

EBONY AND CRYSTAL

BY

CLARK ASHTON SMITH

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BY

CLARK ASHTON SMITH

AUTHOR OF

*The Star-Treader and Other Poems*  
*Odes and Sonnets*

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CLARK ASHTON SMITH

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DEDICATION  
TO  
SAMUEL LOVEMAN

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## PREFACE

Who of us care to be present at the accouchment of the immortal? I think that we so attend who are first to take this book in our hands. A bold assertion, truly, and one demonstrable only in years remote from these; and—dust wages no war with dust. But it is one of those things that I should most “like to come back and see.”

Because he has lent himself the more innocently to the whispers of his subconscious daemon, and because he has set those murmurs to purer and harder crystal than we others, by so much the longer will the poems of Clark Ashton Smith endure. Here indeed is loot against the forays of moth and rust. Here we shall find none or little of the sentimental fat with which so much of our literature is larded. Rather shall one in Imagination’s “misty mid-region,” see elfin rubies burn at his feet, witch-fires glow in the nearer cypresses, and feel upon his brow a wind from the unknown. The brave hunters of fly-specks on Art’s cathedral windows will find little here for their trouble, and both the stupid and the over-sophisticated would best stare owlshly and pass by: here are neither kindergartens nor skyscrapers. But let him who is worthy by reason of his clear eye and unjaded heart wander across these borders of beauty and mystery and be glad.

GEORGE STERLING.

San Francisco, October 28, 1922.



### **ARABESQUE**

Like arabesques of ebony,  
The cypresses, in silhouette,  
Fantastically cleave and fret  
A moon of yellow ivory.

The coldly colored rays illumine  
A leafy pattern manifold,  
And all the field is overscrolled  
With curiously figured gloom.

Like arabesques of ebony,  
Or like Arabian lattices,  
Forever seem the cypresses  
Before a moon of ivory.

## **BEYOND THE GREAT WALL**

Beyond the far Cathayan wall, A thousand leagues athwart the sky, The  
scarlet stars and mornings die, The gilded moons and sunsets fall.

Across the sulphur-colored sands With bales of silk the camels fare,  
Harnessed with vermil and with vair, Into the blue and burning  
lands.

And, ah, the song the drivers sing, To while the desert leagues away— A  
song they sang in old Cathay, Ere youth had left the eldest king,—

Ere love and beauty both grew old, And wonder and romance were flown  
On fiery wings to worlds unknown, To stars of undiscovered gold.

And I their alien words would know, And follow past the lonely Wall,  
Where gilded moons and sunsets fall, As in a song of long ago.

## TO OMAR KHAYYAM

Omar, within thy scented garden-close, When passed with eventide  
The starward incense of the waning rose— Too fair and dear and precious  
to abide After the glad and golden death of spring— Omar, thou  
heardest then,  
Above the world of men,  
The mournful rumour of an iron wing, The sough and sigh of desolating  
years, Whereof the wind is as the winds that blow Out of a  
lonesome land of night and snow, Where ancient winter weeps  
with frozen tears; And in thy bodeful ears,  
The brief and tiny lisp  
Of petals curled and crisp,  
Fallen at Eve in Persia's mellow clime, Was mingled with the mighty  
sound of time.

Omar, thou knewest well  
How the fair days are sorrowful and strange With time's inexorable  
mystery And terror ineluctable of change: Upon thine eyes the  
bleak and bitter spell Of vision, thou didst see,  
As in a magic glass,  
The moulded mists and painted shadows pass— The ghostly pomps we  
name reality.  
And, lo, the level field,  
With broken fane and throne,  
And dust of old, unfabled cities sown, In unremembering years was made  
to yield, From out the shards of Pow'r, The pillars frail and small  
That lift for capital  
The blood-like bubble of the poppy-flow'r; And crowns were crumbled  
for the airy gold  
The crocus and the daffodil should hold As inalienable dow'r.  
Before thy gaze, the sad unvaried green The cypresses like robes funereal  
wear, Was woven on the gradual looms of air, From threadbare silk  
and tattered sendaline That clothed some ancient queen; And from  
the spoilt vermilion of her mouth, The myrtles rose, and from her

ruined hair, And eyes that held the summer's ardent drouth In  
blown, forgotten bow'rs;  
And amber limbs and breast,  
Through ancient nights by sleepless love oppressed, Or by the iron flight  
of loveless hours.

Knowing the weary wisdom of the years, The empty truth of tears;  
The suns of June, that with some great excess Of ardour slay the unabiding  
rose, And grey-haired winter, wan and fervourless For whom no  
flower grows;  
Seeing the scarlet and the gold that pales, On Orient snows untrod,  
In magic morns that grant,  
Across a land of common green and gray, The disenchanting day;  
Knowing the iron veils  
And walls of adamant,  
That ward the flaming verities of God— Knowing these things, ah, surely  
thou wert wise, Beneath the warm and thunder-dreaming skies, To  
kiss on ardent breast and avid mouth, Some girl whose sultry eyes  
Were golden with the sun-beloved south— To pluck the rose and drain the  
rose-red wine, In gardens half-divine;  
Before the broken cup  
Be filled and covered up  
In dusty seas of everlasting drouth.

## **STRANGENESS**

O love, thy lips are bright and cold, Like jewels carven curiously  
To symbols of a mystery,  
A secret dim, forgotten, old.

Like woven amber, finely spun, Thy hair, enwoofed with golden light,  
Remembers yet the flaming flight Of some unknown, archaic sun.

Thine eyes are crystals green and chill, Wherein, as in a shifting sea, Wan  
fires and drowning splendours flee To stealthy deeps forever still.

Fallen across thy dreaming face, The dawn is made a secret thing, Like  
flame of crimson lamps that swing At midnight, in a cavern-space.

Thy smile is like the furtive gleam Of fleeing moons a traveller sees  
Through closing arms of cypress-trees, In secret realms of night  
and dream.

Sphinx-like, unsolved eternally, Thy beauty's riddle doth abide, And love  
hath come, and love hath died, Striving to read the mystery.

## **THE INFINITE QUEST**

In years no vision shall aver, In lands no dream may name,  
Tow'rd alien things what longings were, And thence what languors came!

For each horizon straightly sought, With fealty to the stars,  
What death and weariness were bought, What bitterness, what bars!

---

I waken unto years afar,  
And find the quest made new  
In Earth, that was perchance a star Unto my former view.

## **ROSA MYSTICA**

The secret rose we vainly dream to find, Was blown in grey Atlantis long ago, Or in old summers of the realms of snow, Its attar lulled the pole-arisen wind; Or once its broad and breathless petals pined In gardens of Persepolis, aglow With desert sunlight, and the fiery, slow Red waves of sand, invincible and blind.

On orient isles, or isles hesperian, Through mythic days ere mortal time began, It flowered above the ever-flowering foam; Or, legendless, in lands of yesteryear, It flamed among the violets—near, how near, To unenchanted fields and hills of home!

## **THE NEREID**

Her face the sinking stars desire.

Unto her place the slow deeps bring Shadow of errant winds that wing  
O'er sterile gulfs of foam and fire.

Her beauty is the light of pearls.

All stars and dreams and sunsets die To make the fluctuant glooms that lie  
Around her, and low noonlight swirls

Down ocean's firmamental deep, To weave for her who glimmers there,  
Elusive visions, vague and fair; And night is as a dreamless sleep:

She has not known the night's unrest, Nor the white curse of clearer day;  
The tremors of the tempest play Like slow delight about her breast.

Serene, an immanence of fire, She dwells forever, ocean-thralled, Soul of  
the sea's vast emerald; Her face the sinking stars desire.

## IN SATURN

Upon the seas of Saturn I have sailed To isles of high, primeval amarant,  
Where the flame-tongued sonorous flow'rs enchant The hanging  
surf to silence: All engrailed

With ruby-colored pearls, the golden shore Allured me; but as one whom  
spells restrain, For blind horizons of the sombre main, And harbors  
never known, my singing prore

I set forthrightly: Formed of fire and brass, Immenser skies divided, deep  
on deep Before me,—till, above the darkling foam,

With dome on cloudless adamantine dome, Black peaks no peering seraph  
deems to pass, Rose up from realms ineffable as Sleep!

## **IMPRESSION**

The silver silence of the moon  
Upon the sleeping garden lies;  
The wind of evening dies,  
As in forgetful dreams a ghostly tune.

How white, how still, the flowers are, As carved of pearl and ivory!  
The pines are ebony,  
A sombre frieze on heavens pale and far.

Like mirrors made of lucid stone, The pools lie calm, and bright, and cold,  
Where moon and stars behold,  
In some eternal trance, themselves alone.

### **TRIPLE ASPECT**

Lo, for Earth's manifest monotony Of ordered aspect unto sun and star,  
And single moon, I turn to years afar, And ampler worlds  
ensphered in memory.

There, to the zoned and iris-differing light Of three swift suns in heavens  
of vaster range, Transcendant Beauty knows a trinal change, And  
dawn and eve are in the place of night.

There, long ago, in mornings ocean-green, I saw bright deserts dusky with  
the sky, Or under yellow noons, wide waters lie Like wrinkled  
bronze made hot with fires unseen.

Strange flow'rs that bloom but to an azure sun, I saw; and all complexities  
of light That work fantastic magic on the sight, Wrought  
unimagined marvels one by one.

There, swifter shadows suffer gorgeous dooms— Lost in an orange noon,  
an azure morn; At twofold eve, large, winged lights are born,  
Towering to meet the dawn, or briefest glooms

Of chrysoberyl filled with wondering stars, Draw from an emerald east to  
skies of gold.

Tow'rd jasper waters leaning to behold, Vague moons are lost amid great  
nenuphars.

## **DESOLATION**

It seems to me that I have lived alone— Alone, as one that liveth in a  
dream: As light on coldest marble, or the gleam Of moons eternal  
on a land of stone, The dawns have been to me. I have but known  
The silence of a frozen land extreme— A sole attending silence, all  
supreme As is the sea's enormous monotone.

Upon the icy desert of my days, No bright mirages are, but iron rays Of  
dawn relentless, and the bitter light Of all-revealing noon.\*\*\*\*  
Alone, I crave The friendly clasp of finite arms, to save My spirit  
from the ravening Infinite.

## **THE ORCHID**

Beauty, thou orchid of immortal bloom, Sprung from the fire and dust of  
perished spheres, How art thou tall in these autumnal years With  
the red rain of immemorial doom, And fragrant where but lesser  
suns illumine, For sustenance of Life's forgotten tears!

Ever thy splendour and thy light appears Like dawn from out the midnight  
of the tomb.

Colours, and gleams, and glammers unrecalled, Richly thy petals intricate  
revive: Blossom, whose roots are in Eternity, The faithful soul, the  
sentience darkly thrall'd, In dream and wonder evermore shall  
strive At Eden's lost of time and memory.

## **A FRAGMENT**

Autumn far-off in memory,  
That saw the crisping myrtles fade!\*\*\*\*  
Aeons ago, my tomb was made,  
Beside the moon-constrained sea.

Ah, wonderful its portals were!  
With carven doors of chrysolite, And walls of sombre syenite,  
They wrought mine olden sepulchre!

About the griffin-guarded plinth, White blossoms crowned the scarlet  
vine; And burning orchids opaline  
Illumed the palm and terebinth.

On friezes of mine ancient fame, The cypress wrought its writen shade;  
And through the boughs the ocean made Moresques of blue and  
fretted flame.

Poet or prince, I may not know  
My perished name, nor bring to mind Years that are one with dust and  
wind, Nor songless love, and tongueless woe—:

Only the tomb they made for me, With carven doors of chrysolite, And  
walls of sombre syenite,  
Beside the moon-constrained sea.

## **CREPUSCLE**

The sunset-gonfalons are furled On plains of evening, broad and pale,  
And, wov'n athwart the waning world, The air is like a silver veil.

Into the thin and trembling gloom, That holds a hueless warp of light, The  
murmuring wind on a slow loom, Weaves the rich purples of the  
night.

## INFERNO

Grey hells, or hells aglow with hot and scarlet flow'rs; White hells of light  
and clamour; hells the abomination Of breathless, deep sepulchral  
desolation Oppresses ever—I have known them all, through hours  
Tedious as dead eternity; where timeless pow'rs, Leagued in  
malign, omnipotent persuasion— Wearing the guise of love,  
despair and aspiration, Forever drove, through ashen fields and  
burning bow'rs,

My soul that found no sanctuary.\*\*\*\* For Lucifer, And all the weary,  
proud, imperious, baffled ones Made in his image, hell is  
anywhere: The ice Of hyperboreal deserts, or the blowing spice In  
winds from off Sumatra, for each wanderer Preserves the jealous  
flame of sad, infernal suns.

## **MIRRORS**

Mirrors of steel or silver, gold or glass antique!

Whether in melancholy marble palaces In some long trance you drew the  
dreamy loveliness Of Roman queens, or queens barbarical, or  
Greek; Or, further than the bright and sun-pursuing beak Of argosy  
might fare, beheld the empresses Of lost Lemuria; or behind the  
lattices Alhambran, have returned forbidden smiles oblique

Of wan, mysterious women!—Mirrors, mirrors old, Mirrors immutable,  
impassable as Fate, Your bosoms held the perished beauty of the  
past Nearer than straining love might ever hope to hold; And  
fleeing faces, lips too phantom-frail to last, Found in your magic  
depth a life re-duplicate.

### **BELATED LOVE**

Ah, woe is me, for Love hath lain asleep, Hath lain too long in some  
Morphean close,— Till on his dreaming wings the ruined rose Fell  
lightly, and the rose-red leaves were deep.

Alas, alas, for Love is overlate!  
Far-wandering, alone, we know not where, He found the white and purple  
poppies fair, Nor heard the Summer pass importunate.

Ah, Love, can we forgive thy loitering?  
The golden Summer, as a dream foregone Is changed—till in our eyes the  
ashen dawn Of Autumn kindles.\*\*\*\* We have heard thy wing But  
with a sound of sighing; heart on heart, In our own sighs we hear  
thy wing depart.

### **THE ABSENCE OF THE MUSE**

O, Muse, where lingerest thou? In any land Of Saturn, lit with moons and  
nenuphars?

Or in what high metropolis of Mars— Hearing the gongs of dire, occult  
command, And bugles blown from strand to unknown strand Of  
continents embattled in old wars That primal kings began? Or on  
the bars Of ebbing seas in Venus, from the sand Of shattered nacre  
with a thousand hues, Dost pluck the blossoms of the purple wrack  
And roses of blue coral for thy hair?

Or, flown beyond the roaring Zodiac, Translatest thou the tale of earthly  
news And earthly songs to singers of Altair?

## **DISSONANCE**

The harsh, brief sob of broken horns; the sound Of hammers, on some  
echoing sepulchre; Lutes in a thunderstorm; a dulcimer By sudden  
drums and clamouring bugles drowned; Crackle of pearls, and  
gritting rubies, ground Beneath an iron heel; the heavy whirr Of  
battle wheels; a hungry leopard's purr, And sigh of swords  
withdrawing from the wound—:

All, all are in thy dreadful fugue, O Life, Thy dark, malign and monstrous  
music, spun In hell, from a delirious Satan's dream!\*\*\*  
O! dissonance primordial and supreme— The moan, the thunder,  
evermore at strife, Beneath the unheeding silence of the sun!

## TO NORMA MAY FRENCH

Importunate, the lion-throated sea, Blind with the mounting foam of winter, mourns To cliffs where cling the wrenched and laboured roots Of cypresses, and blossoms granite-grown Lose in the gale their tattered petals, cast On bleak, tumultuous cauldrons of the tide, Where fell thy molten ashes.\*\*\*\* Past the bay, The morning dunes a dust of marble seem— Wrought from primeval fanes to Beauty reared, And shattered by some vandal Titan's mace To more than Time's own ruin. Woods of pine, Above the dunes in Gothic gloom recede, And climb the ridge that arches to the north Long as a lolling dragon's chine. The gulls, Like ashen leaves far-off upon the wind, Flutter above the broad and smouldering sea, That lightens with the fire-white foam: But thou, Of whom the sea is urn and sepulcher, Who hast thereof a blown, tumultuous sleep, And stormy peace in gulfs impacable— What carest thou if Beauty loiter there, Clad with the crystal noon? What carest thou If sharp and sudden balsams of the pine Mingle for her in the air's bright thurible With keener fragrance proffered by the deep From riven gulfs resounding?\*\*\* Knowest thou What solemn shores of crocus-colored light, Reared by the sunset in its realm of change, Will mock the dream-lost isles that sirens ward, And charm the icy emerald of the seas To unabiding iris? Knowest thou The waxing of the wan December foam— A thunder-cloven veil that climbs and falls Upon the cliffs forever?

