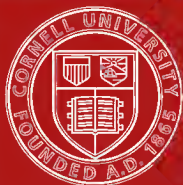


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THE COLLECTED POEMS
OF MAURICE BARING

THE COLLECTED
: : POEMS OF : :
MAURICE BARING

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SONNETS AND LYRICS

SONNETS

TO H. B.

(WITH A BOOK OF VERSE)

I too have travelled in the unknown land,
And anchored by the unfrequented shore ;
I too have heard the Stygian waters roar,
And seen the foam of Lethe kiss the sand.

I too have trampled the enchanted grass,
And seen the phantom hunters gallop by,
And heard the faëry bugle, and the sigh
Of banished gods that in the woodways pass.

And as a traveller brings his spoil to him
More richly graced in might and bravery,
So do I give to you these records dim

Of bright adventure in the fields forlorn ;—
To you who heard the blast of Roland's horn,
And saw Iseult set sail for Brittany.

SONNETS

EXILE

TO A. P.

THEY with the world would have you reconciled,
Outgrow the impulse of these fantasies,
These rebel storms ; and act in grown-up wise.
They know not ; in your mother's arms you
smiled ;

And yet your soul with timeless memories
Was sad ; and when old age shall claim you,
child,
Your heart with young despair shall still be wild
And childish mirth shall still light up your eyes.

Because a banished spirit in you dwells,
That strayed from lands beyond the unfurrowed
sea,
And frets rejecting its captivity ;

You hear the horns of the forbidden chase,
The happy ghosts that down the woodland race
And gallop through the trampled asphodels.

SONNETS

“QUAND VOUS SEREZ BIEN VIEILLE”

WHEN you are old, no man will start to hear
That you were once more lovely than the day ;
Old age may change but cannot take away
From you ; and you will meet him without fear.

Yet when you think of him who loved fair things,
And singing of all beauty sang but you,
Nor dreamed you guessed the secret of his strings,
Then say : “ Although he knew it not, I knew.”

I shall be dead and mid the shadowy throng
In the long twilight I shall not forget ;—
You still will tread the earth with royal grace ;

And if you smile remembering my song,
A moonbeam to the kingdoms of regret
Will come and flood with light the sunless place.

SONNETS

WE drifted to each other like two birds,
That meet high in the windy middle air,
Then fly away again ; each unaware
That there had passed between us silent words.

Then like two pilgrims, tired and travel-sore
We sought for shelter from the rising tide
Of night, in the dark hollow mountain-side,
And, mutually remembering, met once more.

But when the morning came and we looked down
Upon the glittering cities of the plain,
We lingered in the lonely crag content ;—

The world which cannot know the hills will
frown ;—

But sweet and blissful is the banishment
In the high pinnacles of wind and rain.

SONNETS

You walked into the temple of a soul ;
You scanned the height, the depth, and each
 recess ;
You praised the silvery sombre loveliness ;
You heard the multitudinous organ roll.

Behind the towering altar, sad and pale,
An angel stood and uttered mournful sighs ;
And, answering the question in your eyes,
The angel pointed to a hanging veil.

You tore aside the veil, a dreadful gleam
Revealed the sights you had not feared to see,
And a great darkness fell upon the shrine.

You wept, but not your pain nor the lost dream
You pitied ; but that this sad thing should be ;—
And then once more the temple shone divine.

SONNETS

TO ETHEL SMYTH

Your singing brings the rustle of the trees,
The tall trees sighing on the mountain-side ;
It brings a whisper from the foamless tide
That broadening fills the ample estuaries.

Your singing brings the freshness of the breeze
That comes at twilight to the breathless plain ;
The cry of moaning ghosts that call in vain
From wandering prisons in the winds and seas.

Your singing brings to me the final peace,
Dissolves the torment of perplexity
And guides my spirit to a tranquil home ;—

As when the moon compels the storm to cease
And calms the wind ; and all the skeins of foam
Unravel softly on the vanquished sea.

SONNETS

You were the Queen of evening, and the skies
Were 'soft above you, knowing you were fair,
The dewy gold of sunset in your hair,
And twilight in the stillness of your eyes.

