power of mine over thy devil-brood,
The hatchment of thine incest, O thou God
Who knowest me, me, mortal me, thy master,
Thy master—and I laugh at thee, the slave!
Down from Thy throne, impostor, down, down, down
To thine own Hell, immeasurable—

A VOICE.

Strike!

[*The storm, gathering to a climax, bursts in a tremendous flash of lightning, and* JARED *is killed.*

Enter JEPHTHAH *and Soldiers.*

JEPHTHAH.

A terrible peal of thunder! And the sky
Seems for an hour past to have been in labour
And, safely now delivered, smiles again.
For see, the sun! O happy sunlight hours—
What is this blackened and distorted thing?

A SOLDIER.

Some fellow by the altar that kept watch,
Some faithful fellow—he is gone to God.

JEPHTHAH.

How is't the cattle have been driven home?
I trusted we had found a tender lamb,
A lamb of the first year, unblemished, white,
To greet me, that we do meet sacrifice,
Fulfilling thus my vow, and all our duty.
[*A noise of timbrels and singing.*
Surely some merriment—our news hath reached.
Glad news and welcome: God is very good.

Enter ADULAH, *running, followed by singing Maidens.*

ADULAH.

Father!

JEPHTHAH.

My daughter!
[*He suddenly stops, and blanches, understanding.*
Alas my daughter!
[*He continues in a dazed, toneless voice.*
Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

ADULAH.

My father, O my father!

Enter ELEAZAR *and Chorus.*

ELEAZAR.

Most welcome, conqueror!
[JEPHTHAH *waves him aside.*
What is this? What is this?

CHORUS.

Speak, Jephthah, speak! What ill has fallen? Speak!
[*Silence. After a little the Chorus of Maidens understand, and break into wailing. The old men gradually understand and fill the air with incoherent lamentations. Behind* JEPHTHAH *the soldiers, with white lips, have assumed their military formation, and stand at attention by a visible effort of self-control.*

ADULAH.

My father, if thou hast openéd thy mouth
Unto the Lord, fulfil the oath to me,
Because the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee
Of all thine enemies, the Ammonites.
Let this be done for me, that I may go
Two months upon the mountains, and bewail,
I and my fellows, my virginity!

JEPHTHAH.

Go!

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

O the time of dule and teen!
O the dove the hawk has snared!
Would to God we had not been,
We, who see our maiden queen,
Love has slain whom hate had spared.
Sorrow for our sister sways
All our maiden bosoms, bared
To the dying vesper rays,
Where the sun below the bays
Of the West is stooping;
All our hearts together drooping,
Flowers the ocean bears.
All the garb that gladness wears
To a rent uncouth attire
Changed with cares;
Happy songs our love had made
Ere the sun had sunk his fire,
In the moonrise fall and fade,
And the dregs of our desire
Fall away to death;
Tears divide our labouring breath
That our sister—O our sister!
Moon and sun and stars have kissed her!
She must touch the lips of death,
Touch the lips whose coldness saith:
Thou art clay.
Let us fare away, away
To the ice whose ocean gray
Tumbles on the beach of rock,
Where the wheeling vultures mock
Our distress with horrid cries;
Where the flower relenting dies,
And the sun is sharp to slay;
Where the ivory dome above
Glimmers like the dawn of love
On the weary way;
Where the ibex chant and call
Over tempest's funeral;
Where the hornéd beast is shrill,
And the eagle hath his will,
And the shadows fall
Sharp and black, till day is passed
Over to the ocean vast;
Where the barren rocks resound
Only to the rending roar
Of the shattering streams that pour
Rocks by ice eternal bound,
Myriad cascades that crowned
Once the far resounding throne
Of the mountain spirits strong,
All the treacherous souls that throng
Desolate abodes of stone,
Barren of all comely things,
Given to the splendid kings,
Gloomy state, and glamour dark,
Swooping jewel-feathered wings,
Eyes translucent with a spark
Of the world of fire, that swings
Gates of adamant below
Lofty minarets of snow.
Thence the towering flames arise,

Where the flashes white and wise
Find their mortal foe.
Let us thither, caring not
Anything, or any more,
Since the sorrow of our lot
Craves to pass the abysmal door.
Never more for us shall twine
Rosy fingers on the vine.
Never maiden lips shall cull
Myriad blossoms beautiful.
Never cheeks shall dimple over
At the perfume of the clover.
Never bosoms bright and round
Shall be garlanded and bound
With the chain of myrtle, wreathed
By the fingers of the maid
Each has chosen for a mate,
When the west wind lately breathed
Murmurs in the wanton glade
Of the day that dawneth late
In a maiden's horoscope,
Dawning faith and fire and hope
On the spring that only knew
Flowers and butterflies and dew,
Skies and seas and mountains blue,
On the spring that wot not of
Fruit and falling leaves and love.
Never dew-dashed foreheads fair
Shall salute the idle air.
Never shall we wander deep
Where the fronds of fern, asleep,
Kiss her rosy feet that pass
On the spangled summer grass,
Half awake, and drowse again.
Never more our feet shall stain
Purple with the joyous grape,
Whence there rose a fairy shape
In the fume and must and juice,
Singing lest our eyes escape
All his tunic wried and loose
With the feet that softly trod
In the vat the fairy god.
Never more our eyes shall swim,
Looking for the love of him
In the magic moon that bent
Over maidens moon-content,
When the summer woods were wet
With our dewy songs, that set
Quivering all seas and snows,
Stars and tender winds that fret
Lily, lily, laughing rose,
Sighing, sighing violet,
Dusky pansy, swaying rush,
And the stream that flows
Singing, ringing softly: Hush!
Listen to the bird that goes
Wooing to the brown mate's bough;
Listen to the breeze that blows
Over cape and valley now
At the silence of the noon,
Or the slumber-hour
Of the white delicious moon
Like a lotus-flower!
Let us sadly, slowly, go
To the silence of the snow!

ADULAH [*embracing* JEPHTHAH].

Whose crystal fastnesses shall echo back
The lamentations of these friends of mine,
But not my tears. For I will fit myself
By solitude and fasting and much prayer
For this most holy ceremony, to be
A perfect, pure, accepted sacrifice.
Only this sorrow—O father, father, speak!

JEPHTHAH.

Go!

ADULAH.

Most unblamable, we come again.
I would not weep with these; I dare not stay,
Lest I weep louder than them all. Fare well,
My father, O my father! I am passing
Into the night. Remember me as drawn
Into the night toward the golden dawn.[1]

[*Exeunt* ADULAH *and Maidens.*

[1] The "Golden Dawn" meant at this time to Crowley all that "Christ" means to an Evangelical, and more. The symbol constantly recurs in this and many other poems, and always in the sense of a rescuing force.

CHORUS.

Toward the mountains and the night
  The fruitless flowers of Gilead go ;
Toward the hollows weird and white,
  Toward the sorrow of the snow ;
To desolation black and blind
They move, and leave us death behind.

The Lord is great : the Lord is wise
  Within His temple to foresee
With calm impenetrable eyes
  The after glory that shall be ;
But we, of mortal bodies born,
Laugh lies consoling unto scorn.

The God of Israel is strong ;
  His mighty arm hath wrought this day
A victory and a triumph-song—
  And now He breathes upon His clay,
And we, who were as idols crowned,
Lie dust upon the empty ground.

She goes, our sorrow's sacrifice,
  Our lamb, our firstling, frail and white,
With large sweet love-illumined eyes
  Into the night, into the night.
The throne of night shall be withdrawn ;
So moveth she toward the dawn.

All peoples and all kings that move
  By love and sacrifice inspired
In light and holiness and love,
  And seek some end of God desired,
Pass, though they seem to sink in night,
To dawns more perdurably bright.

So priest and people join to praise
  The secret wisdom of the Lord,
Awaiting the arisen rays
  That smite through heaven as a sword ;
Remembering He hath surely sworn :
Toward the night, toward the dawn !

Behold the moon that fails above,
  The stars that pale before the sun !
How far, those figures light as love
  That laughing to the mountains run !
Behold the flames of hair that leap
Above her forehead mild and deep !

She turns to bless her people still :
  So, passes to the golden gate
Where snow burns fragrant on the hill,
  Where for her step those fountains wait
Of light and brilliance that shall rise
To greet her beauty lover-wise.

The silver west fades fast, the skies
  Are blue and silver overhead ;
She stands upon the snow, her eyes
  Fixed fast upon the fountain-head
Whence from Eternity is drawn
The awful glory of the dawn !

ELEAZAR.

Let every man depart unto his house.

CHORUS.

He hath made His face as a fire ; His wrath as a sword ;
He hath smitten our soul's desire ; He is the Lord.
He hath given and taken away, hath made us and broken ;
He hath made the blue and the gray, the sea for a token ;
He hath made to-day and to-morrow ; the winter, the spring ;
He bringeth us joy out of sorrow ; Jehovah is King.

[*Exeunt.* JEPHTHAH *is left standing with white set face. Presently tears come into his eyes, and he advances, and kneels at the altar.*

MYSTERIES:

LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC.

1898.

THE FIVE KISSES.[1]

I.

AFTER CONFESSION.

DAY startles the fawn from the avenues deep
that look to the east in the heart of the wood:
Light touches the trees of the hill with its lips, and God is above them and sees they are good:
Night flings from her forehead the purple-black hood.

The thicket is sweet with the breath of the breeze made soft by the kisses of slumbering maids;
The nymph and the satyr, the fair and the faulty alike are the guests of these amorous shades;
The hour of Love flickers and falters and fades.

Oh, listen, my love, to the song of the brook, its murmurs and cadences, trills and low chords;
Hark to its silence, that prelude of wonder ringing at last like the clamour of swords
That clash in the wrath of the warring of lords.

Listen, oh, listen! the nightingale near us swoons a farewell to the blossoming brake;
Listen, the thrush in the meadow is singing notes that move sinuous, lithe as a snake;
The cushats are cooing, the world is awake.

Only one hour since you whispered the story out of your heart to my tremulous ear;
Only one hour since the light of your eyes was the victor of violent sorrow and fear;
Your lips were so set to the lips of me here.

Surely the victory ripens to perfect conquest of everything set in our way.
We must be free as our hearts are, and gather strength for our limbs for the heat of the fray:
The battle is ours if you say me not nay.

Fly with me far, where the ocean is bounded white by the walls of the northernmost shore,
Where on a lone rocky island a castle laughs in its pride at the billows that roar,
My home where our love may have peace evermore.

Yes, on one whisper the other is waiting patient to catch the low tone of delight.
Kiss me again for the amorous answer; close your dear eyelids and think it is night,
The hour of the even we fix for the flight.

II.

THE FLIGHT.

LIFT up thine eyes! for night is shed around,
As light profound,
And visible as snow on steepled hills,
Where silence fills
The shaded hollows: night, a royal queen
Most dimly seen

[1] Crowley's biographer will note the astonishing coincidences of scene and incident between this poem and the events of 1903–4.

Through silken curtains that bedeck the bed.
Lift up thine head!
For night is here, a dragon, to devour
The slow sweet hour
Filled with all smoke of incense, and the praise
More loud than day's
That swings its barren censer in the sky
And asks to die
Because the sea will hear no hollow moan
Beyond its own,
Because the sea that kissed dead Sappho[1] sings
Of strange dark things—
Shapes of bright breasts that purple as the sun
Grows dark and dun,
Of pallid lips more haggard for the kiss
Of Salmacis,[2]
Of eager eyes that startle for the fear
Too dimly dear
Lest there come death, like passion, and fulfil
Their dreams of ill!
Oh! lift thy forehead to the night's cool wind!
The meekest hind
That fears the noonday in her grove is bold
To seek the gold
So pale and perfect as the moon puts on:
The light is gone.
Hardly as yet one sees the crescent maid
Move, half afraid,
Into the swarthy forest of the air
And, breast made bare,
Gather her limbs about her for the chase
Through starry space,
And, while the lilies sway their heads, to bend
Her bow, to send
A swift white arrow at some recreant star.
The sea is far
Dropped in the hollows of the swooning land.
Oh! hold my hand!
Lift up thy deep eyes to my face, and let
Our lips forget
The dumb dead hours before they met together!
The snowbright weather
Calls us beyond the grassy downs, to be
Beside the sea,
The slowly-breathing ocean of the south.
Oh, make thy mouth
A rosy flame like that most perfect star
Whose kisses are
So red and ripe! Oh, let thy limbs entwine
Like love with mine!
Oh, bend thy gracious body to my breast
To sleep, to rest!
But chiefly let thine eyes be set on me,
As when the sea
Lay like a mirror to reflect the shape
Of yonder cape
Where Sappho stood and touched the lips of death!
Thy subtle breath
Shall flow like incense in between our cheeks,
Where pleasure seeks
In vain a wiser happiness. And so
Our whispers low
Shall dim the utmost beauty of thy gaze
Through moveless days
And long nights equable with trancéd pleasure:
So love at leisure
Shall make his model of our clinging looks,
And burn his books
To write a new sweet volume deeper much,
And frail to touch,
Being the mirror of a gossamer
Too soft and fair.
This is the hour when all the world is sleeping;
The winds are keeping
A lulling music on the frosty sea.
The air is free,

[1] Sappho, the great lyric poet of Greece, plunged from a rock into the sea, according to later tradition.

[2] A stream into which a man plunged, and was united, as a Hermaphrodite, with its attendant nymph. The reference is connected with Sappho's loves. See her Ode to Aphrodite and Swinburne's Anactoria and Hermaphroditus.

As free as summer-time, to sound or cease:
God's utmost peace
Lies like a cloud upon the quiet land.
O little hand!
White hand with rose leaves shed about the tips,
As if my lips
Had left their bloom upon it when they kissed,
As if a mist
Of God's delicious dawn had overspread
Their face, and fled!
O wonderful fresh blossom of the wood!
O purpling blood!
O azure veins as clear as all the skies!
O longing eyes
That look upon me fondly to beget
Two faces, set
Either like flowers upon their laughing blue,
Where morning dew
Sparkles with all the passion of the dawn!
The happy lawn
Leads, by the stillest avenues, to groves
Made soft by loves;
And all the nymphs have made a mossy dell
Hard by the well
Where even a Satyr might behold the grace
Of such a face
As his[1] who perished for his own delights,
So well requites
That witching fountain his desire that looks.
Two slow bright brooks
Encircle it with silver, and the moon
Strikes into tune
The ripples as they break. For here it was
Their steps did pass,
Dreamy Endymion's and Artemis',[2]
Who bent to kiss
Across the moss-grown rocks that build the well:
And here they tell
Of one[1] beneath the hoary stone who hid
And watched unbid
When one most holy came across the glade,
Who saw a maid
So bright that mists were dim upon his eyes,
And yet he spies
So sweet a vision that his gentle breath
Sighed into death:
And others say that here the fairies bring
The fairy king,[2]
And crown him with a flower of eglantine,
And of the vine
Twist him a throne made perfect with wild roses,
And gathered posies
From all the streams that wander through the vale,
And crying, "Hail!
All hail, most beautiful of all our race!"
Cover his face
With blossoms gathered from a fairy tree
Like foam from sea,
So delicate that mortal eyes behold
Ephemeral gold
Flash, and not see a flower, but say the moon
Has shone too soon
Anxious to greet Endymion; and this
Most dainty kiss
They cover him withal, and Dian sees
Through all the trees
No pink pale blossom of his tender lips.
The little ships
Of silver leaf and briar-bloom sail here,
No storm to fear,
Though butterflies be all their mariners.
The whitethroat stirs
The beech-leaves to awake the tiny breeze
That soothes the seas,
And yet gives breath to shake their fairy sails;
Young nightingales,
Far through the golden plumage of the night,
With strong delight

[1] Narcissus, a beautiful youth, inaccessible to love. Echo, a nymph enamoured of him, died of neglect. To punish him, Nemesis caused him to behold his image in a pool; he pined of love for the reflection, and was changed into the flower which still bears his name.

[2] The reader may consult Keats's poem of "Endymion."

[1] A gentle sophistication of the story of Actaeon who beheld Artemis at the bath, and being changed into a stag, was torn to pieces by her hounds.

[2] From sophistication Crowley proceeds to pure invention.

Purple the evening with amazing song;
The moonbeams throng
In shining clusters to the fairy throat,
Whose clear trills float
And dive and run about the crystal deep
As sweet as sleep.
Only, fair love of this full heart of mine,
There lacks the wine
Our kisses might pour out for them; they wait,
And we are late;
Only, my flower of all the world, the thrush
(You hear him? Hush!)
Lingers, and sings not to his fullest yet:
Our love shall get
Such woodland welcome as none ever had
To make it glad.
Come, it is time, cling closer to my hand.
We understand.
We must go forth together, not to part.
O perfect heart!
O little heart that beats to mine, away
Before the day
Ring out the tocsin for our flight! My ship
Is keen to dip
Her plunging forehead in the silvering sea.
To-morrow we
Shall be so far away, and then to-morrow
Shall shake off sorrow
And be to-morrow and not change for ever:
No dawn shall sever
The sleepy eyelids of the night, no eve
Shall fall and cleave
The blue deep eyes of day. Your hand, my queen!
Look down and lean
Your whole weight on me, then leap out, as light
As swallow's flight,
And race across the shadows of the moon,
And keep the tune
With ringing hoofs across the fiery way.
Your eyes betray
How eager is your heart, and yet—O dare
To fashion fair
A whole long life of love! Leap high, laugh low!
I love you—so!—
One kiss—and then to freedom! See the bay
So far away,
But not too far for love! Ring out, sharp hoof,
And put to proof
The skill of him that steeled thee! Freedom! Set
As never yet
Thy straining sides for freedom! Gallant mare!
The frosty air
Kindles the blood within us as we race.
O love! Thy face
Flames with the passion of our happy speed!
The noble steed
Pashes the first gold limit of the sand.
Ah love, thy hand!
We win, no foot pursuing spans the brow!
Yes, kiss me now!

III.

THE SPRING AFTER.

NORTH, by the ice-belt, where the cliffs appease
Innumerable clamour of sundering seas,
And garlands of ungatherable foam
Wild as the horses maddening toward home,
Where through the thunderous burden of the thaw
Rings the sharp fury of the breaking flaw,
Where summer's hand is heavy on the snow,
And springtide bursts the insuperable floe,
North, by the limit of the ocean, stands
A castle, lord of those far footless lands
That are the wall of that most monstrous world
About whose pillars Behemoth is curled,
About whose gates Leviathan is strong,
Whose secret terror sweetens not for song.
The hoarse loud roar of gulphs of raging brine
That break in foam and fire on that divine
Cliff-base, is smothered in the misty air,
And no sound penetrates them, save a rare

Music of sombre motion, swaying slow.
The sky above is one dark indigo
Voiceless and deep, no light is hard within
To shame love's lips and rouse the silky skin
From its dull olive to a perfect white.
For scarce an hour the golden rim of light
Tinges the southward bergs; for scarce an hour
The sun puts forth his seasonable flower,
And only for a little while the wind
Wakes at his coming, and beats cold and blind
On the wild sea that struggles to release
The hard grip from its throat, and lie at ease
Lapped in the eternal summer. But its waves
Roam through the solitude of empty caves
In vain; no faster wheels the moon above;
And still reluctant fly the hours of love.
It is so peaceful in the castle: here
The night of winter never froze a tear
On my love's cheek or mine; no sorrow came
To track our vessel by its wake of flame
Wherein the dolphin bathed his shining side;
No smallest cloud between me and my bride
Came like a little mist; one tender fear,
Too sweet to speak of, closed the dying year
With love more perfect, for its purple root
Might blossom outward to the snowy fruit
Whose bloom to-night lay sleeping on her breast,
As if a touch might stir the sunny nest,
Break the spell's power, and bid the spirit fly
Who had come near to dwell with us. But I
Bend through long hours above the dear twin life,
Look from love's guerdon to the lover-wife,
And back again to that small face so sweet,
And downwards to the little rosy feet,
And see myself no longer in her eyes
So perfectly as here, where passion lies
Buried and re-arisen and complete.
O happy life too sweet, too perfect sweet,
O happy love too perfectly made one
Not to arouse the envy of the sun
Who sulks six months[1] for spite of it! O love,
Too pure and fond for those pale gods above,
Too perfect for their iron rods to break,
Arise, awake, and die for death's own sake!
That one forgetfulness may take us three,
Still three, still one, to the Lethean sea;
That all its waters may be sweet as those
We wandered by, sweet sisters of the rose,
That perfect night before we fled, we two
Who were so silent down that avenue
Grown golden with the moonlight, who should be
No longer two, but one; nor one, but three.
And now it is the spring; the ice is breaking;
The waters roar; the winds their wings are shaking
To sweep upon the northland; we shall sail
Under the summer perfume of the gale
To some old valley where the altars steam
Before the gods, and where the maidens dream
Their little lives away, and where the trees
Shake laughing tresses at the rising breeze,
And where the wells of water lie profound,
And not unfrequent is the silver sound
Of shepherds tuneful as the leaves are green,
Whose reedy music echoes, clear and clean,
From rocky palaces where gnomes delight
To sport all springtime, where the brooding night
With cataract is musical, and thrushes
Throb their young love beside the stream that rushes
Headlong to beat its foamheads into snow,
Where the sad swallow calls, and pale songs flow
To match the music of the nightingale.
There, when the pulses of the summer fail,
The fiery flakes of autumn fall, and there
Some warm perfection of the lazy air
Swims through the purpling veins of lovers.
Hark!
A faint bird's note, as if a silver spark

[1] In Arctic latitudes the sun hardly rises at all from September to March, and is only visible in the south.

Struck from a diamond; listen, wife, and know
How perfectly I love to watch you so.
Wake, lover, wake, but stir not yet the child:
Wake, and thy brow serene and low and mild
Shall take my kisses, and my lips shall seek
The pallid roses on thy perfect cheek,
And kiss them into poppies, and thy mouth
Shall lastly close to mine, as in the south
We see the sun close fast upon the sea;
So, my own heart, thy mouth must close on me.
Art thou awake? Those eyes of wondering love,
Sweet as the dawn and softer than the dove,
Seek no quick vision—yet they move to me
And, slowly, to the child. How still are we!
Yes, and a smile betokens that they wake
Or dream a waking dream for kisses' sake;
Yes, I will touch thee, O my low sweet brow!
My wife, thy lips to mine—yes, kiss me now!

IV.

THE VOYAGE SOUTHWARD.

Holy as heaven, the home
Of winds, the land of foam,
The palace of the waves, the house of rain,
Deeper than ocean, dark
As dawn before the lark
Flings his sharp song to skyward, and is fain
To light his lampless eyes
At the flower-folded skies
Where stars are hidden in the blue, to fill
His beak with star-dropt dew,
His little heart anew
With love and song to swell it to his will;
Holy as heaven, the place
Before the golden face
Of God is very silent at the dawn.
The even keel is keen
To flash the waves between,
But no soft moving current is withdrawn:
We float upon the blue
Like sunlight specks in dew,
And like the moonlight on the lake we lie:
The northern gates are past,
And, following fair and fast,
The north wind drove us under such a sky,
Faint with the sun's desire,
And clad in fair attire
Of many driving cloudlets; and we flew
Like swallows to the South.
The ocean's curving mouth
Smiled day by day and nights of starry blue;
Nights when the sea would shake
Like sunlight where the wake
Was wonderful with flakes of living things
That leapt for joy to feel
The cold exultant keel
Flash, and the white ship dip her woven wings;
Nights when the moon would hold
Her lamp of whitest gold
To see us on the poop together set
With one desire, to be
Alone upon the sea
And touch soft hands, and hold white bosoms yet,
And see in silent eyes
More stars than all the skies
Together hold within their limits gray,
To watch the red lips move
For slow delight of love
Till the moon sigh and sink, and yield her sway
Unto the eastern lord
That draws a sanguine sword
And starts up eager in the dawn, to see
Bright eyes grow dim for sleep,
And lazy bosoms keep
Their slumber perfect and their sorcery,
While dawny winds arise,
And fast the white ship flies

To those young groves of olive by the shore,
The spring-clad shore we seek
That slopes to yonder peak
Snow-clad, bright-gleaming, as the silver ore
Plucked[1] by pale fingers slow
In balmy Mexico,
A king on thunder throned, his diadem
The ruby rocks that flash
The sunlight like a lash
When sunlight touches, and sweeps over them
A crown of light! Behold!
The white seas touch the gold,
And flame like flowers of fire about the prow.
It is the hour for sleep:—
Lulled by the moveless deep
To sleep, sweet wife, to sleep! Yes, kiss me now!

V.

THE ULTIMATE VOYAGE.[2]

THE wandering waters move about the world,
And lap the sand, with quietest complaint
Borne on the wings of dying breezes up,
To where we make toward the wooded top
Of yonder menacing hill. The night is fallen
Starless and moonless, black beyond belief,
Tremendous, only just the ripple keeps
Our souls from perishing in the inane,
With music borrowed from the soul of God.
We twain go thither, knowing no desire
To lead us; but some strong necessity
Urges, as lightning thunder, our slow steps
Upward. For on the pleasant meadow-land
That slopes to sunny bays, and limpid seas
(That breathe like maidens sleeping, for their breast
Is silver with the sand that lies below,)
Where our storm-strengthened dragon rests at last,
And by whose borders we have made a home,
More like a squirrel's bower than a house.
For in this blue Sicilian summertime
The trees arch tenderly for lovers' sleep,
And all the interwoven leaves are fine
To freshen us with dewdrops at the dawn,
Or let the summer shower sing through to us,
And welcome kisses of the silver rain
That raps and rustles in the solitude.
But in the night there came to us a cry:
"The mountains are your portion, and the hills
Your temple, and you are chosen." Then I woke
Pondering, and my lover woke and said:
"I heard a voice of one majestical
With waving beard, most ancient, beautiful,
Concealed and not concealed;[1] and I awoke,
Feeling a strong compulsion on my soul
To go some whither." And the dreams were one
(We somehow knew), and, looking such a kiss
As lovers' eyes can interchange, our lips
Met in the mute agreement to obey.
So, girding on our raiment, as to pass
Some whither of long doubtful journeying,
We went forth blindly to the horrible
Damp darkness of the pines above. And there
Strange beasts crossed path of ours, such beasts as earth
Bears not, distorted, tortured, loathable,
Mouthing with hateful lips some recent blood,
Or snarling at our feet. But these attacked
No courage of our hearts, we faltered not,
And they fell back, snake's mouth and leopard's throat,
Afraid. But others fawning came behind
With clumsy leapings as in friendliness,
Dogs with men's faces, and we beat them off
With scabbard, and the hideous path wound on.
And these perplexed our goings, for no light
Gleamed through the bare pine-ruins lava-struck,

[1] Referring to the story of the accidental discovery of the mine of Potosi by a man who, plucking a plant, found its roots shining with silver.

[2] The Spiritual Journey towards the Supreme Knowledge which is life and bliss.

[1] Macroprosopus.

Nor even the hellish fire of Etna's maw.
But lucklessly we came upon a pool
Dank, dark, and stagnant, evil to the touch,
Oozing towards us, but sucked suddenly,
Silently, horribly, by slow compulsion
Into the slipping sand, and vanishing,
Whereon we saw a little boat appear,
And in it such a figure as we knew
Was Death. But she, intolerant of delay,
Hailed him. The vessel floated to our feet,
And Death was not. She leapt within, and bent
Her own white shoulders to the thwart, and bade
Me steer, and keep stern watch with sword unsheathed
For fear of something that her soul had seen
Above. And thus upon the oily black
Silent swift river we sailed out to reach
Its source, no longer feeling as compelled,
But led by some incomprehensible
Passion. And here lewd fishes snapped at us,
And watersnakes writhed silently toward
Our craft. But these I fought against, and smote
Head from foul body, to our further ill,
For frightful jelly-monsters grew apace,
And all the water grew one slimy mass
Of crawling tentacles. My sword was swift
That slashed and slew them, chiefly to protect
The toiling woman, and assure our path
Through this foul hell. And now the very air
Is thick with cold wet horrors. With my sword
Trenchant, that tore their scaly essences—
Like Lucian's sailor writhing in the clutch
Of those witch-vines—I slashed about like light,
And noises horrible of death devoured
The hateful suction of their clinging arms
And wash of slipping bellies. Presently
Sense failed, and—Nothing!
By-and-by we woke
In a most beautiful canoe of pearl
Lucent on lucent water, in a sun
That was the heart of spring. But the green land
Seemed distant, with a sense of aery height;
As if it were below us far, that seemed
Around. And as we gazed the water grew
Ethereal, thin, most delicately hued,
Misty, as if its substance were dissolved
In some more subtle element. We heard
"O passers over water, do ye dare
To tread the deadlier kingdoms of the air?"
Whereat I cried: Arise! And then the pearl
Budded with nautilus-wings, and upward now
Soared. And our souls began to know the death
That was about to take us. All our veins
Boiled with tumultuous and bursting blood;
Our flesh broke bounds, and all our bones grew fierce,
As if some poison ate us up. And lo!
The air is peopled with a devil-tribe
Born of our own selves. These, grown furious
At dispossession by the subtle air,
Contend with us, who know the agony
Of half life drawn out lingering, who groan
Eaten as if by worms, who dash ourselves
Vainly against the ethereal essences
That make our boat, who vainly strive to cast
Our stricken bodies over the pale edge
And drop and end it all. No nerve obeys;
But in the torn web of our brains is born
The knowledge that release is higher yet.
So, lightened of the devils that possessed
In myriad hideousness our earthier lives,
With one swift impulse, we ourselves shake off
The clinging fiends, and shaking even the boat
As dust beneath our feet, leap up and run
Upward, and flash, and suddenly sigh back
Happy, and rest with limbs entwined at last
On pale blue air, the empyreal floor,
As on a bank of flowers in the old days
Before this journey. So I think we slept.
But now, awaking, suddenly we feel
A sound as if within us, and without,
So penetrating and so self-inspired

Sounded the voice we knew as God's. The words
Were not a question any more, but said:
"The last and greatest is within you now."
Then fire too subtle and omniscient
Devoured our substance, and we moved again
Not down, not up, but inwards mystically
Involving self in self, and light in light.
And this was not a pain, but peaceable
Like young-eyed love, reviving; it consumed
And consecrated and made savour sweet
To our changed senses. And the dual self
Of love grew less distinct and I began
To feel her heart in mine, her lips in mine. . . .
Then mistier grew the sense of God without,
And God was I, and nothing might exist,
Subsist, or be at all, outside of Me,
Myself Existence of Existences.

. . . . .

We had passed unknowing to the woody crown
Of the little hill. There was a secret Vault.
We entered. All without the walls appeared
As fire, and all within as icy light;
The altar was of gold, and on it burnt
Some ancient perfume. Then I saw myself
And her together, as a priest, whose robe
Was white and frail, and covered with a cope
Of scarlet bound with gold: upon the head
A golden crown, wherein a diamond shone;
Within which diamond we beheld our self
The higher priest, not clothed, but clothed upon
With the white brilliance of high nakedness
As with a garment.[1] Then of our self there came
A voice: "Ye have attained to That which Is;
Kiss, and the vision is fulfilled." And so
Our bodies met, and, meeting, did not touch
But interpenetrated in the kiss.

. . . . .

This writing is engraved on lamina
Of silver, found by me, the trusted friend
And loving servant of my lady and lord,
In that abandoned Vault, of late destroyed
By Etna's fury. Nothing else remained
(Save in the ante-room the sword we knew
So often flashing at the column-head)
Within. I think my lord has written this.
Now for the child, whose rearing is my care,
And in whose life is left my single hope,
This writing shall conclude the book of song
His father made in worship and true love
Of his fair lady, and these songs shall be
His hope, and his tradition, and his pride.
Thus have I written for the sake of truth,
And for his sake who bears his father's sword—
I pray God under my fond guardianship
As worthily. Thus far, and so—the end.

[1] See the description of the robes and crown of the Magus in the "Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage."

THE HONOURABLE ADULTERERS

I.

I LOOKED beneath her eyelids, where her eyes
Like stars were deep, and dim like summer skies;
I looked beneath their lashes; and behold!
My own thought mirrored in their maiden gold.
Shame drew to them to cloud their light with lies,
And shrank back shamed; but Love waxed bright and bold.

The devilish circle of the fiery ring[1]
Became one moment like a little thing,
And Truth and God were near us to withdraw
The veil of Love's unalterable law.
We feared no fury of the jealous King,
But, lest in honour love should find a flaw.

[1] *i. e.* the wedding ring.

Only our looks and trembling lips we dread,
And the dear nimbus of a lover's head,
The dreamy splendour and the dim delight
That feels the fragrance fallen from the night,
When soul to soul is locked, and eyes are wed,
And lips not touched kiss secretly by sight.

These things we fear, and move as in a mist
One from the other, and we had not kissed.
Only the perfume of her lips and hair
Love's angel wafted slowly to me there,
And as I went like death away I wist
Its savour faded, nor my soul aware.

I turned and went away, away, away,
Out of the night that was to me the day,
And rode to meet the sun to hide in light
The sorrow of the day that was the night.
So I rode slowly in the morning gray,
And all the meadows with the frost were white.

And lo! between the mountains there uprose
The winter sun; and all the forest glows,
And the frost burns like fire before my eyes,
While the white breeze awoke with slumberous sighs
And stirred the branches of the pine; it knows,
It surely knows how weary are the wise!

Even my horse my sorrow understands,
Would turn and bear me to those western lands;
In love would turn me back; in love would bring
My thirsty lips to the one perfect spring—
My iron soul upon my trembling hands
Had its harsh will; my bitterness was king.

So verily long time I rode afar.
My course was lighted by some gloomy star
That boded evil, that I would not shun,
But rather welcome, as the storm the sun,
Lowering and red, a hurtful avatar,
Whose fatal forehead like itself is dun

It was no wonder when the second day
Showed me a city on the desert way,
Whose brazen gates were open, where within
I saw a statue for a sign of sin,
And saw the people come to it and pray,
Before its mouth set open for a gin.

And seeing me, a clamour rose among
Their dwarfish crowds, whose barbarous harsh tongue
Grated, a hateful sound; they plucked me down,
And mocked me through the highways of the town,
And brought me where they sang to censers swung
A grotesque hymn before her body brown.

For Sin was like a woman, and her feet
Shone, and her face was like the windy wheat;
Her eyes were keen and horrible and cold,
Her bronze loins girdled with the sacred gold;
Her lips were large, and from afar how sweet!
How fierce and purple for a kiss to hold!

But somehow blood was black upon them; blood
In stains and clots and splashes; and the mud
Trampled around her by the souls that knelt,
Worshipping where her false lewd body dwelt,
Was dark and hateful; and a sleepy flood
Trickled therefrom as magic gums that melt.

I had no care that hour for anything:
Not for my love, not for myself; I cling
Desperate to despair, as some to hope,
Unheeding Saturn in their horoscope;
But I, despair is lord of me and king;
But I, my thoughts tend ever to the rope.

But I, unknightly, recreant, a coward,
Dare not release my soul from fate untoward
By such a craven's cunning. Nay, my soul
Must move unflinching to what bitter goal
The angry gods design—if gods be froward
I am a man, nor fear to drain the bowl.

Now some old devil, dead no doubt and damned,
But living in her life, had wisely crammed
Her fierce bronze throat with such a foul device
As made her belly yearn for sacrifice.
She leered like love on me, and smiled, and shammed,
And did not pity for all her breast of spice.

They thrust me in her hateful jaws, and I
Even then resisted not, so fain to die
Was my desire, so weary of the fight
With my own love, so willing to be quite
Sure of my strength by death; and eagerly
Almost I crossed the barrier keen and white.

When lo! a miracle! Her carven hand
Is lifted, and the little space is spanned,
And I am plucked from out her maw, and set
Down on the pedestal, whose polished jet
Shone like a mirror out of hell—I stand
Free, where the blood of other men is wet.

So slowly, while the mob stood back, I went
Out of the city, with no life content,
And certain I should meet no death at least.
Soon, riding ever to the stubborn east,
I came upon a shore whose ocean bent
In one long curve, where folk were making feast.

So with no heart to feast, I joined the mirth,
Mingled the dances that delight the earth,
And laughing looked in every face of guile.
Quick was my glance and subtle was my smile;
Ten thousand little loves were brought to birth,
Ten thousand loves that laughed a little while.

No; for one woman did not laugh, too wise!
But came so close, and looked within my eyes
So deeply that I saw not anything.
Only her eyes grew, as a purple ring
Shielding the sun. They grew; they uttered lies—
They fascinate and cleave to me and cling.

Then in their uttermost profound I saw
The veil of Love's unalterable law
Lifted, and in the shadow far behind
Dim and divine, within the shadow blind
My own love's face most amorously draw
Out of the deep toward my cloudy mind.

O suddenly I felt a kiss enclose
My whole live body, as a rich red rose
Folding its sweetness round the honey-bee!
I felt a perfect soul embracing me,
And in my spirit like a river flows
A passion like the passion of the sea.

II.

He did not kiss me with his mouth; his eyes
Kissed mine, and mine kissed back; it was not wise,
But yet he had the strength to leave me; so
I was so glad he loved enough to go.

My arms could never have released his neck;
He saved our honour from a single speck.
And so he went away; and fate inwove
The bitterest of treason for our love.

For scarce two days when sickness took the King,
And death dissolved the violence of the ring.
I ruled alone ; I left my palace gate
To see if Love should have the laugh at Fate.

And so I violated Death, and died ;
But in the other land my spirit cried
For incarnation ; conquering I came
Within my soulless body as a flame.

Endowing which with sacred power I sought
A little while, as thought that seeks for thought.
I found his changeless love endure as mine,
His passion curl around me as a vine.

So clinging fibres of desire control
My perfect body, and my perfect soul
Shot flakes of light toward him. So my eyes,
Seeking his face, were made divinely wise.

So, solemn, silent, 'mid a merry folk
I bound him by my forehead's silver yoke,
And grew immense about him and within,
And so possessed him wholly, without sin.

For I had crossed the barrier and knew
There was no sin. His lips reluctant grew
Ardent at last as recognising me,
And love's wild tempest sweeps upon his sea.

And I? I knew not anything, but know
We are still silent, and united so,
And all our being spells one vast To Be,
A passion like the passion of the sea.

THE LEGEND OF BEN LEDI.[1]

On his couch Imperial Alpin[2]
In majestic grandeur lay,
Dying with the sun that faded
O'er the plain of granite gray.

Snowy white his beard descended,
Flecked with foeman's crimson gore,
And he rose and grasped his broadsword,
And he prayed to mighty Thor :

"God of thunder, god of battle,
God of pillage and of war,
Hear the King of Scotland dying
On the Leny's thundrous shore !

"Thrice three hundred have I smitten
With my single arm this day ;
Now of life my soul is weary,
I am old, I pass away.

"Grant me this, immortal monarch,
Such a tomb as ne'er before,
Such a tomb as never after
Monarch thought or monarch saw."

Then he called his sons around him,
And he spake again and cried :
"Seven times a clansman's bowshot
Lay me from the Leny's side.

"Where the plain to westward sinketh,
Lay me in my tartan plaid,
All uncovered to the tempest,
In my hand my trusty blade."

Hardly had he spake the order,
When his spirit passed away ;
And his sons their heads uncovered
As they bore him o'er the brae.

Seven times did Phail McAlpine
Bend his mighty bow of yew ;
Seven times with lightning swiftness
West the wingèd arrow flew.

Seven times a clansman's bowshot
From the Leny's western shore,
Laid they him where on to Achray
Spread the plain of Ian Vohr.

Hard by Teith's tumultuous waters
Camped his sons throughout the night,
Till the rosy blush of morning
Showed a vast majestic sight

[1] The "Hill of God."
[2] The first King of all Scotland.

Where of late the plain extended
  Rose a mighty mass of stone,
Pierced the clouds, and sprang unmeasured
  In magnificence—alone!

There the clansmen stood and wondered,
  As the rock, supremely dire,
Split and trembled, cracked and thundered,
  Lit with living flecks of fire.

Spake the chief: "My trusty clansmen,
  This is not the day of doom;
This is honour to the mighty;
  Clansmen, this is Alpin's tomb."

NYMPSFIELD RECTORY,
December 1893.

A DESCENT OF THE MOENCH.[1]

JULY 14, 1896.

AN island of the mist. White companies
Of clouds thronged wondrously against the hills,
And in the east a darkening of the winds
That held awhile their breath for very rage,
Too wild for aught but vaporous quivering
Of melting fleeces, while the sudden sun
Fled to his home. Afar the Matterhorn
Reared a gaunt pinnacle athwart the bank,
Where towered behind it one vast pillar of cloud
To thrice its height. Behold the ice-clad dome
On which we stood, all weary of the way,
And marked the east awaken into scorn,
And rush upon us. Then we set our teeth
To force a dangerous passage, and essayed
The steep slope not in vain. We pushed our way
Slowly and careworn down the icy ridge,
Hewing with ponderous strokes the riven ice
In little flakes and chips, and now again
Encountered strange and fearsome sentinels,
Gray pinnacles of lightning-riven rock
Fashioned of fire and night. We clomb adown
Fantastic cliffs of gnarlèd stone, and saw
The vivid lightning flare in purple robes
Of flame along the ridge, and even heard
Its terrible crackle, 'mid the sullen roar
Of answering thunder. Now the driven hail
Beat on our faces, while we strove to fling
Aloft the axe of forgèd steel, encased
In glittering ice, and smite unceasingly
On the unyielding slope of ice, as black
As those most imminent ghosts of Satan's frown
That shut us out from heaven, while the snow
Froze on our cheeks. Thus then we gained the field
Where precipice and overwhelming rock,
Avalanche, crag, leap through the dazzled air
To pile their mass in one Lethean plain
Of undulations of rolled billowy snow
Rent, seamed, and scarred with wound on jagged wound,
Blue-rushing to the vague expanse below
Of the unknown secrecies of mountain song.
Dragging behind us beautiful weary limbs,
We turned snow-blinded eyes towards the pass[1]
That shot a jasper wall above the mist
Into the lightning-kindled firmament,
Behind whose battlements a shelter[2] lay,
Rude-built of pine, whose parents in the storm
Of some vast avalanche were swept away
Into the valley. Thither we hasted on,
And there, as night stretched out a broken wing
Torn by the thunder and the bitter strife
Of warring flames and tempest's wrath, we came
And flung ourselves within, and laid us down
At last to sleep; and Sleep, a veinèd shape
Of naked stateliness, came down to us,
And tenderly stooped down, and kissed our brows.

[1] The first guideless traverse of this mountain, one of the peaks of the Bernese Oberland.

[1] The Mönchjoch.
[2] The Berglihütte.

IN A CORNFIELD.

O VOICE of sightless magic
  Clear through day's crystal sky,
Blithe, contemplative, tragic,
  As men may laugh or sigh;
As men may love or sorrow,
Their moods thy music borrow
  To bid them live or die.
So sweet, so sad, so lonely,
In silent noontide only
  Thy song-wings float and lie
On cloud-foam scarred and riven,
By God's red lightnings shriven,
And quiet hours are given
  To him that lingers nigh.

Fain would I linger near thee
  Amid the poppies red,
Forget this world, and hear thee
  As one among the dead;
Amid the daffadillies,
Red tulips and white lilies,
  Where daisies' tears are shed;
Where larkspur and cornflower
Are blue with sunlight's hour,
  And all the earth is spread
As in a dream before me;
While steals divinely o'er me
Love's scented spring to draw me
  From moods of dreamy dread.

O winged passion! traveller
  Too near to God to see!
O lyrical unraveller
  Of knotted life to me!
O song! O shining river
Of thought and sound! O giver
  Of goodly words of glee!
Like to a star that singeth,
A flower that incense bringeth,
  A love-song of the free!
Oh! let me sing thy glories
While spring winds whisper stories
Of winter past, whose shore is
  Beyond a shoreless sea.

Sing on, thou lyric lover!
  Sing on, and thrill me long
With such delights as cover
  The days and deeds of wrong!
Live lyre of songs immortal
That pierce Heaven's fiery portal
  With shafts of splendour strong,
Winged with thought's sharpest fires,
Arrowed with soul's desires
  And sped from thunder's thong;
Heaven's gates rock, rage, and quiver,
Earth's walls gape wide and shiver,
While Freedom doth deliver
  Men's spirits with thy song.

Ah, chainless, distant, fleeting,
  To lands that know no sea,
Where ocean's stormy greeting
  Fills no man's heart with glee;
Where lovers die or sever,
And death destroys for ever,
  And God bears slavery:—
Fly thither, so thou leave us
That no man's hand may reave us
  Of this—that we are free.
Free all men that may heed thee,
On freemen's praises feed thee,
Who chorus full, "God speed thee,
  Live lyre of Liberty!"

DREAMS.

WHAT words are these that shudder through my sleep,
  Changing from silver into crimson flakes,
  And molten into gold
Like the pale opal through whose gray may sweep
  A scarlet flame, like eyes of crested snakes,
  Keen, furious, and too cold.

What words are these? The pall of slumber lifts;
  The veil of finiteness withdraws. The night
  Is heavier, life burns low:

Yet to the quivering brain three goodly gifts
The cruelty of Pluto and his might
In the abyss bestow:

Change, foresight, fear. The pageant whirls and boils;
Restricted not by space and time, my dream
Foresees the doom of Fate;
My spirit wrestles in the Dream-King's toils
Always in vain, and Hope's forerunners gleam
Alway one step too late.

Not as when sunlight strikes the counterpane;
Half wakening, sleep rolls back her iron wave,
And dawn brings blithesomeness;
Not as when opiates lull the tortured brain
And sprinkle lotus on the drowsy grave
Of earth's old bitterness;

But as when consciousness half rouses up
And hurls back all the gibbering harpy crowd;
And sleep's draught deepeneth,
And all the furies of hell's belly sup
In the brain's palaces, and chant aloud
Songs that foretaste of Death.

Maddened, the brain breaks from beneath the goad,
Flings off again the foe, and from its hell
Brings for a moment peace,
Till weariness and her infernal load
Of phantom memory-shapes return to quell
The shaken fortresses.

Till nature reassert her empery,
And the full tide of wakefulness at last
Foam on the shore of sleep
To beat the white cliffs of reality
In vain, because their windy strength is past,
And only memories weep.

Why is the Finite real? And that world
So larger, so more beautiful and fleet,
So free, so exquisite,
The world of dreams and shadows, not impearled
With solitary shaft of Truth? Too sweet,
O children of the Night,

Are your wide realms for our philosophers,
Who must in hard gray balance-shackles bind
The essence of all thought:
No sorrier sexton in a grave inters
The nobler children of a poet's mind
Of wine and gold well wrought.

By the poor sense of touch they judge that this
Or that is real or not. Have they divined
This simplest spirit-bond,
The joy of some bad woman's deadly kiss;
The thought-flash that well tunes a lover's mind
Seas and gray gulfs beyond?

So that which is impalpable to touch,
They judge by touch; the viewless they decide
By sight; their logic fails,
Their jarring jargon jingles—even such
An empty brazen pot—wise men deride
The clouds that mimic whales.

My world shall be my dreams. Religion there
And duty may disturb me not at all;
Nor doubts, nor fear of death.
I straddle on no haggard ghostly mare;
Yea, through my God, I have leapt o'er a wall!
(As poet David saith.)

The wall that ever girds Earth's thought with brass
Is all a silver path my feet beneath,
And o'er its level sward

Of sea-reflecting white flowers and fresh grass
I walk. Man's darkness is a leathern sheath,
Myself the sun-bright sword!

I have no fear, nor doubt, nor sorrow now,
For I give Self to God—I give my best
Of soul and blood and brain
To my poor Art—there comes to me somehow
This fact: Man's work is God made manifest;
Life is all Peace again.

And Dreams are beyond life. Their wider scope,
Limitless Empire o'er the world of thought,
Help my desires to press
Beyond all stars toward God and Heaven and Hope;
And in the world-amazing chase is wrought
Somehow—all Happiness.

THE TRIUMPH OF MAN.

BEFORE the darkness, earlier than being,
When yet thought was not, shapeless and unseeing,
Made misbegotten of deity on death,
There brooded on the waters the strange breath
Of an incarnate hatred. Darkness fell
And chaos, from prodigious gulphs of hell.
Life, that rejoiced to travail with a man,
Looked where the cohorts of destruction ran,
Saw darkness visible, and was afraid,
Seeing. There grew like Death a monster shade,
Blind as the coffin, as the covering sod
Damp, as the corpse obscene, the Christian God.
So to the agony dirges of despair
Man cleft the womb, and shook the icy air
With bitter cries for light and life and love.
But these, begotten of the world above,
Withdrew their glory, and the iron world
Rolled on its cruel way, and passion furled
Its pure wings, and abased itself, and bore
Fetters impure, and stooped, and was no more.
But resurrection's ghastly power grew strong,
And Lust was born, adulterous with Wrong,
The Child of Lies; so man was blinded still,
Garnered the harvest of abortive ill,
For wheat reaped thistles, and for worship wrought
A fouler idol of his meanest thought:
A monster, vengeful, cruel, traitor, slave,
Lord of disease and father of the grave,
A treacherous bully, feeble as malign,
Intolerable, inhuman, undivine,
With spite close girded and with hatred shod,
A snarling cur, the Christian's Christless God.
Out! misbegotten monster! with thy brood,
The obscene offspring of thy pigritude,
Incestuous wedlock with the Pharisees
That hail the Christ a son of thee! Our knees
Bend not before thee, and our earth-bowed brows
Shake off their worship, and reject thy spouse,
The harlot of the world! For, proud and free,
We stand beyond thy hatred, even we:
We broken in spirit beneath bitter years,
Branded with the burnt-offering of tears,
Spit out upon the lie, and in thy face
Cast back the slimy falsehood; to your place,
Ye Gadarean swine, too foul to fling
Into the waters that abound and spring!
Back, to your mother filth! With hope, and youth,
Love, light, and power, and mastery of truth
Armed, we reject you; the bright scourge we ply,
Your howling spirits stumble to your sty:
The worm that was your lie—our heel its head
Bruises, that bruised us once; the snake is dead.
Who of mankind that honours man discerns
That man of all men, whose high spirit burns,

Crowned over life, and conqueror of death,
The godhood that was Christ of Nazareth—
Who of all men, that will not gird his brand
And purge from priestcraft the uxorious land?
Christ, who lived, died, and lived, that man might be
Tameless and tranquil as the summer sea,
That laughs with love of the broad skies of noon,
And dreams of lazy kissings of the moon,
But listens for the summons of the wind,
Shakes its white mane, and hurls its fury blind
Against oppression, gathers its steep side,
Rears as a springing tiger, flings its tide
Tremendous on the barriers, smites the sand,
And gluts its hunger on the breaking land;
Engulphing waters fall and overwhelm:—
Christ, who stood dauntless at the shaken helm
On Galilee, who quelled the wrath of God,
And rose triumphant over faith, and trod
With calm victorious feet the icy way
When springtide burgeoned, and the rosy day
Leapt from beneath the splendours of the snow:—
Christ, ultimate master of man's hateful foe,
And lord of his own soul and fate, strikes still
From man's own heaven, against the lord of ill;
Stage thunders mock the once terrific nod
That spoke the fury of the Christian God,
Whose slaves deny, too cowardly to abjure,
Their desecrated Moloch. The impure
Godhead is powerless, even on the slave,
Who once could scar the forehead of the brave,
Break love's heart pitiful, and reach the strong
Through stricken children, and a mother's wrong.
Day after darkness, life beyond the tomb!
Manhood reluctant from religion's womb
Leaps, and sweet laughters flash for freedom's birth
That thrills the old bosom of maternal earth.
The dawn has broken; yet the impure fierce fire
Kindles the grievous furnace of desire
Still for the harpy brood of king and priest,
Slave, harlot, coward, that make human feast
Before the desecrated god, in hells
Of darkness, where the mitred vampire dwells,
Where still death reigns, and God and priests are fed,
Man's blood for wine, man's flesh for meat and bread,
The lands of murder, of the obscene things
That snarl at freedom, broken by her wings,
That prop the abomination, cringe and smile,
Caressing the dead fetich, that defile
With hideous sacraments the happy land.
Destruction claims its own; the hero's hand
Grips the snake's throat; yea, on its head is set
The heel that crushes it, the serpent wet
With that foul blood, from human vitals drained,
From tears of broken women, and sweat stained
From torturers' cloths; the sickly tide is poured,
And all the earth is blasted; the green sward
Burns where it touches, and the barren sod
Rejects the poison of the blood of God.
Yet, through the foam of waters that enclose
Their sweet salt bosoms, through the summer rose,
Through flowers of fatal fire, through fields of air
That summer squanders, ere the bright moon bare
Her maiden bosom, through the kissing gold
Where lovers' lips are molten, and breasts hold
Their sister bodies, and deep eyes are wed,
And fire of fire enflowers the sacred head
Of mingling passion, through the silent sleep
Where love sobs out its life, and new loves leap
To being, through the dawn of all new things,
There burns an angel whose amazing wings

Wave in the sunbright air, whose lips of flame
Chant the almighty music of One Name
Whose perfume fills the silent atmosphere,
Whose passionate melodies caress the ear;
An angel, strong and eloquent, aloud
Cries to the earth to lift the final shroud,
And, having burst Faith's coffin, to lay by
The winding-sheet of Infidelity,
And rise up naked, as a god, to hear
This message from the reawakened sphere;
Words with love clothed, with life immortal shod:—
"Mankind is made a little part of God."[1]
Till the response, full chorus of the earth,
Flash through the splendid portals of re-birth,
Completing Truth in its amazing span:—
"Godhead is made the Spirit that is Man."
To whose white mountains, and their arduous ways,
Turn we our purpose, till the faith that slays
Yield up its place to faith that gives us life,
The faith to conquer in the higher strife;
Our single purpose, and sublime intent,
With their spilt blood to seal our sacrament,
Who stand among the martyrs of the Light;
Our single purpose, by incarnate might
Begotten after travail unto death,
To live within the light that quickeneth;
To tread base thoughts as our high thoughts have trod,
Deep in the dust, the carrion that was God;
Conquer our hatreds as the dawn of love
Conquered that fiend whose ruinous throne above
Broke lofty spirits once, now falls with Fate,
At last through his own violence violate;

[1] *i.e.* the idea of God, dissociated from the legends of priests, and assimilated to the impersonal Parabrahma of the Hindu. This dual use of the word is common throughout Crowley: the context is everywhere sufficient to decide. In the play "Jephthah," however, conventional ideas are followed.

To live in life, breathe freedom with each breath,
As God breathed tyranny and died in death;
Secure the sacred fastness of the soul,
Uniting self to the absolute, the whole,
The universal marriage of mankind,
Free, perfect, broken from the chains that bind,
Force infinite, love pure, desire untold,
And mutual raptures of the age of gold,
The child of freedom! So the moulder, man,
Shakes his grim shoulders, and the shadows wan
Fall to forgetfulness; so life revives,
And new sweet loves beget diviner lives,
And Freedom stands, re-risen from the rod,
A goodlier godhead than the broken God;
Uniting all the universe in this
Music more musical than breezes' kiss,
A song more potent than the sullen sea,
The triumph of the freedom of the free;
One stronger song than thrilled the rapturous birth
Of stars and planets and the mother, earth;
As lovers, calling lovers when they die,
Strangle death's torture in love's agony;
As waters, shaken by the storm, that roar,
Sea unto sea; as stars that burn before
The blackness; as the mighty cry of swords
Raging through battle, for its stronger chords;
And for its low entrancing music, made
As waters lambent in the listening glade;
As Sappho's yearning to the amorous sea;
As Man's Prometheus, in captivity
Master and freeman; as the holy tune
All birds, all lovers, whisper to the moon.
So, passionate and pure, the strong chant rolls,
Queen of the mystic unity of souls;
So from eternity its glory springs
King of the magical brotherhood of kings;
The absolute crown and kingdom of desire,
Earth's virgin chaplet, molten in the fire,
Sealed in the sea, betokened by the wind:
"There is one God, the Spirit of Mankind!"

THE DREAMING DEATH.[1]

My beauty in thy deep pure love
Anchors its homage far above
All lights of heaven. The stars awake;
The very stars bend down to take
From its fresh fragrance for the sake
Of their own cloud-compelling peace.
On earth there lies a silver fleece
Of new-fallen snow, secure from sun,
In alleys, leafy every one
This year already with the spring.
The breeze blows freshly, thrushes sing,
And all the woods are burgeoning
With quick new buds; across the snow
The scent of violets to and fro
Wafts at the hour of dawn. Alone
I wait, a figure turned to stone
(Or salt for pain). A week ago
Thine arms embraced me; now I know
Far off they clasp the empty air:
Thy lips seek home, and in despair
Lament aloud over the frosted moor.
Sad am I, sad, albeit sure
There is no change of God above
And no abatement of our love.
For still, though thou be gone, I see
In the glad mirror secretly
That I am beautiful in thee.
Thy love irradiates my eyes,
Tints my skin gold; its melodies
Of music run over my face;
Smiles envy kisses in the race
To bathe beneath my eyelids. Light
Clothes me and circles with the might
Of warmer rosier suns. Thy kiss
Dwells on my bosom, and it is
A glittering mount of fire, that burns
Incense unnamed to heaven, and yearns
In smoke toward thy home. Desire
Bellies the sails of molten fire
Upon the ship of Youth with wind
Urgently panting out behind,
Impatient till the strand appear
And the blue sea have ceased to rear
Fountains of foam against the prow.
Hail! I can vision even now
That golden shore. A lake of light
Burns to the sky; above, the night
Hovers, her wings grown luminous.
(I think she dearly loveth us.)
The sand along the glittering shore
Is all of diamond; rivers pour
Unceasing floods of light along,
Whose virtue is so bitter strong
That he who bathes within them straight
Rises an angel to the gate
Of heaven and enters as a king.
Birds people it on varied wing
Of rainbow; fishes gold and fine
Dart like bright stars through fount and brine
And all the sea about our wake
Foams with the silver water-snake.
There is a palace veiled in mist.
A single magic amethyst
Built it; the incense soothly sighs;
So the light steam upon it lies.
There thou art dwelling. I am ware
The music of thine eyes and hair
Calls to the wind to chase our ship
Faster toward; the waters slip
Smoothly and swift beneath the keel.
The pulses of the vessel feel
I draw toward thee; now the sails
Hang idly, for the golden gales
Drop as the vessel grates the sand.
Come, thou true love, and hold my hand!
I tremble (for my love) to land.
I feel thy arms around me steal;
Thy breath upon my cheeks I feel;
Thy lips draw out to mine: the breath
Of ocean grows as still as death;
The breezes swoon for very bliss.
The sacrament of true love's kiss
Accomplishes: I feel a pain
Stab my heart through and sleep again,
And I am in thine arms for ever.