Thou art still

As they that sleep in the eldest pyramid— Or mounded with Mesopotamia And immemorial deserts! Thou hast part In the wordless, dumb conspiracy of death— Silence wherein the warrior kings accord, And all the wrangling sages! If thy voice In any wise return, and word of thee, It is a lost, incognizable sigh, Upon the wind's oblivious woe, or blown, Antiphonal, from wave to plangent wave In the vast, unhuman sorrow of the main, On tides that lave the city-laden shores Of lands wherein the eternal vanities Are served at many altars; tides that wash Lemuria's unfathomable walls,

And idly sway the weed-involved oars At wharves of lost Atlantis; tides  
that rise From coral-coffered bones of all the drowned, And  
sunless tombs of pearl that krakens guard.

II.

As none shall roam the sad Leucadian rock, Above the sea's immitigable  
moan, But in his heart a song that Sappho sang, And flame-like  
murmur of the muted lyres That time hath not extinguished, and  
the cry Of nightingales two thousand years ago, Shall mix with  
those remorseful chords that break To endless foam and thunder;  
and he learn The unsleeping woe that lives in Mytelene Till wave  
and deep are dumb with ice, and rime Hath paled the rose forever  
—even thus, Daughter of Sappho, passion-souled and fair, Whose  
face the lutes of Lesbos would have sung, And white Errina  
followed—even thus, The western wave is eloquent of thee,  
And half the wine-like fragrance of the foam Is attar of thy spirit, and the  
pines From breasts of mournful, melancholy green, Release  
remembered echoes of thy song To airs importunate. No wraith of  
fog, Twice-ghostly with the Hecatean moon, Nor rack of blown,  
fantasmal spume shall rise, But I will dream thy spirit walks the  
sea, Unpacified with Lethe. Thou art grown A part of all sad  
beauty, and my soul Hath found thy buried sorrow in its own,  
Inseparable forever. Moons that pass, Immaculate, to solemn pyres  
of snow, And meres whereon the broken lotus dies, Are kin to thee,  
as wine-lipped autumn is, With suns of swift, irreparable change,  
And lucid evenings eager-starred. Of thee, The pearlèd fountains  
tell, and winds that take In one white swirl the petals of the plum,  
And leave the branches lonely. Royal blooms Of the magnolia,  
pale as Beauty's brow, And foam-white myrtles, and the fiery,  
bright Pome-granate flow'rs, will subtly speak of thee While  
spring hath speech and meaning. Music hath Her fugitive and  
uncommanded chords, That thrill with tremors of thy mystery, Or  
turn the void thy fleeing soul hath left To murmurs inenarrable,  
that hold Epiphanies of blind, conceiveless vision, And things we  
dare not know, and dare not dream.

Note: Nora May French, the most gifted poet of her sex that America has  
produced, died by her own hand at Carmel in 1907. Her ashes were strewn  
into the sea from Point Lobos.



## IN LEMURIA

Rememberest thou? Enormous gongs of stone  
Were stricken, and the  
storming trumpeteers Acclaimed my deed to answering tides of  
spears, And spoke the names of monsters overthrown— Griffins  
whose angry gold, and fervid store Of sapphires wrenched from  
marble-plungèd mines— Carnelians, opals, agates, almandines, I  
brought to thee some scarlet eve of yore.

In the wide fane that shrined thee, Venus-wise, The fallen clamours  
died.\*\*\*\* I heard the tune Of tiny bells of pearl and melanite,  
Hung at thy knees, and arms of dreamt delight; And placed my  
wealth before thy fabled eyes, Pallid and pure as jaspers from the  
moon.

## **RECOMPENSE**

Ah, more to me than many days and many dreams  
And more than every hope, or any memory,  
This moment, when thy lips are laid  
immortally On mine, and death and time are shadows of old  
dreams.

Now all the crownless, ruined years have recompense: In one supreme,  
undying hour of light and fire, The many moons and suns have  
found their one desire— When in the hour of love, all life has  
recompense.

## EXOTIQUE

Thy mouth is like a crimson orchid-flow'r, Whence perfume and whence  
poison rise unseen To moons aswim in iris or in green, Or mix with  
morning in an eastern bow'r.

Thou shouldst have known, in amaranthine isles, The sunsets hued like  
fire of frankincense, Or the long noons enfraught with redolence,  
The mingled spicery of purple miles.

Thy breasts, where blood and molten marble flow, Thy warm white limbs,  
thy loins of tropic snow— These, these, by which desire is grown  
divine,

Were made for dreams in mystic palaces, For love, and sleep, and slow  
voluptuousness, And summer seas a-foam like foaming wine.

## **TRANSCENDENCE**

To look on love with disenamoured eyes; To see with gaze relentless,  
rendered clear Of hope or hatred, of desire and fear, The  
insuperable nullity that lies Behind the veils of various disguise  
Which life or death may haply weave; to hear Forevermore in flute  
and harp the mere And all-resolving silence; recognize The gules  
of autumn in the greening leaf, And in the poppy-pod the poppy-  
flow'r— This is to be the lord of love and grief, O'er Time's  
illusion and thyself supreme, As, half-aroused in some nocturnal  
hour, The dreamer knows and dominates his dream.

## **SATIETY**

Dear you were as is the tree of Being To the happy dead in heaven's  
bow'rs.\*\*\*\*

Whence and what, this evil spell that flings me Forth from love with  
loveless eyes unseeing?

Fair you were as nymph or queen of vision— Bosomed like the succubi of  
dreams.\*\*\*\*

All your beauty turns to sad, ironic Weariness, and sorrowful derision.

Lo, of what avail our spent caresses,— Kisses that set the summer night  
aflake?\*\*\*\*

Mute, enormous languor without cause— What is this my autumn heart  
confesses?

All your breast was fragrant like the flowers Of the grape on hills toward  
the south.\*\*\*\*

Love is acrid now like staling asters, Sodden with the rain of autumn  
hours.

## **THE MINISTERS OF LAW**

The glories and the perils of thy day Are one, O Man! Thou goest to thine  
end With Pow'rs, and for a little thou dost wend With marshalled  
Majesties upon their way: But thee the dread Necessities betray  
That nurse, and fearful Splendours that befriend; And thee shall  
alien Dominations rend.\*\*\*\*

Deemest the triumph of the worlds to stay, Or step by step eternal,  
unsurpassed, Stride with the suns upon their road of awe?  
Thou travelest brief ways that end and sink— Urged by the hurrying  
planets; and the vast, Prone-rushing constellations of the Law,  
Thunder and press behind thee at the brink.

## **COLDNESS**

Thy heart will not believe in love: Therefore is love become to me  
A dream, an empty mockery,  
And death and life are less than love.

O, bright and beautiful as flame Thy hair, and pale thy lips, and eyes Like  
    seas wherein the waning skies Of autumn lie in paler flame.

Forevermore thy heart abides,  
A dreaming crystal, pure and cold, Amid whose visions manifold  
No shape nor any shade abides.

Thy days are void and vain as death: The moons and morrows weave for  
    thee A sleep of light eternally,  
Where life is as a dream of death.

Chill as white jewels, or the moon, And virginal as ice or fire,  
Thou knowest life and life's desire As a bright mirror knows the moon.

Lo, if thy heart believed in love, It were not more nor less to me: I know  
    THY love a mockery,  
And all my dreams less vain than love.

## **THE DESERT GARDEN**

Dreaming, I said, "When she is come, This desert garden that is me,  
For her shall offer mellowly  
Its myrrh and its olibanum—  
When she is come.

"The flowers of the moon for her, With blossoms of the sun shall bloom,  
The fading roses breathe perfume, The lightly fallen petals stir,  
And sigh to her.

"Her presence, like a living wind Each little leaf makes visible, Shall  
enter there, or like the spell (Upon the lulling leaves divined) Of  
silent wind."

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Alas! for she is come and gone, And in the garden, green for her, The  
flowers fall, the flowers stir Only to winds of night and dawn: For  
she is gone.

## **THE CRUCIFIXION OF EROS**

Because of thee, immortal Love hath died: Because thy wilful heart will  
not believe, Thy hands and mine a thorny crown must weave, A  
thorny crown for Love the crucified.

Behold, how beautiful the limbs that bleed— The limbs that bleed, O  
stubborn heart, for us!

Still are the lids so softly tremulous, And mute the mouth of our eternal  
need.

---

Though this thy fearful lips would now deny, Love is divine, and cannot  
wholly die: Draw forth the nails thy tender hands have driven—

And we will know the mercy infinite, Will find redemption in our own  
delight, And in each other's heart the only heaven.

## **THE EXILE**

Against my heart your heart is closed; you bid me go: What ways are left  
in all the world for Love to know?

Desolate oceans, and the light of lonely plains, Dead moons that wander in  
the wastes of ice and snow—

These, these I fain would see, and find the splendid bourne Of sunset, or  
the brazen deserts of the morn, That I might lose this ever-aching  
loneliness In vaster solitude; and love be less forlorn,

Faring to seek with alien sun and alien star The strange, the veiled  
horizons infinite and far; Spaces of fire and night, the skies of steel  
and gold, Or sunset-haunted seas where foamless islands are.

### **AVE ATQUE VALE**

Black dreams; the pale and sorrowful desire Whose eyes have looked on  
Lethe, and have seen, Deep in the sliding ebon tide serene, Their  
own vain light inverted; ashen fire, With wasted lilies, late and  
languishing; Autumnal roses blind with rain; slow foam From  
desert-sinking seas, with honeycomb Of aconite and poppy—these  
I bring With this my bitter, barren love to thee; And from the  
grievous springs of memory, Far in the great Maremma of my  
heart, I proffer thee to drink; and on thy mouth, With the one kiss  
wherein we meet and part, Leave fire and dust from quenchless  
leagues of drouth.

## **SOLUTION**

The ghostly fire that walks the fen, Tonight thine only light shall be; On  
lethal ways thy soul shall pass, And prove the stealthy, coiled  
morass, With mocking mists for company.

On roads thou goest not again,  
To shores where thou hast never gone,— Fare onward, though the  
shuddering queach And serpent-rippled waters reach Like seepage-  
pools of Acheron,

Beside thee; and the twisten reeds, Close-raddled as a witch's net, Enwind  
thy knees, and cling and clutch Like wreathing adders; though the  
touch Of the blind air be dank and wet,

As from a wounded Thing that bleeds In cloud and darkness overhead—  
Fare onward, where thy dreams of yore In splendour drape the  
fetid shore And pestilential waters dead.

And though the toads' irrision rise, As grinding of Satanic racks,  
And spectral willows, gaunt and grey, Gibber along thy shrouded way,  
Where vipers lie with livid backs,

And watch thee with their sulphurous eyes,— Fare onward, till thy feet  
shall slip Deep in the sudden pool ordained, And all the noisome  
draught be drained, That turns to Lethe on the lip.

## **THE TEARS OF LILITH**

O lovely demon, half-divine!

Hemlock, and hydromel, and gall, Honey, and aconite, and wine,  
Mingle to make that mouth of thine—

Thy mouth I love: But most of all, It is thy tears that I desire— Thy tears,  
like fountain-drops that fall In gardens red, Satanical;

Or like the tears of mist and fire, Wept by the moon, that wizards use To  
secret runes, when they require Some silver philtre, sweet and dire.

### **A PRECEPT**

With words of ivory,  
Of bronze, of ebony,  
Of alabaster, marble, steel, and gold, The beauty of the visible is told.

But how with these express  
The unseen Loveliness—  
Splendour and light, and harmony, and sound, The heart hath felt, the  
sense hath never found?

No shining words of stone—  
Shadow and cloud alone—  
These shall the poet seek eternally, Whose lines would carve the mask of  
Mystery.

## REMEMBERED LIGHT

The years are a falling of snow, Slow, but without cessation,  
On hills, and mountains, and flowers and worlds that were; But snow, and  
the crawling night wherein it fell, May be washed away in one  
swifter hour of flame: Thus it was that some slant of sunset In the  
chasms of piled cloud— Transient mountains that made a new  
horizon, Uplifting the west to fantastic pinnacles— Smote warm in  
a buried realm of the spirit, Till the snows of forgetfulness were  
gone.

Clear in the vistas of memory,  
The peaks of a world long unremembered, Soared further than clouds but  
fell not, Based on hills that shook not nor melted With that burden  
enormous, hardly to be believed.

Rent with stupendous chasms,  
Full of an umber twilight,  
I beheld that larger world;  
Bright was the twilight, sharp like ethereal wine Above, but low in the  
clefts it thickened, Dull as with duskier tincture.  
Like whimsical wings outspread but unstirring, Flowers that seemed  
spirits of the twilight That must pass with its passing— Too fragile  
for day or for darkness, Fed the dusk with more delicate hues than  
its own; Stars that were nearer, more radiant than ours, Quivered  
and pulsed in the clear thin gold of the sky.

These things I beheld  
Till the gold was shaken with flight Of fantastical wings like broken  
shadows, Forerunning the darkness;  
Till the twilight shivered with outcry of eldritch voices Like pain's last cry  
ere oblivion.

## SONG

I bring my weariness to thee,  
My bitter dreams I bring;  
Love with a wounded wing,  
And life consumed of memory,  
I bring to thee.

The haven of thy happy breast—  
Of this my dreams are fain:  
For all my weary pain,  
In all the world there is no rest, But on thy breast.

## HAUNTING

There is no peace amid the moonlight and the pines; Deep in the windless  
gloom the lamplike thought of you Abides; and ah, what burning  
memories pursue My heart among the pallid marbles!\*\*\* Night  
assigns

Your silver face for wardress of the doors of Sleep; Beyond the wild, last  
bourn of dreamland, lo, your eyes Are on the lonesome, ultimate,  
undiscovered skies; Moonlike and dim, you wander ever in the  
deep

Which is the secret, innermost, unknown abyss Of my own soul, and in its  
night your spirit lives.\*\*\*\*

Shall I not find the very draught that Lethe gives, Sweet with your tears,  
and warm with savour of your kiss?

## **THE HIDDEN PARADISE**

Our passion is a secret Paradise— Eden of lotos and the fruitful date, With  
silence walled and held undesecrate By man or prying seraph: We  
are wise

As any god and goddess, who have wrung From roseal fruitage of a bough  
forbidden, The happy wine we drink, we drink unchidden, Deep in  
the vales where vernal leaves are young,

And the first poppies loiter.\*\*\*\* Though the breath Of all the gods a  
bolted storm prepare, And blood-red gloom of thunders blind the  
sun,

Shall we not turn, with clinging kisses there, And, laughing, quaff some  
dreamless wine of death— Triumphant still, in mere oblivion?

## CLEOPATRA

Thy beauty is the warmth and languor and passion of a tropic autumn,  
Caressing all the senses,— With light from skies of heavy azure,  
With perfume from hidden orchids many-hued That burn in the  
berylline dusk of palms; With the balmy kiss of tropic wind and  
wave, And the songs of exotic birds that pass In vermilion-flashing  
flight from isle to isle on a cobalt sea.\*\*\*

O, sweetness in the inmost sense, As of golden fruits that have grown by  
the waters of Lethe, Or fragrance of purple lilies, crushed by the  
limbs of lovers, In the shadow of a wood of cypress!\*\*\*

Thou pervadest me with thy love, As the dawn pervadeth a valley among  
mountains, Or as opaline sunset filleth the amaranth-coloured sea;  
The desire of thy heart is upon me, As a myrtle-scented wind from  
the isle of Cythera, Where Aphrodite waits for Adonis, Lying  
naked among the flag lilies by a pool of chrysolite; I inhale thy  
love

As the breath of hidden gardens of purple and scarlet, Where Circe  
wanders,

Clad in a trailing gown whose colours are the gold of flame, And the azure  
of the skies of autumn.

## **ECSTASY**

Blind with your softly fallen hair, I turn me from the twilight air; And, ah,  
the wordless tale of love My lips upon your lips declare!

High stars are on the shadowy south— Unseen, unknown: The urgent  
drouth Of desert years in one deep kiss, Would drain the sweetness  
of your mouth.

Our straining arms that clasp and close, Ache with an ecstasy that grows;  
And passion in our secret veins, Like burning amber, glows and  
glows.

This love is sweet to have and hold, Better than sandalwood or gold, After  
the barren, bitter loves, The mad and mournful loves of old.

This love is fortunate and fair, Behind its veil of fallen hair; This love hath  
soft and clinging arms, And a kind bosom, warm and bare.

## UNION

As the fumes of myrrh that mix with the odour of sandalwood In a temple  
sacred to the goddess Lakme; As moonlight mingled with starlight  
In the lucent azure of an autumn lake; As the sunset-rays of gold  
and crimson That interlace on a couch of purple cloud— Even so,  
Beloved,

Hath my love mingled with thine— Even so, our souls are one,  
Like two winds that meet in a valley of rose and lotus, And fall to rest,  
uniting

As the still and fragrant air that lingers On a bed of falling petals.

## PSALM

My beloved is a well of clear waters, To which I have come at noontide,  
From the land of the Abomination of Desolation, From the lion-  
dreaded waste,

Where nothing dwelleth but the inconsolable crying of an evil wind, And  
the wandering realms and cities of the wide mirage; Where no one  
passeth except the sun, Who walked like a terrible god through the  
hell of the brazen skies; And the dreadful cohorts of the  
constellations, Who pass remote in alien years, And clad with icy  
azures of unattainable distance.

