

ALICE

ALICE: AN ADULTERY

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

FROM the Author's Diary it is apparent that the events and thoughts of each day correspond exactly with the sonnets, so that he used no "art" whatever. The book is a statement of plain truth.

To any idiot who may wish to argue that the Propagation of Religious Truth is not to be served by a realistic study of an illicit amour, people who have leisure to do so will reply by inquiring why it is that similar studies occupy so large a portion of Holy Writ, the works of Shakespeare, Shelley, Robert Browning, and other authors, all of whom are acknowledged to have contributed not a little to the aim of our Society.

The present edition is slightly abridged from the privately issued first edition on China paper, of which a few copies (at One Guinea net) remain.

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SOCIETY
FOR THE
PROPAGATION
OF
RELIGIOUS
TRUTH

BOLESKINE
FOYERS
INVERNESS
1905

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INTRODUCTION

Yokohama, April, 1901.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On occasions I am as sensitive to inexplicable

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

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

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

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

I distinctly heard—

“ These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.”

He paused, sighing, then continued—

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

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

“ Who are you?” he asked.

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

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

There was a pause.

I stood still, thinking.

Here was surely the very strangest outcast of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What poetry?”

I told him Shelley.

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

“Which Tennyson?” I asked.

The answer seemed to please him.

“In Memoriam?” he replied.

“He is a neurasthenic counter-jumper.”

“And of the Idylls?”

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

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

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

"Ay me, they died—as I am dying now."

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

He seemed to forget me altogether.

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

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

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

he began drowsily.

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

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

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

he went on unheeding.

I left him to his peace.

My re-appearance restored harmony. The fulvous and fulgurous lady grew comparatively tranquil; the pair withdrew. The old woman lay

sprawled along the divan sunk in a drunken torpor.

I unrolled the manuscript and read.

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

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

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

* This has been lost.

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

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

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

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

WHAT LAY BEFORE

B

MESSALINE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CALIFORNIA

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

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

* *Line 4 cannot with any certainty be deciphered.*

MARGARET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALICE: AN ADULTERY

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“ Commit not with man's sworn spouse
King Lear.

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

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

THE FIRST DAY

“Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?”
As you like it.

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

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

THE SECOND DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRD DAY

"My love is most immaculate white and red."
Love's Labour's Lost.

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

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

THE FOURTH DAY

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

I took another way to shield my love.

I turned my thoughts to the abyss of sky,
Pierced the frail veil, and sought Eternity;
Where the Gods reign most passionless above

A I foolish loves of men, and weary of
The slow procession of Earth's mystery;
Where worlds, not men, are born and live and die,
And aeons flit unnoticed as a dove.

Thither I fled, busied myself with these;

When—lo! I saw her shadow following!

In every cosmic season-tide of spring

She rose, being the spring: in utter peace

She was with me and in me: thus I saw

Ours was not love, but destiny, and law.

REINCARNATION

In Life what hope is always unto men?

Stories of Arthur that shall come again
Cleansing the Earth of her eternal stain,
Elias, Charlemagne, Christ. What matter then?

What matter who, or how, or even when?

If we but look beyond the primal pain,
And trust the Future to write all things plain,
Graven on brass with the predestined pen.

This is the doom. Upon the blind blue sky

A little cloud, no larger than an hand!

Whether I live and love, or love and die,
I care not: either way I understand.

To me—to live is Christ; to die is gain:
For I, I also, I shall come again.

THE FIFTH DAY

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

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

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

THE SIXTH DAY

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

Othello.

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

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

THE SEVENTH DAY

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

3 Henry VI.

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

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

THE EIGHTH DAY

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

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

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

THE NINTH DAY

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

I Henry VI.

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

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

THE TENTH DAY

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

Hamlet.

The mere result of all this was a dream.

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

The foulest traitor of all womankind

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

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

THE ELEVENTH DAY

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

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

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

THE TWELFTH DAY

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

The Sonnets.

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

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

THE POEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE THIRTEENTH DAY

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

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

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

THE FOURTEENTH DAY

"Some there be that shadows kiss;
Such have but a shadow's bliss;
There be fools alive, I wis,"
Merchant of Venice.

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

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

THE FIFTEENTH DAY

“ Were kisses all the joys in bed,
One woman would another wed.”
Sonnets to Sundry
Notes of Music

Another day rose of unceasing fire :

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

The silly “ Thus far and no farther, nigher
Each hour to break (poor arbitrary form !)
As each kiss bade our bodies wed and warm
Give love one chance before its wave retire.

Not so: this trial was the tiniest

Man ever knew, confronted afterward
With giant fears and passions ;—long to fight
And last to yield a Maenad-swelling breast
Unto a furious Dionysian horde
Drunk not with wine, but with avenging night.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY

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

All's Well.

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

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

ALICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY

"Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant."
Tempest.

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

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

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY

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

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

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

THE NINETEENTH DAY

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

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

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

THE TWENTIETH DAY

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

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

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

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY

"Mal. Dispute it like a man.
 M'cd. I shall do so.
 But I must also feel it as a man."
 Macbeth.