. . . . . .

There came a tutor, who had never
Known the response of love to love;
He wandered through the woods above
The river, and came suddenly

[1] The scene of this poem is a little spinney near the wooden bridge in Love Lane, Cambridge.—A. C.

Where he lay sleeping. Purity
And joy beyond the speech of man
Dwelt on his face, divinely wan.
"How beautiful is sleep!" he saith,
Bends over him. There is no breath,
No sound, no motion: it is death.
And gazing on the happy head
"How beautiful is Death!" he said.

A SONNET IN SPRING.

O CHAINLESS Love, the frost is in my brain,
Whose swift desires and swift intelligence
Are dull and numb to-day; because the sense
Only responds to the sharp key of pain.
O free fair Love, as welcome as the rain
On thirsty fallows, come, and let us hence
Far where the veil of Summer lies immense,
A haze of heat on ocean's purple plain.

O wingless Love, let us away together
Where the sure surf rings round the beaten strand;
Where the sky stands, a dome of flawless weather,
And the stars join in one triumphal band,
Because we broke the inexorable tether
That bound our passion with an iron hand.

DE PROFUNDIS.[1]

BLOOD, mist, and foam, then darkness. On my eyes
Sits heaviness, the poor worn body lies
Devoid of nerve and muscle; it were death
Save for the heart that throbs, the breast that sighs.

The brain reels drowsily, the mind is dulled,
Deadened and drowned by noises that are lulled
By the harsh poison of the hateful breath.
All sense and sound and seeing is annulled.

Within a body dead a deadened brain
Beats with the burden of a shameful pain,
The sullen agony that dares to think,
And think through sleep, and wake to think again.

Fools! bitter fools! Our breaths and kisses seem
Constrained in devilry, debauch, and dream:
Lives logged in the morass of meat and drink,
Loves dipped in Phlegethon,[1] the perjured stream.

Behold we would that hours and minutes pass,
Watch the sands falling in the eager glass;
To wile their weariness is pleasure's bliss;
But ah! the years! like smoke They fade, alas!

We weep them as they slip away; we gaze
Back on the likeness of the former days—
The hair we fondle and the lips we kiss—
Roses grow yellow and no purple stays.

Ah! the old years! Come back, ye vanished hours
We wasted; come, grow red, ye faded flowers!
What boots the weariness of olden time
Now, when old age, a tempest-fury, lowers?

Up to high God beyond the weary land
The days drift mournfully; His hoary hand
Gathers them. Is it so? My foolish rhyme
Dreams they are links upon an endless band.

The planets draw in endless orbits round
The sun; itself revolves in the profound
Deep wells of space; the comet's mystic track
By the strong rule of a closed curve is bound.

[1] Composed while walking home through the starry streets from an evil evening in St. Petersburg. Vv. 1–3 are the feelings, vv. *sqq.*, the reflections thus engendered.

[1] The fiery river of Hades.

Why not with time? To-morrow we may see
The circle ended—if to-morrow be—
And gaze on chaos, and a week bring back
Adam and Eve beneath the apple tree.

Or, like the comet, the wild race may end
Out into darkness, and our circle bend
Round to all glory in a sudden sweep,
And speed triumphant with the sun to friend.

Love will not leave my home. She knows my tears,
My angers and caprices; still my ears
Listen to singing voices, till I weep
Once more, less sadly, and set hounds on fears.

She will not leave me comfortless. And why?
Through the dimmed glory of my clouded eye
She catches one sharp glint of love for her:
She will not leave me ever till I die:—

Nay, though I die! Beyond the distant gloom
Heaven springs, a fountain, out of Change's womb!
Time would all men within the grave inter:—
For Time himself shall no god find a tomb?

Glory and love and work precipitate
The end of man's desire—so sayeth Fate.
Man answers: Love is stronger, work more sure,
Glory more fadeless than her shafts abate.

Though all worlds fail, the pulse of Life be still,
God fall, all darken, she hath not her will
Of deeds beyond recall, that shall endure:
For us, these three divinest glasses fill,

Fill to the brim with lustrous dew, nor fail
To leave the blossom and the nightingale,
Love's earlier kiss, and manhood's glowing prime,
These us suffice. Shall man or Fate prevail?

Lo, we are blind, and dubious fingers grope
In Despair's dungeon for the key of Hope;[1]
Lo, we are chained, and with a broken rhyme
Would file our fetters and enlarge our scope.

Yet ants may move the mountain; none is small
But he who stretches out no arm at all;
Toadstools have wrecked fair cities in a night,
One poet's song may bid a kingdom fall.

Add to thy fellow-men one ounce of aid—
The block begins to shift, the start is made:
The rest is thine; with overwhelming might
The balance changes, and the task is paid.

Join'st thou thy feeble hands in foolish prayer
To him thy brain hath moulded and set there
In thy brain's heaven? Such a god replies
As thy fears move. So men pray everywhere.

What God there be, is real. By His might
Begot the universe within the night;
If he had prayed to His own mind's weak lies
Think'st thou the heaven and earth had stood upright?

Remember Him, but smite! No workman hews
His stone aright whose nervy arms refuse
To ply the chisel, but are raised to ask
A visionary foreman he may choose

From the distortions of a sodden mind.
God did first work on earth when woman-kind
He chipped from Adam's rib—a thankless task
I wot His wisdom has long since repined.

[1] See Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, where Hope unlocks the dungeon of Giant Despair. Crowley more wisely would use the key of Work.

Christ touched the leper and the widow's son;
And thou wouldst serve the work the Perfect One
Began, by folding arms and gazing up
To heaven, as if thy work were rightly done.

I tell thee, He should say, if ye were met:
"Thou hadst a talent—ah, thou hast it yet
Wrapped in a napkin! thou shalt drain the cup
Of that damnation that may not forget

"The wasted hours!" Ah, bitter interest
Of our youth's capital—forgotten zest
In all the pleasures of o'erflowing life,
Wine tasteless, tired the brain, and cold the breast!

Ah! but if with it is one good deed wrought,
One kind word spoken, one immortal thought
Born in thee, all is paid; the weary strife
Grows victory. "Love is all and Death is nought."

Such an one wrote that word[1] as I would meet,
Lay my life's burden at his silver feet,
Have him give ear if I say "Master." Yea!
I know no heaven, no honour, half so sweet!

He passed before me on the wheel of Time,
He who knows no Time—the intense sublime
Master of all philosophy and play,
Lord of all love and music and sweet rhyme.

Follow thou him! Work ever, if thy heart
Be fervent with one hope, thy brain with art,
Thy lips with song, thine arm with strength to smite:
Achieve some act; its name shall not depart.

Christ laid Love's corner-stone, and Cæsar built
The tower of glory; Sappho's life was spilt
From fervent lips the torch of song to ignite:
Thou mayst add yet a stone—if but thou wilt.

[1] Browning, in "The Householder."

And yet the days stream by; night shakes the day
From his pale throne of purple, to allay
The tremors of the earth; day smiteth dark
With the swift poignard dipped in Helios' ray.

The days stream by; with lips and cheeks grown pale
On their indomitable breast we sail.
There is a favouring wind; our idle bark
Lingers, we raise no silk to meet the gale.

The bank slips by, we gather not its fruit,
We plant no seed, we irrigate no root
True men have planted; and the tare and thorn
Spring to rank weedy vigour; poisons shoot

Into the overspreading foliage;
So as days darken into weary age
The flowers are fewer; the weeds are stronger born
And hands are grown too feeble to assuage

Their venom; then, the unutterable sea!
Is she green-cinctured with the earlier tree
Of Life? Do blossoms blow, or weeds create
A foul rank undergrowth of misery?

From the deep water of the bitterest brine
Drowned children raise their arms; their lips combine
To force a shriek; bid them go contemplate
The cold philosophy of Zeno's[1] shrine?

Nay, stretch a hand! Although their eagle clutch
O'erturn thy skiff, yet it is overmuch
To grieve for that: life is not so divine—
I count it little grief to part with such!

[1] The Stoic. To be distinguished from the Eleatic and the Epicurean of the same name. He was born at Citium in Cyprus in 340 B.C. He preached ἀπάθεια, happiness in oneself independent of all circumstance, as the highest good.

We are wild serpents in a ring of fire;
Our necks stretch out, our haggard eyes aspire
In desperation; from the fearful line
Our coils revulse in impotence and ire.

An idle song it was the poet sang,
A quavering note—no brazen kettle's clang,
But gentle, drooping, tearful. Nay, achieve!
I can remember how the finish rang

Clear, sharp, and loud; the harp is glad to die
And give the clarion one note silver-high.
It was too sweet for music, and I weave
In vain the tattered woof of memory.

Ashes and dust!
Cold cinders dead!
Our swords are rust;
Our lives are fled
Like dew on glass.
In vain we lust;
Our hopes are sped,
Alas! alas!
From heaven we are thrust, we have no more trust.
Alas!

Gold hairs and gray!
Red lips and white!
Warm hearts, cold clay!
Bright day, dim night!
Our spirits pass
Like the hours away.
We have no light,
Alas! alas!
We have no more day, we are fain to say
Alas!

In Love's a cure
For Fortune's hate;
In Love's a lure
Shall laugh at Fate;
We have tolled Death's knell;
All streams are pure;
We are new-create;
All's well, all's well!
We have God to endure, we are very sure
All's well!

In such wise rang the challenge unto Death
With clear high eloquence and happy breath;
So did a brave sad heart grow glad again
And mock the riddle that the dead Sphinx saith.

When I am dead, remember me for this
That I bade workers work, and lovers kiss;
Laughed with the Stoic at the dream of pain,
And preached with Jesus[1] the evangel—bliss.

When I am dead, think kindly. Frail my song?
'Twas the poor utterance of an eager tongue;
I stutter in my rhyme? my heart was full
Of greater longings, more divinely wrung

By love and pity and regret and trust,
High hope from heaven that God will be just,
Spurn not the child because his mind was dull,
Still less condemn him for his father's lust.

Yet I think priests shall answer Him in vain:
Their gospel of disgrace, disease, and pain,
Shall move His heart of Love to such a wrath—
O Heart! Turn back and look on Love again!

Behold, I have seen visions, and dreamed dreams!
My verses eddy in slow wandering streams,
Veer like the wind, and know no certain path—
Yet their worst shades are tinged with dawning beams!

[1] The allusion betrays Crowley's ignorance (at this time) of the results of modern criticism of the New Testament.

I have dreamed life a circle or a line,
Called God, and Fate, and Chance, and Man, divine.
I know not all I say, but through it all
Mark the dim hint of ultimate sunshine!

Remember me for this! And when I go
To sleep the last sleep in the slumberous snow,
Let child and man and woman yet recall
One little moment that I loved you so!

Let some high pinnacle my tombstone be,
My epitaph the murmur of the sea,
The clouds of heaven be fleeces for my pall,
My unknown grave the cradle of the free.

TWO SONNETS

ON HEARING THE MUSIC OF BRAHMS AND TSCHAIKOWSKY.

To C. G. LAMB.

I.

My soul is aching with the sense of sound
Whose angels trumpet in the angry air;
Wild mænads with their fiery snakes enwound
In the black waves of my abundant hair.
Now hath my life a little respite found
In the brief pauses exquisite and rare;
In the strong chain of music I am bound,
And all myself before myself lies bare.

Drown me, oh, drown me in your fiery stream!
Wing me new visions, fierce enchanting birds!
Peace is less dear than this delirious fight!
For all the glowing fragrance of a dream
And all the sudden ecstasy of words
Deluge my spirit with a lake of light.

II.

The constant ripple of your long white hands,
The soul-tormenting violin that speaks
Truth, and enunciates all my soul seeks,
That binds my love in its desirous bands,
And clutches at my heart, until there stands
No fibre yet unshaken, while it wreaks
In one sharp song the agony of weeks,
And all my soul and body understands.

The music changes, and I know that here,
In these new melodies, a tongue of fire
Leaps at each waving of the silver spear;
And all my sorrow dons delight's attire
Because the gate of Heaven is so near,
And I have comprehended my desire.

A VALENTINE.

(FEB. 14, 1897.)

WHY did you smile when the summer was dying
If it were not that the hours
Might bring in winter, while sad winds are sighing,
Some of Love's flowers?

Now is beginning of spring, and I ask not
Roses to flame o'er the lawn—
Who should know better that peonies bask not
In the sun's dawn?

Still, through the snow, it may be there is peeping
Veiled from the kiss of the sun
One lone white violet, daintily sleeping,
Hard to be won.

So with my fairy white maiden (you hear me?)
Winter may yet pass away;
Spring may arrive, (will it find your heart near me?)
Summer may stay.

Passionate roses I seek not, whose glories
  Now are too fierce for the spring,
While the white flames of the frost flake that hoar is
  Flicker, on wing.

Only a primrose, a violet laden
  With the pale perfume of dawn;
Only a snowdrop, my delicate maiden;
  These have no thorn.

Old-fashioned love, yet you feel it a fountain
  Springing for ever, most pure;
Old-fashioned love, yet as adamant mountain
  Solid and sure.

Yes, tender thoughts on your lips will be breaking
  By-and-by into a smile;
Love, ere he springs up divine at his waking,
  Slumbers awhile.

So, my kissed snowdrop, you took its white blossom
  Tenderly into your hand,
Kissed it three times, wear it yet in your bosom—
  I understand.

ODE TO POESY.

Unto what likeness shall I liken thee,
  O moon-wrought maiden of my dewy sleep?
For thou art Queen of Thoughts, and unto me
  Sister and Bride; the worn earth's echoes leap
Because thy holy name is Poesy.
    Whereto art thou most like?
Thou art a Dian, crescent o'er the sea
  That beats sonorous on the craggy shore,
    Or shakes the frail earth-dyke.
  So calm and still and far, that never more
Thy silken song shall quiver through the land;
Only by coral isle, by lonely strand
Where no man dwells, thy voice re-wakens wild and grand.

Thou art an Aphrodite. From the foam
  Of golden grape and red thou risest up
Immaculate; thou hast an ebon comb
  Of shade and silence, and a jasper cup
Wherein are mingled all desires. Thine home
    Is in the forest shade.
Thy pale feet kiss the daffodils; they roam
  By moss-grown springs, and shake the bluebell tips.
    Each flower of the deep glade
  Has whispered kisses for thy listening lips,
While Eos blushes in the sky, to find
A fairer, queenlier maiden, and as kind
To man and maid, whose eyes are lit by the same mind.

Thou hast, as Pallas hath, a polished shield,
  Whose Gorgon-head is Hatred, and a sword
Sharper than Love's. Thy wisdom is revealed
  To them who love, but thou hast aye abhorred
The children of revenge; to them is sealed
    Thy book, so clear to me.
Thy book where seven sins their sceptres wield,
  And seven sorrows track them, and one joy
    Cancels their infamy;
  Shame and regret are fused to an alloy,
Whose drossy weight sinks down and is consumed,
While o'er the ruddy metal is relumed
A purer flame of peace, with knowledge now perfumed.

Thy ways are very bitter. Not one rose
  Twines in the crown of thorns thy spouse must wear;
There is no Lethe for the scoffs, the blows,
  Nor find they a Cyrenian[1] anywhere
  Amid the mob, to lift my cross, to share
    Its burden: not one friend
Whose love were silence, whose affection knows
  To press my hand and close my dying eyes
    There, at the endless end.
  I am alone on earth, and from the skies

[1] Simon the Cyrenian, who bore the cross of Christ.

Sometimes I seem so far—and yet, thy kiss
Re-quickens Hope ; through æther's emptiness
Thou guidest me to touch the Hand of Him who Is.

Thou hadst a torch to lume my lips to song ;
Thou hast a cooler fountain for my thirst,
Lest my young love should work thy fame a wrong ;
So the grape's veins in purple ardour burst,
And opiates in bloomless gardens throng,
And Life, a moon, wanes fast ;
But to thy garden richer buds belong
And hardier flowers, and Love, a deathless sun,
Flames eager to the last,
And young desires in fleeter revels run,
And Life revives, and all the flowers rejoice,
Bird and light butterfly have made their choice,
Creation hymns its God with an united voice.

There is a storm without. The hoary trees
Stagger ; the foam is angry on the sea :
I know the secret mountains are at ease,
And in the deepest ice-embroidery
Where great men's spirits linger there is peace.
Heed not the unquiet wind !
Dawn's finger shall be raised, its wrath shall cease,
The sun shall rouse us whom the tempest lulled,
And thy poor poet's mind
For respite by its own deep anguish dulled
Shall wake again to watch the cruel day
Drift slowly on its chill and wasted way
With but thy smile to inspire some sad melodious lay.

From whose rude caverns sweep these gusty wings
That shake the steeples as they mock at God ?
Who reared the stallion wind ? Whose foaling flings
The billows starward ? Whose the steeds fire-shod
That sweep throughout the world ? What spearman sings
The fearful chant of war
That fires, and spurs, and maddens all the kings
That rule o'er earth, and air, and ocean ?
Whose hand excites the star
To shatter into fiery flakes ? No man,
No petty god, but One who governs all,
Slips the sun's leash, perceives the sparrow's fall,
Too high for man to fear, too near for man to call.

SONNETS.[1]

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE PHRASE : "I AM NOT A GENTLEMAN AND I HAVE NO FRIENDS."

I.

SELF-DAMNED, the leprous moisture of thy veins
Sickens the sunshine, and thine haggard eyes,
Bleared with their own corrupting infamies,
Glare through the charnel-house of earthly pains,
Horrible as already in hell. There reigns
The terror of the knowledge of the lies
That mock thee ; thy death's double destinies
Clutch at the throat that sobs, and chokes, and strains.

Self-damned on earth, live out thy tortured days,
That men may look upon thy face, and see
How vile a thing of woman born may be.
Then, we are done with thee ; go, go thy ways

[1] The virulence of these sonnets is excusable when it is known that their aim was to destroy the influence in Cambridge of a man who headed in that University a movement parallel to that which at Oxford was associated with the name of Oscar Wilde. They had their effect.

To other hells, thou damned of God hereafter,
'Mid men's contempt and hate and pitiless laughter.

II.

Lust, impotence, and knowledge of thy soul,
And that foreknowledge, fill the fiery lake
Of lava where thy lazar corpse shall break
The burning surface to seek out a goal
More horrible, unspeakable. The scroll
Opens, and "coward, liar, monster" shake
Those other names of "goat" and "swine" and "snake"
Wherewith Hell's worms caress thee and control.

Nay, but alone, intolerably alone,
Alone, as here, thy carrion soul shall swelter,
Yearning in vain for sleep, or death, or shelter;
No release possible, no respite known!
Self-damned, without a friend, thy eternal place
Sweats through the painting of thy harlot's face.

At the hour of the eclipse,
Wednesday, Dec. 28.

BESIDE THE RIVER.

RAIN, rain in May. The river sadly flows,
A sullen silver crossed with sable bars,
Damp, gloomy, shivering, while reluctant stars,
Between swart masses of thick clouds that close,
Drive with drooped plumes their wingéd cars
Toward sleep, the scythe of woes.

Woes, woes in Spring. Ere summer deepeneth
The pink of roses to a purpler tint;
Ere ripening corn shafts back the sudden glint
Of sunshine that brings healing with the breath
Of western winds that sigh, they hint
Of sleep, twin soul with death.

Death, death ere dawn. The night is over dark;
Trees are grown terrible; the shadows wan
Make shudder all the tense desires of man;
No gleam of moonlight bears the golden mark
Of sunny lips, nor shines upon
Our sleep—Love's birchen bark.

Love, love to-night. To-night is all we know,
Is all our care; lips joined to lips we lie,
Tender hands touching, hearts in tune to die,
With willing kiss reluctant to let go;
So sweet love's last enduring sigh
For sleep, so sure, so slow.

Sleep, sleep to-night. Our arms are intertwined;
Breath desires breath and hand imprisons hand;
Breezes cool faces, rosy with the brand
Of long sweet kisses; sun shall dawn and find
Two lovers who have passed the land
Of sleep—and found Death kind.

MAN'S HOPE.

ERE fades the last red glimmer of the sun;
Ere day is night, when on the glittering bar
The waves are foaming rubies, and afar
Streaks of red water, gold on the horizon,
On summer ripples rhythmically run;
Ere dusk is weaned, there sails on silver car
From the expectant East, the evening Star;
And all the threads of sorrow are unspun.

So He who ordered this shall still work thus,
And ere life's lamp shall flicker into death,
And Time lose all his empire over us,
A gleam of Hope, of Knowledge, shall arise,
A star to silver o'er Death's glooming skies,
And gladden the last labouring torch of breath.

SONNET

FOR G. F. KELLY'S DRAWING OF AN HERMAPHRODITE.

O BODY pale and beautiful with sin!
O breasts with venom swollen by the snakes
Of passion, whose cold slaver slimes and slakes
The soul-consuming fevers that within
Thy heart the fires of hell on earth begin!
O heart whose yearning after truth forsakes
The law of love! O heart whose ocean breaks
In sterile foam against some golden skin!

O thou whose body is one perfect prayer,
One long regret, one agony of shame,
Lost in the fragrance, speeding, subtle and rare,
Up to the sky, an avenue of flame!
My soul, thy body, in the same sin curled,
With vivid lust annihilate the world.

A WOODLAND IDYLL.

FRESH breath from the woodland blows sweet
O'er the flowery path we are roaming,
On the dimples of light lover's feet
In the mystical charm of the gloaming,
Yvonne!
On the buds that blush bright as we meet
In the mystical charm of the gloaming!

A tear for the stars of the night,
And a smile for the avenue shady,
A kiss for the eyelashes bright,
And a blush for the cheek of my lady,
Yvonne!
A laugh for the moon and her spite,
And a blush for the cheek of my lady!

We'll tread where the daffodils shake
And the primrose smiles up through her weeping,
Where the daisies dip down to the lake,
Where the wonderful thrushes are sleeping,
Yvonne!
By the marge of the maze of the brake
Where the wonderful thrushes are sleeping.

Where the brook trickles clear to the eye
Below dew-spangled frondlets of willow
We will wander to find by-and-by
The sward of our delicate pillow,
Yvonne!
Where the mosses so lusciously lie
For the sward of our delicate pillow.

For a bride fairer far than the flower
Is the couch spread by fingers of even,
The blossom of apples for bower,
Its roof-tree the sapphires of heaven,
Yvonne!
For the bride of the mystical hour,
Its roof-tree the sapphires of heaven!

With songsters the heavy sweet air
Is trembling and sighing and sobbing,
With meteors magically fair
The sky is deliciously throbbing,
Yvonne!
With splendour and subtlety rare
The sky is deliciously throbbing.

Sweet bride to fond arms with a sigh,
Strong arms to fond bosom, are curling;
The winds breathe more musically by;
The moon has a rosier pearling,
Yvonne!
The stars grow more dim in the sky,
The moon has a rosier pearling.

So, birds, are you shy to awake
  Your voices to laughter-tuned numbers?
So, sun, do you tremble to shake
  The dews of the night from our slumbers?
                Yvonne!
So, breeze, too reluctant to take
  The dews of the night from our slumbers?

Light breaks, and the breezes caress
  Cool limbs and soft eyes and fair faces;
The nightingales carol to bless
  The dawn of our maiden embraces,
                Yvonne!
The woods wear a lovelier dress
  In the dawn of our maiden embraces!

PERDURABO.[1]

EXILE from humankind! The snow's fresh flakes
Are warmer than men's hearts. My mind is wrought
Into dark shapes of solitary thought
That loves and sympathises, but awakes
No answering love or pity. What a pang
Hath this strange solitude to aggravate
The self-abasement and the blows of Fate!
No snake of hell hath so severe a fang!

I am not lower than all men—I feel
Too keenly. Yet my place is not above,
Though I have this—unalterable Love
In every fibre. I am crucified
Apart on a lone burning crag of steel,
Tortured, cast out; and yet—I shall abide.

ON GARRET HOSTEL BRIDGE.[2]

HERE in the evening curl white mists and wreathe in their vapour
  All the gray spires of stone, all the immobile towers;
Here in the twilight gloom dim trees and sleepier rivers,
  Here where the bridge is thrown over the amber stream.
Chill is the ray that steals from the moon to the stream that whispers
  Secret tales of its source, songs of its fountain-head.
Here do I stand in the dusk; like spectres mournfully moving
  Wisps of the cloud-wreaths form, dissipate into the mist,
Wrap me in shrouds of gray, chill me and make me shiver,
  Not with the Night alone, not with the sound of her wing,
Yet with a sense of something vague and unearthly stalking
  (Step after step as I move) me, to annul me, quell
Hope and desire and life, bid light die under my eyelids,
  Bid the strong heart despair, quench the desire of Heaven.
So I shudder a little; and my heart goes out to the mountain,
  Rock upon rock for a crown, snow like an ermine robe;
Thunder and lightning free fashioned for speech and seeing,
  Pinnacles royal and steep, queen of the arduous breast!
Ye on whose icy bosom, passionate, at the sunrise,
  Ye in whose wind-swept hollows, lulled in the moonrise clear,
Often and oft I struggled, a child with an angry mother,
  Often and oft I slept, maid in a lover's arms.
Back to ye, back, wild towers, from this flat and desolate fenland,
  Back to ye yet will I flee, swallow on wing to the south;
Move in your purple cloud-banks and leap your far-swelling torrents,
  Bathe in the pools below, laugh with the winds above,

[1] "I shall endure to the end." This was the mystic title taken by Crowley at his first initiation.

[2] A bridge on the "Backs" at Cambridge.

Battle and strive and climb in the teeth of the glad wild weather,
Flash on the slopes of ice, dance on the spires of rock,
Run like a glad young panther over the stony high-lands,
Shout with the joy of living, race to the rugged cairn,
Feel the breath of your freedom burn in my veins, and Freedom!
Freedom! echoes adown cliff and precipitous ghyll.
Down by the cold gray lake the sun descends from his hunting,
Shadow and silence steals over the frozen fells.
Oh, to be there, my heart! And the vesper bells awaken;
Colleges call their children; Lakeland fades from the sight.
Only the sad slow Cam like a sire with age grown heavy
Wearily moves to the sea, to quicken to life at last.
Blithelier I depart, to a sea of sunnier kindness;
Hours of waiting are past; I re-quicken to love.

ASTRAY IN HER PATHS.[1]

COPENHAGEN, *January*, '97.

I FEEL thee shudder, clinging to my arm,
Before the battlements of the salt sea,
Black billows tipped with phosphorescent light,
Towering from where we stand to yonder shore
That is no earthly shore, but guards the coast
Of that which is from that which is to be;
Wherefore it kindles no evasive fire
Nor blazes through the night, but lies forgotten
Gray in the twilight; never a star is out
To light the broad horizon; only here
Behind us cluster lamps, and busy sounds
Of men proclaim a city; but to us
They are not here; for we, because we love,
Are not of earth, but, as the immortals, stand
With eyes immutable; our souls are fed
On a strange new nepenthe from the cup
Of the vast firmament. Nor do we dream,
Nor think we aught of the transient world,
But are absorbed in our own deity:
And our clear eyes reflect—(who dares to gaze
Shall see and die!)—the changeless empyrèan
Eternity, the concentrated void
Of space, for being the centre of all things,
Time is to us the Now, and Space the Here;
From us all Matter radiates, is a part
Of our own thoughts and souls; because we love.
Thou shudderest, clinging to me; though the night
Jewels her empire with the frosty crown
Of thousand-twinkling stars, whose hoary crests
Burn where light touches them, with diamond points
Of infinite far fire, save where the sea
Is ebony with sleep, and though the wind
Pierces the marrow, since it is the word
Of the Almighty, and cuts through the air
That may not stay its fury, with a cold
Nipping and chill, it is not in the wind;
Nor though the thunder broke, or flashed the fire
From all the circle of eternity,
Were that the reason; for thou shudderest
To hear the Voice of Love; it is no voice
That men may hear, but an intensest rich
Silence, that silence when man waits to hear
Some faint vibration in the smitten air,
And, if he hear not, die; but we who love
Are beyond death, and therefore may commune
In that still tongue; it is the only speech
And song of stars and sun; nor is it marred
By one dissentient tremor of the air
That girds the earth, but in lone æther spreads

[1] This satirical title is from Proverbs vii. 25. A poet's nature is to refine to purest gold even the sordidest of dross.

Its song. But now I turn to thee, whose eyes
Blaze on me with such look as flesh and blood
May never see and live; for so it burns
Into the innest being of the spirit
And stains its vital essence with a brand
Of fire that shall not change; and shuddering I
Gaze back, spirit to spirit, with the like
Insatiable desire, that never quenched,
Nor lessened by sublime satiety,
But rather crescent, hotter with the flame
Of its own burning, that consumes it not,
Because it is the pure white flame of God.
I shudder, holding thee to me; thy gaze
Is still on me; a thousand years have passed,
And yet a thousand thousand; years they are
As men count years, and yet we stand and gaze
With touching hands and lips immutable
As mortals stand a moment; . . .
The universe is One: One Soul, One Spirit,
One Flame, One infinite God, One infinite Love.

SONNET TO CLYTIE.

CLYTIE, beyond all praise, thou goodliest
Of queens, thou royal woman, crowned with tears,
That could not move the dull stars from their spheres
To kiss thee. For the sun would fainer rest
In the gold chambers of the glowing west
Than answer thy love, thine, whose soul endears
All souls but his, whose slow desire fears
The fierce embraces of thine olive breast.

O Queen, sun-lover, we are wed with thee
In changeless love, in passion for a fire
Whose lips bind all men in their bitter spell;
A love whose first caress, hard won, would be
The final dissolution of desire,
A flame to shrivel us with fire of hell.

A VALENTINE, '98.[1]

NOW on the land the woods are green;
A wild bird's note
Shrills till the air trembles between
His beak and throat.

And up through blue and gold and black
The shivering sound
Rushes; no echo murmurs back
From sky or ground.

In the loud agony of song
The moon is still;
The wind drops down the shore along;
Night hath her will.

The bird becomes a dancing flame
In leaf and bower.
The forest trembles; loves reclaim
Their own still hour.

The dawn is here, and on the sands
Where sun first flames,
I gather lilies from all lands
Of sad sweet names.

The Lesbian lily is of white
Stained through with blood,
Swayed with the stream, a wayward light
Upon the flood.

The Spartan lily is of blue,
With green leaves fresh;
Apollo glints his crimson through
The azure mesh.

The English lily is of white,
All white and clean;
There plays a tender flame of light
Her flowers between.

The English lily is a bloom
Too cold and sweet;
One might say—in the twilight gloom
A maiden's feet.

[1] Nothing more; be it well remembered!—A. C.

Silent and slim and delicate
The flower shall spring,
Till there be born immaculate
A fair new thing.

Tall as the mother-lily, still
By faint winds swayed;
Tender and pure, without a will—
An English maid.

No tree of poison, at whose feet
All men lie dead;
No well of death, whose waters sweet
Are tinged with red.

No hideous impassioned queen
For whom love dies;
No warm imperious Messaline
That slew with sighs.

Fiercer desires may cast away
All things most good;
A people may forget to-day
Their motherhood.

She will remain, unshaken yet
By storm and sun;
She will remain, when years forget
That fierier one.

A race of clean strong men shall spring
From her pure life.
Men shall be happy; bards shall sing
The English wife.

And thou, forget thou that my mouth
Has ever clung
To flame of hell; that of the south
The songs I sung.

Forget that I have trampled flowers,
And worn the crown
Of thorns of roses in the hours
So long dropped drown.

Forget, O white-faced maid, that I
Have dallied long
In classic bowers and mystery
Of classic song.

Eros and Aphrodite now
I can forget,
Placing upon thy maiden brow
Love's coronet.

Wake from the innocent dear sleep
Of childhood's life:
An English maiden must not weep
To be a wife.

So shall our love bridge space, and bring
The tender breath
Of sun and moon and stars that sing
To gladden Death.

I see your cheek grow pale and cold,
Then flush above.
Kiss me; I know that I behold
The birth of Love.

PENELOPE.

Ulysses 'scaped the sorceries of that queen
That turned to swine his goodly company,
And came with sails broad-burgeoning and clean
Over the ripples of his native sea.
Yet for the shores his eyes had lately seen,
He kept a half-regretful memory;
And thought, when all the flower-strewn ways were green,
"Better love Circe than Penelope!"

Yes. A good woman's love will forge a chain
To break the spirit of the bravest Greek;
While with an harlot one may leap again
Free as the waters of the western main,
And turn with no heart-pang the vessel's beak
Out to the oceans that all seamen seek.

A SONNET OF BLASPHEMY.

EXALTED over earth, from hell arisen,
There sits a woman, ruddy with the flame
Of men's blood spilt, and her uncleanly shame,
And the thrice-venomous vomit of her prison.

She sits as one long dead: infernal calm,
Chill hatred, wrap her in their poisonous cold.
She careth not, but doth disdainly hold
Three scourges for man's soul, that know no balm.

They know not any cure. The first is Life,
A well of poison. Sowing dust and dung
Over men's hearts, the second scourge, above
All shameful deeds, is Lying, from whose tongue
Drops Envy, wed with Hatred, to sow Strife.

These twain are bitter; but the last is Love.

THE RAPE OF DEATH.

ARGUMENT.—Sir Godfrey, a knight of Normandy, leapeth into a light vessel of Jarl Hungard, while they sit at feast, and, slaying the crew, seeketh the high seas with the Lady Thurla. He slayeth the swiftest pursuers, and escapeth in a great tempest; which on the second day abating, he maketh the inside of a bar, and must await the breeze. Jarl Hungard coming with his men and two dragons, is wrecked, but a knave shooting, slayeth the Lady Thurla. Sir Godfrey forthwith sinketh the other dragon, and saileth forth into the ocean, and is not heard of ever after.[1]

PALE vapours lie like phantoms on the sea,
The tide swells slumberous beneath our keel,
The pulses of our canvas fail; and we
No faint sweet summons from the south wind feel:
The crimson waters of the west are pale,
And bloodless arrows like a stream of steel

Flash from the moon, that rises where the gale
Only a day past raged; the clouds are lost
In pleasant rains that ripple on the sail.

The sudden fascination of the frost
Touches the heavy canvas; now there form
Reluctant crystals, and the vessel, tossed

The wild night through in the devouring storm,
Glistens with dew made sharp and bright with cold.
For no north wind may drive us to the warm

Long-looked-for lands where day, with plumes of gold,
Flaps like a lazy eagle in the air;
Where night, a bird of prey divinely bold,

Wings through the sky, intangible but fair,
And pale with subtle passion; and no wind
Turns our prow southward, till the canvas bear

No more up into it, but still behind
Follow like flame, and lead our love along
Into the valleys of the ocean, blind,

But seeing all the world awake with song
Of many lyres and lutes and reeds of straw,
And all the rivers musical that throng

In bright assemblage of unchanging law,
Like many flute-players; and seeing this,
(That all the mountains looked upon and saw)

The sweetness of the savour of a kiss,
And all its perfume wafted to the sky.
Nay, but no wind will drive our fortalice

[1] The argument is not founded on tradition.

(So strong against the sun) to where they ply
Those pallid wings, or turn our vessel's beak
With utmost fury to the North, to dye

Our prows with seaweed, such as wise men seek
For cleansing of their altars with slow blood
Wrenched from the long dark leaves, with fingers weak

With age and toil; to stem the restless flood
That boils between the islands; to attain
The ultimate ice, where some calm hero stood

And looked one last time for a sail in vain,
And looking upward not in vain, lay down
And died, to pass where cold and any pain

Are not. So still the night is, like the crown
Most white of the high God that glittereth!
The stars surround the moon, and Nereids drown

Their rippled tresses in her golden breath.
Let us keep watch, my true love, caught at last
Between my hands, and not remember death.

Only bethink us of the daylight past,
The long chase oversea, the storm, the speed
Whereby we ran before the leaping blast,

And left the swift pursuers at our need
With one wrecked dragon and one shattered; yea!
And on their swiftest many warriors bleed,

Having beheld, above the gray seaway
Between them and the sun, my sword arise,
Like the first dagger flashing for the day,

My sword, that darts among them serpent-wise—
And all their warriors fell back a space,
And all the air rang out with sudden cries,

Seeing the death and fury of my face,
And feeling the long sword sweep out and kill,
Till there was won the slippery path, the place

Whence I might sever the white cords, and fill
The ship with tangled wreckage of the sail.
All this I did, and bore the blade of ill

Back, dripping blood, to thee most firm and pale
Who held our rudder, all alone, and stood
Fierce and triumphant in the rising gale,

Bent to my sword, and kissed the stinging blood,
While the good ship leapt free upon the deep,
And felt the feet of the resistless flood

Run, and the fervour of the billows sweep
Under our keel—and we were clean away,
Laughing to see the foamheads sough and sleep,

As we kept pace with ocean all the day
And one long night of toil; until the sun
Lit on these cliffs his morning beams that play

With our sails rent and rifted white, and run
Like summer lightning all about the deck,
And laugh upon the work my sword had done

When the feast turned to death for us; we reck
Nothing to-night of all that past despair:
Only to-night I watch your curving neck,

And play with all the kisses of your hair,
And feel your weight, as if you were to be
Always and always—O my queen, how rare

Your lips' perfume; like lilies on the sea
  Your white breasts glimmer; let us wait awhile.
There is no breeze to drive us down to lee

On the cold rocks of yonder icy isle,
  And your sire's passion must forget the chase
As I forget, the moment that you smile,

And sea and sky are brighter for your face—
  I hear the sound of many oars; perchance
Your father's, but within this iron place

The heavy dragons will not dare advance
  Where our light vessel barely skimmed the rock:
Their anger may grow cool, the while they dance

Like fools before the bar we crossed, and mock
  Pursuit. Behold! one dragon strikes the reef,
Breaks in the midst before the dreadful shock,

Shattered and stricken by the rousing sheaf
  Of wild intolerable foam that breaks
Full on their stem: she sinks. One fierce foul thief

Springs desperate upon her poop; she shakes;
  He strings a sudden arrow. Ocean sweeps
Over his curséd craft. The arrow takes

The straight swift road—Ah God!—to her who sleeps,
  To her bright bosom as at peace she lies.
She is dead quickly, and the ocean keeps

The secret of my sorrow from her eyes.
  I will not weep; I cannot weep; I turn
And watch the sail fill with the wind that sighs

A little for pure pity—I discern
  The cowards shake with fear; the vessel springs
Light to the breezes, as the golden erne

That seeks a prey on its impetuous wings:
  The reef is past; I crash upon the foe,
And all the fury of my weapon rings

On armour temperless; the waters flow
  Through the dark rent within the side; I leap
Back to my dead love; back, desiring so

That they had killed me, for I cannot weep.
  They killed her, and a mist of blood consumes
My sight; they killed my lover in her sleep.

The breeze has freshened, and the water fumes,
  The vessel races on beneath the sky;
Beneath her bows the eager billow spumes.

I wonder whither, and I wonder why.
  No ray of light this sea of blood illumes.
I wonder whether God will let me die.

IN THE WOODS WITH SHELLEY.

Sing, happy nightingale, sing;
  Past is the season of weeping;
Birds in the wood are on wing,
  Lambs in the meadow are leaping.
Can there be any delight still in the buttercups sleeping?

Dawn, paler daffodil, dawn;
  Smile, for the winter is over;
Sunlight makes golden the lawn,
  Spring comes and kisses the clover;
All the wild woodlands await poet and songster and lover.

Linger, dew, linger and gem
All the fresh flowers in the garland;
Blossom, leaf, bud and green stem
Flash with your light to some far land,
Where men shall wonder if you be not a newly-born starland.

Ah! the sweet scents of the woods!
Ah! the sweet sounds of the heaven!
Sights of impetuous floods,
Foam like the daisy at even,
Folding o'er passionate gold petals that sunrise had riven!

See, like my life is the stream
Now its desire is grown quiet;
Life was a passionate dream
Once, when light fancy ran riot,
Now, ere youth fades, flows in peace past woody bank and green eyot.

Highest, white heather and rock,
Mountain and pine, with young laughter,
Breezes that murmur and mock
Duller delights to come after,
Wild as a swallow that dives whither the sea wind would waft her.

Lower, an ocean of flowers,
Trees that are warmer and leafier,
Starrier, sunnier hours
Spurning the stain of all grief here,
Bringing a quiet delight to us, beyond our belief, here.

Lastly, the uttermost sea,
Starred with the flakes of spray sunlit,
Blue as its caverns that be
Crystal, resplendent, yet unlit;
So like a mother receives the kiss of the dainty-lip runlet.

Here the green moss is my seat,
Beech is a canopy o'er me,
Calm and content the retreat;
Man, my worst foe, cannot bore me;
Life is a closed book behind—Shelley an open before me.

Shelley's own birds are above
Close to me (why should they fear me?)
May I believe it—that love
Brings his bright spirit so near me
That, should I whisper one word—Shelley's swift spirit would hear me.

Heaven is not very far;
Soul unto soul may be calling
When a swift meteor star
Through the quick vista is falling.
Loose but your soul—shall its wings find the white way so appalling?

Heaven, as I understand,
Nearer than some folk would make it;
God—should you stretch out a hand,
Who can be quicker to take it?
Then you have pacted an oath—judge you if He will forsake it!

I have had hope in the spring—
Trust that the God who has given
Flowers, and the thrushes that sing
Dawnwards all night, and at even
Year after year, will be true now we are speaking of heaven.

Breezes caress me and creep
Over the world to admire it;
Sweet air shall sigh me to sleep,
Softly my lips shall respire it,
Lying half-closed with a kiss ready for who shall desire it.

A VISION UPON USHBA.[1]

HERE in the wild Caucasian night,
The sleepless years
Seem to pass by in garments white,
Made white with tears,
A pageant of intolerable light
Across the sombre spheres,
And, mingling with the tumult of the morn,
Methought a single rose of blood was born.

[1] A mountain in the Caucasus. Crowley never visited this district.

Far on the iron peaks a voice
  Crystal and cold,
Sharper than sounds the aurochs' [1] choice
  O'er wood and wold,
A summons as of angels that rejoice,
  A pæan glad and bold,
A mighty shout of infinite acclaim
Shrieks through the sky some dread forgotten
    Name.

Trembles the demon on his perch
  Of crags ice-bound;
Tremble near forest and far church
  At that quick sound;
The silver arrows that bedeck the birch
  Shiver along the ground:
Priest, fiend, and harpy answer to the call,
And hasten to their ghastly festival.

There in the vale below my feet
  I see the crew
Gather, blaspheming God, and greet
  Their shame anew.
A feast is spread of some unholy meat;
  Ofttimes there murmurs through
Their horrid ranks a cry of pain, as God
Bids them keep memory of His iron rod.

The vale is black with priests. They fight,
  Wild beasts, for food,
The orphan's gold, the widow's right,
  The virgin's snood.
All in their maws are crammed within the
    night
  That hides their chosen wood,
Where through the blackness sounds the
    sickening noise
Of cannibals that gloat on monstrous joys.

The valley steams with slaughter. Here
  Shall the pure snow
The bloody reek of murder rear
  To crush the foe?
In Titan fury shall the rocks spring clear,
  And smite the fiends below?
Shall poisonous wind and avalanche combine
To wreck swift justice, human and divine?

[1] The extinct Wild Bull of Europe.

Priests thrive on poison. Carrion
  Their eager teeth
Tear, till the sacramental sun
  Its sword unsheath,
And bid their horrid carnival be done,
  And smite beneath
In their cold gasping valleys, and bid light
Break the battalions of the angry night.

That sword that smote from Heaven was so
    keen,
  Its silver blade
No angel's sight, no fairy's eye hath seen,
  No tender maid
With subtle insight may behold its sheen
  With light inlaid;
But God, who forged it, breathed upon its
    point,
And His pure unction did the hilt anoint.

Within the poet's hand he laid the sword:
  With reverent ear
The poet listened to His word
  Cleansed through of fear.
The brightness of the glory of the Lord
  Grew adamant, a spear!
And when he took the falchion in his hand
Lo! kings and princes bowed to his command.

Then shall the flag of England flaunt
  In peaceful might,
The sceptred isle of dying Gaunt [1]
  Shall rule by right.
The sons of England shall bid Hell avaunt
  And priest and harlot smite.
Then all the forces of the earth shall be
Untamable, a shield of Liberty.

Freedom shall burgeon like a rose,
  While in the sky
A new white sun with ardour glows
  On liberty.
Men shall sing merrily at work as those
  Who fear no more to die—
Ay! and who fear no more at last to live
Since man can love and worship and forgive.

[1] See *Richard II.*, ii. 1.

Then on these heights of Caucasus
A fire shall dwell,
Pure as the dawn, and odorous
Of bud and bell;
A flower of fire, a flame from Heaven to us
All triumph to foretell,
A glory of unspeakable delight,
A flower like lightning, adamant and white.

There needs no more or sun or sea
Or any light;
On golden wheels Eternity
Revolves in Night.
The island peoples are too proud and free
And full of might
To care for time or space, but glorious wend
A royal path of flowers to the end.

I pray thee, God, to weapon me
With this keen fire,
That I may set this people free
As my desire;
That the white lilies of our liberty
Grow on Life's crags still higher,
Till on the loftiest peaks their blossom flower,
The rampart of a people and their power.

ELEGY, *August 27th*, 1898.[1]

So have the days departed, as the leaves
Smitten by wrath of Autumn blast;
So the year, fallen from delight, still grieves
Over the happy past.

The year of barren summer, when the wind
Blew from the south unlooked-for snow,
The year when Collon,[2] desolate and blind,
Gloomed on the vale below,

When logs of pinewood lit the little room,
And friendship ventured in to sit
Beside their blaze, to listen in the gloom
To wisdom and to wit;

When we discussed our hopes, and told the stories
Of happy climbing days gone by;
The stubborn battle with the cliffs, the glories
Of the blue Alpine sky.

The keen delight of paths untrodden yet,
And new steep ice and rocky ways
Too dangerous and splendid to forget.
Those dear strong happy days!

And now what happier fate to your brave souls
Than so to strive and fighting fall?
Think you that He who sees you, and controls,
Did not devise it all?

The mountains that you loved have taken you,
And we who love you will not weep.
Shall we begrudge? Your last look saw sky blue;
You will be glad to sleep.

Your pure names (thine renowned, yours fresh with youth
And full of promise) shall be kept
Still in our hearts for monuments of truth,
As if you had not slept.

EPILOGUE.

HORACE, in the fruitful Sabine country,
Where the wheat and vine are most abundant,
Where the olive ripens in the sunshine,
Where the streams are voiced with Dian's whispers,
Lived in quiet, with a woman's passion
To inspire his lute and bring contentment
In the gray still days of early winter.
I, remote from cities, like the poet,

[1] When Dr. John Hopkinson and three of his children perished on the Petite Dent de Veisivi.

[2] A mountain at the head of the Val d'Hérens.

Tune my lesser lyre with other fingers,
Yet am not a whit the less belovéd.
Unto me the stars are never silent,
Nor do sea and storm deny their music,
Nor do flower and breeze refuse their kisses:
So my soul is flooded with their magic;
So my love completes the joy of living.
I am like the earth, to whom there gather
Rays of gold to bid the gray horizon
Melt, recede, and brighten into azure.
Let me sing, O holy one, Apollo!
Sing as Horace sang, and flood the ocean
With a living ecstasy of music
Till the whole creation echo, echo,
Echo till the tune dissolve the heavens?
Still song lingers; lamely from the lute-string
Steals a breath of melody; the forest
Treasures in its glades the sighs I utter.
Yet may I be happy, storing honey
Lover's lips hold, gathering the sunlight
Eyes and hair have kept for me, delighting
In the bells far-off, in yonder thrushes,
In the tawny songster of the forest,
In the stream's song, all the words of passion,
Echoes of the deeper words unspoken
In thy breast and mine, O heart of silence!
Will they pierce one day to other nations
Clear and strong and triumphing?
It may be.
Then we shall not envy you, my Horace!

JEZEBEL;

AND OTHER TRAGIC POEMS.

By COUNT VLADIMIR SVAREFF.*

Edited, with an Introduction and Epilogue, by ALEISTER CROWLEY.

1899.

DÉDICACE.

LONDRES, *Juin* 1898.

PEINTRE, que ton amour inspire
Des chansons toujours plus sublimes,
Malgré qu'aujourd'hui ma mauvaise lyre
Chante l'abîme.

Nos espoirs, nos desirs nous rendent
Des amis chers aux dieux ;
Demain, ma voix, plus haute et plus profonde,
Chante les cieux.

À GERALD.[1]

PERDITA.

LIKE leaves that fall before the sullen wind
At summer's parting kiss and autumn's call,
Lost thoughts fly half-forgotten from my mind,
Like leaves that fall.

They shall not come again ; the wintry pall
Of consciousness clouds o'er them ; they shall find
No rest, no hope, no tear, no funeral.

Into the night, despairing, bleeding, blind,
They pass, nor know their former place at all,
Lost to my soul, to God, to all mankind,
Like leaves that fall.

[1] Gerald Kelly, the eminent painter.

JEZEBEL.

PART I.

A LION'S mane, a leopard's skin
Across my dusty shoulders thrown;
A swart fierce face, with eyes where sin
Lurks like a serpent by a stone.
A man driven forth by lust to seek
Rest from himself on Carmel's peak.

A prophet[1] with wild hair behind,
Streaming in fiery clusters ! Yea,
Tangled with vehemence of the wind,
And knotted with the tears that slay ;
And all my face parched up and dried,
And all my body crucified.

Ofttimes the Spirit of the Lord
Descends and floods me with his breath ;
My words are fashioned as a sword,
My voice is like the voice of death.
The thunder of the Spirit's wings
Brings terror to the hearts of kings.

Anon, and I am driven out
In desert places by desire ;
My mouth is salt and dry ; I doubt
If hell hath such another fire ;
If God's damnation can devise
A lust to match these agonies.

[1] Not Elijah, as the sequel shows. Foolish contemporary reviews, however, made this silly blunder.

* Under this name the poet lay perdu in the heart of London, prosecuting, under circumstances of romantic and savage interest, his first occult studies.

The desert wind my body burns,
  The voice of flesh consumes my soul;
My body towards the city turns,
  My spirit seeks its fierier goal;
In wells of heaven to quench my thirst,
And take God's hand among the first.

I conquered self; I grew at last
  A prophet chosen of the Lord;
I blew the trumpet's iron blast
  That called on Zimri Omri's sword;
My voice inflamed the fiery steel
That was to smite upon Jezreel.

And now, I haste from yonder sands,
  With fervour filled, to say God's doom
To Ahab of the bloody hands,
  The spoiler of his father's tomb,
The slayer of the vineyard king.
God's judgment, and his fate, I bring.

The city gleams afar; I see
  Samaria's white walls on high;
The mountains echo back to me
  The vengeful murmur of the sky;
All heaven and earth on me attend
To prophesy the tyrant's end.

The gates are closed because of night
  Whose heavy breath infects the air;
The dog-star gleams, a devilish light:
  I thought I saw behind me glare
The eyes of fiends. I thought I heard
An evil laugh, a mocking word.

The gates swing open at the Name,
  Without a warder roused from sleep;
I pass, with face of burning flame,
  That is not quenched, although I weep.
(For even my tears are tears of fire,
For loathing, madness, and desire.)

Ah God! the traps for fervent feet!
  The morrow beaconed, and I came
By where the golden groves of wheat
  In summer glories fiercely flame;
To those white courts, by princes trod,
Where Ahab sat, and mocked at God.

Where Ahab sat:—but lo! I saw
  No king, no tyrant to be curst;
But she, who filled me with blind awe,
  She, for whose blood my thin veins thirst;
The blossom of a painted mouth
And bare breasts tinctured with the south.

For lo! the harlot Jezebel!
  Her hands dropped perfume, and her tongue
(A flame from the dark heart of hell,
  The ivory-barred mouth, that stung
With unimaginable pangs)
Shot out at me, and Hell fixed fangs.

Her purple robes, her royal crown,
  The jewelled girdle of her waist,
Her feet with murder splashed, and brown
  With the sharp lips that fawn and taste,
The crimson snakes that minister
To those unwearying lusts of her.

And all her woman's scent did drift
  A steam of poison through the air;
The haze of sunshine seems to lift
  And toil in tangles of black hair,
The hair that waves, and winds, and bites,
And glistens with unholy lights.

For lo! she saw me, and beheld
  My trembling lips curled back to curse,
Laughed with strong scorn, whose music knelled
  The empire of God's universe.
And on my haggard face upturned
She spat! Ah God! how my cheek burned!

Then, as a man betrayed, and doomed
  Already, I arose and went,
And wrestled with myself, consumed
  With passion for that sacrament
Of shame. From that day unto this
My cheek desires that hideous kiss.

Her hate, her scorn, her cruel blows,
  Fill my whole life, consume my breath;
Her red-fanged hatred in me glows,
  I lust for her, and hell, and death.
I see that ghastly look, and yearn
Toward the brands of her that burn.

Sleep shuns me; dreams divide the night,
  (My parched throat thirsty for her veins)
That she and I with deep delight
  Suck from death's womb infernal pains,
Whose fire consumes, destroys, devours
Through night's insatiable hours.

And altogether filled with love,
  And altogether filled with sin,
The little sparks and noises move
  About the softness of her skin.
Her pleasures and her passions purr
For the delight I have of her.

Aching with all the pangs of night
  My shuddering body swoons; my eyes
Absorb her eyelids' lazy light,
  And read her bosom to devise
Fresh blossoms of the heart of hell
And secret joys of Jezebel.

Her lips are fastened to my breast
  To suck out blood in feverish tides;
The token of her I possessed,
  Still on my withered cheek abides.
Thus slowly the desire grows
To kill and have her yet—who knows?

Part II.

I know. When Ramoth-Gilead's field
  Grew bloody with hot ranks of dead,
I smote amain with sword and shield;
  My brows with mingled blood were red;
And on my cheek the kiss of hell,
The hatred of my Jezebel.

I waited many days. At last
  The rushing of a chariot grew
Frightful through all the city vast:
  Men were afraid. But I—I knew
Jehu was here, whose sword should dip
Deep in my love's adulterous lip.

The spirit filled me. *And behold!*
  I saw her dead stare to the skies.
I came to her; she was not cold,
  But burning with old infamies.
On her incestuous mouth I fell,
And lost my soul for Jezebel.

I followed him afoot, afire;
  Beneath her window he drew rein;
She looked forth, clad in glad attire,
  Haggard and hateful, once again;
And taunted him. His bastard blood
Quailed, but his violent soul withstood.

He blenched, and then with eyes of flame,
  "Who is on my side? Who?" he said.
Three eunuchs, passionless, grown tame,
  Grinned from behind her laughing head.
"Throw down that woman!" And my breath
Caught as they flung her out to death.

I think I died that moment. He,
  Foaming for vengeance and blood-lust,
Laughed his coarse laugh of hideous glee.
  Her sweet bad body in the dust
He trampled. Royal from the womb
A martyred murderess lacks a tomb!

A tigress woman, clad with sin,
  And shod with infamy, who pressed
The bloody winepress of my skin,
  And plucked the purple of my breast—
Her lovers in their hearts shall keep
Her memory passionate and deep.

They cast her forth on Naboth's field
  Still living, in her harlot's dress;
Her belly stript, her thighs concealed,
  For shame's sake and for love's no less.
Night falls; the gaping crowds abide
No longer by her stiffening side.

I crept like sleep toward the place
That held for me her evil head;
I bent like sin above her face
That dying she might kiss me dead.
I whispered "Jezebel!" She turned,
And her deep eyes with hatred burned.

"Ah! prophet, come to mock at me
And gloat on mine exceeding pain?"
"Nay, but to give my soul to thee,
And have thee spit at me again!"
She smiled—I know she smiled—she sighed,
Bit my lips through, and drank, and died!

Her murders and her blasphemies,
Her whoredoms, God has paid at last;
Upon my bosom close she lies;
Her carnal spirit holds me fast.
My blood, my infamy, my pain,
Seal my subjection and her reign.

My veins poured out her marriage cup,
For holy water her cruel tongue;
For blessing of white hands raised up,
These perfumed infamies unsung;
For God's breath, her sharp tainted breath;
For marriage bed, the bed of death.

The hounds that scavenge, fierce and lean,
Snarl in the moonlight; in the sky
The vulture hangs, a ghost unclean;
The lewd hyæna's sleepless eye
Darts through the distance; these admit
My lordship over her—and it.

