

IV

The Thuamaturge

I

Then the Lord answered me out of the wind
 Out of the whirlwind did He answer me;
 Gird up thy loins now like a man, and find
 If thou canst answer like a man to Me!
Who art thou darkening counsel by thy word,
 And in thine ignorance accusing Them
 Who, ere thy prayer was formulated, heard
 And crowned it with its passion's diadem ?
Who is the Son of Man, that We should mind him ?
 Or visit the vain virgin of his pleasance ?
 Yet ever as we went We stood behind him
 And compassed her with Our continual presence ?
From the black whirlwind the most high God sayeth :
 Why did ye doubt, o ye of little faith ?

II

I answer Thee out of the utmost dust.

I am a worm, I abase myself, I cry
Against myself that I am found unjust
More than all they that dwell beneath the sky.

I do repent, I do lament, o Thou

Who hast watched over us and cared for us,
Beating i' the dust this consecrated brow,
And answer Thee in broken murmur thus,

That I am altogether base and vile,

That Thou art altogether good and great,
That Thou hast given the guerdon grace for guile
Even while I lifted up myself to Fate

And cursed Thee. And from me who scorned to Pray

Thou hast rolled the sad sepulchral stone away.

III

On this wise ; that by uttermost good Fortune
I met you walking out in London city,
Even when from Heaven I did not dare importune
Hardly to pass your house ! The Gods took pity
They whirled us in a chariot of fire
About the highest heavens for many an age !
So Regent's Park may seem to hot desire ;
So the archangel gets a cabman's wage ;
So all the aeons that pass still leave one time
To take one's lunch at the appointed hour —
This is the difference between prose and rime
And this the great gulf fixed for leaf and flower.
The British public grunts and growls and grovels,
Swilling its hogwash of neurotic novels.

IV

We knew enough to wake to choral rapture
All answering Nature : I will swear the sun
Came out ; you saw the moulting trees recapture
Their plumage, and the green destroy the dun.
Nothing could jar ; the British workman took
A kindly interest in our kind caresses ;
The loafing nursemaid and the musing cook
Agreed with us entirely. Love impresses
Its seal upon the world ; is skilled to wake
The sympathy of everything that lives.
Kindliness, flows, not venom, from the snake ;
The trodden worm dies duly – but forgives
The cabman asked four shillings for the job,
And almost boggled at my glad ten bob !

V

Oh ! it was rapture and madness once again
To turn our tears to kisses brimming over
The mouths that never were too wide and fain
For lover to hold intercourse with lover.
Ah ! we were owls of dusk to doubt the light,
Bats to mistrust the Wolf's tail's holy warning :
" Sorrow endureth maybe for a night,
But joy must surely cometh in the morning ".
Joy, ay ! what joy poured straight from the high treasure,
The inexhaustible treasure of delight
The gods have poured us, pouring overmeasure
Because we love with all our life and might.
Believe me, it is better than all prayers
To show the gods our love surpasses theirs !

VI

Nay, even thus you could not credit Fate,
 Even in my arms close cuddled as you lay
 With hard-shut eyes and lips inebriate
 With their own kisses all this happy day.
Nay, but blaspheming you put hope aside,
 Bade me forget you, swore yourself a liar,
 Smiled through the words because you knew you lied
 Knew that – what waters can put out our fire ?
So we amused ourselves with cunning brisk
 Careful arrangements to forget each other.
 You cut that love-curl from your neck at risk
 Of comment – at the slightest – from your mother.
You gave it me – God forget me, dear girl,
 When I forget to treasure up that curl!

VII

Your loveliness should help me to forget you ;
Your murmurous " I love you " like soft bees
Humming should help ; although my kisses fret you,
They are intended but to give you ease,
And help you to forget me ; then, the fixed
Ardent intentness of my cat-green eyes
Flecked with red fire is like a potion mixed
Straight out of Lethe, or divination lies.
If there be truth in augury, your lips
Fastened to mine should be a certain spell
To put your memory of me in eclipse : —
In short, if all be true that sages tell,
Two days of absence with roast beef and beer
Will cure me of you perfectly, my dear !

