

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

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PROLOGUE

SIN : AN ODE

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

PROLOGUE

ix

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.

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.

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,

PROLOGUE

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 passes 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.
One lifted me : and, lo !
Thalassian, white as snow,

PROLOGUE

xi

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 rearsen 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 MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

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 sunlight.*

CORA VAVASOUR (*late of the Halls*).

ULRIC, *illegitimate son of Cora.*

MADELINE, *girl in love with Ulric.*

THE SPIRIT OF TRAGEDY, *as Chorus.*

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;

A

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

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.

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
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

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

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—aye, 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.

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 spear 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 !"

CORA.

Ah me ! if she could look within a glass
With spells and pantacles 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.

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
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—sober-sides!
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,
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.
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.

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.

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 a 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

THE MOTHER'S TRAGEDY

I I

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 spherèd 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 spent 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.

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.

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.

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 accursèd 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 ?

B

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 your 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 Ædipus—"I have profaned——"

ULRIC.

What sphinx more cruel ? What new Ædipus ?
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.

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.

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.

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 ! 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 !

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, 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.

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 thunder-struck, 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, look-
ing straight before her with uncomprehend-
ing eyes.

CURTAIN.

THE FATAL FORCE

“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.*

PACHAD, *her son (by the son of herself and the LEPER).*

THE LEPER, *her divorced husband.*

THE KING OF SYRIA.

AMENHATEP, *High Priest.*

Chorus of Priests.

Soldiers of Egypt.

Syrian Troops.

PACHAD.

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.

PACHAD.

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 !

PACHAD.

To-day
I, Horus, am to grow 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 ?

PACHAD.

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 th' 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.

PACHAD

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,

C

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. 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 !

PACHAD.

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.

THE FATAL FORCE

37

PACHAD.

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.

PACHAD.

I shall avenge it as a god. The land
Shall be made free.

AMENHATEP.

And the old gods have sway,
Re-born from incorruption.

PACHAD.

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 Toun, 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 tem-
pestuous 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 glowworm 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

A holy habitation for the shrine
Solitary, 'mid the night of broken brine
That foamed like starlight round the desolate shore.
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 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
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.]

PACHAD.

I am not Horus, but I shall be king.

Enter LEPER.

THE LEPER.

I am a leper, but I am the king.

PACHAD.

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.

PACHAD.

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.

PACHAD.

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.

PACHAD.

Yea, I am a god.
I am fire against the fountain of my birth,
The storm upon the earth that nurtured me !
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.*

PACHAD.

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,
Centered 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 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.

PACHAD.

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 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
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,

The mother of all things, the full desire,
The immitigable, intelligible one,
Reality beyond realities !
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 !

THE FATAL FORCE

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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 lotos 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 lotos 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.

PACHAD (*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,
And 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.]*

PACHAD (*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.

PACHAD.

I am the avenger of my own false birth.

RATOUM.

I have loved thee ever, I have made thee god.

PACHAD.

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.

PACHAD.

I am a god to execute my will.

[Threatens her with his dagger.]

RATOUM.

Mercy ! Thou canst not strike a woman down !

PACHAD.

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,
and 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.]

PACHAD.

I am done with godhead : let me be a man.

CHORUS.

Hail, Pachad, king of Egypt and the Nile !
Hail, Pachad, Lord of the two lands, all hail !

PACHAD.

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!
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! White noon
Of tremendous flashing fire,
Spirit of the moon!
Trembling essence of desire
Triple-tongued, thy flame is kindled

