

ALICE

ALICE : AN ADULTERY

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ADULTERY

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INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR.

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It has often been pointed out how strange are the prophecies made from time to time by writers of what purports to be merely fiction.

Of all the remarkable tales with which Mr. R. Kipling has delighted the world, none is more striking than that of McIntosh Jellaludin and his mysterious manuscript. And now, only a few years after reading that incredible tale, I myself, at Yokohama, come across a series of circumstances wonderfully analogous. But I will truthfully set down this history just as it all happened.

I went one memorable Wednesday night to No. 29.* For my advent in this most reputable

* Disinclination to marry is congenital in the elect : the Pauline alternative is discountenanced by my doctor.

quarter of the city, which is, after all, Yama, and equally handy for the consul, the chaplain, and the doctor, readers of Rossetti will expect no excuse; for their sakes I may frankly admit that I was actuated by other motives than interest and solicitude for my companion, a youth still blindly groping for Romance, beneath the skirts of tawdry and painted Vice. Perhaps I may have hoped to save him from what men call the graver and angels the lesser consequences of his folly. This for the others.

As to the character of the mansion at which we arrived, after a journey no less dubious than winding, I will say that, despite its outward seeming, it was, in reality, a most respectable place; the main occupation of its inhabitants seemed to be the sale of as much "champagne" as possible; in which inspiring preface my friend was soon deeply immersed. . . .

Golden-haired, a profound linguist, swearing in five Western and three Oriental languages, and comparable rather to the accomplished courtesans

of old-time Athens than to the Imperial Peripatetics of the *Daily Telegraph* and Mr. Raven-Hill, her looks of fire turned my friend's silky and insipid moustache into a veritable Burning Bush. But puppy endearments are of little interest to one who has just done his duty by No. 9 in distant Yoshiwara; so turned to the conversation of our dirty old Irish hostess, who, being drunk, grew more so, and exceedingly entertaining.

Of the central forces which sway mankind, her knowledge was more comprehensive than conventional. For thirty years she had earned her bread in the capacity of a Japanese Mrs. Warren; but having played with fire in many lands, the knowledge she had of her own subject, based on indefatigable personal research, was as accurate in detail as it was cosmopolitan in character. Yet she had not lost her ideals; she was a devout Catholic, and her opinion of the human understanding, despite her virginal innocence of Greek, was identical with that of Mr. Locke.

On occasions I am as sensitive to inexplicable

interruption as Mr. Shandy, and from behind the hideous yellow partition came sounds as of the constant babbling of a human voice. Repeated glances in this direction drew from my entertainer the information that it was "only her husband," indicating the yellow-haired girl with the stem of her short clay pipe. She added that he was dying.

Curiosity, Compassion's Siamese twin, prompted a desire to see the sufferer.

The old lady rose, not without difficulty, lifted the curtain, and let it fall behind me as I entered the gloom which lay beyond. On a bed, in that half-fathomed twilight, big with the scent of joss-sticks smouldering in a saucer before a little bronze Buddha-rupa, lay a man, still young, the traces of rare beauty in his face, though worn with suffering and horrid with a week's growth of beard.

He was murmuring over to himself some words which I could not catch, but my entrance, though he did not notice me, seemed to rouse him a little.

I distinctly heard—

“These are the spells by which to re-assume
And empire o’er the disentangled doom ”

He paused, sighing, then continued—

“To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy power which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent :
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful, and free :
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.”

The last phrase pealed trumpet-wise: he sank back into thought. “Yes,” he said slowly, “neither to change, nor falter, nor repent.” I moved forward, and he saw me.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I am travelling in the East,” I said. “I love Man also; I have come to see you. Who are you?”

He laughed pleasantly. “I am the child of many prayers.”

There was a pause.

I stood still, thinking.

Here was surely the very strangest outcast of

Society. What uncouth bypaths of human experience, across what mapless tracks beyond the social pale, must have led hither—hither to death in this Anglo-Saxon-blasted corner of Japan, here, at the very outpost of the East. He spoke my thought.

“Here I lie,” he said, “east of all things. All my life I have been travelling eastward, and now there is now no further east to go.”

“There is America,” I said. I had to say something.

“Where the disappearance of man has followed that of manners: the exit of God has not wished to lag behind that of grammar. I have no use for American men, and only one use for American women.”

“Of a truth,” I said, “the continent is accursed—a very limbo.”

“It is the counterfoil of evolution,” said the man wearily. There was silence.

“What can I do for you?” I asked. “Are you indeed ill?”

"Four days more," he answered, thrilling with excitement, "and all my dreams will come true—until I wake. But you can serve me, if indeed—Did you hear me spouting poetry?"

I nodded, and lit my pipe. He watched me narrowly while the match illuminated my face.

"What poetry?"

I told him Shelley.

"Do you read Ibsen?" he queried, keening visibly. After a moment's pause: "He is the Sophocles of manners," I said, rewarded royally for months of weary waiting. My strange companion sat up transfigured. "The Hour," he murmured, "and the Man! . . . What of Tennyson?"

"Which Tennyson?" I asked.

The answer seemed to please him.

"In Memoriam?" he replied.

"He is a neurasthenic counter-jumper."

"And of the Idylls?"

"Sir Thomas did no wrong; can impotence excuse his posthumous emasculation?"

He sank back contented. "I have prayed to my god for many days," he said, "and by one of the least of my life's miracles you are here; worthy to receive my trust. For when I knew that I was to die, I destroyed all the papers which held the story of my life—all save one. That I saved; the only noble passage, perhaps—among the many notable. Men will say that it is stained; you, I think, should be wiser. It is the story of how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. They were not drowned, you know (he seemed to lapse into a day dream), and they came out on the Land of Promise side. But they had to descend therein."

"They all died in the wilderness," I said, feeling as if I understood this mystical talk, which, indeed, I did not. But I felt inspired.

"Ay me, they died—as I am dying now."

He turned to the wall and sought a bundle of old writing on a shelf. "Take this," he said. "Edit it as if it were your own: let the world know how wonderful it was." I took the manuscript from the frail, white hand.

He seemed to forget me altogether.

“Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhasa,” he murmured, turning to his little black Buddha-rupa.

There was a calm like unto—might I say, an afterwards?

“There is an end of joy and sorrow,
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,”

he began drowsily.

A shrill voice rose in a great curse. The hoarse anger of drunken harlotry snarled back. “Not a drop more,” shouted my friend, adding many things*. It was time for my return.

“I will let them know,” I whispered. “Good-bye.”

“‘There is not one thing with another;
But Evil saith to Good: ‘My brother—’”

he went on unheeding.

I left him to his peace.

My re-appearance restored harmony. The

* The substance of his remarks, and subsequent adventures are detailed in my “Three Screams at Midnight.”—ED.

fulvous and fulgurous lady grew comparatively tranquil; the pair withdrew. The old woman lay sprawled along the divan sunk in a drunken torpor.

I unrolled the manuscript and read.

Brutal truth-telling humour, at times perhaps too Rabelaisian; lyrics, some of enchanting beauty, others painfully imitative; sonnets of exceedingly unequal power, a perfectly heartless introduction (some fools would call it pathetic), and, as a synthesis of the whole, an impression of profound sadness and, perhaps, still deeper joy, were my reward. Together with a feeling that the writer must have been a philosopher of the widest and deepest learning and penetration, and a regret that he showed no more of it in his poetry. First and last, I stood amazed, stupefied: so stand I still.

Dramatic propriety forbade me seeing him again; he was alone when he started.

Let us not too bitterly lament! He would hate him who would "upon the rack of this tough world stretch him out longer."

To the best of my poor ability I have executed his wishes, omitting, however, his name and all references sufficiently precise to give pain to any person still living. His handwriting was abominably difficult, some words quite indecipherable. I have spent long and laborious hours in conjecture, and have, I hope, restored his meaning in almost every case. But in the sonnets of the 12th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, 29th, 35th, 41st, 43rd and 48th days, also in "At Last," "Love and Fear," and "Lethe," one or more whole lines have been almost impossible to read. The literary student will be able readily to detect my patchwork emendations. These I have dared to make because his whole pattern (may I use the word?) is so elaborate and perfect that I fear to annoy the reader by leaving any blanks, feeling that my own poverty of diction will be less noticeable than any actual hiatus in the sense or rhythm. I attempt neither eulogy nor criticism here. Indeed, it seems to me entirely uncalled for. His words were: "Let the world know how wonderful it was," that is, his love

and hers; not “how wonderful it is,” that is, his poem.

The poem is simple, understandable, direct, not verbose. More I demand not, seeing it is written (almost literally so) in blood; for I am sure that he was dying of that love for Alice, whose marvellous beauty it was his mission (who may doubt it?) to reveal. For the burning torch of truth may smoke, but it is our one sure light in passion and distress. *The jewelled silence of the star* is, indeed, the light of a serener art; but love is human, and I give nothing for the tawdry gems of style when the breast they would adorn is that of a breathing, living beauty of man’s love, the heart of all the world. Nor let us taint one sympathy with even a shadow of regret. Let us leave him where

“Sight nor sound shall war against him more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.”