VIII

Why did you play with such ungracious folly ?
Because our passion is too bitter-sweet ?
Because the acute and maddening melancholy
Is stronger than the rapture when we meet ?
Because you weep beyond your own control
Like to one wounded bleeding inwardly ?
Because you are not the mistress of your soul
Mighty enough to master fate and me ?
It cuts me to the heart to see the brine
Not falling from your bad bewitching eyes,
To feel you are weeping in the central shrine
Whose woes the peristyle may not surprise.
I want to treat you as a lover rather ;
You make me lecture to you like a father !

IX

Write in you heart, dear maid, that Hitherto
The Lord hath helped us. Give him duly praise
(As I have given Him for making you).
Pray not, ask not for wealth and length of days
Or even for wisdom, lest one day you find
That you are saddled with some thousand grooms
(You bear the case of Solomon in mind !)
All in frock-coats and helmeted (with plumes)
– A scarcely pleasant prospect ! Just give thanks
O Lord, for what we have received, Amen !
And then if Jordan overflows his banks,
Our vines increase, and one seed turns to ten,
Keep on thanksgiving ! Even if things go wrong,
Howls are less pleasant to the ear than song.

X

Keep on thanksgiving ! We are tenfold blest
 Beyond others, simply having found each other.
 Were we to part for ever, breast from breast,
 Now, even now, there would not be another
In all the earth that should not envy aright
 With plenty cause our short-lived happiness.
 No life can hold one half-an-hour's delight
 Such as we had – this morning ! Why then, bless,
Bless all that lives and moves and hath its being !
 Bless all the Gods, without omitting one !
 Bless all the company of heaven, agreeing
 To veil their fires to our stupendous sun !
Bless all the lesser glories that excite
 In the great gladness of our mother light !

XI

How purely unexpected was the chance !
 When things looked blackest, on a sudden, the sun !
 Chance is another word for ignorance ;
 We do not know how all these things are done.
But what has happened once may happen again,
 And " Hitherto the Lord hath helped us ", dear !
 " History repeats itself " – which makes it plain
 That " Evermore the Lord will help us. " Fear
And sorrow are folly ; you must sleep o' nights
 (Try reading me !) and I can promise you
 You will awake to more divine delights
 Than ever in the world you guessed or knew.
Stick to it ! One fine day you'll find on waking
 Me in your arms, and – oh ! your body aching !

XII

This is an effort of prophetic skill
Not passing range of human calculation.
A woman gets exactly what she will
If she keeps willing it sans divagation.
To have me secretly and altogether
Yours is your will – unless your kisses lied.
Sooner or later we shall slip the tether
And all the world before us deep and wide
Gape like the abyss, through which we fall to find
Strange equilibrium without support,
Strange rapture without sense, and void of mind
Strange ecstasies that mock the name of thought.
Sooner or later, Lola ! Circumstance
Bows before those who never miss a chance.

XIII

This is enough to make a donkey laugh !
I talk like a Dutch uncle ; and you listen
Like a man reading his own epitaph.
But, really ! Truly ! How our glad eyes glisten !
How our hearts rump ! Whatever we may say,
Have never a doubt, Lord, that it's all thanksgiving !
If Thou dost thus for people every day,
How very easy Thou must make a living !
We would be like Thee ! if we had the power
We would fill all folk with supernal blisses,
Breed life's sweet briar to the full June flower
And on their praises feed our proper kisses.
For as you said " However kind the gods are,
We could be kinder yet I think the odds are ".

XIV

Let me take leave of you as heretofore
 With solemn kiss and sacred reverence !
 I love you better and I love you more
 Daily, and whether you are hither or hence.
I adore you as I adore the holy ones
 That do abide exalted in their shrine
 Starry beyond mere splendour of stars and suns,
 Drunken beyond mere Dionysian wine.
Thus do I hold you ; thus I pray you hold
 Me as a secret and a blessed chrisam
 That you have gained to adorn your house of gold
 By some strange silent sacred exorcism.
You have said 'I love you' — sacraments are true —
 I exchange the salutation. I love you.