You did not know your dear divinity,
And childlike, all unconscious that you walked
High in celestial air, you smiled and talked,
And stooped to pluck a rose, and gave it me.

As at the gate of heaven an angel-child
Might wonder at an outcast's pleading gaze,
An outcast kneeling at the golden bars,

And say : " Come, be my playmate, here the days
Are longer, and the ways outside are wild,
And you shall play with suns and silver stars."

SONNETS

ON WATTS' PICTURE OF PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

TO A. V. M.

THOUGH borne like withered leaves upon a stream,
Faded and dead, they would not live again,
Nor, in the hard world, face the wiles of men ;
Their past is but the haunting of a dream.

And yet they would not sleep in asphodel,
Nor, for without remorse is their regret,
Drink deep of bliss and utterly forget ;
Not for all Heaven would they exchange their
Hell.

And they give thanks because their punishment
Is sealed and sure, because their doom shall be
To go in anguish through Eternity,

Together on the never-resting air.
Beyond all happiness is their content
Who know there is no end to their despair.

SONNETS

SHALL I pretend that I no more perceive
The peerless worth of your high qualities ?
And say your precious words are honeyed lies
Which my conceit compels me to believe ;

And vow your lips divinely do deceive ;
Call false the unclouded earnest of your eyes
And artificial the pure tears that rise,
When you take pity and with passion grieve ?

Shall I forswear my faith in Truth and Right ?
Acknowledge only God's black cruelty ?
Yet if I bow but to an impious might,

More great and blind my faith in you must be ;
For you are Heaven and Hell and Day and Night,
And Sun and Moon and Providence to me.

SONNETS

*“To that high capital where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay.”—SHELLEY.*

TO E. M.

THE silver angel with sad sable wings
Flew down to meet her in the dewy field,
And broke her happy song half-way, and sealed
Her singing with the kiss of silent things,

And bade her seek the dark and banished land.
She did not raise wet, wistful eyes, nor pray
With outstretched arms for one, for one more
day,
But to his shining hands she gave her hand.

She looked not back, though she remembered
much,
But steadfastly she climbed the darkling stair,
And followed firm the strange and glistening
touch,

Till in the whiteness of the silent hall,
Over her frozen eyes and faded hair,
Queenlike she bound the scarlet coronal.

SONNETS

ΛΕΙΠΙΟΕΣΣΑ ΚΑΛΥΞ

TO E. W. G.

SHE listened to the music of the spheres ;
We thought she did not hear our happy strings ;
Stars diademed her hair in misty rings,
And all too late we knew those stars were tears.

Without she was a temple of pure snow,
Within were piteous flames of sacrifice ;
And underneath the dazzling mask of ice
A heart of swiftest fire was dying slow.

She in herself, as lonely lilies fold
Stiff silver petals over secret gold,
Shielded her passion, and remained afar

From pity. Cast red roses on the pyre !
She that was snow shall rise to Heaven as fire
In the still glory of the morning star.

SONNETS

I DREAMED that I was lifted to the skies
And found her in the starless end of space ;
There was no smile of welcome on her face,
There were no tears in her immortal eyes,

She did not recollect nor recognise ;
But comfort, like a dawn, then seemed to break ;
I said, " It is a dream, I shall awake
And find her turning earth to Paradise."

I wake, and know that nothing can restore
My dearest to the Earth, to sight and sound ;
I know that I no longer hope to soar

And find her shining at the heavenly bound.
She is of yesterday for evermore ;
All my to-days are buried in the ground.

SONNETS

AND now the first cold numbness of the blow
Is past, past also is the secret smart ;
The dizzy panic of the helpless heart,
And the rebellious tears have ceased to flow.

Now all the world stands out distinct and sad,
And laughter rings more hollow and more vain ;
Grief seems more palpable, more plenteous pain,
And the mad strife grows hour by hour more mad.

Now I can say : “ Thank God she is not here,
Thank God that yonder safe upon the shore
She sleeps beneath the cold and boundless night,

And hears the wailing of the waves no more,
Nor moan of men, in careless fortune’s might,
Who cry for help, and as they cry despair.”