NOTE.—The sudden and tragic death of the Editor has necessitated the completion of his task by another hand. The introduction was, however, in practically its present form.

A BRIEF CRITICAL ESSAY
ON
“ ALICE : AN ADULTERY.”

Almost the first remark that we made on laying down the MS. submitted for our judgment was that it is always doubtful how far a man is justified in stripping bare his soul for the public benefit. “Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?” asks Browning; “unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?” And his answer is:—

“With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart,” once more!

Did Shakespeare? If so, the less shakespeare he!” Very well; but Browning himself went even farther, and permitted the posthumous publication of the actual love letters that passed between himself and his wife.

In point of fact, there seems no great objection to such an action save in the poet’s own interest.

For it is abominable to correlate the life and work of any man, whenever that work approaches the standard of genius. Work of that sort is perfectly independent of life. The purest poems spring alike from the foulest soil and from the cleanest kept. Any stimulus may stimulate. Knowing Shelley almost by heart, the present writer is still ignorant of his domestic affairs—and thanks God for it.

Here, however, we have no work of genius to save from soilure. The poem is less than the man, as the editor has pointed out in his sufficiently able introduction. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the poem is sufficiently remarkable to merit consideration *per se*, and the poet must be considered as having entered the lists.

To break a lance or two with him, then.

We are very sorry that he should have selected the sonnet as the expression of his thoughts. A good deal of this story would be better told in prose (or not told at all!)—but the sonnet! He himself knows perfectly well what a sonnet should be: the

crystallisation or a separate and single moral idea, a clearly-defined protasis, if I may say so, in the octet: an equally clear apodosis in the sestet. To use it for narrative is absurd. A series of sonnets for a series of thoughts indeed is right. Rossetti's "House of Life" is the best example of perfection in this art. He knows this well indeed, and achieves superb results now and then. The title sonnet, the 3rd, 4th, 11th, and some others are fine examples of this, though even here is a *reference to the facts*, a fatal fault in such jewel-work as a sonnet should be, and approaching the abyss of didacticism.

Again, he is fatally obscure in many places. Often the sonnet-metre is at fault, and his undoubtedly great gift of compression fails to compass all his ideas into the fourteen permissible lines. Some are quite unintelligible without reference to the Shakespearian ambiguity at the head; others are still obscure unless a clear understanding of, and sympathy with, the man's position (and the woman's) at the time be ever

present in the reader's mind. I need only instance the 46th, 40th, 38th, 31st, 29th, 28th, and the infamous 21st day as examples of what I mean. The secret of the 10th day is peculiarly obscure, and apparently refers to some long-past event in the author's life. To turn for a moment to an examination of the facts as found in the poem.

1st day.—They are on a tropical island in the Pacific.

6th day and 11th.—The man is a meddler with magic and a believer in the Theosophical Doctrines of Evolution (4th day), and yet also in existence of Gods.*

8th day.—He calls his island "the extreme west of all the world."

16th day.—"Alice" had a husband living (where is mentioned in 48th day, but not printed now) and a boy was travelling with her.

22nd day.—There is a talk of going to Japan.

*I have asked Sri Abhavananda, the eminent European Buddhist, and he is quite clear that the author has practically no knowledge of true Buddhism, and less than no claim to describe himself as an adherent. See Day the 38th.

27th—38th days.—The voyage takes ten days, after four of which a day is “lost,” evidently on the 180th degree.

The time exactly corresponds to that occupied by the fast steamers from Hawaii to Japan, and I think we may assume that that island is the one where the affair began. This is confirmed by a punning allusion to Diamond Head in the 27th day. This becomes perfectly clear if we accept the Editor’s conjecture “hula” for the indecipherable word in the 9th day. It is presumed that they landed in Yokohama, as the following day they visit Kamakura. It is strange how the writer can have come down to the state in which my friend the Editor, found him. He could evidently write and obtain money from home (47th day), and his actions are quite difficult to understand unless we assume the whole “Alice” episode to be a gorgeous fiction with the place and time references slyly inserted, the more surely to ensnare the feet of an investigator. This I am rather inclined to

believe.* The man is at once the most truthful writer and the most consummate liar of all time. He selects truth or falsehood without the slightest moral sense or idea of advantage; he asks himself "Which is humorous?" and acts accordingly. He chose his love deliberately, I am quite sure, with reference to his art alone. But if our Editor's conjecture as to the real cause of his death is right, the fire he played with burnt him at last, and he died of the love he had invoked in play. It is the old-story of the magician strangled by the devil.

As to what became of Alice we have no idea, if, indeed, she be after all a real person. In my judgment our poet was perfectly capable of deifying an old woman of fifty with a false front and

*The results of a lengthy correspondence with some who knew our author, go far to confirm this theory. Yet I believe (for it is so like his peculiar sense of humour) that there is enough genuine detail somewhere in the poem to enable the wronged husband to discover his wife's infidelity, as he says in the 40th day. Our opinion of such humour is, of course, damning.—ED.

writing round her, perfectly conscious all the time of the shame of it all, and filled with an eternal inner laughter. We have heard what a woman he married in the end.

Our poet is one of the most annoying in the world. His fiftieth day is an outrage on mankind in its sudden and hideous close. He himself feels it, and writes the two following sonnets to discuss (and so to modify) the hateful impression. But through pig-headedness, or in very despair, he leaves the detestable fact standing, the very instant after the lovers part, as ugly and mean a summary of the whole affair as it is possible to imagine.

Of the bad taste of the whole poem nobody can have any doubt, with its ruthless analysis of everything, its frank and brutal physiology, its mean and sordid outlook—all these contrasting with glimpses all too rare of exquisite synthesis, delicacy of feeling almost extreme, and a large and noble view of the universe. He seems to love to play off one against the other, and the result is a perpetual jarring: stimulus of thought, perhaps allowable,

even admirable in a philosopher, detestable in a poet.

Similar remarks apply to his lyrics. Some appear to me to be vile plagiarisms in metre, form, and language; others as among the best and loveliest we have of any poet, living or dead. "The roses of the world are sad" and "I have no heart to sing" are, in my opinion, unsurpassed in any language. Their presence alone is sufficient apology for the publication of an otherwise objectionable book.

G.K.

WHAT LAY BEFORE

WHITE POPPY

Amid the drowsy dream,
Lit by some fitful beam
 Of other light
Than the mere sun, supreme
On all the glint and gleam
 Shooting through night,
Above the water-way
Where my poor corpse must stay,
I bend and float away
 From human sight.

Unto the floral face,
Carven in ancient grace
 Of Gods or Greeks,
The whole sky's way gives place :
Open the walls of space,
 And silence speaks.
See! I am floating far
Beyond space and sun and star,
As drifts a nenuphar
 Down liliated creeks.

Beyond the heavens I see
The pale embroidery
 Of some wan child
Waster by earth and sea,
Whose kisses were too free,
 Too swift and wild ;
A Maenad's floating tress
Lost in the wilderness
Of death's or my caress,
 Discrowned, defiled.

Clad in pale green and rose,
Her thin face flickers, glows,
 Tempestuous flame.
Horrid and harsh she goes,
Speaks, trembles, wakes and knows
 How frail is shame!
Grows vast and cloudy and is
The whole mouth's sobbing kiss,
And crushes me with bliss
 Beyond a name.

Then fall I from excess
Of bitter ecstasies,
 Pale ghosts of blood,
To worlds where palaces
Shine through dim memories
 Of flower and flood,
Shine in pale opal and pearl,
Void of bright boy or girl,
Desolate halls that furl
 Their shapes subdued.

And wide they sunder, wide
They fall into the tide
 Of fallen things.
Me, me, O meek-browed bride,
Horrible faces hide
 And devilish wings.
Me the grim harpies hold
In kisses slaver-cold,
Mute serpent-shapes of gold
 With serpent stings.

The dreadful bridal won,
The demon banquet done,
 My flesh let loose :—
Rises a strange red sun,
A sight to slay or stun ;
 Sepulchral dews
Fall from the rayless globe,
Whose sightless fingers probe
My golden-folded robe,
 My soul's misuse.

And in that thankless shape
Vines grow without a grape,
 Thorns roseless spring.
Nay! There is no escape :—
The yawning portals gape,
 The orbéd ring
As by a whirlpool drawn
Into that devil-dawn :—
I sink and shriek and fawn
 Upon the thing.

★ ★ ★

*The Editor regrets that he is unable to publish
this verse.*

★ ★ ★

And in the desperate pang
And subtle stroke and fang
 Of hateful kisses
Whence devilish laughter sprang,
Close on me with a clang
 The brazen abysses
The leopard-coloured paw
Strikes, and the cruel jaw
Hides me in the glutless maw—
 Crown of ten blisses !