At the fountain-heads of light ;
Fanned to whirling fiery flight,
As the spark of life is dwindled
In the sacramental span,
In the star that flashes white
In the body of a man ;
By the swart Osirian power,
If, when strikes the holy hour
Of the holy sacrifice,
Angels swoon from starry homes
Full of inexpressive eyes,
That the blood that swells and foams
Lighten with the fervid air,
To create from death's despair
Masteries of music, domes
Gilded with the splendid essence of the highest
 hope of man ;
If the sombre stream that ran
From the smitten breast be kindled with the
 sacrificial fire :
If the altar set above
In the palaces of love
Glow with this, the perfect passion
And sublime desire
From the clay of Fate to fashion
His own glory, to inspire
Worlds impossible to thought
With the beauties, subtly wrought,
Of his own creative strength.
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-resound-
ing light!
Let the might
Of Osirian sacrifice
Dwell upon the self-slain king!
Consecrate him, consecrate him, consecrate, ye
holy ones,
The imperial mind
Thrice, and thrice the higher soul,
Thrice the spirit, till the sun's
Utter glory burn upon him, till the freed Osiris find
He is god above mankind,
Thrice united unto man,
As the living gold that ran
Molten to the fiery sea,
Mixed in its eternity.
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.*]

THE FATAL FORCE

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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 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 !

THE MOTHER AT THE SABBATH

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 !

68 THE MOTHER AT THE SABBATH

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 ?

Abbess, sweet 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 ! Come, baby, to the band :
Our God may kiss you—yes, he will not spare you !

THE MOTHER AT THE SABBATH 69

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”—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.

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 harmony.

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
Always 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—aye, 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 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.

74 THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

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 !

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 grow
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!

76 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 sword !
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 !

MADONNA OF THE GOLDEN EYES 77

"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 !

78 MADONNA OF THE GOLDEN EYES

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!"

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 !

MORS JANUA AMORIS

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 there 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
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.
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 fluidic 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 !
Let our bodies meet and mix
On the spirit's crucifix !

SIDONIA THE SORCERESS

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 WHORE IN HEAVEN

THERE dwells an image, deathlessly divine,
With beauty's armour panoplied, more strong
Than Styx could make Æacides ; a shrine
Of subtle passion, and unsleeping song,
In every soul that knows the emotional
Swift sound that wings the slave's despairing call.
There, in the harbour of supreme success,
It lingers, wrapt in its own loveliness.

No invocation of the myriad rays
Of thousand-coloured flowers may move its peace :
No manifold keen music where the ways
Of lofty corridors, and foaming seas,
And crag-hewn pinnacles, accept the wind's
Wild fingers : not even the eagle-piercing mind's
Chill sword of thought : a woman's agony
Yet draws its beauty from the sacred sea.

Hear how this fell. A stern Dissenter dwelt
Lone in a fertile valley : lonely he,
Lonelier the sharp-faced wife : each day they knelt
In loveless worship : thrice a week they see

The chill damp chapel. God denied them not
One chance of sight and love : their bed begot
The loveliest child angels e'er prayed above,
A maiden that an anchorite would love.

She grew to beauty and to thoughts divine,
Yet knelt each day in prayer to such a Thing
As could not (so she knew) create the vine,
The air, the linnet, and the water-spring.
And every week some red-nosed ranter jarred
Her tender ears—(yes, life was very hard !).
Then she guessed Love. A village boy she took,
And drew his soul out with her amorous look.

The stream sang merrier and the grass grew green ;
The leaves made murmur as she drew him down
Into her maiden arms : the far-off queen
She guessed so happy in her golden crown
She never envied after : for she wrung
Love's secret, understanding, heart and tongue,
Its strange desire ; sage heads the linnets nod,
Chirping : " So Lilian has found her God ! "

No ! For she might not in her joy discern
The real fountain of delight. She took
The carrion crow to be the golden erne,
Saw dainty covers, and misread the book.
The world was open to her now—she went
From passion unto passion, sacrament
To profanation : and the village knew
She asked for lovers, and cared little who.

There is one end to this mistake of hers.

Imagine terror and the father's wrath,
The mother's dry-eyed scorn: the very curs
Yelp as she weeps along the little path
Toward the train: imagine how the years
Mingled her wine-cup with the wanton's tears,
And leave her worn and weary and alone;
A face of brass, a serpent's heart of stone.