SONNETS

AFTER SEEING "ROMEO AND JULIET"

A TRAGEDY ? Yes, for the ancient foes,
When fateful friendship sealed their perished feud
Not tragic for the wooer and the wooed
Was life's untimely, undividing close.

The timorous maid aroused by love arose
A fearless wife. The idler who pursued
His glittering aims, a vain and petty brood,
Through love attained to manhood and repose.

The two transfigured natures blent in one,
And this full, perfect, passionate unity,
For rough and dusty Earth too bright and high,

Sank in great calm, as dreaming unison
Of darkness and midsummer sound must die
Before the daily duty of the Sun.

SONNETS

O STAR of dawn, descended from the spheres,
From space of gold and snow and flaming zone ;
Princes there were enough among your peers
To live and love and die for you alone.

You were the Goddess of a guarded shrine,
I was the beggar lingering at the gate ;
You left behind the pomp and solemn state,
You sought the Earth discrowned and twice
divine.

Now you have laid aside your diadem,
And bound wild roses in your royal hair,
And I may kiss your shining garment's hem.

Truly my soul has scaled the rainbow stair ;
The world lies glistening like a fiery gem,
And all the stars are singing in the air.

SONNETS

SHE is a vessel of mysterious snow,
A water-lily anchored in dark reeds,
That in the evening's violet afterglow
Unfolds its hidden heart of flaming seeds.

She has the halo of the lonely moon,
And round her floats the jessamin's faint musk,
With summer birds and bees she is in tune
And silvery moths and the delirious dusk.

In the green twilight of her leafy bower
She gave me water from a whispering well,
And there, a secret sun, she shone for me.

Now I am banished from the ecstasy,
Her face has filled the imperishable hour,
Sways like a phantom moon my soul in Hell.

SONNETS

OH ! something less than words, and something
more

I'd need if I would write for you ; the spell
That bids the wandering sounds in concord soar
And opens wide the gates of Heaven and Hell.

Then would I write you the sad melody,
That only tells a loneliness forlorn
It found in the dark heart where it was born,
Yet speaks the groaning world's whole misery.

Rising, it shakes the burden from its wings ;
It soars triumphant to the sky and sings ;
The veil is rent ; the clouds are scattered far.

The listening soul was one with floods of light,
And swam within that stillness infinite,
Constant, eternal, one with every star.

SONNETS

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

WE have been loosened from the bonds of time
And space in vain divides us. Near or far,
Absent, you shine before me like a star ;
The hours when you are with me cease to chime.

Sadness we know but not satiety ;
We heed no march of seasons short or long,
O'erwhelmed and deafened by the tides of song,
Which roll increasing from eternity.

For us the glory of the day is done ;
And sunset melts in a long silvery dream
Of darkness luminous with peace and dew ;

We float, like ghosts upon death's endless stream,
In bliss ; for only one soft unison
Breathes in the empty vastness : I and you.

SONNETS

DEMOPHÖON

WE shall not look upon his face again ;
The wanderer will return to us no more.
Brief was the stay ! Yet how could he remain ?
His soul was native to the ghostly shore.

The shadows of dominions huge and dim,
The scent of alien meadows far away,
The breeze that blows from Lethe followed him,
Home-sick for night, and weary of the day.

And found he peace in lands beyond the sun ?
The stillness that he craved, the dreamless home ?
Or stands he now beside the calling foam,

Still waiting till at last the sail shall gleam
And bear him from the place of dusk and dream
To the full harbours of oblivion ?

SONNETS

WE drift apart, nor can we quite forget ;—
Some link is lost ; and that affinity,
That binds us not and will not set us free,
Still tinges all our friendship with regret.

And now I feel our hearts at last have met
In perfect tune ; that God made you for me
And me for you ; and now that He has set
This veil between us, this mute mystery.

Yet when I wash away the dust of earth,
In the cool kingdoms of celestial dew,
I think that you will meet me with a smile,

The old smile made undying with new birth ;
And I'll say this : “ I loved you all the while.”
And you will say : “ I loved you and I knew.”

SONNETS

I DARE not pray to thee, for thou art won
Rarely by those by whom thou hast been wooed ;
Thou comest unsolicited, unsued,
Like sudden splendours of the midnight sun.