The host is lifted up. Behold
The vintage spilt, the broken bread!
I feast upon the cruel cold
Pale body that was ripe and red.
Only, her head, her palms, her feet,
I kissed all night, and did not eat.

So, and not otherwise, the word
Of God was utterly fulfilled.
So, and not otherwise. I heard
Her spirit cry, by death not stilled:
"My sin is perfect in thy blood,
And thou and I have conquered God."

Now let me die, at last desired,
At last beloved of thee my queen;
Now let me die, with blood attired,
Thy servant naked and obscene;
To thy white skull, thy palms, thy feet,
Clinging, dead, infamous, complete.

Now let me die, to mix my soul
With thy red soul, to join our hands,
To weld us in one perfect whole,
To link us with desirous bands.
Now let me die, to mate in hell
With thee, O harlot Jezebel.

CONCERNING CERTAIN SINS.

Some sins assume a garb so fine and white
That the blue veil of Heaven seems to shade
Their purity. They are winged so wide and bright
That even angels' pinions seem to fade,
And the archangel's wing recedes in night:—
Ay! even God seems perturbed and afraid
Because it wears so holy a garb of light
Of perfumed fire immaculately made.

These sins are deadly. God is merciless
For Love that joins Man's passion with His power,
And makes to bloom on earth a fairer flower
Than heaven bears. Our token of success
Is that displeasure toward our sin unnamed
Of a fierce demon jealous and ashamed.

A SAINT'S DAMNATION.

You buy my spirit with those peerless eyes
That burn my soul; you loose the torrent stream
Of my desire; you make my lips your prize,

And on them burns the whole life's hope: you deem
You buy a heart; but I am well aware
How my damnation dwells in that supreme

Passion to feed upon your shoulders bare,
And pass the dewy twilight of our sin
In the intolerable flames of hair

That clothe my body from your head; you win
The devil's bargain; I am yours to kill,
Yours, for one kiss; my spirit for your skin!

O bitter love, consuming all my will!
O love destroying, that hast drained my life
Of all those fountains of dear blood that fill

My heart! O woman, would I call you wife?
Would I content you with one touch divine
To flood your spirit with the clinging strife

Of perfect passionate joy, the joy of wine,
The drunkenness of extreme pleasure, filled
From sin's amazing cup? Oh, mine, mine, mine,

Mine, if your kisses maddened me or killed,
Mine, at the price of my damnation deep,
Mine, if you will, as once your glances willed!

Take me, or break me, slay or soothe to sleep,
If only yours one hour, one perfect hour,
Remembrance and despair and hope to steep

In the infernal potion of that flower,
My poisonous passion for your blood! Behold!
How utterly I yield, how gladly dower

Our sin with my own spirit's quenchéd gold,
Clothe love with my own soul's immortal power,
Give thee my body as a fire to hold—
O love, no words, no songs—your breast my bower!

LOT.

"And while he lingered . . . they brought him forth, and set him without the city."—GEN. xix. 16.

TURN back from safety: in my love abide,
Whose lips are warm as when, a virgin bride,
I clung to thee ashamed and very glad,
Whose breasts are lordlier for the pain they had,
Whose arms cleave closer than thy spouse's own,
Thy spouse—O lover, kiss me, and atone!
All my veins bleed for love, my ripe breasts beat
And lay their bleeding blossoms at thy feet!
Spurn me no more! O bid these strangers go;
Turn to my lips till their cup overflow;
Hurt me with kisses, kill me with desire,
Consume me and destroy me with the fire
Of bleeding passion straining at the heart,
Touched to the core by sweetnesses that smart;
Bitten by fiery snakes, whose poisonous breath
Swoons in the midnight, and dissolves to death!
Ah! let me perish so, and not endure
Thy falsehood who have known thy love was sure,
Built up by sighs a palace of long years—
Lo! it was faery, and the spell of tears
Dissolves it utterly. O bid them go,
These white-faced boys, where calmer rivers flow
And birds less passionate invoke the spring
Or seek their loves with weaker, wearier wing.
Turn back from safety! Let God's rivers pour
Brimstone and fire, and all his fountains roar
Lava and hail of hell upon my head,
So be he leave us altogether dead,
Burnt in that shameful whirlwind of his ire,
Consumed in one tall pyramid of fire

Whose bowers of flame shall tell the sky of God
How we despised his feet with thunder shod,
And conquered, clasping, all the host of death.
Turn to me, touch me, mix thy very breath
With mine to mingle floods of fiery dew
With flames of purple, like the sea shot through
With golden glances of a fiercer star.
Turn to me, bend above me, you may char
These olive shoulders with an old-time kiss,
And fix thy mouth upon me for such bliss
Of sudden rage rekindled. Turn again,
And make delight the minister of pain,
And pain the father of a new delight,
And light a lamp of torture for the night
Too grievous to be borne without a cry
To rend the very bowels of the sky
And make the archangel gasp—a sudden pang,
Most like a traveller stricken by the fang
Of the black adder whose squat head springs up,
A flash of death, beneath a cactus cup.
Ah turn! my bosom for thy love is cold;
My arms are empty, and my lips can hold
No converse with thee far away like this.
O for that communing pregnant with a kiss
That is reborn when lips are set together
To link our souls in one desirous tether,
And weld our very bodies into one.
Ah fiend Jehovah, what then have we done
To earn thy curse—is love like ours too strong
To dwell before thee, and do thy throne no wrong?
Art thou grown jealous of the fiery band?
Lo! thou hast spoken, and thy strong command
Bade earth and air divide, and on the sea
Thy spirit moved—and thou must envy me!
Gird all thy godhead to destroy a man
Whose little moment is a single span,
Whose small desire is nothing—and thy power
Must root from out his bosom the fair flower
Of passion! Listen to thine own voice yet:
"A rich man many flocks and herds did get
And took the poor man's lamb." Thou art the man!
Our love must lie beneath thy bitter ban!
Thou petty, envious God! My king, be sure
His brute force shall not to the end endure;
Some stronger soul than thine shall wrest his crown
And thrust him from his own high heaven down
To some obscure forgetful hell. For me
Forsake thy hopes in him! We worship, we,
Rather the dear delights we know and hold;
The first cool kiss, within the water cold
That draws its music from some bubbling well,
Looks long, looks deadly, looks desirable,
The touch that fires, the next kiss, and the whole
Body embracing, symbol of the soul,
And all the perfect passion of an hour.
Turn to me, pluck that amaranthine flower,
And leave the doubtful blossoms of the sky!
You dare not kiss me! dare not draw you nigh
Lest I should lure you to remain! nor speak
Lest you should catch the blood within your cheek
Mantling. You dared enough—so long ago!—
When to my blossom body clean as snow
You pressed your bosom till desire was pain,
And—then—that midnight—you did dare remain
Though all my limbs were bloody with your mouth
That tore their flesh to satiate its drouth,
That was not thereby satisfied! And now
A pallid coward, with sly, skulking brow,
You must leave Sodom for your spouse's sake.
Coward and coward and coward! who would take
The best flower of my life and leave me so,
Still loving you—Ah! weak—and turn to go

For fear of such a God! O blind! O fool!
To heed these strangers, and to be the tool
Of their smooth lies and monstrous miracles!
O break this bondage and cast off their spells!
Five righteous! Thou a righteous man! A jest!
A righteous man—you always loved me best,
And even when lured by lips of wanton girls
Would turn away and sigh and touch my curls
And slip half-conscious to the old embrace:—
And now you will not let me see your face
Or hear your voice or touch you. Ah! the hour!
He moves. Come back, come back, my life's one flower!
Come back. One kiss before you leave me. So!
Stop—turn—one little kiss before you go;
It is my right—you must. Oh no! Oh no!

EPILOGUE.

To die amid the blossoms of the frost
On far fair heights; to sleep the quiet sleep
Of dead men underneath the snowy steep
Of many mountains; ever to have lost
These cares and these distrusts; to lie alone,
Watched by the distant eagle's drowsy wing,
Stars and grey summits, and the winds that sing
Slow dirges in eternal monotone.

Such is my soul's desire, being weary of
This vain eternity of sleepless dreams
That is my life; withal there still may be
In other worlds, the hope of other love
Than this that floods my veins with poisonous streams,
And wastes with wan desire the soul of me.

AN APPEAL TO THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC.

1899.

THOU fair Republic oversea afar,
Where long blue ripples lap the fertile land,
Whose manifest dominion, like a star,
Fixed by the iron hands and swords of war,[1]
Now must for aye, a constellation, stand—
Thou new strong nation! as the eagle aspires
To match the sun's own fires,
Children of our land, hear the children of your sires.

We stretch out hands to-day when the white wings
Of Peace are spread beneath you and your foe.
O race of men that slay the slaves of kings!
We, whom the foam-crowned ocean still enrings,
We, whose strong freedom never brooked a blow,
Hail you now victors, hail you of the sword
Proved in the west the lord,
Hail you, and bid you sound quick friendship and accord.

The eagle of your emblem would not stoop
To the proud vaunts of that outrageous wing
That Bismarck reared, and strengthened, and bade swoop
Fierce upon France, whose pallid pinions droop
To own an Emperor where she mocked a king:
Their challenge you hurled back across the foam:
Vienna and tall Rome
Trembled for their ally: you stirred our hearts at home.

The fire of love no waters shall devour;
The faith of friendship stands the shocks of time;
Seal with your voice the triumph of this hour,
Your glory to our glory and our power,
Alliance of one tongue, one faith, one clime!
Seal and clasp hands; and let the sea proclaim
Friendship of righteous fame,
And lordship of two worlds that time can never tame.

Stoop not and tender not an hour's regret
For those wild words in trivial anger passed:
Forget your fools, as we their words forget,
And join our worlds in one amazing net
Of empire and dominion, till aghast
The lying Russian cloke his traitor head
More close, since Spain has bled
To wake in us the love that lay a century dead.

Let all the world keep silence at our peace;
Let France retreat and Russia step aside
From their encroachments, bid their envy cease
Stricken by Fear, who see our strength increase
By comradeship that quickens to abide,
A bond of justice, light, and liberty,
To make the wide earth free
As the wild waves that slake the passion of the sea.

[1] This poem was written shortly after the Spanish war.

Let all the world keep silence and behold
The wrath of two great nations that are friends
Against who bartered Poland, and who sold
Italy, weighed out Hungary for gold,
And shattered Greece to serve no noble ends.
The traitors and the peoples and the kings
That love not righteous things;
They shall behold our wrath, and find our anger stings.

White slaves shall look up and behold a light
Grow in the islands of the sacred sea,
And on the land whose forehead kisses night
And has the dawn upon its wings, whose might
Is mightier for the lips of Liberty
Pressed on its new-born cheek, when Church and State
Drove forth to baffle Fate
Our sires and yours, whose fame is grown this year so great.

That morning of deliverance is at hand;
The world requickens, and all folk rejoice,
Seeing our kingdom look toward your land,
And both catch hands, indissolubly grand
In the proud friendship of a better choice.
Your winds that wrought wild wreckage on our shore
Shall sink and be no more,
Or waft your barks, with wheat gold-laden, swiftly o'er.

Our foamcaps, that your rocks disdainful flung
Back to the waves that left our beaten coast,
Shall be like echoes of sweet songs unsung,
And all the ocean noises find a tongue
To voice the clamour of a righteous boast—
That friendship and dominion shall be wrought
Out of the womb of thought,
And all the bygone days be held for things of nought.

What matter though our fathers did you wrong?
Though brave sons brake our bitter yoke? Though we
Strove to compel you to a cruel thong?
What, though the stronger did defeat the strong?
Both, wild and patient as the steep strong sea?
What matter that some strive to waken hate,
Traitors to either state,
Hang them in chains! Our way to Freedom cannot wait!

The petty partisans of party war,
The hireling quillmen, and the jingo crowd,
The well-paid patriots, scenting from afar
Silence, their doom—shall they eclipse the star
Now crescent in the sky, whose music loud
Rejoices humble hearts and true men all,
And sounds the funeral
Dirge of slave, tyrant, priest, that snarl, and snarling fall?

These we forget—remembering only this:
Ye are blood-brothers, and our tongues are one;
Our hopes and conquests in one splendid kiss
Unite and struggle not for empire. Is
Our land and yours too little for the sun
To gladden, to illume, to bid increase,
Bound by two mighty seas
In one fraternal clasp of admirable peace?

Ye are our brothers; ye have spurned the power
That bound the islands of your eastern shore;
Ye have restored to freedom that fair flower,
Cuba, in her most agonising hour,
And east and west have thundered with red war.
We freed us from the slavery of Spain,
And laid upon the main
Our hand three centuries back—and ye have struck again.

Priestcraft and tyranny in this defeat
Shake, and the walls of hell with fear resound;
The sun laughs gladlier on the heavier wheat,
Because the fates must weave a winding-sheet
At last for Fear. Deliverers are found
Who will deliver. Mountain, stream, and brake,
Lone wood, and sleepy lake,
Are peopled with bright shapes that sing for freedom's sake.

Rocks, and pale fountains, and tall trees that quiver,
And all the clouds that deck the sunset sky
Move like the music of a mighty river
Where ripples break, and rapids gleam and shiver,
And calm rebuilds her empire by-and-by.
For joy of this alliance all the earth
Forgets her day of dearth,
In her new birth forgets, and maddens into mirth.

The stars swing censers of pale gold to God,
Whose incense is the love-song of the free;
Angels with mercy and with beauty shod
Move in the mazes of an Eden, trod
Not by the seemly spirits of the sea,
But by brave men built wholly of desire
And freedom's mystic fire,
To clothe its habitants with glorious attire.

Clasp hands, O fair republic of the west,
And leave the kingdoms to their sudden fate.
With new-born love and ardour unrepressed,
Let Lethe steep in its unquiet rest
The old years whose red hands have made us great.
O fair republic, strong and swift, unbind
The shackles of thy mind:
More than our kin ye are; henceforth not less than kind.

Bind on the splendid sandals, and unloose
The burning horses, and fling wide the reins!
From cold Archangel unto Syracuse
Europe shall see and tremble and ask truce,
And new blood pour through Asia's wasted veins.
Our Empire from Guiana to Hong Kong,
In your new love made strong,
Shall last while earth is glad because of sun and song.

And O! ye desert places of the sea,
Ye plains and mountains rugged with the wind,
And all ye hollow caverns whence there flee
Foam-heads and blusterous waves, give ear to me,
And O thou thunder, follow hard behind!
O womb of night, reverberate these chords,
Ye clouds, ye stormy lords,
With clamour and shrill voice as of ten thousand swords.

Swords that clang sharp on heaven's anvil, white
With heat of God's own forehead that beholds
The building broken that is made of might,
Nor builded firm on justice' iron height,
Nor is not cast in mercy's silver mould:—
Swords sharp to slay, when vengeance must its fill
Drink of the bloody rill
Wherein men lave their mouths, arise and smite and kill.

Listen, all lands, and wonder! For the night
Rolls back her beaten iron, and the day
Breaks, and the passionate heralds of the light,
Armoured with love for panoply of might,
Rush on the portals of the falling way.
The lamps of heaven are dim while swords strike fire
From rocks whose crests burn higher:—
At their assault hell's dogs gasp, totter, and expire.

All the gold gates are open of the East ;
The rugged columns of the hills uphold
A dome of changeless turquoise, and they feast,
The sun's lips, on the woods that have increased
Since dawn with store of unimagined gold.
The steam of many exhalations fair
Sweetens the midday air ;
Echo and tree and bud chant and give birth and bear.

The broad Pacific brightens into blue,
And coral isles are white with beating flame
Of living water on their strand, live through
With million flames candescent as the dew,
Red flowers too queenly for a mortal name !
The sea is pregnant with green stars ; the land,
The sky, like lovers stand
With kiss half-consciously exchanged, hand fast in hand.

O lovers fair and free, the wings of peace
Bear this voice onward ; linger as you will
By moon-wrought glades, and softly murmuring seas,
Lands white with summer, and the quiet leas !
Linger, and let no word of music thrill
Your hearts ; young love is all the harp ye need :
Your kiss in very deed
Is keen to echo song well tuned from Milton's reed.

O lovers, and ye happy groves that hear
Their whispers, and ye vales that know their feet,
And all ye mountains that incline your ear
To the still murmur of the love-lorn sphere,
And all ye caves their murmurs who repeat ;
Your music throbs in unison with mine ;
The world is flushed with wine
Bubbling from Freedom's well, warm, luminous, divine.

Burn, changeful purple of the vine's cool stream !
Burn, like the sunset of a stormy sky
When white winds gather, and white horses gleam
Upon the ocean, and the meadows steam
With haze of thunder, when the crimson eye
Dips, and deep darkness falls and lies, and breaks
In lightning's awful flakes,
When thunder unto thunder calls and the storm awakes.

With maddening hoofs, ye coursers of the sun,
Spurn the reverberant air and paw the day,
Make east and west indissolubly one,
And night fall beaten, for its day is spun,
And bid light gird its sword to thigh, display
The shield of heaven's blue, and call the deep
To watch the warrior sleep
Of two fast friends that wake only if brave men weep.

Wake, western land so fair, and this shall be !
Speak and accomplish, let no ardour slip,
A sullen hound, and be brought shamefully
Back, and resurge the tremor of the sea,
And spoil a perfect kiss from free land's lip.
O fair free sister country, for our sake,
Who at thy side would break
All bars, all bonds, and bid the very dead awake.

Are not your veins made purple with our blood,
And our dominions touch they not afield ?
Pours not the sea its long exultant flood
On either's coast ? The rose has one same bud,
And the vine's heart one purple pledge doth yield.
Are we not weary of the fangéd pen ?
Are we not friends, and men ?
Le us look frankly face to face—and quarrel then !

For by the groves of green and quiet ways,
  And on the windy reaches of the river,
In moonlit night and blue unbroken days,
And where the cold ice breaks in pallid bays,
  And where dim dawns in frosty forest shiver;
Where India burns and far Australia glows;
    Where cactus blooms, where rose,
Let our hearts' beat be heard, to lighten many woes.

Sister and daughter of our loyal isle,
  Our hands reach out to you, our lips are fain
To wreathe with yours in one delicious smile
Of budding love, to grow a kiss awhile,
  And laugh like bride and groom, and kiss again!
Let our alliance like a marriage stand,
    Supreme from strand to strand,
The likeness of our love, the clasp of hand in hand.

And men who come behind us yet unborn,
  Nor dimly guessed at down the brook of time,
Shall celebrate the brave undying morn
When the free nations put aside their scorn
  For friendship, rock no sundering surge may climb,
When their strong hands gripped hard across the sea,
    Flushed with fresh victory,
Lands royal, leal, and great, vast, beautiful, and free.

Our children's children shall unsheathe the sword
  Against the envy of some tyrant power:
The leader of your people and our lord
Shall join to wrest from slavery abhorred
  Some other race, a fair storm-ruined flower!
O fair republic, lover and sweet friend,
    Your loyal hand extend,
Let freedom, peace and faith grow stronger to the end!

O child of freedom, thou art very fair!
  Thou hast white roses on thy eager breast,
The scent of all the South is in thy hair,
Thy lips are fragrant with the blossoms rare
  Blown under sea waves when the white wings rest!
Come to our warrior breast, where victory
    Sits passionate and free—
Ring out the wild salute! Our sister over sea!

THE FATAL FORCE.*

1899.

"She
In the habiliments of the goddess Isis
That day appeared."—*Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 6, 16.

"Stoop not down, for a precipice lieth beneath the earth, reached by a descending ladder which hath Seven Steps, and therein is established the throne of an evil and fatal force."—ZOROASTER.

PEOPLE.

RATOUM, *Queen of Egypt.*
THE LEPER, *her divorced husband.*
KHOMSU, *their son* (dead).
S'AFI, *son of* KHOMSU *and* RATOUM.
THE KING OF SYRIA.
AMENHATEP, *High Priest.*
Chorus of Priests.
Soldiers of Egypt.
Syrian Troops.

S'AFI.

WHY is thy back made stiff, unrighteous priest,
Thy knee reluctant? Thine old eyes, grown blind,
Stare into silence, and behold no god
Longer. Thy forehead knows no reverence
Nor sign of worship. Or sits mutiny
Blasphemous on thy brows? For in thine eyes
I see full knowledge, and some glittering fire
Lurks in the rheumy corners; yea, some fire
Malignant, terrible—nay, pitiable,
Thou poor fool stricken with senility,
How spurred to passion? Yet behold thy god,
Horus, lest anger take benignancy
From his left hand and smite thee with his strength.
Thou hearest? Nay, thou pitiful old man,
For I have loved thee. Yet my godhead must
Get worship. Anger not the god, but stoop,
My faithful priest, and worship at my feet.

AMENHATEP.

I am most miserable. But truth must leap
In this tremendous moment from my lips,
Its long-shut barrier. For I pity thee
With my old heart's whole pity. Thou art young,
And beautiful, and proud, and dear to me,
Whom I have served thy life through. Now that love
Demands a deadlier service—to speak truth.
Thou art not Horus, but a man as I.

CHORUS.

Thou art not Horus, but a man. Thy life
Is not of the immortals, but, as ours,
Stands at the summons of the hooded death.

* This play deals with the effect of shattering all the solid bases of a young man's mind. Here we find him strong enough to win through. In the "Mother's Tragedy" is a similar case with a weaker nature. It is well to note that in the former play the mother is evil; in the latter good. Hence also in part the tragedy. For a good mother is an affliction against which none but the strongest may strive. It is fortunately rare.

S'AFI.

Speak ! I have this much of a god in me—
I am not shaken at your cries ; my lips
Are silent at your blasphemy ; my ears
Are strong to hear if there be truth at all
In your mixed murmurs : I command you, speak !

AMENHATEP.

The burden of the madness of the Queen
Lies on the land : the Syrian is near ;
And she, believing that her godhead guards
Her people, sleeps. The altars are thrown down ;
The people murmur. She hath done thee wrong,
But be thou mighty to avenge !

S'AFI.

To-day
I, Horus, shall become Osiris. Yea,
Strange secret dreams of some mysterious fate
Godlike have come upon me, and the throne
Totters for your disloyalty.

AMENHATEP.

Beware !
How died thy father?

S'AFI.

That amazing god
Incarnate in him chose a nobler form,
And in my mother's body sought his home,
Whose double incarnation is divine
Beyond the old stories. Yes, I am a god.

AMENHATEP.

Beware the fatal magic of her heart !
For she is great and evil, and her voice
Howls blasphemy against yet living gods.
Thou knowest not the story of thy birth,
The truth.

S'AFI.

Then speak the truth, if so a priest
May tune his tongue to anything but lies.

AMENHATEP.

Sixteen strange seasons mingle gold and grey
Since in this very temple she, the Queen,
Spake, and threw open to our reverent gaze
A royal womb made pregnant with that seed
Of which thou art the harvest. She spake thus :
" Princes, and people of the Egyptian land,
And broken priests of broken deities
Discrowned this hour, look up, behold your god !
For I am pregnant with my own son's child,
The fruit of my desire's desire. Most pure,
The single spirit of my godhead yearned
From death to reap dominion, and from birth
To pluck the blossom of its fruitful love,
And be the sun to ripen and the rain
To water it. My soul became the bride
To its own body, and my body leapt
With passion from mine own imperial loins
Begotten, and made strong from my own soul
To answer it. I hail thee, son of mine,
Thou royal offspring of a kingly sire,
Less kingly for the single flower of love !
I hail thee, son, the secret spouse of me,
King of my body and this realm to-day !
For lo ! the child leapt up within my womb,
Hailing me mother, and my spirit leapt,
Hailing him brother ! Son and spouse and king,
Exulting father of the royal soul
That lies here, loving me, assume thy crown
And sit beside me, equal to thy queen.
For look ye to the burning south, and see
The sun grown amorous, and behold his fire
Leap to my godhead. For without a man
I single, I the mother, have conceived
Of my own loins, and made me no less god
Than all your gods ! Ye people and ye priests,
Behold the burden of my life, and fear,

And know me Isis. Worship me, and praise
The goodliest ruler of the world, the queen
Of all the white immeasurable seas,
And that vast river of our sowing-time,
And of your Sun. Behold me made a god
Of my own godhead, and adore the sun
Of my queen's face, and worship ye the fount
And fertile river of my life. Bow down,
Ye people and ye priests, and worship me,
And him co-equal. I am very god!"
So spake the Queen; but I arose and said:

"Queen and our lord, we worship! Let the smoke
Of this divinest incense be a smell
Sweet to thy nostrils! For three times I cast
Its faint dust in the tripod, and three times
The smoke of adoration has gone up
To greet our gods; for the old gods are dead."

Then there came forth a leper in the hall,
In the most holy temple. So amazed
All shrank. And he made prophecy and said:
"The child that shall be born of thee is called
Fear.[1] He shall save a people from their sin;
For the old gods indeed go down to death,
But the new gods arise from rottenness."
Then said the goddess: "I indeed am pure
In my impurity; immaculate
In misconception; maiden in my whoredom;
Chaste in my incest, being made a god
Through my own strength." The leper with smooth words
Turned, and went laughingly towards the west,
And took of his own leprosy and threw
Its foul flakes in the censer. So he passed,
Laughing, and on the altar the flame fell,
Till a great darkness was upon the room,
And only the Queen's eyes blazed out. So all
Silently went, and left her naked there,
Crowned, sceptred, and exultant, till a chant
Rolled from her moving lips; and great fear fell
Upon us, and the flame leapt, and we fled,
Worshipping. But the mood passed, and we see
A lecherous woman whose magician power
Is broken, and the balance of her mind
Made one with the fool's bauble, and her wand,
That was of steel and fire, like a reed, snapped!

[1] S'afi is the Egyptian for fear.

S'AFI.

So lived my father. Tell me of his death.

AMENHATEP.

At thy first breath the gods were patient still,
Till the abomination filled its cup,
And hatred took her heart. She slew thy sire,
And made his body the banquet of her sin
In the infernal temple. "So," she said,
"I reap the incarnation of the god."
So, gloomy and hideous, she would prowl about
Seeking fresh human feasts, and bloody rites
Stained the white altar of the world. And yet
Her power is gone, and we behold her go,
Haggard and weary, through the palace courts
And through the temple, lusting for strange loves
And horrible things, and thirsting for new steam
Of thickening blood upon her altar steps.
Her body wearies of desire, and fails
To satisfy the fury of her spirit;
The blood-feasts sicken her and yield no strength;
She is made one with hell, and violent force
Slips and is weakness, and extreme desire
Spends supple.

S'AFI.

I have heard you as a god
Immutable.

CHORUS.

Thou art as proud and calm
As statued Memnon. Thou art more than god
And less than man. Thine eyelids tremble not.

S'AFI.

I shall avenge it as a god. The land
Shall be made free.

AMENHATEP.

And the old gods have sway,
Re-born from incorruption.

S'AFI.

The old gods!
I must muse deeply. Keep your ancient ways
A little. I must play the part through so.

CHORUS.

In the ways of the North and the South
Whence the dark and the dayspring are drawn,
We pass with the song of the mouth
Of the notable Lord of the Dawn.
Unto Ra, the desire of the East, let the clamour of singing proclaim
The fire of his name!

In the ways of the East and the West
Whence the night and the day are discrowned,
We pass with the beat of his breast,
And the breath of his crying is bound.
Unto Toum, the low Lord of the West, let the noise of our chant be the breath
Proclaiming him Death!

In the ways of the depth and the height,
Where the multitude stars are at ease,
There is music and terrible light,
And the violent song of the seas.
Unto Mou, the most powerful Lord of the South, let our worship declare
Him Lord of the Air!

In the mutable fields that are sown
Of a seed that is whiter than noon,
Whose harvest is beaten and blown
By the magical rays of the moon,
In the caverns and wharves of the wind, in the desolate seas of the air,
Revolveth our prayer!

In the sands and the desert of death,
In the horrible flowerless lands,
In the fields that the rain and the breath
Of the sun make as gold as the sands
With ripening wheat, in the earth, in the infinite realm of its seed,
The hearts of us bleed!

In the wonderful flowers of the foam,
Blue billows and breakers grown grey,
When the storm sweeps triumphantly home
From the bed of the violate day,
In the furious waves of the sea, wild world of tempestuous night,
Our song is as light!

In the tumult of manifold fire,
Multitudinous mutable feet
That dance to an infinite lyre
On the heart of the world as they beat,
In the flowers of the bride of the flame, in the warrior Lord of the Fire,
There burns our desire!

AMENHATEP.

Cry now, bewail the broken house, bewail
The ruin of the land; cry out on Fate!

CHORUS.

Slow wheels of unbegotten hate
And changeless circles of desire,
Formless creations uncreate,
Swift fountains of ungathered fire,
The misty counterpoise of time,
Dim winds of ocean and sublime
Pyramids of forgotten foam
Whirling, vague cones of shapeless sleep
And infinite dreams, and stars that roam,
And comets moving through the deep
Unfathomable skies,
Darker for moonlight, and the glow-worm eyes
Of dusky women that were stars,
And paler curves of the immutable bars
That line the universe with light,
Great eagle-flights of mystic moons
That dip, while the dull midnight swoons
About the skirts of Night:
These bowed and shaped themselves and said:
"It shall be thus!"
And the intolerable luminous
Death that is god bent down his head
And answered: "Thus, immutably,
Above all days and deeds, shall be!"
And the great Light that is above all gods
Lifted his calm brow, spake, and all the seas,
And all the air, and all the periods
Of seasons and of stars gave ear, and these
Vaults of the heaven heard
The great white Light that shaped its secrecies
Into one holy terrible word,
Higher than all words spoken; for He said:
"Death is made change, and only change is dead."
For the most holy spirit of a man
Burns through the limit of the wheels that ran
Through all the unrelenting skies
When Icarus died,
And leaps, the flight of wise omnipotent eyes,
When Dædalus espied
An holy habitation for the shrine
Solitary, 'mid the night of broken brine
That foamed like starlight round the desolate shore.[1]
So to the mine of that crystalline ore
Golden, the electric spark of man is drawn
Deep in the bosom of the world, to soar
New-fledged, an eagle to the dazzling dawn
With lidless eyes undazzled, to arise,
Son of the morning, to the Southern skies;
And fling its wild chant higher at the fall
Of even, and of bright Hyperion;
To mix its fire with dew, to call
The spirit of the limitless air, made one
In the amazing essence of all light
Limitless, emanation of the might
Of the great Light above all gods, the fire
Of our supreme desire.
So out of grievous labyrinths of the mind
The soul's desire may find
Some passionate thread, the clear note of a bird,
To make the dark ways of the gods as light,
And bring forth music from slow chants unheard,
And visions from the fathomless night.
So is the spirit of the loftier man
Made holy and most strong against his fate;
So is the desolate visage of the wan
Lord of Amenti[2] covered, and the gate
Of Ra made perfect. So the waters flow
Over the earth, throughout the sea,
Till all its deserts glow,
And all its salt springs vanish, and night flee
The pinions of the day wide-spread, and pure
Fresh fountains of sweet water that endure
Assume the crown of the wide world, and lend
A star of many summits to his head
That rules his fate and compasses his end,
And seeks the holy mountain of the dead
To draw dead fire, and breathe, and give it life!

But thou, be strong for strife,
And, as a god, cry out, and let there be
The mark of many footsteps on the sea

[1] See Vergil, *Aen.* vi. ll. 14–19.
[2] The West: the Egyptian Land of the Dead.

Of angels hastening to fulfil
Thy supreme, single will!
Alone, intense, unmoved, not made for change,
Let thy one godhead rise
To move like morning, and like day to range,
A furnace for the skies,
That all men cry: "The uncreated God!
Formless, ineffable, just, whose period
Is as his name, Eternity!" So bear
The sceptre of the air!
So mayest thou avenge, all-seeing, blind,
The wrath of this consuming fire, that licks
The rafters and the portals of the house,
The gateways of the kingdom, where behind
Lurk ruinous fates and consequence; where fix
Their fangs the scorpions; where hide their brows
The shamed protectors of the Egyptian land.
Go forth avenging; men shall understand
And worship, seeing justice as a spouse
Lean on thine iron hand.

For Murder walks by night, and hides her face,
But righteous Wrath in the light, and knows his place;
For hate of a mother is ill, and the lightning flashes
But foil a harlot's will, burn the earth to ashes,
Cleanse the incestuous sty of a whore's desire,
Scatter the dung to the sky, and burn her with fire!
So the avenging master shall cleanse his fate of shame,
Set his seal of disaster, a royal seal to his name. [*Exeunt.*

S'AFI.

I am not Horus, but I shall be king.

Enter THE LEPER.

THE LEPER.

I am a leper, but I am the king.

S'AFI.

Monstrous illegible horror, let thy mouth
Frame from its charnel-house some pregnant word
Intelligible.

THE LEPER.

I am king; thy mother's limbs
Clung fast to mine when I begot thy father.

S'AFI.

He died in battle; thou art not the king.

THE LEPER.

I did not fall in battle; but my queen
Saw on my breast the livid mark of sin
That was the leprosy of her own soul,
And drove me forth to compass my disgrace
With infamies ineffable.

S'AFI.

I know;
I shall avenge. The old gods come again.

THE LEPER.

Nay! I have lived through all these barren years,
Discrowned, diseased, abominable, cast out,
And meditating on the event of life,
And that initiated Hope that we,
Royal, inherit, of the final life,
Nor newer incarnation, and possessed
Of strange powers, who have moved about this court
Loathed, and unrecognised, and shunned, have thought
That the old bondage was as terrible
As thine incestuous mother's iron hand,
Rending the entrails of her growing realm
To seek her bloody fate, whose violence
Even now makes the abyss of wrath divine
Boil in the deep. Thou mayest be that great
Osiris, bidding man's high soul be free,
Justified in its own higher self, made pure
And perfect in its own eyes, being a god.

Destroy this priestcraft! We are priests indeed,
Highest among the secret ones; and we—
See where our heritage is made; I, king,
A leper, and thyself, the hideous fruit
Of what strange poisons? But in mine own self
I am the king and chief of all the priests;
And thou, in thine own eyes, art a young god,
Strong, beautiful, and lithe, a leaping fawn
Upon the mountains.

S'AFI.

Yea, I am a god.
I am fire against the fountain of my birth,
The storm upon the earth that nurtured me![1]
Leave me: we twain have no more words to speak.

THE LEPER.

Neither in heaven nor in hell. I go,
The dead king, worshipping the living man.
[*Exit.*

S'AFI.

I have been a god so long, my thoughts run halt
From many contemplations. Like the flow
Of a slow river deep and beautiful,
My even life moved onward to full scope,
The ocean of profounder deity,
And—suddenly—the cataract! My soul,
Centred eternally upon itself,
Comprehends hardly all this violence
Of wayward men intemperate. I am calm,
And contemplate, without a muscle moved
Or nerve set shrieking, all these ruinous deeds
And dissolution of the royal house.
I see this grey unnatural mother of mine
Now, as she is, disrobed of deity,
And like some reeling procuress grown wolf
By infamous bewitchment, haunt the stairs,
And pluck the young men by the robe, and take
The maidens for her sacrifice, and burn
With great unquenchable dead lustrous eyes
Toward impossible things grown possible
In Egypt. I will cleanse the land of this.
Let me remember I am yet a god!

Re-enter THE LEPER.

THE LEPER.

Thou must be brought before her presently
Borne in a coffin. See thou fill it not,
But take the lion's mask and play his part
Before the throne. Be ready, and be strong.

S'AFI.

I shall do so. Come, let us go together
In hateful love and sacrilegious hate,
Disease and godhead. I am still the god.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter RATOUM.

RATOUM.

I stood upon the desert, and my eyes
Beheld the splendid and supernal dawn
Flame underneath the single star that burns
Within the gateway of the golden East
To rule my fate; but I have conquered Fate
Thus far, that I am perfect in myself,
The absolute unity and triple power
Engrafted. For the foolish people see
An old grey woman, wicked, not divine,
Who[1] shall this hour assume the royal self
And the old godhead, and the lithe strong limbs
And supple loins and splendid bosom bare
Full of bright milk, the breast of all the world.
This lesser mastery I have made mine own
By strange devices, by unheard-of ways
Of wisdom, by strong sins, and magical
Rituals made righteous of their own excess
Of horror; but I have not made myself

[1] Fire and Water, Air and Earth, are the "antagonisms" of the "elements."

[1] This antithetical use of the relative is uncommon.

So absolute as I shall do to-day
In this new infamy. For I must pass
Desolate into the dusk of things again,
Having risen so far to fall to the abyss,
Deeper for exaltation ; I must go
Wailing and naked into the inane
Cavernous shrineless place of misery,
Forgetful, hateful, impotent, except
The last initiation seize my soul,
And fling me into Isis' very self,
The immortal, mortal. Let me know this night
Whether my place is found among the stars
That wander in the deep, or made secure
As the high throne of her that dwells in heaven,
Fruitful for life and death, Wisdom her name !
This hour the foolish ones shall see their souls
Shrink at my manifest deity. This night
My spirit on my spirit shall beget
Myself for my own child. Behold ! they come,
Fantastically moving through the dance,
The many mourners, and the fatal bier
Looms in the dimness of the anteroom.
It is enough. My hour is at hand !

CHORUS *enter and circumambulate.*

Even as the traitor's breath
Goeth forth, he perisheth
By the secret sibilant word that is spoken unto death.

Even as the profane hand
Reacheth to the sacred sand,
Fire consumes him that his name be forgotten in the land.

Even as the wicked eye
Seeks the mysteries to spy,
So the blindness of the gods takes his spirit : he shall die.

Even as the evil priest,
Poisoned by the sacred feast,
Changes by its seven powers to the misbegotten beast :

Even as the powers of ill,
Broken by the wanded will,
Shriek about the holy place, vain and vague and terrible :

Even as the lords of hell,
Chained in fires before the spell,
Strain upon the sightless steel, break not fetters nor compel :

So be distant, O profane !
Children of the hurricane !
Lest the sword of fire destroy, lest the ways of death be plain !

So depart, and so be wise,
Lest your perishable eyes
Look upon the formless fire, see the maiden sacrifice !

So depart, and secret flame
Burn upon the stone of shame,
That the holy ones may hear music of the sleepless Name !

Now the sacred and obscene
Kiss, the pure and the unclean
Mingle in the incense steaming up before the goddess queen.

Holy, holy, holy spouse
Of the sun-engirdled house,
With the secret symbol burning on thy multiscient brows !

Hear, O hear the mystic song
Of the serpent-moving throng,
Isis mother, Isis maiden, Isis beautiful and strong !

Even as the traitor's breath
Goeth forth, he perisheth
By the secret sibilant word that is spoken unto death.

RATOUM.

The hour is given unto death. Bring in
Dead Horus, for the night is shed above.
[*Coffin brought in.*

CHORUS.

The noise of the wind of the winter; the sound
Of the wings of the charioted night;
The song of the sons of the seas profound;
The thunder of death; the might
Of the eloquent silence of black light!

RATOUM.

The noise of many planets fallen far!

CHORUS.

Death listens for the voice of life; night waits
The dawn of wisdom: winter seeks the spring!

RATOUM.

The music of all stars arisen; the breath
Of God upon the valley of the dead!

CHORUS.

The silence of the awaiting soul asleep!

RATOUM.

The murmur of the fountain of my life!

CHORUS.

The whole dead universe awaits the Word.

RATOUM.

Now is the hour of life; my voice leaps up
In the dim halls of death, and kindling flame
Roars like the tempest through forgetfulness.
This is my son, whose father is my son,
From my own womb complete and absolute,
And in this strong perfection of myself
Stands the triumphant power of my desire,
Manifest over self, and man, and god!
For in the sacred coffin lies his corpse
Who shall arise at the enormous word
Of my creating deity; his life
Shall quicken in him, and the dead man rise,
Osiris; and all power be manifest
In our supreme reunion; let the priest
Cast incense on the fire, upon the ground
Let water of the fertilising Nile
Be spilt, because these dark maternal breasts
That gave their milk to that divinest child
Are not yet full of the transcending stream
That knows its fountain in my deity.
The incense fumes before me: I am come,
Isis, within this body that ye know,
Transmuting! Look upon me, ye blind eyes!
Behold, dull souls and ignorant desires!
See if I be not altogether god!

[*She assumes the appearance of her mature beauty, standing before them with the wand upraised.*

Wonder and worship! Sing to me the song
Of the extreme spring! Rejoice in my great strength
And infinite youth and new fertility,
And lave your foreheads in this holy milk
That springs, the fountain of humanity,
Luminous in the temple! Raise the hymn.

CHORUS.

Through fields of foam ungarnered sweeps
The fury of the wind of dawn;
Through fiery desolation creeps
The water of the wind withdrawn.
With fire and water consecrate
The foam and fire are recreate.
With air uniting fire and water,
The springtide's unbegotten daughter
Blossoms in oceans of blue air,
Flowers of new spring to bear.

The sorrowful twin fishes glide
Silent and sacred into sleep;
The joyful Ram exalts his pride,
Seeing the forehead of the deep
Glow from his palace, as the sun
Leaps to the spring, whose coursers run
Flaming before their golden master,
As death and winter and disaster
Fall from the Archer's bitter kiss
Fast to their mute abyss.

The pale sweet blooms of lotus burn;
  The scent of spring is in the soul;
Men's spirits to the loftiest turn;
  Light is extended and made whole.
The waters of the whispering Nile
Lisp of their loves a little while,
  Then break, like songsters, into sighing,
  Because the lazy days are dying;
And swift and tawny streams must rise
World's world to fertilise.

The lotus is afire for love,
  Its yearnings are immortal still;
But in its bosom, fed thereof,
  Lust, like a child, will have his will.
Immortal fervour, strangely blent
With mystic sensual sacrament,
  Fills up its cup; its petals tremble
  With faint desires that dissemble
The fierce intention to be wed
One with the spring sun's head.

The fountains of the river yearn
  Toward the sacred temple-walls,
They foam upon the sands that burn
  With spring's delirious festivals.
They flash upon the gleaming ways,
They cry, they chant aloud the praise
  Of Isis, and our temple kisses
  Their flowery water-wildernesses,
Whose foamheads nestle to the stones
With slumberous antiphones.

All birds and beasts and fish are fain
  To mingle passion with the hope
All creatures hold, that cycled pain
  May make its stream the wider scope
Of many lives and changing law,
Till to the sacred fountains draw
  Essences of dim being, mated
  With lofty substance uncreated,
Concluding the full period
That makes all being God.

S'AFI (*disguised in the mask of a lion*).

I lift the censer. Hail, immortal queen,
From the vast hall of death! Dead Horus cries
Towards the dawn. Bid me awake, O mother!
O mother! from the darkness of the tomb,
That live Osiris may cry back to thee,
O spouse! O sister! from the halls of life,
The profound lake, the immeasurable depth,
The sea of the three Loves! O mother, mother!
Isis, the voice that even Amenti hears,
Speak, that I rise from chaos, from the world
Of shapeless and illusionary forms,
Of dead men's husks, and unsubstantial things.
O mother, mother, mother! I arise!

RATOUM.

Horus, dread godhead, child of me, arise!
Arise Osiris, to the sacred rites
And marriage-bed of fuller deity.
Now, at the serpent-motion of this wand,
Rise from the dead! Arise, dead Horus, rise
To be Osiris. Isis speaks! Arise!
  [*The coffin is opened.* THE LEPER *is raised out of it swathed in bandages.*
Out of the sleep of ages wake and live!
  [*The wrappings fall off.*

THE LEPER.

I am the resurrection and the death!
  [RATOUM *falls back shrieking. The priests raise a chant to stifle the sound.*

S'AFI (*tearing off his mask*).

I am the hideous poison of thy veins
And foulest fruit of thy incestuous womb.

RATOUM.

I am thy mother! I have nurtured thee
With woman's tenderness and godhead's strength.

S'AFI.

I am the avenger of my own false birth.

RATOUM.

I have loved thee ever; I have made thee god.

S'AFI.

I hate myself, and therefore I hate thee.

RATOUM.

I am still goddess, still desire thy love.
That leper lies: thou art indeed a god.

S'AFI.

I am a god to execute my will.
[*Threatens her with his dagger.*

RATOUM.

Mercy! Thou canst not strike a woman down!

S'AFI.

So! The thin casing of the godhead rots,
Mere mummy-cloth: the rotten corpse within,
Dust and corruption! I am still the god,
And gods slay women: therefore I slay thee.

RATOUM.

Then thou shalt see me once again a god!
[*By a tremendous effort she towers before him. Silently they gaze at one another for a while, he vainly endeavouring to force himself to strike. At last she collapses into the throne; he springs forward and drives his knife into her.*

THE LEPER.

It is finished! The sacrament is made! The god
Has flamed within the altar-cake: 'tis done!
[*Silence: presently* THE LEPER *breaks into a horrible, silent, smooth laughter. Again silence.*

S'AFI.

I am done with godhead: let me be a man.

CHORUS.

Hail, S'afi, king of Egypt and the Nile!
Hail, S'afi, Lord of the two lands,[1] all hail!

S'AFI.

King of himself and lord of life and death,
No lesser throne! I have borne me as a god,
Avenging on my nearest blood the sin
That brought me shameful to the shameless light.
I have not faltered nor turned back at all,
Nor moved my purpose for a moment's thought.
Nor will I now. The god is gone from me,
And as a man I feel the living shame
Of my existence, and the biting brand
Of murder set upon me, and the sting
Of my discrownèd forehead. I shall die
Having this proof of my own nobleness
To soothe the rancour of my stricken soul
In the abodes of night, that I have dared,
With the first knowledge to make good my spirit
Against its fate, to steel my flinching heart
Against all men, dominions, shapes, and powers,
Seen and unseen, to justice and to truth,
Sought out by desolate ways of hateful deeds,
And so set free myself from my own fate,
Whom I will smite to end the coil of things
Here, to begin—what life? For Life I know
Stands like a living sentinel behind
The rugged barrier of death, the gates
Where the rude valley narrows, and man hears
The steep and terrible cataract of time
Break, and lose shape and substance in the foam
And spray of an eternity of air!
My death, and not my life, may crown me king!

[1] Upper and Lower Egypt.

So let me not be buried in that state
Due to the hateful rank that I abjure
By this proud act, but let my monument
Say to succeeding peoples and dim tribes
Unthought of: "This was born a living man
Bound, and he cut the chain of circumstance,
And spat on Fate." And all the priests shall say
And all the people: "Verily and Amen."
[*Stabs himself.*

CHORUS.

Spirit of the Gods! O single,
Sacred, secret, let the length
East and west, the depth and height,
North and south, with music tingle,
Ring with battled clarion choirs of the far-resounding light!
Let the might
Of Osirian sacrifice
Dwell upon the self-slain king!
Spirit of the Gods! Unite
Streams of sacramental light
In the soul, thrice purified,
Consecrated thrice,
Till Osiris justified
In the supreme sacrifice
Take his kingdom. Hear the cry
That the wailing vultures make,
Circling in the blackening sky
Over the abysmal lake.
Spirit, for our spirit's sake
Give the token of thy fire
Trident in the lambent air,
Till our spirits unaware
Worship and aspire!
Hear, beyond all periods,
Timeless, formless, multiform,
Thou, supreme above the storm,
Spirit of the Holy Ones, Spirit of the Gods!

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

The battle rages: even now the shock
Of hostile spears makes the loud earth resound,
The wide sky tremble.

AMENHATEP.

Here lies Horus dead,
There Isis slain. We have no leader left.

MESSENGER.

The fight is doubtful. We may conquer still.

AMENHATEP.

By this shed blood and desecrated shrine
And horrible hour of madness, may it be
That all the evil fortune of the land,
Created of these dead iniquities,
Burn its foul flame out. Are ye not appeased,
Even ye, O Powers of Evil, at this shame
And sacrilege? And ye, Great Powers of Good,
Hath not enough of misery been wrought,
Enough of expiation? We have sinned,
But our iniquity he purged away,
Who as avenger hath denied his life,
To be made one with ye. O by his blood
And strong desire of holiness, and might
And justice, let him mediate between
And mitigate your anger, that the name
Of Egypt may not perish utterly.
Make, make an end!

THE LEPER.

All things must work themselves
To their own end. Created sin grown strong
Must claim its guerdon. Ye abase yourselves
Well for repentance; but ye shall not ward
With tears and prayers the ruin ye have made,
Nor banish the enormous deities
Of judgment so invoked by any prayers,
Or perfumes or libations. What must be
Will be. Material succour ye demand
In vain. But ye may purify yourselves.

AMENHATEP.

Knows then thy prophecy our final doom?

THE LEPER.

Inquire not of your fate! Myself do know,
Mayhap. Ye shall know. I await the event.

AMENHATEP.

We shall be patient, and we shall be strong.

THE LEPER.

The noise of rushing feet! The corridor
Rings with their scurrying fear. This is the end.

[*Enter a flying soldier, crying aloud, and seeks a hiding-place.*

Speak not, thou trembling slave: we understand!

[*The soldier slips on the marble floor, and lies groaning.*

AMENHATEP.

See that due silence greets catastrophe!
No word from now without command of mine.

[*Silence. Then grows a noise of men fighting, &c.; above this after a while rises a shrill laughter, terrifying to hear. Then cries of victory and the triumphant laugh of a great conqueror. His heavy step, and that of his staff, &c., is next heard coming masterfully down the corridor. The soldier gives a shriek.*

THE LEPER.

The Syrian must not see a cur like this
Cower at death. For Egypt's honour, then!
Give me that spear. [*Aside.*] That royalty's own hand
Should send this thing to his long misery!

[*Taking a spear, he runs through the soldier.*

The KING OF SYRIA, *attended, enters.*

KING OF SYRIA.

Your armies beaten back before my face,
Your weapons broken, I am come to take
The crown from her pale brows that sitteth there.

THE LEPER.

The Queen is dead: I am the King of Egypt.
To-day I saved the house from its own shame
By strange ways: I will strike one blow to save
The land from its invaders. In the name
Of all our gods, I here invoke on thee
The spirit of my leprosy. Have at you!

[*Springs at the* KING OF SYRIA, *only to be transfixed on his drawn sword; but he succeeds in clasping the King, who staggers. His soldiers, with a shout, rush forward, drag down* THE LEPER *and attack the priests. All are slain. Silence: then a shield drops, clanging on the ground.*

KING OF SYRIA (*assuming crown and sitting on throne*).

Salute the conqueror of the Egyptian land!

[*The soldiers salute and cheer.*

I am a leper: get ye hence!

[*Exeunt soldiers.*

Unclean! [*Silence.*
This was the hour that my ambitious hopes
Centred upon: and now I grasp the hour—
So fares mortality. [*Silence.*
Unclean! unclean!

CURTAIN.

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY.*

1899.

SCENE.—*The room is furnished with comfort as well as luxury. A crucifix is in the window to the East, and the room is flooded with a ray of sunlight.*

CORA VAVASOUR (*late of the Halls*).
ULRIC, *illegitimate son of* CORA, *ignorant of his parentage.*
MADELINE, *girl in love with* ULRIC.
THE SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY, *as Chorus, sits in the back, crouched, brooding over the scene. It is veiled and throned.*

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY.

HERE, in the home of a friend,
Here, in the mist of a lie,
The pageant moves on to the desolate end
Under a sultry sky.
Noon is upon us, and Night,
Spreading her wings unto flight,
Visits the lands that lie far in the West,
Where the bright East is at peace on her breast:
Opposite quarters unite.
Soon is the nightfall of Destiny here;
Nature's must pass as her hour is gone by.
Only another than she is too near,
Gloom in the sky.
One who can never pass over shall sever
Links that were forged of Love's hand;
Love that was strong die away as a song,
Melt as a cable of sand.
But I am watching, with unwearied eye,
The wayfare of the tragedy.

I see the brightness of the home; I see
The grisly phantom of despair to be.
I see the miserable past redeemed,
(Intolerable as its purpose seemed,)
Redeemed by love: I see the jealous days
Pass into sunshine, and youth-beaming rays
Quicken the soul's elixir. Let me show
How these air-castles tumble into woe.
[*Raises sceptre as if to start action of play.*

CORA.

Why did your eyelids quiver as I spoke?
A smile, a tear? that trembling, in their deep
Violet passion, of the beautiful
Eyes that they half discover? Speak to me.
I have long thought a secret was your spouse,
Shared your deep fancies and your lightest word,
Partook your maiden bed, and gave you dreams
Somewhat too troublous to be virginal.

MADELINE.

My dear kind Cora, do they lie to you,
These fancies of my idle hours? Believe,
I seem to tremble at my inward thought;
My heart is full of wonder. When I go
Nightward beneath the moon, and take my thoughts
Past her pale beauty through some glowing skies

* The justification of this play, both in subject and construction, is to be found in the Introduction to the "Ion" of Euripides. [Verrall, Camb. Univ. Press, 1890.] The chief of its many morals is that sin must reap its harvest in spite of repentance, prayer, and the other dodges by which men seek to elude Fate.

Not unfamiliar, through exulting gates—
"Lift up your heads," I hear the angels cry;
"Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.
A child-heart seeks the Lover of the Child!"
O meek and holy Jesus, hath Thy heart
Yearned unto me, Thy maiden? For I knew
A bliss so pregnant with the unforeseen
As brought me to the very feet of Christ,
Weeping. How clouded that mysterious
Passion! I fell a-weeping in my bed,
Forgetting, or not knowing. For a fire
Too perfect for my sinful soul to touch
Gathered me closely in itself, to hide
Its utter glory from me. Now I feel
Swift troubled tremblings in myself: I seek
Again those visionary skies. Alas!
That angel chorus swells another note
I cannot understand.

CORA.

I am so moved,
I cannot find it in my heart to say
The words I purposed. Let my folly pass
As an old worldly woman's talk.

MADELINE.

O no!
You bear the sainted fragrance of your love
Higher than even my dreams. In earthly life
You are not earthly. I have often thought
The Virgin has some special care for you,
And given of her beauty and her peace
A special dower. Your thoughts are ever pure;
Your soul in sweet communion with God!
Why, you are crying?

CORA.

You say this to me?
O could you look within a magic glass,
Holding my hand, such sights would come to you
Beyond your knowledge—ay, beyond belief!
I am no saintly virgin wrapped in prayer,
Nor is my life one river of clear water
Drawn from the wells of God. You foolish child!
My love for you you cannot understand,
Nor the low motive—you have shown it me—
Of this beginning of our talk.

MADELINE.

Say on!

CORA (*meaningly*).

Much less you understand the love I bear
To Ulric!

MADELINE *gives a little cry.*

Heart of Christ! it cannot be!

CORA.

No, child; I tricked you. Is your secret out?

MADELINE.

I am dismayed at my discovery.
(*Slowly.*) I never guessed my own poor silliness
Until that moment when you frightened me.

CORA.

And now you know how dear he is to you!
Come, child, I love you both. Your happiness
Is my life's purpose. I have seen the truth
Of this in you; it comes to every one.
I know that he is half in love with you.
Look once again as you did look just now,
And he would die for you. O foolish girl!
[MADELINE *weeps quietly for a little,*
CORA *caressing her.*

MADELINE.

Please let me go: you are too kind to me!

CORA.

Rest, sunny head! A little while to sleep,
And then—perhaps the Mother in a dream
May comfort you. A woman's love is this
To have one heart, an undivided love;
But Hers—division in the universe
Makes multiple each part. Sweet Madeline,
Believe me, She will come to maiden dreams,
Bestow Her peace, and so direct the life
That is not unto God unconsecrate
For being dedicated unto love!

[*Exit* MADELINE.

CORA *remains thinking.*

I was no bolder twenty years ago!
Time, Time, thou maker and destroyer both,
Only in resurrection hast no part!

[*Broods.*

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY (*with light enjoyment*).

How light and how agreeable,
Paved pathway to the gate of hell!
See how all virtues, graces, shine,
Till woman half appears divine!
But I am waiting, watching still
The treason of the powers of ill.
Soft, moveless, as a tigress glides,
Strange laughing devilry abides
Its hour to poison. How they gloat,
The fiends, upon her lips and throat!
They touch her heart, they speer[1] her eyes,
They linger on the lovely prize!
O dead she thought them! It is written:
"Eve's heel is by the serpent bitten,
His head she bruises." No indeed!
Not woman, but the woman's seed!
Hark! in the cloak of "Love of Truth"
They whisper "Memory of Youth";
And, mindful of the deadliest sin,
Hint: "Sinful woman, look within!"

[1] To search, with the idea of looking more deeply. The grotesque word is used to suggest the quaint inspection of the malicious goblins.

CORA.

Ah me! if she could look within a glass[1]
With spells and pantacles[2] well fortified!
I have a glass whose bitter destiny
No wizard may conjure. Arise ye there,
Old hours of horror, clear by one and one,
In the confused and tossing ocean,
Where memory picks spar and spar from out
The dreadful whirlpool hardly yet appeased,
To join together in imagination
The ship—the wreck! And yet I stand at last
Secure in my unselfish love to them,
Repaid in mine own currency. I trust
God hath made smooth the road beneath the hearse
Of my forgetful age. All must be well.

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY (*with sombre joy*).

Mortals never learn from stories
How catastrophe becomes;
How above the victor's glories
In the trumpets and the drums,
And the cry of millions "Master!"
Looms the shadow of disaster.
Every hour a man hath said
"That at least is scotched and dead."
Some one circumstance: "At last
That, and its effects, are past."
Some one terror—subtle foe!—
"I have laid that spectre low!"
They know not, learn not, cannot calculate
How subtly Fate

[1] The crystal sphere is habitually used by clairvoyants and others for purposes of divination. Such a globe should be ceremonially consecrated and vitalised.