My beloved is a singing fountain, Set in a wide oasis,  
Between the frondage of the fruitful palm, And the branches of the  
flowering myrtle: The wind that bloweth thereon,  
Hath lain in a vale of cassia and myrrh, And caressed the vermilion  
blossoms of the pomegranate, Whose red is the red of the lips of  
Astarte; A thousand nightingales are gathered there, From all the  
gardens of lost romance; And plots of purple and silver lillies,  
More beautiful than the meadows of mirage, Revive the flowers of  
Sabeen queens, And the blossoms worn by all the princesses of  
legend.\*\*\*

Ah, suffer me to dwell  
Thereby, and forget the gilded cities of desire, The domes of spectral gold,  
That fled from horizon to horizon  
Before me, and left my feet in the sinking vales and shifting plains of the  
desert, Whose waters are green with corruption, And bitter with the  
dust and ashes of death.

Ah, suffer me to sleep  
In the balsam-laden shadows of the palm and myrtle, By the ever-  
springing fountain!

## **IN NOVEMBER**

With autumn and the flaring leaves our love must end— Ere flauntful  
spring shall mock thy tears and my despair With blossoms red or  
pale, some April bride may wear: Now, while the weary, grey,  
forgetful heavens bend

Above the grief and languor of the dying lands, In one last kiss shall meet  
and mingle and expire The muted, last, remembering sighs of our  
desire; And on my face the flower-like burden of thy hands

Shall rest a little, and be taken tenderly, And, ah, how lightly hence! And  
in thy golden eyes, Thy love, and all the ashen glory of the skies,  
Shall mingle, and as in a mirror lie for me.

## **SYMBOLS**

No more of gold and marble, nor of snow, And sunlight, and vermilion,  
would I make My vision and my symbols, nor would take The  
auroral flame of some prismatic floe, Nor iris of the frail and lunar  
bow, Flung on the shafted waterfalls that wake The night's blue  
slumber in a shadowy lake.\*\*\*

To body forth my fantasies, and show Communicable mystery, I would  
find, In adamantine darkness of the earth, Metals untouched of any  
sun; and bring Black azures of the nether sea to birth— Or fetch  
the secret, splendid leaves, and blind, Blue lilies of an Atlantean  
spring.

**THE HASHISH-EATER;**  
**or, THE APOCALYPSE OF EVIL**

Bow down: I am the emperor of dreams; I crown me with the million-coloured sun Of secret worlds incredible, and take Their trailing skies for vestment, when I soar, Throned on the mounting zenith, and illumine The spaceward-flown horizons infinite.

Like rampant monsters roaring for their glut, The fiery-crested oceans rise and rise, By jealous moons malefically urged To follow me forever; mountains horned With peaks of sharpest adamant, and mawed With sulphur-lit volcanoes lava-langued, Usurp the skies with thunder, but in vain; And continents of serpent-shapen trees, With slimy trunks that lengthen league by league, Pursue my flight through ages spurned to fire By that supreme ascendance.

Sorcerers And evil kings predominantly armed With scrolls of fulvous dragon-skin, whereon Are worm-like runes of ever-twisting flame, Would stay me; and the sirens of the stars, With foam-light songs from silver fragrance wrought, Would lure me to their crystal reefs; and moons Where viper-eyed, senescent devils dwell, With antic gnomes abominably wise, Heave up their icy horns across my way: But naught deters me from the goal ordained By suns, and aeons, and immortal wars, And sung by moons and motes; the goal whose name Is all the secret of forgotten glyphs, By sinful gods in torrid rubies writ For ending of a brazen book; the goal Whereat my soaring ecstasy may stand,

In amplest heavens multiplied to hold My hordes of thunder-vested avatars, And Promethèan armies of my thought, That brandish claspèd levins. There I call My memories, intolerably clad

In light the peaks of paradise may wear, And lead the Armageddon of my dreams, Whose instant shout of triumph is become Immensity's own music: For their feet Are founded on innumerable worlds, Remote in alien epochs, and their arms Upraised, are columns potent to exalt With ease ineffable the countless thrones Of all the gods that are and gods to be, Or bear the seats of Asmadai and Set Above the seventh paradise.

## Supreme

In culminant omniscience manifold, And served by senses multitudinous,  
Far-posted on the shifting walls of time, With eyes that roam the  
star-unwinnowed fields Of utter night and chaos, I convoke The  
Babel of their visions, and attend At once their myriad witness: I  
behold, In Ombos, where the fallen Titans dwell, With mountain-  
built walls, and gulfs for moat, The secret cleft that cunning  
dwarves have dug Beneath an alp-like buttress; and I list, Too late,  
the clang of adamantine gongs, Dinned by their drowsy guardians,  
whose feet Have felt the wasp-like sting of little knives, Embrued  
with slobber of the basilisk, Or juice of wounded upas. And I see,  
In gardens of a crimson-litten world The sacred flow'r with lips of  
purple flesh, And silver-lashed, vermilion-lidded eyes Of torpid  
azure; whom his furtive priests At moonless eve in terror seek to  
slay,

With bubbling grails of sacrificial blood That hide a hueless poison. And I  
read, Upon the tongue of a forgotten sphinx, The annulling word a  
spiteful demon wrote With gall of slain chimeras; and I know What  
pentacles the lunar wizards use, That once allured the gulf-  
returning roc, With ten great wings of furlèd storm, to pause  
Midmost an alabaster mount; and there, With boulder-weighted  
webs of dragons'-gut, Uplift by cranes a captive giant built, They  
wound the monstrous, moonquake-throbbing bird, And plucked,  
from off his sabre-taloned feet, Uranian sapphires fast in frozen  
blood, With amethysts from Mars. I lean to read, With slant-lipped  
magicians, in an evil star, The monstrous archives of a war that ran  
Through wasted aeons, and the prophecy Of wars renewed, that  
shall commemorate Some enmity of wivern-headed kings, Even to  
the brink of time. I know the blooms Of bluish fungus, freaked  
with mercury, That bloat within the craters of the moon, And in  
one still, selenic hour have shrunk To pools of slime and fetor; and  
I know What clammy blossoms, blanched and cavern-grown, Are  
proffered in Uranus to their gods By mole-eyed peoples; and the  
livid seed Of some black fruit a king in Saturn ate, Which, cast  
upon his tinkling palace-floor, Took root between the burnished  
flags, and now Hath mounted, and become a hellish tree, Whose  
lithe and hairy branches, lined with mouths, Net like a hundred

ropes his lurching throne, And strain at starting pillars. I behold  
The slowly-thronging corals, that usurp Some harbour of a million-  
masted sea, And sun them on the league-long wharves of gold—  
Bulks of enormous crimson, kraken-limbed And kraken-headed, lifting up  
as crowns The octiremes of perished emperors, And galleys  
fraught with royal gems, that sailed From a sea-deserted haven.

Swifter grow

The visions: Now a mighty city looms, Hewn from a hill of purest  
cinnabar, To domes and turrets like a sunrise thronged With tier on  
tier of captive moons, half-drowned In shifting erubescence. But  
whose hands Were sculptors of its doors, and columns wrought To  
semblance of prodigious blooms of old, No eremite hath lingered  
there to say, And no man comes to learn: For long ago A prophet  
came, warning its timid king Against the plague of lichens that had  
crept Across subverted empires, and the sand Of wastes that  
Cyclopean mountains ward; Which, slow and ineluctable, would  
come, To take his fiery bastions and his fanes, And quench his  
domes with greenish tetter. Now I see a host of naked giants,  
armed With horns of behemoth and unicorn, Who wander, blinded  
by the clinging spells Of hostile wizardry, and stagger on To  
forests where the very leaves have eyes, And ebonies like wrathful  
dragons roar To teaks a-chuckle in the loathly gloom; Where coiled  
lianas lean, with serried fangs, From writhing palms with swollen  
boles that moan; Where leeches of a scarlet moss have sucked The  
eyes of some dead monster, and have crawled To bask upon his  
azure-spotted spine; Where hydra-throated blossoms hiss and sing,  
Or yawn with mouths that drip a sluggish dew, Whose touch is  
death and slow corrosion. Then, I watch a war of pigmies, met by  
night, With pitter of their drums of parrot's hide,

On plains with no horizon, where a god Might lose his way for centuries;  
and there, In wreathèd light, and fulgors all convolved, A rout of  
green, enormous moons ascend, With rays that like a shivering  
venom run On inch-long swords of lizard-fang.

Surveyed

From this my throne, as from a central sun, The pageantries of worlds and  
cycles pass; Forgotten splendours, dream by dream unfold, Like  
tapestry, and vanish; violet suns, Or suns of changeeful iridescence,

bring Their rays about me, like the coloured lights Imploring  
priests might lift to glorify The face of some averted god; the songs  
Of mystic poets in a purple world, Ascend to me in music that is  
made From unconceived perfumes, and the pulse Of love ineffable;  
the lute-players Whose lutes are strung with gold of the utmost  
moon, Call forth delicious languors, never known Save to their  
golden kings; the sorcerers Of hooded stars inscrutable to God,  
Surrender me their demon-wrested scrolls, Inscribed with lore of  
monstrous alchemies, And awful transformations.\*\*\* If I will, I  
am at once the vision and the seer, And mingle with my ever-  
streaming pomps, And still abide their suzerain: I am The neophyte  
who serves a nameless god, Within whose fane the fanes of  
Hecatompilos Were arks the Titan worshippers might bear, Or  
flags to pave the threshold; or I am The god himself, who calls the  
fleeing clouds Into the nave where suns might congregate, And  
veils the darkling mountain of his face With fold on solemn fold;  
for whom the priests Amass their monthly hecatomb of gems—  
Opals that are a camel-cumbering load,

And monstrous alabraundines, won from war With realms of hostile  
serpents; which arise, Combustible, in vapours many-hued, And  
myrrh-excelling perfumes. It is I, The king, who holds with  
scepter-dropping hand The helm of some great barge of chrysolite,  
Sailing upon an amethystine sea To isles of timeless summer: For  
the snows Of hyperborean winter, and their winds, Sleep in his  
jewel-built capital, Nor any charm of flame-wrought wizardry,  
Nor conjured suns may rout them; so he flees, With captive kings  
to urge his serried oars, Hopeful of dales where amaranthine dawn  
Hath never left the faintly sighing lote And fields of lispings moly.  
Or I fare, Impanoplied with azure diamond, As hero of a quest  
Achernar lights, To deserts filled with ever-wandering flames, That  
feed upon the sullen marl, and soar To wrap the slopes of  
mountains, and to leap, With tongues intolerably lengthening, That  
lick the blenchèd heavens. But there lives (Secure as in a garden  
walled from wind) A lonely flower by a placid well, Midmost the  
flaring tumult of the flames, That roar as roars the storm-possessed  
sea, Implacable forever: And within

That simple grail the blossom lifts, there lies One drop of an incomparable  
dew, Which heals the parchèd weariness of kings, And cures the  
wound of wisdom. I am page To an emperor who reigns ten  
thousand years, And through his labyrinthine palace-rooms,  
Through courts and colonnades and balconies Wherein immensity  
itself is mazed, I seek the golden gorget he hath lost, On which the  
names of his conniving stars

Are writ in little sapphires; and I roam For centuries, and hear the brazen  
clocks Innumerably clang with such a sound As brazen hammers  
make, by devils dinned On tombs of all the dead; and nevermore I  
find the gorget, but at length I find A sealèd room whose nameless  
prisoner Moans with a nameless torture, and would turn To hell's  
red rack as to a liliated couch From that whereon they stretched him;  
and I find, Prostrate upon a lotus-painted floor, The loveliest of all  
beloved slaves My emperor hath, and from her pulseless side A  
serpent rises, whiter than the root Of some venefic bloom in  
darkness grown, And gazes up with green-lit eyes that seem Like  
drops of cold, congealing poison.\*\*\*

Hark!

What word was whispered in a tongue unknown, In crypts of some  
impenetrable world?

Whose is the dark, dethroning secrecy I cannot share, though I am king of  
suns And king therewith of strong eternity, Whose gnomons with  
their swords of shadow guard My gates, and slay the intruder?  
Silence loads The wind of ether, and the worlds are still To hear the  
word that flees me. All my dreams Fall like a rack of fuming  
vapours raised To semblance by a necromant, and leave Spirit and  
sense unthinkably alone, Above a universe of shrouded stars, And  
suns that wander, cowed with sullen gloom, Like witches to a  
Sabbath.\*\*\* Fear is born In crypts below the nadir, and hath  
crawled Reaching the floor of space and waits for wings To lift it  
upward, like a hellish worm Fain for the flesh of seraphs. Eyes that  
gleam, But are not eyes of suns or galaxies,

Gather and throng to the base of darkness; flame Behind some black,  
abysmal curtain burns, Implacable, and fanned to whitest wrath By  
raisèd wings that flail the whiffled gloom, And make a brief and

broken wind that moans, As one who rides a throbbing rack. There  
is A Thing that crouches, worlds and years remote, Whose horns a  
demon sharpens, rasping forth A note to shatter the donjon-keeps  
of time, And crack the sphere of crystal.\*\*\* All is dark For ages,  
and my tolling heart suspends Its clamour, as within the clutch of  
death, Tightening with tense, hermetic rigours. Then, In one  
enormous, million-flashing flame, The stars unveil, the suns  
remove their cowls, And beam to their responding planets; time Is  
mine once more, and armies of its dreams Rally to that insuperable  
throne, Firmèd on the central zenith.

Now I seek

The meads of shining moly I had found In some remoter vision, by a  
stream No cloud hath ever tarnished; where the sun, A gold  
Narcissus, loiters evermore Above his golden image: But I find A  
corpse the ebbing water will not keep, With eyes like sapphires  
that have lain in hell, And felt the hissing embers; and the flow'rs  
About me turn to hooded serpents, swayed By flutes of devils in a  
hellish dance, Meet for the nod of Satan, when he reigns Above the  
raging Sabbath, and is wooed By sarabands of witches. But I turn  
To mountains guarding with their horns of snow The source of that  
befoulèd rill, and seek A pinnacle where none but eagles climb,  
And they with failing pennons. But in vain

I flee, for on that pylon of the sky, Some curse hath turned the unprinted  
snow to flame— Red fires that curl and cluster to my tread, Trying  
the summit's narrow cirque. And now, I see a silver python far  
beneath— Vast as a river that a fiend hath witchèd, And forced to  
flow remèant in its course To fountains whence it issued. Rapidly  
It winds from slope to crumbling slope, and fills Ravines and  
chasmal gorges, till the crags Totter with coil on coil incumbent.  
Soon It hath entwined the pinnacle I keep, And gapes with a  
fanged, unfathomable maw, Wherein great Typhon, and Enceladus,  
Were orts of daily glut. But I am gone, For at my call a hippogriff  
hath come, And firm between his thunder-beating wings, I mount  
the sheer cerulean walls of noon, And see the earth, a spurnèd  
pebble, fall Lost in the fields of nether stars—and seek A planet  
where the outwearied wings of time Might pause and furl for

respite, or the plumes Of death be stayed, and loiter in reprieve  
Above some deathless lily: For therein, Beauty hath found an  
avatar of flow'rs— Blossoms that clothe it as a coloured flame,  
From peak to peak, from pole to sullen pole, And turn the skies to  
perfume. There I find A lonely castle, calm and unbeset, Save by  
the purple spears of amaranth, And tender-sworded iris. Walls  
upbuilt Of flushèd marble, wonderful with rose, And domes like  
golden bubbles, and minarets That take the clouds as coronal—  
these are mine, For voiceless looms the peaceful barbican, And the  
heavy-teethed portcullis hangs aloft As if to smile a welcome. So I  
leave My hippogriff to crop the magic meads,

And pass into a court the lilies hold, And tread them to a fragrance that  
pursues To win the portico, whose columns, carved Of lazuli and  
amber, mock the palms Of bright, Aidennic forests—capitalled  
With fronds of stone fretted to airy lace, Enfolding drupes that  
seem as tawny clusters Of breasts of unknown houris; and  
convolved With vines of shut and shadowy-leavèd flow'rs, Like  
the dropt lids of women that endure Some loin-dissolving rapture.  
Through a door Enlaid with lilies twined luxuriously, I enter, dazed  
and blinded with the sun, And hear, in gloom that changing colours  
cloud, A chuckle sharp as crepitating ice, Upheaved and cloven by  
shoulders of the damned Who strive in Antenora. When my eyes  
Undazzle, and the cloud of colour fades, I find me in a monster-  
guarded room, Where marble apes with wings of griffins crowd On  
walls an evil sculptor wrought, and beasts Wherein the sloth and  
vampire-bat unite, Pendulous by their toes of tarnished bronze,  
Usurp the shadowy interval of lamps That hang from ebon arches.  
Like a ripple, Borne by the wind from pool to sluggish pool In  
fields where wide Cocytus flows his bound, A crackling smile  
around that circle runs, And all the stone-wrought gibbons stare at  
me With eyes that turn to glowing coals. A fear That found no  
name in Babel, flings me on, Breathless and faint with horror, to a  
hall Within whose weary, self-reverting round, The languid  
curtains, heavier than palls, Unnumerably depict a weary king,  
Who fain would cool his jewel-crusted hands In lakes of emerald  
evening, or the fields Of dreamless poppies pure with rain. I flee  
Onward, and all the shadowy curtains shake

With tremors of a silken-sighing mirth, And whispers of the innumerable  
king, Breathing a tale of ancient pestilence, Whose very words are  
vile contagion. Then I reach a room where caryatids, Carved in the  
form of tall, voluptuous Titan women, Surround a throne of  
flowering ebony Where creeps a vine of crystal. On the throne,  
There lolls a wan, enormous Worm, whose bulk, Tumid with all  
the rottenness of kings, O'erflows its arms with fold on creased  
fold Of fat obscenely bloating. Open-mouthed He leans, and from  
his throat a score of tongues, Depending like to wreaths of torpid  
vipers, Drivel with phosphorescent slime, that runs Down all his  
length of soft and monstrous folds, And creeping among the  
flow'rs of ebony, Lends them the life of tiny serpents. Now, Ere  
the Horror ope those red and lashless slits Of eyes that draw the  
gnat and midge, I turn, And follow down a dusty hall, whose  
gloom, Lined by the statues with their mighty limbs, Ends in a  
golden-roofed balcony Sphering the flowered horizon.