Yet in my heart the hope doth still abide
That thou hast haply heard my unbreathed
 prayer ;
That in the stifling moment of despair,
I shall turn round and find thee by my side.

Like a sad pilgrim who has wandered far,
And hopes not any longer for the day,
But blinded by black thickets finds no way,

Comes to a rift of trees in that sad plight,
And suddenly sees the unending aisles of night
And in the emerald gloom the morning star.

SONNETS

ΩΚΥΜΟΡΟΣ

GAILY he rode into life's tournament,
Gaily he ran at tilt to win the prize,
April was in his heart and in his eyes,
Death called to him and unafraid he went.

Then pity those who grieve, but oh ! not him,
Though taken from the sunlight to the grave,
He shared the fortune of the happy brave,
He tasted of a joy which grew not dim.

The Fates when they beheld young Sigurd ride
Fearless and happy through the roads of spring,
To leap those flames which circled in a ring

The glory of his unawakened bride ;
Mindful of what the tragic years should bring,
Whispered : " It is to-day he should have died."

SONNETS

THE DEAD SAMURAI TO DEATH

TO E. C.

I HAD not called nor prayed for thee to come ;
No favour of the Fates I bent to ask,
I thought but of the momentary task :
In the supreme bright hour my soul was dumb.

Yet above all the rest 'twas here and now
I longed to meet with thee, O beckoning friend ;
Before the lightning of thine eyes to bow
And follow thee to where the triumphs end.

Therefore let those who gaze upon me here
Discern no sadness in my staring eyes
And no regret, they will not look for fear.

I dared not hope to meet thee in this place ;
Then let my smile speak rapture and surprise
And with ineffable wonder stamp my face.

POUTILOFF'S HILL,
October 17, 1904

SONNETS

THE DYING RESERVIST

TO B. C.

I SHALL not see the faces of my friends,
Nor hear the songs the rested reapers sing
After the labours of the harvesting,
In those dark nights before the summer ends ;

Nor see the floods of spring, the melting snow,
Nor in the autumn twilight hear the stir
Of reedy marshes, when the wild ducks whirl
And circle black against the afterglow.

My mother died ; she shall not have to weep ;
My wife will find another home ; my child,
Too young, will never grieve or know ; but I

Have found my brother, and contentedly
I'll lay my head upon his knees and sleep.
O brother Death,—I knew you when you smiled.

SONNETS

THE WOUNDED

TO H. C.

THEY turn us from the long-desired door ;
Here there is shelter for the sorely spent,
But not for us ; since many a dying score
Of maimed and mangled men, whose limbs are
rent

With bayonet and with bullet, crowd the floor.
We who have fought since dawn, nor tasted bread,
Although our wounds are slight, our wounds are
sore,
We must march on, nor shall we find a bed.

O men, O brothers, is our rest not earned ?
Shall we not seek the mountains huge and wide
Whose doors are always open ? There the guest

Sweet welcome finds ; for thou hast never turned
A stranger from thy gates, nor hast denied,
O hospitable Death, a place to rest.

FUN-CHU-LING,
October 16, 1904

SONNETS

My love is glad and strong as the salt sea ;
Thou art the moon above it, singly bright.
Thou shalt discern me thus in thy still might ;
Thus fathomless and wide my love shall be.

And vast and dim with a green world of waves,
And rich with pearls and gems and drifting weeds,
And derelict hulls and wrecks of perished deeds,
And oozy woods and undiscovered caves.

But all this huge tumultuous element
Shall whisper like a woodland stream, and sleep
Calm as a slumbering child ; shall smile and weep

In dreams of bliss,—obedient, soft and still ;
For thou, my moon, from thy dark firmament
Upon this sea shalt write thy silver will.

SONNETS

VALE

I AM for ever haunted by one dread,
That I may suddenly be swept away,
Nor have the leave to see you, and to say
Good-bye ; then this is what I would have said :

I have loved summer and the longest day ;
The leaves of June, the slumberous film of heat,
The bees, the swallow, and the waving wheat,
The whistling of the mowers in the hay.