For all the vision world
Is closed on me and curled
 Into the deep
Of my slow soul, and hurled
Through lampless lands, and furled,
 Sharp folds and steep :
Till all unite in one,
Seven planets in the sun,
And I am deeper done
 Into full sleep.

MESSALINE

Beneath the living cross I lie
And swoon towards eternity :
Prodigious sinewy shapes, and lean
And curving limbs of Messaline.

 The deep arched eyes, the floating mane,—
One pierces, one wraps-in my brain.
A crown of thorn, a spear of clean
Cold fire of dying Messaline.

 Swart tangles of devouring hair,
The scorpion labyrinth and snare,
Leprous entanglements of sense,
The Imminence of the Immense.
And in the deep hard breath I draw
Kissed from her strangling mouth and maw,
I feel the floating deaths that dwell

About that citadel of hell ;
A soft lewd flavour, an obscene
Mysterious self of Messaline.

Or, in the kisses that swoop low
To catch my breath and kill me so,
I feel the ghostliness of this
Unreal shuttle-game—the kiss !
Her moving body sobs above,
And calls its lechery true love.
Out from the flame of heart she plucks
One flower of fiery light, and sucks
Its essence up within her lips,
And flings it into mine, and dips
And bends her body, writhes and swims
To link the velvet of our limbs,
My drouthy passion worn and keen,
And lusty life of Messaline.

The heart's blood in her boiling over
She sucked from many a dying lover :
The purple of her racing veins
Leapt from some soul's despairing pains ;
She drinks up life as from a cup ;

She drains our health and builds it up
Into her body ; takes our breath,
And we—we dream not it is death !
Arm unto arm and eye to eye,
Breast to great breast and thigh to thigh,
We look, and strain, and laugh, and die.
I see the head hovering above
To swoop for cruelty or love ;
I feel the swollen veins below
The knotted throat ; the ebb and flow
Of blood, not milk, in breasts of fire ;
Of deaths, not fluctuants, of desire ;
Of molten lava that abides
Deep in the vast volcanic sides ;
Deep scars where kisses once bit in
Below young mountains that be twin,
Stigmata cruciform of sin,
The diary of Messaline.

 The moving mountains crater-crowned ;
The valleys deep and silver-bound ;
The girdle treacherously wound ;
One violet-crest mounded mole,

Some blood-stain filtered from the soul ;
The light and shadow shed between
My soul and God from Messaline.

And even as a dark and hidden
Furnace roars out in woods forbidden,
A sullen tide of molten steel
Runs from deep furrows in the wheel ;
So from afar one central heat
Sends the loud pulse to fever beat ;
So from one crown and heart of fire
Spring the vast phantoms of desire,
Impossible and epicene,
Familiar souls of Messaline.

And as, when thunder broods afar
Imperial destinies of war,
Men see the haze and heat, and feel
The sun's rays like a shaft of steel,
Seeing no sun ; even so the night
Clouds that deep miracle from sight :
Until this destiny be done
Hangs the corona on the sun ;
And I absorbed in those unclean
Ghost-haunted veins of Messaline.

CALIFORNIA

Forged by God's fingers in His furnace, Fate,
My destiny drew near the glowing shore
Where California hides her golden ore,
Her rubies and her beryls ; ★ ★ ★ ⁽¹⁾
Manifold fruits and flowers alike create
Glories most unimaginable, more
Than Heaven's own meadows match ; yet this is sore,
A stain ; not one of these is delicate.

Save only the clear green within the sea—
Because that rolls all landless from Japan.
I did not know until I missed it here
How beautiful that beauty is to me,
That life that bears Death's sigil traced too clear,
Blue lines within the beauty that is man.

(1) Line 4 cannot with any certainty be deciphered.

MARGARET

The moon spans Heaven's architrave ;
 Stars in the deep are set ;
Written in gold on the day's grave,
 “To love, and to forget ;”
And sea-winds whisper o'er the wave
 The name of Margaret.

A heart of gold, a flower of white,
 A blushing flame of snow,
She moves like latticed moons of light—
 And O! her voice is low,
Shell-murmurs borne to Amphitrite,
 Exulting as they go.

Her stature waves, as if a flower
 Forgot the evening breeze,
But heard the charioted hour
 Sweep from the farther seas,
And kept sweet time within her bower,
 And hushed mild melodies.

So grave and delicate and tall—
 Shall laughter never sweep
Like a moss-guarded waterfall
 Across her ivory sleep?
A tender laugh most musical?
 A sigh serenely deep?

She laughs in wordless swift desire
 A soft Thalassian tune ;
Her eyelids glimmer with the fire
 That animates the moon ;
Her chaste lips flame, as flames aspire
 Of poppies in mid-June.

She lifts the eyelids amethyst,
And looks from half-shut eyes,
Gleaming with miracles of mist,
Gray shadows on blue skies ;
And on her whole face sunrise-kissed,
Child-wonderment most wise.

The whitest arms in all the earth
Blush from the lilac bed.
Like a young star even at its birth
Shines out the golden head.
Sad violets are the maiden girth,
Pale flames night-canopied.

O gentlest lady! Lift those eyes,
And curl those lips to kiss!
Melt my young boyhood in thy sighs,
A subtler Salmacis!
Hide, in that peace, these ecstasies ;
In that fair fountain, this!

She fades as starlight on the stream,
As dewfall in the dell ;
All life and love, one ravishing gleam
Stolen from sleep's crucible ;
That kiss, that vision is a dream :—
And I—most miserable !

Still Echo wails upon the steep,
“To love—and to forget !”
Still sombre whispers from the deep
Sob through Night's golden net,
And waft upon the wings of sleep
The name of Margaret.



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“Commit not with man’s sworn spouse.”
King Lear.

Against the fiat of that God discrowned,
Unseated by Man’s justice, and replaced,
By Law most bountiful and maiden-faced
And mother-minded : passing the low bound
Of man’s poor law we leapt at last and found
Passion ; and passing the dim halls disgraced
Found higher love and larger and more chaste,
A calm sphinx waiting in secluded ground.

Hear the sad rhyme of how love turned to lust,
And lust invigorated love, and love
Shone brighter for the stain it rose above,
Gathering roses from the quickening dust ;
And faith despoiled and desecrated trust
Wore pearlier plumes of a diviner dove.

THE FIRST DAY

“Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?”
As You Like It.

The waving surf shone from the Peaceful Sea.
Young palms embowered the house where Beauty sate
Still but exultant, silent but elate
In its own happiness and majesty
Of a mild soul unstirred by rivalry
Of any life beyond its own sweet state.
I looked around me, wondered whether Fate
Had found at last a woman's love for me.

I had no hope: she was so grave and calm,
So shining with the dew-light of her soul,
So beautiful beyond a woman's share.
Yet—here! Soft airs, and perfume through the palm,
And moonlight in the groves of spice, control
The life that would not love and yet be fair.

THE SECOND DAY

“ Keep you in the rear of your affection
Out of the shot and danger of desire.”
Hamlet.

I was so hopeless that I turned away
And gave my love to foul oblivion,
Shuttered my bosom's window from the sun,
Kindled a corpse-light and proclaimed “ The day ! ”;
Lurked in Aeaean fens to elude the ray
Whose beauty might disturb me : I did shun
The onyx eyes that saw me not as one
Possible even for a moment's play.

Thus I was tangled in some house of hell,
Giving mine own soul's beauty up to lust,
Hoping to build some fort impregnable
Against my love : instead the deep disgust
Of my own beasthood crushed it into dust,
And left my manhood twisted in her spell.

THE THIRD DAY

“ My love is most immaculate white and red.”
Love’s Labour’s Lost.

She was more graceful than the royal palm ;
Tall, with imperial looks, and excellence
Most simply swathed in spotless elegance,
And holy and tuneful like some stately psalm.
Her breath was like a grove of myrrh and balm,
And all the sight grew dim before the sense
Of blind attraction toward ; an influence
Not incompatible with her own calm.

All the red roses of the world were blended
To give the lively colour of her face ;
All the white lilies of the sea shone splendid
Where the blue veins afforded them a space ;
Like to the shapely fragrance of dawn’s shrine
She gleamed through mist, enchanting, Erycine.

THE FOURTH DAY

“Amen, if you love her ; for the lady is very well worthy.”
Much Ado about Nothing.

I took another way to shield my love.

I turned my thoughts to the abyss of sky,
Pierced the frail veil, and sought Eternity ;
Where the Gods reign most passionless above
All foolish loves of men, and weary of
The slow procession of Earth's mystery ;
Where worlds, not men, are born and live and die,
And aeons flit unnoticed as a dove.

Thither I fled, busied myself with these ;
When—lo ! I saw her shadow following !
In every cosmic season-tide of spring
She rose, being the spring : in utter peace
She was with me and in me : thus I saw
Ours was not love, but destiny, and law.