Ere my heart

Hath hushed the panic tumult of its pulses, I listen, from beyond the  
horizon's rim, A mutter faint as when the far simoon, Mounting  
from unknown deserts, opens forth, Wide as the waste, those wings  
of torrid night That fling the doom of cities from their folds, And  
musters in its van a thousand winds, That with disrooted palms for  
besoms, rise And sweep the sands to fury. As the storm,  
Approaching, mounts and loudens to the ears Of them that toil in  
fields of sesame, So grows the mutter, and a shadow creeps Above  
the gold horizon, like a dawn

Of darkness climbing sunward. Now they come, A Sabbath of abominable  
shapes, Led by the fiends and lamiae of worlds That owned my  
sway aforetime! Cockatrice, Python, tragelaphus, leviathan,  
Chimera, martichoras, behemoth, Geryon and sphinx, and hydra,  
on my ken Arise as might some Afrite-built city, Consummate  
in the lifting of a lash, With thundrous domes and sounding  
obelisks, And towers of night and fire alternate! Wings Of white-  
hot stone along the hissing wind, Bear up the huge and furnace-  
hearted beasts Of hells beyond Rutilicus; and things Whose  
lightless length would mete the gyre of moons— Born from the  
caverns of a dying sun, Uncoil to the very zenith, half disclosed

From gulfs below the horizon; octopi Like blazing moons with  
countless arms of fire, Climb from the seas of ever-surging flame  
That roll and roar through planets unconsumed, Beating on coasts  
of unknown metals; beasts That range the mighty worlds of Alioth,  
rise, Aforesting the heavens with multitudinous horns, Within  
whose maze the winds are lost; and borne On cliff-like brows of  
plunging scolopendras, The shell-wrought tow'rs of ocean-witches  
loom, And griffin-mounted gods, and demons throned On sable  
dragons, and the cockodrills That bear the spleenful pygmies on  
their backs; And blue-faced wizards from the worlds of Saiph, On  
whom Titanic scorpions fawn; and armies That move with fronts  
reverted from the foe, And strike athwart their shoulders at the  
shapes Their shields reflect in crystal; and eidola Fashioned within  
unfathomable caves By hands of eyeless peoples; and the blind  
And worm-shaped monsters of a sunless world, With krakens from  
the ultimate abyss,

And Demogorgons of the outer dark, Arising, shout with multitudinous  
thunders, And threatening me with dooms ineffable In words  
whereat the heavens leap to flame, Advance on the magic palace!  
Thrown before, For league on league, their blasting shadows blight  
And eat like fire the amaranthine meads, Leaving an ashen desert!  
In the palace, I hear the apes of marble shriek and howl.

And all the women-shapen columns moan, Babbling with unknown terror.  
In my fear, A monstrous dread unnamed in any hell, I rise, and flee  
with the fleeing wind for wings, And in a trice the magic palace  
reels, And spiring to a single tow'r of flame, Goes out, and leaves  
nor shard nor ember! Flown Beyond the world, upon that fleeing  
wind, I reach the gulf's irrespirable verge, Where fails the  
strongest storm for breath and fall, Supportless, through the nadir-  
plunged gloom, Beyond the scope and vision of the sun, To other  
skies and systems. In a world Deep-wooded with the multi-  
coloured fungi, That soar to semblance of fantastic palms, I fall as  
falls the meteor-stone, and break A score of trunks to powder. All  
unhurt, I rise, and through the illimitable woods, Among the trees  
of flimsy opal, roam, And see their tops that clamber, hour by hour,  
To touch the suns of iris. Things unseen, Whose charnel breath  
informs the tideless air With spreading pools of fetor, follow me

Elusive past the ever-changing palms; And pittering moths, with wide and ashen wings, Flit on before, and insects ember-hued, Descending, hurtle through the gorgeous gloom, And quench themselves in crumbling thickets. Heard Far-off, the gong-like roar of beasts unknown Resounds at measured intervals of time, Shaking the riper trees to dust, that falls In clouds of acrid perfume, stifling me Beneath a pall of iris.

Now the palms  
Grow far apart and lessen momentarily To shrubs a dwarf might topple. Over them I see an empty desert, all ablaze With amethysts and rubies, and the dust Of garnets or carnelians. On I roam, Treading the gorgeous grit, that dazzles me With leaping waves of endless rutilance, Whereby the air is turned to a crimson gloom, Through which I wander, blind as any Kobold; Till underfoot the griding sands give place To stone or metal, with a massive ring More welcome to mine ears than golden bells, Or tinkle of silver fountains. When the gloom Of crimson lifts, I stand upon the edge Of a broad black plain of adamant, that reaches, Level as a windless water, to the verge Of all the world; and through the sable plain, A hundred streams of shattered marble run, And streams of broken steel, and streams of bronze, Like to the ruin of all the wars of time, To plunge, with clangour of timeless cataracts, Adown the gulfs eternal.

So I follow,  
Between a river of steel and a river of bronze, With ripples loud and tuneless as the clash Of a million lutes; and come to the precipice From which they fall, and make the mighty sound Of a million swords that meet a million shields, Or din of spears and armour in the wars Of all the worlds and aeons: Far beneath, They fall, through gulfs and cycles of the void, And vanish like a stream of broken stars, Into the nether darkness; nor the gods Of any sun, nor demons of the gulf, Will dare to know what everlasting sea Is fed thereby, and mounts forevermore With mighty tides unebbing.

Lo, what cloud,  
Or night of sudden and supreme eclipse, Is on the suns of opal? At my side, The rivers rail with a wan and ghostly gleam, Through darkness falling as the night that falls From mighty spheres

extinguished! Turning now, I see, betwixt the desert and the suns,  
The poised wings of all the dragon-rout, Far-flown in black  
occlusion thousand-fold Through stars, and deeps, and devastated  
worlds, Upon my trail of terror! Griffins, rocs, And sluggish, dark  
chimeras, heavy-winged After the ravin of dispeopled lands, With  
harpies, and the vulture-birds of hell— Hot from abominable feasts  
and fain To cool their beaks and talons in my blood— All, all have  
gathered, and the wingless rear, With rank on rank of foul, colossal  
Worms, Like pillars of embattled night and flame, Looms on the  
wide horizon! From the van, I hear the shriek of wyvers, loud and  
shrill As tempests in a broken fane, and roar Of sphinxes, like the  
unrelenting toll Of bells from tow'rs infernal. Cloud on cloud,  
They arch the zenith, and a dreadful wind Falls from them like the  
wind before the storm.

And in the wind my cloven garment streams, And flutters in the face of all  
the void, Even as flows a flapping spirit, lost On the Pit's undying  
tempest! Louder grows The thunder of the streams of stone and  
bronze.— Redoubled with the roar of torrent wings, Inseparably  
mingled. Scarce I keep My footing, in the gulfward winds of fear,  
And mighty thunders, beating to the void In sea-like waves  
incessant; and would flee With them, and prove the nadir-founded  
night

Where fall the streams of ruin; but when I reach The verge, and seek  
through sun-defeating gloom, To measure with my gaze the dread  
descent, I see a tiny star within the depths— A light that stays me,  
while the wings of doom Convene their thickening thousands: For  
the star Increases, taking to its hueless orb, With all the speed of  
horror-changed dreams The light as of a million million moons;  
And floating up through gulfs and glooms eclipsed, It grows and  
grows, a huge white eyeless Face, That fills the void and fills the  
universe, And bloats against the limits of the world With lips of  
flame that open.\*\*\*\*

## **THE SORROW OF THE WINDS**

O winds that pass uncomforted  
Through all the peacefulness of spring, And tell the trees your sorrowing,  
That they must mourn till ye are fled!

Think ye the Tyrian distance holds The crystal of unquestioned sleep?  
That those forgetful purples keep No veiled, contentious greens and golds?

Half with communicated grief,  
Half that they are not free to pass With you across the flickering grass,  
Mourns each inclined bough and leaf.

And I, with soul disquieted,  
Shall find within the haunted spring No peace, till your strange sorrowing  
Is down the Tyrian distance fled.

## ARTEMIS

In the green and flowerless garden I have dreamt, Lying beneath perennial  
moons apart, Whose cypress-built bowr's  
And ivy-plighted myrtles none shall part;

In the funereal maze of larch and laurel, Across white lawns, athwart the  
spectral mountains, Seen through the sighing haze  
Of all the high and moon-suspended fountains;

With feet enshaded by the fruitless green Of summer trees that bear no  
summer blossom; With wintry lusters laid  
Upon the mounded marble of thy bosom,

Thou dost await, O mournful, enigmatic Image of love-bewildered  
Artemis, Whose tender lips too late,  
Or all too soon, have sought the wounding kiss.

**LOVE IS NOT YOURS, LOVE IS NOT MINE**

Love is not yours, love is not mine: It is the tranquil twilight heaven  
Through which our pauseless feet are driven Into the vast and  
desert noon.

Love is not mine, love is not yours: It is a flying fire that passes, Perishing  
on the blind morasses, After the frail and perished moon.

## **THE CITY IN THE DESERT**

In a lost land, that only dreams have known,  
Where flaming suns walk naked and alone;  
Among horizons bright as molten brass,  
And glowing heavens like furnaces of glass,  
It rears, with dome and tower manifold,  
Rich as a dawn of amaranth and gold,  
Or gorgeous as the Phoenix, born of fire,  
And soaring from an opalescent pyre,  
Sheer to the zenith. Like some anademe  
Of Titan jewels turned to flame and dream,  
The city crowns the far horizon-light,  
Over the flowered meads of damassin.\*\*\*  
A desert isle of madreperl! wherein  
The thurifer and opal-fruited palm,  
And heaven-thronging minarets becalm  
The seas of azure wind.\*\*\*\*

NOTE: These lines were remembered out of a dream, and are given verbatim.

### **THE MELANCHOLY POOL**

Marked by that priesthood of the Night's misrule, The shadow-cowled,  
imprecatory trees— Cypress that guarded woodland secrecies And  
graves that waited the delaying ghoul, Nathless I neared the  
melancholy pool, Chief care of all, but closelier sentinelled By  
those whose roots were deepest in dead Eld.

Where the thwart-woven boughs were wet and cool, As with a mist of  
poison, I drew near, To mark the tired stars peer dimly down  
Through riven branches from the height of space, And shudder in  
those waters with quick fear, Where in black deeps the pale moon  
seemed to drown— A haggard girl, with dead, despairing face.

### **THE MIRRORS OF BEAUTY**

Beauty hath many mirrors: multifold In ocean, or the foam, the gem, the  
dew, Or well and rivulet, her eyes renew With moon or sun their  
glories bright or cold,— Whether in nights the ruby planets hold,  
Or with the sombre light and icy hue Of skies Decembral, or the  
autumn's blue, Or dawn or evening of the vernal gold.

Often, upon the solitary sea,  
She lieth, ere the wind shall gather breath— One with the reflex of  
infinity.  
In pools profounder for the twilight sky, Her vision dwells, or in the poet's  
eye, Or the black crystal of the eyes of Death.

## **WINTER MOONLIGHT**

The silence of the silver night Lies visibly upon the pines;  
In marble flame the moon declines Where spectral mountains dream in  
light.

And pale as with eternal sleep, The enchanted valleys, far and strange,  
Extend forever without change  
Beneath the veiling splendours deep.

Carven of steel or fretted stone, One stark and leafless autumn tree With  
shadows made of ebony,  
Leans on the moon-ward field alone.

## **TO THE BELOVED**

Green suns, and suns of garnet I have known— Turning, with suns that  
mock the sapphire-gem, The constellated moons that mirror them  
To ever-changing opals. On the flown Horizons I have followed,  
all alone, To meadows of mirage the deserts hem, And sought to  
break the ghostly, golden stem Of roses of illusion, briefly blown  
By evanescent waters. One by one, The outward ways of wonder I  
have trod Through alien lives ineffable. But none Hath held the  
troublous marvel and surprise That gleams and trembles in thy  
slightest nod, Or sleeps between thy eyelids and thine eyes.

## REQUIESCAT

What was Love's worth,  
Who lived with the roses?—  
Love that is earth,  
And with earth reposes!

What was Love's wonder?—  
Scent of the flow'rs  
After the thunder,  
Thunder, and show'rs!

What were the breathless  
Words that he said?—  
Love that was deathless,  
Love that is dead!

---

Echo hath taken  
The song, and flown;  
None shall awaken  
Music and moan.

Buds and the flower,  
All that Love found,  
Last but an hour  
Strewn on his mound.

## MIRAGE

Deem ye the veiling vision will abide— The marvel, and the glamour, and  
the dream, Which lies in light upon the barren world?

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The wings of Phoenix towering to the sun, Nor opals, nor the morning  
foam, may hold The hueful flame that as from faery moons Is  
mirrored on the sand; where many a time, From fields that hem  
with golden asphodel A river like a dragon coiled in light, Rise to  
the noon the hovering minarets And soaring walls of cities Ilion-  
like, Till the dim winds are hung with palaces Of orient madreperl.

Forever lost—

Like sunset on a land of old romance,— The splendour fails, and leaves  
the traveller In endless deserts flaming to the day.

## **INHERITANCE**

On all the sovereignty thine eyes obtain, Thy grant of vision from the  
royal sun, And all thine appanage of lordly dream, The Dust,  
wherewith the worm is parcener, Waits with perennial claim, nor  
will resign Its right in thee: All glories and all gleams, The seven  
splendours that inform the light, And beauties immemorial as the  
moon, Robing the barren world—all which thine eyes Hold for  
inheritance, at length shall fill The blindness and oblivion of the  
grave, And leave it dark.\*\*\*\*

With dustiness and night  
Upon thy mouth of starry proud desire, With slumber for thy dreams, thou  
wilt repose, Nor startle when the lazy, loitering Worm Is slow to  
leave the tavern of thy brain.

## **AUTUMNAL**

In all the pleasancess where Love was lord, Blossom the mournful  
immortelles alone; The fallen roses crumble, and are blown, A  
snow of red, about the barren sward.

The misty sun is grown a dimmer gold: Only the leaves, the leaves forever  
seem To tell and treasure, in a gorgeous dream, The aureate fervour  
of the dawns of old.

Only for us remains the memory  
Of sultry moons and summer suns that were; And we have found, where  
fallen roses stir, The immortelles that flower mournfully.

## CHANT OF AUTUMN

Like the voice of a golden star, Heard from afar,  
Perishing beauty calls  
Out of the mist and rain;  
Like the song of a silver wind, When the night is blind,  
Murmuring music falls,  
Never to rise again.

Voice of the leaves that die,  
Whisper and sigh  
Of ruinous gardens waning  
Rose by ungathered rose!  
Dolour of pines immortal,  
That guard the portal  
Of a lonely mead retaining  
Blossoms that no man knows!

Voices of love and the autumn sun— In my heart ye are one!  
Fairer the petals that fall,  
Dearer the beauty that dies,  
And the pyres of autumn burning, Than a thousand springs returning.\*\*\*  
O, perishing loves that call  
In my heart and the hollow skies!

## **ECHO OF MEMNON**

I wandered ere the dream was done Where over Nilus' nenuphars,  
With all its ears of quivering stars, The darkness listened for the sun.

Ere shadows were, ere night was gone, I found the one whom suns had  
sought, And waiting at his feet, methought Had speech with  
Memnon in the dawn.\*\*\*\*

Sad as the last, lamenting star, He sang, and clear as morning's gold: Unto  
his voice I saw unfold  
The hesitant, pale nenuphar.