I have loved words which lift the soul with wings,
Words that are windows to eternal things.
I have loved souls that to themselves are true,

Who cannot stoop and know not how to fear,
Yet hold the talisman of pity's tear :
I have loved these because I have loved you.

SONNETS

“Parceque c’était elle ; parceque c’était moi.”

THAT skies and hills and seas and all things blue
Are bluer for the light which filled your eyes,
That nature’s treasure-house of harmonies
Is richer for the music that was you,

Comforts me not ; nor yet the word sublime
That speaks of the unknown immensity,
Where we shall meet and understand, set free
Forever from the bonds of space and time.

You were a summer’s day, all warmth and tune ;
Your soul a harbour, dark beneath the moon,
And flashing with soft lights of sympathy ;—

But oh ! the seal of grief more than these things
Is the old phrase that now so sadly rings :
That you were you, and I, alas ! am I.

SONNETS

SPRING FLOODS

TO M. F.

You are the first-born crocus of the spring ;
The swiftest swallow from the Afric sands,
That comes back twittering to the northern
lands ;
The song that larks o'er melted snowfields sing.

You are the million melodies that ring
At dawn, in dew-drenched woods. You are the
hour
When the frail almond-blossom breaks in flower,
And you are sweeter than that blossoming.

My life was like a frozen land ; but you
Came like the sun ; the snows, in disarray,
Made of the plain and meadows one broad
stream.

My perished hopes were leafless trees ; to-day,
On the bright floods, by miracle made new,
They float like shadows of a silver dream.

SONNETS

WRITTEN TO A YOUNG LADY

AFTER SEEING HER ASSIST AT THE EXTINGUISHING
OF A FIRE IN A VILLAGE IN RUSSIA

TO C. A. D.

I SAW you in the tumult of the fire ;
The flames unfurled a huge triumphant cloud.
You were all white against the shadowy crowd,
Like a calm priestess by a blazing pyre.

The glare had made of night a glowing sea ;
With the full moon aloof in starless skies.
Your eyes outshone the fire ; your quiet eyes
Had robbed the moon of her tranquillity.

Surely before we both were born your face
Once brought me quiet in a fatal place.
When Troy was burned and all the dying men

Looked up and saw fair Helen in the fire,
And gladly fell. Ah ! You were Helen then,
And I who died, I had my heart's desire !

SONNETS

PALAMON TO EMELEY

As sea-foam, as the rainbow's sprinkled shower,
As perishable as the blossom's hue,
Is this the verse I write in praise of you,
The ghost of an imperishable hour.

I saw you gathering here and there a flower,
In the green garden where the lilies grew,
I thought you were frail Venus, born of dew,
As frail as the May blossom's fallen dower.

I cast my flower of verse into the stream,
That drowns like weeds, in its remorseless wave,
The pride of Kings, the glory of the brave,
But since your beauty tinges it, my dream

Shall float for ever in this film of rhyme,
A roseleaf drifting down the floods of Time.

SONNETS

THE CONSCRIPT

TO G. W.

It were disloyalty you say to change
Your roving birthright for a paper rose,
And for a silver penny and brave clothes
To swear away your spirit's reckless range.

You will not sell your freedom for a plume,
Nor let your soul be brutalized in drill,
Nor break you to a meddling sergeant's will;
You that have access to the general's room.

I claim a larger freedom. If in line
I serve with others, all their strength is mine.
The large consent uplifts me upon wings.

And in the faces of the men that die,
Obedient to the bugle, I descry
The seal and mandate of the King of Kings.

LYRICS

SONG

THE sky is stormy and red ;
The wanderer comes from the west,
He knocks at the door and dread
Knocks at the heart in my breast ;
Wanderer, what is thy quest ?

Worse than the battle and rout
Is the icy dwelling within ;
Empty and full of the shout
Of the mirthless laughter of sin ;
Wanderer, stay thou without !

LYRICS

SONG

To hide my sorrow's secret smart,
I often laugh till it breaks my heart ;
When love is dead and despair has come,
It is best for lips to be sealed and dumb ;
When Love is dead, and Death is nigh,
'Tis best to stifle memory.
Nothing can quicken the withered flower,
Never returns the once vanished hour ;
My heart is dead and my tears are dry,
'Tis best to stifle memory.