REINCARNATION

In life what hope is always unto men ?
Stories of Arthur that shall come again
To cleanse the Earth of her eternal stain,
Elias, Charlemagne, Christ. What matter then ?
What matter who, or how, or even when ?
If we but look beyond the primal pain,
And trust the Future to write all things plain,
Graven on brass with predestined pen.

This is the doom. Upon the blind blue sky
A little cloud, no larger than an hand !
Whether I live and love, or love and die,
I care not : either way I understand.
To me—to live is Christ ; to die is gain :
For I, I also, I shall come again.

THE FIFTH DAY

“Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.”
Richard III.

All thought of work is almost cast aside.
I followed like a dog the way she went,
Speaking but seldom, very well content
To day-dream, oft imagining a bride,
A wife, a lover, even a sister, tied
By some soft bond of twinning: thus I blent
A real joy with a brighter element
Of fancy free to wander far and wide.

For as I followed by the shore and bended
Over her footsteps in the wood, my will
Rose to high strength assertive and transcended
The petty forms of the seducer's skill.
Chaste love strode forth, a warrior's stern and splendid
Determined footsteps on the Arcadian Hill.

THE SIXTH DAY

“ Are there not charms
By which the property of youth and maidhood
May be abused ? ”

Othello.

I drew a hideous talisman of lust
In many colours where strong sigils shone ;
Crook'd mystic language of oblivion,
Fitted to crack and scorch the terrene crust
And bring the sulphur streaming from the thrust
Of Satan's winepress, was ill written on
The accurséd margin, and the orison
Scrawled backwards, as a bad magician must.

By these vile tricks, abominable spells,
I drew foul horrors from a many hells—
Though I had fathomed Fate ; though I had seen
Chastity charm-proof arm the sea-gray eyes
And sweet clean body of my spirit's queen,
Where nothing dwells that God did not devise.

THE SEVENTH DAY

“ This word ‘ love,’ which greybeards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another
And not in me : I am myself alone.”

3 Henry VI.

Therefore I burnt the wicked pantacle,
And cast my love behind me once again.
I mused upon the mystery of pain,
Where the Gods taught me by another spell
Not chosen from the armoury of Hell,
But given of Mercury to cleanse the stain
Of the old planet : thus I wrote me plain
Secrets divine—tremendous, terrible !

Thus I forgot my soul and dwelt alone
In the strong fortress of the active mind
Whose steady flame burned eager in the night ;
Yet was some shadow on the starry throne,
Some imperfection playing hoodman-blind
So that I saw not perfectly aright.

THE EIGHTH DAY

“ A certain aim he took
At a fair Vestal throned by the West.”
Midsummer Night's Dream.

Here in the extreme west of all the earth
This Vestal sate ; and I from Cupid's bow
Loosed a fair shaft of verses shapen so
As to fling love through the chaste girdle's girth,
And show my love how meek was my love's birth,
How innocent its being: thus arow
Stood the mild lines, immaculate, to show
My harmless passion and her own great worth.

She could not be offended: and moreover—
When at the nightfall I sought Heaven's light,
All my work grew unspotted, done aright!
The high Gods came above my head to hover,
Because I worked with a diviner might,
The perfect sage being the perfect lover.

THE NINTH DAY

“ How canst thou tell she will deny thy
Before thou make a trial of her love ? ”

1 Henry VI.

I was most weary of my work : the mind
Shuddered at all the wonders it had written,
And the whole body by the spirit smitten
Groaned : so I went and left my love behind,
Danced the gross “ hula,” hardly disinclined,
By a new lust emphatically bitten ;
And so in flames at harlot glances litten
I sought that solace I shall never find.

Fool ! not to tell her. Triple fool to fly
The sunny glance, the moonlight meditation,
For even the light of heaven. How much worse
The dark antithesis, the coarser curse
Of Eden ! Pass, O shadows of creation,
Into the daybreak of Eternity !

THE TENTH DAY

“ O God ! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.”

Hamlet.

The mere result of all this was a dream.

The day passed damned, void of my love's dear light,
And stole acursed to the endless night,
Forgotten (as I trust) by God : no beam
Of memory lighting it down Time's dark stream.
I dreamt : my shrine was broken and my might
Defiled, and all my Gods abased, in sight
Of all blind Heaven exenterate and extreme.

The foulest traitor of all womankind

I ever knew, became my friend* : unclean
Sexual abominations floated through,
More foul because a golden cord did wind
Unspotted through that revel epicene,
The pure faith of one woman that was true.

* This circumstance was later fulfilled : I having judged her actions on insufficient evidence.

THE ELEVENTH DAY

“What win I if I gain the thing I seek?”
Rape of Lucrece.

There is much sorcery in the word eleven.
I took my lover's image pale and clear,
Fixed in my mind ; I saw her standing near,
Woody her, conjured her by the power of heaven,
Of my own mind, the Genii of the Seven,
To come and live with me and be my dear,
To love me in the spirit without fear ;—
Leaving the body's love to follow at even.

Seemeth it not absurd ? to use the thought,
The utterly divine impersonal
Mind of a man, the pure, the spiritual,
To such a purpose rather less than nought,
A woman's love—considering that all
Wise men assure us that it may be bought !

THE TWELFTH DAY

“ I grant thou wert not married to my Muse
And therefore mayst without attain o'erlook
The dedicated words which writers use
Of their fair subjects.”

The Sonnets.

I learnt at last some sort of confidence,
Called me the fool I was, knowing my skill
Proven of old, all women's native will
To do all things soever that lack sense,
Especially if evil: thoughts immense
Like this I thought: plumes of my amorous quill
I tickled her withal: then grave and still
Waited secure: the silence grew intense.

She read—and saw me but a beardless boy,
Too young to fear, too gentle not to pity,
Not overbold; quite powerless to destroy
Her life's long peace, the ten-year-walléd city.
Why be too cruel, check such baby joy?
She said “I think the poem very pretty.”

RED POPPY

I have no heart to sing.
What offering may I bring,
 Alice, to thee?
My great love's lifted wing
Weakens, unwearying,
 And droops with me,
Seeing the sun-kindled hair
Close in the face more fair,
The sweet soul shining there
 For God to see.

Surely some angle shed
Flowers for the maiden head,
 Ephemeral flowers !
I yearn, not comforted.
My heart has vainly bled
 Through age-long hours.
To thee my spirit turns ;
My bright soul aches and burns,
As a dry valley yearns
 For spring and showers.

Splendid, remote, a fane
Alone and unprofane,
 I know thy breast.
These bitter tears of pain
Flood me, and fall again
 Not into rest.
Me, whose sole purpose is
To gain one gainless kiss,
And make a bird's my bliss,
 Shrined in that nest.

O fearful firstling dove !
My dawn and spring of love,
 Love's light and lure !
Look (as I bend above)
Through bright lids filled thereof
 Perfect and pure,
Thy bloom of maidenhood.
I could not : if I could,
I would not : being good,
 Also endure !

Cruel, to tear or mar
The chaliced nenuphar ;
 Cruel to press
The rosebud ; cruel to scar
Or stain the flower-star
 With mad caress.
But crueller to destroy
The leaping life and joy
Born in a careless boy
 From lone distress.

More cruel than art thou
The calm and chaste of brow,
 If thou dost this,
Forget the feeble vow
Ill sworn : all laws allow
 Pity, that is
Kin unto love, and mild.
List to the sad and wild
Crying of the lonely child
 Who asks a kiss.

One kiss, like snow, to slip,
Cool fragrance from thy lip
 To melt on mine ;
One kiss, a white-sail ship
To laugh and leap and dip
 Her brows divine ;
One kiss, a starbeam faint
With love of a sweet saint,
Stolen like a sacrament
 In the night's shrine !

One kiss, like moonlight cold
Lighting with floral gold
 The lake's low tune ;
One kiss, one flower to fold,
On its own calyx rolled
 At night, in June !
One kiss, like dewfall, drawn
A veil o'er leaf and lawn—
Mix night, and noon, and dawn,
 Dew, flower, and moon !

One kiss, intense, supreme !
The sense of Nature's dream
 And scent of Heaven
Shewn in the glint and gleam
Of the pure dawn's first beam,
 With earth for leaven ;
Moulded of fire and gold,
Water and wine to fold
Me in its life, and hold !—
 In all but seven !

I would not kiss thee, I!
Lest my lip's charactery
 Ruin thy flower.
Curve thou one maidenly
Kiss, stooping from thy sky
 Of peace and power!
Thine only be the embrace!—
I move not from my place,
Feel the exultant face
 Mine for an hour!

Mine, and for ever mine;
Dim glory in the shrine
 Of Artemis
Endymion-lured to wine,
And dove-looks Erycine,
 Flower-scented bliss!
O sweet! O saint! I swoon
Beneath the guiding moon;
In thine embrace, the tune
 Of that one kiss.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY

“ If it be a sin to make a true election, she is damned.”
Cymbeline.