But dolorous like the peal of dooms, And proclamation of the night,  
The waste returned that voice of light With echo from its hollow tombs!

## **TWILIGHT ON THE SNOW**

Before the hill's high altar bowed The trees are Druids, weird and white,  
Facing the vision of the light  
With ancient lips to silence vowed.

No certain sound the woods aver, Nor motion save of formless wings—  
Filled with faint twilight flutterings, With thronging gloom, and  
shadow-stir.

And hidden in a hollow dell,  
Lie all the winds that magic trees Have lulled with crystal wizardries, And  
bound about with Merlin-spell.

## **IMAGE**

Calm as a long-forgotten marble god who smiles, Colossal, in the grim  
serenity of stone, Upon the broken pillars lying all alone, Athwart  
the horizon's infinite and yellow miles;

Whom neither desert darkness nor the desert noon, Nor dawns that render  
terrible the bare dead land, Nor winds that wrap his mighty form in  
palls of sand, Nor the Medusa of the dumb and stony moon,

Shall evermore dismay, nor lion, nor the lynx, With silken-sheathèd claws,  
and eyes of golden glede; Nor any griffin, from the gates of  
treasure freed To roam the gulf, nor any wild and wandering  
sphinx:—

Even thus, amid the waste of all fair things that were, Of high marmoreal  
dreams immense and overthrown, I wait forever, and about my  
face is blown The sand of crumbling cenotaph and sepulcher.

## **THE REFUGE OF BEAUTY**

From regions of the sun's half-dreamt decay, All day the cruel rain strikes  
darkly down; And from the night thy fatal stars shall frown—  
Beauty, wilt thou abide this night and day?

Roofless, at portals dark and desperate, Wilt thou a shelter unrefused  
implore, And past the tomb's too-hospitable door, Evade thy lover,  
in eluding Hate?

---

Alas, for what have I to offer thee?— Chill halls of mind, dark rooms of  
memory Where thou shalt dwell with woes and thoughts infirm;

This rumour-throngèd citadel of Sense, Trembling before some nameless  
Imminence; And fellow-guestship with the glutless Worm.

## **NIGHTMARE**

As though a thousand vampires, from the day Fleeing unseen, oppressed  
that nightly deep, The straitening and darkened skies of sleep  
Closed on the dreamland dale in which I lay.

Eternal tensions numbed the wings of Time, While through the unending  
narrow ways I sought Awakening; up precipitous gloom I thought  
To reach the dawn, far-pinnacled sublime.

Rejected at the closed gates of light I turned, and down new dreams and  
shadows fled, Where beetling Shapes of veiled, colossal dread  
With Gothic wings enormous arched the night.

## **THE MUMMY**

From out the light of many a mightier day, From Pharaonic splendour,  
Memphian gloom, And from the night aeonian of the tomb They  
brought him forth, to meet the modern ray,— Upon his brow the  
unbroken seal of clay, While gods have gone to a forgotten doom,  
And desolation and the dust assume Temple and cot immingling in  
decay.

From out the everlasting womb sublime Of cyclopean death, within a land  
Of tombs and cities rotting in the sun, He is reborn to mock the  
might of time, While kings have built against Oblivion With walls  
and columns of the windy sand.

## **FORGETFULNESS**

My life is less than any broken glass.\*\*\*\*

My long and weary love, thy lips unwon— All, all is turned to mere  
oblivion, With the grey flowers and the fallen grass Of yesteryear.  
And on the winds that pass, Thy music and thy memory are one;  
For thy wan face, desired above the sun, Only some languid echo  
saith Alas.\*\*\*

Love is no more, immemorably flown As any leaf or petal.\*\*\*But to me,  
The very fields are still, and strange, and lone: The forest and the  
garden fail for breath, Where the dumb heavens hold implacably  
An autumn like the marble sleep of death.

## **FLAMINGOES**

On skies of tropic evening, broad and beryl-green, Above a tranquil sea of  
molten malachite, With flare of scarlet wings, in long and level  
flight, The soundless, fleet flamingoes pass to isles unseen.

They pass and disappear, where darkening palms indent The horizon,  
underneath some high and tawny star— Lost in the sunset gulfs of  
glowing cinnabar, Where sinks the painted moon, with prows of  
orpiment.

## **THE CHIMAERA**

O, who will slay the last chimaera, Time?

Though Love and Death have many a cunning dart— Despite of these, and  
close-wrought webs of Art, And Slumber, with a slow Lethan  
lime—

Still, still, he lives; and though thy feet attain The lunar peaks of ice and  
crystal, he, Some night of agonized eternity With brazen teeth shall  
gnaw thy fretted brain.

Gorged with the dust of thrones and fanes destroyed— With lidless eyes  
like moons of adamant, And vaulted mouth emportalling the void,

He crouches like a passive sphinx before Some temple gate, or, grinning,  
moves to grant Thine entrance at the monarch's golden door.

## **SATAN UNREPENTANT**

Lost from those archangelic thrones that star, Fadeless and fixed, heaven's  
light of azure bliss; Rejected of His splendour and depressed  
Beyond the birth of the first sun, and lower Than the last star's  
decline, I here endure, Abased, majestic, fallen, beautiful, And  
unregretful in the doubted dark, Throneless, that greatens chaos-  
ward, albeit From chanting stars that throng the nave of night Lost  
echoes wander here, and of his praise, With ringing moons for  
cymbals dinned afar, And shouted from the flaming mouths of  
suns.

The shadows of impalpable blank deeps— Deep upon deep accumulate—  
close down, Around my head centered, while above, In the lit,  
loftier blue, star after star Spins endless orbits betwixt me and  
heaven; And at my feet mysterious Chaos breaks, Abrupt,  
immeasurable. Round His throne Now throbs the rhythmic  
resonance of suns, Incessant, perfect, music infinite: I, throneless,  
hear the discords of the dark, And roar of ruin uncreate, than which  
Some vast cacophony of dragons, heard In wasted worlds, were  
purer melody.

The universe His tyranny constrains Turns on: In old and consummated  
gulfs The stars that wield His judgment wait at hand, And in new  
deeps Apocalyptic suns Prepare His coming: Lo, His mighty whim  
To rear and mar, goes forth enormously In nights and  
constellations! Darkness hears

Enragèd suns that bellow down the deep God's ravenous and insatiable  
will; And He is strong with change, and rideth forth In whirlwind  
clothed, with thunders and with doom, To the red stars: God's  
throne is reared of change; Its myriad and successive hands support  
Like music His omnipotence, that fails If mercy or if justice  
interrupt The sequence of that tyranny, begun Upon injustice, and  
doomed evermore To stand thereby.

I, who with will not less

Than His, but lesser strength, opposed to Him This unsubmissive brow  
and lifted mind, He holds remote, in nullity and night Doubtful  
between old Chaos and the deeps Betrayed by Time to vassalage.  
Methinks All tyrants fear whom they may not destroy, And I, that  
am of essence one with His, Though less in measure, He may not  
destroy, And but withstands in gulfs of dark suspense, A secret  
dread forever: For God knows This quiet will irrevocably set  
Against His own, and this mine old revolt Yet stubborn, and  
confirmed eternally.

And with the hatred born of fear, and fed Ever thereby, God hates me, and  
His gaze Sees the bright menace of mine eyes afar, Through  
midnight, and the innumerable blaze Of servile suns: Lo, strong in  
tyranny, The despot trembles that I stand opposed!

For fain am I to hush the anguished cries Of Substance, broken on the  
racks of change, Of Matter tortured into life; and God, Knowing  
this, dreads evermore some huge mishap— That in the vigils of  
Omnipotence, Once careless, I shall enter heaven, or He, Himself,  
with weight of some unwonted act,

Thoughtless perturb His balanced tyranny, To mine advance of watchful  
aspiration.

With rumored thunder and enormous groan— (Burden of sound that  
heavens overborne Let slip from deep to deep, even to this, Where  
climb the huge cacophonies of Chaos) God's universe moves on.  
Confirmed in pride, In patient majesty serene and strong, I wait the  
dreamt, inevitable hour, Fulfilled of orbits ultimate, when God,  
Whether through His mischance or mine own deed, Or rise of other  
and extremere Strength, Shall vanish, and the lightened universe No  
more remember Him than Silence does An ancient thunder. I know  
not if these, Mine all-indomitable eyes, shall see A maimed and  
dwindled Godhead cast among The stars of His creating, and  
beneath The unnumbered rush of swift and shining feet, Trodden  
into night; or mark the fiery breath Of His infuriate suns blaze  
forth upon And scorch that coarsened Essence; or His flame,  
Drawn through the windy halls of nothingness, A mightier comet,  
roar and redden down, Portentous unto Chaos. I but wait, In strong

majestic patience equable, That hour of consummation and of  
doom, Of justice, and rebellion justified.

## **THE ABYSS TRIUMPHANT**

The force of suns had waned beyond recall.

Chaos was re-established over all, Where lifeless atoms through forgetful  
deeps Fled unrelated, cold, immusical.

Above the tumult heaven alone endured; Long since the bursting walls of  
hell had poured Demon and damned to peace erstwhile denied,  
Within the Abyss God's might had not immured.

(He could but thwart it with creative mace.\*\*\*) And now it rose above the  
heavenly base, Mordant at pillars rotten through and through Of  
Matter's last, most firm abiding-place.

Bastion and minaret began to nod, Till all the pile, unmindful of His rod,  
Dissolved in thunder, and the void Abyss Caught like a quicksand  
at the feet of God!

## **THE MOTES**

I saw a universe to-day:  
Through a disclosing bar of light  
The motes were whirled in gleaming flight  
That briefly dawned and sank away.

Each had its swift and tiny noon;  
In orbit-streams I marked them flit,  
Successively revealed and lit.  
The sunlight paled and shifted soon.

## **THE MEDUSA OF DESPAIR**

I may not mask forever with the grace Of woven flow'rs thine eyes of  
staring stone: Ere fatally I front thee, fully known The guarded  
horror of thy haggard face, Thy visage carven from the heart long  
dead Of some white, frozen star; ere thou astound My life to thine  
own likeness, and confound— Depart, and curse more kindred  
things instead:

Triumphant, through what realms of elder doom Where even the swart  
vans of Time are stunned, Seek thou some fit, Cimmerian citadel,  
And mighty cities, desolate, unsunned, Whose walls of horrent and  
enormous gloom Make sharp the horizon of the light of hell!

## **LAUS MORTIS**

The imperishable phantoms, Love and Fame, Nor Beauty, burning on the  
mist and mire A fugitive uncapturable fire,  
Nor God, that is a darkness and a name— Not these, not these my choric  
dreams acclaim, But Death, the last and ultimate desire, Great  
Death I praise with litany and lyre, And sombre pray'r implacably  
the same.

O, incommunicable hope that lies Deep in despair, as tapers that illumine  
Some fearful fane's arcanic, sacred gloom!  
O, solace of all weary hearts and wise!— The dream which Satan hath for  
anodyne, Which is to God a sweet and secret wine.

## THE GHOUL AND THE SERAPH

Scene: A cemetery, by moonlight. The Ghoul emerges from the shade of a cypress, and sings.

### THE SONG

Ho, ho, the Pest is on the wing!

Ha, ha, the sweet and crimson foam Upon the lips of churl and king!

No worm but hath a feastful home: Ha, ha, the Pest is on the wing!

Ho, ho, his kiss incarnadines

The brows of maiden, queen and whore!

The nun to him her cheek resigns; Wan lips were never kissed before His  
ancient kiss incarnadines.

Good cheer to thee, white worm of death!

The priest within the brothel dies, The bawd hath sickened from his  
breath!

In grave half-dug the digger lies: Good cheer to thee, white worm of  
death!

The Seraph appears from among the trees, half-walking, half-flying with wings whose iris the moonlight has rendered faint, and pauses abruptly at sight of the Ghoul.

### THE SERAPH

What gardener in crudded fields of hell, Or scullion of the Devil's house,  
art thou— To whom the filth of Malebolge clings, And reek of  
horrid refuse? Thou art gnurled And black as any Kobold from the  
mines Where demons delve for orichalch and steel To forge the  
racks of Satan! On thy face,

Detestable and evil as might haunt The last delirium of a dying hag, Or  
necromancer's madness, fall thy locks, Like sodden reeds that trail  
in Acheron From shores of night and horror! And thy hands, Like  
roots of cypresses uptorn in storm That still retain their grisly  
provender, Make the glad wine and manna of the skies Turn to a  
qualmish sickness in my veins!

## THE GHOUL

And who art thou?—Some white-faced fool of God, With wings that emulate the giddy bird, And bloodless mouth forever filled with psalms In lieu of honest victuals!\*\*\* Askest thou My name? I am the Ghoul Necromalor: In new-made graves I delve for sustenance, As Man within his turnip-fields: I take For table the uprooted slab, that bears The words, “In Pace;” black and curdled blood Of cadavers is all my cupless wine— Slow-drunken, as the dainty vampire drinks From pulses oped in never-ending sleep.

## THE SERAPH

O! foulness born as of the ninefold curse Of dragon-mouthed Apollyon, plumed with darts, And armed with horns of incandescent bronze! O, dark as Satan’s nightmare, or the fruit Of Belial’s rape on hell’s black hippogriff!\*\*\*

What knowest THOU of Paradise, where grow The gardens of the manna-laden myrrh, And lotos never known to Ulysses, Whose fruit provides our long and sateless banquet?

Where boundless fields, unfurrowed and unsown, Supply for God’s own appanage their foison Of amber-hearted grain, and sesame Sweeter than nard the Persian air compounds

With frankincense from isles of India?

Where flame-leaved forests infinitely teem With palms of tremulous opal, from whose top Ambrosial honeys fall forevermore In rains of nacred light! Where rise and rise Terrace on hyacinthine terrace, hills Hung with the grapes that drip cerulean wine, One draught whereof dissolves eternity In bliss oblivious and supernal dream!

## THE GHOUL

To all, the meat their bellies most commend, To all, the according wine: For me, I wot, The cates whereof thou braggest were as wind In halls where men had feasted yesterday, Or furbished bones the full hyena leaves: Tiger and pig have their apportioned glut, Nor lacks the shark his provender; the bird Is nourished with the worm of charnels; man, Or the grey wolf, will slay and eat the bird, Till wolf and man be carrion for the worm.

What wouldst thou? As the elfin lily does, Or as the Paphian myrtle, pink  
with love, I draw me from the unreluctant dead The rightful meat  
my belly's law demands.\*\*\*

Eaters of death are all: Life shall not live, Save that its food be death; No  
atomy In any star, or heaven's remotest moon, But hath a billion  
billion times been made The food of insatiable life, and food Of  
death insatiate: For all is change— Change, that hath wrought the  
chancre and the rose, And wrought the star, and wrought the  
sapphire-stone, And lit great altars, and the eyes of lions—  
Change, that hath made the very gods from slime Drawn from the  
pits of Python, and will fling Gods and their builded heavens back  
again To slime. The fruits of archangelic light

Thou braggest of, and grapes of azure wine, Have been the dung of  
dragons, and the blood Of toads in Phlegethon; each particle That  
is their splendour, clomb in separate ways, Through suns, and  
worlds, and cycles infinite— Through burning brume of systems  
unbegun, Or manes of long-haired comets, that have lashed The  
night of space to fury and to fire; And in the core of cold and  
lightless stars, And in immalleable metals deep.

Each atomy hath slept, or known the slime Of Cyclopean oceans turned to  
air Before the suns of Ophinchus rose; And they have known the  
interstellar night, And they have lain at root of sightless flow'r's In  
worlds without a sun, or at the heart Of monstrous-eyed and  
panting flow'rs of flesh, Or aeon-blooming amaranths of stone:  
And they have ministered within the brains Of sages and  
magicians, and have served To swell the pulse of kings or  
conquerors, And have been privy to the hearts of queens.

The Ghoul turns his back on the Seraph, and moves away singing.

#### THE SONG

O condor, keep thy mountain-ways, Above the long Andean lands!  
Gier-eagle, guard the eastern sands Where the forsaken camel strays!  
Beetle and worm and I will ward The feastful graves of lout and lord.

O, warm and bright the blood that lies Upon the wounded lion's trail!  
Hyena, laugh, and jackal, wail  
And ring him round, who turns and dies!  
Beetle and worm and I will ward The feastful graves of lout and lord.

Raven and kestrel, kite and crow, The swart patrol of northern lands,  
Gather your noisy, bickering bands— The reindeer bleeds upon the  
snow!

Beetle and worm and I will ward The feastful graves of lout and lord.

Arms of a wanton girl are good, Or hands of harp-player and knight!  
Breasts of the nun be sweet and white, Sweet is the festive friar's blood!  
Beetle and worm and I will ward The feastful graves of lout and lord.

### **AT SUNRISE**

The moon declines in lonely gold Among the stars of ashen-grey—  
    Veiling the pallors of decay  
With clouds and glories, fold on fold.