LYRICS

BALLAD

TO N.

THE roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun,
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

All clad in golden armour,
To fight the Saladin,
He left me in my garden,
To weep, to sing, and spin.

When fell the dewy twilight
I heard the wicket grate,
There came a ghost who shivered
Beside my garden gate.

All clad in golden armour,
But dabbled with red dew ;
He did not lift his vizor,
And yet his face I knew.

LYRICS

And when he left my garden
The roses all were red
And dyed in a fresh crimson ;
Only my heart was dead.

The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun ;
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.

LYRICS

CHANDRA

TO H.

(I)

SHE is not wrought of perishable clay,
But of some delicate essence thin and rare,
Some texture whereof iris-dews are made,
Or wings of dragon-flies, or petals of foam,
Or the frail, iridescent, floating shell.
In vain we liken her to star or flower ;
Fairer is she than earthly semblances.
She is a spirit wandered from the moon ;—
A sigh, a melody made palpable.
She moves as though she floated o'er the flowers,
And the earth seems to fawn beneath her feet.
And the sky seems to crown her as a Queen.

LYRICS

CHANDRA

(2)

LIKE far-seen palms in the desert air,
Like phantom isles hung over the seas,
Like glistening haze in the noontide's glare,
Or webs of silver on twilight trees :
So thou seemest, a film of light,
A baseless dream which at dawn must die ;
Like dew of the morn or the snowflake bright,—
Child of the moon, descend from the sky.

Come, for the darkness has risen from earth,
And the moon has breathed o'er the sleeping
sea ;
We are weary of toil, we are sated with mirth,
We are fain to dream, and our dream is of thee.
The moon and the stars and the lotus flower,
The lilies and dusk are of no avail,
For thou art the dream of the twilight hour
And lotus and lily, O fair ! O frail !

LYRICS

SONG

TO C. L.

THE corn is garnered, the swallows fly,
The leaves fall soft on their wintry bed.
There was a dream in the summer sky,
And song, as soft as a rose's sigh.
Why should I linger ? the dream has fled,
The song is silent, the rose is dead,

The ghost of the rose is in the air,
The dead song speaks in the moaning sea ;
After the dream is the long despair,
The endless dusk and the unheard prayer :
“ O Death come quickly and set me free,
My friend is no longer kind to me.”

LYRICS

BALLAD

MINE eyes are dim and my wound is sore,
White sail, will you come to me ?
My Friend, shall I never see thee more ?
Be still, O moaning sea.

Have you forgotten the cup of bliss ?
White sail, will you come to me ?
On the flying ship, and the first long kiss ?
Be still, O moaning sea.

Have you forgotten the forest trees ?
White sail, will you come to me ?
The vows we spoke to the stars and seas ?
Be still, O moaning sea.

I sought you once in a strange disguise ;
White sail, will you come to me ?
You knew not even my sad, sad eyes ;
Be still, O moaning sea.

“ Call when you will, I'll come,” you said ;
White sail, will you come to me ?
Come swiftly, or you will find me dead ;
Be still, O moaning sea.

BALLAD

The sail is black, they have hauled it high ;
White sail, you came not to me ;
I'll turn my face to the wall and die ;
Be still, O moaning sea.

O Iseult, my life, my death, my friend !
White sail, there's no need for thee ;
I waited for you until the end . . .
Still is the moaning sea.

LYRICS

DIRGE FOR A POET

I PONDER on a broken lute,
The fragment of a song,
And wonder if the soul be mute,
Or if a heavenly throng
Of harmonies and mighty themes
Proclaim his interrupted dreams.

The wistful thought, the hidden fire,
The darkling prophecies,
The passion and the brave desire
That lit his startled eyes ;
Oh ! will that broken music reach
Through large fulfilment unto speech ?

And shall I meet him once again
Upon the endless way ?
East of the sun, where gleams the plain
That knows not night nor day ;
And in the calm untroubled land
Will his wild spirit understand ?

DIRGE FOR A POET

Like some soft fiery cloud that soars
At sunset o'er the snow,
He sought the pale unearthly shores
Beyond the western glow ;
And sank into the wave of night
Before he reached the crimson light.