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

Solve me the riddle of the dream who can!
 That night I sought a new toy for a lure,
 And she would not: but knew how hard to endure
Is love like ours, the love of purity.

 So she: "Dispute it like a man!" and I:
 " But I must also feel it as a man!"

Note. *Eheieh* is the Hebrew for "I am that I am." Its numerical value is 21. That coincidence is possibly conscious enough, but I was not aware at the time that this was the 21st day.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY

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

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

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

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY

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

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

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

“Alice told me to-day that she had cancer of the uterus.
Vae Capricorno!” (Author's Diary.)—ED.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

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

Of course I might have known it was a lie.
Nathless, I wept all morning and despaired.
Nothing for any life of earth I cared,
Neither for heaven : I railed against the sky,
Hating the earth, the sea, the witchery
Of all the universe : my breast I bared
And cursed God, hoping lightning ; and I dared
Not ask my love “ In very truth—you die? ”

I could not bear it longer ; then she spake :
“ I lied indeed, love, for mine honour’s sake ”
And I reproached her for her love’s distrust,
Saying “ I would not so in any wise
Have lowered love unto the level of lust :
But now—” I hid my thought in tears and sighs.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

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

Alice was desperately ill at morn.

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

The child slept elsewhere that she might sleep well.

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

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

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

Merry Wives of Windsor.

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

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

UNDER THE PALMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not only as the kiss of tender lovers—

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

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

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

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

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

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

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

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

Twelfth Night.

A curious conflict this of love and fear,
Honour and lust, and truth and trust beguiled;
One in the semblance of a rose-bright child:—
The other in a shape more gross and clear,

A fiercer woman-figure crowned severe
With garlands woven of scourges, but whose wild
Breast beat with splendour of sin, whose looks were mild,
Hiding the cruel smile behind a tear.

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

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRTIETH DAY

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

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

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

THE DAY WITHOUT A NUMBER *

* O never shall the sun that morrow see,
Macbeth.

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

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

* Through crossing the 180th degree in a Westward direction.—ED.

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRTY-SECOND DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRTY-THIRD DAY

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

Nathless she locked her cabin-door to me.

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

She never told: but I might surely see
In the drawn face and haggard eyes what vast
Voices of misery had held her fast,
And made her curse her own lock's cruelty.

So by her beauty and my love we swore,
And by the light within mine eyes, by her
Sweet shame: that never so we sunder again.
But she: “You swear ‘by thy bright face’ in vain;
‘By thy sweet self’ you grow a perjurer;
Who have shamed my face and made me but an whore.”

THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY

Ben. Stop there, stop there.

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

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

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

THE THIRTY-FIFTH DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRTY-SIXTH DAY

"'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity."
Phoenix and Turtle.

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

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

LETHE

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

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

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY

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

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

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

THE THIRTY-NINTH DAY

"Had I no eyes but ears, my ears would love
That inward beauty and invisible."
Venus and Adonis.

Note from this day no possible event.

All secrets told, and all desires fulfilled,
Primitive passion of our soul have killed.
We dwell within a calmer element

Perfectly pure and perfectly content.

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

Fire only is our substance ; there we dwell,

The Salamandrine with the Salamander.

No fuel to crack, no water to make tunes,

No air to blow us hither and thither ; well !

At our own will through cosmic space we wander
Alive, the sun's beam mixing with the moon's.

THE FORTIETH DAY

“ Away, you rascally Althea's dream, away ! ”
2 King Henry IV.

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

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

THE FORTY-FIRST DAY

"I am sick."
Antony and Cleopatra.

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

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

THE FORTY-SECOND DAY

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

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

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

AT LAST

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

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

THE FORTY-THIRD DAY

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

Impossible that we shall ever part!

The heart shrinks back from thinking it, the mind
Hates it, and prays as love is to be blind.
Yet we know well that no magician's art
Can keep our two selves near their single heart.
Self-mocked I urged her “ Come and leave behind
All fear and friends and children: we shall find
Love risen sole without a counterpart.”

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

We could not, loving to see children laugh,
Let cowards twit them with their mother's lust.
Even our own purity confirmed the trust.
How long, O Lord, how long? Too long by half
Till men read, wondering, wedlock's epitaph.

THE FORTY-FOURTH DAY

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

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

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

THE FORTY-FIFTH DAY

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

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

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

THE FORTY-SIXTH DAY

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

Julius Caesar.

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

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

THE FORTY-SEVENTH DAY

“Thou ever young, fresh, loved, and delicate wooer.”
Timon of Athens.

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

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

THE FORTY-EIGHTH DAY

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

Timon of Athens

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

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

THE FORTY-NINTH DAY

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

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

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

THE FIFTIETH DAY

Suffolk. "If I depart from thee I cannot live.
Margaret. let me hear from thee.
For wheresoe'er thou art in this world's globe
I have an Iris that shall find thee out."
2 King Henry VI.

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

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

II

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

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

III

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

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

AFTER

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

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

② GH 943
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