In the dim porchway where the sea's deep boom
Under our very feet made ceaseless song,
We sate, remote, the lone lanai along,
Sequestered from the young moon in the gloom
Of early even: then the tender bloom
Shone on her cheek and deepened as the strong
Arms gathered round her, more than shame or wrong,
And the soft question murmured “ Love you—whom ?”

The deepening rose ; the heart's pulse quickening ;
The fear ; the increasing ecstasy of this—
A little cloud lifted a sombre wing
Shadowing our secret breath from Artemis—
Breasts met and arms enclosed, and all the spring
Grew into summer with the first long kiss.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY

“Some there be that shadows kiss ;
Such have but a shadow's bliss ;
There be fools alive, I wis.”

Merchant of Venice.

All day we chose each moment possible
When to the other's face each face might cling,
Each kiss burn forth, a double fiery sting
Exalting us in joy foreseen to swell
A mighty exultation ; it befell,
However, that I saw the shadowy thing
Lurk behind love, and flap a scornful wing,
Seeing our honour stood a citadel.

I saw the foolishness of love and saith :
“I am exalted over shame and death,
But will not take my fill of death and shame.”
For each kiss leaps, a more insistent breath,
And adds fresh fuel to the amorous flame,
Not quells it—Is not honour but a name ?

THE FIFTEENTH DAY

“ Were kisses all the joys in bed,
One woman would another wed.”

Sonnets to Sundry
Notes of Music.

Another day rose of unceasing fire :

Kisses made monstrous for their sterile storm
Maddening with sea-sounds, as of lute or shawm
Fluting and clashing in extreme desire ;

The silly “ Thus far and no farther,” nigher

Each hour to break (poor arbitrary form !)
As each kiss bade our bodies wed and warm
Give love one chance before its wave retire.

Not so : this trial was the tiniest

Man ever knew, confronted afterward

With giant fears and passions ;—long to fight

And last to yield a Maenad-swelling breast

Unto a furious Dionysian horde

Drunk not with wine, but with avenging night.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY

“ My chastity’s the jewel of our house
Bequeathed down from many ancestors,
Which were the greatest obloquy i’ th’ world
For me to lose.”

All’s Well.

There was no secret cave of the wood’s womb
Where we might kiss all day without a start
Of fear that meant to stay and must depart,
Nor any corner where the sea’s perfume
Might shelter love in some wave-carven tomb.
But Maytime shone in us ; with words of art
I drew her down reluctant to my heart,
When night was silence and my bed the gloom.

So without sin we took strange sacrament,
Whose wine was kisses, and whose bread the flower
Of fast and fervent cleaving breast to breast.
As lily bends to lily we were bent,
Not as mere man to woman : all the dower
Of martyred Virgins crowned our dangerous quest.

ALICE

The roses of the world are sad,
 The water-lilies pale,
Because my lover takes her lad
 Beneath the moonlight veil.
No flower may bloom this happy hour—
Unless my Alice be the flower.

The stars are hidden in dark and mist,
 The moon and sun are dead,
Because my love has caught and kissed
 My body in her bed.
No light may shine this happy night—
Unless my Alice be the light.

So silent are the thrush, the lark!
The nightingale's at rest,
Because my love loves the dark,
And has me in her breast.
No song this happy night be heard!—
Unless my Alice be the bird.

The sea that roared around the house
Is fallen from alarms,
Because my lover calls me spouse,
And takes me to her arms.
This night no sound of breakers be!—
Unless my Alice be the sea.

Of man and maid in all the world
Is stilled the swift caress,
Because my lover has me curled
In her own loveliness.
No kiss be such a night as this!—
Unless by Alice be the kiss.

No blade of grass awaiting takes
The dew fresh-fallen above,
Because my lover swoons, and slakes
Her body's thirst of love.
This night no dewfall from the blue!—
Unless my Alice be the dew.

This night—O never dawn shall crest
The world of wakening,
Because my lover has my breast
On hers for dawn and spring.
This night shall never be withdrawn—
Unless my Alice be the dawn.



THE SEVENTEENTH DAY

“ Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant.”
Tempest.

Last night—but the boy shrieked in's sleep—then, there
I had ended all! Having ingressed the track
That leads from green or white-crowned hours to black,
The pleasant portals of the scorpion snare,
First gleaming toils of an enchantress' hair
That afterward shall change their fervours slack
To strong gripe of a devil-fish: go back?
The hand is put forth to the plough—beware!

I took my shrine down: at the night we lay
Four hours debating between fear and sin:
Whether our love went deeper than the skin,
Or lower than the lips: love won the day.
We nestled like young turtles that be twin
Close till the morn-star chased the moon away.

LOVE AND FEAR

The rose of the springtime that bended
 Its delicate head to the breeze
Is crimson and stately and splendid
 Now summer is here and at ease ;
Love risen as the sun hath transcended its passion and peace.

In a garden of dark foliage that clusters
 Round your face as a rosebud withdrawn,
New splendour springs carmine and lustres
 Your cheeks with the coming of dawn,
Love's light as an army that musters its plumes—and is gone.

For fear as a fountain, that trembles
 With wind, is arisen, and hides
The light of your love, and dissembles
 The roar of the passionate tides ;
Though a flickering flame it resembles, love is, and abides.

I see through the moonlight that covers
 (As a mist on the mountain) your head
The flame of your heart as a lover's
 Shine out in your face and be shed,
A ruby that flashes and hovers and droops and is dead.

As a saint in a vision half hidden
 I see the sweet face in a mist,
A nimbus of glory unbidden
 That shades you or shows as you list.
But I, as a bridegroom, unchidden, may kiss—and am kissed.

In the light and the manifest splendour
 That shows you in darkness a bride,
Pale blossom of moonlight and slender,
 A lily that sways in the tide,
A star that falls earthward to bend her sweet breast to my side :—

No depth of the darkness may shield you
 From eyes that with love are aflame,
No darkness, but light, as you yield you
 To love that is stronger than shame,
No music but kisses, that pealed you their paeon, proclaim :

That the light of heaven is shaded,
The sound of the sea is made still,
The climax shall come unupbraided
Obedient alone to our will,
And the flowers that were fallen and faded drink dew to their fill :

Dew filling your eyes and their lashes
With tender mirage of a tear ;
Dew fallen on the mouth as it flashes,
The kiss that is master of fear ;
Dew covering the body that dashes and clings to me here.

O fairest, O rose among roses !
O flower of the innermost fire !
O tune of my soul that encloses
All life, the tempestuous lyre !
O dawn of my dawn that reposes and darts in desire !

And death and its portals are rifted,
Life listens our kisses that weep ;
Love hears, and his measure is shifted,
Grows solemn and deadly and deep ;
Love's ship droops its sails and is drifted in silence to sleep.

And soft as a seal on our slumber
 Dreams drift of Aurorean dew ;
Dreams shapen of flames that encumber
 The shrine of the morn in the blue ;
Flames shapen of lips that outnumber our kisses anew.



THE EIGHTEENTH DAY

“Touches so soft still conquer chastity.”
Passionate Pilgrim.

She grew most fearful, starting at slight noise ;
As knowing that the sting of shame was hers
Worse than a guilty love administers,
Since our pure shame unworthily destroys
The love of all she had, her girls and boys,
Her home, their lives : and yet my whisper stirs
Into live flame her passion, and deters
Her fear from spurning all the day's due joys.

She had not dared to speak one word, to tell
How deep and pure a fountain sunward leapt
In her life's garden : but to-night she lay
In my intense embraces : so the spell
Moved her : “I love you,” said she. So we kept,
Remurmuring that one phrase until the day.

THE NINETEENTH DAY

“ The boy is foolish, and I fear not him.”
Richard III.

She dared not come into my room to-night.
So? I was acquiescent, sharp despair
And nervous purpose mixing in me there
The while I waited: then I glided light
(Clad in the swart robe of an eremite)
Across the passage and, all unaware
My kisses underneath the veil of vair
Woke her: she turned and sighed and held me tight.

Her child slept gently on the farther side.
But we took danger by the throat, despised
All but the one sole splendour that we prized;
And she, whose robe was far too slight to hide
The babe-smooth breasts, was far too frail to cover
Her heart's true fire and music from her lover.

THE TWENTIETH DAY

“ ‘Val.’ How long hath she been deformed ?
‘Speed.’ Ever since you loved her.”
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Again the unveiled goddess of delight
Watched us at midnight : there my lover lay
Child-breasted, maiden as the rose of day
Dawning on snowy mountains : through deep night
Her body gleamed self-luminously white
With the sweet soul that sundered the quick clay,
And all her being was a sense of May ;—
Scent conquering colour, soul out-running sight.

Not with the Lysian, nor Iacchian dew
Of frenzy covered, but with warmer flakes
Of Aphrodite shed upon our life,
We clung still closer, till the soul ran through
Body to body, twined like sunny snakes,
Sinlessly knowing we were man and wife.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY

“ Mal. Dispute it like a man.
Macd. I shall do so.
 But I must also feel it as a man.”
 Macbeth.