Perchance to-morrow's western wind
May bear to oceans dim,
Mysterious clouds incarnadined,
But never one like him.
Shall nature stop the march of spheres
Because of a few foolish tears ?

Once only nature breathes each note
That builds the song of time :
No more across the skies will float
That tender sunset chime.
I loved ; and in the eastern skies
A million morning stars arise.

LYRICS

CIRCE

TO R. B.

No more shall the sad, fallen Gods be seen ;
Weary of exile in the sullen world,
Forgotten by the thankless mortal race ;
They recollect the glory that has been ;
Olympus once with starry snow impearled
Haunts and derides them in their chill disgrace,
And thus they seek the dark and dreamless place.

Some linger yet, and in the Tuscan hills,
Where the pink rose-bush fringes the green
corn,
The swallows hear the song of Proserpine ;
And oft Apollo with a glory fills
A church on some Sicilian shore, forlorn,
Where none but lovers seek the ruined shrine ;
But lovers know and praise the light divine.

Circe abides in her enchanted home,
The rainbow circle of an opal isle,
Set in a ghostly sea where no wind blows ;
Yet few can find that faery bell of foam.

CIRCE

And oft when through the night, a weary
while,
Pilgrims have laboured, as the morning glows,
It blossoms in the East, a pearly rose.

Yet Circe too is changed, a listless shade
Of her who paced before the golden loom ;
For she has felt the waving of Death's wings,
A pale immortal flower, she fain would fade ;
Her life is dusk that deepens not to gloom ;
Dumbly she feels the sharp regret that stings
The darkened soul, the lapse of mortal things.

Hushed is the music of the haunted well,
Unvexed by sighing ghosts her woodland
ways ;
For Circe has renounced her perilous wand ;
Nor seeks to capture men with any spell.
They do but drink the pity of her gaze,
They feel the solace of her flower-like hand,
And dwell a moment in her still strange land.

There in the emerald evening she bestows
A silent pitying audience on her slaves ;
And thence they sail into a wide despair ;
Around her isle dark vapours seem to close,
Before them lie unending wastes of waves,
And dazed they think the vision blest and fair
Was but a mirage of the mocking air.

LYRICS

Henceforth as men that dream a lustrous
dream

Which lingers through the brightness of the
day

And clings like subtle scent of herb or flower,

They cannot but recall the halcyon gleam

Of that green island in the world grown grey ;

They see the pale witch in her dusky bower,

Like a tall lily in the twilight hour.

And some set sail and seek her isle once more

Toiling until they sink into their grave ;

But no man twice fulfils the phantom quest.

And some await upon the desolate shore

A pilot star to point across the wave,

The sunset isle they find not in the West,

Till Death upon their tir'd eyes sheddeth rest.

But Circe watches from her jasmine throne,

And when at sunset the dark waters shine,

A sound of sighing trembles in the breeze ;

The west wind brings the wistful pilgrims'
moan,

And Circe scans far on the dim sky-line

The white sails of unnumbered argosies,

Like flakes of snow upon the crimson seas.

LYRICS

BLOSSOM

TO A. C. B.

IN silence, in the night, an angel came,
And breathed a song upon the wintry earth,
And lit within its frozen heart a flame ;
And the divine still mystery of birth
Crept trembling through the slumberous fields
and trees.

With the first glimmer of the April morn,
Some wondrous thing and new
Spoke in the whisper of the dawn's cold breeze ;—
The world, awakening through its tears of dew,
Smiled, for in darkness blossom had been born.

As though the dawn had flung to earth her veil,
The dew-drenched blossom glistens in the sun ;
Softer than snow, and as a mirage frail,
It hangs in blushing films divinely spun.
What silent plotting powers have planned this
sight ?

It is as though the never-resting loom
Of time had ceased to ply ;
And the thin web of hours had taken flight
Before the advent of Eternity,—
As darkness, when the dawn breaks into bloom.

LYRICS

Alas ! the vision is a wistful smile

 Upon the cheating features of the hour ;

Earth toils in travail, beauty is born, awhile

 To shine like flame, to wither like a flower.