Within a crystal interlude,  
Stillness and twilight rest awhile Ere the bright snows, illumined, smile,  
    From peaks where sullen purples brood;

And from the low Favonian bourn, A light wind blows so dulcetly  
It seems the futile silver sigh Breathed by the lingering moon forlorn.

## THE LAND OF EVIL STARS

'Neath blue days, and gold, and green, Blooms the glorious land serene,—  
Flaming shields of dawns between; And the rapt white flowers  
suffice To illumine  
With their bright eyes  
Fluctuant ecstatic gloom  
'Twixt the fallen emerald sun,  
And the unrisen azure one.

But the season of the night  
Comes in all the suns' despite;  
And, ah, gorgeous then their sorrows, At departure into morrows  
Of far, other lands forgot—  
Until now remembered not,  
For the lovelier flow'rs of this, And each lake's pure lucency;  
And recalled regretfully,  
Regretfully, for leaving THIS.

In the star-possessed night  
The land knows another light—  
All the small and evil rays  
Of the sorcerous orbs ablaze  
With ecstatic, intense  
Hate and still malevolence—  
Dwelling on the fields below  
From the ascendancy of even,  
Till the suns, re-entering heaven, Glorify with triple glow  
The dim flowers smitten low.

Ah, not cold, or kind, as ours,  
The stars of those remotest hours!  
Peace and pallor of the flow'rs  
They have fevered, they have marred, With the poison of their light,  
With distillèd bale and blight  
Of a red, accursed regard:

All the toil of sunlight hours  
They undo  
With their wild eyes—  
Eldritch and ecstatic eyes,  
Stooping timeward from the skies, Burning redly in the dew.

## **THE HARLOT OF THE WORLD**

O Life, thou harlot who beguilest all!

Beautiful in thy house, the gorgeous world, Abidest thou, where Powers  
pinion-furled And flying Splendours follow to thy call.

Innumerable like the stars or like the dust, Nations and monarchs were thy  
thralls of yore: Unto the grave's old womb forevermore Hast thou  
betrayed the passion and the lust.

Fair as the moon of summer is thy face, And mystical with cloudiness of  
hair.\*\*\*

Only an eye, subornless by delight,

Shall find within thy phosphorescent gaze Those caverns of corruption and  
despair, Where the Worm toileth in the charnel night.

## **THE HOPE OF THE INFINITE**

My hope is in the unharvestable deep, That shows with eve the treasure of  
the stars To mournful kings behind their palace-bars, And  
wanderers outworn, and boys who weep A shattered bauble—or  
above the sleep Of headsmen, and of men condemned to die, Pours  
out the moon's white mercy from on high, Or hides with clement  
gloom the hours that creep Like death-worms to the grave.\*\*\* And  
I have ta'en From storming seas by sunset glorified, Or from the  
dawn of ashen wastes and wide, Some light re-gathered from the  
lamps that wane, And promise of a translunary Spain, Where loves  
forgone and forfeit dreams abide.

## **LOVE MALEVOLENT**

I fain would love thee, but thy lips are fed With poison-honey, hived in a  
skull; They seem like scarlet poppies, beautiful For delving roots,  
deep-clenchèd in the dead.

Thine eyes are coloured like the nightshade-flow'r.\*\*\*  
Blent in the opiate perfume of thy breath Are dreams, and purple sleep,  
and scented death For him that is thy lover for an hour.

Mandragora, within the graveyard grown, Hath given thee its carnal root  
to eat, And vipers, born and nurstled in a tomb,

From fawning mouths drip venom at thy feet; Yet from thy lethal lips and  
thine alone, Love would I drink, as dew from poison-bloom.

## **PALMS**

Palms in the sunset of a languid summer land!

Sculpture of living green, on dreamy scarlet light  
Dividing as a wall the  
twilight from the night!

How magically still and luminous they stand,

Inclining fretted leaves above some red lagoon— Careless alike, in mystic  
and immense repose, Of the flamingo-coloured, flying sun that  
goes, Or the slow coming of the lion-coloured moon.

## MEMNON AT MIDNIGHT

(Dedicated to Albert M. Bender)

Methought upon the tomb-encumbered shore I stood, of Egypt's lone,  
monarchal stream, And saw immortal Memnon, throned supreme  
In gloom as of that Memphian night of yore: Fold upon fold  
purpureal he wore, Beneath the star-borne canopy extreme—  
Carven of silence and colossal dream, Where waters flowed like  
sleep forevermore.

Lo, in the darkness, thick with dust of years, How many a ghostly god  
around his throne, With thronging winds that were forgotten  
Fames, Stood, ere the dawn restore to ancient ears The long-  
withholden thunder of their names, And music stilled to  
monumental stone.

## **EIDOLON**

Chryselephantine, clear as carven flame, Before my gaze, thy soul's  
eidolon stands, As on the threshold of the frozen lands A frozen  
sun forevermore the same.

All passion that the passive marbles make Imperishable in their shining  
sleep, Is thine; and all the wan despairs that weep With tears of ice  
and crystal, cannot break

The heart, which, like a ruby white and rare, In thy deep breast  
impenetrably gleams.\*\*\*

More beautiful than any sphynx, and fair

As Aphrodite dead, thine image seems— Guarding forever, in its golden  
eyes, The treasure of intagliate memories.

## THE KINGDOM OF SHADOWS

A crownless king who reigns alone, I live within this ashen land,  
Where winds rebuild from wandering sand My columns and my crumbled  
throne.

My sway is on the men that were,  
And wan sweet women, dear and dead; Beside a marble queen, my bed  
Is made within the sepulchre.

In gardens desolate to the sun,  
Faring alone, I sigh to find  
The dusty closes, dim and blind,  
Where winter and the spring are one.

My shadowy visage, grey with grief, In sunken waters walled with sand, I  
see,—where all mine ancient land Lies yellow like an autumn leaf.

My silver lutes of subtle string  
Are rust,—but on the grievous breeze, I hear what sobbing memories.  
And muted sorrows murmuring!

Across the broken monuments,  
Memorial of the dreams of old,  
The sunset flings a ghostly gold  
To mock mine ancient affluence.

About the tombs of stone and brass The silver lights of evening flee; And  
slowly now, and solemnly,  
I see the pomp of shadows pass.  
Often, beneath some fervid moon,  
With splendid spells I vainly strive Dead loves imperial to revive,  
And speak a heart-remembered rune:—

But, ah, the lovely phantoms fail, The faces fade to mist and light, The  
vermeil lips of my delight

Are dim, the eyes are ashen-pale.

A crownless king who reigns alone, I live within this ashen land,  
Where winds rebuild from wandering sand My columns and my crumbled  
throne.

## REQUIESCAT IN PACE

White iris on thy bier,  
With the white rose, we strew,  
And lotus pale or blue  
As moonlight on the orient mountain-snows.

Slumber, as they that sleep  
In the slow sands unknown,  
Or under seas that zone  
With lulling foam the sealed, extremer lands.

Slumber, with songless birds  
That sang, and sang to death,  
Giving their gladder breath  
To lonely winds in one melodious pang.

Sleep, with the golden queens  
Of planets long forgot,  
Whose fire-soft lips are not  
Recalled by any sorcery of song.

Sleep, with the flowers that were, And any leaf that fell  
On field or flowerless dell  
In autumns lost of memory and grief.

Pass, with the music flown  
From ivory lyre, and lute  
Of mellow string left mute  
In cities desolate ere the dream of Tyre.

Pass, with the clouds that sank  
In sunset turned to grey  
On some Edenic day  
For which the exiled years have ever yearned.  
White iris on thy bier,

With the white rose, we strew,  
And lotus pale or blue  
As moonlight on the orient mountain-snows.

## **ALEXANDRINES**

Knowing the weariness of dreams, and days, and nights, The great and  
grievous vanity of joy and pain; Frail loves that pass, where  
languors infinite remain; Fervours, and long despairs, and  
desperate, brief delights;

Knowing how in the witless brains of them that were, The drowsy, wiving  
worm hath prospered and hath died; Knowing that, evermore, by  
moon and sun abide The standing glooms made stagnant in the  
sepulchre;

Knowing the vacillant leaves that tremble, flame, and fall, The sweetly  
wasting rose, the dawns and stars that wane— Knowing these  
things, the desolate heart and soul are fain Of the one perfect sleep  
which filleth, foldeth all.

## **ASHES OF SUNSET**

Who fares to find the sunset ere it fly, Turning to light and fire the further  
west, Shall have the veils of twilight for his quest, And all the  
falling of an ashen sky.

On lands he shall not know, the splendour lies— A pharos on some  
alienated shore, In foam and purple lost forevermore, Where  
dreams are kindled in remoter eyes.

## **NOVEMBER TWILIGHT**

November's winy sunset leaves,  
Deep in the silver heavens far,  
One ruby-hearted star  
That lit the summer's moon-forsaken eyes.

Under its ray, remote, alone,  
Ascends upon the ashen gloom  
The ghostly, faint perfume  
From autumn's grey, forgotten roses flown.

## SEPULTURE

Deep in my heart, as in the hollow stone And silence of some olden  
sepulchre, Thy silver beauty lies, and shall not stir— Forgotten,  
incorruptible, alone:

Though altars darken, and a wind be blown From starless seas on beacon-  
fires that were— Within thy tomb, with oils of balm and myrrh,  
Forever burn the onyx lamps unknown.

And though the bleak, Novembral gardens yield Rose-dust and ivy-leaf,  
nor any flow'r Be found through vermeil forest or wan field—  
Still, still the asphodel and lotos lie Around thy bed, and hour by  
silent hour, Exhale immortal fragrance like a sigh.

## QUEST

All beneath a wintering sky  
Follow the wastrel butterfly;  
With vermilion leaf or bronze—  
Tatters of gorgeous gonfalons—  
With the winds that always hold  
Echo of clarions lost and old,—  
We must hasten, hasten on  
Tow'rd the azure world withdrawn, We must wander, wander so  
Where the ruining roses go;  
Where the poplar's pallid leaves  
Drift among the gathered sheaves  
In that harvest none shall glean; Where the twisted willows lean  
In their strange, tormented woe,  
Seeing, on the streamlet's flow  
Half their fragile leaves depart; Where the secret pines at heart,  
High, funereal, vespertine,  
Guard eternal sorrows green:—  
We shall follow, we shall find,  
Haply, ere the light is blind,  
The moulded place where Beauty lay, Moon-beheld until the day,  
In the woven windlestrae;  
Or the pool of tourmaline,  
Rimmed with golden reeds, that was In the dawn a tiring-glass  
For her undelaying mien.

Ever wander, wander so,  
Where the ruining roses go;  
All beneath a wintering sky,  
Follow the wastrel butterfly.

## **BEAUTY IMPLACABLE**

White Beauty, bending from a throne sublime, Hath claimed my lips with  
kisses keen as snow: Now through my harp the tremors come and  
go Of things not stirred with urgencies of Time.

Now from the lunar mountains, old and lone, In dream I watch the  
neighboring world remote; Or on the dim Uranian waters float  
After a star-like sun from zone to zone.

Lo! in her praise, the stern, the fearful one, Whose love is as the light of  
snows afar, Whose ways are difficult, what word shall be?

I, desolate with Beauty, and undone, Say Death is not so strong to change  
or mar, And Love and Life not so desired as she.

## **A VISION OF LUCIFER**

I saw a shape with human form and face, If such in apotheosis might stand: Deep in the shadows of a desolate land His burning feet obtained colossal base, And spheral on the lonely arc of space, His head, a menace unto heavens unspanned, Arose with towered eyes that might command The sunless, blank horizon of that place

And straight I knew him for the mystic one That is the brother, born of human dream, Of man rebellious at an unknown rod; The mind's ideal, and the spirit's sun; A column of clear flame in lands extreme, Set opposite the darkness that is God.

## **DESIRE OF VASTNESS**

Supreme with night, what high mysteriarch— The undreamt-of god  
beyond the trinal noon Of elder suns empyreal—past the moon  
Circling some wild world outmost in the dark— Lays on me this  
unfathomed wish to hark What central sea with plume-plucked  
midnight strewn, Plangent to what enormous plenilune That lifts in  
silence, hinderless and stark?

The brazen comprehension of the waste, The waste inclusion of the brazen  
sky— These I desire, and all things wide and deep; And, lifted past  
the level years, would taste The cup of an Olympian ecstasy,  
Titanic dream, and Cyclopean sleep.

## **ANTICIPATION**

The thought of death to me  
Is like a well of waters, deep and dim— Cool-gleaming, hushed, and  
hidden gratefully Among the palms asleep  
At silver evening on the desert's rim.

Or as a couch of stone,  
Whereon by moonlight, in a marble room, Some fevered king reposes all  
alone— So is the hope of sleep,  
The inalienable surety of the tomb.

## **A PSALM TO THE BEST BELOVED**

Thou comfortest me with the manna of thy love, And the kisses of thy  
mouth are wine and sustenance; Thy lips are grateful as fruit  
In lonely orchards by the wayside of a ruinous land; They are sweet as the  
purple grapes On parching hills that confront the autumnal desert,  
Or apples that the mad simoon hath spared In a garden with walls  
of syenite.

Thy loosened hair is a veil  
For the weariness of mine eyes and eyelids, Which have known the  
redoubled sun In a desert valley with slopes of the dust of white  
marble, And have gazed on the mounded salt In the marshes of a  
lake of dead waters.

Thy body is a secret Eden  
Fed with lethean springs,  
And the touch of thy flesh is like to the savour of lotos.  
In thy hair is a perfume of ecstasy, And a perfume of sleep,  
Between thy thighs is a valley of delight, And between thy breasts is a  
valley of peace.

## THE WITCH IN THE GRAVEYARD

Scene: A forsaken graveyard, by moonlight. Enter two witches.

FIRST WITCH:

Sit, sister, now that haggish Hecate Appropriate and ghastly favour sheds,  
And with wild light forwards our enterprise; And watch the  
weighted eyelids of each grave As never mother watched her babe,  
to mark, At zenith of the necromantic moon The stir of that  
disquiet, when the dead, From suckling nightmares of the charnel  
dark Or long insomnia on a mouldy couch, Impelled like wan  
sommambulists, arise— Constrained to emerge and walk, or seated  
each On his own tombstone, shrouded council hold, Or commerce  
with the sooty wings of Hell.

All omens of this influential hour When all dark powers, thronging to the  
dark, Promote enchantry with their wavèd wings, And brim the  
wind with potency malign— A dew of dread to aid our cauldron—  
these Observe thou closely, while I seek afield All requisite swart  
herbs of venefice, And evil roots unto our usance ripe.

(The first witch departs, leaving the other among the tombs, and returns  
after a time, in the course of her search.)

FIRST WITCH:

Sister, what seest or what hearest thou?

SECOND WITCH:

I see

The moonlight, and the slowly moving gleam

That westers hour by hour on tomb and stone; And shrivelled lilies, tossed  
i' the winter's breath, With their attenuate shadows, as might dance  
Phantom with flaffing phantom; at my side, The white and  
shuddering grasses of the grave, With nettles, and the parching  
fumitory, Whose leaves, root-trellised on the bones of death, Will  
rasp and bristle to the lightest wind.

(The first witch moves on, and approaches again, after a long interval.)

FIRST WITCH:

Sister, what seest or what hearest thou?

SECOND WITCH:

I see

The mound-stretched gossamers, cradles to the dew; Moon-wefted briers,  
and the cypress-trees With shadow swathed, or cerements of the  
moon; And corpse-lights borne from aisle to secret aisle Within the  
footless forest.\*\*\*

Now I hear

The lich-owl, shrieking lethal prophecy; And whimpering winds, the  
children of the air, Lost in the glades of mystery and gloom.

(The first witch disappears and passes again shortly.)

FIRST WITCH:

Sister, what seest or what hearest thou?

SECOND WITCH:

I see

The ghost-white owl, with huge sulphureous eyes, That veers in prone,  
unwhispered flight, and hear The small shriek of the moon-  
adventuring mole, Gripped in mid-graveyard.\*\*\* And I see Where  
some wild shadow shakes, though the pale wind Of moonlight stirs  
far off\*\*\*and hear Curst mandragores that gibber to the moon,  
Though no man treads anigh.\*\*\*

(After an interval)

Some predal hand doth halt the wandering air; Now dies the throttled wind  
with rattling breath, And round about a breathing Silence prowls.

(After another interval)

I hear the cheeping of the bat-lipped ghouls, Aroused beneath the vaulted  
cypresses Far-off; and lipless muttering of tombs, With clash of  
bones bestirred in ancient charnels Beneath their shroud of unclean  
light that crawls.\*\*\*

Earth shudders, and rank odours 'gin to rise From tombs a-crack; and  
shaken out all at once From mid-air, and directly neath the moon,

Meseems what hanging wing divides the light, Like a black film of gloom, or thickest shadow; But on the tombs there is no shadow!

FIRST WITCH:

Enough! 'Twill be a prosperous night, methinks, For commerce of the demons with the dead; And for us, too, when every omen's good, And fraught with, promise of a potent brew.