I had a fearful dream (on going away)
Of scorpion women curled in my caress,
And twenty days they closed on my distress
Not giving me relief, but gold and gray,
Cold and intense ; the one-and-twentieth day
They drew my life out, one exceeding stress,
Volcanic anguish !—Here’s the strange excess :
I called, ere waking, on the name *Eheieh*!

Solve me the riddle of the dream who can !
That night I sought a new toy for a lure,
And she would not : but knew how hard to endure
Is love like ours, the love of purity.
So she : “Dispute it like a man !” and I :
“But I must also feel it as a man !”

Note. *Eheieh* is the Hebrew for “I am that I am.” Its numerical value is 21. I was not aware at the time that this was the 21st day.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY

“I'll have her : but I will not keep her long.”
Richard III

It was impossible that she should come
Over the leagues of summer-coloured sea
Alone with love and laughter and tears and me
To the toy land of the chrysanthemum,
Where all the flowers lack scent, the birds are dumb,
The fruits are tasteless : where the jewelled lea
And the many-leavéd greenery
Is dwarf : French gem-work on a baby's thumb.

The Yankee God frowned also on the plan.
We had enough, no more. But I insist,
Still thinking I was master of my heart :
Saying, “Another month to be a man,
Another month to kiss her and be kissed,
And then—all time to Magic and to Art !”

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY

“ He has strangled
His language in his tears.”
K. Hen. VIII

My comedy has changed its blithe aspect
To bitterest face of tragedy ; she said :
“ Alas ! O soul of mine ! I am surely dead,
Seeing my life is by a serpent wrecked
Of sore disease : but spare me, and reflect
That in few months I die : but were I wed—
O lover ! O desire discomfited !
I die at once : consider, and elect.”

How could I otherwise than spare my wife ?
With tender lips and fingers one strong kiss
Swooned slave-wise even before the gate of bliss,
No more : for I rose up and cursed my life,
Hating the God that made us to dis sever
So soon so sweet a love, and that for ever.
Ut. Canc. sublatum iri dixisse. Vae Capricorno !

(Author's Note.)

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

“She having the truth of honour in her, hath made
him that gracious denial which he is most glad to
receive.” Measure for Measure.

Of course I might have know it was a lie.

Nathless, I wept all morning and despaired.

Nothing for any life of earth I cared,

Neither for heaven: I railed against the sky,

Hating the earth, the sea, the witchery

Of all the universe: my breast I bared

And cursed God, hoping lightning; and I dared

Not ask my love “In very truth—you die?”

I could not bear it longer; then she spake:

“I lied indeed, love, for mine honour’s sake,”

And I reproached her for her love’s distrust,

Saying “I would not so in any wise

Have lowered love unto the level of lust

But now—” I hid my thought in tears and sighs.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

“ I am in health, I breathe, and see thee ill.”
Richard II.

Alice was desperately ill at morn.

Hour by sweet hour I watched her sorrowing,
While the strong fever fought unconquering
With native coolness of her life, o'er-worn
Or poisoned ; thus I fought the long forlorn
Battle all day, until the evening
Brought back sweet health on sleep and noiseless wing :
Strong love of the long battle was reborn.

The child slept elsewhere that she might sleep well.

Therefore, not fearing anything, I came ;
Lit my love's candle at her body's flame,
And fought not with the fevers now that swell
Our burning lips and bosoms, until shame
Nearly surrendered the sweet citadel.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

“ I think the devil will not have me damned.
. . . he would never else cross me thus.”
Merry Wives of Windsor.

This time she set her will against my will ;
Swore that she would not come : in my despair
I half believed her an enchantress fair
Cruel as hell and dowered with subtle skill
To strain my life out with her love, and kill
My soul with misery : suddenly a rare
Swift smile set shimmering all the ambient air,
And then I knew she was my true love still.

She would not come ? Why, were Hell's portals fast
Shut, as to Orpheus on Eurydice,
Their brass would break before love's gold and steel,
The sharpness inlaid with sweet tracery
Of talismans of virtue : she is leal
To come and live and be my love at last.

UNDER THE PALMS

The woodland hollows know us, bird-enchanted,
Likewise the spaces of the ghostly sea,
The lake's abundant lilies, the pale slanted
Moonlight on flowers, the wind's low minstrelsy ;
For all the tropic greenery is haunted
By you and me.

The tall palms bend and catch love's tender ditty
To learn a sweeter song to lure their mate.
The soft wind sighs in amorous self-pity,
Having no love wherein to laugh elate,
And turns to the cold harbour and the city,
Wailing its fate.

Two faces and two bosoms, breathing slowly
In tune and time with the sea's hymn below,
Breathing in peace of love, mighty and holy,
Fearing to fuse, and longing—be it so!
And the world's pulse stops, as God bends him lowly
To hear and know.

For not the heights of heaven shall exalt her
Whose heart is full of love's dumb deity,
Nor harp-strings lift me, nor the sound of psalter,
Whose love is merged and molten into thee,
Nor incense sweeter be by shrine or altar
For you and me.

But like dove's eyes where glamour lies a-dwelling,
Like sweet well-water rising in the well,
Strong steep black currents thrust up, flooding, welling,
Into the moonlight, swift, adorable,—
So kisses cluster, so our bosoms swelling
Abide and dwell.

Yet the twin faces, like Madonnas, meeting,
 Fear and draw back and gaze a little space ;
Fear, lest they lose the moonlight frail and fleeting,
 Lose their own beauty in their own embrace,
But feel how gladdening hearts and bosoms beating
 Kindle the face

But not for long shall lilies strive with roses,
 Nor fear be fearful, nor delight repose,
Nor love retire ; the woodland cleaves and closes
 Round heads an aureole hides, a rainbow shows.
A swifter shape of fire cleaves us, encloses
 Rosebud and rose.

Mouth unto mouth ! O fairest ! Mutely lying,
 Fire lambent laid on water,—O ! the pain !
Kiss me, O heart, as if we both were dying !
 Kiss, as we could not ever kiss again !
Kiss me, between the music of our sighing,
 Lightning and rain !

Not only as the kiss of tender lovers—

Let mingle also the sun's kiss to sea,
Also the wind's kiss to the bird that hovers,
The flower's kiss to the earth's deep greenery.
All elemental love closes and covers
Both you and me.

All shapes of silence and of sound and seeing,
All lives of Nature molten into this,
The moonlight waking and the shadows fleeing,
Strange sorcery of unimagined bliss,
All breath breathing in ours ; mingled all being
Into the kiss.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

“The ship is in her trim ; the merry wind
Blows fair from land.”

Comedy of Errors.

Quite careless whether golden gales of wind
Fling our boat forward, or the storm and spark
Of lightning lamp or shroud us in the dark,
Careless if ever land again we find,
Careless of all things (this love being blind),
We put to sea. O gladly stand and mark
The diamond headland fall behind our barque,
Wrapped in shrine-shadow of love's central mind !

We are alone to-day on the strange sea,
Divider of the dawn's divinity
From sunset's splendour : our eternal noon
Of love reck's little of eternity—
And though the moon is dying, ourselves may swoon,
One deathless shape of the large-breasted moon.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

“ But I perceive in you so excellent a touch
of modesty that you will not extort from me
what I am willing to keep in.”

Twelfth-Night.

A curious conflict this of love and fear,
Honour and lust, and truth and trust beguiled ;
One in the semblance of a rose-bright child :—
The other in a shape more gross and clear,
A fiercer woman-figure crowned severe
With garlands woven of scourges, but whose wild
Breast beat with splendour of sin, whose looks were mild,
Hiding the cruel smile behind a tear.

So she : “ I now you never would ; ” yet did
Such acts that no end otherwise might be.
So I : “ I will not ever pluck the flower ; ”
Yet strayed enchanted on the lawns forbid,
And bathed enamoured in the secret sea,
Both knowing our words were spoken—for an hour.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY

“Persevere in that clear way thou goest,
And the gods strengthen thee.”

Pericles.

Linked in the tiny shelf upon the ship,
My blind eyes burned into her mild ones : limbs
Twined to each other while fine dew bedims
Their quivering skins : lip fastened unto lip :
Whole soul and body frenzied meet and clip ;
And the breath staggers, and the life-blood swims !
Terrible gods chant black demoniac hymns
As the frail cords of honour strain and slip.

For in the midst of that tremendous tide
The mighty vigour of a god was mine !
Drunk with desire, her lamentations died.
The dove gave place a moment to the swine !
Rapturous draughts of madness ! Out she sighed
Uttermost life's love, and became a bride.

Beneath the sonnet, in pencil, and feebler hand, are scrawled
faintly the words : Alice ! Alice !

THE THIRTIETH DAY

“ For god’s sake, lords, convey my tristful Queen,
For tears do stop the floodgates of her eyes.”
King Henry IV.

