

SYNTHESIS.

WHEN I think of the hundreds of women I have
loved from time to time,
White throats and living bosoms where a kiss might
creep or climb,
Smooth eyes and trembling fingers, faint lips or mur-
derous hair,
All tunes of love's own music, most various and rare ;
When I look back on life, as a mariner on the deep
Sees, tranced, the white wake foaming, fancies the
nereids weep ;
As, on a mountain summit in the thunders and the snow,
I look to the shimmering valley and weep : I loved
you so !
For a moment cease the winds of God upon the reverent
head ;
I lose the life of the mountain, and my soul is with the
dead ;
Yet am I not unaware of the splendour of the height,
Yet am I lapped in the glory of the Sun of Life and
Light :—
Even so my heart looks out from the harbour of God's
breast,
Out from the shining stars where it entered into rest—

Once more it seeks in memory for reverence, not regret,
And it loves you still, my sisters! as God shall not
forget.

It is ill to blaspheme the silence with a wicked whispered
thought—

How still they were, those nights! when this web of
things was wrought!

How still, how terrible! O my dolorous tender brides,
As I lay and dreamt in the dark by your shameful
beautiful sides!

And now you are mine no more, I know; but I cannot
bear

The curse—that another is drunk on the life that
stirs your hair:

Every hair was alive with a spark of midnight's delicate
flame,

Or a glow of the nether fire, or an old illustrious shame.

Many, so many, were ye to make one Womanhood—

A thing of fire and flesh, of wine and glory and blood,

In whose rose-orient texture a golden light is spun,

A gossamer scheme of love, as water in the sun

Flecked by wonderful bars, most delicately crossed,

Worked into wedded beauties, flickering, never lost—

That is the spirit of love, incarnate in your flesh!

Your bodies had wearied me, but your passion was ever
fresh:

You were many indeed, but your love for me was one.

Then I perceived the stars to reflect a single sun—

Not burning suns themselves, in furious regular race,

But mirrors of midnight, lit to remind us of His face.

Thus I beheld the truth : ye are stars that give me light ;
But I read you aright and learn I am walking in the
night.

Then I turned mine eyes away to the Light that is
above you :

The answering splendid Dawn arose, and I did not
love you.

I saw the breaking light, and the clouds fled far away :
It was the resurrection of the Golden Star of Day.

And now I live in Him ; my heart may trace the years
In drops of virginal blood and springs of virginal tears.

I love you now again with an undivided song.

Because I can never love you, I cannot do you wrong.

I saw in your dying embraces the birth of a new
embrace ;

In the tears of your pitiful faces, another Holier Face.

Unknowing it, undesiring, your lips have led me higher ;

You have taught me purer songs that your souls did
not desire ;

You have led me through your chambers, where the
secret bolt was drawn,

To the chambers of the Highest and the secrets of the
Dawn !

You have brought me to command you, and not to be
denied ;

You have taught me in perfection to be unsatisfied ;

You have taught me midnight vigils, when you smiled
in amorous sleep ;

You have even taught a man the woman's way to weep.

So, even as you helped me, blindly, against your will,

So shall the angel faces watch for your own souls still.
A little pain and pleasure, a little touch of time,
And you shall blindly reach to the subtle and sublime ;
You shall gather up your girdles to make ready for the
 way,
And by the Cross of Suffering climb seeing to the Day.
Then we shall meet again in the Presence of the Throne,
Not knowing; yet in Him! O Thou! knowing as we
 are known.