## **POEMS IN PROSE**

## THE TRAVELLER

(Dedicated to V. H.)

“Stranger, where goest thou, in the sad raiment of a pilgrim, with shattered sandals retaining the dust and mire of so many devious ways! With thy brow that alien suns have darkened, and thy hair made white from the cold rime of alien moons? Wanderest thou in search of the cities greater than Rome, with walls of opal and crystal, and fanes more white than the summer clouds, or the foam of hyperboreal seas? Or farest thou to the lands unpeopled and unexplored, to the sunless deserts lit by the baleful and calamitous beacons of volcanoes? Or seekest thou an extremer shore, where the red and monstrous lilies are like a royal pageant, pausing with innumerable flambeaux held aloft on the verge of the waveless waters?”

“Nay, it is none of these that I seek, but forevermore I seek the city and the land of my former home: In the quest thereof I have wandered from the first immemorable years of my youth till now, and have mingled the dust of many realms, of many highways, in my garments’ hem. I have seen the cities greater than Rome, and the fanes more white than the clouds of summer; the lands unpeopled and unexplored, and the land that is thronged by the red and monstrous lilies. Even the far, aerial walls of the cities of mirage, and the saffron meadows of sunset I have seen, but nevermore the city and land of my former home.”

“Where lieth the land of thine home? and by what name shall we know it, and distinguish the rumour thereof, among the rumours of many lands?”

“Alas! I know not where it lieth; nor in the broad, black scrolls of geographers, and the charts of old seamen who have sailed to the marge of the seventh sea, is the place thereof recorded. And its name I have never learned, howbeit I have learned the name of empires lying beneath stars to us invisible. In many languages have I spoken, in barbarous tongues unknown to Babel; and I have heard the speech of many men, even of them that inhabit the strange isles of the sea of fire and the sea of snow. Thunder, and lutes, and battle-drums, the fine unceasing querulousness of

gnats, and the stupendous moaning of the simoon; lyres of ebony, damascened with crystal, bells of malachite with golden clappers; the song of exotic birds that sigh like women or sob like fountains; whispers and shoutings of fire, the multitudinous mutter of cities asleep, the manifold tumult of cities at dawn, and the slow and weary murmur of desert-wandering streams—all, all have I heard, but never, in any place, from any tongue, a sound or syllable that resembled in the least the name I would learn.”

## THE FLOWER-DEVIL

In a basin of porphyry, at the summit of a pillar of serpentine, the thing has existed from primeval time, in the garden of the kings that rule an equatorial realm of the planet Saturn. With black foliage, fine and intricate as the web of some enormous spider; with petals of livid rose, and purple like the purple of putrefying flesh; and a stem rising like a swart and hairy wrist from a bulb so old, so encrusted with the growth of centuries that it resembles an urn of stone, the monstrous flower holds dominion over all the garden. In this flower, from the years of the oldest legend, an evil demon has dwelt—a demon whose name and whose nativity are known to the superior magicians and mysteriarchs of the kingdom, but to none other. Over the half-animate flowers, the ophidian orchids that coil and sting, the bat-like lilies that open their ribbed petals by night, and fasten with tiny yellow teeth on the bodies of sleeping dragonflies; the carnivorous cacti that yawn with green lips beneath their beards of poisonous yellow prickles; the plants that palpitate like hearts, the blossoms that pant with a breath of venomous perfume—over all these, the Flower-Devil is supreme, in its malign immortality, and evil, perverse intelligence—inciting them to strange maleficence, fantastic mischief, even to acts of rebellion against the gardeners, who proceed about their duties with wariness and trepidation, since more than one of them has been bitten, even unto death, by some vicious and venefic flower. In places, the garden has run wild from lack of care on the part of the fearful gardeners, and has become a monstrous tangle of serpentine creepers, and hydra-headed plants, convolved and inter-writhing in lethal hate or venomous love, and horrible as a rout of wrangling vipers and pythons.

And, like his innumerable ancestors before him, the king dares not destroy the Flower, for fear that the devil, driven from its habitation, might seek a new home, and enter into the brain or body of one of the king's subjects—or even the heart of his fairest and gentlest, and most beloved queen!

## IMAGES

### TEARS

Thy tears are not as mine: Thou weapest as a green fountain among palms and roses, with lightly falling drops that bedew the flowery turf. My tears are like a rain of marah in the desert, leaving a bitter pool whose waters are fire and poison.

### THE SECRET ROSE

My soul hath dreamt of a rose, whose marvellous and secret flower, fraught with an unimaginable perfume, hath never grown in any garden. Only in valleys of the shifting cloud, only among the palms and fountains of a land of mirage, only in isles beyond the seas of sunset, it blooms for a moment, and is gone. But ever the ghost of its fragrance haunts the hall of slumber; and the women whom I meet in dreams wear always its blossom for coronal.

### THE WIND AND THE GARDEN

To thee my love is something strange and fantastical, and far away, like the vast and desolate sighing of the desert wind to one who dwells in a garden of palm and rose and lotus, filled by no louder sound than the mellow lisp of a breeze of perfume, or the sigh of silvering fountains.

### OFFERINGS

Before thee, O goddess of my dreams, idol of my desires, I have burnt amber and myrrh, frankincense, and all the strange and rich perfumes of lands a thousand leagues beyond Araby or Taprobane. Strange and rich offerings have I brought thee, the gems of unknown regions, and the spoil of cities remoter than Caydon or Samarkand. But these delight thee not, only the simple-scented flowers of spring, and the diamonds and opals of dew, strung on the threads of the spider.

### A CORONAL

The pale and flowerless poppies of Proserpine, the cold, blind lotus of Lethe, and the strange, white sea-blooms that grow from the lips of drowned men in the blue darkness of the nether sea,—these have I woven as a coronal for my dead love.

## THE BLACK LAKE

In a land where weirdness and mystery had strongly leagued themselves with eternal desolation, the lake was out-poured at an undiscoverable date of elder aeons, to fill some fathomless gulf far down amid the shadows of snowless, volcanic mountains. No eye, not even the sun's, when he stared vertically upon it for a few hours at midday, seemed able to divine its depths of sullen blackness and unrippled silence. It was for this reason that I found a so singular pleasure in frequently contemplating the strange lake. Sitting for I knew not how long on its bleak basaltic shores, where grew but a few fleshly red orchids, bent above the waters like open and thirsty mouths, I would peer with countless fantastic conjectures and shadowy imaginings, into the alluring mystery of its unknown and inexorable gulf.

It was at an hour of morning before the sun had surmounted the rough and broken rim of the summits, when I first came, and clomb down through the shadows which filled like some subtler fluid the volcanic basin. Seen at the bottom of that stirless tincture of air and twilight, the lake seemed as dregs of darkness.

Peering for the first time, after the deep and difficult descent, into the so dull and leaden waters, I was at length aware of certain small and scattered gleams of silver, apparently far beneath the surface. And fancying them the metal in some mysterious ledge, or the glints of long-sunken treasure, I bent closer in my eagerness, and finally perceived that what I saw was but the reflection of the stars, which, tho the day was full upon the mountains and the lands without, were yet visible in the depth and darkness of that enshadowed place.

## VIGNETTES

### BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS

Surely, beyond the mountains there is peace—beyond the mountains that lie so blue and still at the world's extreme. Such ancient calm, such infinite quietude is upon them, that surely, no toiling cities, no sea whose foam a ship has ever cloven, can lie beyond, but valleys of azure silence, where amaranthine flowers sleep and dream, untroubled of any wind, by the hyalescence of tranquilly flowing streams unbroken as the surface of a mirror.

### THE BROKEN LUTE

Because you are silent to my lyric prayers, deaf to the melodies I have made from the sighs and murmurs of a wounded love, I have broken my golden lute, and cast it away, tarnished and unstrung, among the red leaves and faded roses of the September garden. Silence, the silver dust of lilies, the mournful muted wind of autumn, and the fitfully drifting leaves, have claimed it for their own. Seeing it there, as you pass on your queenly way amid the crumbling roses, will you not echo in your heart one sigh of the many sighs, which, as a music for your pleasure, were breathed from its chords, during the summer's half-forgotten days?

### NOSTALGIA OF THE UNKNOWN

The nostalgia of things unknown, of lands forgotten or unfound, is upon me at times. Often I long for the gleam of yellow suns upon terraces of translucent azure marble, mocking the windless waters of lakes unfathomably calm; for lost, legendary palaces of serpentine, silver and ebony, whose columns are green stalactites; for the pillars of fallen temples, standing in the vast purpureal sunset of a land of lost and marvellous romance. I sigh for the dark-green depths of cedar forests, through whose fantastically woven boughs, one sees at intervals an unknown tropic ocean, like gleams of blue diamond; for isles of palm and coral, that fret an amber morning, somewhere beyond Cathay or

Taprobana; for the strange and hidden cities of the desert, with burning brazen domes and slender pinnacles of gold and copper, that pierce a heaven of heated lazuli.

### GREY SORROW

Ofttimes, in the golden, sad, November days, I meet among the dead roses of the garden the ghost of an old sorrow—a sorrow grey and dim as the mist of autumn—as a wandering mist that was once a rain of tears. There, through the long decline of afternoon, I walk among the roses with the ghost of my sorrow, whose half-forgotten, half-invisible form becomes dimmer and more indistinct, till I know its face no longer from the twilight, nor its voice from the vesper wind.

### THE HAIR OF CIRCE

I am afraid of thy hair: Lustrous, heavily curled, it suggests the coils of a golden snake; and half the fascination of thy painted lips, of thy still and purple-lidded eyes, is due to the fear that it may awake beneath my caresses.

### THE EYES OF CIRCE

Thine eyes are green and still as the lakes of the desert. They awake in me the thirst for strange and bitter mysteries, the desire of secrets that are deadly and sterile.

## A DREAM OF LETHE

In the quest of her whom I had lost, I came at length to the shores of Lethe, under the vault of an immense, empty, ebon sky, from which all the stars had vanished one by one. Proceeding I knew not whence, a pale, elusive light as of the waning moon, or the phantasmal phosphorescence of a dead sun, lay dimly and without lustre on the sable stream, and on the black, flowerless meadows. By this light, I saw many wandering souls of men and women, who came, hesitantly or in haste, to drink of the slow un murmuring waters. But among all these, there were none who departed in haste, and many who stayed to watch, with unseeing eyes, the calm and waveless movement of the stream. At length in the lily-tall and gracile form, and the still, uplifted face of a woman who stood apart from the rest, I saw the one whom I had sought; and, hastening to her side, with a heart wherein old memories sang like a nest of nightingales, was fain to take her by the hand. But in the pale, immutable eyes, and wan, unmoving lips that were raised to mine, I saw no light of memory, nor any tremor of recognition. And knowing now that she had forgotten, I turned away despairingly, and finding the river at my side, was suddenly aware of my ancient thirst for its waters, a thirst I had once thought to satisfy at many diverse springs, but in vain. Stooping hastily, I drank, and rising again, perceived that the light had died or disappeared, and that all the land was like the land of a dreamless slumber, wherein I could no longer distinguish the faces of my companions. Nor was I able to remember any longer why I had wished to drink of the waters of oblivion.

## THE CARAVAN

My dreams are like a caravan that departed long ago, with tumult of intrepid banners and spears, and the clamour of bugles and brave adventurous songs, to seek the horizons of perilous untried barbaric lands, and kingdoms immense and vaguely rumoured, with cities beautiful and opulent as the cities of paradise, and deep Edenic vales of palm and cinnamon and myrrh, lying beneath skies of primeval azure silence. For traffic in the realms of mystery and wonder, in the marts of scarce-imaginable cities and metropoli a million leagues away, on the last horizon of romance, my dreams departed, as a caravan with its laden camels. Since then, the years are many, the days have flown as the flocks of southering swallows; unnumbered moons have multiplied in fugitive silver, uncounted suns in irretainable gold. But, alas, my dreams have not returned. Have the swirling sands engulfed them, on a noon of storm when the desert rose like a sea, and rolled its tawny billows on the walled gardens of the green and fragrant lands? Or perished they, devoured by the crimson demons of thirst, and the ghouls and vultures? Or live they still, as captives in alien dungeons not to be ascertained, or held by a wizard spell in palaces demon-built, and cities baroque and splendid as the cities in a tale from the Thousand and One Nights?

## THE PRINCESS ALMEENA

From her balcony of pearl the princess Almeena, clad in a gown of irisated silk, with her long and sable locks unbound, gazes toward the sunset-flooded sea beyond a terrace of green marble that peacocks guard. Below, in the tinted light, fantastic trees whose boles are serpentine, train a fine and hair-like foliage, mingling with the moon-shaped leaves of enormous lilies. Rainbow-coloured reeds cluster about the pools and fountains of black water, that are rimmed with carven malachite. But these the princess does not heed, but gazes upon the far-off seas, where the golden ichors of the sun have gathered in a vast lake overflowing the horizon. Ere long, a wind from the west, from islands where palm trees blossom above the purple foam, brings in its breath the odour of unknown flowers to mingle with the balms of the garden, and the sweet suspiration of the princess—the princess who dreams, listening to the wind, that her lover, the captain of the emperor's most redoubtable trireme of war, sailing the sky-blue seas beyond the horizon and the sunset, has remembered her wild and royal loveliness, and has breathed in his heart a secret sigh.

## ENNUI

In the alcove whose curtains are cloth-of-gold, and whose pillars are fluted sapphire, reclines the emperor Chan, on his couch of ebony set with opals and rubies, and cushioned with the furs of unknown and gorgeous beasts. With implacable and weary gaze, from beneath unmoving lids that seem carven of purple-veined onyx, he stares at the crystal windows, giving upon the infinite fiery azures of a tropic sky and sea. Oppressive as nightmare, a formless, nameless fatigue, heavier than any burden the slaves of the mines must bear, lies forever at his heart: All deliriums of love and wine, the agonizing ecstasy of drugs, even the deepest and the faintest pulse of delight or pain—all are proven, all are futile, for the outworn but insatiate emperor. Even for a new grief, or a subtler pang than any felt before, he thinks, lying on his bed of ebony, that he would give the silver and vermilion of all his mines, with the crowded caskets, the carcanets and crowns that lie in his most immemorial treasure-vault. Vainly, with the verse of the most inventive poets, the fanciful purple-threaded fabrics of the subtlest looms, the unfamiliar gems and minerals from the uttermost land, the pallid leaves and blood-like petals of a rare and venomous blossom—vainly, with all these, and many stranger devices, wilder, more wonderful diversions, the slaves and sultanas have sought to alleviate the iron hours. One by one he has dismissed them with a weary gesture. And now, in the silence of the heavily curtained alcove, he lies alone, with the canker of ennui at his heart, like the undying mordant worm at the heart of the dead.

Anon, from between the curtains at the head of his couch, a dark and slender hand is slowly extended, clasping a dagger whose blade reflects the gold of the curtain in a thin and stealthily wavering gleam: Slowly, in silence, the dagger is poised, then rises and falls like a splinter of lightning. The emperor cries out, as the blade, piercing his loosely folded robe, wounds him slightly in the side. In a moment the alcove is filled with armed attendants, who seize and drag forth the would-be assassin—a slave girl, the princess of a conquered people, who has often, but vainly, implored her freedom from the emperor. Pale and panting with terror and

rage, she faces Chan and the guardsmen, while stories of unimaginable monstrous tortures, of dooms unnameable, crowd upon her memory. But Chan, aroused and startled only for the instant, feels again the insuperable weariness, more strong than anger or fear, and delays to give the expected signal. And then, momentarily moved, perchance, by some ironical emotion, half-akin to gratitude—gratitude for the brief but diverting danger, which has served to alleviate his ennui for a little, he bids them free the princess; and, with a regal courtesy, places about her throat his own necklace of pearls and emeralds, each of which is the cost of an army.

## THE STATUE OF SILENCE

I saw a statue, carven I knew not from what substance, nor with what form or feature, because of the manifold drapery of black which fell about it as a veil or a pall. Turning to Psyche, who was with me, I said, "O thou who knowest by name and form the eidola of all things, pray tell me what thing is this." And she answered, "The name of it is Silence, but neither god nor man nor demon knoweth the form thereof, nor its entity. The seraphim pause often before it, waiting the day when the shape shall be unveiled; and the gods and demons of the universe are mute in its presence, half-hoping, half-fearing the time when these lips shall speak, and deliver forth one dreameth not what, of oracle, or query or judgment, or doom."

## REMOTENESS

There are days when all the beauty of the world is dim and strange; when the sunlight about me seems to fall on a land remoter than the poles of the moon. The roses in the garden surprise me, like the monstrous orchids of unknown colour, blossoming in planets beyond Aldebaran. And I am startled by the yellow and purple leaves of October, as if the veil of some tremendous and awful mystery were half-withdrawn for a moment. In such hours as these, O heart of my heart, I fear to touch thee, I avoid thy caresses, dreading that thou wilt vanish as a dream at dawn; or that I shall find thee a phantom, the spectre of one who died and was forgotten many thousand years ago, in a far-off land on which the sun no longer shines.