Bitter reproaches passed between us twain,
Hers real, mine with sneering logic sewn
Proving my trespass hardly half her own,
Its cause ; I proved her how she made me fain
And left me mad, and led through joy and pain
To that unthinkable thing : I might atone
No whit in this way : then that stubborn stone
My heart grew tears : we were good friends again.

Therefore at night I added nothing new :
Only a little while I lay with her
And with mere kisses sucked her soul away,
And made my banquet of immortal dew,
Demanding nothing but to minister
To her desire until the dawn grew grey.

THE DAY WITHOUT A NUMBER

“ O never shall the sun that morrow see.”
Macbeth.

We lost a day! Nor kisses, nor regret,
Nor fear, nor pain, nor anything at all!
The day was lost, vanished past recall,
That saw no sunrise, never saw sun set—
For East and West invisibly were met
In gateways neither glad nor musical
Nor melancholy nor funereal.
Nought is there to remember nor forget.

Yet in my westward journey many hours
I stole, and now must pay them back again.
I plucked not one flower, but an hundred flowers;
I bore an hundred passions in my brain—
King Solomon had three hundred paramours.
I quite agree that everything is vain.

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY

“ You whoreson villain ! will you let it fall ?”
Taming of the Shrew.

The inexpiable fate whose shuddering wing
Fear fled from, changed the native deed of sin
Into a spasmic kiss too salt and keen,
Windless, that ended with a sterile sting
The earlier hour whose heart was full of spring ;
And the large love grew piteously lean ;
Dreadful, like death ; withdrawn and epicene
At the mad crisis of the eventful thing.

O that such tender fondness like a flower's
Should take such nameless infamy ! That we
Should pluck such bitter bloom, rooted in fear,
Salt with the scurf of some diseased sea,
Foul with the curse of God : that we are here,
Hating the night's inexorable hours.

THE THIRTY-SECOND DAY

“ Me of my lawful pleasure she restrained
And prayed me oft forbearance.”
Cymbeline.

How sweet the soft looks shot, endearing shame
With their warm fragrance of love's modest eyes !
The secret knowledge of our secrecies
Shone from their distance with a subtle flame,
And gave to pudency a rosier name
When the long lashes drooped, and saintlier sighs
Took softer meanings, till my arteries
Throbbled with the glad desire that went and came.

“ I charge you in the very name of love.”
Quoth she : “ We have all day to steal below
And snatch short kisses out of danger's throat.
Why beg you night : is not the day enough ?”
But I : “ The night is panting and aglow
to feel our hair distraught and limbs afloat.”

THE THIRTY-THIRD DAY

“ Clubs, clubs ! These lovers will not keep the peace.”
Titus Andronicus.

Nathless she locked her cabin-door to me.

All lovers guess the piteous night I passed—
Shuddering phantoms, hideous and aghast,
Loomed, lust of hate ! toward me : how did she ?

She never told : but I might surely see

In the drawn face and haggard eyes what vast
Voices of misery had held her fast,
And made her curse her own lock's cruelty.

So by her beauty and my love we swore,

And by the light within mine eyes, by her

Sweet shame : that never so we sunder again.

But she : “ You swear ‘ by thy bright face ’ in vain ;

‘ By thy sweet self ’ you grow a perjurer ;

Who have shamed my face and made me but an whore.”

THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY

“ Ben. Stop there, stop there.

Mer. Thou desirest me to stop in my tale against the hair.”
Romeo and Juliet.

Sweet are the swift hard struggles ere the kiss,
When the frail body blushes into tears,
And short breaths cancel the long sighs, and fears
Constrain delight, until their import is
Made foolish when the struggle's synthesis
Leads to hot armistice, as dewy spheres
Glow, and increase the fury that reveres
No God, no heaven but its own hell's bliss.

So after desperate shifts of modesty
We could no more ; loosened and lax we lay
Breathing and holding : then in amorous play
She laughed and left her body's love to me,
And kissed one kiss holding the heart of May,
And kissed again, and kissed our lives away.

THE THIRTY-FIFTH DAY

“ I cannot kiss, that is the humour of it, but adieu.”
King Henry V.

The third time bitterly came reason back.
Is it a fault in love when mornings find
The soul grown sober and rethroned the mind ?
Or is it mere necessity to track
The candid chequer cross-wise to the black,
And love, not mutable, yet well inclined
To take his pleasure in becoming blind
After such sight mere day is wont to lack.

So we were angry with ourselves and said
We would not kiss—two days, and we would part.
And she prayed heaven that she might be dead,
And I cursed heaven and my foolish head.
I strove to turn towards old shapes of Art ;
She, to some phantom faded from her heart.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH DAY

“ ’Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.”
Phoenix and Turtle.

Yet ere the stars paled slowly in the east
I could not sleep: and she—how else? What rest
May a man know until his quiet breast
Beats to her tune? I garbed me as a priest
And moved towards my Host—on God I feast!
We lay in naked chastity, caressed
Child-like or dreaming, till the dawn repressed
Our sighs: that nuptial yet hath never ceased.

That was the best: far sundered by the tide
Dolorous, endless as Oceanus,
A serpent-river girdling the large earth,
Still in that pure embrace we bring to birth
A thousand pleasant children born of us,
Sacred and sinless, if unsanctified.

LETHE.

We have forgotten all the days of fear,
The nights of torment when the kiss expired,
Lost upon lips with love not overtired,
But fearing many things—the after year,
The end, the man—O no, not him! the tear,
The children's sorrow, and our own shame fired
Not less in doing all that love desired:
We have forgotten, surely—being here!

We have forgotten every shape of sorrow,
Knowing no end to one night's ecstasy
In the night's kiss from morning that we borrow,
From the hard usurer, Eternity—
Seeing we have it in our power to die
Before the new kiss kindle for the morrow.

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY

“ By long and vehement suit I was seduced
To make room for him in my husband’s bed.”
King John.

Mortals are not for nectar all the time :
Ambrosia feeds not men ; nepenthe’s sip
Is only for a moment : then we dip
Back to the earth and leave the bed sublime,
And tune our kisses to a terrene rhyme.
So, once again before we left the ship
With right good will our bodies cling and slip,
And the life’s flame sinks as the kisses climb.

There never has been such a supreme kiss
Since heaven and earth began to be as this !
Doubt nothing of it ! yet our spirits knew
Its savour was as roses fallen to dust :
Our proper food was of Selenian dew,
And love without a battle conquered lust.

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY

“The carcass of a beauty spent and done.”
 Lover's Complaint.

One day from landing. Kamakura sees
 Pass to the might shrine and shape of bronze
 Me, pilgrim, murmuring pious orisons,
 Taking my refuge in that House of Peace,
And after, sees my love, and doth not please.
 She was too young to know that shrine the Son's,
 Or see the Virgin's House in Kwan-se-on's;
 And when I told her, flushed, and bade me cease.

I ceased indeed! All hope of mental flower
 She shattered in five minutes: following lust,
 All intellectual communing did pass,
And all respect of mind: but love's high tower,
 Stricken of lightning, stood: not fallen in dust,
 Beautiful fragments as of a Greek vase.

THE THIRTY-NINTH DAY

“ Had I not eyes but ears, my ears would love
That inward beauty and invisible.”
Venus and Adonis.

Note from this day no possible event.

All secrets told, and all desires fulfilled,
Primitive passion of our soul have killed.

We dwell within a calmer element
Perfectly pure and perfectly content.

The subtler splendour of our love has stilled
Those sombre glories that it never meant,
Those giant meanings that it never meant.

Fire only is our substance ; there we dwell,
The Salamandrine with the Salamander.
No fuel to crack, no water to make tunes,

No air to blow us hither and thither ; well !
At our own will through cosmic space we wander
Alive, the sun's beam mixing with the moon's.

THE FORTIETH DAY

“ Away, you rascally Althea’s dream, away ! ”
II., King Henry IV.

Mere terror struck into our souls, one shaft
Sudden and swift ; our punishment was here.
The shapeless form of an avenging fear
Shuddered within her ; from the deep rich draught
Of lively labour that her nights had quaffed
Rises a serpent : prescience of next year,
The springtide ; may the Minotaur appear,
Prodigious offspring of the fatal graft ?

The worst has happened. Time must now discover
What love had hidden from the wittol’s eyes
(What hate may tell him if he read my song,
If he be subtle : not if he be wise)
In our despair came laughter to my lover :
“ All’s well as yet. I calculated wrong.”

THE FORTY-FIRST DAY

“ I am sick.”
Antony and Cleopatra.

How things are changed since Alice was so ill !
I, being in high fever, lay in bed,
While my love smoothed the pillows for my head :
Her calm looks christened me with dew to still
All chance of fever to the soul, and fill
My heart with pure love like a snowfall shed
Meekly, a blossom where frail white and red
Were never frenzied at some mad god's will.