[2] From παν, all, a diminutive. The word thus means "a universe in little." It is usually a square or circle of vellum or other material, designed and painted appropriately to its purpose; a spirit is then evoked and commanded to dwell therein, that it may do the required office.

Weaves its fine mesh, perceiving how to wait;
Or how accumulate
The trifles that shall make it master yet
Of the strong soul that bade itself forget.

CORA.

Let me not shrink! Truth always purifies.
I will go through those two impossible
Actual years. The city was itself;
Hard thinking if hard drinking — sobersides!
One night I stepped up tremulous on the stage,
Sang something, found my senses afterward
Only to that intolerable sound
Of terrible applause. They shook the sky
With calling me to answer. And I lay—
A storm of weeping swept across my frame—
Till the polite, the hateful manager
Led me to face a nation's lunatic
Roar of delight. I soon got over that,
And over—yes, the other thing. Three months—
They used to quote me on the Stock Exchange!
I will say this to me, I will not shrink:
Look up, you coward, Cora Vavasour!
Which fathered me the bastard? Every rag,[1]
Prurient licksores of society,
Gave it a different father. Am I sure
Myself? The shameful Mammon was his name,
Glittering gold! I loved my opulence,
Cursed my "misfortune." Childbirth sobered me.
I loved the child, the only human love
I ever tasted, and I sacrificed
The popularity, the infamy,
Of my old life; I sought another world.
I "got religion" — how I hate the phrase!—
So jest the matron newspapers. The end.

[1] Society papers.

Since then I lived, as I am living still,
Wrapped in the all-absorbing love of him
My child, my child! And now my selfishness
Is shamed, and I have made the sacrifice
To give this pure heart to that maidenly,
And let mine old age grow upon my hair,
Finding my happiness in seeing him
The all-devoted, and in God's good pleasure
Have little children playing at my knees,
That I may listen, in their innocent prayers,
For Jesus' voice. And I will never break
The secret of his being to my boy
Lest he despise me. This one reticence
I think my long-drawn agony may earn.
For I will do without a mother's name
If only I may keep a son's love still!

[*Exit.*

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY (*with sarcastic verve*).

She will not break an oath so wisely sworn,
Unlock her secret to disdain.
Wisdom is hers—what angel need to warn?
Since angels only seek to gain
That wisdom of the unprofane.
All future happiness I surely see.
I am the Soul of Tragedy!

Enter ULRIC (*musing, with love-light in his eyes*).

[*At his entrance,* SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY *changes to a shape of incarnate Horror, and continues:*

Naked as dawn, the purpose of the hour
Grows on my vision, and my cynic laughter
Chills in my veins: the old avenging power
Shows me the thing that is to be hereafter.
I gloated on the coming of the curse—
I did create an hearse,
Black plumes and solemn mourners; and I saw
The triumph of some natural law
Fit for a poet's verse.
I saw some common fate to lure, to tempt;
(No mortal of the ages is exempt)

Some notable disaster to the house
Wherein such piety and love abide;
I saw some hateful spouse
Carry away the bride.
That feeble prescience of events to come,
That stultified imagining, hath lied;
And I can see, though all the signs be dumb
And auguries unfruitful—I can see,
Now, some intolerable tragedy
Fit for a god to picture, not a man!
I see the breaking of the rosary,
And Fate's cold fingers snap the span
Of three most innocent and pleasant lives.
So terrible a happening dives
Swift from God's hand to the abyss of hell,
And in its torment thrives,
Gathering curses from the darkest cave,
Calling corruption from the grave
To form one shape of aspect multiple
Divided in its single spell;
One spectre smooth and suave,
More horrible than any fear or active doom,
Beckoning with its lewd malignant finger,
Beckoning, beckoning, to no pious tomb
Where pitiable memory might linger.
A creeping, living horror hems me in,
A masterpiece of sin!
Even my soul, inured to contemplate
The dreadful, the perverse design of Fate,
In many stories never meant to win
Applause of mortals or of gods, but made
To choke man's spirit in its shade,
And make him, in his pride and happiness,
In virtue's mantle and love's seemly dress,
Immeasurably afraid.
The hour is on them—let its weight express
All blood, all life, from the disastrous grape!
In God, in mercy, there is no escape,
No anchor for distress.
The hour strikes mournfully upon the bell
Of the most awful precipice
That merges hell in hell.
There is deep silence in that dread abyss;
There is deep silence in the sphered sun;
There is deep silence where the planets run,
Majestic fires! Before the throne of God
Deep silence waits the lifting of the rod,
The moving nod.
Silence, reflected thence, still and intense, into the firmament;
Such silence as befits the event.

Re-enter CORA.

CORA.

This is the hour, O child whom I have loved
With love more tender than a mother's love,
Being thy friend; this moment have I sought,
Awaiting always the propitious time,
To speak some purpose grown more definite
Than is our wont. We spend the honey days
In gentle intercourse: high souls have stood
Watching us drink from their crystalline stream
Meandering through language: mighty kings
Have listened as we read of their dead pomp;
Fair women blushed as their imagined shapes
Flitted before us in the tender page.
We too have followed every curve and line
In fairy fancies on our canvas drawn
Of stately people, and the changing rhyme
Of virgins dancing before Artemis;
In all the pleasures that delight the mind,
Invigorate the soul, lend favour to
The body of the youth—for I am old—

ULRIC.

My Cora! old! But urgently a word
Came of some purpose. I am half afraid
To hear it—and yourself! Reluctance sits
Doggèd against the will to speak. Dear friend,
Let us sit close and whisper.

CORA.

Listen, then!
You are grown man: young men seek happiness.
Is there one joy your soul hath never felt?
One pure sweet passion?

ULRIC (*surprised*).

Sweet! you speak of love!
You must have guessed I meant to question you,
And smoothed the passage to my modesty.

CORA (*with bitter sorrow at her heart*).

You make me very glad. Yes, yes, indeed,
Love is my meaning. Does it shame me much
To talk so openly of love to you?
But I am old enough to be—to be——

ULRIC (*breaking right out*).

My wife! O Cora, I have loved you so!
My heart is like a fountain of the sea.
I burn, I tremble; in my veins there swims
A torrid ecstasy of madness. Ah!
Ah God! I kiss you, kiss you! O you faint!
Sweetheart, my passion overwhelms your soul.
Your virginal sweet spirit cannot reach
My fury. You are silent. Yet you love!
I read it in the terror of your eyes,
The crimson of your burning face. I know,
I know you love me! Cora, Cora, tell me!
O she will die! I would not—I was rough—
My overmastering desire to you—
My queen, my wife, this maddens me.

CORA (*recovering*).

You fool!
You beast! I hate you for your stupid self!
I am defiled! Go! Touch me not! Speak not!
I am accursèd of the Lord my God.
[*Shrieks.*

ULRIC (*still passionate, yet full of tender concern*).

Darling! my darling! How have I done this?

CORA.

Fool! It is madness! Yes, and punishment.
O God, that all my love should come to this!
You, you are mad! I speak of love, and you,
You—you are acting! I was taken in!
Let's laugh about it!
[*Tries to laugh, sinks back.*
It was not well done.
[ULRIC *is silent, and, puzzled, waits for her to go on.*
Surely you knew that it was Madeline!

ULRIC.

What! I should wed that pretty Puritan?
The downcast eyes and delicate white throat,
The lily, when I saw the rose before me?
Your full delicious beauty was as God!
You are a bunch of admirable grapes
Fit to intoxicate my being! Yes!
I would not give that sunny fruit of yours
For twenty such frail flowers as Madeline.
I am a man—you mate me with a girl!

CORA.

Stop! not a word! My blasphemy to hear,
Yours to speak out—when you are told the truth!

ULRIC.

What truth? This word hath first an ugly sound.
The truth! God curse it to His blackest hell
If but it stand between us and our love!

CORA.

O Ulric, Ulric ! bear with me awhile !
Speak no more words—each syllable strikes here, [*Hand to heart.*
A cloud of wingèd scorpions, that rage
In mine own deepest self; for there I know
Tame harpies that had ceased to torture me ;
And this more ghastly brood renews their sting,
Adding a triple poison ! O my soul
Is torn with pangs more horrible than hell,
Scorching the very marrow of my bones,
Corrupting me—corrupting me, I say—
O God ! is any safety at Thy feet ?
Be silent, O be silent for awhile,
And I will shrivel up thy wretched ears,
Give thee to curse the hour that saw thee first,
To curse thy parents and thine own young head.
May God forbid that thou should rail on Him !
Leave me a little to my torment yet,
That I may quell the host of devil forms
That eat my soul up, many torturing,
And one—ah ! one accursed beyond all—
Soothing ! O heart of Jesus, bleed with mine ! [*Kneels towards East.*
See, see ! I seek Thee on maternal knees !
Conceive Her pangs that bore Thee, when her shame
Devoured Her, with no memory of love—
As mine, as mine ! O bitter memories !
[*A pause.*

ULRIC.

Tell me, dear friend ! anxiety and love
Are like to kill me. Tell me in three words.

CORA (*slowly and deliberately*).

I am a dancer and a prostitute !

ULRIC *smiles contemptuously.*

Why trick me with so pitiful a lie ?
Were you the vilest woman on the earth,
Mere scum of filth shed off the city's dregs—
Were you the meanest and most treacherous—
Were you the sordid soul that most contrasts
With your true, noble, and unselfish self—
Were you the synthesis of all I hate,
In mind and body leprous and deformed—
Did every word and gesture fill my soul
With hatred and its parody, disgust—
It touches not my question ! This one fact
O'ermasters all eccentric circumstance :
I love you—you, and not your attributes !

CORA.

Great noble soul ! I hate myself the more
That I must wound you further with the truth.
A double prong this poisoned poniard
Snaps in our hearts. I kept the secret long.
Your breath, that burns upon me, wraps me round
With whirling passion, pierces through my veins
With its unhallowed fire, constrains, compels,
Drags out the corpse of twenty years ago
From the untrusty coffin of my mind,
To poison, to corrupt, to strike you there
Blind with its horror.

ULRIC.

Leave these bitter words !
They torture me with terrible suspense,
And you with fear. I see by these dread looks,
Tedious prologues, that there is a truth
You are afraid to speak.

CORA (*aside*).

What subterfuge?
What shield against the lightning of his love?
(*Hastily.*) I have a husband living.

ULRIC.

Think you, then,
I have lived so long and looked into you eyes
To listen to so hastily disgorged
A prentice falsehood not grown journeyman?
Then, had you fifty husbands, am I one,
Reared in the faith of high philosophy,
Schooled from my childhood in the brotherhood
Of poets, to descend to this absurd
Quibble of tedious morality?
Shame not your truth with that ignoble thought!
And also—tell me, once for all, the truth!
[*Bitterly.*
Say that you love him—it is on your tongue

CORA.

Learn the momentous horror of thy birth!
[*A pause.*

ULRIC.

I would not urge my suit against that plea,
But—I have known you, and your own pure soul
Should cast no doubt against me—you have said
"Rather we love such as the child of love;
And pity—he is not unpitiful
In this vile system; and respect him too—
He stands alone, the evidence of Strength!"
You move your purpose with no bastardy!
Only you claim to speak the generous thought:
For you I wait, for you, to offer love!

CORA.

All is too true—my own philosophy
Mars my world's wisdom. (*Suddenly.*) Can you tell me why
I loved you as a child, and why I dare
Now take your head between my hands and kiss
Your forehead with these shameful lips of mine,
These harlot lips, and kiss you unashamed?

ULRIC.

Strange are these words, and this emotion strange!

CORA.

Strange is the truth, and deadly as an asp.

ULRIC.

Wear me no more with this anxiety.

CORA.

How can I speak? For this will ruin us.

ULRIC.

Unspoken, I demand thy heart of thee.

CORA.

My heart is broken. This will murder thine.

ULRIC.

Kill, but not torture! Let me know the truth.

CORA.

This shaft is aimed even against thy life.

ULRIC.

What is my life without the love of thee?

CORA.

I hate each word as I do hate the devil.

ULRIC.

I, each evasion. I am bound a slave
To this wild passion. It will eat me up.

CORA.

You cannot guess the horror that you speak.
I tell you, if I know your golden heart,
This detestation of yourself shall cry
The cry of Œdipus—"I have profaned——"

ULRIC.

What sphinx more cruel? What new Œdipus?
You riddle, Cora, and it breaks my heart.
[*He sinks exhausted.*

(*Rallying.*) By God, I swear to you no lie shall keep
Its Dead Sea bar against our marrying.

CORA.

The truth! The truth! The truth! I am indeed
That whore I told you. That makes nothing here.
I am the mother of thy bastard birth!

ULRIC (*the conventional criticism is nearest the surface.*)

Stop! stop! I did not hear you. O my God!
What agony is this? What have I done
To earn this infamy? Or rather, Thou,
What have I not done? Have Thou pity yet;
Sustain me in this vile extremity!
[*He prays silently.*

CORA (*watching him*).

How wonderful! He will abide the shock.
Death and mute horror fight within his face
Against a will made masterful to Fate.

ULRIC (*raises his eyes and lifts his arm in act to strike*).

Then I detest you! Mother! Treacherous!
Vile as the worm that battens on the dead!

CORA.

Ulric! He's mad! Sweet heaven! what is this?
[CORA *is now hysterical.* ULRIC *does not notice. She shrieks at each new insult.*

ULRIC.

Say rather, what are you? I loved you once
Childlike; then came the power of reasoning,
And I beheld you, the unselfish one,
Befriending me, the angel of my life.
See what it rested on, my happiness!
Your sacrifice is utter selfishness;
Me, the sole pledge of your debaucheries
You keep—your love, the mere maternity
You share with swine and cattle! All your care
Is duty: let the harlot cleanse herself—
Tardy repentance!—In the name of God!
Worse, you have lied, and built me up a house
Of trust in you as being truth and love,
Who are in truth all lies, all treachery!
You made me love you as an honest man!
You watched this passion, this intolerable
Desire, this flame of hell; you fed it full,
Sunned it and watered—O my brain will snap!—
Only to blast it. Take your story back;

Be what you will except that infamous !
For as my mother—I should spit on you !
[CORA *is at his feet grovelling. She half rises to listen.*
Ignoble is your foul maternity,
The cattle-kinship. But the other crime
Is viler than the first one. "Look !" you say :
"His passion threatens to defile my bed !"
And put a hideous abiding curse
On both our lives to save your modesty
From my incestuous embrace ! O God !
My love is nobler—to defy the past,
Deny !—your love is merely natural ;
Mine, against Nature, is the love Divine !
What crime is this? Thy pale Son's martyrdom
Cleansed earth from no such vile hypocrisy
As this my mother's. And I call thee, God,
To witness ; and I call mankind to hear ;
This is my faith : I live and die by it.
I, nobler, cast away the infamy,
Break with my hands these rotten barricades,
[*He picks up his mother's Bible, tears it, and casts it into the fire.*
And swear before the Spirit of the World,
In sight of God, this day : I love you still
With carnal love and spiritual love !
And I will have you, by the living God,
To be my mistress. If I fail in this,
Or falter in this counsel of despair,
May God's own curses dog me into hell,
And mine own life perpetuate itself
Through all the ages of eternity.
Amen ! Amen ! Come, Cora, to my heart !
[*He stoops to embrace her. Horror and madness catch him, and he runs about the room wildly, crying for* CORA, *whom he cannot see.* MADELINE *enters.*

MADELINE.

O Cora ! Cora ! Ulric ! Help ! Help ! Help !

ULRIC (*regains his self-control*).

Hush ! All is well ! I cannot tell you now.
Some news—a letter—it has frightened her.

MADELINE.

But you were crying as a madman would.

ULRIC.

Believe me, I am nervous and distraught.
You know me, how excitable I am.
A moment, and you see me calm again.
Come, Cora, do not frighten Madeline !
[*He raises her to lead her from the room.*

CORA.

Where would you lead me? I am blind with tears.

ULRIC.

I have no tears. Mine eyes are hard and cold
As my intention. Help me, Madeline.

CORA.

God will avenge me bitterly on you
If you stretch hand to aid this infamy.

ULRIC.

You shall not wreck her life. Be silent now !
Believe me, it is nothing, Madeline !
She often falls into a fit like this.
Excess is danger, equally in prayer
(Her vice is prayer) as in debauchery.
[*He is again going mad. He drags* CORA *from the room.*

MADELINE.

[MADELINE *is uncertain what to do during this scene: so fidgets about and does nothing.*

It is not illness that hath made them mad.
I cannot guess what storm has lashed itself
Thus in one hour from peace and happiness
To such a fury that the very room
Seems to my fancy to be tossed about,
Rocking and whirling on some dizzy sea.
There is a horrible feeling in the air.

[*She shudders*

SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY.

[*During this speech sighs, cries, voices from without indicate the action.*

The keystone of this arch of misery
Is set by the unfaltering hands
Of Fate. How desperate the anarchy
Wrought in one hour!
The fickle sands
Run through the glass, and all the light is gone.
Abysses without name the mighty power
Spans with spread fingers; on the horizon
Blood stains the setting sun,
The shattered sun; it shall not rise again!
No resurrection to the trampled flower,
No hope to angels watching as in vain
Love—lies—slain!
Madness and Terror and the deadly mood of Fortitude,
A misbegotten brood
Of all things shameful—O the desolate eyes
Of the cold Christ enthroned! The weeping heaven-
Answers for angels: the oppressive skies
See them dislink from bodily form and shape,
Unloved and unforgiven,
Unwept, unpenitent, unshriven!
Their hell of horror knows no gate of any escape.
This tragedy is terrible to me.
Even I, its spirit, shudder as I see;
I, passionless, the moulder of men's hope,
The slayer of them, cast no horoscope
Divining what befell. And I am moved:
Both love, and both are worthy to be loved.
Ah Fate! if thou hadst cast the dies
Whence no appeal, in any other wise!
I am the soul of the grim face of things:
Mine are the Sphinx's wings;
Mine own life lives with this event!
Yet even I, its very self, lament
The execrable tyranny,
The rayless misery
Of this wild whirlpool sea of circumstance.
Mine old eyes look askance:
It is my punishment to dwell
In mine own self-created hell.

[CORA *rushes in.*

MADELINE.

What curse of God hath smitten you? I see
Exceeding horror in abiding shape
Blasting the countenance of peace and love
With some distortion. O your mouth's awry!

CORA (*in a hoarse, horrible voice*).

You cannot tell! I cannot tell myself.
Some vital mist of blood is shrouding sight
From all but my corruption's self. Come here
And look within mine eyes, if you can see
Remembrance that there was a God! I say
I see the whole bright universe a tomb,
With creeping spectres moving in the mist,
Some suffocating poison that was air.
O Phædra![1] lend me of thy wickedness,
Lest I go mad to contemplate myself!
I choke—I grope—I fall!
What name is this
That strikes my spirit as a broken bell
Struck by some devilish hammer? In my brain
Reverberates some word impossible.
O I am broken on the wheel of death;
My bones are ground in some infernal mill;
My blood is as the venom of a snake,
Striking each vessel with unwonted pangs,
Killing all good within me. I am—Ah!

[1] Wife of Theseus, in love with his son Hippolytus, by whom she was repulsed.

MADELINE.

Dear friend, dear friend, seek comfort in my arms !
Look to Our Lady of the Seven Stars !

CORA.

Can you not see ? I am cut off from God !
Loathsome bull-men in their corruption linked
Whisper lewd fancies in my ear. Great fish,
Monstrous and flat, with vile malignant eyes,
And crawling beetles of gigantic strength,
Crushed, mangled, moving,[1] are about me. Go !
Go ! do not touch the carcase of myself
That is abased, defiled, abominable.

MADELINE.

O Heart of Jesus ! Thou art bleeding still !
This was Thy true disciple. Leave her not,
Sweet Jesus, in this madness. Who is this ?

Enter ULRIC ; *he carries a razor.*

ULRIC.[2]

I have a lovely bride at last, my dear !
A phantom with intolerable eyes
Came close and whispered : I am Wisdom's self,
Thy spouse from everlasting. Mortal king
Of my immortal self, I claim thy love !
So, we are wedded close. Justice demands
The punishment of this accursèd one,
Originator of the cruel crimes
My mother-mistress carried to their close.
It was your vile affection, Madeline,
And your perverted hankering for me
That caused this thing abominable. Come !
I will not hurt you in the killing you !

[*He catches* MADELINE *gently by the hair, bending back her head.* CORA *sits thunderstruck, unable to move or speak.*)

MADELINE.

Help, Cora, help ! he means to murder me !
Jesus, my Saviour, save them from this deed !
Help ! [ULRIC *cuts her throat.*

ULRIC.

So perish the Queen's enemies !
Well, little lover, have I done it well ?
Cora, my sweetheart, we are happy now
To think our troubles should be ended so
In perfect love and—I am feeling ill——

[CORA *recovers her mental balance.*

CORA.

A blood-grey vapour and a scorpion steam
To poison the unrighteous life of God !

[ULRIC *looks on in a completely dazed manner, uncomprehending.*

CORA (*takes razor and puts it in his hand*).

Kill yourself.

ULRIC (*smiling, as if with some divine and ineffable joy, draws the razor across his throat, cutting in deeply. He falls bleeding.*)

My dear !

CORA.

That is my duty to my motherhood.
Let me now think of all this happening.

[*She sinks slowly into a chair trembling. She puts her hand to her throat as if choking. She bites her lip and sits easily back, looking straight before her with uncomprehending eyes.*

CURTAIN.

[1] The descriptions of demons are from a little-known Rabbinical MS. on the "Qliphoth," or shells (larvae) of the dead. They are known also as the "cut off from God."

[2] *Cf.* the speech of the Dweller of the Threshold in Lytton's "Zanoni."

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY GHOST.*

1901.

I. THE COURT OF THE PROFANE.

PROLOGUE.

OBSESSION.

TO CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

"Car ce que ta bouche cruelle
Eparpille en l'air,
Monstre assassin, c'est ma cervelle,
Mon sang et ma chair!"

THY brazen forehead, and its lustre gloom,
Great angel of Night's legion chosen chief,
Beam on me like the hideous-fronted tomb,
Whereon are graven strange words of misbelief;
Thy brazen forehead, and its lustre gloom!

Sinister eyes, you burn into my breast,
Creating an infernal cavern of woe,
Where strange sleek leopards lash them in unrest,
And furtive serpents crawling to and fro—
Sinister eyes, you burn into my breast!

All hell, all destinies of death are written
Like litanies blaspheming in those eyes;
And where the lightning of high God hath smitten
Lie the charred brands of monstrous infamies,
Wherein all destinies of death are written.

Thou cam'st to obsess me first that Easter Eve,
When, from the contemplation of His pain,
I turned to look into my own heart's heave,
And saw the bloody nails made fast again.
Thou cam'st to obsess me first that Easter Eve!

The lustre of old jet was over thee,
And through thy body coursed the scented blood;
Thy flesh was full of amorous ecstasy:
Polished, and gloomier than some black full flood,
The lustre of old jet was over thee!

In thy great brazen blackness I am bathed;
Through all thy veins, like curses, my blood runs;
In all thy flesh my naked bones are swathed,
My womb is pregnant with mad moons and suns.
In thy great brazen blackness I am bathed!

Imminent over me thy hatred hangs;
Thy slow blood trickles on my swollen sides,
The curdling purple where those poison-fangs
Struck, slays desire; and only death abides.
Imminent over me thy hatred hangs!

* At the publisher's suggestion, this volume was split up into "The Soul of Osiris" and "The Mother's Tragedy." The original design of the poet is now restored.

Thy jet smooth body clung to mine awhile,
Descending like the thunder-pregnant night.
Ominous, black, thy secret cruel smile
Lured me. We lay like death; until the light
Thy jet smooth body clung to mine awhile!

Thou wast a lion as an angel then,
In copper-glowing lands that gnaws the prey
He has regotten from the tribes of men.
We lay like passion all that deadly day—
Thou wast a lion as an angel then!

Great angel of the brazen brows, great lover,
Great hater of my body as my soul,
To whom I gave my life and love thrice over,
Fill me one last caress—the poison-bowl!
Great angel of the brazen brows, great lover!

FAME.

O IF these words were swords, and I had might
From some old prophet in whose tawny hair
The very breath of the Jehovah were
To smite the Syrian, and to smite, and smite,
And splash the sun's face with the blood, for spite
Of his downgoing, till I had made fair
All glories of my master, I could bear
To sink myself in the abundant night.

O if these words were lightnings, and their flame
Deluged the world, and drowned the seed of shame
In these ill waters where alone Truth's ark
May float, where only lovers may embark,
I were contented to abandon fame
And live with love for ever in the dark.

THE MOTHER AT THE SABBATH.[1]

COME, child of wonder! it is Sabbath Night,
The speckled twilight and the sombre singing!
Listen and come: the owl's disastrous flight
Points out the road! Hail, O propitious sight!
See! the black gibbet and the murderer swinging!

Come, child of wonder and the innocent eyes!
Come where the toad his stealthy way is taking.
Flaps the bat's wing upon thy cheek? How wise,
How wicked are those faces! And the skies
Are muffled, and the firmament is quaking.

Spectres of cats misshapen nestle close,
And rub their phantom sides against our dresses.
Come, child of wonder! in these souls morose
Keen joys may shudder—how the daylight goes!—
Night shall betray thee to the cold caresses!

Yes; it is nigh the hour of subtlety
And strange looks meaning more than Hell can utter:—
Come, child of wonder! watch the woman's eye
Who lurks toward us through the stagnant sky.
Hark to the words her serpents hiss or mutter!

[1] The Sabbath of the Witches. The reader should consult Payne Knight, "Two Essays on the Worship of Priapus"; Eliphaz Levi, "Histoire de la Magie" and "Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie"; P. Christian, "Histoire de la Magie"; and Goethe, "Faust." Also J. Glanvil, "Saducismus Triumphatus."

Close we are come; before us is the Cross
To trample and defile: the bones shall shudder
Of many a self-slain darling. From the moss
Swamp-adders greet us. How the dancers toss
The frantic limb, the unreluctant udder!

See, how their frenzy peoples all the ground!
Strange demon-shapes take up the unholy measure,
Strange beast and worm and crab: the uncouth sound
Of the unheard-of kisses: the profound
Gasps of the maniac, the devouring pleasure!

A curse of God is on them!—ha! the curse,
The curse that locks them in obscene embraces!
See how love mocks the melancholy hearse
Dressed as an altar: is she nun or nurse,
The priestess chosen of the half-formed faces?

An abbess, child of the unsullied eyes!
Why? To blaspheme! Sweet child, the dance grows madder.
O I am faint with pleasure! Ah! be wise;
One measure more, and then—the sacrifice?
What victim? Guess — a woman or an adder?

Nay, fear not, baby! In your mother's hand
You must be safe? You trust the womb that bare you!
Who comes toward us? Why, our God, the Grand!
Our Baphomet![1] Come, baby, to the band:
Our God may kiss you—yes, he will not spare you!

[1] Supposed to be the abbreviation of the Templar's Order spelt backwards: Tem. o. h. p. ab. = Templi omnium hominum pacis pater (Heb. Ab, father). Some assert the word to be really a synthesis of a great body of secret doctrine, discoverable by any one who knows the Qabalistic meaning of each letter.

Fall down, my baby; worship him with me.
There, go; I give you to his monster kisses!
Take her, my God, my God, my infamy,
My love, my master! take the fruit of me!
— Shrieks every soul and every demon hisses!

Out! out! the ghastly torches of the feast!
Let darkness hide us and the night discover
The shameless mysteries of God grown beast,
The nameless blasphemy, the slimèd East—
Sin incarnated with a leprous lover!

"Hoc est enim"[1]—the victim! ah! my womb,
My womb has borne the victim! Now I queen it
To-night upon the damned—thy love makes room,
My goat-head godhead, for my hecatomb!
I am thy mistress, and thy slaves have seen it!

Even as thy cold devouring kisses roll
Over my corpse; I hear its death-cry thrill me!
Thine!—O my God! I render thee the whole,
My broken body and my accursèd soul!
Come, come, come, come! Ah! conquer me and kill me!

THE BRIDEGROOM.

No passion stirs the cool white throat of her;
No living glory fills the deep dead eyes;
No sleep that breaks her Southern indolence;
Not all the breezes out of heaven, that stir
The sleepy wells and woodlands, bid her rise;
Nor all a godhead's amorous violence.
She is at peace; we will go hence.

[1] "Hoc est enim corpus meum," the words used in the Mass at the elevation of the Host.

Warm wealth of draperies, the broidered room,
And delicate tissues of pale silk that shine
About her bed: all kiss the dead girl's face
With shadowy reluctances that gloom
Over and under, and the cold divine
Presence of Death bedews the quiet place.
She was so gracious; she was grace.

Once, in the long insidious hours that steal
Through summer's pleasant kingdom, she would weave
Such songs, such murmurs of the dusky breeze
That passed, like silken tapestries that feel
The silkier cheeks of maidens as they cleave
Tender to patient lovers, for the ease
Of lips fulfilled of harmonies.

Such songs were hers. What song is hers to-night
When she is smitten in her bridal bed,
Because I would not trust the God that gave
Her smooth virginity to godlier might,
My glory? There she lies divine and dead
Because I would not trust the sullen wave
Of time; and chose this way—her grave.

I had not thought the poison left her so—
Smiling, enticing, exquisite. I meant
Rather that beauty to destroy, to leave
No subtle languors on that breast of snow,
No curves by God's caressing finger bent,
To bid me think of her: I would deceive
My memory—now I can but grieve.

Perhaps our happiness, despite of all,
Would have grown comelier and never tired;
Perhaps the pitiful pale face had been
Alway my true wife's; let me not recall
Her first shy glance! This woman I desired,
And sealed my own for ever by this keen
Death that crowns her Death's queen.

Death's and not mine: I was a fool to kiss
Her dead lips—ay, her living lips for that!
I cannot bid her rise and live again.
I would not. Nay, I know not; for is this
My triumph or my ruin, satiate
Of death, insatiate alway of pain?
What have I done? In vain, in vain!

I will not look at her; I dare not stay.
I will go down and mingle with the throng,
Find some debasing dulling sacrifice,
Some shameless harlot with thin lips grown grey
In desperate desire, and so with song
And wine fling hellward. Yes, she does not rise—

O if she opened once her eyes!

THE ALTAR OF ARTEMIS.

WHERE, in the coppice, oak and pine
With mystic yew and elm are found,
Sweeping the skies, that grow divine
With the dark wind's despairing sound,
The wind that roars from the profound,
And smites the mountain-tops, and calls
Mute spirits to black festivals,
And feasts in valleys iron-bound,
Desolate crags, and barren ground;—
There in the strong storm-shaken grove
Swings the pale censer-fire for love.

The foursquare altar, rightly hewn,
And overlaid with beaten gold,
Stands in the gloom; the stealthy tune
Of singing maidens overbold
Desires mad mysteries untold,

With strange eyes kindling, as the fleet
Implacable untiring feet
  Weave mystic figures manifold
  That draw down angels to behold
The moving music, and the fire
Of their intolerable desire.

For, maddening to fiercer thought,
  The fiery limbs requicken, wheel
In formless furies, subtly wrought
  Of swifter melodies than steel
  That flashes in the fight : the peal
Of amorous laughters choking sense,
And madness kissing violence,
  Rings like dead horsemen ; bodies reel
  Drunken with motion ; spirits feel
The strange constraint of gods that dip
From Heaven to mingle lip and lip.

The gods descend to dance ; the noise
  Of hungry kissings, as a swoon,
Faints for excess of its own joys,
  And mystic beams assail the moon,
  With flames of their infernal noon ;
While the smooth incense, without breath,
Spreads like some scented flower of death,
  Over the grove ; the lover's boon
  Of sleep shall steal upon them soon,
And lovers' lips, from lips withdrawn,
Seek dimmer bosoms till the dawn.

Yet on the central altar lies
  The sacrament of kneaded bread
With blood made one, the sacrifice
  To those, the living, who are dead—
  Strange gods and goddesses, that shed
Monstrous desires of secret things
Upon their worshippers, from wings
  One lucent web of light, from head
  One labyrinthine passion-fed
Palace of love, from breathing rife
With secrets of forbidden life.

But not the sunlight, nor the stars,
  Nor any light but theirs alone,
Nor iron masteries of Mars,
  Nor Saturn's misconceiving zone,
  Nor any planet's may be shown,
Within the circle of the grove,
Where burn the sanctities of love :
  Nor may the foot of man be known,
  Nor evil eyes of mothers thrown
On maidens that desire the kiss
Only of maiden Artemis.

But horned and huntress from the skies,
  She bends her lips upon the breeze,
And pure and perfect in her eyes,
  Burn magical virginity's
  Sweet intermittent sorceries.
When the slow wind from her sweet word
In all their conchéd ears is heard.
  And like the slumber of the seas,
  There murmur through the holy trees
The kisses of the goddess keen,
And sighs and laughters caught between.

For, swooning at the fervid lips
  Of Artemis, the maiden kisses
Sob, and the languid body slips
  Down to enamelled wildernesses.
  Fallen and loose the shaken tresses ;
Fallen the sandal and girdling gold,
Fallen the music manifold
  Of moving limbs and strange caresses,
  And deadly passion that possesses
The magic ecstasy of these
Mad maidens, tender as blue seas.

Night spreads her yearning pinions ;
  The baffled day sinks blind to sleep ;
The evening breeze outswoons the sun's
  Dead kisses to the swooning deep.
  Upsoars the moon ; the flashing steep
Of Heaven is fragrant for her feet ;
The perfume of the grove is sweet
  As slumbering women furtive creep
  To bosoms where small kisses weep,
And find in fervent dreams the kiss
Most memoried of Artemis.

Impenetrable pleasure dies
  Beneath the madness of new dreams ;
The slow sweet breath is turned to sighs
  More musical than many streams
  Under the moving silver beams,

Fretted with stars, thrice woven across.
White limbs in amorous slumber toss
  Like sleeping foam, whose silver gleams
  On motionless dark seas; it seems
As if some gentle spirit stirred
Their lazy brows with some swift word.

So, in the secret of the shrine,
  Night keeps them nestled; so the gloom
Laps them in waves as smooth as wine,
  As glowing as the fiery womb
  Of some young tigress, dark as doom,
And swift as sunrise. Love's content
Builds its own mystic monument,
  And carves above its vaulted tomb
  The Phœnix on her fiery plume,
To their own souls to testify
Their kisses' immortality.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

O CRIMSON cheeks of love's fierce fever!
  O amber skin, electric to the kiss!
  O eyes of sin! O bosom of my bliss!
Sorrow, the web, is spun of Love the weaver.

Twelve moons have circled in their seasons;
  The earth has swept, exultant, round the sun;
  Our love has slept, and, sleeping, made us one.
The thirteenth moon, be sure, the time of treasons!

Another spirit waves its pinions.
  Love vanishes: we hate each other's sight.
  In sullen seas sinks our sun-flaming light,
Darkness is master of the dream-dominions.

Lo! in thy womb a child! How rotten
  Seems love to me who love it as my soul!
  The love of thee hath broken its control,
The misconceived become the misbegotten.

In thee the love of me is broken.
  Fear, hatred, pain, discomfort mock thy days;
  Thou canst disdain; these solitary bays
Twine with decaying myrtles for a token.

Dislike, disgust (you say repulsers)
  Link me to thee despite—because of—this
  Skeleton key to charnel-house. My kiss
Is the dog's kiss to Lazarus his ulcers!

Mock me, ye clinging lovers, at your peril!
  God turns to dust the blossom of your youth.
  The fruit of lust is poisonous with—truth!
Its immortality is—to be sterile!

This lie of Love hath no abiding:
  "Two loves are ended; one, the infant band,
  Rises more splendid." Spin the rope of sand!
Two loves are one; but O to their dividing!

Fertility—distaste's adoption!
  Her body's growth—desire's mortality!
  I look and loathe. Behold how lovers die,
And immortality puts on corruption!

ASMODEL.[1]

CALL down that star whose tender eyes
  Were on thy bosom at thy birth!
Call, one long passionate note that sighs!
  Call, till its beauty bend to earth,
Meet thee and lift thee and devise
  Strange loves within the gleaming girth,
And kisses underneath the star
Where on her brows its seven rays are.

Call her, the maiden of thy sleep,
  And fashion into human shape
The whirling fountains fiery and deep,
  The incense-columns that bedrape

[1] One of the "Intelligences" of the Planet Venus.

Her glimmering limbs, when shadows creep
  Among blue tresses that escape
The golden torque that binds her hair,
Whose swarthy splendours drench the air.

She comes! she comes! The spirit glances
  In quick delight to hold her kiss;
The fuming air shimmers and dances;
  The moonlight's trembling ecstasies
Swoon; and her soul, as my soul, trances,
  Knowing no longer aught that is;
Only united, moving, mixed,
A music infinitely fixed.

Music that throbs, and soars, and burns,
  And breaks the possible, to dwell
One moving monotone, nor turns,
  Making hell heaven, and heaven hell,
The steady impossible song that yearns
  And brooks no mortal in its swell—
This monotone immortal lips
Make in our infinite eclipse!

Formless, above all shape and shade;
  Lampless, beyond all light and flame;
Timeless, above all age and grade;
  Moveless, beyond the mighty name;
A mystic mortal and a maid,
  Filled with all things to fill the same,
To overflow the shores of God,
Mingling our proper period.

The agony is passed: behold
  How shape and light are born again;
How emerald and starry gold
  Burn in the midnight; how the pain
Of our incredible marriage-fold
  And bed of birthless travail wane;
And how our molten limbs divide,
And self and self again abide.

The agony of extreme joy,
  And horror of the infinite blind
Passions that sear us and destroy,
  Rebuilding for the deathless mind
A deathless body, whose alloy
  Is gold and fire, whose passions find
The tears of their caress a dew,
Fiery, to make creation new.

This agony and bloody sweat,
  This scarring torture of desire,
Refine us, madden us, and set
  The feast of unbegotten fire
Before our mouths, that mingle yet
  In this; the mighty-moulded lyre
Of many stars still strikes above
Chords of the mastery of love.

This subtle fire, this secret flame,
  Flashes between us as she goes
Beyond the night, beyond the Name,
  Back to her unsubstantial snows;
Cold, glittering, intense, the same
  Now, yesterday, for aye! she glows
No woman of my mystic bed;
A star, far off, forgotten, dead.

Only to me looks out for ever
  From her cold eyes a fire like death;
Only to me her breasts can never
  Lose the red brand that quickeneth;
Only to me her eyelids sever
  And lips respire her equal breath;
Still in the unknown star I see
The very god that is of me.

The day's pale countenance is lifted,
  The rude sun's forehead he uncovers;
No soft delicious clouds have drifted,
  No wing of midnight's bird that hovers;
Yet still the hard blind blue is rifted,
  And still my star and I as lovers
Yearn to each other through the sky
With eyes half closed in ecstasy.

Night, Night, O mother Night, descend!
  O daughter of the sleeping sea!
O dusk, O sister-spirit, lend
  Thy wings, thy shadows, unto me!

O mother, mother, mother, bend
And shroud the world in mystery
That secrets of our bed forbidden
Cover their faces, and be hidden!

O steadfast, O mysterious bride!
O woman, O divine and dead!
O wings immeasurably wide!
O star, O sister of my bed!
O living lover, at my side
Clinging, the spring, the fountain-head
Of musical slow waters, white
With thousand-folded rays of light!

Come! Once again I call, I call,
I call, O perfect soul, to thee,
With chants, and murmurs mystical,
And whispers wiser than the sea:
O lover, come to me! The pall
Of night is woven: fair and free,
Draw to my kisses; let thy breath
Mingle for love the wine of death!

MADONNA OF THE GOLDEN EYES.

NIGHT brings madness; moonlight dips her throat to madden us;
Love's swift purpose darts, the flash of a striking adder.
Love that kills and kisses dwells above to sadden us;
Dawn brings reason back and the violet eyes grows sadder.
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Swooned the deep sunlight above the summer stream;
Droned the sleepy dragon-fly by the water spring;
Stood we in the noontide in a misty dream,
Fearful of our voices, of some sudden thing.
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Dared we whisper? Dared we lift our eyes to see there
In their desperate depth some mutual flame of treason?
Dared we move apart? So glad were we to be there,
Nothing in the world might change the constant season.
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Did a breath of wind disturb the lazy day?
Did a soul of fear flit phantom-wise across?
Suddenly we clasped and clave as spirit unto clay;
Suddenly love swooped to us as swoops the albatross.
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Did thy husband's venom breathe on the trembling scale?
Did that voice corrupting cry across the midnight air?
What decided? Gabriel may spin the foolish tale.
What decided? We were lovers — who should care?
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

How we clave together! How we strained caresses!
How the swooning limbs sank fainting on the sward!
For the fiery dart raged fiercer; in excesses
Long restrained, it cried, "Behold! I am the Lord!"
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Yes, we sat with modest eyes and murmuring lips
Downcast at the table, while the husband drank his wine.
So thy sly, slow hand stretched furtively; there slips
Deadly in his throat the poison draught divine!
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Then we left his carcase with the stealthy tread
Reverent, in presence of the silent place;
Then you burned, afire, caught up the ghastly head,
Looked like Hell right into it, and spat upon the face!
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

"Come with me," you whispered, "come, and let the moon
Lend her light to madden us through the hours of pleasure;
Let the dayspring pass and brighten into noon!
Yet no limit find our love, nor passion find a measure!"
O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!

Dawn brought reason back, and the violet eyes are sadder:—
O they were golden once, and I call them golden still!
Dawn has brought remorse, the sting of a foul swamp-adder—
I hate you! beast of Hell! I have snapped Love's manacle!
O Murderess of the hateful eyes!

O and you fix them on me! your lips curse now—'tis fitter!
Snarl on! eat out your heart with the poison that is its blood.
Speak! and her lips move now with blasphemies cruel and bitter.
Slow the words creep forth as a sleepy and deadly flood.
They glitter, those Satanic eyes!

"Beast! I gave you my soul and my body to all your lust!
Beast! I am damned in Hell for the kisses we sucked from death!
Now remorse is yours, and love is fallen in dust—
I shall seek Him again for its sacramental breath!
Yes, fear the gold that glitters from these eyes!"

She took a dagger, and I could not stir.
She pierced my silent fascinated breast.
She held me with the deadly look of her.
I cried to Mary in the House of Rest:
"O Madonna of the Virgin eyes!"

* * *

I pierced him to the very soul: I took
His whole life's love to me before he died:
Mad kisses mingled that enduring look
Of death-caught passion: in his death he cried,
"O Madonna of the Golden Eyes!"

LOVE AT PEACE.

THE valleys, that are splendid
With sun ere day is ended
And love-lutes take to tune,
See joyless and unfriended
The perfect bowstring bended,
Whose bow is called the moon.
They see the waters slacken
And all the sky's blue blacken,
While in the yellow bracken
Love lies in death or swoon.

The stars arise and brighten;
The summer lightnings lighten,
Faint and as midnight mute.
Afar the snowfields tighten
The iron bands that frighten
No fairy's tender foot.
Across the stiller river
Stray flowers of ice may shiver,
Before the day deliver
The murmur of its lute.

The sleep of bird and flower
Proclaims that Heaven has power
To guard its gentlest child.
The lover knows the hour,
And goes with dew for dower
To wed in woodland wild.
The silvern grasses shake,
And through the startled brake
Glides the awakened snake,
Untamable and mild.

The song of stars ; the wail
Of women wild and pale,
  Forlorn and not forsaken ;
The tremulous nightingale ;
The waters wan that fail
  By frost-love overtaken,
Make sacred all the valley ;
And softly, musically,
The breezes lull and rally ;
  The pine stirs and is shaken.

Beneath whose sombre shade
I hold a lazy maid
  In chaste arms and too tender.
Lo ! she is fair ! God said ;
And saw through the deep glade
  How sweet she was and slender.
But I—could I behold her
Curved shapeliness of shoulder ?
I, whose strong arms enfold her
  Immaculate surrender.

Pure as the dawns that quicken
On snow-topped mountains stricken
  By first gray light that grows,
By beams that gather, thicken,
A web of fairy ticken [1]
  To make a fairy rose :
Pure as the seas that lave
With phosphorescent wave
The sombre architrave
  Of Castle No-man-knows.

Pure as the dreams, undreamt
(That men have in contempt,
  That wise men yearn to see),
Of angel forms exempt
From mockeries that tempt
  Who fly about the lea ;
Proclaiming things unheard,
Unknown to brightest bird,
Things, whose unspoken word
  Is utmost secrecy.

[1] A closely woven fabric.

So pure, so pale we lie,
Like angels eye to eye,
  Like lovers lip to lip.
So, the elect knight, I
Keep vigil to the sky,
  While the dumb moments slip.
So she, my bride, my queen,
So virginal, so keen,
Swoons, while the moon-rays lean
  To fan their silver ship.

No sleep, but precious kisses
In those pale wildernesses,
  Mark the dead hours of night,
No sleep so sweet as this is,
Whose pulse of purple blisses
  Beats calm and cool and light.
No life so fair with roses,
No day so swift to close is ;
No cushion so reposes
  Fair love so sweet and slight.

MORS JANUA AMORIS.

"None but the dead can know the worth of love."—KELLY.

In the night my passion fancies
  That an incense vapour whirls,
That a cloud of perfume trances
  With its dreamy vapour-curls
All my soul, with whom their dances
  The one girl of mortal girls.
The one girl whose wanton glances
  Soften into living pearls
Comes, a fatal, fleeting vision,
Turns my kisses to derision,
Smiles upon my breast, and sighs,
Flits, and laughs, and fades, and dies.

By the potent starry speeches ;
  By the spells of mystic kings ;
By the magic passion teaches ;
  By the strange and sacred things

By whose power the master reaches
To the stubborn fiery springs ;
By the mystery of the beaches
Where the siren Sibyl sings ;
I will hold her, live and bleeding ;
Clasp her to me, pale and pleading ;
Hold her in a human shape ;
Hold her safe without escape !

So I put my spells about her
As she flew into my dreams ;
So I drew her to the outer
Land of unforgetful streams ;
So I laid her (who should doubt her?)
Where enamelled verdure gleams,
Drew her spirit from without her !
In her eyelids stellar beams
Glow renascent, now I hold her
Breast to breast, and shining shoulder
Laid to shoulder, in the bliss
Of the uncreated kiss.

Lips to lips beget for daughters
Little kisses of the breeze ;
Limbs entwined with limbs, the waters
Of incredible blue seas ;
Eyes that understand, the slaughters
Of a thousand ecstasies
Re-embodied, as they wrought us
Garlands of strange sorceries ;
New desires and mystic passion
Infinite, of starry fashion ;
The mysterious desire
Of the subtle formless fire.

Vainly may the Tyanæan [1]
Throw his misconceiving eye
To bewitch our empyrean
Splendours of the under sky !
If the loud infernal pæan
Be our marriage-melody,
We are careless, we Achæan
Moulders of our destiny.

[1] Apollonius of Tyana, the sage whose glance dissolved the illusion which Lamia had cast about herself. See Keats's poem.

Hell, it may be, for his playing,
Renders Orpheus the decaying
Love—in Hell, if Hell there be,
I would seek Eurydice !

If she be the demon sister
Of my brain's mysterious womb ;
If she brand my soul and blister
Me with kisses of the tomb ;
If she drag me where the bistre
Vaults of Hell gape wide in gloom ;
Little matter ! I have kissed her !
Little matter ! as a loom
She has woven love around me,
As with burning silver bound me,
Held me to her scented skin
For an age of deadly sin !

So I fasten to me tighter
Fetters on her limbs that fret ;
So my kisses kindle brighter,
Fiercer, flames of Hell, and set
Single, silent, as a mitre
Blasphemous, a crown of jet
On our foreheads, paler, whiter
Than the snowiest violet.
So I forge the chains of fire
Round our single-souled desire.
Heaven and Hell we reck not of,
Being infinite in love.

Come, my demon-spouse, to fashion
The fantastic marriage-bed !
Let the starry billows splash on
Both our bodies, let them shed
Dewfall, as the streams Thalassian
On Selene's fallen head !
Let us mingle magic passion,
Interpenetrating, dead,
Deathless, O my dead sweet maiden !
Lifeless, in the secret Aidenn ! [1]
Let our bodies meet and mix
On the spirit's crucifix !

[1] This word is taken direct from Poe's "Raven" in the sense in which it is used by him.

THE MAY QUEEN.[1]

(OLD STYLE.)

IT is summer and sun on the sea,
The twilight is drawn to the world:
We linger and laugh on the lea,
The light of my spirit with me,
Sharp limbs in close agony curled.

The noise of the music of sleep,
The breath of the wings of the night,
The song of the magical deep,
The sighs of the spirits that weep,
Make murmur to tune our delight.

Slow feet are our measures that move;
Swift songs are more soft than the breeze;
Our mouths are made mute for our love;
Our eyes are made soft as the dove;
We mingle and move as the seas.

The light of the passionate dawn
That kissed us, and would not awaken,
Grew golden and bold on the lawn;
The rays of the sun are withdrawn
At last, and the blossoms are shaken.

Oh, fragrant the breeze is that stirs
The grasses around us that lean!
Oh, sweet is the whisper that purrs
From those wonderful lips that are hers,
From the passionate lips of a queen.

A queen is my lover, I say,
With a crown of the lilies of light—
For a maiden they crowned her in May,
For the Queen of the Daughters of Day
That are flowers of the forest of Night.

They crowned her with lilies and blue,
They crowned her with yellow and roses;
They gave her a sceptre of rue,
And a girdle of laurel and yew,
And a basket of pansies in posies.

They led her with songs by the stream;
They brought her with tears to the river;
They danced as the maze of a dream;
They kissed her to roses and cream,
And they cried, "Let the queen live for ever!"

They took her, with all of the flowers
They had girded her with for God's daughter;
They cast her from amorous bowers
To the river, the horrible powers
Of the Beast that lurks down by the Water!

My way was more swift than a bow
That flings out its barb to the night:
My sword struck the infinite blow
That smote him, and blackened the flow
Of the amorous river of light.

I plunged in the stream, and I drew
My queen from the clasp of the water;
I crowned her with roses and blue,
With yellow and lilies anew;
I called her my love and God's daughter!

I gave her a sceptre of may;
I gave her a girdle of green;
I drew her to music and day;
I led her the beautiful way
To the land where the Winds lie between.

So still lingers sun upon sea;
Still twilight draws down to the world;
The light of my spirit is she;
The soul of her love is in me;
Lithe kisses with music are curled.

Like light on the meadows we dwell;
Like twilight clings heart unto heart;
Like midnight the depth of the spell
Our love weaves, and stronger than hell
The guards of our palace of art.

We are one as the dew that is drawn
By the sun from the sea: we are curled
In curves of delight and of dawn,
On the lone, the immaculate lawn,
Beyond the wild way of the world.

[1] See Frazer, "The Golden Bough," for proof of the universality of the ritual described. The parallelism is accidental, Crowley having read no sociology at this time.

SIDONIA THE SORCERESS.[1]

SIDONIA the Sorceress! I revel in her amber skin,
Dream in her eyes and die in her caress.
She is for me the avatar of sin,
Sidonia the Sorceress.

The one unpardonable wickedness,
Strange serpent-blasphemies, are curled within
The heart of her Hell gives me to possess.

Her hair is fastened with a dagger thin;
A dead man's heart is woven with each tress.
I murdered Christ before my lips could win
Sidonia the Sorceress.

THE GROWTH OF GOD.

(AS DEVELOPED ON A MOONLESS NIGHT IN THE TROPICS.)[2]

EVEN as beasts, where the sepulchral ocean
Sobs, and their fins and feet keep Runic pace,
Treading in water mysteries of motion,
Witch-dances: where the ghastly carapace
Of the blind sky hangs on the monstrous verge:
Even as serpents, wallowing in the slime;
So my thoughts raise misshapen heads, and urge
Horrible visions of decaying Time.

For in the fiery dusk arise distorted
Grey shapes in moonless phosphorus glow of death;
The keen light of the eyes thrust back and thwarted,
The quick scent stabbed by the miasma breath.

The day is over, when the lizard darted,
A flash of green, the emerald outclassed;
Night is collapsed upon the vale: departed
All but the Close, suggestive of the Vast.

The heavy tropic scent-inspiring gloom
Clothes the wide air, the circumambient æther.
The earth grins open, as it were a tomb,
And struggling earthquakes gnash their teeth beneath her.
The night is monstrous: in the flickering fire
Strange faces gibber as the brands burn low;
Old shapes of hate, young phantoms of desire
More hateful yet, shatter and change and grow.

There is a sense of terror in the air,
And dreadful stories catch my breath and bind me,
Soft noises as of breathing: unaware
What devils or what ghosts may lurk behind me!
Even my horse is troubled: vain it is
Invoking memory for sweet sound of youth;
The song, the day, the cup, the shot, the kiss!
This night begets illusion—ay! the truth.

I know the deep emotion of that birth,
When chaos rolled in terror and in thunder;
The abortion of the infancy of earth;
The monsters moving in a world of wonder;
The Shapeless, racked with agony, that grew
Into these phantom forms that change and shatter;
The falling of the first toad-spotted dew;
The first lewd heaving ecstasy of matter.

I see all Nature claw and tear and bite,
All hateful love and hideous: and the brood
Misshapen, misbegotten out of spite;
Lust after death; love in decrepitude.

[1] For her history see Wilhelm Meinhold.

[2] When Crowley was benighted on the way from Iguala to Mexico City, whither he was riding unattended.

Thus, till the monster-birth of serpent-man
Linked in corruption with the serpent-woman,
Slavering in lust and pain—creation's ban.
The horrible beginning of the human.

The savage monkey leaping on his mate;
The upright posture for sure murder taken;
The gibberings modified to spit out hate:
Struggle to manhood—surely God-forsaken.
The bestial cause of Morals—fear and hate.
At last the anguish-vomit of despair,
The growth of reason—and its pangs abate
No whit: the knife replaces the arm bare.

Fear grows, and torment; and distracted pain
Must from sheer agony some respite find;
When some half-maddened miserable brain
Projects a God in his detesting mind.
A God who made him—to the core all evil,
In his own image—and a God of Terror;
A vast foul nightmare, an impending devil;
Compact of darkness, infamy, and error.

Some bestial woman, beaten by her mates,
In utter fear broke down the bar of reason;
Shrieked, crawled to die; delirium abates
By some good chance her terror in its season.
Her ravings picture the cessation of
Such life as she had known: her mind conceives
A God of Mercy, Happiness, and Love;
Reverses life and fact: and so believes.

So man grew up; and so religion grew.
Now in the æons shall not truth dissever
The man and maker, smite the old lie through,
Cast God to black oblivion for ever?
Picture no longer in fallacious thought
A doer for each deed! the real lurks
Nowhere thus hidden: there is truly nought
Substantial in these unsubstantial works.

But work thou ever! Thou who art or art not,
Work that the fever of thy life abate;
Work! though for weary ages thou depart not,
At last abideth the sequestered state.
Sure is the search! O seeker, as the bird,
Homing through distant skies toward its rest,
Shall surely find—and thou shalt speak the word
At last that shall dissolve thee into rest.

TO RICHARD WAGNER.

O MASTER of the ring of love, O lord
Of all desires, and king of all the stars,
O strong magician, who with locks and bars
Dost seal that kingdom silent and abhorred
That stretches out and binds with iron cord
The hopes and lives of men, and makes and mars!
O thou thrice noble for the deadly scars
That answered vainly thy victorious sword!

Wagner! creator of a world of light
As beautiful as God's, bend down to me,
And whisper me the secrets of thy heart,
That I may follow and dispel the night,
And fight life through, a comrade unto thee,
Under Love's banner with the sword of Art!

THE TWO EMOTIONS.

How barren is the Valley of Delight!
Swift the gaunt hounds that nose the warm close trail
Of all my love's content; in vain I veil
My secret of remorse; from their keen sight
And scent my poor deception takes to flight.
I borrow perfume from young loves waxed pale;
I borrow music from the nightingale.
In vain: she knows me, that I hate he quite.

Not altogether: in my patchwork brain
Some rag of passion tears its woof asunder.
Strange, that its own insatiable pain
Should find an opiate in her eyes of wonder!
Yes, though I hate her well enough to kill,
I know that then my soul would love her still.

THE SONNET.

I.

THE solemn hour, and the magnetic swoon
Of midnight in a poet's lonely hall!
Grave spirits answer (angels if he call)
The invocations of his lofty tune.
Thus in his measures nature craves the boon
To be reflected; and his rhymes appal
Or charm mankind as tides that flow or fall,
Waxes or wanes the tempestival moon.

Her course is measured in the sonnet's tether.
Waxes the eightfold ecstasy; exceeds
The minor sestet, where some passion bleeds
Or truth discourses: or eclipse may end,
Proof against thought; but if man comprehend
The stars in all their stations sing together.

II.

What power or fascination can there lie
In this fair garden of the straight-kept rows,
The sonnet? Surely some archangel knows
Why, having written in mere ecstasy
One sonnet-thought, the metre cannot die
But urges, but compels me to compose
More and still more,[1] and still my spirit goes
Striving up glittering steeps of symphony.

[1] This is a singular psychological fact.

There is an angel who is guardian.
Surely her wings are rosy, and her feet
Black as the wind of frost; but oh! her face!
Whoso may know it is no more a man,
But walks with God, and sees the Lady sweet
Whose body was the vehicle of grace.

WEDLOCK.

A SONNET.