## THE MEMNONS OF THE NIGHT

Ringed with a bronze horizon, which, at a point immensely remote, seems welded with the blue brilliance of a sky of steel, they oppose the black splendour of their porphyritic forms to the sun's insuperable gaze. Reared in the morning twilight of primeval time, by a race whose towering tombs and cities are one with the dust of their builders in the slow lapse of the desert, they abide to face the terrible latter dawns, that move abroad in a starkness of fire, consuming the veils of night on the vast and Sphinx-like desolations. Level with the light, their tenebrific brows preserve a pride as of Titan kings. In their lidless implacable eyes of staring stone, is the petrified despair of those who have gazed too long on the infinite.

Mute as the mountains from whose iron matrix they were hewn, their mouths have never acknowledged the sovereignty of the suns, that pass in triumphal flame from horizon unto horizon of the prostrate land. Only at eve, when the west is like a brazen furnace, and the far-off mountains smoulder like ruddy gold in the depth of the heated heavens—only at eve, when the east grows infinite and vague, and the shadows of the waste are one with the increasing shadow of night—then, and then only, from the sullen throats of stone, a music rings to the bronze horizon—a strong, a sombre music, strange and sonorous, like the singing of black stars, or a litany of gods that invoke oblivion; a music that thrills the desert to its heart of adamant, and trembles in the granite of forgotten tombs, till the last echoes of its jubilation, terrible as the trumpets of doom, are one with the black silence of infinity.

## THE GARDEN AND THE TOMB

I know a garden of flowers—flowers lovely and multiform as the orchids of far, exotic worlds—as the flowers of manifold petal, whose colours change as if by enchantment in the alter nation of the triple suns; flowers like tiger lilies from the garden of Satan; like the paler lilies of paradise, or the amaranths on whose perfect and immortal beauty the seraphim so often ponder; flowers fierce and splendid like the crimson or golden flowers of fire; flowers bright and cold as the crystal flowers of snow; flowers whereof there is no likeness in any world of any sun; which have no symbol in heaven or in hell.

Alas! in the heart of the garden is a tomb—a tomb so trellised and embowered with vine and blossom, that the sunlight reveals the ghastly gleam of its marble to no careless or incurious scrutiny. But in the night, when all the flowers are still, and their perfumes are faint as the breathing of children in slumber—then, and then only, the serpents bred of corruption crawl from the tomb, and trail the fetor and phosphorescence of their abiding-place from end to end of the garden.

## IN COCAIGNE

It was a windless afternoon of April, beneath skies that were tender as the smile of love, when we went forth, you and I, to seek the fabulous and fortunate realm of Cocaigne. Past leafing oaks with foliage of bronze and chrysolite, through zones of yellow and white and red and purple flowers, like a landscape seen through a prism, we fared with hopeful and tremulous hearts, forgetting all save the dream we had cherished.\*\*\* At last we came to the lonely woods, the pines with their depth of balmy, cool, compassionate shadow, which are sacred to the genius of that land. There, for the first time I was bold to take your hand in mine, and led you to a slope where the woodland lilies, with petals of white and yellow ivory, gleamed among the fallen needles. As in a dream, I found that my arms were about you, as in a dream I kissed your yielding lips, and the ardent pallor of your cheeks and throat. Motionless, you clung to me, and a flush arose beneath my kisses like a delicate stain, and lingered softly. Your eyes deepened to my gaze like the brown pools of the forest at evening, and far within them, as in immensity itself, trembled and shone the steadfast stars of your love. As a ship that has wandered beneath stormy suns and disastrous moons, but comes at last to the arms of the shielding harbour, my head lay on the gentle heaving of your delicious breast, and I knew that we had found Cocaigne.

## THE LITANY OF THE SEVEN KISSES

### I

I kiss thy hands—thy hands, whose fingers are delicate and pale as the petals of the white lotus.

### II

I kiss thy hair, which has the lustre of black jewels, and is darker than Lethe, flowing by midnight through the moonless slumber of poppy-scented lands.

### III

I kiss thy brow, which resembles the rising moon in a valley of cedars.

### IV

I kiss thy cheeks, where lingers a faint flush, like the reflection of a rose upheld to an urn of alabaster.

### V

I kiss thine eyelids, and liken them to the purple-veinèd flowers that close beneath the oppression of a tropic evening, in a land where the sunsets are bright as the flames of burning amber.

### VI

I kiss thy throat, whose ardent pallor is the pallor of marble warmed by the autumn sun.

### VII

I kiss thy mouth, which has the savour and perfume of fruits agleam with spray from a magic fountain, in the secret Paradise that we alone shall find; a Paradise whence they that come shall nevermore depart, for the waters thereof are Lethe, and the fruit is the fruit of the tree of Life.



## FROM A LETTER

\*\*\*\*Will you not join me in Atlantis, where we will go down through streets of blue and yellow marble to the wharves of orichalch, and choose us a galley with a golden Eros for figurehead, and sails of Tyrian sendal? With mariners that knew Odysseus, and beautiful amber-breasted slaves from the mountain-vales of Lemuria, we will lift anchor for the unknown fortunate isles of the outer sea; and, sailing in the wake of an opal sunset, will lose that ancient land in the glaucous twilight, and see from our couch of ivory and satin the rising of unknown stars and perished planets.\*\*\* Perhaps we will not return, but will follow the tropic summer from isle to halcyon isle, across the amaranthine seas of myth and fable: We will eat the lotos, and the fruit of lands whereof Odysseus never dreamt; and drink the pallid wines of faery, grown in a vale of perpetual moonlight. I will find for you a necklace of rosy-tinted pearls, and a necklace of yellow rubies, and crown you with precious corals that have the semblance of sanguine-coloured blossoms. We will roam in the marts of forgotten cities of jasper, and carnelian-built ports beyond Cathay; and I will buy you a gown of peacock azure damascened with copper and gold and vermilion; and a gown of black samite with runes of orange, woven by fantastic sorcery without the touch of hands, in a dim land of spells and philtres.

## FROM THE CRYPTS OF MEMORY

Aeons of aeons ago, in an epoch whose marvelous worlds have crumbled, and whose mighty suns are less than shadow, I dwelt in a star whose course, decadent from the high, irremeable heavens of the past, was even then verging upon the abyss in which, said astronomers, its immemorial cycle should find a dark and disastrous close.

Ah, strange was that gulf-forgotten star—how stranger than any dream of dreamers in the spheres of to-day, or than any vision that hath soared upon visionaries, in their retrospection of the sidereal past! There, through cycles of a history whose piled and bronze-writ records were hopeless of tabulation, the dead had come to outnumber infinitely the living. And built of a stone that was indestructible save in the furnace of suns, their cities rose beside those of the living like the prodigious metropli of Titans, with walls that overgloom the vicinal villages. And over all was the black funereal vault of the cryptic heavens—a dome of infinite shadows, where the dismal sun, suspended like a sole, enormous lamp, failed to illumine, and drawing back its fires from the face of the irresolvable ether, threw a baffled and despairing beam on the vague remote horizons, and shrouded vistas illimitable of the visionary land.

We were a sombre, secret, many-sorrowed people—we who dwelt beneath that sky of eternal twilight, pierced by the towering tombs and obelisks of the past. In our blood was the chill of the ancient night of time; and our pulses flagged with a creeping prescience of the lentor of Lethe. Over our courts and fields, like invisible sluggish vampires born of mausoleums, rose and hovered the black hours, with wings that distilled a malefic languor made from the shadowy woe and despair of perished cycles. The very skies were fraught with oppression, and we breathed beneath them as in a sepulcher, forever sealed with all its stagnancies of corruption and slow decay, and darkness impenetrable save to the fretting worm.

Vaguely we lived, and loved as in dreams—the dim and mystic dreams that hover upon the verge of fathomless sleep. We felt for our women, with their pale and spectral beauty, the same desire that the dead may feel

for the phantom lilies of Hadean meads. Our days were spent in roaming through the ruins of lone and immemorial cities, whose palaces of fretted copper, and streets that ran between lines of carven golden obelisks, lay dim and ghastly with the dead light, or were drowned forever in seas of stagnant shadow; cities whose vast and iron-built fanes preserved their gloom of primordial mystery and awe, from which the simulacra of century-forgotten gods looked forth with unalterable eyes to the hopeless heavens, and saw the ulterior night, the ultimate oblivion. Languidly we kept our gardens, whose grey lilies concealed a necromantic perfume, that had power to evoke for us the dead and spectral dreams of the past. Or, wandering through ashen fields of perennial autumn, we sought the rare and mystic immortelles, with sombre leaves and pallid petals, that bloomed beneath willows of wan and veil like foliage: or wept with a sweet and nepenthe-laden dew by the flowing silence of Acherontic waters.

And one by one we died and were lost in the dust of accumulated time. We knew the years as a passing of shadows, and death itself as the yielding of twilight unto night.

## A PHANTASY

I have dreamt of an unknown land—a land remote in ulterior time, and alien space not ascertainable: the desert of a long-completed past, upon which has settled the bleak, irrevocable silence of infinitude; where all is ruined save the stone of tombs and cenotaphs; and where the sole peoples are the kingless, uncounted tribes of the subterranean dead.

Above this land of my dream, citted with tombs and cenotaphs, a red and smouldering sun maintains a spectral day, in alternation with an ashen moon through the black ether where the stars have long since perished. And through the hush of the consummation of time, above the riven monuments and crumbled records of alien history, flit in the final twilight the mysterious wings of seraphim, sent to fulfill ineffable errands, or confer with demons of the abyss; and black, gigantic angels, newly returned from missions of destruction, pause amid the sepulchers to sift from their gloomy and tremendous vans the pale ashes of annihilated stars.

## THE DEMON, THE ANGEL, AND BEAUTY

Of the Demon who standeth or walketh always with me at my left hand, I asked: “Hast thou seen Beauty? Her that me-seemeth was the mistress of my soul in Eternity? Her that is now beyond question set over me in Time; even though I behold her not, and, it may be, have never beheld, nor ever shall; her of whose aspect I am ignorant as noon is concerning any star; her of whom as witness and testimony, I have found only the hem of her shadow, or at most, her reflection in a dim and troubled water. Answer, if thou canst, and tell me, is she like pearls, or like stars? Does she resemble most the sunlight that is transparent and unbroken, or the sunlight divided into splendour and iris? Is she the heart of the day, or the soul of the night?”

To which the Demon answered, after, as I thought, a brief space of meditation:

“Concerning this Beauty, I can tell thee but little beyond that which thou knowest. Albeit, in those orbs to which the demons of my rank have admission, there be greater adumbrations of some transcendent Mystery than here, yet have I never seen that Mystery itself, and know not if it be male or female. Aeons ago, when I was young and incautious, when the world was new and bright, and there were more stars than now, I, too was attracted by this Mystery, and sought after it in all accessible spheres. But failing to find the thing itself, I soon grew weary of embracing its shadows, and took to the pursuit of illusions less insubstantial. Now I am become grey and ashen without, and red like old fire within, who was fiery and flame-coloured all through, back in the star-thronged aeons of which I speak: Heed me, for I am as wise, and wary and ancient as the far-travelled and comet-scarred sun; and I am become of the opinion that the thing Beauty itself does not exist. Doubtless the semblance thereof is but a web of shadow and delusion, woven by the crafty hand of God, that He may snare demons and men therewith, for His mirth, and the laughter of His archangels.”

The Demon ceased, and took to watching me as usual—obliquely, and with one eye—an eye that is more red than Aldebaran, and inscrutable as the gulfs beyond the Hyades.

Then of the Angel, who walketh or standeth always with me at my right hand, I asked, “Hast thou seen Beauty? Or hast thou heard any assured rumour concerning Beauty?”

To which the Angel answered, after, as I thought, a moment of hesitation:

“As to this Beauty, I can tell thee but little beyond that which thou knowest. Albeit in all the heavens, this Mystery is a topic of the most frequent and sublime speculation among the archangels, and a perennial theme for the more inspired singers and harpists of the cherubim—yea, despite all this, we are greatly ignorant as to its true nature, and substance, and attributes. But sometimes there are mighty adumbrations which cover even the superior seraphim from above their wing-tips, and make unfamiliar twilight in heaven. And sometimes there is an echo which fills the empyrean, and hushes the archangelic harps in the midst of their praising of God. This is not often, and these visitations of echo and shadow spread an awe over the assembled Thrones and Splendours and Dominations, which at other times accompanies only the emanence or appearance of God Himself. Thus are we assured as to the reality of this Beauty. And because it remains a mystery to us, to whom naught else is mysterious except God, we conjecture that it is the thing upon which God meditateth, self-obscured and centred, and because of which He hath held himself immanifest to us for so many aeons; that this is the secret which God keepeth even from the seraphim.”

## THE SHADOWS

There were many shadows in the palace of Augusthes. About the silver throne that had blackened beneath the invisible passing of ages, they fell from pillar and broken roof and fretted window in ever-shifting multiformity. Seeming the black, fantastic spectres of doom and desolation, they moved through the palace in a gradual, grave, and imperceptible dance, whose music was the change and motion of suns and moons. They were long and slender, like all other shadows before the early light, and behind the declining sun; squat and intense beneath the desert noontide, and faint with the withered moon; and in the interlunar darkness, they were as myriad tongues hidden behind the shut and silent lips of night.

One came daily to that place of shadows and desolation, and sate upon the silver throne, watching the shadows that were of desolation. King nor slave disputed him there, in the palace whose kings and whose slaves were powerless alike in the intangible dungeon of centuries. The tombs of unnumbered and forgotten monarchs were white upon the yellow desert roundabout. Some had partly rotted away, and showed like the sunken eye-sockets of a skull—blank and lidless beneath the staring heavens; others still retained the undesecrated seal of death, and were as the closed eyes of one lately dead. But he who watched the shadows from the silver throne, heeded not these, nor the fleet wind that dipt to the broken tombs, and emerged shrilly, its unseen hands dark with the dust of kings.

He was a philosopher, from what land there was none to know or ask. Nor was there any to ask what knowledge or delight he sought in the ruined palace, with eyes alway upon the moving shadows; nor what were the thoughts that moved through his mind in ghostly unison with them. His eyes were old and sad with meditation and wisdom; and his beard was long and white upon his long white robe.

For many days he came with the dawn and departed with sunset; and his shadow leaned from the shadow of the throne and moved with the others. But one eve he departed not; and thereafter his shadow was one with the

shadow of the silver throne. Death found and left him there, where he dwindled into dust that was as the dust of slaves or kings.

But the ebb and reflux of shadows went on, in the days that were before the end; ere the aged world, astray with the sun in strange heavens, should be lost in the cosmic darkness, or, under the influence of other and conflicting gravitations, should crumble apart and bare its granite bones to the light of strange suns, and the granite, too, should dissolve, and be as of the dust of slaves and kings. Noon was encircled with darkness, and the depths of palace-dusk were chasmed with sunlight. Change there was none, other than this, for the earth was dead, and stirred not to the tottering feet of time. And in the expectant silence before the twilight of the sun, the moving shadows seemed but a mockery of change; a meaningless antic phantasmagoria of things that were; an afterfiguring of forgotten time.

And now the sun was darkened slowly in mid-heaven, as by some vast and invisible bulk. And twilight hushed the shadows in the palace of Augustus, as the world itself swung down toward the long and single shadow of irretrievable oblivion.



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*Clark Ashton Smith*



## Transcriber's Notes

Obvious typographical errors have been silently corrected. All other spelling and punctuation remains unchanged.

This book was prepared from the author's own copy which contained a number of corrections in the author's hand. These have been implemented and the changes are (the original word is in brackets after):

### TO OMAR KHAYYAM

The cypresses like robes funereal ([funeral](#)) wear,

### THE MINISTERS OF LAW

And thee shall alien ([aliend](#)) Dominations rend.\*\*\*\*

### REMEMBERED LIGHT

Till the twilight shivered with (the deleted) outcry of eldritch ([eldrich](#)) voices

### THE HASHISH-EATER;

Whose lightless length would mete ([meet](#)) the gyre of moons—

Beyond the world, upon ([beyond](#)) that fleeing wind,

### SATAN UNREPENTANT

Lost from those ([lost](#) deleted) archangelic thrones that star,

In wasted worlds, were purer (pure) melody.

And in (in added) new deeps Apocalyptic suns

### ALEXANDRINES

Knowing the vacillant leaves that tremble, [flame](#), (no comma) and fall,

### IN COCAIGNE

shone ([shown](#)) the steadfast stars of your love. As a ship that has wandered

### THE LITANY OF THE SEVEN KISSES

I kiss thine eyelids, and liken them to the purple-veinèd ([veined](#)) flowers

### A PHANTASY

mysterious wings of seraphim, sent to fulfill ([fill](#)) ineffable errands,

### THE SHADOWS

There were many shadows in the palace of Augusthes ([Agusthes](#)). About

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