She sat and gazed upon me all day long.
Sometimes she held my hands ; then she would weep,
And then stoop tenderly and kiss my lips,
Or lull me with some chaste and gentle song
Of angel love. Night's plume its dewfall drips
As she still sits and watches me to sleep.

THE FORTY-SECOND DAY

“ Pol. : No longer stay.
Leon. : One seven-night longer.
Pol. : Very sooth, to-morrow.”
 Winter’s Tale.

I could not let her leave me the day after.
Also we must wait till the month decide
Whether the mother stood behind the bride.
In any other case what love and laughter
Such tidings of an angel’s birth would waft her ;
Now, what a fear ! And so she would abide
Another vessel and another tide,
Until we held the key of the hereafter.

But this sad spectre could not change our calm.
The day went by more peaceful than a dream
Dreamt by a maiden in pure winds of balm ;
Love’s sweet still music like a far-off psalm
Thrilled our quiet pulses : with the intent supreme :
“ This one week more a century shall seem.”

AT LAST

O tearless sorrow of long years, depart !
O joy of minutes that be ages long,
Come ! Let the choral pulse and strength of song
Quickened, and the fire of lute and lyre dart,
An arrow red with blood and bright with art,
And cover all the fiery bloom of wrong
With blossoms blacker where the blood runs strong
As our lips pale, their life fled to the heart.

Surely we are as dead, we loving so,
So bitterly, so keenly : let no breath
Persuade us we are living and must die !
Better believe eternal kisses flow
Under the strong rude current miscalled death,
The lotus-river where our bodies lie !

THE FORTY-THIRD DAY

“ O theft most base
That we have stolen what we do fear to keep.”
Troilus and Cressida.

Impossible that we shall ever part !

The heart shrinks back from thinking it, the mind
Hates it, and prays as love is to be blind.

Yet we know well that no magician's art
Can keep our two selves near their single heart.

Self-mocked I urger her “ Come and leave behind
All fear and friends and children : we shall find
Love risen sole without a counterpart.”

Even while I begged her, I well knew she must.

We could not, loving to see her children laugh,
Let cowards twit them with their mother's lust.

Even our own purity confirmed the trust.

How long, O lord, how long ? Too long by half
Till men read, wondering, wedlock's epitaph.

THE FORTY-FOURTH DAY

“ lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death.”
Romeo and Juliet.

Sleep, O deep splendour of disastrous years,
Gone like a star fallen at the fall of night !
Wake, O mute mouth and majesty of light,
Made of no sound that even silence hears,
But born of strings intangible, of spheres
Shaken of love, a mightier music's might
Frailer to sound than dewfall is to sight !
Wake, O sweet soul incorporate of tears !

Or else dream on and let no tears begem
Love's crown of thorns, ensanguine diadem,
But let pale kisses blossom, starry shrine
Of lips most deathlike, that endure divine
Past sleep's, or parting's, or death's spoil of them
In the pomegranate walks of Proserpine !

THE FORTY-FIFTH DAY

“Peace, fool ! I have not done.”
Troilus and Cressida.

Thou knowest, O love, how tired our bodies grow
Forgotten in quick converse, love to love ;
How the flame flickers of the ghost above,
The spirit's kiss ; the sleepless to-and-fro
Movement of love's desire too strong to know
Or care for that it takes its substance of—
As if life's burden were not drear enough
Or death's deliverance not so far and slow.

Our bodies almost perish, with one thought
Crowned and completed, consecrate and shrined :
A perfect temple of fine amber wrought,
Whose shrine's the body and whose lamp the mind.
The heart is priest and sacrifice in one ;
And, where it sinned or sorrowed, shall atone.

THE FORTY-SIXTH DAY

“ Because I love you, I will let you know :
 my wife
 . . . like a fountain with a hundred spouts
 Did run pure blood.”

Julius Caesar.

Was it a sense of uttermost relief
 We gladdened with, and bade our fears forget ?
 Was there no subtle fragrance of regret ?
 For me, at least, a pang of perfect grief ?
Had it been otherwise, I would be chief
 And drive her to abandon all things yet
 In mere despair, that bye and bye shall get
 Young comfort in a babe beyond belief.

God would not curse and bless us to such measure ;
 We were not sad enough nor glad enough !
 A little time of misery and pleasure ;
Pain strangling half the ecstasy thereof—
 Such all our gain, who gained the utmost treasure,
 Gift of the wizard wand and cup of love.

THE FORTY-SEVENTH DAY

“Thou ever young, fresh, lov’d, and delicate wooer.”
Timon of Athens.

The little money that we had to spend
Was gone long since : the little more I stole
Followed : I pledged than all things but my soul
(On which the usurers refused to lend)
To raise our utmost, till a ship should send
Much plenty from the Sunset : to control
And stop her yet a little while, the whole
I meant to waste before the week should end.

Thus we went Northward to the capital,
Desolate huts and ways funereal,
An hateful town ; earthquake and heat and rain
Made the place wretched, did not love enchain
There even as here : what mattered aught at all
While love was hovering and our lips were fain ?

THE FORTY-EIGHTH DAY

“ Let us return
“ And strain what other means is left to us
In our dear peril.”

Timon of Athens.

Our love takes on a tinge of melancholy,
The six months glory of life past on earth
About to yield to Hades' bridal birth,
The world's sad sympathy with Persephone.
Yet I myself, while tuning to her key
My sighs of sorrow, mused in secret mirth :
“ I am convinced at last of money's worth,
For lack of which she cannot cross the sea.”

I told her, like a fool, a day too soon.
She went and told her story to the priest ;
She wept, and borrowed money of the beast.
She told me she would go : June fell from June.
I, left in limbo ; she, to front the elate
Cockoldy lawyer in the L . . . S . . . S . . .

THE FORTY-NINTH DAY

“ Let me twine
Mine arms about that body.”
Coriolanus.

I stole her money, even then to prove
She had no wings to fly with : but I knew
What to her hateful duty there was due,
And how the hateful system stank thereof :
I let her go, both weeping, both enough
Heart-broken : no farewell went ever through—
Words came not : only ever : “ I love you ! ”
With broken kisses and stained cheeks of love.

So all day long and half the night we wandered
Down deep lanes and in gardens, like lost souls.
Strong kisses that had surfeited a score
Of earthly bridals in an hour we squandered ;
And tears like fire, and looks like burning coals,
Without a word passed on for evermore.

THE FIFTIETH DAY

Suffolk : “ If I depart from thee I cannot live.

Margaret : “ let me hear from thee,

For whereso'er thou art in this world's globe
I have an Iris that shall find thee out.”

II. King Henry VI.

At noon she sailed for home, a weeping bride
Widowed before the honeymoon was done.
Always before the rising of the sun
I swore to come in spirit to her side
And lie like love ; and she at eventide
Swore to seek me and gather one by one
The threads of labyrinthine love new spun,
Cretan for monstrous shadows serpent-eyed.

So the last kiss passed like a poison-pain,
Knowing we might not ever kiss again.
Mad tears fell fast : “ Next year ! ” in cruel distress
We sobbed, and stretched our arms out, and despaired,
And—parted. Out the brute-side of truth flared ;
“ Thank God I've finished with that foolishness ! ”

II

Ah! there be two sides to all shapes of truth!
I might indeed go back to bitter toil,
Prune the mind's vine, and gather in the spoil
Rough-conquered from books, men, fields, without ruth
Pillaging Nature, pawning strength and youth
For some strange guerdon (or its counterfoil)
Gainless or not-to-be-gained, priestly or royal,
Profane, canaille—I know not, in good sooth!

I might do this: or else I might repose
Wrapped in the urned leaves of my love's blown rose,
Seek her in spirit, and commune, and wait
Her freedom and the rapture to enclose
In my own house her beauty intimate.
I am a fool, tossing a coin with Fate.

III

Is love indeed eternal? Otherwise
Is evolution an eternal plan?
Must I move upward in the stream of Man,
God-ward: my life as Christ to sacrifice,
As Buddha to repress: to grow so wise,
Space, time shall lie within my finger-span?
I know not which I wish: either I can;
Not both, unless all meditation lies.

I am not sure: if love as great as ours
May not be God to part of us at least,
Leaving the Rest to find its heights and powers
In other spheres; that, night's enamoured priest;
This, on the lake the dewy lotus-flowers
That lift their jewelled hearts toward the East.

AFTER

Now, when the sun falls in the dismal sky
And no light leaps beneath the plunging prow,
I know the fullness of my sorrow now :—
That all my talk and laughter was a lie ;
That as each hour widens the gulfs that sigh
Between us ; the truth scores upon my brow
Sigils of silence, burns in me the vow
“I love you, and shall love you till it die.’

Whether next year, as fondly we made oath
Shall see us meet at least, whether as wife
I shall at last gather the whole vow’s breath—
Not heaven nor hell shall break our solemn troth.
love you, and shall love you all my life.
I love you, and shall love you after death.