I SAW the Russian peasants[1] build a ring
Of glowing embers of the bubbling pine.
In the green heart o' the salamander line
They scatter roses. Now the youngsters spring
Within, who with hard-shut eyes hope to bring
From out the fiery circle one divine
Blossom of rose, as from a poisonous mine
Gold comes to gird the palace of a king.

Envious I sprang—and found the last rose gone.
So in the fiery ring of wedlock, blind,
Mad, one may leap, no rose perhaps to find
(Or, if no rose, good fortune finds no thorn),
But—mark the difference—palpable and plain:
Rose or no rose, one leaps not out again.

SONNET FOR GERALD KELLY'S DRAWING OF JEZEBEL.

LIFT up thine head, disastrous Jezebel!
Fire and black stars are melted in thine hair
That curls to Hell, as in Satanic prayer;
Thy mouth is heavy with its riper smell
Than clustered pomegranates beside a well;
The cruel savour of thy lust lies there,
That blood may tinge thy kisses unaware
To fill thy children with the hope of Hell.

[1] In my mind's eye, Horatio. The story is a pretty fiction.

O evil beauty ! Heart of mystery
Wherein my being toils, and in the blood
Mixed with thy poison finds its subtle food,
Intoxicating my divinity !
Disdainful hands behind thee, I may take
What joys I will — but thou wilt not awake.

MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE.[1]

In my distress I made complaint to Death :
Thy shadow strides across the starry air ;
Thou comest as a serpent unaware,
Striking love's heart and crushing out man's breath :
Thy destiny is even as God saith
To mark the impotence of human prayer,
Choke hope, sting all but Love ; and never care
If man or flower or sparrow perisheth.

Thee, I invoke thee, though no mercy move
Thy heart ! No power is to thy hate assigned
On love (sing, poets ! shrill, Pandean reeds !).
But me, look on me, how my bosom bleeds—
Invoke new power of cruelty ; be kind,
And ask authority to quench my love !

COENUM FATALE.

"La cour d'appel de la volonté de l'homme—
C'est le ventre !"—*Old proverb.*

The worst of meals is that we have to meet.
They trick my purpose and evade my will,
Remind my conscience that I love her still,
And pull my spirit from its lofty seat.
For I withdraw myself : my stealthy feet
Seek half-ashamed the alembic which I fill
To the epic-mark—one sonnet to distil,
In this poor miracle—my love to cheat.

Dinner clangs cheerily from my lady's gong.
A man must eat in intervals of song !
Swift feet run back to hide my hate of her.
And then — that hate flies truant, as my thought
Rests (surely it beseems the overwrought)
And I am left her slave and minister.

THE SUMMIT OF THE AMOROUS MOUNTAIN.

To love you, Love, is all my happiness ;
To kill you with my kisses ; to devour
Your whole ripe beauty in the perfect hour
That mingles us in one supreme caress ;
To drink the purple of your thighs ; to press
Your beating bosom like a living flower ;
To die in your embraces, in the shower
That dews like death your swooning loveliness

To know you love me ; that your body leaps
With the quick passion of your soul ; to know
Your fragrant kisses sting my spirit so ;
To be one soul where Satan smiles and sleeps ;—
Ah ! in the very triumph-hour of Hell
Satan himself remembers whence he fell !

CONVENTIONAL WICKEDNESS.

Before the altar of Famine and Desire
The Two in One, a golden woman stands
Holding a heart in her ensanguine hands,
The nightly victim of her whore's attire.
Quick sobs of lust instead of prayers inspire
Some oracle of Death. From many lands
Come many worshippers. Their fading brands
Rekindle from the sacrificial fire.

Before the altar of Plenty, Love, and Peace,
Stand purer priests in bloodless sacrifice,
And quiet hymns of happiness are heard.
Here sound no hatreds and no ecstasies ;
Here no polluted sacrament of Vice
Unveiled ! I chose the first without a word !

[1] Canticles viii. 6, 7.

LOVE'S WISDOM.

THERE is a sense of passion after death.
Passion for death, desire to kiss the scythe,
All know, whose limbs in envious glory writhe,
And lie exhausted, mingling happy breath.
"Could I end so—this moment!" Lingereth
The lazy gaze half mournful and half blithe.
But there's another, when the body dieth—
Hast thou no knowledge what the carcase saith?

I watched all night by my dead lover's bed.
I saw the spirit; heard the motionless
Lips part in uttering a supreme caress:
"I care not or for life or death;" they said,
"Only for love." "What difference?" said I,
"Dead or alive, I love thee utterly."

THE PESSIMIST'S PROGRESS.[1]

MORTAL distrust of mortal happiness
Is born of madness and of impotence;
A miserable and distorted sense,
Defiant in its hatred of success.
Even where love's banners flame, and flowers bless
The happy head; all faith and hope immense
Fly, for possession dwells supreme, intense;
And to possess is only—to possess.

But, as the night draws snailwise to its end,
And sleep invades the obstinate desire,
And lovers sigh—but not for kisses' sake—
There comes this misery, as half awake
I watch the embers of my passion-fire,
And see love dwindled in my—call her friend!

[1] The obscurity of this poem demands explanation. Its thesis is the fact that human happiness is only found in strife and aspiration. Victory and achievement inevitably lead to discontent, because only the impossible is truly desirable.

NEPHTHYS.

"There is no light, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest."—SOLOMON.

A FOOLISH and a cruel thing is said
By the Most High that mocks man's empty breast,
As if the grave were mere eternal rest,
Or merest resurrection of the dead.
All petty wishes: at the fountain-head,
A dead girl's whisper—I have stooped and pressed
My ear unto her heart—her soul confessed
That none of life her joy relinquished.

"I died the moment when you tore away
The bleeding veil of my virginity.
The pain was sudden—and the joy was long.
Persists that triumph, keenly, utterly!
Write, then, in thy mysterious book of song:
'Death chisels marble where life moulded clay.'"

AGAINST THE TIDE.

I KILLED my wife—not meaning to, indeed—
Yet knew myself the sheer necessity:
For I too died that miracle-hour—and she,
She also knew the immedicable need.
She sighed, and laughed, and died. How loves exceed
In that strange fact! Yet robbed (you say) are we
Of God's own purpose of fecundity.
Exactly! You have read the golden rede.

That is the pity of all things on earth:
That all must have its consequence again.
Life ends in death and loving ends in birth.
All's made for pleasure: man's device is pain.
And in that pain and barrenness men find
Triumph on God; and glory of the mind.

STYX.

(TO M. M. M.)

"The number nine is sacred, as the Oracles inform us, and attaineth the summits of philosophy."—ZOROASTER.

NINE times I kissed my lover in her sleep:
The first time, to make sure that she was there;
The second, as a sleepy sort of prayer;
The third, because I wished that she should weep;
The fourth, to draw her kisses and to keep;
The fifth, for love; the sixth, in sweet despair;
The seventh, to destroy us unaware;
The eighth, to dive within the infernal deep.

The last, to kill her—and myself as well!
Ah! joy of sweet annihilation,
The blackness that invades the burning sun,
My swart limbs and her limbs adorable!
So nine times dead before the night is done,
Even as Styx nine times embraces Hell.

LOVE, MELANCHOLY, DESPAIR.[1]

DEEP melancholy—O, the child of folly!—
Looms on my brow, a perched ancestral bird;
Black are its plumes, its eyes melancholy,
It speaks no word.

Like to a star, deep beauty's avatar[2]
Pales in the dusky skies so far above:
Seven rays of gladness crown its passionate star,
One heart of love.

[1] This poem is partially composed on Mr. Poe's scheme of verse—*vide* "The Philosophy of Composition."—A. C.

[2] Incarnation.

The fringing trees, marge of deep-throated seas,
Move as I walk: like spectres whispering
The spaces of them: let me leave the trees—
It is not spring!

Spring—no! but dying autumn fast and flying,
Sere leaves and frozen robins in my breast!
There is the winter—were I sure in dying
To find some rest!

There is a shallop—how the breakers gallop,
Grinding to dust the unresisting shore,
A moon-mad thought to wander in the shallop!
Act—think no more!

Pale as a ghost I leave the sounding coast,
The waters white with moonrise. I embark,
Float on to the horizon as a ghost,
Confront the dark.

The cadent curve of Dian seems to swerve,
Eluding helmcraft: let me drift away
Where sea and sky unite their clamorous curve
In praise of Day.

Is it an edge? Some spray-bechiselled ledge?
Some sentry platform to an under sky?
Let me drift onward to the azure edge—
I can but die!

The moon hath seen! An arrow cold and keen
Brings some cold being from the water chill,
Rising between me and the world—unseen,
Most terrible.

Dawns that unheard-of terror! Never a word of
The spells that chain ill spirits I remember.
And oh! my soul! What hands of ice unheard-of
Disturb, dismember!

It hath no shape; and I have no escape!
  It wraps around me, as a mist, despair.
Fear without sense and horror without shape
  Most surely there!

O melancholy! charming child of folly,
  Where is thy comfort told without a word?
Where are thy plumes, beloved melancholy,
  Familiar bird?

O emerald star, deep beauty's avatar,
  Are thy skies dim? What throne is thine above?
Where is the crown of thee—thy sevenfold star,
  My heart of love?

Then from the clinging mist there came a singing;
  A dirge re-echoes to the poet prayer:
"I am their child to whom thy soul is clinging,
  I am Despair!"

II. THE GATE OF THE SANCTUARY.

TO LAURA.

MISTRESS, I pray thee, when the wind
  Exults upon the roaring sea,
Come to my bosom, kissed and kind
  And sleep upon the lips of me!

Dream on my breast of quiet days,
  Kindled of slow absorbing fire!
Sleep, while I ponder on the ways
  And secret paths of my desire!

Dream, while my restless brain probes deep
  The mysteries of its magic power,
The secrets of forgotten sleep,
  The birth of knowledge as a flower!

Slow and divine thy gentle breath
  Woos my warm throat: my spirit flies
Beyond the iron walls of death,
  And seeks strange portals, pale and wise.

My lips are fervent, as in prayer,
  Thy lips are parted, as to kiss:
My hand is clenched upon the air,
  Thy hand's soft touch, how sweet it is!

The wind is amorous of the sea;
  The sea's large limbs to its embrace
Curl, and thy perfume curls round me,
  An incense on my eager face.

I see, beyond all seas and stars,
  The gates of hell, the paths of death
Open: unclasp the surly bars
  Before the voice of him that saith:

"I will!" Droop lower to my knees!
  Sink gently to the leopard's skin![1]
I must not stoop and take my ease,
  Or touch the body lithe and thin.

Bright body of the myriad smiles,
  Sweet serpent of the lower life,
The smooth silk touch of thee defiles,
  The lures and languors of a wife.

Slip to the floor, I must not turn:
  There is a lion in the way![2]
The stars of morning rise and burn:
  I seek the dim supernal day!

Sleep there, nor know me gone: sleep there
  And never wake, although God's breath
Catch thee at midmost of the prayer
  Of sleep—that so dream turns to death!

Pass, be no more! The beckoning dawn
  Woos the white ocean: I must go
Whither my soul's desire is drawn.
  Whither? I know not. Even so.

[1] An actual rug: not a symbol.
[2] Tennyson: the Holy Grail. The phrase is, however, much older.

THE LESBIAN HELL.

THE unutterable void of Hell is stirred
By gusts of sad wind moaning; the inane
Quivers with melancholy sounds unheard,
Unpastured woes, and unimagined pain,
And kisses flung in vain.

Pale women fleet around, whose infinite
Long sorrow and desire have torn their wombs,
Whose empty fruitlessness assails the night
With hollow repercussion, like dim tombs
Wherein some vampire glooms.

Pale women sickening for some sister breast;
Lone sisterhood of voiceless melancholy
That wanders in this Hell, desiring rest
From that desire that dwells for ever free,
Monstrous, a storm, a sea.

In that desire their hands are strained and wrung;
In that most infinite passion beats the blood,
And bursting chants of amorous agony flung
To the void Hell, are lost, not understood,
Unheard by evil or good.

Their sighs attract the unsubstantial shapes
Of other women, and their kisses burn
Cold on the lips whose purple blood escapes,
A thin chill stream; they feel not nor discern,
Nor love's low laugh return.

They kiss the spiritual dead, they pass
Like mists uprisen from the frosty moon,
Like shadows fleeting in a seer's glass,
Beckoning, yearning, amorous of the noon
When earth dreams on in swoon.

They are so sick for sorrow, that my eyes
Are moist because their passion was so fair,
So pure and comely that no sacrifice
Seems to waft up a sweeter savour there,
Where God's grave ear takes prayer.

O desecrated lovers! O divine
Passionate martyrs, virgin unto death!
O kissing daughters of the unfed brine!
O sisters of the west wind's pitiful breath,
There is One that pitieth!

One far above the heavens crowned alone,
Immitigable, intangible, a maid,
Incomprehensible, divine, unknown,
Who loves your love, and to high God hath said:
"To me these songs are made!"

So in a little from the silent Hell
Rises a spectre, disanointed now,
Who bears a cup of poison terrible,
The seal of God upon his blasted brow,
To whom His angels bow.

Rise, Phantom disanointed, and proclaim
Thine own destruction, and the sleepy death
Of those material essences that flame
A little moment for a little breath,
The love that perisheth!

Rise, sisters, who have ignorantly striven
On pale pure limbs to pasture your desire,
Who should have fixed your souls on highest Heaven,
And satiated your longings in that fire,
And struck that mightier lyre!

Let the ripe kisses of your thirsty throats
And beating blossoms of your breath, and flowers
Of swart illimitable hair that floats
Vague and caressing, and the amorous powers
Of your unceasing hours,

The rich hot fragrance of your dewy skins,
The eyes that yearn, the breasts that bleed, the thighs
That cling and cluster to these infinite sins,
Forget the earthlier pleasures of the prize,
And raise diviner sighs;

Cling to the white and bloody feet that hang,
And drink the purple of a God's pure side;
With your wild hair assuage His deadliest pang,
And on His broken bosom still abide
His virginal white bride.

So, in the dawn of skies unseen above,
Your passion's fiercest flakes shall catch new gold,
The sun of an immeasurable love
More beautiful shall touch the chaos cold
Of earth that is grown old.

Then, shameful sisterhood of earth's disdain,
Your lips shall speak your hearts, and understand;
Your lovers shall assuage the amorous pain
With spiritual lips more keen and bland,
And ye shall take God's hand.

THE NAMELESS QUEST.[1]

THE king was silent. In the blazoned hall
Shadows, more mute than at a funeral
True mourners, waited, waited in the gloom;
Waited to hear what child was in the womb
Of his high thoughts. As dead men were we all;
As dead men wait the trumpet in the tomb.

The king was silent. Tense the high-strung air[2]
Must save itself by trembling—if it dare.
Then a long shudder ran across the space;
Each man ashamed to see his fellow's face,
Each troubled and confused. He did not spare
Our fear—he spake not yet a little space.

After a while he took the word again:
"Go thou then moonwards[1] on the great salt plain;
So to a pillar. Adamant, alone,
It stands. Around it see them overthrown,
King, earl, and knight. There lie the questing slain,
A thousand years forgotten—bone by bone.

"No more is spoken—the tradition goes:
'There learns the seeker what he seeks or knows.'
Thence—none have passed. The desert leagues may keep
Some other secret—some profounder deep
Than this one echoed fear: the desert shows
Its ghastly triumph—silence. There they sleep.

"There, brave and pure, there, true and strong, they stay
Bleached in the desert, till the solemn day
Of God's revenge—none knoweth them: they rest
Unburied, unremembered, unconfessed.
What names of strength, of majesty, had they?
What suns are these gone down into the West?

"Even I myself—my youth within me said:
Go, seek this folly; fear not for the dead,
And God is with thine arm! I reached the ridge,
And saw the river and the ghastly bridge
I told you of. Even then, even there, I fled.
Nor knight, nor king—a miserable midge!

"Yet from my shame I dare not turn and run.
My oath grows urgent as my days are done.
Almost mine hour is on me: for its sake
I tell you this, as if my heart should break:—
The infinite desire—a burning sun!
The listening fear—the sun-devouring snake!"

[1] This poem has no foundation in tradition.

[2] Here and in several other passages intense energy of will, or importance of situation, is represented as producing an actual condition of strain in the air or the ether. The fact observed is at least subjectively true to many people.

[1] The moon here symbolises the path of ל, which leads from Tiphereth, the human will, to Kether, the divine Will.

The king was silent. None of us would stir.
I sat, struck dumb, a living sepulchre.
For—hear me! in my heart this thing became
My sacrament, my pentecostal flame.
And with it grew a fear—a fear of Her.
What Her? Shame had not found itself a name.

Simply I knew it in myself. I brood
Ten years—so seemed it—O! the bitter food
In my mouth nauseate! In the silent hall
One might have heard God's sparrow in its fall.
But I was lost in mine own solitude—
I should not hear Mikhael's[1] trumpet-call.

Yet there did grow a clamour shrill and loud:
One cursed, one crossed himself, another vowed
His soul against the quest; the tumult ran
Indecorous in that presence, man to man.
Stilled suddenly, beholding how I bowed
My soul in thought: another cry began.

"Gereth the dauntless! Gereth of the Sea!
Gereth the loyal! Child of royalty!
Witch-mothered Gereth! Sword above the strong,
Heart pure, head many-wiled!" The knightly throng
Clamour my name, and flattering words, to me—
If they may 'scape the quest—I do them wrong;

They are my friends! Yet something terrible
Rings in the manly music that they swell.
They are all caught in this immense desire
Deeper than heaven, tameless as the fire.
All catch the fear—the fear of Her—as well,
And dare not—even afraid, I must aspire.

A spirit walking in a dream, I went
To the high throne—they shook the firmament
With foolish cheers. I knelt before the queen
And wept in silence. Then, as it had been
An angel's voice and touch, her face she bent,
Lifted and kissed me—oh! her lips were keen!

Her voice was softer than a virgin's eyes:
"Go! my true knight: for thither, thither lies
The only road for thee; thou hast a prayer
Wafted each hour—my spirit will be there!"
Too late I knew what subtle Paradise
Her dreams and prayers portend: too fresh, too fair!

I turned more wretched than myself knew yet.
I told my nameless pain I should forget
Its shadow as it passed. The king did start,
Gripped my strong hands, and held me to his heart,
And could not speak a moment. Then he set
A curb on sorrow and subdued its dart.

"Go! and the blessing of high God attend
Thy path, and lead thee to the doubtful end.
No tongue that secret ever may reveal.
Thy soul is God-like and thy frame is steel;
Thou mayst win the quest—the king, thy friend,
Gives thee his sword to keep thee—Gereth, kneel!

"I dub thee Earl; arise!" And then there rings
The queen's voice: "Shall my love not match the king's?
Here, from my finger drawn, this gem of power
Shall guard thee in some unimagined hour.
It hath strange virtue over mortal things.
I freely give it for thy stirrup's dower."

[1] Correct for "Michael." A piece of pedantry pardonable in a youth of 25.

I left the presence. Now the buffeting wind
Gladdens my face—I leave the court behind.
Am I stark mad? My face grows grim and grave;
I see—O Mary Mother, speak and save!
I stare and stare until mine eyes are blind—
There was no jewel in the ring she gave![1]

Oh! my pure heart! Adulterous love began
So subtly to identify the man
With its own perfumed thoughts. So steals the grape
Into the furtive brain—a spirit shape
Kisses my spirit as no woman can.
I love her—yes; and I have no escape.

I never spoke, I never looked! But she
Saw through the curtains of the soul of me,
And loved me also! It is very well.
I am well started on the road to Hell.
Loved, and no sin done! Ay, the world shall see
The quest is first—a love less terrible.

Yet, as I ride toward the edge of snow
That cuts the blue, I think. For even so
Comes reason to me: "Oh, return, return!
What folly is it for two souls to burn
With hell's own fire! What is this quest of woe?
What is the end? Consider and discern!"

Banish the thought! My working reason still
Is the rebellious vassal to my will,
Because I will it. That is God's own mind.
I cast all thought and prudence to the wind:
On, to the quest! The cursed parrot hill
Mocks on, on, on! The thought is left behind.

[1] The gift of a wedding ring is of course typical of the supreme surrender on the part of a married woman.

Night came upon me thus—a wizard hand
Grasping with silence the reluctant land.
Through night I clomb—behind me grew the light
Reflected in the portal of the night.
I reach the crest at dawn—pallid I stand,
Uncomprehending of the sudden sight.

The river and the bridge! The river flows,
Tears of young orphans for its limpid woes.
The red bridge quivers—how my spirit starts,
Its seeming glory built of widows' hearts!
And yet I could disdain it—heaven knows
I had no dear ones for their counterparts.

Yet the thought chilled me as I touched the reins.
Ah! the poor horse, he will not. So remains,
Divided in his love. With mastered tears
I stride toward the parapet. My ears
Catch his low call; and now a song complains.
The bridge is bleeding and the river hears.

Ah! God! I cannot live for pity deep
Of that heart-quelling chant—I could not sleep
Ever again to think of it. I close
My hearing with my fingers. Gently goes
A quivering foot above them as they weep—
I weep, I also, as the river flows.

Slowly the bridge subsides, and I am flung
Deep in the tears and terrors never sung.
I swim with sorrow bursting at my breast.
Yet I am cleansed, and find some little rest.
Still from my agonised unspeaking tongue
Breaks: I must go, go onward to the quest.

Again the cursed cry: "What quest is this?
Is it worth heaven in thy lover's kiss?
A queen, a queen, to kiss and never tire!
Thy queen, quick-breathing for your twin desire!"
I shudder, for the mystery of bliss;
I go, heart crying and a soul on fire!

"Resolve all question by a moonward tread.
Follow the moon!" Even so the king had said.
My thought had thanked him for the generous breath
Wherewith he warned us: for delay were death.
And now, too late! no moon is overhead—
Some other meaning in the words he saith?

Or, am I tricked in such a little snare?
I lifted up my eyes. What soul stood there,
Fronting my path? Tall, stately, delicate,
A woman fairer than a pomegranate.
A silver spear her hands of lotus bear,
One shaft of moonlight quivering and straight.

She pointed to the East with flashing eyes:
"Thou canst not see her—but my Queen shall rise."
Bowed head and beating heart, with feet unsure
I passed her, trembling, for she was too pure.
I could have loved her. No: she was too wise.
Her presence was too gracious to endure.

"She did not bid me go and chain me to her,"
I cried, comparing. Then, my spirit knew her
For One beyond all song[1]—my poor heart turned:
Then, 'tis no wonder. And my passion burned
Mightier yet than ever. To renew her
Venom from those pure eyes? And yet I yearned.

Still, I stepped onward. Credit me so far!
The harlot had my soul: my will, the star!
Thus I went onward, as a man goes blind,
Into a torrent crowd of mine own kind;
Jostlers and hurried folk and mad they are,
A million actions and a single mind.

[1] The "Higher Self."

"What is thy purpose, sweet my lord?" I pressed
One stalwart. "Ah! the quest," he cried, "the quest."
God's heart! the antics, as they toil and shove!
One grabs a coin, one life, another love.
All shriek, "The prize is mine!" as men possessed.
I was not fooled at anything thereof.

Rather I hated them, and scorned for slaves;
"Fools! all your treasure is at last the grave's!"
Mine eyes had fixed them on the sphinx, the sky.
"Is then this quest of immortality?"
And echo answered from some unseen caves:
Mortality! I shrink, and wonder why.

Strange I am nothing tainted with this fear
Now, that had touched me first. For I am here
Half-way I reckon to the field of salt,
The pillar, and the bones—it was a fault
I am cured of! praise to God! What meets mine ear,
That every nerve and bone of me cries halt?

What is this cold that nips me at the throat?
This shiver in my blood? this icy note
Of awe within my agonising brain?
Neither of shame, nor love, nor fear, nor pain,
Nor anything? Has love no antidote,
Courage no buckler? Hark! it comes again.

Friend, hast thou heard the wailing of the damned?
Friend, hast thou listened when a murderer shammed
Pale smiles amid his fellows as they spoke
Low of his crime: his fear is like to choke
His palsied throat. How, if Hell's gate were slammed
This very hour upon thy womanfolk?

Conceive, I charge thee! Brace thy spirit up
To drink at that imagination's cup!
Then, shriek, and pass! For thou shalt understand
A little of the pressure of the hand
That crushed me now. Yes, yes! let fancy sup
That grislier banquet than old Atreus[1] planned!

Mind cannot fathom, nor the brain conceive,
Nor soul assimilate, nor heart believe
The horror of that Thing without a Name.
Full on me, boasting, like Death's hand it came,
And struck me headlong. Linger, while I weave
The web of mine old agony and shame.

A little shadow of that hour of mine
Touches thy heart? Fill up the foaming wine,
And listen for a little! How profound
Strikes memory keen-fanged; memory, the hound
That tracks me yet! a shiver takes my spine
At one half-hint, the shadow of that sound.

Where am I? Seven days my spirit fell,
Down, down the whirlpools and the gulfs of hell:
Seven days a corpse lay desolate—at last
Back drew the spirit and the soul aghast
To animate that clay—O horrible!
The resurrection pang is hardly past.

Yet in awhile I stumbled to my feet
To flee—no nightmare could be worse to meet.
And, spite of that, I knew some deadlier trap
Some worm more poisonous would set—mayhap!

I turned—the path? My horror was complete—
A flaming sword across the earthquake gap.

I cried aloud to God in my despair.
"The quest of quests! I seek it, for I dare!
Moonward! on, moonward!" And the full moon shone,
A glory for God's eyes to dwell upon,
A path of silver furrowed in the air,
A gateway where an angel might have gone.

And forward gleamed a narrow way of earth
Crusted with salt: I watch the fairy birth
Of countless flashes on the crystal flakes,
Forgetting it is only death that makes
Its home the centre of that starry girth.
Yet, what is life? The manhood in me wakes.

The absolute desire hath hold of me.
Death were most welcome in that solemn sea;
So bitter is my life. But carelessness
Of life and death and love is on me—yes!
Only the quest! if any quest there be!
What is my purpose? Could the Godhead guess?

So the long way seemed moving as I went,
Flashing beneath me; and the firmament
Moving with quicker robes that swept the air.
Still Dian drew me to her bosom bare,
And madness more than will was my content.
I moved, and as I moved I was aware!

The plain is covered with a many dead.
Glisten white bone and salt-encrusted head,
Glazed eye imagined, of a crystal built.
And see! dark patches, as of murder spilt.
Ugh! "So thy fellows of the quest are sped!
Thou shalt be with them: onward, if thou wilt!"

[1] Atreus, King of Mycenae, gave a banquet of pretended reconciliation to his half-brother Thyestes, at which the two sons of Thyestes were served up.

So was the chilling whisper at my side,
Or in my brain. Then surged the maddening tide
Of my intention. Onward! Let me run!
Thy steed, O Moon! Thy chariot, O Sun!
Lend me fierce feet, winged sandals, wings as wide
As thine, O East wind! And the goal is won!

Was ever such a cruel solitude?
Up rears the pillar. Quaintly shaped and hued,
It focussed all the sky and all the plain
To its own ugliness. I looked again,
And saw its magic in another mood.
A shapeless truth took image in my brain.

A hollow voice from every quarter cries:
"O thou, zelator of this Paradise,
Tell thou the secret of the pillar! None
Can hear thee, of the souls beneath the sun.
Speak, or the very Godhead in thee dies.
For we are many and thy name is One."

The Godhead in me! As a flash there came
The jealous secret and the guarded name.
The quest was mine! And yet my thoughts confute
My intuition; and my will was mute.
My voice—ah! flashes out the word of flame:
"Eternal Beauty, One and absolute!"

The overwhelming sweetness of a voice
Filled me with Godhead. "Still remains the choice!
Thou knowest me for Beauty! Canst thou bear
The fuller vision, the abundant air?"
I only wept. The elements rejoice;
No tear before had ever fallen there.

I thought within myself a bitter thing,
Standing abased. The golden marriage ring
The queen had given—how her beauty stank
Now in mine eyes, where once their passion drank
Its secret sweets of poison. Let the spring
Of love once dawn—all else hath little thank!

Yet resolute I put my love away.
It could not live in this amazing day.
Love is the lotus that is sickly sweet,
That makes men drunken, and betrays their feet:
Beauty, the sacred lotus: let me say
The word, and make my purity complete.

The whole is mine, and shall I keep a part?
O Beauty, I must see thee as thou art!
Then on my withered gaze that Beauty grew—
Rosy quintessence of alchemic dew!
The Self-informing Beauty! In my heart
The many were united: and I knew.

Smitten by Beauty down I fell as dead—
So strikes the sunlight on a miner's head.
Blind, stricken, crushed! That vast effulgence stole,
Flooded the caverns of my secret soul,
And gushed in waves of weeping. I was wed
Unto a part, and could not grasp the whole.

Thus, I was broken on the wheel of Truth.
Fled all the hope and purpose of my youth,
The high desire, the secret joy, the sin
That coiled its rainbow dragon scales within.
Hope's being, life's delight, time's eager tooth;
All, all are gone; the serpent sloughs his skin!

The quest is mine! Here ends mortality
In contemplating the eternal Thee.
Here, She is willing. Stands the Absolute
Reaching its arms toward me. I am mute,
I draw toward. Oh, suddenly I see
The treason-pledge, the royal prostitute.

One moment, and I should have passed beyond
Linked unto Spirit by the fourfold bond.
Not dead to earth, but living as divine,
A priest, a king, an oracle, a shrine,
A saviour! Yet my misty spirit conned
The secret murmur: "Gereth, I am thine!"

I must have listened to the voice of hell.
The earthly horror wove its serpent spell
Against the Beauty of the World: I heard
Desolate voices cry the doleful word
"Unready!" All the soul invisible
Of that vast desert echoed, and concurred.

The voices died in mystery away.
I passed, confounded, lifeless as the clay,
Somewhere I knew not. Many a dismal league
Of various terror wove me its intrigue,
And many a demon daunted: day by day
Death dogged despair, and misery fatigue.

Behold! I came with haggard mien again
Into the hall, and mingled with the train,
A corpse amid the dancers. Then the king
Saw me, and knew me—and he knew the ring!
He did not ask me how I sped: disdain
Curled his old lips: he said one bitter thing.

"You crossed the bridge—no man's heart trod you there?"
Then crossed his breast in uttering some prayer:
"I pray you follow of your courtesy,
My lord!" I followed very bitterly.
"Likes you the sword I gave?" I did not dare
Answer one word. My soul was hating me.

He bade me draw. I silently obeyed.
My eye shirked his as blade encountered blade.
I was determined he should take my life.
"Went your glance back—encountering my wife?"
"Taunt me!" I cried; "I will not be afraid!"
My whole soul weary of the coward strife.

He seemed to see no opening I gave,
But hated me the more. Serene and suave,
He fenced with deep contempt. I stumble, slip,
Guard wide—and only move his upper lip.
"You know I will not strike, Sir pure and brave!
Fight me your best—or I shall find a whip!"

That stung me, even me. He wronged me, so:
Therefore some shame and hate informed the blow;
Some coward's courage pointed me the steel;
Some strength of Hell: we lunge, and leap, and wheel;
Hard breath and laboured hands—the flashes grow
Swifter and cruel—this court hath no appeal!

He gladdened then. I would not slip again,
And baulk the death of half its shame and pain.
I, his best sword, must fall, in earnest fight.
The old despair was coward—he was right.
Now, king, I pay your debt. A purple stain
Hides his laced throat—I sober at the sight.

"King, you are touched!" "Fight on, Earl Lecherer!"
I cursed him to his face—the added spur
Sticks venom in my lunge—a sudden thrust!
No cry, no gasp; but he is in the dust,
Stark dead. The queen—I hate the name of her!
So grew the mustard-seed, one moment's lust.

I too was wounded: shameful runs the song.
She nursed me through that melancholy long
Month of despair: she won my life from death.
Ah God! she won that most reluctant breath
Out of corruption: love! ah! love is strong!
What waters quench it? King Shalomeh[1] saith.

[1] Hebrew form of Solomon. See Canticles viii. 6, 7.

I am the king: you know it, friend! We wed.
That is the tale of how my wooing sped.
And oh! the quest: half won—incredible?
I am so brave, and pure—folk love me well.
But oh! my life, my being! That is dead,
And my whole soul—a whirlwind out of hell!

THE REAPER.

IN middle music of Apollo's corn
She stood, the reaper, challenging a kiss;
The lips of her were fresher than the morn,
The perfume of her skin was ambergris;
The sun had kissed her body into brown;
Ripe breasts thrown forward to the summer breeze;
Warm tints of red lead fancy to the crown,
Her coils of chestnut, in abundant ease,
That bound the stately head. What joy of youth
Lifted her nostril to respire the wind?
What pride of being? What triumphal truth
Acclaimed her queen to her imperial mind?

I watched, a leopard, stealthy in the corn,
As if a tigress held herself above;
My body quivered, eager to be torn,
Stung by the snake of some convulsive love!
The leopard changed his spots; for in me leapt
The mate, the tiger. Murderous I sprang
Across the mellow earth: my senses swept,
One torrent flame, one soul-dissolving pang.
How queenly bent her body to the grip!
How lithe it slips, her bosom to my own!
The throat leans back, to tantalise the lip:—
The sudden shame of her is overthrown!
O maiden of the spirit of the wheat,
One ripening sunbeam thrills thee to the soul,
Electric from red mane to amber feet!
The blue skies focus, as a burning bowl,
The restless passion of the universe
Into our mutual anger and distress,
To be forbidden (the Creator's curse)
To comprehend the other's loveliness.
We cannot grasp the ecstasy of this;
Only we strain and struggle and renew
The utter bliss of the unending kiss,
The mutual pang that shudders through and through,
Repeated and repeated, as the light
Can build a partial palace of the day,
So, in our anguish for the infinite,
One moment gives, the other takes away.
(I, the mere rhymer, she, the queen of rhyme,
As sweeps her sickle in the falling wheat,
Her body's sleek intoxicating time,
The music of the motion of her feet!)

I swoon in that imperial embrace—
Lay we asleep till evening, or dead?
I knew not, but the wonder of her face
Grew as the dawn and never satiated.
She knew not in her strong imperial soul
How hopeless was the slavery of life,
How by the part man learns to love the whole,
How each man's mistress calls herself a wife.
I tired not of the tigress limbs and lips—
Only, my soul was weary of itself,
Being so impotent, who only sips
The dewdrops from the flower-cup of an elf,
Not comprehending the mysterious sea
Of black swift waters that can drink it up,
Not trusting life to its own ecstasy,
Not mixing poison with the loving-cup.
I, maker of mad rhymes, the reaper she!
We lingered but a day upon the lawn.
O Thou, the other Reaper! come to me!
Thy dark embraces have a germ of Dawn!

THE TWO MINDS.

"THEY SHALL BE NO MORE TWAIN, BUT ONE FLESH."

WELL have I said, "O God, Thou art, alone,
In many forms and faces manifest!
Thou, stronger than the universe, Thy throne!
Thou, calm in strength as the sea's heart at rest!"

But I have also answered: "Let the groan
Of this Thy world reach up to Thee, and wrest
Thy bloody sceptre: let the wild winds own
Man's lordship, and obey at his behest!"

Man has two minds: the first beholding all,
As from a centre to the endless end:
The second reaches from the outer wall,
And seeks the centre. This I comprehend.
But in the first: "I can — but what is worth?"
And in the second: "I am dust and earth!"

THE TWO WISDOMS.

SOPHIE! I loved her, tenderly at worst.
Yet in my passion's highest ecstasy,
When life lost pleasure in desire to die
And never taste again the deadly thirst
For those caresses; even then a curst
Sick pang shot through me: looking far on high,
Beyond, I see Σοφια in the sky.
The petty bubble of Love's pipe is burst!

Yea! through the portals of the dusky dawn
I see the nameless Rose of Heaven unfold!
Yea! through rent passion and desire withdrawn
Burns in the East the far ephemeral gold.
O Wisdom! Mother of my sorrow! Rise!
And lift my love to thine immortal eyes!

THE TWO LOVES.

WHAT is my soul? The shadow of my will.
What is my will? The sleeper's sigh at waking.
Osiris! Orient godhead! let me still
Rest in the dawn of knowledge, ever slaking
My lips and throat where yon rose-glimmering hill,
The Mountain of the East, its lips is taking
To Thy life-lips: I hear Thy keen voice thrill;
Arise and shine! the clouds of earth are breaking!

The clouds are parted: yes! And there above
I bathe in ether and self-shining light;
My soul is filled with the eternal love;
I am the brother of the Day and Night.
I AM! my spirit, and perhaps my mind!
But O my heart! I left thy love behind!

A RELIGIOUS BRINGING-UP.

WITH this our "Christian" parents marred our youth:
"One thing is certain of our origin.
We are born Adam's bastards into sin,
Servants to Death and Time's devouring tooth.
God, damning most, had this one thought of ruth
To save some dozens—Us: and by the skin
Of teeth to save us from the devil's gin—
Repentance! Blood! Prayer! Sackcloth! This is truth."

Our parents answer jesting Pilate so.[1]
I am the meanest servant of the Christ:
But, were I heathen, cannibal, profane,
My cruel spirit had not sacrificed
My children to this Moloch. I am plain?
"Blasphemer! Damned!"? Undoubtedly —I know!

THE LAW OF CHANGE.

SOME lives complain of their own happiness.
In perfect love no sure abiding stands;
In perfect faith are no immortal bands
Of God and man. This passion we possess
Necessitous; insistent none the less
Because we know not how its purpose brands
Our lives. Even on God's knees and in His hands:
The Law of Change. "*Out, out, adulteress!*"?

[1] See Bacon's Essay on Truth.

These be the furies, and the harpies these?
That discontent should sum the happiest sky?
That of all boons man lacks the greatest —rest?
Nay! But the promise of the centuries,
The certain pledge of immortality,
Child-cry of Man at the eternal Breast.

SYNTHESIS.

WHEN I think of the hundreds of women I have loved from time to time,
White throats and living bosoms where a kiss might creep or climb,
Smooth eyes and trembling fingers, faint lips or murderous hair,
All tunes of love's own music, most various and rare;
When I look back on life, as a mariner on the deep
Sees, tranced, the white wake foaming, fancies the nereids weep;
As, on a mountain summit in the thunders and the snow,
I look to the shimmering valley and weep: I loved you so!
For a moment cease the winds of God upon the reverent head;
I lose the life of the mountain, and my soul is with the dead;
Yet am I not unaware of the splendour of the height,
Yet am I lapped in the glory of the Sun of Life and Light:—
Even so my heart looks out from the harbour of God's breast,
Out from the shining stars where it entered into rest—
Once more it seeks in memory for reverence, not regret,
And it loves you still, my sisters! as God shall not forget.
It is ill to blaspheme the silence with a wicked whispered thought—
How still they were, those nights! when this web of things was wrought!
How still, how terrible! O my dolorous tender brides,
As I lay and dreamt in the dark by your shameful beautiful sides!
And now you are mine no more, I know; but I cannot bear
The curse—that another is drunk on the life that stirs your hair:
Every hair was alive with a spark of midnight's delicate flame,
Or a glow of the nether fire, or an old illustrious shame.
Many, so many, were ye to make one Womanhood—
A thing of fire and flesh, of wine and glory and blood,
In whose rose-orient texture a golden light is spun,
A gossamer scheme of love, as water in the sun
Flecked by wonderful bars, most delicately crossed,
Worked into wedded beauties, flickering, never lost—
That is the spirit of love, incarnate in your flesh!
Your bodies had wearied me, but your passion was ever fresh:
You were many indeed, but your love for me was one.
Then I perceived the stars to reflect a single sun—
Not burning suns themselves, in furious regular race,
But mirrors of midnight, lit to remind us of His face.
Thus I beheld the truth: ye are stars that give me light;
But I read you aright and learn I am walking in the night.
Then I turned mine eyes away to the Light that is above you:
The answering splendid Dawn arose, and I did not love you.
I saw the breaking light, and the clouds fled far away:
It was the resurrection of the Golden Star of Day.

And now I live in Him ; my heart may trace the years
In drops of virginal blood and springs of virginal tears.
I love you now again with an undivided song.
Because I can never love you, I cannot do you wrong.
I saw in your dying embraces the birth of a new embrace ;
In the tears of your pitiful faces, another Holier Face.
Unknowing it, undesiring, your lips have led me higher ;
You have taught me purer songs that your souls did not desire ;
You have led me through your chambers, where the secret bolt was drawn,
To the chambers of the Highest and the secrets of the Dawn !
You have brought me to command you, and not to be denied ;
You have taught me in perfection to be unsatisfied ;
You have taught me midnight vigils, when you smiled in amorous sleep ;
You have even taught a man the woman's way to weep.
So, even as you helped me, blindly, against your will,
So shall the angel faces watch for your own souls still.
A little pain and pleasure, a little touch of time,
And you shall blindly reach to the subtle and sublime ;
You shall gather up your girdles to make ready for the way,
And by the Cross of Suffering climb seeing to the Day.
Then we shall meet again in the Presence of the Throne,
Not knowing ; yet in Him ! O Thou ! knowing as we are known.

III. THE HOLY PLACE

THE NEOPHYTE.[1]

TO-NIGHT I tread the unsubstantial way
That looms before me, as the thundering night
Falls on the ocean : I must stop, and pray
One little prayer, and then—what bitter fight
Flames at the end beyond the darkling goal ?
These are my passions that my feet must tread ;
This is my sword, the fervour of my soul ;
This is my Will, the crown upon my head.
For see ! the darkness beckons : I have gone,
Before this terrible hour, towards the gloom,
Braved the wild dragon, called the tiger on
With whirling cries of pride, sought out the tomb
Where lurking vampires battened, and my steel
Has wrought its splendour through the gates of death.
My courage did not falter : now I feel
My heart beat wave-wise, and my throat catch breath
As if I choked ; some horror creeps between
The spirit of my will and its desire,
Some just reluctance to the Great Unseen
That coils its nameless terrors, and its dire
Fear round my heart ; a devil cold as ice
Breathes somewhere, for I feel his shudder take
My veins : some deadlier asp or cockatrice
Slimes in my senses : I am half awake,
Half automatic, as I move along
Wrapped in a cloud of blackness deep as hell,
Hearing afar some half-forgotten song
As of disruption ; yet strange glories dwell
Above my head, as if a sword of light,
Rayed of the very Dawn, would strike within

[1] This poem describes the Initiation of the *true* "Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn" in its spiritual aspect.

The limitations of this deadly night
That folds me for the sign of death and sin—
O Light! descend! My feet move vaguely on
In this amazing darkness, in the gloom
That I can touch with trembling sense. There shone
Once, in my misty memory, in the womb
Of some unformulated thought, the flame
And smoke of mighty pillars; yet my mind
Is clouded with the horror of this same
Path of the wise men: for my soul is blind
Yet: and the foemen I have never feared
I could not see (if such should cross the way),
And therefore I am strange: my soul is seared
With desolation of the blinding day
I have come out from: yes, that fearful light
Was not the Sun: my life has been the death,
This death may be the life: my spirit sight
Knows that at last, at least. My doubtful breath
Is breathing in a nobler air; I know,
I know it in my soul, despite of this,
The clinging darkness of the Long Ago,
Cruel as death, and closer than a kiss,
This horror of great darkness. I am come
Into this darkness to attain the light:
To gain my voice I make myself as dumb:
That I may see I close my outer sight:
So, I am here. My brows are bent in prayer;
I kneel already in the Gates of Dawn;
And I am come, albeit unaware,
To the deep sanctuary: my hope is drawn
From wells profounder than the very sea.
Yea, I am come, where least I guessed it so,
Into the very Presence of the Three
That Are beyond all Gods. And now I know
What spiritual Light is drawing me
Up to its stooping splendour. In my soul
I feel the Spring, the all-devouring Dawn,
Rush with my Rising. There, beyond the goal,
The Veil is rent!
Yes: let the veil be drawn.

SIN.

Ye rivers, and ye elemental caves,
Above the fountains of the broken ice,
Know ye what dragon lurks within your waves?
Know ye the secret of the cockatrice?
The basilisk whose shapeless brood
Take blood and muck for food?
The sexless passion, the foul scorpion spawn?
The witches and the evil-chanting ones
Who strangle stars and suns,
Eclipse the moon, and curse against the dawn?
Know ye the haunts of death?
The hole that harboureth
The sickening breath,
Whence all disease is bred, and all corruption drawn?

Nay, these ye know not, or your waters cold
Would stagnate, shudder, putrefy for fear;
Your echoes hate existence, and be rolled
Into the silent, desolate, dead sphere.
For in those sightless lairs
No living spirit fares:—
Caught in a chain, linked corpses for a lure!
Shall human senses feel
Or human tongue reveal?
Nay, shall the mortal know them and endure
Whose little period
Is limited by God;
Whose poor abode
Is the mean body, prey to all distemperature?

Yet, mortal, in the Light and Way Divine,
Gird on the armour of the Holy One:
Seek out the secret of the inmost shrine,
Strong in the might and spirit of the sun.
Arise, arise, arise,
Give passage to mine eyes,

Ye airs, ye veils; ye bucklers of the Snake!
I knew the deepest cells,
Where the foul spirit dwells;
Called to the dead, the drowsed, arise! awake!
Their dark profoundest thought
Was less than She I sought,
It was as nought!
I drew my soul, I dived beneath the burning lake.

Thrice, in the vault of Hell, my Word was born,
Abortive, in the empty wilderness.
False echoes, made malicious, turn to scorn
The awful accents, the Supreme address.
The Fourth, the final word!
All chaos shrank and heard
The terror that vibrated in the breath.
Hell, Death, and Sin must hear,
Tremble and visibly fear,
Shake the intangible chain that hungereth.
That Mother of Mankind
Sprang in the thunder-wind!
The strong words bind
For evermore, Amen! the keys of Hell and Death.[1]

Central, supreme, most formidable, Night
Gathered its garments, drew itself apart;
Gaunt limbs appear athwart the coprolite
Veil of deep agony, display the heart;
Even as a gloomy sea,
Wherein dead fishes be,
Poisonous things, nameless; the eightfold Fear,
Misshapen crab and worm,
The intolerable sperm,
Lewd dragons slime-built. Stagnant, the foul mere
Crawled, moved, gave tongue,
The essential soul of dung
That lived and stung;
That spoke: no word that living head may hear!

[1] Rev. i. 18.

Even as a veil imaging Beauty's eyes
Behind, lifted, lets flash the maiden face;
So that dead putrefying sea supplies
A veil to the unfathomable Place.
Behind it grew a form,
Wrapped in its own dire storm,
Dark fires of horror about it and within,
A changing, dreadful Shape:
Now a distorted ape;
Now an impending vampire, vast and lean;
Last, a dark woman pressed
The world unto her breast,
Soothed and caressed
With evil words and kisses of the mouth of Sin.

The Breath of men adoring. "Worship we!
"The mighty Wisdom, the astounding power,
"The Horror, the immense profundity,
"The stealthy, secret paces of thy Bower!
"Thee we adore and praise
"Whose breast is broad as day's;
"Thee, thee, the mistress of the barren sea,
"Deep, deadly, poisonous;
"Accept the life of us,
"Dwell in our midst; yea, show thy cruelty!
"Suck out the life and breath
"From breast that quickeneth!
"Such pain is death,
"Such terror, such delight—all, all is unto thee!"

I too, I also, I have known thy kiss.
I also drank the milk that poisons man,
Sought to assume the impenetrable bliss
By spells profound and draughts Canidian.[1]
One lifted me: and, lo!
Thalassian,[2] white as snow,

[1] Canidia, a sorceress of Rome in the time of Horace, who attacked her.

[2] From Θαλασσα, the sea. But Crowley always uses the word as exalting, idealising, personifying the idea.

The scarlet vesture and the crimson skin !
As Aphrodite clove
The foam, incarnate Love,
Maiden ; as light leaps the dawn-gardens in,
So in the Love and Light,
Life slain, yet infinite,
The God-Man's night,
Leaps pure the Soul re-arisen from the embrace of Sin.

Yet, in the terror of that Breast, abides
So sweet and deadly a device, a lure
Deep in the blood and poison of her sides,
Swart, lean, and leprous, that her stings endure.
Even the soul of grace
Abideth not her face
Without vague longing, infinite desire,
Stronger because suppressed,
Unto the wide black breast,
The lips incarnate of blood, flesh, and fire,
So to slip down between
Thighs vast and epicene,
Morose and lean,
To that unnameable morass, the ultimate mire.

Wherefore behoves the Soul that leaps divine,
Even beholding, darkly in a mirror,
The face of God, to sink before His Shrine,
Weeping : O Beauty, Majesty, and Terror,
Wisdom and Mind and Soul,
Crown simplex, Mighty Whole,
Lord of the Gods ! O Thou, the King of Kings !
To me a sinner, me,
Lowest of all that be,
Be merciful, O Master Soul of things !
Show me thy face of ruth,
And in thy way of truth
Guide my weak youth,
That stumbles while it walks, makes discord when it sings !

So, Mighty Mother ! Pure, Eternal Spouse,
Isis, thou Star, thou Moon, thou Mightiest,
Lead my weak steps to thine Eternal House !
Rest my vain head on thine Eternal Breast !
Spread wide the wings divine
Over this shadowy shrine,
Where in my heart their hovering lendeth Light !
Bend down the amazing Face
Of sorrow and of grace,
Share the deep vigil of thine eremite !
So let the sighing breath
Draw on the Hour of Death,
Whence wakeneth
The Spirit of the Dawn, begotten of the night.

THE NAME.

SACRED, between the serpent fangs of pain,
Ringed by the vortex of the hurricane,
Lurks the abyss of fate : the gloomy cave,
Sullen as night, and sleepy as a wave
When tempest lowers and dare not strike, gapes wide,
Vomiting pestilence ; the deadly bride
Of death, Despair, grins charnel-wise : the gate
Of Hope clangs resonant : and starless Fate
Glowers like a demon brooding over death.
Monstrous and mute, the slow resurgent breath
Spreads forth its poison : the pale child at play
Coughs in his gutter ; the hard slave of day
Groans once and dies : the sickly spouse can feel
Some cold touch kill the unborn child, and steal
Up to her broken heart : the pale hours hang
Like death upon the agéd : the days clang
Like prison portals on the folk of day.
Yet for the children of the night they play
Like fountains in the moonlight : for the few,
The sorrowful, sweet faces of the dew,
The laughter-loving daughters of the dawn,
Whose moving feet make tremble all the lawn
From Hesper to the break of rose and gold,
Where Heaven's petals in the East unfold
The awful flower of morning : for the folk
Bound in one single patient love, a yoke

Too light for fairy fingers to have woven,
oo strong for mere archangels to have cloven
With adamantine blades from the armoury
Of the amazing forges of the sea:
The folk that follow with undaunted mien
The utmost beauty that their eyes have seen—
O patient sufferers! yet your storm-scarred brows
Burn with the star of majesty: your vows
Have given you the wisdom and the power
To weld eternities within one hour,
To bind and braid the North wind's serpent hair,
And track the East wind to his mighty lair
Even in the caverns of the womb of dawn;
To take the South wind and his fire withdrawn
And clothe him with your kiss; to seize the West
In his gold palace where the sea-winds rest,
And hurl him ravening on the breaking foam;
To find the Spirit in his glimmering home
And draw his secret from unwilling lips;
To master earthquake, and the dread eclipse;
To dominate the red volcanic rage;
To quench the whirlpool, conquering war to wage
Against all gods not wholly made as ye,
O patient, and O marvellous! I see,
I see before me an archangel stand,
Whose flaming scimitar, a triple brand,
Quivers before him, whose vast eyebrows bend,
A million comets: for his locks extend
A million flashing terrors: on his breast
He bears a mightier cuirass: for his vest
All heaven blazes: for his brows a crown
Roars into the abyss: his mighty frown
Quells many an universe and many an age—
Yea, many eternities! His nostrils rage
With fire and fury, and his feet are shod
With all the splendours of the avenging God.
I see him and I tremble! But my hand
Still flings its gesture of supreme command
Upwards; my voice still dares to tongue the word
That hell and chaos and destruction heard
And ruined, shrieking! yea, my strong voice rolls,
That martyr-cry of many slaughtered souls,
Utterly potent both to bless and ban—
I, I command thee in the name of Man!
He trembled then. And far in thunder rolled
Through countless ages, through the infinite gold
Beyond existence, grew that master-sound
Into the rent and agonized profound,
Till even the Highest heard me: and He said,
As one who speaks alone among men dead:
"Behold, he rules as I the abyss of flame.
For lo! he knoweth, and hath said, My Name!"

THE EVOCATION.

FROM the abyss, the horrible lone world
Of agony, more sharp than moonbeams strike
The shaken glacier, my cry is hurled,
As the avenger lightning. Swiftly whirled,
It flings in circles closing serpent-like
On the abominable devil-horde
I summon to the mastery of the sword.

In my white palace, where the flashing dawn
Leaps from the girdling bastions, where the light
Flames from the talisman as if a fawn
Glode through the thickets, where the soul, withdrawn
From every element, gleams through the night
Into that darkness palpable, where They
Lurk from the torment of the light of day.

Swings the swift sword in paths of vivid blue;
Rings the sharp summons in the halls of fear;
Flames the great lamen[1]; as a fiery dew
Falls the keen chanted music; fierce and true
Beams the bright diamond of the crowning sphere.

[1] A plate bearing the Names of God appropriate to the work in hand, with other symbols of power, worn by the exorciser upon his breast.

None may withstand the summons: like dead flame
Flares darkness deeper, and demands its name.

Mine eyes peer deeper in the quivering gloom—
What horrors crowd upon the aching sight!
Behold! the phantom! Icy as the tomb,
His head of writhing scorpions in the womb
Of deadlier terrors: how a charnel-light
Gleams on his beetle-frame! What poison drips
Of slime and blood from his disastrous lips!

What oceans of decaying water steam
For his vast essence! And a voice rolls forth
With miserable fury from that stream
Of horror: "Thou hast called me by the beam
Of glory, by the devastating wrath
Of thine accurséd godhead: tell me then
My Name! Thou hardiest of the Sons of Men!"

"Thy name is—stay! thou liest! I discern
In Thee no terror that my spells evoke.
Begone, thou wandering corpse of night! return
Into thy shadowy world! My symbols burn
Against thee, shade of terror! Go!" It spoke:
"Yea! I am human. Know my actual truth:
I am that ghost, the father of thy youth!"

"Poor wandering phantom!"—the exultant yell
And wolfish howling of all damnéd souls
Peals from the ravening jaws and gulfs of hell:
Leaps that foul horror through the terrible
Extinguished circle of the burning bowls.
Then I remember, fling the gleaming rod
Against him: "Liar, back! For I am God!"

Back flung the baffled corpse. But through the air
Looms the more startling vision in the night;
The actual demon of my work is there!
Where is the glittering circle? Where, ah, where
The radiant bowls whose flame rose fiery bright?
I am alone in the absolute abyss;
No aid; no helper; no defence—but this!

My left hand seeks the lamen. Once again
Fearless I front the awful shape before me,
Fearless I speak his Name. My trembling brain
Vibrates that Word of Power. I cry amain:
"Down, Dweller of the Darkness, and adore me!
I am thy Master, and thy God! Behold
The Rose of Ruby and the Cross of Gold![1]

"I am thy Saviour!" At the kindling word
Up springs the dawn-light in the broken bowls;
Up leaps the glittering circle. Then I heard
A hoarse shrill voice, as if some carrion bird
Shrieked, mightier than the storm that rocks and rolls
Through desolation: "Thou hast known my Name.
What is thy purpose, Master of the Flame?"

I made demand: through long appalling hours
Stayed he to tempt and try my adamant
Purpose: at last the legionary powers
Behind him sank affrayed; his visage lowers
Less menacing: his head is turned aslant
In vain: I bid him kneel and swear: the earth
Rocked with the terror of that deadlier birth.

He swore: he vanished: the wide sky resounds
With echoing thunders: through the blinding night
The stars resume their courses: at the bounds
Of the four watch-towers cry the waking hounds:
"The night is well": slow steals the ambient light
Through all the borders of the universe
At that last lifting of my strenuous curse.

[1] "Ave Frater!" "Rosae Rubeae." "Et Aureae Crucis." Greeting of Rosicrucians.

Slow steals the ambient light; white peace resumes
In planet, element, and sign, her sway.
The twisted ether shapes itself: relumes
The benediction all the faded fumes
With holier incense: in the fervid way
All nature rests: with holy calm I blend
Blessing and prayer at the appointed end.

THE ROSE AND THE CROSS.[1]

OUT of the seething cauldron of my woes,
Where sweets and salt and bitterness I flung;
Where charméd music gathered from my tongue,
And where I chained strange archipelagoes
Of fallen stars; where fiery passion flows
A curious bitumen; where among
The glowing medley moved the tune unsung
Of perfect love: thence grew the Mystic Rose.

Its myriad petals of divided light;
Its leaves of the most radiant emerald;
Its heart of fire like rubies. At the sight
I lifted up my heart to God and called:
How shall I pluck this dream of my desire?
And lo! there shaped itself the Cross of Fire!

HAPPINESS.

IT is the seasonable sun of spring
That gilds the all-rejuvenescent air—
New buds, young birds, so happy in the rare
Fresh life of earth: myself am bound to sing,
Feeling the resurrection crown me king.
I am so happy as men never were.
Of sorrow much, of suffering a share,
Leave me unmoved, or leave me conquering.

O miserable! that it should be so!
Lord Jesus, Sufferer for the sins of man,
Thou didst invite me to Thy shame and loss.
And I am happy! Pity me! Bestow
The right to work in the eternal Plan,
The right to hang on the eternal Cross!

