

THE MUSE

AN arrow of light hath splintered
The long-forgotten abode
Where for a myriad aeons hath wintered
An all-but-fossilized toad.
Now, exposed to the light
Of the sun, he shall gasp and die,
And be buried once more in the night,
Save he grow wings and fly!
But, die or fly, a jewel
Is hidden within his head
That gives green light that is cruel,
And a fiercer light that is red,
And a soft blue light that is human,
And a yellow light divine,
And a white light that came from a woman,
And a silver light that is mine!

Wonderment calm of the afterglow
Of daylight,—I knew thee how long ago!

Once I found thee, alone, forlorn,
Waiting the call of the windy morn.

Now I dream of an olden sea,
And sea-birds twittering melody.

Once I found thee, O sister mine,
Rising, re-born, from the foam-flecked brine—

Thee! My Night, my mother obscene,
Gentle and curling and dark and green.

Mother of slime, and the things of dust;
Wonder in pain and joy and lust—

Mother of all men, queen of love's star,
I tread in the wake of thy fairy car.

Methought I had left you to die, to drown,
To burn, to fade, in the bright-lit town.

“Nay,” you whisper; “the way to death
Lies through the river that gave me breath.

“Old, forgotten, Lethean, dumb,
I wonder if thou in the night be come.”

Silence calls from the wind-swept mere,
An enchanted lyre in the hemisphere.

“O windy moon! O pure pale curse!
Lady-love of the universe!

“O rose-lipped daughter of foam and fire,
Faded, paled, in thy lost desire!

“O silence informed by the secret rune
Writ of old at the set o’ the moon!

“Hush! for the wind goes sailing by
Under the dome of the red, blind sky.”

“Tell me, tell me before I go,
Lady mine, was it ever so?

“Ever since first thou cam’st from the sea,
And didst bear in thine eyes her mystery?”

“Nay, or thou hadst not found me now,
Stalking the marshes with gray-starred brow.

“I came wrought, ere thou wast born,
Into the land of wine and corn.

“I came unknown from the sea’s glad grace,
But I bore her sorrows upon my face.

“I sprang from the loins of the god of fire,
And I bore the lust of my lusty sire.

“So to thee am I all unknown;
So to thee do I sing alone.

“I am forgotten, a child of grace,
Wandering over the heaven’s face.

“The darkest place in the aching tide
Is the bridal-bed of the wondrous bride.

“Catch me and hold me, at last, at last;
Let me lie in thine arms asleep from the past.

“Let me feel thy kisses sink down on me,
Like the silver rain that falls on the sea.

“Make me thine own, O singer of flame;
Let me nestle close: from the skies I came.”

So she sleeps in my arms, and I
Wake, all lonely, under the sky.

From under the sky she has flown, and I
Know not whither under the sky.

So she came from the storied past,
But I shall know her at last, at last!