She had one curse: against the cruel men
That reared her without knowledge of mankind,
Her parents and their leprous faith; but then
She had one virtue: pitiful her mind
Toward all gentle spirits: she had given
Many a sister half a help to heaven;
Many a sorrowing soul that knew her face
Lovely behind her destiny's disgrace.

The stern Dissenter was a godly man,
And robbed his master. Flying from his home,
He reached the city, poor, without a plan
To fill his belly. Wretched did he roam
Begging through London. On a winter's night
His daughter found him, frozen in the light
Of some cold lamp: her wheels triumphant roll.
She laughed with Hell, and cursed him from her soul.

Then suddenly came pity. She commands
The carriage to stay still. For nigh an hour
She set her teeth and clenched her gauded hands.
Alternate gusts her swaying soul devour.

Hate, triumph, justice, with their hardness strove
Pity, pure pity ; and, I think, the love
Of some God's angel. Now the strife is past ;
She took her father home with her at last.

Now, in that moment, quite a miracle !
Through all the shell of miserable sin,
Through all the blackness of the gulf of Hell,
She sees Truth's angel. She is locked within
No irrefragable bars ; her spirit woke
From its dull slavery ; her passion broke
Her history's prison, from that hour to endure
Mighty as tempest and as spring wind pure.

After a year her changed life met its fate.
There came a man and loved her, and her soul
The first time knew true sympathy. Elate,
That pure joy filled her body's broken bowl
With infinite fresh fire and purer wine ;
Her whole life grew one exquisite divine
Flower of the sunlight ; memory alone
Held its stern sceptre on a cruel throne.

She simply fled and would not see his face.
A noble folly ! In the countryside
Where her harsh youth was nurtured, in the place
Where she revolted, she lay down and died.
With crossed hands folded on her budded breast
She closed her eyes, and slept the sweet long rest
Where the true peace of purity is drawn.
She lay there dead ; her spirit sought the dawn.

Where the vast whiteness of the Godhead sate,
A fearful glory shone upon the throne,
And through the diamond music of the gate
She entered, unresisting and alone,
Up to God's presence. Then that calm voice rolled
Flecking its whiteness with immortal gold :
" Daughter of Earth, take thou thy proper stand,
Virgin of Virgins, at My own right hand ! "

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 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 rhymers, 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 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.

THE GROWTH OF GOD

(AS DEVELOPED ON A MOONLESS NIGHT IN
THE TROPICS)

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 be-
neath 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 .

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.
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 when the æons grow to millionfold,
Hath earth one mystery, one glory new ?
Are not these thoughts immeasurably old ?
Only—day breaks as I am musing sadly ;
The phantoms scatter—is not earth divine ?
I leap to saddle ; gallop forward madly
Into the morning strong and keen as wine.

The gold air whistles and the glad horse thunders,
Spurning the quiet woodland : now the light
Stirs bird and beast—a thousand glowing wonders
Flash into glory, lambent to the sight.
I know, I feel the Godhead set above me,
My own high part in His celestial sphere ;
In life, in death, the universe cries—love me !—
God in my heart, and all the world is dear !

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 blythe.
But there’s another, when the body dieth—
Hast thou no knowledge what the carcass 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 nor for life nor death;” they said,
“Only for love.” “What difference?” said I,
“Dead or alive, I love thee utterly.”

THE PESSIMIST'S PROGRESS

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.

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 triumphs, 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 the 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.

EPILOGUE

A DEATH IN THESSALY

Μόνος Θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐργῶ.

—ÆSCH., *Fr. Niobe.*

FAREWELL! O Light of Day, O torch of
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, 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, grey faces;
Fallen on the stubble are the rotten sheaves;
The vicious ghosts abound; and Chronos' paces
No soul deceives.

[[[440]]]

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 lusted
The main event.

Ay! the wild whirlings in the woodland reaches;
The ghastly smile upon the Stone God's 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.

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 land 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 dew the woodland Ones bedizen ;
So—so for me !

EPILOGUE

III

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.