THE LORD'S DAY.

THE foolish bells with their discordant clang
Summon the harlot-ridden Hell to pray:
The vicar's snout is tuned, the curates bray
Long gabbled lessons, and their noisy twang
Fills the foul worshippers with hate; the fang
Of boredom crushes out the holy day,
Where whore and jobber sit and gloom, grown grey
For hating of each other; the hours hang.

But where cliffs tremble, and the wind and sea
Clamour, night thunders from the roaring West;
I worship in the storm, and fires flee
From my gripped lightnings and my burning crest;
And when my voice rolls, master of the weather,
A thousand mighty angels cry together!

BRIGHTON, *January* 1899.

CERBERUS.

I STOOD within Death's gate,
And blew the horn of Hell:
Mad laughters echoing against Fate,
Harsh groans less terrible,
Howled from beneath the vault; in night the avenging thunders swell.

The guardian stood aloof,
A monster multiform.
His armour was of triple proof,
His voice out-shrilled the storm.
Behind him all the Furies whirl and all the Harpies swarm.

[1] The symbol of the "Rose and Cross" now replaces that of the "Golden Dawn." We may suppose from this that Crowley was about this time received into the former fraternity.

The first face spake and said:
"Welcome, O King, art thou!
Await thy throne a thousand dead;
A crown awaits thy brow,
A seven-sting scorpion; for thy rod thou hast a bauble now."

The next face spake and said:
"Welcome, O Priest, to me!
Red blood shall dye thee robes of red,
Hell's cries thy litany!
Thy mitre sits, divided strength, to end thy church and thee!"

The third face spake and said:
"Welcome, O Man, to Death!
Thy little span of life is sped,
Sighed out thy little breath.
The worm that never dies is thine; the fire that lingereth!"

"Three voices has thy frame,
Their music is but one.
Fool-demon, slave of night and shame,
That canst not see the sun!
I am the Lord thy God:[1] make thou homage and orison!"

The wild heads sank in fear:
Then, troubled, to those eyes
Remembrance crept of many a year,
Barred gates of Paradise.
Again the Voice rolled in the deep, mingled with murmuring sighs:

"I mind me of the day
One[2] came from Death to me;
His soul was weary of the day,
His look was melancholy;
He bade me open in the Name that binds Eternity.

"Yet though He passed within
And plunged within the deep,
The seven palaces of sin,
And slept the lonely sleep,
Yet came He out alone: but then I thought I heard Them weep.

"He passed alone, above,
Out of the Gates of Night;
Angels of Purity and Love
Drew to my sound and sight.
I heard Them cry that even there He fixed the eternal Light.

"I think beneath these groans,
And laughters madness-born,
Tears fell that might dissolve the stones
That grind the accurséd corn.
Beneath the deep, beneath the deep, may dwell the star of morn!

"Therefore, O God, I pray
Redemption for the folk
That dread the scourging light of day,
That bear the midnight yoke.
The Chaos was no less than this—and there the light awoke."

"O Dog of Evil, yea!
Thou hast in wisdom said.
The glory of the living day
Shall shine among the dead.
Thy faith shall have a holier task, thy strength a goodlier stead."

Then I withdrew the light
Of mine own Godhead up,
As stars that close with broken night
Their adamantine cup.
I sought the solar airs: my soul on its own tears might sup.

For in the vast profound
Still burns the rescuing sign;[1]
Beyond all sight and sense and sound
The symbol flames divine.
For He shall make all life, all death, His solitary shrine.

[1] The assumption of the form of the God of the Force whom one addresses is the Egyptian magical spell to subdue it.

[2] Ieheshua, or "Jesus."

[1] The Triangle surmounted by the Cross. This was the symbol of the "Golden Dawn."

THE HOLY OF HOLIES

THE PALACE OF THE WORLD.[1]

THE fragrant gateways of the dawn[2]
Teem with the scent of flowers.
The mother, Midnight, has withdrawn
Her slumberous kissing hours:
Day springs, with footsteps as a fawn,
Into her rosy bowers.

The pale and holy maiden horn[3]
In highest heaven is set.

[1] Describes the spiritual aspect of the "Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram," which we append, with its explanation. The abstruse nature of many of these poems is well reflected in this one.

(i.) Touching the forehead, say Ateh (Unto Thee).

(ii.) Touching the breast, say Malkuth (the Kingdom).

(iii.) Touching the right shoulder, say ve-Geburah (and the Power).

(iv.) Touching the left shoulder, say ve-Gedulah (and the Glory).

(v.) Clasping the hands upon the breast, say le-Olahm, Amen (to the Ages, Amen).

(yi.) Turning to the East, make a pentagram with the proper weapon. Say יהוה.

(vii.) Turning to the South, the same, but say אדני.

(viii.) Turning to the West, the same, but say אהיה.

(ix.) Turning to the North, the same, but say אגלא.

(x.) Extending the arms in the form of a cross, say—

(xi.) Before me Raphael,

(xii.) Behind me Gabriel,

(xiii.) On my right hand Michael,

(xiv.) On my left hand Auriel,

(xv.) for about me flames the Pentagram,

(xvi.) and in the Column stands the six-rayed Star.

(xvii.–xxi.) Repeat (i.) to (v.), the "Qabalistic Cross."

Those who regard this ritual as a mere device to invoke or banish spirits, are unworthy to possess it. Properly understood, it is the Medicine of Metals and the Stone of the Wise. [Author's Note.]

[2] This ritual was given to Neophytes of the Order of the Golden Dawn.

[3] The moon, as before, signifies Aspiration to the Highest.

My forehead, bathed in her forlorn
Light, with her lips is met;
My lips, that murmur in the morn,
With lustrous dew are wet.

My prayer is mighty with my will;
My purpose as a sword[1]
Flames through the adamant, to fill
The gardens of the Lord
With music, that the air be still,
Dumb to its mighty chord.

I stand above the tides of time
And elemental strife;
My figure stands above, sublime,
Shadowing the Key of Life,[2]
And the passion of my mighty rhyme
Divides me as a knife.

For secret symbols on my brow,
And secret thoughts within,
Compel eternity to Now,
Draw the Infinite within.
Light is extended.[3] I and Thou
Are as they had not been.[4]

So on my head the light is one,
Unity manifest;
A star more splendid than the sun
Burns for my crowned crest;
Burns, as the murmuring orison
Of waters in the west.

What angel from the silver gate
Flames to my fierier face?
What angel, as I contemplate
The unsubstantial space?
Move with my lips the laws of Fate
That bind earth's carapace?

[1] For the "Flaming Sword" is the "Pentagram unwound."

[2] The arms being extended, and the magus being clad in a Tau-shaped robe and a nemmes, the sacred Egyptian headdress, his figure would cast a shadow resembling the Ankh, or "Key of Life."

[3] Khabs am Pekht. Konx om Pax. Light in Extension. The mystic words which seal the current of light in the sphere of the aspirant.

[4] *Cf.* Omar Khayyam the Sufi.

No angel, but the very light
And fire and spirit of Her,
Unmitigated, eremite,
The unmanifested myrrh,
Ocean, and night that is not night,
The mother-mediator.[1]

O sacred spirit of the Gods![2]
O triple tongue![3] Descend,
Lapping the answering flame that nods,
Kissing the brows that bend,
Uniting all earth's periods
To one exalted end.

Still on the mystic Tree of Life
My soul is crucified;[4]
Still strikes the sacrificial knife
Where lurks some serpent-eyed
Fear, passion, or man's deadly wife
Desire, the suicide!

Before me dwells the Holy One
Anointed Beauty's King;[5]
Behind me, mightier than the Sun,
To whom the cherubs sing,
A strong archangel,[6] known of none,
Comes crowned and conquering.

An angel stands on my right hand
With strength of ocean's wrath;[7]
Upon my left the fiery brand,
Charioted fire smites forth:[8]
Four great archangels to withstand
The furies of the path.[9]

[1] Binah, the revealer of the Triad of Light.
[2] Ruach Elohim (see Genesis i.) adds up to 300=ש=Fire.
[3] ש by shape hath a triple tongue.
[4] These archangels are at points on the "Tree of Life" which cause them to surround as described one who is "crucified" thereon.
[5] Raphael dwells in Tiphereth, Beauty.
[6] Gabriel, dweller in Yesod, where are the Kerubim.
[7] Michael, lord of Hod, an Emanation of a watery nature.
[8] Auriel, archangel of Netzach, to which Fire is attributed.
[9] The path of ת, or Saturn and Earth, which leads from Malkuth to Yesod indeed, but is dark and illusory. This first step upward attracts the bitterest opposition of all the Enemies of the Human Soul.

Flames on my front the fiery star,
About me and around.[1]
Pillared, the sacred sun, afar,
Six symphonies of sound;
Flames, as the Gods themselves that are;
Flames, in the abyss profound.[2]

The spread arms drop like thunder! So
Rings out the lordlier cry,
Vibrating through the streams that flow
In ether to the sky,
The moving archipelago,
Stars in their seigneury.

Thine be the kingdom! Thine the power!
The glory triply thine![3]
Thine, through Eternity's swift hour,
Eternity, thy shrine—
Yea, by the holy lotus-flower,
Even mine![4]

THE MOUNTAIN CHRIST.[5]

O WORLD of moonlight! Visionary vale
Of ocean-sleeping mountains! Mighty chasm
Within whose wild abyss there chants the pale,
The dolorous phantasm
Of wrecked white womanhood! The wizard cold
Grips the mute valley in his grasp of gold!

[1] As asserted in the ritual.
[2] It flames both above and beneath the magus, who is thus in a cube of 4 pentagrams and 2 hexagrams, 32 points in all. And 32 is אהיהוה, the sacred word that expresses the Unity of the Highest and the Human.
[3] As in ritual.
[4] Supreme affirmation of Unity with the Highest in the Lotus, the universal symbol of Attainment.
[5] Composed during a solitary ramble across the Col du Géant.

Yonder the hatred of the dismal steep
  Sweeps up to wrathful thunders, that are curled
In billowy menace, as the deadlier deep
  That menaces the world
With breaking foam: so hangs the glacier, rent
By giant sunrays, in the frost-grip pent.

Yonder again rears up the craggy wall
  Its cleaving head to heaven: thither I
Climb the vast terrors, where the echoing fall
  Roars stony from the sky.
Thither I pressed at midnight, and the dawn
Saw my swift feet move faster than the fawn.

Pale seas of blue soft azure lie beyond,
  Far o'er the gleaming green: the smoke is risen
Out of the cloudy north; the incense-wand
  That binds dead souls in prison,
That prison of the day, when sleepless dead
Rest for awhile from agony and dread.

Strange! how a certain fear possesses me
  Alone amid their crag-bound solitude.
Even beyond the keen delight—to Be—
  Steals that diviner mood
Of wonder at the miracle—the plan
Of Nature crowned by the astounding Man!

The secret of the Lord is set with him
  That wonders at His majesty:[1] his praise
Wells from no trembler's misery: his hymn
  Swells the exultant day's.
His psalm wings upward, and reflected down
Even in Hell makes music and renown.

Yea! for the echo of the anthem rolls
  Down to the lost unfathomable deep.
Down, to the darkness of all shades and souls,
  The founts of music sweep.
Even the devils in the utter night
Feel it the saving, not the avenging light.

[1] See the Psalms of David. "Wonders" is a correcter rendering than "fears."

Yea! for the worship of my secret song
  Vibrates through every chasm of the world:
Its sound is caught by angels, and made strong!
  By sylphs, and dewed, and pearled
With fairy melodies, and borne, alone,
Aloft, to the immeasurable throne.

O mighty palace of immortal stone!
  O glamour of the fathomless gray snow!
O clouds! O whirlwinds of my mountain throne!
  I charge your souls to go
Unto the souls of men, and bid them rise
Toward redemption, and the unsullied eyes.

I charge you go and whisper unto men
  The solemn glories of your secret mind,
Making them pure, and wise; return ye then
  Unto your proper kind,
Having thus offered water, blood, and tears,
For the remission of our carrion years.[1]

So deepen all the mountains: even so
  The wandering shadows close upon the day;
The sunlight burns its fading ruby glow
  On the chaotic way.
Night falls, and I must tread the dizzy steep
Again, to plunge to the devouring deep.

The blessing of the Highest shall be set
  On your white heads, O monarchs of the snow!
The blessing of the Highest, lightening yet
  The burdens that ye know.
So, as three golden arrows of the sun
Strike, may the threefold sacrament be One!

O visionary valley of my Soul!
  When shall thy beauty, even thine, be made
As pure and mighty as these hills that roll
  In mist and sun and shade?
O thou! the Highest! make my will as thine,
My consciousness, the consciousness divine!

[1] See the Prayer of the Undines, given by Eliphaz Levi and some other writers on occult subjects.

TO ALLAN BENNETT MACGREGOR.[1]

O MAN of Sorrows: brother unto Grief!
O pale with suffering, and dumb hours of pain!
O worn with Thought! thy purpose springs again
The Soul of Resurrection: thou art chief
And lord of all thy mind: O patient thief
Of God's own fire! What mysteries find fane
In the white shrine of thy white spirit's reign,
Thou man of Sorrows: O, beyond belief!

Let perfect Peace be with thee: let thy days
Prosper in spite of thine unselfish soul;
And as thou lovest, so let Love increase
Upon thee and about thee: till thy ways
Gleam with the splendour of that secret goal
Whose long war grows the great abiding peace.

THE ROSICRUCIAN.

À SA MAJESTÉ JACQUES IV D'ÉCOSSE.[2]

I SEE the centuries wax and wane.
I know their mystery of pain,
The secrets of the living fire,
The key of life: I live: I reign:
For I am master of desire.

Silent, I pass amid the folk
Caught in its mesh, slaves to its yoke.
Silent, unknown, I work and will
Redemption, godhead's master-stroke,
And breaking of the wands of ill.

No man hath seen beneath my brows
Eternity's exultant house.
No man hath noted in my brain
The knowledge of my mystic spouse.
I watch the centuries wax and wane.

Poor, in the kingdom of strong gold,
My power is swift and uncontrolled.
Simple, amid the maze of lies;
A child, among the cruel old,
I plot their stealthy destinies.

So patient, in the breathless strife;
So silent, under scourge and knife;
So tranquil, in the surge of things;
I bring them from the well of Life,
Love, from celestial water-springs!

From the shrill fountain-head of God
I draw out water with the rod
Made luminous with light of power.
I seal each æon's period,
And wait the moment and the hour.

Aloof, alone, unloved, I stand
With love and worship in my hand.
I commune with the Gods: I wait
Their summons, and I fire the brand.
I speak their Word: and there is Fate.

I know no happiness, no pain,
No swift emotion, no disdain,
No pity: but the boundless light
Of the Eternal Love, unslain,
Flows through me to redeem the night.

Mine is a sad slow life: but I,
I would not gain release, and die
A moment ere my task be done.
To falter now were treachery—
I should not dare to greet the sun!

Yet, in one hour I dare not hope,
The mighty gate of Life may ope,
And call me upwards to unite
(Even my soul within the scope)
With That Unutterable Light.

[1] Now a Buddhist recluse in Burma. In England he was a martyr to spasmodic asthma, which, however, could not quench, could hardly dull even, the fire of his soul.

[2] Supposed to have escaped from Flodden, and become an Adept: to have reappeared as the "Comte de St. Germain," and later (so hinted Mr. S. L. Mathers) as Mr. S. L. Mathers.

Steady of purpose, girt with Truth,
I pass, in my eternal youth,
  And watch the centuries wax and wane:
Untouched by Time's corroding tooth,
  Silent, immortal, unprofane!

My empire changes not with time.
Men's kingdoms cadent as a rhyme
  Move me as waves that rise and fall.
They are the parts, that crash or climb;
  I only comprehend the All.

I sit, as God must sit; I reign.
Redemption from the threads of pain
  I weave, until the veil be drawn.
I burn the chaff, I glean the grain;
  In silence I await the dawn.

THE ATHANOR.

LIBERTINE touches of small fingers creep
  Among my curls to-night: pale ghastly kisses,
Like mournful ghosts roused from their ruined sleep
  By clamorous cries of murder. Strange abysses
Loom in the vista keen eyes penetrate,
Vague forecasts of immeasurable fate.

O thou belovéd blood, that wells and weeps!
  O thou belovéd mouth, that beats and bleeds!
O mystic bosom where some serpent sleeps,
  Sweet mockery of a thousand saintlier creeds!
Even I, that breathe your perfume, taste your breath,
Know, even this hour, ye are not life, but death!

No death ye bring more godlike than desire,
  When seas roar tempest-lashed, and foam is flung
Raging on pitiless crags, and gloomy fire
  Lurks in the master-cloud; corpses are swung
Helpless and horrible in trough and crest—
That death were music, and the lord of rest.

No death ye bring as when the storm is rolled,
  An imminent giant on the sun-ripped snows,
Where icy fingers grip the overbold
  Son of their secrets, and like springes close
On his choked throat and frozen body—Nay!
That death were twilight, and the gate of Day!

No death ye bring as his, that grips the flag
  In desperate fingers, and with bloody sword
Flames up the thundering breach, while bastioned crag,
  Glacis, and pent-house belch their monstrous horde
Of hideous engines shattering—this strife
Clears the straight road of Glory and of Life!

Nay: but the hateful death that stings the soul
  Into rebellion; the insensate death
That chokes its own delight with words that roll
  Mightier-mouthed than the archangel's breath;
The death that murders courage ere it drink
The soul's own life-blood on the desperate brink!

So, from the languid fingers in my curls
  And dreamy worship of a woman's eyes,
I look beyond the miserable whirls
  Of foolish measures woven in the skies;
Beyond the thoughtless stars: beyond God's sleep:
Beyond the deep: beneath the deadly deep!

Infinite rings of luminous ether move
  At first amid the blackness that I seek:
Infinite motion and amazing love
  Deaden the lustre of the night. I speak
The cry of silence, that is heard unspoken;
That, being heard, rings evermore unbroken.

Silence, deep silence. Not a shudder stirs
  The vast demesne of unforgetful space,
No comet's lunatic rush: no meteor whirs,
  No star dares breathe, no planet knows his place
In that supreme unquiet quietude.
I am the master of my own deep mood.

I am the master. Yea, no doubt I rule
  The whole mad universe by will extended[1]—
Who whispers then, "O miserable fool!
  This night thy might and majesty are ended;
Thy soul shall be required of thee"? I heard
This voice, and knew it for my proper word!

Yea, mine own voice: the higher spirit speaks,
  Stemming the hands that guide, the arms that hold,
Even the infinite brain: that spirit seeks
  A loftier dawn of more ephemeral gold—
Ephemeral, and eternal: droop thine head,
O God! for thou must suffer this: I said!

Droop thy wide pinions, O thou mortal God!
  Sink thy vast forehead, and let Life consume
The miserable life thy feet have trod
  Beneath them, that thine own life in its doom
Fall, in its resurrection to arise;
Stoop, that its holier hope may cleave the skies.

Power, power, and power! O single sacrifice
  On thine own altar: let thy savour steam
Up, through the domes of broken Paradise;
  Up, by Euphrates'[2] unimagined stream;
Up, by strange river and mysterious lawn
To some impossible diadem of dawn!

So the mere orderly ruling of events
  Shall change and blossom to a finer flower
Until it serve to worlds and elements
  For aspiration in the nobler hour—
Not mere repression, but the hope and crown
Of fallen hierarchies no more cast down.

O misery of triple love and grief
  And hope! O joy of hatred and despair
And happiness! The little hour is brief,
  And the lithe fingers soothe the listless hair
Less, and the kisses swoon to tenderer sighs
And little sobs of sleeping ecstasies.

No! for the envy of the infinite
  Crushes the juice from out the poppy's stem,
And brown-stained fingers wring the petals white,
  And weary lips seek lotus-life in them
Vainly: the lotus burns above the tomb—
Yea, but in thought's unfathomable womb!

For spiritual life and love and light
  Climb the swayed ladder of our various fate;
The steep rude stair that mocks the hero's might,
  Casts off the wise, and crumbles with the great.
Yet from the highest crown no blossom fell,
Save one, to bring salvation unto Hell.

O angel of my spiritual desire![1]
  O luminous master of the silver feet!
O passionate rose of infinite white fire!
  O cross of sacrifice made bitter-sweet!
O wide-wing, star-brow, veritable lord!
O mystic bearer of the flaming sword!

O brows half seen, O visionary star
  Seen in the fragrant breezes of the East!
O lover of my love, O avatar
  Of the All-One, O mystical High Priest!
O thou before whose eyes my weak eyes fail,
Wonderful warden of the Holy Grail!

[1] *Cf.* Fichte.

[2] Or Phrath, the Fourth River of the Mystic Eden, flowing from Tiphereth to Yesod.

[1] The "Genius" of Socrates; the "Holy Guardian Angel" of Abramelin the Mage; or the "Higher Self" of the Theosophists.

O thou, mine angel, whom these eyes have seen,
These hands have handled, and this mouth has kissed!
O thou, the very tongue of fire, the clean
Sweet-scented presence of a holier Christ!
Listen, and answer, and behold! My wings
Droop, O thou stronger than the immortal kings!

My flame burns dim! O bring the broken jar
And alabaster casket, and dispense
The oil that flows from that supernal star,
And holy fountains of the Influence.[1]
Bring peace, and strength, and quicken in my heart
Mastery of night-fear and the day-flung dart.

Yea! from the limit of the fallen day,
And barren ocean of ungathered Time,
Bring Night, and bring Eternity, and stay
With white wings pointing where tired feet may climb:
Even the pathway where shed blood ran deep
To build red roses in the land of Sleep.

O guardian of the pallid hours of night!
O tireless watcher of the smitten noon!
O sworded with the majesty of light,
O girded with the glory of the moon!
Angel of absolute splendour! Link of mine
Old weary spirit with the All-Divine!

Ship that shalt carry me by many winds
Driven on the limitless ocean! Mighty sword,
By which I force that barrier of the mind's
Miscomprehension of its own true lord!
Listen, and answer, and behold my brow
Fiery with hope! Bend down, and touch it now!

[1] From Kether, the Vast Countenance, are said to flow "13 fountains of magnificent oil" through Mezla, the Influence, upon Tiphereth, the Lesser Countenance.

Press the twin dawn of thy desirous lips
In the swart masses of my hair; bend close,
And shroud all earth in masterless eclipse,
While my heart's murmur through thy being flows,
To carry up the prayer, as incense teems
Skyward, to those immeasurable streams!

Breathe the creative Sigh upon my mouth
That even the body may become the soul:
Cry, as the chainéd Eagle of the South,
"A house of death,"[1] and make my spirit whole!
Touch with pure balm the five mysterious wounds!
Come! come away! but not your mighty sounds![1]

O wind of all the world! O silent river!
O sea of seas! O flower of all the flowers
O fire! O spirit! Beam thou on for ever
Through æons of illimitable hours!
Kiss thou my forehead, let thy tender breath
Woo me to life, and my desire to death!

I shall be ready for it by-and-by,
That sharp initiation, when the whole
Body is torn with sundering pangs, and I,
The very conscious essence of the soul,
Am rent with agony, as when the pale
Christ heard the shriek of the dividing veil.

That awful mystery, its heart torn out,
Palpitates on the altar-stone of life:
That broken self, that hears the triumph-shout
Of its own voice beneath the falling knife,
When, like a bad dream changing, swiftly grows
A new soul's joy, a fuller-petalled rose.

Many the spirits broken for one man;
Many the men that perish to create
One God the more; many the weary and wan
Old Gods that die to constitute a Fate:
How many Fates then, think you, must control
The stainless aspiration of the soul?

[1] See the "48 Calls or Keys" of Dr. Dee, from which this is quoted.

Not one. I tell you, destiny is sure,
Yet moves no finger: though it tune my tongue,
My tongue shall tune it too: my words endure
As destiny decays: my hands are flung
In prayer to Heaven nay, to mine own crown,
To raise myself, and not to drag it down![1]

O holiest Lord of the divine white flame
Of brilliance sworded in the temple sky!
O thou who knowest my most secret name,
Who whisperest when only thou and I
Make up our universe: bestow thy kiss:
Arise! Come, let us pierce the old abyss!

Rise! Move! Appear! Let us go forth together,
Into the solemn passionless profound,
Into the darkness, and the thrilling weather,
Into the silence louder than all sound,
Into the vast implacable inane!
Come, let us journey thither once again!

THE CHANT TO BE SAID OR SUNG UNTO OUR LADY ISIS.

Roll through the caverns of matter, the world's irremovable bounds!
Roll, ye wild billows of ether! the Sistron[2] is shaken and sounds!
Wild and sonorous the clamour, vast in the region of death,
Live with the fire of the Spirit, the essence and flame of the breath!
Sound, O sound!

Gleam in the world of the dark, where the chained ones shall tremble and flee!
Gleam in the skies of the dusk, for the Light of the Dawn is in me!
Light on the forehead, and life in the nostrils, and love in the breast,
Shine, O thou Star of the Dawning, thou Sun of the Radiant Crest!
Shine, O shine!

Flame through the sky in the strength of the chariot-wheels of the Sun!
Flame, ye young fingers of light, on the West of the morning that run!
Flame, O thou Meteor Car, for my fire is exalted in thee!
Lighten the darkness and herald the day-light, and waken the sea!
Flame, O flame!

Crown Her, O crown Her with stars as with flowers for a virginal gaud!
Crown Her, O crown Her with Light and the flame of the down-rushing Sword!
Crown Her, O crown Her with Love for maiden and mother and wife!
Hail unto Isis! Hail! For She is the Lady of Life!
Isis crowned!

A LITANY.

The ghosts of abject days flit by;
The bloated goblins of the past;
Dim ghouls in soulless apathy;
Fates imminent, and dooms aghast!
O Mother Mout,[1] O Mother Night,
Give me the Sun of Life and Light![2]

[1] An allusion to the sign called "Enterer of the Threshold," in which the Egyptian Gods often stand. It is a sign of high initiation (if you know the rest!) and implies the gathering of force from the Gods and its projection as will toward any object.

[2] A musical instrument used for religious purposes by the Egyptians. It consisted of an oval framework (with a handle) crossed by four wires loosely fixed, which on being shaken gave forth a musical sound.

[1] Mout, the Vulture Goddess of The Womb of Years.

[2] "Mother, give me the Sun!" This, the tragedy-word of Ibsen's "Ghosts," served as inception—by reversal—of this poem.

The shadows of my hopes devoured,
  The crowns of my intent cast down,
The hate that shone, the love that lowered,
  Make up God's universal frown.
O Lord, O Hormakhou,[1] display
The rosy earnest of the day!

The mighty pomp of desolate
  Dead kings, a pageant, moves along;
Dead queens unite in desperate,
  Unsatisfied, unholy song.
O Khephra,[2] manifest in flesh,
Arise, create the world afresh!

The silence of my heart is one
  With memory's insatiate night;
I hardly dare to hope the sun.
  I seek the darkness, not the light.
O Lord Harpocrates,[3] be still
The moveless centre of my will!

My sorrows are more manifold
  Than His that bore the sins of man.
My sins are like the starry fold,
  My hopes their desolation wan.
O Nuit,[4] the starry one, arise,
And set thy starlight in my skies!

In darkness, in the void abyss,
  I grope with vain despairing arms.
The silence as a serpent is,
  The rustle of the world alarms.
O Horus,[5] Light in Darkness, bless
My failure with thine own success!

My suffering is keen as theirs
  That in Amenti taste of death;

[1] The Dawn-God.
[2] The Beetle-Headed God, who brings light out of darkness, for He is the Sun at Midnight.
[3] God of Silence. Usually shown as a child.
[4] The bowed Goddess of the Stars. Shown as a naked woman, her hands and feet on the earth, the arms and legs much elongated, so that her body arches the firmament.
[5] The Hawk-headed Lord of Strength, the Avenger of Osiris' death.

Not mine own pains create these prayers:
  For them I claim the living Breath.
O Lord Osiris,[1] bend and bring
All winters to thy sign of Spring!

Poor folly mine: I cannot see
  Save from one corner of one star!
So many millions over me;
  So many, and the next, how far!
O Wisdom-crowned Ta-hu-ti,[2] lend
Thy magic: let my light extend![3]

I cannot comprehend one truth.
  My sight is biassed, and my mind—
One snake-skin thought is of its youth;
  Grows old, and casts the slough behind.
O Themis,[4] Lady of the plume,
Shed thy twin godhead in the gloom!

How ugly is this life of mine!
  How slimes it in the terrene mud!
Clouds hide the beauty all-divine,
  The moonlight has a mist of blood.
O Hathoor,[5] Lady of the West,
Take thy sad lover to thy breast!

Even the perfumes of the dawn
  Intoxicate, deceive the soul.
Let every shadow be withdrawn!
  Let there be Light, supreme and whole!
O Ra,[6] thou golden Lord of Day,
The Sun of Righteousness display!

The burden is so hard to bear.
  I took too adamant a cross;
This sackcloth rends my soul to wear;
  My self-denial is as dross!
O Shu,[7] that holdest up the sky,
Hold thou thy servant, lest he die!

[1] The Redeemer by His suffering.
[2] Thoth, the Ibis God. Equivalent to the higher Hermes.
[3] Khabs am Pekht again.
[4] Goddess of Justice.
[5] Goddess of Beauty and Love.
[6] The Hawk-headed God, the Sun in his strength.
[7] The Egyptian Atlas—à rebours.

Nature is one with my distress.
The flowers are dull, the stars are pale.
I am the Soul of Nothingness.
I cannot lift the golden veil.
O Mother Isis,[1] let thine eyes
Behold my grief, and sympathise !

I cannot round the perfect wheel,
Attain not to the fuller end.
In part I love, in part I feel,
Know, worship, will, and comprehend.
O Mother Nephthys,[2] fill me up
Thine own perfection's deadly cup !

My aspiration quails within me ;
" My heart is fixed," in vain I cry ;
The little loves and whispers win me :—
" Eli, lama sabacthani ! "

[1] Nature : the beginning.
[2] Perfection : the end.

O Chomse,[1] moon-god, grant thy boon,
The silver pathway of the moon !

Beyond the Glory of the Dawn,
Beyond the Splendour of the Sun,
Thy secret Spirit is withdrawn,
The plumes of the Concealed One.
Amoun ![2] upon the Cross I cry,
" I am Osiris, even I ! "

O Thou ! the All, the many-named,
The One in many manifest :
Let not my spirit be ashamed,
But win to its eternal rest !
Thou Self from Nothing ! bring Thou me
Unto that Self which is in Thee !

AMEN.

[1] See previous explanations of moon-symbolism.
[2] The Supreme and Concealed One. Osiris, justified by trial, purified through suffering, can at the moment of his crucifixion—which is also his equilibration—attain to him.

THE EPILOGUE IS SILENCE

CARMEN SAECULARE *

1900

PROLOGUE.

THE EXILE.

"The Sun, surmounted by a red rose, shining on a mossy bank."[1]

OVER the western water lies a solar fire,
Rapt lives and drunken ecstasies of sad desire;
Poppies and lonely flag-flowers haunt the desolate
Marsh-strand: the herons gaunt still contemplate
What was delight, is ruin, may breed love again,
Even as darkness breeds the day: when life is slain.

. . . . .

O who will hear my chant, my cry; my voice who hear,
Even in this weary misery, this danker mere,
Me, in mine exile, who am driven from yonder mountains
Blue-gray, and highland airs of heaven, and moving fountains?
Me, who shall hear me? Am I lost, a broken vessel,
Caught in the storm of lies and tossed, forbid to wrestle?
Shall not the sun rise lively yet, the rose yet bloom,
The crown yet lift me, life beget flowers on the tomb?
I was born fighter. Think you then my task is done,
My work, my Father's work for men, the rising sun?
Who calls me coward? Let them wait awhile! Shall I
Bow down a loyal head to fate: despair and die?
I hear the sea roll strong and pure that bore me far
From Méalfourvónie's[1] scalp, gray moor and lonely scaur;
I hear the waves together mutter in counsel deep;
I hear the thunder the winds utter in broken sleep;
I hear the voices of four rivers crying aloud;
Four angels trumpet, and earth shivers: the heavens shroud
Their faces in blank terror for the sound of them:
The mountains are disturbed and roar: the azure hem
That laps all lands is broken, lashed in fiery foam,
And all God's thunderbolts are crashed—against my home.
Written in heaven, written on earth, written in the deep,
Written by God's own finger-birth; the stars may weep,
The sun rejoice, that see at last His vengeance strike;
The fury of destruction's blast; the fiery spike
As of an arrow of adamant, comet or meteor:
"The dog returneth to his vomit: the ancient whore[2]

[1] This is the heraldic description of Crowley's crest.

[1] A mountain on Loch Ness, opposite the poet's home.
[2] England.

* Crowley, an Irishman, was passionately attached to the Celtic movement, and only abandoned it when he found that it was a mere mask for the hideous features of Roman Catholicism.

That sitteth upon many waters, even she
That called together all her daughters upon the sea;
That clad herself in crimson silk and robes of black
And gave men blood instead of milk; and made a track
Of lives and gold and dust and death on land and sea,
She is fallen, is fallen! Her breath I take to me.
That which I gave I take, and that she thought to build,
I, even I, will break it flat: my curse fulfilled.
No stone of London soon shall stand upon another,
No son of her throughout the land shall know his brother.
I will destroy her who is rotten: from the face
Of earth shall fail the misbegotten, root and race;
And the fair country unto them again I give,
Whom in long exile men contemn: for they shall live."
Yea, they shall live! The Celtic race! Amen! And I
Give praise, and close mine eyes, cover my face, and laugh—and die.

"CARMEN SAECULARE."

"I prophesy, with feet upon a grave,
Of death cast out, and life devouring death.
. . . . . .
Of freedom, though all manhood were one slave;
Of truth, though all the world were liar; of love,
That time nor hate can raze the witness of."
SWINBURNE, *Tiresias.*

NINE voices that raise high the eternal hymn!
Nine faces that ring round the rainbow sky!
Hear me! The century's lamp is growing dim;
Saturnian gloom descends and it must die.
Fill, fill my spirit to the utter brim
With fire and melody!

O nine sweet sisters! I have heard your song
In blue soft waters and in stern grey seas;
I listen for your voices in the throng;
I languish for your deadly melodies!
Yet, when I hear the sound for which I long,
My soul is not at ease.

There rings an iron music in my ears;
A Martial cadence, chorus of the Hours:
The years of plenty, the abundant years
Flee, as the halcyon from the dying flowers.
The chariot of Miseries and Fears
Marshals its sombre powers.

Take up thy pen and write! I must obey.
No shrinking at that terrible command!
Their voices mingle in the feeble lay,
Their fire impulses the reluctant hand.
My words must prophesy the avenging day
And curse my native land.

How have I loved thee in thy faithlessness
Beneath the rule of those unspeakable![1]
How would I shield thee from this sorceress
That holds my words imprisoned in her spell!
I would be silent. And the words obsess
My spirit. It is well.

O England! England, mighty England, falls!
None shall lament her lamentable end!
The Voice of Justice thunders at her walls.
She would not hear. She shall not comprehend!
The nations keep their mocking carnivals:
She hath not left a friend!

The harlot that men called great Babylon,
In crimson raiment and in smooth attire,
The scarlet leprosy that shamed the sun,
The gilded goat that plied the world for hire;—
Her days of wealth and majesty are done:
Men trample her for mire!

[1] The House of Hanover.

The temple of their God is broken down ;
Yea, Mammon's shrine is cleansed ! The house of her
That cowed the world with her malignant frown,
And drove the Celt to exile and despair,
Is battered now—God's fire destroys the town ;
London admits God's air.

They scorned the God that made them ; yea, they said :
"Lords of this globe, the Saxon race, are we.
"Europe before us lies, as men lie dead ;
"Britannia—ho ! Britannia rules the sea !"
This night thy kingdom shall be finishèd,
Thy soul required of thee.

Hail ! France ! Because thy freedom hath rebelled
Against the alien, and the golden yoke ;[1]
Because thy justice lives and reigns, unquelled,
Unbribed ;[2] because thy head above the smoke
Soars, eagle ! Tribulation hath not felled
Thy freedom's ancient oak !

Therefore, this message of the Gods to thee !
What banner floats above thy bastions ?
The oriflamme, the golden fleur-de-lys ?
The eagle, or the tricolour ? Thy sons
Choose their own flag, contented to be free,
With freemen's orisons.

The mist is gathering on the seer's sight—
I cannot see the future of thy state.
Or, am I dazzled by resounding light ?
I know this thing—thy future shall be great !
Come war, come revolution ! In their spite
Thou mayst compel thy Fate.

[1] The Jews.
[2] The verdict of Rennes.

O German Empire ! Let thy sons beware,
Not crowding sordid towns for lust of gold,
Not all forgetful of the herdsman's care,
Not arming all men in an iron mould.
Peaceful be thou : with watching and with prayer.
But be not overbold.

Fall, Austria ! In the very day and hour
That reverend head that holds thee in its awe
Shall sink in peace, I see thy rotten power
Break as the crumbling ice-floe in the thaw.
Destruction shatters thy blood-builded tower.
Death has thee in his maw.

Stand, Russia ! Let thy freedom grow in peace,
Beneath the constant rule, the changing Czar.
Thy many, thine inhospitable seas
Shall ring thee round, a zodiac to thy star,
And Frost, the rampart of thine iron ease,
Laugh at the shock of war.

Turn, Italy ! The Voice is unto Thee !
Return, poor wounded maiden, to thy home !
Thou hast well tried a spurious liberty :
Thou art made captive ; let thy fancy roam
To the great Mother, deeper than the sea,
And fairer than the foam.

O Gateway of the admirable East !
Hold fast thy Faith ! Let no man take thy Crown !
The Birds of Evil, that were keen to feast,
(Fools cried) but herald thy renewed renown.
Mad Christians see in thee the Second Beast,
But shall not shake thee down.

Therefore reign thou, saith God, august, alone,
White-winged to East and West, an albatross,
"Abdul the Damned, on thy infernal throne!"[1]
Allah can wed the Crescent and the Cross!
According to the wisdom thou hast shown
Mete thou thy gain and loss!

O melancholy ruin, that wert Greece!
What little comfort canst thou take from time?
Years pass, in shameful war or sordid peace—
What god can recreate thee, the sublime?
Alas! let Lethe roll her sleepy seas
Over thy ruined clime.

O piteous fallen tyranny of Spain!
What dogs are tearing at thy bowels yet?
Let thine own King,[2] saith God, resume his reign!
Loyal and happy seasons may forget
The ancient scars. Thy moon is on the wane?
Thy sun may never set!

And thou, foul oligarchy of the West,
Thou, soiled with bribes and stained with treason's stain,
Thou, heart of coin beneath a brazen breast,
Rotten republic, prostitute of gain!
Thou, murderer of the bravest and the best
That fringed thy southern main![3]

The doom is spoken. Thine own children tear
Thy cruel heart and thy corrupted tongue;
Thy toilers snare thee in thine own foul snare,
And sting thee where thy gilded worms had stung.
The politician and the millionaire
Regain maternal dung.

[1] A notorious phrase, from the hysterical sonnets of a poetaster of the period.
[2] Don Carlos.
[3] In the Civil War, 1861–1864.

Then only shall thy liberty arise;
Then only shall thine eagle shake his wings,
And sunward soar through the unsullied skies,
And careless watch the destiny of kings.
Then only shall truth's angel in thine eyes
Perceive eternal things.

The oracle is suddenly grown still.
Only, mine eyes, unweary of the sight,
Pierce through the dawn-mist of the sacred hill
And yearn toward the rose of love and light.
My lips, that drank the Heliconian rill,
Murmur with slow delight.

I see the faces of the lyric Nine!
The Rose of God its petals will unfold!
I madden with the ecstasy divine!
My soul leaps sunwards, shrieking—and behold!
Out of the ocean and the kindling brine
Apollo's face of gold!

What music, what delirium, what delight!
What dancing madness catches at my feet!
A tongue of fresh, impossible, keen light
Burns on my brow—a silver stream of heat.
I am constrained: The Awful Word I write
From the one Paraclete.

The Reign of Darkness hath an end. Behold!
Eight stars are gathered in one fiery sign.[1]
This is the birth-hour of the Age of Gold;
The false gold pales before the Gold divine.
The Christ is calling to the starry fold
Of Souls—Arise and shine!

[1] Eight planets were together in the "fiery" sign, Sagittarius, towards the close of the year 1899.

The Isis of the World hath raised her veil
  One moment, that fresh glory of the stars
May glow through winter, where the sun
    is pale;
  Melt snow-bound lilies; bid the prison
    bars,
Wherein men bow their heads and women
    wail,
  Blossom to nenuphars.

The sacred lotus of the universe
  Blossoms this century—a million tears
Melted the ice of Eve's accursèd curse:
  A million more have watered it—it peers,
A resurrection fragrance, to disperse
  Men's folly and their fears.

The contemplation of those awful eyes,
  The flaming void, the godhead of the light,
The abyss of these unfathomable skies,
  Exhaust my being; I desire the night.
Lo! I have written all the destinies
  Thy spirit bade me write.

The noise of rushing water! And the sound
  Of tenfold thunder! Mighty a flame of fire
Roars downward: as a maiden from a swound
  My spirit answers to its own desire.
My feet are firm again upon the ground—
  Yea! but my head is higher.

My face is shining with the fire of heaven.
  I move among my fellows as a ghost.
With thought for bread and memory for
    leaven
  My life is nourished, yet my life is lost.
I live and move among the starry seven,
  Nor count the deadly cost.

Only I see the century as a child
  Call Truth and Justice, Light and Peace,
    to guide;
Wisdom and Joy, and Love the undefiled,
  Lead up true worship, its eternal bride.
Stormy its birth; its youth, how fierce and
    wild!
  Its end, how glorified!

O Spirit of Illimitable Light!
  O Thou with style and tablet![1] Answer me
In that dread pomp of Triumph and of Right,
  The awful day: my witnesses are Ye
That I have said in all men's sound and sight
  The things that are to be.

IN THE HOUR BEFORE REVOLT.

". . . the green paradise which western waves
  Embosom in their ever-wailing sweep,
  Talking of freedom to their tongueless caves,
  Or to the spirits which within them keep
  A record of the wrongs which, though they
      sleep,
  Die not, but dream of retribution."
                Adonais [*cancelled passage*].

WILD pennons of sunrise the splendid,
  And scarlet of clustering flowers
Cry aloud that the Winter is ended,
  Claim place for the re-risen hours.
The Ram in the Heavens exalted[2]
  Calls War to uncover her wing;
Through skies that be hollow and vaulted
  Exulting the shouts of him ring:
    The Sign of the Spring.

How hollows the heart of the heaven!
  How light swells his voice for a cry!
The winter is shaken and riven,
  And death and the fruits of him die.
The billow roars back to its tyrant,
  The wind; the red thunderbolts roar;
The flame and the earthquake aspirant
  Leap forth as an herald before
    The trumpet of war.

In crimson he robes him for raiment,
  In armour all rusted and red:
Spear shakes and sword flashes, exclaimant
  To share in the spoil of the dead.

[1] Thoth, the Scribe of the Gods.
[2] Aries, the sign which the Sun enters at the Vernal Equinox, is "ruled" by Mars, the planet of War.

A helmet flames forth on his forehead,
Gold sparks from the forge of the stars,
His shield with the Gorgon made horrid
Hath blood on its bull-battled bars—
Thou God of me, Mars!

He strides through the vibrating aether;
Spurns earth from His warrior feet;
Shakes fire from the forges beneath her;
His glances are fervid and fleet.
With a cry that makes tremble the thunder,
Light-speared, with a sword that is flame,
He bursts the vast spaces asunder.
His angels arise and proclaim:
The Lord is His Name!

O Lord! Thou didst march out of Edom!
Thou leapedst from the Mountains of Seir!
The breath of Thy voice was as Freedom!
The nations did tremble with fear.
The heathen, their fury forsook them;
The Moabites trembled and fled.
O Lord, when Thy countenance shook them,
Thy voice in the House of the Dead.
O Lord! Thou hast said!

The lightnings were kindled and lightened,
Thy thunder was heard on the deep;
The stars with Thy Fear shook and whitened,
The sun and the moon in the steep.
The sea rose in tumult and clamour,
The earth also shook with Thee then,
As Thor had uplifted his hammer,
And smitten the mutinous men.
O! rise Thou again!

The voice of the Lord is uplifted;
The wilderness also obeys;
The flames of the fire they are rifted;
The waves of the sea know His ways.
The cedars of Lebanon hear Thee,
The desert of Kadesh hath known;
The Sons of Men know Thee and fear Thee,
Flee far from the Light of Thy Throne.
For Thou art alone.

O Lord! Is Thy path in the Water,
The marvellous ways of the Deep?
Not there, O not there! Wilt Thou slaughter
Oblivion's sons in their sleep?
Hath the deep disobeyed Thee or risen
In wrath and revolt to Thy sky,
Broken loose from the bands of her prison?
Held counsel against the Most High?
Yea, even as I!

But I, O Most Mighty, invoke Thee,
Whose footsteps are in the Unknown.
My cries were the cries that awoke Thee,
Upstarting in arms from Thy Throne!
I call Thee, I pray Thee, I chide Thee,
Whose glory my foes have abhorred.
My spirit is fixed, may abide Thee,
Awake the Invisible Sword.
For Thou art the Lord!

Look down upon earth and behold us
Few folk who have sworn to be free.
Past days, when the traitors had sold us,
We trample; we call upon Thee!
Look Thou on the armed ones, the furious,
The Saxons! they brandish the steel;
Heaven rings with their insults injurious;
Earth moans for their harrow and wheel.
To Thee we appeal.

They boast, though their triumph Hell's gift is,
On Africa's desperate sons:
"Our thousands have conquered their fifties;
Our twenties have murdered their ones."
That glory—that shame—let them trumpet
To Europe's unquickening ear.
List Thou to the boast of the strumpet!
Lend Thou, Thou indignant, an ear!
Then—shall they not fear?

O Lord, to Thy strength in the thunder,
Thy chariot-wheels in the war,
We, Ireland, look upward and wonder,
The Sword of Thee smiting before.

In the hour of Revolt that burns nigher
Each hour as it leaps to the sky,
We look to Thee, Lord, for Thy Fire;
We look—shall Thy Justice deny?
Well, can we not die?

But Thou, Thou shalt fall from the heaven
As hail on the furious host.
I see them: their legions are driven;
Their cohorts are broken and lost.
Thy fire hath dispersed them and shattered!
They hesitate, waver, and flee!
The tyrant is shaken and scattered,
And Ireland is clear to the Sea!
Green Erin is free!

Hail! Hail to Thee, Lord of us, Horus![1]
All hail to the warrior name!
Thy chariots shall drive them before us,
Thy sword sweep them forth as a flame.
Rise! Move! and descend! I behold Thee,
Heaven cloven of fieriest bars,
Armed Light; and they follow and fold Thee,
Thine armies of terrible stars.
The Powers of Mars!

At the brightness that leapeth before Thee,
The heavens bow down at Thine ire;
Thick clouds pass to death and adore Thee,
Wild hailstones and flashings of fire.
The mountains of Ages are shattered;
Perpetual hills are bowed down;
The Winds of the Heaven are scattered,
Borne back from Thy furious frown,
O Lord of Renown!

In terror and tumult and battle
Thy breath smiteth forth as a sword;
The Saxons are driven as cattle;
We know Thee, that Thou art the Lord!
Forth Freedom flings skyward, a maiden
Rejoicing, upsprung from the sea,
And the wild lyre of Erin is laden
At last with the songs of the free!
Hail! Hail unto Thee!

[1] Egyptian God of the Sun, and of War. Cf. p. 212, note 5.

EPILOGUE.

TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR INDEPENDENCE.

THE ship to the breezes is bended;
The wind whistles off to the lee;
The sun is arisen, the splendid!
The sun on the marvellous sea!
And the feast of your freedom is ended,
O sons of the free!

Your shouts have gone up to remember
The day of your oath to the world.
Is its flame dwindled down to an ember?
The flag of your liberty furled?
Your limbs are too strong to dismember—
In sloth are they curled?

The price of your freedom—I claim it!
Your aid to make other men free!
Your strength—I defy you to shame it!
Your peace—I defy it to be
Dishonoured! Arise and proclaim it
From sea unto sea!

From Ireland the voice of the dying,
The murdered, the starved, the exiled,
In hope to your freedom is crying
A dolorous note and a wild:
"Your star-bestrewn banner is flying,
And ours—is defiled."

From Ind—shall her summons awaken?
Her voices are those of the dead!
By famine and cholera shaken,
By taxes and usury bled,
In the hour of her torture forsaken,
Stones given for bread!

In Africa women are fighting
Their homes and their freedom to hold
Young children and graybeards, delighting
To die for their country of old!
For the ravenous lion is smiting
A stroke for their gold.

They fall in the shelterless hollow ;
They sleep in the cold and the sun ;
They fight, and the Englishmen follow—
The odds are as twenty to one !
Hide, hide thy bright eyes, O Apollo !
The murder is done.[1]

The stones should arise to declare it,
Their terror and tyrannous reign !
The earth be unable to bear it,
Gape wide, for her motherly pain !
Shalt thou, O Columbia, share it,
The shame and the stain ?

Your stripes are the stripes of dishonour ;
Your stars are cast down from the sky ;
While earth has this burden upon her,
Your eagle unwilling to fly !
Loose, loose the wide wings ! For your honour !
Let tyranny die !

Remember, this day of your glory,
Your fight for the freedom you own.
Those years—is their memory hoary ?
Your chains—is their memory flown ?
Your triumph is famous in story,
But yours is alone.

In the name of your Freedom I claim it,
Your power in the cause of the free !
In the name of our God as I name it,
AMEN ! I demand it of ye,
Man's freedom ! Arise and proclaim it,
The song of the sea !

S.S. PENNSYLVANIA,
July 4, 1900.

[1] Kruger, however, fulfilled his threat to drive the English into the sea. Only Jews and Chinamen have survived the struggle ; as the fox in the contest between the lion and the bear, recorded by Aesop.—A. C.
Time will show whether Crowley's cynicism is justified.

TANNHÄUSER

A STORY OF ALL TIME

TANNHÄUSER.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive ;
  Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant ;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive ;
  Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant :
Five [1] . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

XVII

Now, they ply axes and crowbars ;
  Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
  Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue ?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars ?

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
  On we drift : where looms the dim port ?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota ;
  Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

—R. BROWNING, *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.*

DEDICATION.

I SHALL not tell thee that I love thee !
  Nay ! by the Star in Heaven burning,
  Its ray to me at midnight turning
To tell me that it beams above thee—
  Nay ! though thou wert, as I am, yearning,
I should not tell thee that I love thee !

I know what secret thought once blossomed
  Into a blush that seemed a kiss,
  Some swift suppressed extreme of bliss
In thy most fearful sigh embosomed.
  What oracle should prate of this ?
I know the secret thought that blossomed !

Extol the truth of love's disdain !
  Love, daring by no glance to gladden
  A heart that waits but that to madden
In purple pleasure plucked of pain.
  Nay ! let our tears, that fail to sadden,
Extol the truth of love's disdain !

. . . . .

Let deeper silence shield the deeper rapture !
  Hardly our eyes reveal the inward bliss,
  Sealed by no speech and shadowed by no kiss.
Love is no wizard to elude recapture
  In the strong prison of his silences !
Let deeper silence shield the deeper rapture !

Twin souls are we, to one Star bound in Heaven !
  Twin souls on earth by earthly bars divided !
  But, did thy spirit glide as mine has glided
Straight to That Star—no rose-leaves ask to leaven
  The manna that the Moon of Love provided !
Twin souls are we, to one Star bound in Heaven !

Not to thy presence in the veil and vision
  Of solemn lies that men miscall the world ;
  Not to thy mind the lightnings truthward hurled
I turn. I laugh dead distance to derision !—
  Spirit to spirit : there our loves are curled,
Not to thy presence in the veil and vision !

[1] The reference is to the five acts of the play.

Beyond the gold and glamour of Life's lotus,
The flower that falls from this our stronger sight,
We dwell, eternal shapes of shadowy light.
Only the love on earth that shook and smote us
Begets new stars—truth's flowers fallen through night
Beyond the gold and glamour of Life's lotus!

Eternal bliss of Love in birthless bowers!
Light, the gemmed robes of Love! Life, lifted breath,
Ageless existence deifying death!
Love, the sole flower beyond these lesser flowers!—
In thee at last the live fruit quickeneth?
Eternal bliss of Love in birthless bowers!
. . . . .
There, secret! Know it! Now forget!
Betray not Wisdom unto Folly!
Less sweet is Joy than Melancholy!—
Why should our eyes for this be wet?
Enough: be silent and be holy!
There, secret! Know it! Now forget!

Now I have told thee that I love thee!
To me our Star in Heaven burning
Tells me thy heart as mine is yearning;
Tells me Love's fragrance stolen above thee
Thy soul to mine at last is turning
Now I have told thee that I love thee!

PREFACE.

As, after long observation and careful study, the biologist sees that what at first seemed isolated and arbitrary acts are really part of a series of regular changes, and presently has the life-history of the being that he is examining clear from Alpha to Omega in his mind; as, during a battle, the relative importance of its various incidents is lost, the more so owing to the excitement and activity of the combatant, and to the fact that he is himself involved in the vicissitudes which he may have set himself to observe; while even for the commander, though the smoke-pall may lift now and again to show some brilliant charge or desperate hand-to-hand struggle, he may fail to grasp its significance in his dispositions; or indeed find it to be quite unexpected and foreign to his calculations; yet a few years or months later the same battle may be lucidly, tersely, and connectedly described, so that a child is able to follow its varying fortunes with delight and comprehension: just so has my own observation of a life-history more subtle, a battle more terrible, been at last co-ordinated: I can view the long struggle from a standpoint altogether complete, calm, and philosophical; and the result of this review is the present story of Tannhäuser, just as the isolated and often apparently contradictory incidents of the fight were recorded in that jungle of chaotic emotions which I printed under the title of "The Soul of Osiris,"[1] calling it a history so that my readers might discover for themselves (if they chose to take the trouble) the real continuity in the apparent disjointedness.

The history of any man who seriously and desperately dares to force a passage into the penetralia[2] of nature; not with the calm philosophy of the scientist, but with the burning conviction that his immortal destiny is at stake; must be a strange one: to me at least strangely attractive. The constant illusions; the many disappointments; the bitter earnestness of the man amid the grim humour, or more often sheer cacchination of his surroundings; all the bestial mockery of the baffling fiends; the still more hideous mockery in which the Powers of Good themselves seem to indulge; doubt of the reality of that which he seeks; doubt even of the seeker; the irony of the whole strife: are fascinating to me as they are, I make no doubt, to the majority of mankind.

This is the subtler form of that mental bewilderment which the Greek Tragedians were so fond of depicting; as subtle in effect, yet grosser in its determining factors. For we are thus changed from the times of Sophocles and Euripides; that the fixed ideas of morality and religion which they employed as the motives of pathos or of horror are now shattered. Ibsen, otherwise in spirit and style purely Greek, and dealing as the Greeks did with the emotions of the soul, has realised the changed and infinitely more complex conditions of life; our self-appointed spiritual guides notwithstanding, or, rather, withstanding in vain. Consequently it is impossible any more to divine whether virtue or vice (as understood of old)

[1] Now "The Temple of the Holy Ghost."
[2] Hidden places.

will cause the irreparable catastrophe which is the one element of drama which we may still (in the work of a modern dramatist) await with any degree of confidence.

I trust that I may be forgiven for adopting the idea that Tannhäuser was one of those mysterious Germans whose reputed existence so perturbed the Middle Ages; in short, a Rosicrucian.[1] Some people may be surprised that a Member of that illustrious but unhappy fraternity should take cognizance of what my friend Bhikku Ananda Maitriya calls "hog-nosed Egyptian deities," still more that he should show reverence to symbols like the B. V. M. and the Holy Grail. But the most learned and profound students of the Mysteries of the Rosy Cross assure me that it was the special excellence of these mystics that they declined to be bound down by any particular system in their sublime search for the Eternal and the Real.

Under these circumstances I have not scrupled to subvert anything that appeared to me to need subverting in the interests, always identical, of beauty and of truth. Anachronism may be found piled upon anachronism, and symbolism mixed with symbolism.

In one direction I have restrained myself. Nowhere does Tannhäuser refer to the Vedas and Shastras[2] or to the Dhamma[3] of that blameless hypochondriac, Gotama Buddha. I take all the blame for so important an omission, not without a shrewd suspicion that the commination will take the form of "For this relief much thanks!"

The particular object that I have in view in speaking both in Hebrew and Egypto-Christian symbolism is that by this means I may familiarise my readers with the one thing of any importance that life, travel, and study have taught me, to wit: the Origin of Religions.

I take it that there have always, or nearly always, been on the earth those whom Councillor von Eckartshäusen,[4] the Svámi Vivekananda[5] and their like, call "great spiritual giants" (can there be any etymological link between "yogi"[1] and "ogre"?) and that such persons, themselves perceiving Truth, have tried to "diminish the message to the dog"[2] for the benefit of less exalted minds, and hidden that Truth (which, unveiled, would but blind men with its glory) in a mass of symbols often perverted or grotesque, yet to the proper man transparent; a "bait of falsehood to catch the carp of truth." Now, regarded in this light, all religions, quâ religions, are equally contemptible. The Hindu Gnanis[3] say "That which can be thought is not true." As machineries for the exercise of spiritual and intellectual powers innate or developed, certain sets of symbols may be more or less convenient to a special trend of mind, reason, or imagination; no more: I deny to any one religion the possession of any essential truth which is not also formulated (though in a different language) in every other. To this rule Buddhism appears a solitary exception. Whether it is truly so I have hardly yet decided: the answer depends upon certain recondite mathematical considerations, to discuss which would be foreign to the scope of my present purpose, but which I hope to advance in a subsequent volume.[4]

If you do not accept my conclusion that all religions are the expression of truth under different aspects, facets of the same intolerable gem, you are forced back on the conclusions of those unpleasing persons the Phallicists. But should you travel to the East, and tell a Lingam-worshipping Sivite that his is a phallic worship he will not be pleased with you. Compare on this point Arnold, "India Revisited," 1886, p. 112.

So much for the symbolology of this, I fear, much-mangled drama. Drama indeed is an altogether misleading term; monodrama is perhaps better. It is really a series of introspective studies; not necessarily a series in time, but in psychology, and that rather the morbid psychology of the Adept than the gross mentality of the ordinary man.

It may help some of my readers if I say that my Tannhäuser is nearly identical in

[1] See their original documents, fairly enough translated in "Real History of the Rosicrucians," by A. E. Waite.
[2] Hindu sacred books.
[3] The law.
[4] Author of the "Cloud upon the Sanctuary," a profound mystical treatise.
[5] A well-known Indian mystic, author of "Raja Yoga."

[1] "Yogi" is "one who seeks union," *i.e.* with the Supreme.
[2] Browning, "Mr. Sludge the Medium."
[3] Philosophers.
[4] Berashith, *q.v. infra*, vol. ii.

scheme with the "Pilgrim's Progress." Literary and spiritual experts will however readily detect minor differences in the treatment. It will be sufficient if I state that "the Unknown," whether minstrel, pilgrim, or Egyptian sage, represents Tannhäuser in his true Self,—the "Only Being in an Abyss of Light!" The Tannhäuser who talks is the "Only Being in an Abyss of Darkness," the natural man ignorant of his identity with the Supreme Being. The various other characters are all little parts of Tannhäuser's own consciousness and not real persons at all: whether good or bad, all alike hinder and help (and there is not one whose function is not thus double) the realisation of his true unity with all life. This circumstance serves to explain, though perhaps not to excuse, the lack of dramatic action in the story. Love being throughout the symbol of his method, as Beauty of its object, it is through Love, refined into Pity, that he at last attains the Supreme Knowledge, or at least sufficient of it to put the last straw on the back of his corporeal camel, and bring the story to a fitting end.

To pass to more mundane affairs. I may mention for the benefit of those who may not be read in certain classes of literature, and so think me original when I am hardly even paraphrasing, that Tannhäuser's songs in Act IV. are partly adapted from the so-called "Oracles of Zoroaster," partly from the mysterious utterances of the great angel Avé,[1] perhaps equally spurious. Of course Bertram's song is merely a rather free adaptation of the two principal fragments of Sappho, which so many people have failed to translate that one can feel no shame in making yet another attempt. There may be one or two conscious plagiarisms besides, for which I do not apologise. For any unconscious ones which may have crept in owing to my prolonged absence from civilised parts, and the consequent lack of opportunity for reference and comparison, I emphatically do.

One word to the reviewers. It must not be taken as ungracious if I so speak. From nearly all I have received the utmost justice, kindness, and consideration: two or three only seem to take delight in deliberately perverting the sense of my remarks: and to them, for their own sake, I now address these words of elementary instruction. You are perfectly welcome to do with my work in its entirety what Laertes did with his allegiance and his vows: but do not pick out and gloat over a few isolated passages from the Venusberg scenes and call me a sensualist, nor from the Fourth Act and groan "Mysticism!"; do not quote "Two is by shape the Coptic Aspirate" as a sample of my utmost in lyrics; do not take the song of Wolfram as my best work in either sentiment or melody. As a *quid pro quo* I give you all full permission to conclude your review of this book by quoting from Act III. "Forget this nightmare!"

I must express my great sense of gratitude to Oscar Eckenstein,[1] Gerald Kelly, and Allan MacGregor, who have severally helped me in the work of revision, which has extended over more than a year of time and nearly twenty thousand miles of space. Some few of the very best lines were partially or wholly suggested by themselves, and I have not scrupled to incorporate these: if the book be but a Book, the actual authorship seems to me immaterial.

I have written this preface in lighter vein, but I hope that no one will be led to suppose that my purpose is anything but deadly serious. This poem has been written in the blood of slain faith and hope; each foolish utterance of Tannhäuser stings me with shame and memory of old agony; each Ignis Fatuus that he so readily pursues, reminds me of my own delusions. But, these follies and delusions being the common property of mankind, I have thought them of sufficient interest, dramatic and philosophical, to form the basis of a poem. Let no man dare to reproach me with posing as the hero of my tale. I fall back on the last utterance of Tannhäuser himself: "I say, then, 'I': and yet it is not 'I' Distinct, but 'I' incorporate in All." Above all, pray understand that I do not pose as a teacher. I am but an asker of questions, such as may be found confronting those who have indeed freed their minds from the conventional commonplaces of the platitudinous, but have not yet dared to uproot the mass of their convictions, and to examine the whole question of religion from its most fundamental source in the consciousness of mankind. Such persons may find the reason-

[1] In "Dr. Dee."

[1] The famous mountaineer.

ing of Tannhäuser useful, if only to brace them to a more courageous attempt to understand the "Great Arcanum," and to attain at last, no matter at what cost, to "true Wisdom and perfect Happiness." So may all happen!

KANDY, CEYLON, *Sept.* 1901.

PERSONS CONCERNED.

THE WORLD OF GODS.

ISIS.
HATHOÖR.

THE WORLD OF MEN.

TANNHÄUSER.
ELIZABETH.
AN UNKNOWN MINSTREL.
THE LANDGRAVE.
WOLFRAM, BERTRAM, HEINRICH, } *At the Court of the Landgrave.*
A SHEPHERD BOY.
PILGRIMS, FORESTERS, COURTIERS, ETC.

THE WORLD OF DEMONS.

THE EVIL AND AVERSE HATHOÖR, CALLED VENUS.

TANNHÄUSER.

ACT I.

"Therefore we are carefully to proceed in Magic, lest that Syrens and other monsters deceive us, which likewise do desire the society of the human soul."
Arbatel of Magic. Aphorism 35.

A lonely and desolate plain. TANNHÄUSER *riding towards a great mountain.*

TANNHÄUSER.

Six days. Creation took no longer! Yet
I wander eastward, and no light is found.
The stars their motion shirk, or else forget.
The sun—the moon? Imprisoned underground
Where gnomes disport, and devils do abound.

Six days. I journey to the black unknown,
Always in hope the Infinite may rise
Some unexpected instant, as 'twere grown
A magic palace to enchanted eyes;
A wizard guerdon for a minstrel wise.

Perhaps I am a fool to think that here,
Merely by rending Nature's hollow veil,
I may attain the Solitary Sphere,
Achieve the Path; or, haply, if I fail,
Gain the Elixir, or behold the Grail.[1]

I seek the mystery of Life and Time,
The Key of all that is not and that is,
And that which — climb, imagination! climb!—
Transcends them both—the mystical abyss
Where Mind and Being marry, and are Bliss.[2]

So have I journeyed—like a fool! Ah, well!
Let pass self-scorn, as love of self is past!
But—am I further forward? Who can tell?
God is the Complex as the Protoplast:
He is the First (not "was"), and is the Last

(Not "will be"). Then why travel? To what end?
What is the symbol I am set to find?
What is that burning heart of blood to spend
Caught in a sunset with the night behind,
The Grail of God? I would that I were blind!

I would that I were desolate and dumb,
Naked and poor! That He might manifest
A crimson glory subtly caught and come,
An opal crucible of Alkahest![3]
And yet—what gain of vital gold expressed?

[1] A vessel containing the blood of Jesus. See Malory, "Morte d'Arthur."
[2] Sat-Chit-Ananda, the qualities of Atman, the Soul.
[3] See Eirenaeus Philalethes, his treatise.

This were my guerdon: to fade utterly
Into the rose-heart of that sanguine vase,
And lose my purpose in its silent sea,
And lose my life, and find my life, and pass
Up to the sea that is as molten glass.

I mind me of that old Egyptian,
Met where Aurora streamed her rainbow hair,
Who called me from the quest. An holy man!
A crown of light scintillant in the air
Shone over him: he bade me not despair.

"The Blood of the Osiris!" was his word:
(Meaning the Christ?) "The life, the tears, the tomb!
"The Love of Isis is its name!" (I heard
This for the love of Mary.) In her womb
Brews the Elixir, and the roses bloom.

For the Three Maries (so he said) were One:
Three aspects of the mystic spouse of God,
Isis! This pagan! "Look towards the Sun"[1]
(Quoth he), "and seek a winepress to be trod;
"With Beauty girdled, garlanded, and shod.

"Thus," riddled he, "thy heart shall know its Peace!"
Let be! I ride upon the sand instead,
Look to the Cross, whereon I take mine ease!
Let be! Just so the Roman soldier said.
Esaias?[2] He is dead—as I am dead!

What was his symbol and his riddle's key?
Go, seek the stars and count them and explore!
Go, sift the sands beyond a starless sea!
So, find an answer where the dismal shore
Of time beats back eternity! No more!

[1] *i.e.*, Tiphereth, the Sphere of Beauty.
[2] See Mark xv. 35, 36 for the obscure allusions.

Let me ride on more hastily than this,
That so my body may be tired of me,
And fling me to the old forgetful kiss,
Sleep's, when my mind goes, riderless and free,
Into some corner of eternity.

Alas! that mind returns from its abode
With newer problems, fiercer thoughts! But stay!
Suppose it came not? It must be with God!—
Then this dull house of gold and iron and clay
Is happy also—'tis an easy way!

So easy, I am fearful of mishap.
Some fatal argument the God must find
That linked us first. The dice are in His lap—
Let Him decide in His imperial mind!
My choice; to see entirely—and be blind!

Yet I bethink me of that holy man,
(Pagan albeit) my stirrup's wisdom-share:
"Learn this from Thothmes the Egyptian.
"Use only in thine uttermost despair!"
He whispered me a Word.[1] "Beware! Beware!

"Two voices are there in the sullen sea;
"Two functions hath the inevitable fire;
"Earthquake hath earth, and yet fertility:
"See to thy purpose, and thy set desire!
"Else, dire the fate—the ultimation dire!"

Vague threats and foolish words! Quite meaningless
The empty sounds he muttered in mine ear.
Why should their silly mystery impress
My thoughtful forehead with the lines of fear?
(This riding saps my courage as my cheer.)

[1] It is a tradition of magic that all words have a double effect; an upright, and an averse. See the shadow of a devil's head cast by the fingers raised in blessing as figured in Elíphaz Levi's "Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie" and elsewhere. Upon this tradition the whole play hangs.

Still, I must see his symbol of the Sun,
The Winepress, and the Beauty! Puerile
And pagan to that old mysterious one,
The awful Light and the anointed Vial,
The Dawning of the Blood, even as a smile:—

Even as a smile on Beauty's burning cheek—
Ha! In a circle? As this journey is?
How vain is man's imagining and weak!
Begod[1] my lady, and my lady's kiss?
Back swing we to the pitiful abyss,

Liken God's being to the life of man.
So reason staggers. Angels, answer me!
Ye who have watched the far unfolding plan—
How is time shorter than eternity?
Prove it and weigh! By mind it cannot be.

All our divisions spring in our own brain.
See! As upsprings on the horizon there
A clefted hill contemptuous of the plain.
(Why, which is higher?) I am in despair.
Let me essay the Pharaoh and his prayer!
[TANNHÄUSER *speaks the Word of Double Power.*

Oh God, Thy blinding beauty, and the light
Shed from Thy shoulders, and the golden night
Of mingling fire and stars and roses swart
In the long flame of hair that leaps athwart,
Live in each tingling gossamer! Dread eyes!
Each flings its arrow of sharp sacrifice,
Eating me up with poison! I am hurled
Far through the vaporous confines of the world
With agony of sundering sense, beholding
Thy mighty flower, blood-coloured death, unfolding!
Lithe limbs and supple shoulders and lips curled,
Curled out to draw me to their monstrous world!

[1] To invest with divine attributes.

Warm breasts that glow with light ephemeral
And move with passionate music to enthral,
To charm, to enchant, to seal the entrancing breath.
I fall! Stop! Spare me!—Slay me!
[TANNHÄUSER *enters into an ecstasy.*
This is death.
[*The evil and averse* HATHOÖR, *or* VENUS, *who hath arisen in the place of the Great Goddess, lifteth up her voice and chanteth:—*

VENUS.

Isis am I, and from my life are fed
All showers and suns, all moons that wax and wane,
All stars and streams, the living and the dead,
The mystery of pleasure and of pain.
I am the mother! I the speaking sea!
I am the earth and its fertility!
Life, death, love, hatred, light, darkness, return to me—
To me!

Hathoör am I, and to my beauty drawn
All glories of the Universe bow down,
The blossom and the mountain and the dawn,
Fruit's blush, and woman, our creation's crown.
I am the priest, the sacrifice, the shrine,
I am the love and life of the divine!
Life, death, love, hatred, light, darkness, are surely mine—
Are mine!

Venus am I, the love and light of earth,
The wealth of kisses, the delight of tears,
The barren pleasure never come to birth,
The endless, infinite desire of years.
I am the shrine at which thy long desire
Devoured thee with intolerable fire.
I was song, music, passion, death, upon thy lyre—
Thy lyre!

I am the Grail and I the Glory now :
I am the flame and fuel of thy breast ;
I am the star of God upon thy brow ;
I am thy queen, enraptured and possessed.
Hide thee, sweet river ; welcome to the sea,
Ocean of love that shall encompass thee !
Life, death, love, hatred, light, darkness, return to me—
To me !

[TANNHÄUSER *perceives that he is in the palace of a Great Queen.*

Rise, rise, my knight ! My king ! My love, arise !
See the grave avenues of Paradise,
The dewy larches bending at my breath,
Portentous cedars prophesying death !
See the long vistas and the dancing sea,
The measured motion of fecundity !
Bright winds set swaying the soft-sounding flowers
(Here flowers have music) in my woven bowers,
Where sweet birds blossom, and in chorus quire
The rapt beginnings of immense desire.
Here is the light and rapture of the will :
We touch the stars—and they are tiny still !
O mighty thews ! O godlike face and hair !
Rise up and take me ; ay, and keep me there,
One tingle at thy touch from head to feet ;
Lips that cling close, and never seem to meet,
Melting as sunlight melts in wine ! Arise !
Shame ! Has thy learning left thee over-wise ?
Thy lips sing fondly—to another tune.
Nay ! 'twas my breathing beauty made thee swoon,
Dread forkéd fire across the cloven sky ;
Stripped off thy body of mortality—
Nay, but on steeper slopes my love shall strive !
Our bodies perish and our hearts revive
Vainly, unless the shaking sense beware
The crested snakes shot trembling through our hair,
Their wisdom ! But our souls leap, flash, unite,
One crownéd column of avenging light,
Fixed and yet floating, infinite, immense,
Caught in the meshes of the cruel sense,
Two kissing breaths of agony and pleasure,
Mixed, crowned, divided, beyond age or measure,
Time, thought, or being ! Now thine eyes awake,
Droop at my kisses ; the long lashes slake
Their sleek and silky thirst in tears of light !
Thine eyes ! They burn me, even me ! They smite
Me who am scatheless, and a flame of fire.
See, in our sorrow and intense desire
All worlds are caught and sealed ! The stars are taken
In love's weak web, and gathered up, and shaken !
Our word is mighty on the magic moon !
The sun resurges to our triple tune !
(See, it is done !) O chosen of the Christ !
My knight, and king, and lover, wast thou priced,
A portion in the all-pervading bliss,
Thou, whom I value at my ageless kiss ?
Chosen of Me ! Thou heart of hearts, thou mine,
Man ! Stamping into dust the Soul Divine
By might of that mere Manhood ! Sense and thought
Reel for the glory of thee kissed and caught
In the eternal circle of my arms !
Woven in vain are the mysterious charms
Endymion taught Diana ! For one gaze ;
One word of my unutterable praise ;
And I was utterly and ever lost,
Lost in the whirlwind of thy love, and tossed
A wreck on its irremeable sea !
Life ! Life ! This kiss ! Draw in thy breath ! To me !
To me ! [TANNHÄUSER *is lost.*

ACT II.

"But a moment's thought is passion's passing bell."—KEATS, *Lamia.*

In Venusberg.

VENUS.

SWEET, sweet are May and June, dear,
The loves of lambent spring,
Our lamp the drooping moon, dear,
Our roof, the stars that sing;
The bed, of moss and roses;
The night, as long as death!
Still, breath!
Life wakens and reposes,
Love ever quickeneth!

Sweet, sweet, when Lion and Maiden,[1]
The motley months of gold,
Swoop down with sunlight laden,
And eyes are bright and bold.
Life-swelling breasts uncover
Their warm involving deep—
Love, sleep!—
And lover lies with lover
On air's substantial steep.

TANNHÄUSER.

Ah! sweeter was September—
The amber rain of leaves,
The harvest to remember,
The load of sunny sheaves.
In gardens deeply scented,
In orchards heavily hung,
Love flung
Away the days demented
With lips that curled and clung.

Ah! sweeter still October,
When russet leaves go grey,
And sombre loves and sober
Make twilight of the day.

[1] Leo and Virgo, in which the Sun is during July and August.

Dark dreams and shadows tenser
Throb through the vital scroll,
Man's soul.
Lift, shake the subtle censer
That hides the cruel coal!

Still sweeter when the Bowman[1]
His silky shaft of frost
Lets loose on earth, that no man
May linger nor be lost.
The barren woods, deserted,
Lose echo of our sighs—
Love—dies?—
Love lives—in granite skirted,
And under oaken skies.

But best is grim December,
The Goatish God[1] his power;
The Satyr blows the ember,
And pain is passion's flower;
When blood drips over kisses,
And madness sobs through wine:—
Ah, mine!—
The snake starts up and hisses
And strikes and—I am thine!

VENUS.

Those are thy true joys? Cruelty for love?

TANNHÄUSER.

And death in kissing. How I have despised,
Riding through meadows of the rushing Rhine,
To watch the gentle foresters of spring
Crush dainty violets in their dalliance,
Laughing in chorus with the birds; and then
(Coming at harvest time upon my tracks)
See these same lovers in the golden sheaves
Under the sun. The same, the fuller fruit,
Say you? But somehow, nearer to the end.
Lost the old sense of mystery, and lost
That curious reverence in sacrilege
With Wonder—the child's faculty! Less joy,
Less laughter, yes! that symptom I approve;
Yet is that subtle fading-out of smiles

[1] Sagittarius, Capricornus, in which is the Sun during November and December.

Rather the coming of a dull despair,
And not at all that keen despair, that sharp
Maddening pain that should torment a man
With deadliest delight, the self-same hour
That he unveils the Isis of desire.
These little lovers strip their maidens bare,
And find them—naked! Poor and pitiful!
Look at our love instead! I raised Thy veil,
Nay, tore Thy vesture from Thee, and behold!
Then only did I see what mystery,
What ninefold forest, shade impassible,
Surrounds Thy heart, as with a core of light
Shut in the mystery of a dead world.
Thou formless sense of gloom and terror! Thou
Upas,[1] new tree of life—by sinister
Cherubim with averted faces kept!
Nay! This one secret I suspect, and gloat
Over the solemn purport of the dream
With subtle shuddering of joy,—and that
Keener delight, a sense of deadly fear!
This secret: Thou art darkness in Thyself,
And evil wrapped in light, and ugliness
Vested in beauty! Therefore is my love
No petty passion like these country-folk's:
No fertile glory (as the Love of God):
But vast and barren as the winter sea,
Holding I know not what enormous soul
In its salt bitter bosom, underneath
The iron waters and the serpent foam;
Below, where sight and sound are set no more,
But only the intolerable weight
Of its own gloomy selfhood. This am I:
This passion, lion-mouthed and adder-eyed.
A mass compressed, a glowing central core,
Like molten metal in the crucible!
Death's secret is some sweetness ultimate,
Sweeter than poison. Ah! My very words,
Chance phrases, ravel out the tale for me—
Sweetness and death — poison and love. Consider
How this same striving to the Infinite,
Which I intend by "love," is likest to
That journey's wonder to the womb of death:
Because no soul of man has ever crossed
Again that River—the old fable's wrong;
Æneas came never to the ghostly side!
Was not the boat weighed with his body still?
Felt he the keen emotions of the dead?
Could he, the mortal and the warrior,
Converse with Them, and understand? Believe!
No soul has crossed in utter sympathy
And yet returned; because of this decree:
No man can look upon the face of God!
Yet Moses looked upon His hinder parts,[1]
And I—yes, goddess! in this passionate
Life in our secret mountain, well I know
Thy beauty, and Thy love (although they be
Infinite, far beyond the mortal mind,
Body, or soul to touch, to comprehend,
And dwell in), that the utter intimate
Knowledge of Thee, if once I ravelled out
Thy secret, laid Thee naked to the bone—
Nay, to the marrow! were to come, aware,
Face to face full with deity itself.
And this I strive at! Therefore is my love
Wholly in tune with that concealed desire
Bred in each mortal, though he never know
(Few do know), to transcend the bound of things,
And find in Death the purpose of this life.

VENUS.

Yes, there you tear one veil away from me!
Yet, am not I the willing one? Indeed
I feel the wonder of that same desire
From mine own side of the Impassible.
See then how equal God and man are made!
For I have clothed me in the veil of flesh,
And strive toward thy finite consciousness
As thou art reaching to my infinite,
Nurturing my Godhead at the breast of Sin
With milk of fleshly stings—even to pain:—

TANNHÄUSER.

I see, I see the Christian mystery!
That was the purpose of High God Himself

[1] A legendary tree in Java, which had the property of poisoning any one who rested in its shade.

[1] See Exodus xxxiii. 18 to end.

Clothed in the Christ! Ah! Triumphed He at last?
Nay, not in death! The slave—He rose again!
Alas! Alas!

VENUS.

Alas indeed, my knight!
We love not! Being both enamoured of
Just the one thing that is impossible.
But in this carnal strife the Intimate
Achieves for one snatched swiftness. Kiss me, love!

TANNHÄUSER.

Ah, but the waking! As I sink to sleep
Pillowed in nuptial arms — so fresh and cool—
(Yet in their veins I know the fire that runs
Racing and maddening from the crown of flame,
The monolithic core of mystical
Red fury that is called a woman's heart)
Sinking, I say, from the supreme embrace,
The Good-night kisses; sinking into sleep—
What dreams betoken the dread solitude?

VENUS.

What dreams? Ah, dreamest not of me, my knight?
Of vast caresses that include all worlds?
Of transmutation into molten steel
Fusing with my intolerable gold
In the red crucible of alchemy,
That is—of clay?

TANNHÄUSER.

I dream of no such thing.
But of Thy likeness have I often seen
The vast presentment—formless, palpable,
Breathing. Not breathing as we use the word,
When life and spirit mingle in one breath,
Slay passion in one kiss—breathing, I say,
Differently from Thee!

VENUS.

Explain, explain!

TANNHÄUSER.

As if were kindled into gold and fire
The East!

VENUS.

The East!

TANNHÄUSER.

As if a flowerless moss
Suddenly broke in passionate primroses![1]

VENUS.

Violets, violets!

TANNHÄUSER.

Or as if a man
Lay in the fairest garden of the world,
In the beginning: and grew suddenly
A living soul at that caressing wind!

VENUS.

A living soul!

TANNHÄUSER.

So is Thy shade to me
When sleep takes shape.

VENUS.

She is mine enemy.
Hate her, O hate her, she will slay thy soul!

TANNHÄUSER.

And is my soul not slain within me now?
Yet, I do hate her—in these waking hours.
But in my sleep she grows upon the sense,
A solitary lotus that pales forth
In the wide seas of space and separateness.
That radiance! — Amber-scented voice of light,
Calling my name, ever, ever calling—

[1] Taken as symbols of bright and open joys: violets as soft and sombre.

VENUS.

Answer that call—and thou art lost indeed!
Wake thou thy spirit in this hateful sleep,
Keeping the vision, rise, and spit on her!

TANNHÄUSER.

Spit on Thy likeness? I who love Thee so?

VENUS.

Yes, yes: obey me! She will leave thee then.
She hath assumed mine image!
[*Thunder.*

TANNHÄUSER.

What is that?

VENUS.

Mere thunder on the mountain top. Do this,
And I will come in sleep, in sleep renew
The carnal joys of day.

TANNHÄUSER.

Hast Thou forgot?
It is the fleshly I would flee!

VENUS.

Forget?
But I strive fleshwards. Let our sleep renew
The endless struggle—and perhaps, for thee,
For thee!—the veil may lift another fold.

TANNHÄUSER.

Why dost Thou hate this vision?

VENUS.

She would take
Thee from these arms!

TANNHÄUSER.

But she is beautiful
With Thine own beauty: yet as if the God
Cancelled its mortal comeliness, and came
More intimate than matter, closing in
Keen on my spirit; as if all I sought
In Thine own symbol, Beauty, were concealed
Under her brows—how wider than the air!
How deeper than the sea! How radiant
Beyond the fire!

VENUS.

O shun her devilish lures!
That Beauty is the sole detested fear
That can annul our conquests, and arouse
Our rapt dream-kisses.

TANNHÄUSER.

That is my intent.
It is the spiritual life of things
I seek—Thou knowest!

VENUS.

Oh, I did not mean!
Remember my dilemma! Hear me speak
The story of her. She is a wicked witch
That seeketh to delude thy sleepy sense
In vicious purpose and malignant hope
To ape my Godhead.
[*Thunder.*

TANNHÄUSER.

Thunder rolls again.
I am uneasy.

VENUS.

Heed it not at all!
May not my servants of the elements
Play children's gambols on the mountain crest
About our fortress? Leave this idle talk!
Come, in this sweet abandonment of self—
Come, with this kiss I seal thy loyal oath
To spit upon her!

TANNHÄUSER.

Ah, you murder me!
[*Sings.*
Come, love, and kiss my shoulders! Sleepy lies
The tinted bosom whence its fire flies,

The breathing life of thee, and swoons, and sighs,
And dies!
None but the dead can know the worth of love!

Come, love, thy bosom to my heart recalls
Strange festivals and subtle funerals.
Soft passion rises in the amber walls,
And falls!
None but the dead can breathe the life of love!

Come, love, thy lips, curved hollow as the moon's!
Bring me thy kisses, for the seawind tunes,
The song that soars, and reads the starry runes,
And swoons!
None but the dead can tune the lyre of love!

Come, love, thy body serpentine and bright!
What love is this, the heart of sombre light,
Impossible, and therefore infinite?
Sheer height!
None but the dead can twine the limbs of love!

Come, love! My body in thy passion weeps
Tears keen as dewfall's, salter than the deep's.
My bosom! How its fortress wakes, and leaps,
And sleeps!
None but the dead can sleep the sleep of love!

Come, love, caress me with endearing eyes!
Light the long rapture that nor fades nor flies!
Love laughs and lingers, frenzies, stabs, and sighs,
And dies!
None but the dead can know the worth of love!

[TANNHÄUSER *sleeps*.

VENUS.

Sleep on, poor fool, and in thy sleep deceived
Defy the very beauty that thou seekest!
Now is the solemn portal of the dusk
Lifted; and in the gleaming silver-gray,
The eastern sky, steps out the single One,
Hathoör and Aphrodite—whom I mock!
I may not follow in the dimness—I
Chained unto matter by my evil will,
Delight of death and carnal life. But see!
He stirs, as one beholding in a dream
Some deadly serpent or foul basilisk
Sunning its scales, called kingly, in the mire.
Strike, O my lover! I will drag thee down
Into mine own unending pain and hate
To be one devil more upon the earth.—
Come! ye my serpents, wrap his bosom round
With your entangling leprosy! And me,
Let me assume the belovéd limber shape,
The crested head, the jewelled eyes of death,
And sinuous sinewy glitter of serpenthood,
That I may look once more into his face,
And, kissing, kill him! Thus to hold him fast,
Drawing his human spirit into mine
For strength, for life, for poison! Ah, my God!
These pangs, these torments! See! the sleeper wakes!
I am triumphant! For he reaches out
The sleepy arms, and turns the drowsy head
To catch the dew dissolving of my lip.
Wake, lover, wake! Thy Venus waits for thee!
Draw back, look, hunger!—and thy mouth is mine!

TANNHÄUSER.

"Once I will shew Me waking. Destiny
"Adds one illusion to thee. Yet, Oh child!
"Yet will I not forsake thee; for thy soul,
"Its splendid self, hath known Me. Fare thee well."

VENUS.

What are these strange and silly words? Awake!
Wake and devour me with the dawn of love,
The dragon to eclipse this moon of mine!

TANNHÄUSER.

I sleep not. Those were Her mysterious words
As faded the great vision. And I knew
In some forgotten corner of my brain
Some desperate truth.

VENUS.

Forget this foolishness!
[*There cometh a shadow.*
I am afraid, even I! What moves me thus?

TANNHÄUSER.

I saw the mighty vision as before
Forming in front of the awakening east,
All permeated with the rose of dawn,
And pale with delicate green light and shade,
Marvellous! So, you say, she is a witch
Seeking to rob or trick you of your power?

VENUS.

I say so? No! I dare not! Oh forbear!

TANNHÄUSER (*starts up*).

There, there She comes in waking! Hail to Thee!
I am afraid, I also, I myself!
Help! lover, Venus, mistress of my life!
I cannot bear the glory of the gaze.
No man shall look upon the face of God!
Where art thou? Save me from the scorpion![1]
I am—alone!

HATHOÖR.

Light, Truth, arise, arise!

TANNHÄUSER.

I see—I see! All blinded by the Light—
Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Love!
Thou, Whom I sought through ages of deep sleep
Forgotten when I died. There is no death:
Change alternating; and forgetfulness
Of one state in the other—easy truth
I could not understand! Oh hear me, hear!
Spare me the last illusion!—She is gone!

VENUS.

Save me, my knight! To thy sufficing arms
I cling in this distress of womanhood!

TANNHÄUSER.

Kiss me the last time.

VENUS.

Whom have I but thee,
Thee in the ages? Barren were my bliss
And shorn my Godhead of eternal joy,
Barred from thy kiss.

TANNHÄUSER.

Call not thyself again
Goddess. I saw thee in the Presence there.
The scales are fallen, and mine eyes see clear.

VENUS.

Then you would leave me! Serpent if I were,
My coils should press in dolorous delight
Thy straining bosom, and my kiss were death!
Death! Dost thou live, Tannhäuser? Sayest thou still:
"None but the dead can know the worth of love!"?

TANNHÄUSER.

Still. I am not in any sense estranged.
I yearn for thee in the first hour of spring,
As in the dying days of autumn. I
Would clasp thee, as a child its mother's throat,
Drinking celestial wine from that dear mouth,
Or with goodwill see poison in thy smile,
And die, still kissing thee, and kissed again!
This, though I saw thee crawl upon the earth,
Howl at Her presence Whom thou wouldest ape,
Thy tale reversed. I read that thunder now!

[1] Lilith, among other shapes, can assume that of a scorpion.

This, though I know thee. Aphrodite, no!
Nor Anael,[1] nor Eva! Rather thou
Lilith, the woman-serpent, she who sucks
The breath of little children in their sleep,
Strangles young maidens, and presides upon
Sterile debauchery and unnatural loves.

VENUS.

Lilith! Ah, lover! Thou hast known my name!

TANNHÄUSER.

So; yet I love thee! Rended is the veil!
Calling thee Ugliness, I guessed aright,
Who saw, and see, all Beauty in thee still.
Only, a beauty risen out of Hell;
Death and delusion—ay, corruption's self,
Wickedness sliming into impotence,
Pleasure in putrefaction. But, in sleep,
I will put off that evil as a clout
Cast by a beggar.

VENUS.

And the sore is left.

TANNHÄUSER.

Oh, but this body, very consciousness!
I banish both. I cross the crimson wall—
My spirit shall reach up to and attain
That other.

VENUS.

So Persephone must hold
Thy life divided in Her dark domain.[2]

TANNHÄUSER.

Already I have tasted once of this
In its own lesser way. Ten years ago
I loved a maiden called Elizabeth.
A child she was, so delicate and frail,
Far, white, and lonely as the coldest star
Set beyond gaze of any eye but God's;
And, to forget her, found due somnolence
In such a warm brown bosom as thine own
Is fire and amber. Then I came away:—
I heard of knights no better horsed than I,
No better sworded, with no gift of song,
Who, caught by one ineffable desire,
Rode on by old mysterious watersheds,
Traversed strange seas, or battled with strange folk,
Held vigil in wild forests, all to seek
The vision of the Holy Grail. And I
Rode forth on that same foolish wandering,
And found a-many ventures on the way;
At last an old Egyptian; who bestowed
The magic word, which, when I had pronounced,
Called up thine evil corpse-light in the sky.
He riddled me—ah God! I see it now!
The bloody winepress? The ascending sun?
Thy dawning beauty and thine evil bed!
The double meaning! I had evil thoughts
When I pronounced it—else had She Herself,
Hathoör or Mary, risen. Misery!
Incessant mystery of the search for Truth!

VENUS.

Search out my mystery a little while!

TANNHÄUSER.

There is a flush of passion in thine eyes,
An hunger in them; fascinate me now,
My serpent-woman, drawing out my breath
Into thy life, and mingling that in mine!
See the rich blood that mantles to my touch,
Invites the tooth to bite the shimmering skin,
Till I could watch the ripe red venom flow
Slow on the hills of amber, staining them
Its own warm purple. Look, the tender stream!

VENUS.

Let its old sleepy fragrance lull thee now,
Yet madden thee in brain and sense and soul,
Mixing success with infinite despair.
So; take our secret back to sleep with us:—
And in that sleep I know that thou wilt choose

[1] The semi-divine woman, between Aphrodite the divine, and Eve the human.
[2] Persephone was compelled to spend six months of the year in Hades.

The fact, and leave the dream, and so disdain
These far-off splendours, catch the nearer joy,
Take squalid kisses, banish crested love
Intangible. Delights it thee, my friend,
To reach the summits unattained before,
And stumble on their snows? Thine old desire
Was just to touch the mere impalpable,
To formulate the formless. Otherwise
Christ did as well—thine own words turn again!

TANNHÄUSER.

Ah, if pure love could grow material!
There are pure women!

VENUS.

There you make me laugh!
Remember—I have known such. But besides
You ask hot snow and leaden feather-flights!

TANNHÄUSER.

And you—you keep me worrying, fair queen,
In logic and its meshes, when to-day
I rather would be caught in other nets,
The burning gold and glory of your hair,
Lightning and sunshine, storm and radiance,
Your flaming pell![1]

VENUS.

Come, sing to me again!
That we may watch each other as you sing;
Feel how it overmasters and o'erwhelms,
The growing pang of hunger for a kiss!

TANNHÄUSER.

Brood evil, then, in your amazing eyes,
That I may see the serpent grow in you;
As I were just the bird upon the bough—
So let the twittering grow faint and still,
And let me fall, fall into the abyss,
Your arms—a culminating ecstasy,
Darkness and death and rapture. Sing to you?

[1] From Latin *pellis*, skin.

What song? My tunes are played upon too oft
My first great cry of love inaudible
Sapped me of music.

VENUS.

Sing me that again!

TANNHÄUSER.

Who is this maiden robéd for a bride,
White shoulders and bright brows adorable,
The flaming locks that clothe her, and abide,
As God were bathing in the fire of Hell?
They change, they grow, they shake
As sunlight on the lake:
They hiss, they glisten on her bosom bare.
O maiden, maiden queen!
The lightning flows between
Thy mounting breasts, too magically fair.
Draw me, O draw me to a dreaming death!
Send out thine opiate breath,
And lull me to the everlasting sleep,
That, closing from the kisses of disdain
To ecstasy of pain,
I may sob out my life into their dangerous deep.

Who cometh from the mountain as a tower
Stalwart and set against the fiery foes?
Who, breathing as a jasmine-laden bower?
Who, crowned and lissome as a living rose?
Sharp thorns in thee are set;
In me, in me beget
The dolorous despair of this desire.
Thy body sways and swings
Above the tide of things,
Laps me as ocean, wraps me round as fire!
Ye elemental sorceries of song,
Surge, strenuous and strong,
Seeking dead dreams, the secret of the shrine;
So that she drain my life and being up
As from a golden cup,
To mingle in her blood, death's kiss incarnadine.

Who cometh from the ocean as a flower?
Who blossometh above the barren sea?
Thy lotus set beneath thee for a bower,
Thine eyes awakened, lightened, fallen on me?
O Goddess, queen, and wife!
O Lady of my life!
Who set thy stature as a wood to wave?
Whose love begat thy limbs?
Whose wave-washed body swims
That nurtured thee, and found herself a grave?
But thou, O thou, hast risen from the deep!
All mortals mourn and weep
To see thee, seeing that all love must die
Beside thy beauty, see thee and despair!
Deadly as thou art fair,
I cry for all mankind—they are slain, even as I!

[TANNHÄUSER *pauses, bends eagerly towards* VENUS. *She smiling luxuriously, he continues.*

Who cometh wanton, with long arms outspread?
Who cometh with lascivious lips aflame?
Whose eyes invite me to the naked bed
Stark open to the sun, dear pride of shame?
Whose face draws close and near,
Filling the soul with fear,
Till nameless shudders course in every limb?
Whose breath is quick and fierce?
Whose teeth are keen to pierce
The arms that clasp her? Whose the eyes that swim
For dear and delicate delight? And whose
The lips that halt and choose
The very centre of my mouth, and meet
In one supreme and conquering kiss, and cleave
Unto the wound they leave,
Bringing all heart's blood to one house, too sore and sweet?

Who rageth as a lioness bereaved,
If, for a moment's breathing space, I move
Back from the purple where her bosom heaved,
Back from the chosen body that I love?
Whose lips cling faster still
In desperate sweet will?
Whose body melts as fire caught in wine
Into the clasping soul?
Whose breathing breasts control
Her heart's quick pulsing, and the sob of mine?
O Venus, lády Venus, thou it is
Whose fierce immortal kiss
Abides upon me, about me, and within:
Thou, lady of the secret of the Sea,
Made one for love with me,
Love and desire and dream, a sense of mortal sin!

Who cometh as a visionary shape
Within my soul and spirit to abide,
Mysterious labyrinth without escape,
Magical lover, and enchanted bride?
O Mother of my will!
Set thy live body still
Unto my heart, that even Eternity
Roll by our barren bed—
That even the quick and dead,
Being mortal, mix in our eternal sea!
Distil we love from all the universe!
Defy the early curse!
Bid thorns and thistles mingle in delight!
And from the athanor of death and pain
Bring golden showers of rain
To crown our bed withal, the empire of the Night!

O Wife! Incarnate Beauty self-create!
O Life! O Death! Love unimaginable!
Despair grows hope, as hope grows desperate;
And Heaven bridges the great gulf of Hell.
Thy life is met with mine,
Transmuted, grown divine,
Even in this, the evil of the world!
What agony is this,
The first undying kiss

From jewelled eyes and lips in passion curled ?
O sister and O serpent and O mate,
Strike the red fang of hate
Steady and strong, persistent to the heart !
So shall this song be made more terrible
With the soul-mastering spell,
Choke, stagger, know the Evil, Beauty's counterpart !

Whose long-drawn curse runs venom in my veins ?
What dragon spouse consumes me with her breath ?
What passionate hatred, what infernal pains,
Mixed with thy being in the womb of Death ?
Blistering fire runs,
Scorching, terrific suns,
Through body and soul in this abominable
Marriage of demon power
Subtle and strong and sour,
A draught of ichor of the veins of Hell!
Curses leap leprous, epicene, unclean,
The soul of the Obscene
Incarnate in the spirit : and above
Hangs Sin, vast vampire, the corrupt, that swings
Her unredeeming wings
Over the world, and flaps for lust of Death —and Love !

VENUS.

This man was drained of music ! Five new songs
Chase the three ancient to oblivion ! Oh !
Love is grown fury !

TANNHÄUSER.

Kill me !

VENUS.

In the kiss.

[TANNHÄUSER *sleeps.*

ACT III.

For Love is lord of truth and loyalty,
Lifting himself out of the lowly dust
On golden plumes up to the purest sky,
Above the reach of loathly sinful lust,
Whose base affect through cowardly distrust
Of his weak wings dare not to heaven fly,
But like a moldwarp in the earth doth lie.

His dunghill thoughts, which do themselves enure
To dirty dross, no higher dare aspire,
Nor can his feeble earthly eyes endure
The flaming light of that celestial fire
Which kindleth love in generous desire,
And makes him mount above the native might
Of heavy earth, up to the heaven's height.
SPENSER, *Hymn in Honour of Love.*

In Venusberg: changing afterward to a woodland crossway.

VENUS.

GONE to his Goddess ! the poor worm's asleep.
And yet—I cannot follow him. Not even
Into the dreamland that these mortals use.
There, I am barred. The flaming sword of Light
Is set against me, and new pangs consume
This nest of scorpions where my heart once was.
Yet to my fearful task of hate I set
No faltering bosom. I will have this man,
His life, his strength ; and live a little more.
Life—shall I ever reach the splendid sword
Of womanhood, and gird it, gain my will,
A human soul, and from that altitude
Renew the terrible war against the Gods ?
I have called Chronos the devouring God
My father—shall his desolating reign
Never return ? Ay me ! this heart of hate,
Loathing the man, takes comfort in the beast,
And gloats on the new garbage for an hour.
So, Sin, embrace me ! Watch ; he moves again,
Transfigured by the dream : slow rapture steals
Over his face. Mere godhead could not bring

That human light and living! I shall win.
He must have banished Her—and dreams
of me.

TANNHÄUSER (*in sleep*).

Elizabeth!

VENUS.

His far-off baby-love!
I triumph, then! The Goddess hath with-
drawn.
His mind works back to childhood, babydom;
Will grow to manhood and remember me.

TANNHÄUSER (*awaking, leaps to his feet*).

Freedom! Elizabeth! All hail to Her!
Radiant Goddess! Liberty and love!

VENUS.

What sayest thou? Curse Her!

TANNHÄUSER.

My Elizabeth!

VENUS.

What? Art thou mad? Come close to me
again.
Forget this nightmare. Rather, tell me it,
And I will soothe thee. Have I not a balm,
A sovereign comfort in my old caress?

TANNHÄUSER.

I must begone. She waits.

VENUS.

Who waits? Come here!
Let us talk fondly, set together still,
Not with these shouts and wavings of the
arms,
Struts and unseemly gestures. Tannhäuser!

TANNHÄUSER.

She waits for me, my sweet Elizabeth!
Venus or Lilith, I have loved thee well!
Now, to my freedom!

VENUS.

Your Elizabeth!

TANNHÄUSER.

Ay, to those pure and alabaster brows,
The tender fingers, and the maiden smile.
Burn the whore's bed! Unpaint the cruel
lips!
Cover the shameless belly, and forget
The cunning attitudes and aptitudes!
Unlearn the mowings, the lascivious grins!
I perceive purity.

VENUS.

Nay, I have loved thee!
Fresh pleasure hourly filled the crystal cup.
Shalt thou find wine so comely and so keen,
So fresh with life to fill each aching vein
With new electric fervour? Will she be
My equal? She is mortal and a child.
Her arms are frail and white. Her lily
cheeks
Could never take thy kiss. Thy love would
shock,
Repel. I scorn to say her love were less
Than mine: I tell thee that she could not
love
Thee even at all as thou wouldst understand.

TANNHÄUSER.

So certain art thou? Let me go to her,
Try, and come back!

VENUS.

No doubt of that success!
A child is easy to degrade!

TANNHÄUSER.

Vile thing!
I will try otherwise—to raise myself:
But if I fail, I will not drag her down;
I will return.

VENUS.

To lose thee for one hour
Is my swift death—so desolate am I!
I have not got one lover in the world,
Save only Tannhäuser. And he will go.

TANNHÄUSER.

One lover! Who makes up the equal soul
Of all the wickedness beneath the sun?
Lilith! Seek out thy children to devour!
Leave me. I go to my Elizabeth.

VENUS.

O no! It kills me! That is naked truth.
I am the soul and symbol of desire,
Yet individual to thy love. Stay! Stay!
One last caress, and then I let thee go,
And—die. I fear, and I detest, this death.
I am not mortal, doomed to it! I slip
Into mere slime; no resurrection waits
Me, made the vilest of the stars that fell.
I must not die. I dare not. But for thee,
Thy love, one last extreme delirium!—
Take thou this dagger! At the miracle
Of a moment when our lips are fastened close
Once more, in the unutterable kiss,
Drive its sharp spirit to my heart!

TANNHÄUSER.

Not I!
I know the spell.[1] I am warned. I will
begone.

VENUS.

I swear I will not let thee! Thinkest thou
So long I have held thee not to have the
power
To hold thee still by charm, or love, or force?
Fool, for I hate thee! I will have thy life!

TANNHÄUSER.

Where is the cavern in the mountain side,
The accurséd gateway of this house of Hell?

VENUS.

Thou canst not find it! Fool!

TANNHÄUSER.

And yet I will.

[1] Which would have given her power to use his body as an habitation, according to legend.

VENUS.

Meanwhile my chant shall tremble in the air,
And rack thy limbs with poison, wither up
The fine full blood, breed serpents in thy
heart,
And worms to eat thee. Living thou shalt
be
A sensible corpse, a walking sepulchre.
Come, come, Apollyon! Come, my
Aggereth![1]
Belial, cheat his ears and blind his eyes!
Come, all ye tribes of serpents and foul fish!
Beetle and worm, I have a feast for you!

TANNHÄUSER.

The palace staggers. I can hardly see—
Only these writhing horrors. I am blind!

VENUS.

Ha! My true knight! I ask thee once again,
Once more invoke the epithets of love,
Suspend my powers—constrain thee on my
knees
For thine old kisses. See, I am all thine!
All thine the splendid body, and the shape
Of mighty breasts, and supple limbs, and wide
Lips, and slow almond eyes! Adorable,
Seductive, sombre, moving amorously,
Droop the long eyelids, purple with young
blood,
The lazy lashes and the flowing mane,
The flame of fire from head to feet of me!
The subtle fervours, drunken heats and ways,
And perfumes maddening from the soul of
spring!
The little nipples, and the dangerous pit
Set smiling in the alabaster; thine,
The glowing arms are thine, the desperate
Fresh kisses, and the gold that lurks upon
The sunny skin, the marble of these brows,
The roses, and the poppies, and the scent
Subtle and sinful—thine, all thine, are these,
What with my heart that only beats for thee,
The many-throned and many-minded soul
Centred to do thee worship. Hither, hither!

[1] A female demon. She rides in a chariot drawn by an ox and an ass. See Deut. xxii. 10.

TANNHÄUSER.

This shakes my spirit as a winnower
Whose fan is the eternal breath of God;
Yet on my forehead I perceive a Star
That shames thy beauties and thy manifold
Mind with Its tiny triple flame. I go!

VENUS.

Try not the impossible. Thou knowest my power.
I shall renew the charm.

TANNHÄUSER.

I see a Power
Above thy mockery of witchcraft. Work
Thy devilish lusts on me unfortunate!
There is no gateway to this fortalice?
Thy fiends surround me? Hein! their pangs begin!
I have one word, one cry, one exorcism:
Avé Maria!

VENUS.

Mercy! Mercy, God!

[*Thunder rolls in the lightning-riven sky. All the illusion vanishes, and* TANNHÄUSER *finds himself in a cross-way of the forest, where is a Crucifix. He is kneeling at the foot, amazed, as one awakening from a dream, or from a vision of mysterious power.*

TANNHÄUSER.

I am escapéd as a little bird
Out of the fowler's net. I thank Thee, God!
For in the pit of horror, and the clay
Of death I cried, and Thou hast holpen me,
Set me upon a rock, established me,
And filled my mouth, and tuned mine ancient lyre
With a new song—praise, praise to God above,[1]
And to Our Lady of the Smitten Heart,

[1] Psalm xl.

That David never knew: my pettiness
Exceeding through Her mercy and Her might
The King and Priest of Israel; for I know
Her love, and She hath shewn to me Her face,
And given me a magic star to stand
Over the house that hides Elizabeth.

[*A shepherd-boy is discovered upon a rock hard by.*

SHEPHERD-BOY.

Ta-lirra-lirra! Hillo ho! The morning!

[*He plays upon his flute.*

TANNHÄUSER.

These were the melodies that I despised!
Oh God! Be merciful to sinful me,
And keep me in the Way of Truth. But Thou!
Forgive, forgive! Lead, lead me to Thy Light!

SHEPHERD-BOY (*sings*).

Light in the sky
Dawns to the East!
Song-bird and beast
Wake and reply.
Let me not die,
Now, at the least!
Lord of the Light!
Queen of the dawn!
Soul of the Night
Hid and withdrawn!
Voice of the thunder!
Light of the levin!
I worship and wonder,
O maker of Heaven!
The night falls asunder;
The darkness is riven!

Light, O eternal!
Life, O diurnal!
Love, O withdrawn!
Heart of my May, spring
Far to Thy dawn!
God of the dayspring!
Sun on the lawn!

Hail to Thy splendour,
Holy, I cry!
Mary shall bend her
Face from the sky,
Subtle and tender—
Then I can die!

TANNHÄUSER.

The simple love of life and gladness there!
Merely to be, and worship at the heart.
How complex, the machinery of me!
Better? I doubt it. Hark! he tunes again.

SHEPHERD-BOY (*sings*).

O Gretchen, when the morn is gray,
Forsake thy flocks and steal away
To that low bank where, shepherds say,
The flowers eternal are.
Thine eyes should gleam to see me there,
As fixed upon a star.
And yet thy lips should take a tune,
And match me unaware—
So steals the sun beside the moon
And hides her lustre rare.
The bloom upon the peach is fine;
The blossom on thy cheek is mine!
O kiss me—if you dare!
I called thee by the name of love
That mothers fear and gods approve,
And maidens blush to say—
O Gretchen, meet me in the dell
We know and love, who love so well,
While morn is cold and gray!
So, match thy blushes to the dawn;
Thy bosom to the rising moon,
Until our loves to earth have drawn
Some new bewitching tune.
Come, Gretchen, in the dusk of day,
Where nymphs and dryads creep away
Beneath the oaks, to laugh and play
And sink in lover's swoon.
We'll sing them sister songs, and show
What secrets mortal lovers know.

TANNHÄUSER.

The simple life of love and joy therein!
Merely to love—to take such pride in it
Gods must behold! The childish easiness,
Impossible to me, who am become
Perhaps the subtlest mind of men. Alas!
Maybe in this I still am self-deceived,
Merely the fool swelled up with bitter words,
Imagination, and the toadstool growth,
Thought, wounded; as a scorpion to sting
Its own bruised life out. This is Tannhäuser!
How long ago since he took pleasure in
Such love— [*A horn winds.*
such music as yon horn below—
[*A chant is heard.*
Such worship as the simple chant that steals
Calm and majestic in the solitude
Up from the valley. Pilgrims, by my fay!
[*Enter* PILGRIMS.

PILGRIMS (*sing*).

Hail to Thee, Lady bright,
Queen of the stars of night!
Avé Maria!
Spouse of the Breath divine,
Hail to Thee, shrouded shrine,
Whence our Redeemer came!
Hail to Thy holy name!
Avé Maria!

TANNHÄUSER.

Those words that saved me!

SHEPHERD-BOY.

Pray, your blessing, sirs!
I worship Mary in my simple way,
And see Her name in all the starry host,
And Jesus crucified on every tree
For me! God speed you to the House of God!

THE ELDEST PILGRIM.

The Blessing of the Virgin on your head!

THE YOUNGEST PILGRIM.

What make you, sir, so downcast? Come with us
Who taste all happiness in uneasiness,
Hunger and thirst, in His sweet Name—

TANNHÄUSER.

Ah no!
I have been shown another way than yours!
I am too old in this world's weariness,
Too hungry in its hunger unto God,
Too foolish-wise, too passionate-cynical,
To seek your royal road to Deity!

ANOTHER PILGRIM.

Leave him! Belike 'tis some philosopher
With words too big to understand himself.

TANNHÄUSER.

With heart too seared to understand himself!
With mind too wise to understand himself!
With soul too small to understand himself!

ELDEST PILGRIM.

Cling to the Cross, sir, there is hope in that!

TANNHÄUSER.

You know not, friend, the man to whom you speak.
I have lived long in miracles enough,
Myself the crowning miracle of all,
That I am merely here. God speed you, sirs!
I ask your blessing, not to stay therewith
My soul's own need (though that is dire enough)
But—he that blesseth shall himself be blessed!
My blessing were small help to you, my friends.

AN INTELLIGENT PILGRIM.

For your own reason, give it to us, then!

TANNHÄUSER.

The Blessing of the Lord! May Mary's self
Be with you and defend you evermore,
Most from the fearful destiny of him
Men used to call the minstrel Tannhäuser!

ELDEST PILGRIM.

A sombre blessing! May God's mercy fall
On you and yours!

TANNHÄUSER.

On mine, ah mine! Amen,
Amen to that!

ELDEST PILGRIM (*smiles*).

On her you love, my friend!
We will pass onward, by your honour's leave!

PILGRIMS (*sing*).

Hail, hail, O Queen, to Thee,
Spouse of Eternity!
Avé Maria!
Mother in Maidenhood!
Saintly Beatitude!
Queen of the Angel Host!
Bride of the Holy Ghost!
Avé Maria!

[*Exeunt Pilgrims.*

TANNHÄUSER.

The love of Isis! No mere love to Her
That is inborn in every soul of us!
It is Her love to Christ that we must taste,
Uniting us with Her eternal sigh.
There is a problem infinite again.
I have not gained one jot since first I saw
The stately bosom of the Venusberg,
Save that mine eyes have seen a little truth,
My body found a little weariness.
I am very feeble! Hither comes the hunt!

[*A horn winds quite close by.*

The noble, doomed, swift beauty! Closer yet
Pant the long hounds! What heart he has! One, two!
See the brach[1] dying by his bloody flank!
So could not Tannhäuser awhile ago.
My help lay outside and above myself.
What skills him he is brave? He ends the same.
Poor stag! Here sweep the foremost hunters up.
My very kinsmen! There rides Wolfram too!

[1] Feminine of hound.

The proper minstrel! The ideal lover!
The pure, unsullied soul. Even so, forsooth!
They tell no secrets in the scullery.
And there is Heinrich, wastrel of the Court,
Yet hides a heart beneath the foolish face.
And lo! The Landgrave! Flushed, undignified!
The chase was long—if he could see himself!
Wind, wind the mort! What call will answer me
When I step forward? Am I dead, I wonder,
Or merely on my hare-brain quest? Three years
Since I was seen in Germany!
[*He descends the hill and enters the company.*
Hail, friends!
Good cousin Landgrave, merry be the meet!

LANDGRAVE.

Hands off me, fellow! Who are you?

TANNHÄUSER.

My lord,
Your cousin. Is my face so changed with care,
My body shrunken with my suffering
(That was not ever of the body) so?

WOLFRAM.

I know you, my old friend! Our chiefest bird!
Sweetest of singers!

TANNHÄUSER.

No, the naughty one!

HEINRICH.

Tannhäuser! Yes! And we have thought you dead.

LANDGRAVE.

Friends, will you swear to him?

HEINRICH.

Yes, yes, 'tis he!

WOLFRAM.

I know the blithe look in the sober eyes!

LANDGRAVE.

Changed verily. It was most urgent, cousin,
I were assured of your identity.
Three weeks the couriers scour the land for you,
Urgent demands:—how came you here at last?
Your horse? Your arms? Three years since Germany
Saw the brave eyes and kindly face of you!
Where have you been? Upon the sacred quest
Still riding?

TANNHÄUSER.

Ay, my lord, upon the quest.

LANDGRAVE.

You travelled in far lands?

TANNHÄUSER.

Far, very far!

LANDGRAVE.

You fought with Turks?

TANNHÄUSER.

I fought within myself.

LANDGRAVE.

Why is such suffering written in dark lines,
And painted in the greyness of your hair?

TANNHÄUSER.

I had an evil dream.

LANDGRAVE.

You saw the Grail?

TANNHÄUSER.

I saw—strange things.

WOLFRAM.

For very feebleness
Your limbs shake under you. How hither, friend?
Your horse and arms? Your squire?

TANNHÄUSER.

My squire is dead.
[*With sudden passion.*
I am no weakling that I need a knave
Hanging upon me—'tis an incubus.

LANDGRAVE.

And then your horse?

TANNHÄUSER.

I know not; possibly
Kept as an hostage. I was prisoner once.

WOLFRAM.

Prisoner? By here?

TANNHÄUSER.

A-many castles, sir,
Held by old ogres—and not all of them
Stand in the mid-day, front the sober sun,
Answer the slug-horn.[1]

LANDGRAVE.

You are pleased to riddle.
Ever the poet!

TANNHÄUSER (*aside*).

Let me try the truth
For certitude of incredulity!
(*Aloud, laughing*) I was in Venusberg!

ALL (*except* HEINRICH, *who laughs*).

Save us, Maria!
[*They look about them fearfully and cross themselves.*

[1] I prefer to follow Browning in his "absurd blunder" than to imitate the alleged correctness of our critics.—A. C.

LANDGRAVE.

Even in jest, such words!—Most dangerous
Even to think of!—but to speak!

HEINRICH (*aside*).

These fools!
[*He remains, thoughtfully regarding* TANNHÄUSER.

LANDGRAVE.

God avert omens! Soft you, Tannhäuser,
You heard the heralds?

TANNHÄUSER.

Never a word of them!

LANDGRAVE.

You must remember my Elizabeth,
My daughter—I designed to marry her
To a most noble youth—

TANNHÄUSER.

Von Aschenheim?

LANDGRAVE.

The same. I would have wed her, but ('tis strange!)
The lady had a purpose of her own,
And swore by all the Virgins in the Book
She would wed nobody but—Tannhäuser.
So, like the foolish, doting sire I am,
I gave her thirty days to find you. This
Must dumb you with astonishment.

TANNHÄUSER.

Well, no!
The details, unfamiliar! But the theme
I knew. And therefore leaps my bosom up:
I rob your verderer of his nag, and ho!
Low the long gallop to Elizabeth!

WOLFRAM.

Lucky and brave. How we all envy you!

HEINRICH.

Envy? This day when he comes back to us!
Why, we are lucky too! We thought you dead!

WOLFRAM.

Begrudge you, no! But—wish our luck were yours?
Yes! Come, Tannhäuser, there's my hand on it!
Luck, love, and loyalty—the triple toast!

FORESTERS.

Tannhäuser! Luck, and love, and loyalty!

TANNHÄUSER.

I thank you, loving kinsmen and my friends.
But see, I am impatient to be gone!
(*To the verderer.*) Your horse—that favour I shall not forget,
Nor linger to repay. Good morrow then!
Good sport all day!

LANDGRAVE.

God speed thee, Tannhäuser!
[*Exit* TANNHÄUSER.
Am I still dreaming? It was surely he.
But such an one, compact of suffering,
Of joy, of love, of pity, of despair;
Half senseless, half too subtle for my sense.

WOLFRAM.

He has passed through some unimagined test,
Or undergone some sorrow. Leave it so!
I saw high grief upon him, and new love!

HEINRICH.

You are the poet! To your instinct then!
Here's to the insight given us by God!

LANDGRAVE.

Wolfram is right; a truce to jest to-day.
The dogs are loose. Ride forward, gentlemen!
[*Amid the winding of horns and cries of the huntsmen the company moves off.*

HEINRICH.

They hate his very name! Dear Tannhäuser!
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

"So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force:
What then? since Swiftness gives the charioteer
The palm, his hope be in the vivid horse
Whose neck God clothed with thunder, not the steer
Sluggish and safe! Yoke Hatred, Crime, Remorse,
Despair: but ever mid the whirling fear,
Let, through the tumult, break the poet's face
Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the race!"

Two Poets of Croisic.

SCENE I.

A room in the palace of the LANDGRAVE.

ELIZABETH.

I AM ashamed to look upon thy face!

TANNHÄUSER.

O, Love! Pure mystery of life!

ELIZABETH.

Not so.
Learn how this came. My father would have made
A match of lands and titles. I declined,
Minded to keep my high virginity.
He laughed, was cruel. So I said at last:
"Tannhäuser only!" Was this modesty?
Listen. You loved me when I was a child;
And, in my childish way, I looked to you,
Loved sitting at your knee and toying with
The great cross-hilt, or watching how the steel
Outshone the jewelled scabbard when you drew
(You would not let me touch) the delicate blade
Half out: and also fingering your harp,
Picking child's tunes out, while you curled my hair
Between two fingers, dreamily enough!
Then, too, you went away out of my life!
You see the symbol you have been to me?
The swift high mind, the heart of gold and fire,

The living purpose and the mystic life
Of lonely seeking for the Grail of God!
I—call you husband? When I said your name,
It was to set the task impossible,
Had they but known it—just as one should say:
"Bring down St. Michael: let me marry him!"
They knew the angels were too pure; but you,
They guessed not how exalted were your hopes;
How utterly unselfish, pure, and true,
Your great heart beat!

TANNHÄUSER (*with bitterness*).

I hardly knew, myself!
(*Aside.*) Here is the virgin insight of the truth!
Or—cannot purity be brought to know
Aught but itself? Some poets tell us that!
(*Aloud.*) I am unworthy even to speak to you.

ELIZABETH.

The proof! The proof! Dear God, how true it is
That such high worthiness sees nothing there
In his own heart (save what is very Christ)
But wickedness!

TANNHÄUSER (*aside*).

This is my punishment!
This faith, this hope, this love—to me—to me!

ELIZABETH.

Yet, once my word went forth into the world,
Suddenly came the fear that you were still
Accessible to men—might hear, might come!
The kind, grave face of you—that light outshone
The mystical ideal. Therefore too
I minded me of our old baby-love,
And—marriages are made in heaven, you know!
Besides—Our Lady showed me in a dream
How you would come.

TANNHÄUSER.

And now? So sure are you
The loving word you spoke an hour ago
Came from the heart—who called me by mistake?

ELIZABETH.

So sure? You want me to confess again
The deep pure love, the love indicible.

TANNHÄUSER (*to himself*).

Words, thoughts, that fail her? How should acts exceed?
(*Aloud.*) Better sit thus and read each other's thoughts—
I in the blue eyes, in the hazel you!
Then, bending, I may touch my lips upon
Sweet thoughtful brows.

ELIZABETH.

Your kisses move my soul.
Strange thoughts and unimagined destinies
Take ship, and harbour in the heart of me.

TANNHÄUSER.

Words mean too much, and never mean enough.
Look, only look!

ELIZABETH.

I am so happy—so!

SCENE II.

The Court assembled in the Great Hall. LANDGRAVE *enthroned,* ELIZABETH *by his side. Facing them are the competing minstrels. Around, courtiers and fair ladies.*

LANDGRAVE.

Welcome all minstrels! Let us celebrate
In the old fashion, dear to Germany,
My child's betrothal to this noble youth,

Great lord, true knight, and honest gentleman,
So long who journeyed on the holy quest
Forgotten of these younger days, and now
Come back among us to receive reward
For those long sufferings; in days of peace,
In fruitful love, and marriage happiness.
So, to the poet's tourney.

HERALD.

Sire, Lord Heinrich
Craves your high pardon.

LANDGRAVE.

Ha! He is not here!

WOLFRAM.

Our sturdy lover will not be consoled
For losing, as he phrases it, his friend.

LANDGRAVE.

Well, we forgive him the more readily
Because of the occasion. One alone
Of all themes possible may grace this hour;—
Love! Let the lots of precedence be drawn.
Tannhäuser, you will string us once again
Your harp forgotten?

TANNHÄUSER.

That will I, my lord.

HERALD.

On the Lord Wolfram falls it first to sing.

WOLFRAM (*sings*).

Tender the smile, and faint the lover's sigh,
When first love dawns in the blue maiden sky,
Where happy peace is linked with purity.

As sad spring's sun starts on his daily race,
Reddens the east, as if in sad disgrace;
So love first blushes on true maiden's face.

Soft, soft, the gaze of married folk, I think,
Limpid and calm as pools where cattle drink;
And, when they kiss, most discontentments shrink!

Even as the stars together sing (we hear)
So sings the married life, a tuneful sphere.
Husband is he, and she is very dear.

How truly beautiful it is to see
Old age in perfect unanimity,
Affections smooth, and buzzing like a bee.

The sun sets, in conjunction with the moon.
Death comes at last, a pleasure and a boon,
And they arrive in heaven very soon.

[*Immense, spontaneous, uncontrollable applause sweeps like a whirlwind through the court.*

AN UNKNOWN MINSTREL (*breaking in unheralded*).

Tender the phrase, and faint the melody,
When poets praise a maiden's purity;
Platitude linked to imbecility.

[*Murmurs of surprise.*

As 'mongst spring's sprigs sprouts sunshine's constant face;
Or as a mill grinds on, with steady pace;
So sprouts, so grinds, the unblushing commonplace.

Soft, soft the brain—

[*The murmurs break into an indignant uproar.*

HERALD.

Silence!

LANDGRAVE.

Sir Minstrel, you are insolent!
We do not know you, yet have borne with you,
Rudely uprising ere your turn was come:—
And you abuse our patience to insult
The noble minstrel whose impassioned song
Touched every heart. Sing in your turn you may.
Love is the theme, not imbecility!

WOLFRAM.

That is the subject next his heart, no doubt!
[*Laughter.*

HERALD.

Lord Bertram!

BERTRAM.

I shall sing in other key.
[*Sings.*
He is the equal of the gods, my queen,
He crowned and chosen out of men,
Who sits beside thee, sees
Love's laughing ecstasies
Flame in thy face, and alter then
To the low light of passion dimly seen
In shaded woods and dells, Love's wide demesne.

But me! I burn with love! My lips are wan!
Thy face is turned—I flame! I melt! I fall!
My heart is chilled and dark;
My soul's ethereal spark
Is dulled for sorrow; my despairs recall
At last Thy name, O gracious Paphian,
Lady of Mercy to the love of man!

Come, come, immortal, of the many thrones!
Sparrows and doves in chariot diamonded
Drawn through the midmost air!
O Lady of despair,
Who bound the golden helmet of Thine head?
Whose voice rings out the pitiful low tones:
"Who, who hath wronged thee? And my power atones.

"She who now doth flee, shall soon pursue thee;
"She who spurns thy gifts, with gifts shall woo thee;
"She who loves not, she shall cleave unto thee,
"Thou the unwilling!"
Peer of Gods is he, equal soul to theirs,
Who lingers in thy passionate embrace:
Whose languor-laden kiss
Cleaves where thy bosom is
A throne of beauty for thy throat and face!
In these dark joys and exquisite despairs,
O Love, let Death lay finger unawares!

LANDGRAVE.

Passion and music—but no Principle!
How different is Tannhäuser!
(*To the unknown minstrel*) You, sir, next!
Sing of pure love and noble womanhood.
Our court loves not these wastrel troubadours,
Loose locks, flushed faces, soul's unseemliness.

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL (*sings*).

Amid earth's motley, Gaia's cap and bells,
This too material, too unreal life,
Sing, sing the crown of tender miracles,
The pure true wife!

Sing not of love, the unutterable one,
The love divine that Mary has to men.
Seek not the winepress and the rising sun
Beyond thy ken!

TANNHÄUSER (*aside*).

Who is this man that reads my inmost thoughts?

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

I sing of love, most delicate and pure,
Surely the crown of life! How slow and sweet
Its music! Shall the ecstasy endure,
Sunshine on wheat?

Where leads this gentle love? I see you sigh!
The scythe is laid unto the golden grain:
A note of utter unreality
Usurps the strain.

I sing not of that other flame of hell
Wrapping with torture the delighted brow—
But thou! who knowest, and hast known, so well,
Sing thou!

[TANNHÄUSER, *entranced, imagines himself to be still in Venusberg.*

TANNHÄUSER (*aside*).

I have been dreaming that I left this place,
Escaped with life, wooed my Elizabeth;
My dreams are always strange in Venusberg.
[*Taking his harp.*
Sing thee again, dear lady, of our joy?
Listen, then, listen! For some sombre finger,
Other than mine, impulses on the string.
This tune I knew not! See, the strings are moved
Subtly as if by witchcraft—or by God!
[*Sings.*

In the Beginning God began,
And saw the Night of Time begin;
Chaos, a speck; and space, a span;
Ruinous cycles fallen in,
And Darkness on the Deep of Time.
Murmurous voices call and climb;
Faces, half-formed, arise; and He
Looked from the shadow of His throne,
The curtain of Eternity;
He looked—and saw Himself alone,
And on the sombre sea, the primal one,
Faint faces, that might not abide;
Flicker, and are fordone.
So were they caught within the spacious tide,
The sleepy waters that encased the world.
Monsters rose up, and turned themselves, and curled
Into the deep again.

The darkness brooded, and the bitter pain
Of chaos twisted the vast limbs of time
In horrid rackings: then the spasm came:
The Serpent rose, the servant of the slime,
In one dark miracle of flame
Unluminous and void: the silent claim
Of that which was, to be: the cry to climb,
The bitter birth of Nature: uttermost Night
Dwelt, inaccessible to sound and sight;
Shielded from Voice, impervious to Light.

Lo! on the barren bosom, on the brine,
The spirit of the Mighty One arose,
A flickering light, a formless triple flame,
The self-begotten, the impassive shrine,
The seat of Heaven's archipelagoes;
Yet lighted not the glory whence it came,
Nor shone upon the surface of the sea.
Time, and the Great One, and the Nameless Name,
Held in their grip the child, Eternity.
Silence and Darkness in their womb withheld
That spiritual fire, and brooded still:
Nature and Time, their solenesss undispelled,
Ever awaiting the eternal Will.
And Law was unbegotten: uttermost Night
Dwelt, inaccessible to sound and sight;
Shielded from Voice, impervious to Light.

Then grew within the barren womb of this
The Breath of the Eternal and the Vast,
Softer than dawn, and closer than a kiss—
And lo! the chaos and the darkness passed!
At the creative sigh the Light became.
Chaos rolled back in the abundant flame.
The vast and mystic Soul,
The Firmament, a living coal,
Flamed 'twixt the glory and the sea below.
The whirling force began. The atom whirled
In vortices of flashing matter: wild as snow
On mountain tops by the wind-spirits hurled,
Blinding and blind, the sparks of spirit curled
Each to its proper soul; the wide wheels flow,
Orderly streams, and lose the rushing speed,
Meet, mingle, marry. Fire and air express
Their dews and winds of molten loveliness,
Fine flakes of arrowy light, the dawn's first deed,
Metallic showers and smoke self-glittering
For many an aeon. Wild the pennons spring
Of streaming flame! Then, surging from the tide,

Grew the desirable, the golden one,
Separate from the sun.
Now fire and air no more exult, exceed,
Are balanced in the sphere. The waters wide
Glow on the bosom of fixed earth; and Need,
The Lady of Beginning, also was.
Thus was the firmament a vital glass,
The waters as the vessel of the soul;
Thus earth, the mystic basis of the whole,
Was smitten through with fire, as chrysopras,
Blending, uniting, and dividing it,
Volcanic, airy, and celestial.

I rose within the elemental ball,
And lo! the Ancient One of Days did sit!
His head and hair were white as wool, His eyes
A flaming fire: and from the splendid mouth
Flashed the Eternal Sword![1]
Lo! Lying at his feet as dead, I saw
The leaping-forth of Law:
Division of the North wind and the South,
The lightning of the armies of the Lord;
East rolled asunder from the rended West;
Height clove the depth: the Voice begotten said:
"Divided be thy ways and limited!"
Answered the reflux and the indrawn breath:
"Let there be Life, and Death!"

"The Earth, she shall be governed by her parts:[2]
Division be upon her! Let her glory
From crown to valley, source and spring to mouth,
North unto South,
Smooth gulf and sea to rugged promontory,
Always be vexed and drunken, that the hearts
Ruling her course round alway in the sky;
And as an handmaid let her serve and die!
One season, let it still confound another;
No man behold his brother;
No creature in it or upon, the same!

Her members, let them differ; be no soul
Equal! Let thought, let reasonable things,
Bow to thy wings,
Thy manifest control,
Vexation! weeding out of one another.
Their dwelling-places, let them lose their name!
The work of man, and all his pomp and power,
Deface them: shatter the aspiring tower!
Let all his houses be as caves and holes,
Unto the Beast I give them. And their souls—
Lift up the shadowy hand!—
Confound with darkness them that understand!
For why?
Me, the Most High,
It doth repent Me, having made mankind!
Let her be known a little while, and then
A little while a stranger. Dumb and blind,
Deaf to the Light and Breath of Me be men!
She is become an harlot's bed, the home
And dwelling of the fallen one! Arise!
Ye heavens, ye lower serving skies!
Beneath My dome
Serve ye the lofty ones. The Governors,
Them shall ye govern. Cast the fallen down!
Bring forth with them that are Fertility's!
Destroy the rotten! Let no shores
Remain in any number! Add and crown,
Diminish and discrown, until the stars
Be numbered! Rise, ye adamantine bars!
Let pass your Masters! Move ye and appear!
Execute judgment and eternal ill,
The law of justice, and the law of fear.
It is my Will!"

So shed the primal curse
Its dreadful stature, its appalling shape.
In giant horror the clouds rolling drape
Earth, like a pluméd pall upon an hearse,
Till God looms up, half devil and half ape,
Heaven exulting in the hateful rape;
And still the strong curse rolls
Over accurséd and immortal souls,
Covering the corners of the universe
Without escape.

[1] See Daniel vii. 9.
[2] This passage is a paraphrase of the 19th "call" in Dr. Dee's book, referred to above.

This is the evil destiny of man :
The desperate plan
Made by the Ancient One, to keep His power.
Limits He set, made space unsearchable
Yet bounded, made time endless to transcend
Man's thought to comprehend :
Builded the Tower
Of life, and girded it with walls of hell,
The name of Death. This limit in all things
Baffles the spirit wings,
Chains the swift soul ; for even Death is bound.
In its apparent amplitude I saw,
I, who have slept through death, have surely found
The old accurséd law,
And death has changed to life. This task alone
Shoots to the starry throne :
That if man lack not purpose, but succeed,
Reaching in very deed
Impersonal existence ;—Lo !
Man is made one with God, an equal soul.
For he shall know
The harmony, the oneness of the Whole.

This was my purpose. Vain,
Ah vain ! The Star of the Unconquered Will
Centred its vehemence and light, to stain
In one successful strain
The stainless sphere of the unchangeable,
With its own passionate, desperate breath
Ever confronting the dark gate of Death.
I passed that gate ! O pitiful ! The same
Mystery holds me, and the flame
Of Life stands up, unbroken citadel,
Beyond my sight, vague, far, intangible.
Broken are will, and witchery, and prayer.
Remains the life of earth, which is but hell,
Destiny's web, and my immense despair.

LANDGRAVE.

Your words are terrible ! We knew them true
Even while you sang. But see ! the light of day !
Beauty in all things and—for you—true love !
All the blind horror of the song recedes.
There is a sequel ; is there not, my friend ?
Of love, your theme, we have not heard a note.

TANNHÄUSER.

That is a question. I am not so sure
My song was not entirely to that end.

WOLFRAM.

Yes, poet, true one that you are indeed !
You show us the dilemma of the soul,
The Gordian knot Love only hews asunder.

TANNHÄUSER.

Or—shall I say ?—soothes only, bandages,
Not heals the sore of Destiny ?

WOLFRAM.

No, certes,
But substitutes for one reality
Another—and a lovely pleasant one.

TANNHÄUSER.

Existence is illusion after all ;
Man, a bad joke ; and God, mere epigram !
If we must come to that. And likewise love.

LANDGRAVE.

You have dipped somewhat in philosophy
Of a too cynical and wordy sort.

TANNHÄUSER.

To logic there is one reality,
Words. But the commonsense of humankind
By logic baffles logic, chains with Deed
The lion Thought. It is a circle, friends !
All life and death and mystery ravel out
Into one argument—the rounded one.

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

Count me your children their arithmetic !
Zero, the circle, grows to one, the line :
Both limitless in their own way. Proceed.

Two is by shape the Coptic aspirate,[1]
Life breathed, and death indrawn. And so
Rounds you at last the ten, completion's self,
The circle and the line. Why stick at nought?

BERTRAM.

Only a donkey fastened to a post
Moves in a circle.

LANDGRAVE.

This is noble talk!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

Leave the wide circle—word and argument!
Move to the line—the steady will of man,
That shall attract the Two, the Breath of Life,
The Holy Spirit: land you in the Three,
Where form is perfect—in the triangle.

TANNHÄUSER.

My friend, the Three is infinitely small,
Mere surface. And I seek the Depth divine!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

The solid! But the triangle aspires
To that same unity that you despise,
And lo! the Pyramid! The Sages say:
Unite that to the Sphinx, and all is done,
Completion of the Magnum Opus.

TANNHÄUSER.

No!
Each new dimension lands me farther yet
In the morass of limit.

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

Be it so!
But follow me through all the labyrinth,
And ten rewards us. And your Zero's found
To have an actual value and effect
On unity—your Will.

TANNHÄUSER.

What's then to seek?

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

The fourth dimension, for the early step.

LANDGRAVE.

It seems this talk is merely mystical.
This is no College of the Holy Ghost
For Rosencreutz his mystifying crew![1]

A COURTIER.

A Poet's tourney, and the theme is Love!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

There is a sequel to our poet's song,
And he will sing it.

TANNHÄUSER.

No! I know it not!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

The winepress and the sun!

TANNHÄUSER (*again in Venusberg*).

My spouse and Queen!
Bright Goddess of the amber limbs, the lips
Redder than poppies in the golden corn
That is your mane! Listen, the after-song!
[*Taking his harp.*

LANDGRAVE.

What are these words?

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

Let silence now abide:
Disturb not the impassioned utterance!

TANNHÄUSER. [*Sings.*

Can you believe the deadly will's decree,
The bitter earnestness of this desire,
The deep intention, the solemnity,
Profound as night and penetrant as fire,

[1] The secret headquarters of the Rosicrucians was named by them Collegium Spiritus Sancti.

The awful grasping at the Infinite,
Even as I grapple at the breasts of thee,
The seeking and the striving to the light
Deep in thine eyes, where Hell flames steadily?
I am not clinging thus
Despairing to the body of thy sin
For mere delight—Ah, deadly is to us
The pleasure wrapping us, and holding in
All love, all hate—the miserable way!
Dawns no devouring day
Still on the infinite slow tune of limbs
Moving in rapture; sleepy echo swims
In the dissolving brain,
Love conquering lassitude at last to win
Pain out of peace, and pleasure from a pang;
Then, scorpion-stung of its own terrible tang,
Burnt of its own fire, soiled of its own stain,
Falls conquered as a bird
Bolt-stricken through the brain,
To the resounding plain:
The double word,
The seesaw of all misery—begin
The alluring mysteries of lust and sin;
Ends their delight!—and are they clear to sight?
Or mixed with death, compact of night?
Begin—the bitter tears of impotence,
The sad permuted sense
Of this despair—what would you? and renew
The long soft warfare—the enchanted arms,
The silken body's charms,
The lips that murmur and the breasts that sting;
The eyes that sink so deep
Beyond the steeps and avenues of sleep,
And of their wonder bring
No ultimation from the halls of night,
The slippery staircase, and the Fatal Throne,
The Evil House, the Fugitive of Light,
The great Unluminous, the Formless One!
Stoop not! Beneath, a precipice is set,
The Seven Steps. Stoop not, forget
Never the Splendid Image, and the realm
Where lightnings overwhelm
The evil, and the barren, and the vile,
In God's undying smile!

Stoop not, O stoop not, to yon splendid world,
Yon darkly-splendid, airless, void, inane,
Blind confines in stupendous horror curled,
The sleepless place of Terror and distress,
Luring damned souls with lying loveliness,
The Habitation and the House of Pain.
For that is their abode, the Wretched Ones,
Of all unhappiness the sons!

And when, invoking often, thou shalt see
That formless Fire; when all the earth is shaken,
The stars abide not, and the moon is gone,
All Time crushed back into Eternity,
The Universe by earthquake overtaken;
Light is not, and the thunders roll,
The World is done:
When in the darkness Chaos rolls again
In the excited brain:
Then, O then call not to thy view that visible
Image of Nature; fatal is her name!
It fitteth not thy body to behold
That living light of Hell,
The unluminous, dead flame,
Until that body from the crucible
Hath passed, pure gold!
For, from the confines of material space,
The twilight-moving place,
The gates of matter, and the dark threshold,
Before the faces of the Things that dwell
In the Abodes of Night,
Spring into sight
Demons dog-faced, that show no mortal sign
Of Truth, but desecrate the Light Divine,
Seducing from the sacred mysteries.

But, after all these Folk of Fear are driven
Before the avenging levin
That rives the opening skies,
Behold that Formless and that Holy Flame
That hath no name;
That Fire that darts and flashes, writhes and creeps
Snake-wise in royal robe,
Wound round that vanished glory of the globe,
Unto that sky beyond the starry deeps,

Beyond the Toils of Time—then formulate
In thine own mind, luminous, concentrate,
The Lion of the Light, a child that stands
On the vast shoulders of the Steed of God :
Or winged, or shooting flying shafts, or shod
With the flame-sandals. Then, lift up thine hands !
Centre thee in thine heart one scarlet thought
Limpid with brilliance of the Light above !
Draw into nought
All life, death, hatred, love :
All self concentred in the sole desire—
Hear thou the Voice of Fire !

This hope was Zoroaster's—this is mine !
Not one but many splendours hath the Shrine :
Not one but many paths approach the gate
That guards the Adytum, fortifying Fate !
Mine was, by weariness of blood and brain,
Mere bitter fruit of pain
Sought in the darkness of an harlot's bed,
To make me as one dead :
To loose the girders of the soul, and gain
Breathing and life for the Intelligible ;
Find death, yet find it living. Deep as Hell
I plunged the soul ; by all blind Heaven unbound
The spirit, freed, pierced through the maze profound,
And knew Itself, an eagle for a dove.
So in one man the height and deep of love
Joined, in two states alternate (even so
Are life and death)—shall one unite the two,
My long impulsive strife ?
Did I find life ?
The real life—to know
The ways of God. Alas ! I never knew.
Then came our Lady of the Sevenfold Light,
Showed me a distant plan, distinct and clear,
As twilight to the dayspring and the night,
Dividing and uniting even here :
The middle path—life interfused with death—
Pure love ; the secret of Elizabeth !
This is my secret—in the man's delight
To lose that stubborn ecstasy for God !
To this clear knowledge hath my path been trod
In deepest hell—in the profoundest sky !
This knowledge, the true immortality,
I came unto through pain and tears,
Tigerish hopes, and serpent loves, and dragon fears,
Most bitter kisses, salted springs and dry ;
In those deep caverns and slow-moving years,
When dwelt I, in the Mount of Venus, even I !

[*The spell is broken, and uproar ensues.*

LANDGRAVE.

The fiend ! The atheist ! Devil that you are !

VOICES.

Kill him, ay, kill him !

TANNHÄUSER.

Crucify him, say !

[TANNHÄUSER *extends his arms as on a cross.*

LANDGRAVE.

Blaspheme not ! Dare not to insult the sign
Of our Redemption ! Gentlemen and peers,
What say you ? shall he live to boast himself,
The abandoned, perjured, the apostate soul,
Daring to come to our pure court to brag
Of his incredible vileness ? To link up
The saintly purity of this my child
With his seducer's heart of hell ! My voice !
Death ! Your cry echoes me ?

VOICES.

Death ! Death !

TANNHÄUSER.

Leap out,
Sword of my fathers ! You have heard my harp !
Its music stings your vile hypocrisy
Into mere hatred. Truth is terrible !
You, cousin, taken in adultery !
You, Wolfram, lover of the kitchen maids !
You, Jerome—yes, I know your secret deeds !

You, ladies! Are your faces painted thus
Not to hide wrinkles of debauchery?
To catch new lovers?

LANDGRAVE.

Stop the lying mouth!
Friends, your sword-service!

TANNHÄUSER.

Will they answer you?
My arm is weary as your souls are not
Of beastliness: I have drawn my father's sword,
Hard as your virtue is the easy sort,
Heavy to handle as your loves are light,
Smooth as your lies, and sharper than your hates!
I know you! Cowards to the very bone!
[*Driving them out.*
Who fights me, of this sworded company?
Cannot my words have sting in them enough,
Now, to make one of you turn suddenly
And stab me from behind? Out, out with you!
Fling-to the doors! A murrain on the curs!
So, I am master!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

Well and merrily done!
But look you to the lady; she has swooned.

TANNHÄUSER.

Who are you, sir, stood smiling, nonchalant,
At all the turmoil, ridiculing it?
You knew the secret symbol of my life,
You forced me to that miserable song.

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

My name, sir, at your service, is Geſchift.

TANNHÄUSER.

Sent? And the purpose of your coming here?
You must wield power to keep them silent so,
When the first word had culminated else
In twice the tempest echoed to the last!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

It was most necessary for yourself
To formulate your thought in word. Enough—
The thought transmuted in the very act.

TANNHÄUSER.

You know? You know! The new illusion gone!
Bitter, O bitter will it be to say!

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

Due grace and courage will be found for you.
Farewell, Tannhäuser!

TANNHÄUSER.

Shall we meet again?

THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.

There is one glamour you must wreathe in gloom
Before you come to the dark hill of dreams.

TANNHÄUSER.

My soul is sick of riddling. Fare you well!
[*Exit* THE UNKNOWN MINSTREL.
Wake, wake, poor child, poor child, Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH.

What says my dear one? I have been with God.

TANNHÄUSER (*aside*).

How shall I speak? A violent good-bye,
As one distraught, ashamed? I had unbared
My bosom to these folk, but the sole pride,
My father's gift—to be a gentleman—
Forbade the dying, welcome otherwise,
At any despicable hands as theirs.
They, they might boast—*we hundred swords or so*
Set on the mighty Tannhäuser, and slew him.
We, scarce an hundred! Yes, believe it, sirs

We are not so feeble !—But death anyhow
Cuts and not loosens the entangled life.
Be mine the harder and the better way,
The single chance : not hope ; appeal no more ;
Hardly the arrowy wisdom of despair ;
Hardly the cowardice or courage yet
To drift, nor cursing nor invoking God.

ELIZABETH.

I heard, I pure, I virginal, your song ;
The shameful story of your intercourse
With—fiend or woman ? And your burning will,
Even in that horror, to the Highest ; at last
Your choice of me—the middle course of them,
Pure human love ? And, if your song be true,
As I, who heard the voice, the earnestness,
Saw the deep eyes, and truth aflame in them,
Know—then the choice be Mary's and not mine !
I love you better, were that possible ;
Will make you a true wife, and lead your hand,
Or be led by you, in the pleasant path.
For me, I enter not—Blesséd be God !—
In those dark problems that disturb your soul.
Mine is the simple nature. Look at me !

TANNHÄUSER.

O Lady pure, miracle of true love,
I have a bitter word and harsh to say.
This is my curse—no sooner do I speak,
Or formulate my mind in iron words,
Than my mind grows, o'erleaps the limit set,
And I perceive the truth that lies beyond—
One further step into a new-fallen night.
Hear then—I hate to hurt your perfect soul ;
I hate myself because I love you still
In that strange intermediate consciousness,
The reason and the mind ! This middle way
Ancients called safe[1]—that damns it instantly !
Without some danger nothing great is done !
Let me be God ! Or, failing of that task,
Were it but by an unit, let me fall !
And, falling, be it from so great a height
That I may reach some uttermost Abyss,
Inhabit it and reign, most evil one
Of all the Horrors there—and in that path
Seem, even deluded, to approach once more
Infinity. For all the limitless
Hath no distinction—evil is no more,
And good no more.

ELIZABETH.

But God is absolute Good !

TANNHÄUSER.

No ! He is Not ! That negative alone
Shadows His shadow to our mortal mind.

ELIZABETH.

That is too deep ; I cannot fathom you.

TANNHÄUSER.

Define, give utterance to this "Good." You see
God slips you, He the Undefinable !
Not good ! Not wise ! Not anything at all
That heart can grasp, or reason frame, or soul
Shadow the sense of !

ELIZABETH.

He is far too great !
I see !

TANNHÄUSER.

Not great ! The consciousness of man
Their many generations moulded so
To fix in definite ideas, and clothe
Their Maker in the rags. If skies are vast,
So gems are tiny : who shall choose between ?
Who reads the riddle of the Universe ?
All words ! Thus, from his rock-wrought peeking-point
Out speers the hermit : "See, the sun is dead !"
It shines elsewhere. You from your tiny perch,
The corner of the corner of the earth,

[1] "In medio tutissimus ibis."—OVID.

Itself a speck in solar life; the sun,
For all I know, a speck among the stars,
Themselves one corporate molecule of space!—
You from your perch judge, label, limit Him!
Not that your corner is not equally
The centre and the whole. Fool's talk it is!
Consider the futility of mind!
Realise utterly how mean, how dull,
How fruitless is Philosophy!

ELIZABETH.

Indeed
My brain is baffled. But I see your point.
Talking of God, even imagining,
Insane! But for aspiring—that I will!

TANNHÄUSER.

That is true marriage, in my estimate.
Aspire together to one Deity?
Yes! But to love thee otherwise than that?

ELIZABETH.

This one thing clearly do I understand:
We shall not marry. It is well, my lord.

TANNHÄUSER.

Miserable, miserable me! I bring
Hate and disruption and unhappiness
Unto all purity I chance to touch.
I have no hope but I am fallen now;
So journey, in this purpose of despair,
To Lilith and the Venusberg.

ELIZABETH.

Oh no!
Grant me one boon—the one that I shall ask
Ever in this world! Promise me!

TANNHÄUSER.

Alas!
One promise gave I once to woman—that
Drove me to this illusion of your love,
And broke your heart.

ELIZABETH.

Oh no, I shall not die.
Have I not Mary and the angels yet?

TANNHÄUSER.

You are so pure, so pitiful—your word
Cannot bring evil. Yes, I promise you!

ELIZABETH.

Go then the bitter pilgrimage to Rome,
Gain absolution for this piteous past
From him that owns the twin all-opening keys
That bar your infinite on either side.
Then! look with freshness, hope, and fortitude
Still to the summit—the ideal God.

TANNHÄUSER.

I have no hope nor trust in man at all;
But I will go. Fare well, Elizabeth!
[*Going, returns and kneels before her.*
Dare you once kiss these gray and withered brows?
As 'twere some flower that fell amid my hair.
The lotus of eternal hope and life.

ELIZABETH.

Dare I? I kiss you once upon the brow,
Praying that God will make the purpose clear,
And on the eyes—that He may lend them light.
[TANNHÄUSER *rises, and silently departs.*
Oh God! Oh God! That I have loved him so!
Be merciful! Be merciful! to him,
The great high soul, bound in the lofty sin;
To me, the little soul, the little sin!

ACT V.

"One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky.
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I."

Hertha.

A desolate and melancholy wood. Nightfall.

HEINRICH.

WELL, I am lost! The whistle brings no hound,
The horn no hunter! North and South are mixed

In this low twilight and the hanging boughs.
I have slept worse than this. Poor Tannhäuser!
I met him walking, as in dream, across
The courtyard, while behind him skulked that crew
That lurked, and itched to kill him, him unarmed,
Not daring! But he reached his hand to me!
"Good luck, old friend!" and, smiling, he was gone.
Gone to the Pope—great soul to mountebank!
It was her wish, they whisper. Well-a-day!
He's gone, and not a friend have I again.
This bank is soft with delicate white moss,
No pillow better in broad Germany.
Were Madeline but here! What rustle stirs
These leaves? A strong man sobbing! The earth quakes
Responsive. Hillo-ho! Who comes by there?

[TANNHÄUSER *enters. He appears old and worn; but from his whole body radiates a dazzling light, and his face is that of the Christ crucified.*

Save us, Saints, save us! I have looked on God!

TANNHÄUSER.

Heinrich! my friend, my old true-hearted friend!
Fear not! I am not ghost, but living man!
Ah me, ah me, the sorrow of the world!

HEINRICH.

Thou, Tannhäuser! what miracle is this?
Your body glows—with what unearthly light?

TANNHÄUSER.

I did not know. Ah! sorrow of this earth!
What tears are falling from the Pleiades!
What sobs tear out Orion's jewelled heart!
Ah me! As these, as these!

HEINRICH.

Speak, speak to me!
Else, I am feared. Why run these tears to earth?
Why shakes your bosom? Why does glory flame
A crown, a cincture? What befell you there?

TANNHÄUSER.

I came to Rome across the winter snows
Barefoot, and through the lovely watered land
Rich in the sunshine—even unto Rome.
There knelt I with the other sinful folk
At the great chair of Peter. Sobbed they out
From full repentant hearts their menial sins,
And got them peace. But I told brutally
(Cynical phrase, contempt of self and him)
My sojourn in the Venusberg; then he
Rose in his wrath, and shook the barren staff
Over my head, and cried—I heard his voice
Most like the dweller of the hurricane
Calm, small, and still, directing desolation;
Death to the world athwart its path.—So he
Cried out upon me, "Till this barren staff
Take life, and bud, and blossom, and bear fruit,
And shed sweet scent—so long God casteth thee
Out from His glory!" Stricken, smitten, slain—
When—one unknown, a pilgrim with the rest,
Darting long rugged fingers and deep eyes,
Reached to the sceptre with his word and will—
Buds, roses, blossoms! Lilies of the Light!
Bloom, bloom, the fragrance shed upon the air!
Out flames the miracle of life and love!
Out, out the lights! Flame, flame, the rushing storm!
Darkness and death, and glory in my soul!
Swept, swept away are pope and cardinal,
Palace and city! There I lay beneath
The golden roof of the eternal stars,
Borne up on some irremeable sea

That glowed with most internal brilliance ;
Borne up, borne up by hands invisible
Into a firmament of secret light
Manifest, open, permeating me !
Then, then, I cried upon the mystic Word !
(That once begot in me the Venusberg)
And lo ! that light was darkness—in the face
Of That which gleamed above. And verily
My life was borne on the dark stream of death
Down whirling aeons, linked abysses, columns
Built of essential time. And lo ! the light
Shed from Her shoulders whom I dimly saw ;
Crowned with twelve stars and horned as the moon ;
Clothed with a sun to which the sun of earth
Were tinsel ; and the moon was at Her feet [1]—
A moon whose brilliance breaks the sword of song
Into a million fragments ; so transcends
Music, that starlight-sandalled majesty !
Then—shall I contemplate the face of Her ?
O Nature ! Self-begotten ! Spouse of God,
The Glory of thy Countenance unveiled !
Thy face, O mother ! Splendour of the Gods !
Behold ! amid the glory of her hair
And light shed over from the crown thereof,
Wonderful eyes less passionate than Peace
That wept ! That wept ! O mystery of Love !
Clasping my hands upon the scarlet rose
That flamed upon my bosom, the keen thorns
Pierced me and slew ! My spirit was withdrawn
Into Her godhead, and my soul made One
With the Great Sorrow of the Universe,
The Love of Isis ! Then I fell away
Into some old mysterious abyss
Rolling between the heights of starry space ;
Flaming above, beyond the Tomb of Time,
Blending the darkness into the profound
Chasms of matter—so I fell away
Through many strange eternities of Space,

[1] Revelations xii. 1.

Limitless fields of Time. I knew in me
That I must fall into the ground and die ;
Dwell in the deep a-many years, at last
To rise again—Osiris, slain and risen !
Light of the Cross, I see Thee in the sky,
My future ! I must perish from the earth,
Abide in desolate halls, until the hour
When a new Christ must needs be crucified.—
So weep I ever with Our Lady's tears,
Weep for the pain, the travail, the old curse ;
Weep, weep, and die. So dawns at last the Grail,
The Glory of the Crucified ! Dear friend,
Be happy, for my heart goes out to you,
And most to that poor pale Elizabeth—
Were it not only that the selflessness
That fills me now, forbids the personal,
Casts out the individual, and weeps on
For the united sorrow of all things.
For if I die, it is not Tannhäuser,
Rather a spark of the supreme white light
That dwelt and flickered in him in old time ;
That Light, I say, that hides its flame awhile
To shine more fully—to redeem the world !
I say, then, "I" ; and yet it is not "I"
Distinct, but "I" incorporate in All.
I am the Resurrection and the Life !
The Work is finished, and the Night rolled back !
I am the Rising Sun of Life and Light,
The Glory of the Shining of the Dawn !
I am Osiris ! I the Lord of Life
Triumphant over death—
O Sorrow, Sorrow, Sorrow of the World !

HEINRICH.

This was my friend. Deep night descends, perfused
With unsubstantial glory from beyond.
The stars are buried in the mist of light.
Beyond the hill the world is, and laments
Existence—the wide firmament of woe !

And he—his heart was great enough for all,
The fall of sparrows as the crash of stars.
The tears of lonely forests, and the pain
Of the least atom—all were in his heart.
Was that indeed the truth? that he should come
At last a Christ upon the waiting world,
Redeem it to more purpose than the last!
So fills his sorrow, and Her sympathy,
My common soul, that I am fain to fall
Upon my face, and cry aloud to God:
"O Thou, Sole Wise, Sole Pure, Sole Merciful,
Who hast thus shown Thy mystery to man:
Grant that his coming may be very soon!"
See, the sobs shake me like a little child.
The moon is crescent, waxing in the West.
Take the last kiss, dear.
What is the strange song?

[*The great Goddess ariseth, weeping for the slain Osiris* TANNHÄUSER, *the perfected through suffering.*

ISIS.

Isis am I, and from my life are fed
All stars and suns, all moons that wax and wane,
Create and uncreate, living and dead,
The Mystery of Pain.
I am the Mother, I the silent Sea,
The Earth, its travail, its fertility.
Life, death, love, hatred, light, darkness, return to me—
To Me!

EPILOGUE

A DEATH IN THESSALY.[1]

Μόνος Θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾷ.
—ÆSCH., *Fr. Niobe.*

FAREWELL! O Light of day, O torch Althæan!
The strange fruits lure me of Persephone;
I raise the last, the memorable pæan,
Storm-throated, mouthed as the cave-rolling sea;
I lift the cup: deep draughts of blue Lethean!
My wine to me.

O lamentable season of Apollo,
When swoops his glory to the golden wave!
As all his children, so their lord shall follow!
The flower he slew, the maiden he would save,
As Itylus,[2] light woven, tuned! Oh swallow,
Bewail their grave!

The gracious breast of Artemis may light me
To men—yet loved I ever Artemis?
Surely the vine-song and the dance delight me,
The sea-blue bowers where Aphrodite is.
Terrible gods and destinies excite me,
The strange sad kiss.

Thus may no moon tell Earth my story after,
No virgin sing my fame as virginal.

Yet some night-leaves the southern stream may waft her,
Some amorous nymph across the wood may call
A loud mad chant; love, tears, harsh sombre laughter.
No more at all.

Oh, mother, Oh, Demeter, in my burthen
Let me assume thy sorrow singular;
A branching temple and an altar earthen,
A fire of herbs, a clayen water-jar;
An olive grove to bind the sacred girth in
Lone woods afar.

Let life burn gently thence, as when the ember
In one faint incense-puff to shrineward dies.
No care, no pain, no craving to remember,
One leap toward the knees and destinies,
Where shine Her lips like flames, Her breasts like amber,
Like moons Her eyes.

For my heart turns—ah still!—in Sorrow's traces,
Where sad chill footprints pash the sodden leaves;
Where ranged around me are the cold, gray faces;
Fallen on the stubble are the rotten sheaves;
The vicious ghosts abound; and Chronos' paces
No soul deceives.

[1] The northern portion of Greece. It was renowned for wizard rites.

[2] See Swinburne, Poems and Ballads, 1st Series.

Yet my heart looks to Madness as its mother,
Remembering Who once caught me by the well;
And the strange loves of that misshapen Other,
The feast of blood, the cold enchanted dell,
Where fire was filtered up through earth to smother
Sick scents of hell.

And that wild night when vine-leaves wooed and clustered
Round my wild limbs, and like a woman I went
Over the mountains—how the Northwind blustered!—
And slew with them the beast, and was content.
The madness:—Oh! the dreadful light that lustred
The main event.

Ay! the wild whirlings in the woodland reaches;
The ghastly smile upon the Stone God's[1] lip;
The rigid tremors, anguish that beseeches
From eye to eye fresh fervours of the whip;
The mounded moss below the swaying beeches—
Kiss me and clip!

Why! the old madness grows!—how feebly lying
Smooth by this bay where waves are tender flowers.
Winds, soft as the old kisses were, are sighing.
Clouds drift across the sun for silken bowers.
The moon is up—an hastening nymph! I, dying,
Await the Hours.

[1] Priapus, like Jehovah, is the phallic god of generation. It is to be remarked that Crowley never uses Jehovah in this sense, but in the later spiritualised sense of the Qabalists.

And thou, Persephone, I know thy story,
That I must taste the terror of thy wrong:
How Hades ride across the promontory,
Snatch my pale body in mid over-song;
Drag me from sight of my Apollo's glory
With horses strong.

Nay! as Apollo half the day is shrouded,
As Artemis twice seven nights is dark;
Surely he shines in other lands unclouded,
Surely her shaft shall find another mark.
So dawns the day on Acheron ghost-crowded,
And on my bark.

I know not how yon world may prove, nor whither
Hermes conduct me to what farther end.
Yet if these bays abide, this heart not wither,
It cannot be I shall not find a friend.
Some pale immortal lover draw me thither!
To kiss me bend!

Moreover, as Apollo re-arisen
Flames, with a roaring of the morning sea,
Up from the stricken gray, the iron-barred prison,
Flashes his face again upon the lea,
And diamond dews the woodland ones bedizen;
So—so for me!

Some forty years this earth knew song and passion
Pour from my lips, saw gladness in mine eyes!
Some forty shall I sing some other fashion,
Dance in strange measures, change the key of sighs.
Then rise in Thessaly again, Thalassian!
Only, more wise.

APPENDIX

QABALISTIC DOGMA

[This short explanatory article has been specially contributed by an Adept, revered alike for his intellectual gifts and his spiritual attainments by the few to whom he permits himself to be known. Thanks to him would be impossible, but the Editor wishes to express his gratitude to the student who kindly obtained for him the introduction. No liberties have been taken with the MS., even to the retention of the capitals, but the spelling of some Eastern names has been assimilated to the universal alphabet—*e.g.* Qabalah for Kabbala—with the permission of the author.]

THE Evolution of Things is thus described by the Qabalists.

First is Nothing, or the Absence of Things, אין, which does not and cannot mean Negatively Existing (if such an Idea can be said to mean anything), as S. Liddell Mâcgregor Mathers, who misread the Text and stultified the Commentary by he Light of his own Ignorance of Hebrew and Philosophy, pretends in his Translation of v. Rosenroth.

Second is Without Limit אין סוף, *i.e.*, Infinite Space.

This is the primal Dualism of Infinity; the infinitely small and the infinitely great. The Clash of these produces a finite positive Idea which happens (see בראשית, *infra*, vol. ii., for a more careful study, though I must not be understood to indorse every Word in our Poet-Philosopher's Thesis) to be Light, אור. This word אור is most important. It symbolises the Universe immediately after Chaos, the Confusion or Clash of the infinite Opposites. א is the Egg of Matter; ו is ♉, the Bull, or Energy-Motion; and ר is the Sun, or organised and moving System of Orbs. The three Letters of אור thus repeat the three Ideas. The Nature of אור is thus analysed, under the figure of the ten Numbers and the 22 Letters which together compose what the Rosicrucians have diagrammatised under the name of Minutum Mundum. (See Table of Correspondences.) It will be noticed that every Number and Letter has its "Correspondence" in Ideas of every Sort; so that any given Object can be analysed in Terms of the 32. If I see a blue Star, I should regard it as a Manifestation of Chesed, Water, the Moon, Salt the Alchemical Principle, Sagittarius or What not, in respect of its Blueness—one would have to decide which from other Data—and refer it to the XVIIth Key of the Taro in Respect of its Starriness.

The Use of these Attributions is lengthy and various: I cannot dwell upon it: but I will give one Example.

If I wish to visit the Sphere of Geburah, I use the Colours and Forces appropriate: I go there: if the Objects which then appear to my spiritual Vision are harmonious therewith, it is one Test of their Truth.

So also, to construct a Talisman, or to invoke a Spirit.

The methods of discovering Dogma from sacred Words are also numerous and important: I may mention:—

(*a*) The Doctrine of Sympathies: drawn from the total Numeration of a Word,

when identical with, or a Multiple or Submultiple of, or a Metathesis of, that of another Word.

(*b*) The Method of finding the Least Number of a Word, by adding (and re-adding) the Digits of its total Number, and taking the corresponding Key of the Taro as a Key to the Meaning of the Word.

(*c*) The Method of Analogies drawn from the Shape of the Letters.

(*d*) The Method of Deductions drawn from the Meanings and Correspondences of the Letters.

(*e*) The Method of Acrostics drawn from the Letters. This Mode is only valid for Adepts of the highest Grades, and then under quite exceptional and rare Conditions.

(*f*) The Method of Transpositions and Transmutations of the Letters, which suggest Analogies, even when they fail to explain in direct Fashion.

All these and their Varieties and Combinations, with some other more abstruse or less important Methods, may be used to unlock the Secret of a Word.

Of course with Powers so wide it is easy for the Partisan to find his favourite Meaning in any Word. Even the formal Proof $0=1=2=3=4=5=\ldots\ldots\ldots=n$ is possible.

But the Adept who worked out this Theorem, with the very Intent to discredit the Qabalistic Mode of Research, was suddenly dumbfounded by the Fact that he had actually stumbled upon the Qabalistic Proof of Pantheism or Monism.

What really happens is that the Adept sits down and performs many useless Tricks with the Figures, without Result.

Suddenly the Lux dawns, and the Problem is solved.

The Rationalist explains this by Inspiration, the superstitious Man by Mathematics.

I give an Example of the Way in which one works. Let us take IAO, one of the "Barbarous Names of Evocation," of which those who have wished to conceal their own Glory by adopting the Authority of Zarathustra have said that in the holy Ceremonies it has an ineffable Power.

But what Kind of Power? By the Qabalah we can find out the Force of the Name IAO.

We can spell it in Hebrew יאו or יאע. The Qabalah will even tell us which is the true Way. Let us however suppose that it is spelt יאו. This adds up to 17.

But first of all it strikes us that I, A, and O are the three Letters associated with the three Letters ה in the great Name of Six Letters, אהיהוה, which combines אהיה and יהוה, Macroprosopus and Microprosopus. Now these feminine Letters ה conceal the "Three Mothers" of the Alphabet, א, מ, and ש. Replace these, and we get אשימוא, which adds up to 358, the Number alike of נחש, the Serpent of Genesis, and the Messiah. We thus look for redeeming Power in IAO, and for the Masculine Aspect of that Power.

Now we will see how that Power works. We have a curious Dictionary, which was made by a very learned Man, in which the Numbers from 1 to 10,000 fill the left hand Column, in Order, and opposite them are written all the sacred or important Words which add up to each Number.

We take this Book, and look at 17. We find that 17 is the number of Squares in the Swastika, which is the Whirling Disc or Thunderbolt. Also there

is חוג, a Circle or Orbit; זוד, to seethe or boil; and some other Words, which we will neglect in this Example, though we should not dare to do so if we were really trying to find out a Thing we none of us knew. To help our Deduction about Redemption, too, we find חדה, to brighten or make glad.

We also work in another Way. I is the Straight Line or Central Pillar of the Temple of Life; also it stands for Unity, and for the Generative Force. A is the Pentagram, which means the Will of Man working Redemption. O is the Circle from which everything came, also Nothingness, and the Female, who absorbs the Male. The Progress of the Name shows then the Way from Life to Nirvana by means of the Will: and is a Hieroglyph of the Great Work.

Look at all our Meanings! Every one shows that the Name, if it has any Power at all, and that we must try, has the Power to redeem us from the Love of Life which is the Cause of Life, by its masculine Whirlings, and to gladden us and to bring us to the Bosom of the Great Mother, Death.

Before what is known as the Equinox of the Gods, a little while ago, there was an initiated Formula which expressed these Ideas to the Wise. As these Formulas are done with, it is of no Consequence if I reveal them. Truth is not eternal, any more than God; and it would be but a poor God that could not and did not alter his Ways at his Pleasure.

This Formula was used to open the Vault of the Mystic Mountain of Abiegnus, within which lay (so the Ceremony of Initiation supposed) the Body of our Father Christian Rosen Creutz, to be discovered by the Brethren with the Postulant as said in the Book called Fama Fraternitatis.

There are three Officers, and they repeat the Analysis of the Word as follows:—

Chief. Let us analyse the Key Word—I.
2nd. N.
3rd. R.
All. I.
Chief. Yod. י
2nd. Nun. נ
3rd. Resh. ר
All. Yod. י
Chief. Virgo (♍) Isis, Mighty Mother.
2nd. Scorpio (♏) Apophis, Destroyer.
3rd. Sol (☉) Osiris, slain and risen.
All. Isis, Apophis, Osiris, IAO.

All spread Arms as if on a Cross, and say:—

The Sign of Osiris slain!

Chief bows his Head to the Left, raises his Right Arm, and lowers his Left, keeping the Elbow at right Angles, thus forming the Letter L (also the Swastika).

The Sign of the Mourning of Isis.

2nd. With erect Head, raises his Arms to form a V (but really to form the triple Tongue of Flame, the Spirit), and says:—

The Sign of Apophis and Typhon.

3rd. Bows his Head and crosses his Arms on his Breast (to form the Pentagram).

The Sign of Osiris risen.

All give the Sign of the Cross, and say:—

L.V.X.

Then the Sign of Osiris risen, and say:—

Lux, the Light of the Cross.

This Formula, on which one may meditate for Years without exhausting its wonderful Harmonies, gives an excellent Idea of the Way in which Qabalistic Analysis is conducted.

First, the Letters have been written in Hebrew Characters.

Then the Attributions of them to the Zodiac and to Planets are substituted, and the Names of Egyptian Gods belonging to these are invoked.

The Christian Idea of I.N.R.I. is confirmed by these, while their Initials form the sacred Word of the Gnostics. That is, IAO. From the Character of the Deities and their Functions are deduced their Signs, and these are found to signal (as it were) the Word Lux (אור), which itself is contained in the Cross.

A careful Study of these Ideas, and of the Table of Correspondences, which one of our English Brethren is making, will enable him to discover a very great Deal of Matter for Thought in these Poems which an untutored Person would pass by.

To return to the general Dogma of the Qabalists.

The Figure of Minutum Mundum will show how they suppose one Quality to proceed from the last, first in the pure God-World Atziluth, then in the Angel-World Briah, and so on down to the Demon-Worlds, which are however not thus organised. They are rather Material that was shed off in the Course of Evolution, like the Sloughs of a Serpent, from which comes their Name of Shells, or Husks.

Apart from silly Questions as to whether the Order of the Emanations is confirmed by Palæontology, a Question it is quite incompetent to discuss, there is no Doubt the Sephiroth are types of Evolution as opposed to Catastrophe and Creation.

The great Charge against this Philosophy is founded on its alleged Affinities with Scholastic Realism. But the Charge is not very true. No Doubt but they did suppose vast Storehouses of "Things of one Kind" from which, pure or mingled, all other Things did proceed.

Since ג, a Camel, refers to the Moon, they did say that a Camel and the Moon were sympathetic, and came, that Part of them, from a common Principle: and that a Camel being yellow brown, it partook of the Earth Nature, to which that Colour is given.

Thence they said that by taking all the Natures involved, and by blending them in the just Proportions, one might have a Camel.

But this is no more than is said by the Upholders of the Atomic Theory.

They have their Storehouses of Carbon, Oxygen, and such (not in one Place, but no more is Geburah in one Place), and what is Organic Chemistry but the Production of useful Compounds whose Nature is deduced absolutely from theoretical Considerations long before it is ever produced in the Laboratory?

The difference, you will say, is that the Qabalists maintain a Mind of each Kind behind each Class of Things of one Kind; but so did Berkeley, and his Argument in that Respect is, as the great Huxley showed, irrefragable. For by the Universe I mean the Sensible; any other is Not to be Known; and the Sensible is dependent upon Mind. Nay, though the Sensible is said to be an Argument of an Universe Insensible, the latter becomes sensible to Mind as soon as the Argument is accepted, and disappears with its Rejection.

Nor is the Qabalah dependent upon its Realism, and its Application to the Works magical—but I am defending a Philosophy which I was asked to describe, and this is not lawful.

A great Deal may be learned from the Translation of the Zohar by S. Liddell Macgregor Mathers, and his Introduction thereto, though for those who have Latin and some acquaintance with Hebrew it is better to study the Kabbala Denudata of Knorr von Rosenroth, in Despite of the heavy Price; for the Translator has distorted the Text and its Comment to suit his belief in a supreme Personal God, and in that degraded Form of the Doctrine of Feminism which is so popular with the Emasculate.

The Sephiroth are grouped in various Ways. There is a Superior Triad or Trinity; a Hexad; and Malkuth: the Crown, the Father, and the Mother; the Son or King; and the Bride.

Also, a Division into seven Palaces, seven Planes, three Pillars or Columns: and the like.

The Flashing Sword follows the Course of the Numbers and the Serpent Nechushtan or of Wisdom crawls up the Paths which join them upon the Tree of Life, namely the Letters.

It is important to explain the Position of Daath or Knowledge upon the Tree. It is called the Child of Chokmah and Binah, but it hath no Place. But it is really the Apex of a Pyramid of which the three first Numbers form the Base.

Now the Tree, or Minutum Mundum, is a Figure in a Plane of a solid Universe. Daath, being above the Plane, is therefore a Figure of a Force in four Dimensions, and thus it is the Object of the Magnum Opus. The three Paths which connect it with the First Trinity are the three lost Letters or Fathers of the Hebrew Alphabet.

In Daath is said to be the Head of the great Serpent Nechesh or Leviathan, called Evil to conceal its Holiness. (נחש=358=משיח, the Messiah or Redeemer, and לויתך=496=מלכות, the Bride.) It is identical with the Kundalini of the Hindu Philosophy, the Kwan-se-on of the Mongolian Peoples, and means the magical Force in Man, which is the sexual Force applied to the Brain, Heart, and other Organs, and redeemeth him.

The gradual Disclosure of these magical Secrets to the Poet may be traced in these Volumes, which it has been my Privilege to be asked to explain. It has been impossible to do more than place in the Hands of any intelligent Person the Keys which will permit him to unlock the many Beautiful Chambers of Holiness in these Palaces and Gardens of Beauty and Pleasure.

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