The fashioned wonders of man's hand and brain,

 The living marble, the immortal song,

 The poet's soaring dream,

Rise like the blossom, like the blossom wane ;

 And on the moving surface of Time's stream

Their life is neither briefer nor more long.

Sorrow descends upon the mortal sight,

 Sorrow for beauty of fair things that fade,

Till one strong thought consoles the hopeless
 night,

 That from the wealth of God, where worlds
 are made,

(The Treasure-house that nothing can decrease),

 A never-ending tide shall ebb and flow ;

 The note must sound and die,—

The eternal symphony shall never cease ;

 Divinely made, thought, shape and melody

Shall come like blossom and like blossom go.

LYRICS

From a play

FAREWELL ! this is the last, the saddest tryst ;
For I am of the valley and the plain,
And you are for the mountain and the mist ;
Farewell ! we shall not say " Farewell " again.

You will forget the swearing of the oath ;
You were the wind and I the bending tree !
Alas ! I am the rock and you the froth,
That lightly comes and goes upon the sea.

Farewell ! your path is to the rising sun,
But in the twilight I shall watch in vain ;
For what is done can never be undone,
And joy to me can never come again.

LYRICS

VITA NUOVA

From a play

ALL these last years have been a winter dream,
Which makes the awakening of the Spring more
sweet,
For now it is the Spring, and I do meet you
Among the flowers of April. God is kind.
When hope in all things fair, when desperate faith
In truth and good had perished utterly,
When courage and endurance were nigh dead,
You rise upon my life again. The spring
Is here ; the trees are scarcely green, the earth
Is sweet with tender shoots ; but you, too swift,
Come bringing not the Dawn but the full noon ;
Not Spring, but the whole majesty of Summer—
The summer with his robe of gorgeous gold,
Drenched with the blood of roses and of poppies ;
Stiff with the splendid ripple of ripe corn ;
Embroidered with the wings of dragon-flies ;
His arms all laden with soft crimson fruit,
Crowned with the sickle of the silver moon,
And bearing the tall hollyhock for sceptre.
Throned on the haze of noonday, with a noise
Of turtle-doves, and bees, and nightingales :

VITA NUOVA

His minstrels, bathed in a great cloud of fragrance,
That sheds and scatters many million scents ;—
Some warm from the mown hayfields, others cool
From the moist haunts of floating waterlilies,
Some languorous from the creeping jessamine,
Some fresh and dewy from the honeysuckle,
Some aromatic from the dying leaves
Of strawberries, some dreamy from the pink,
Some rich and riotous from the dark rose,
Some heavy from the lily. And in his eyes,
And drooping from the shadow of his hair,
The softness of June twilight, and the rapture
Of the star-haunted, hot, midsummer night.

THE SONG OF THE NAMELESS

TO OTTO BENZON

OH ! who are these men marching in procession
dark and long,
To the sound of mournful music, and a tired
triumphant song ?
With torches, and with trumpets, and with
banners red as blood ?
They carry neither sword nor gun ; but there's
a trembling thud
Of a hundred thousand footsteps, and the sky
re-echoes loud
With the wistful marching murmur of the long
dark crowd.

Have you come to crown a Cæsar ? to bury a
dead king ?
What is the secret message of the murmured
song you sing ?
Are you bearing a brave hero who has fallen in
the wars ?
Are you singing of his glory that is writ among
the stars ?
Are you leading saint or singer to be crowned
with a gold wreath ?
Are you mournful or exultant ? Is it life you
sing, or death ?

THE SONG OF THE NAMELESS

We are bearing a dead comrade to his final
resting bed ;

We are singing of the fallen, of the unremem-
bered dead.

The man we bring was of us, but we do not know
his name ;

He worked for us ; he fell before the hour of
triumph came ;

His body is our banner, and his soul our battle-cry,
The emblem of the unknown men who in the
darkness die.

Why is your song so mirthless if the hour of
triumph has come ?

A million of our comrades are now lying stiff and
dumb.

Why are your ranks so sombre and your music
soft and slow ?

We marched through crimson rivers, and there
still is blood to flow.

Why are your faces worn and wan ? We come
from very far,

And not from fields of battle—all our life has
been a war.

How can our march be mirthful, when there's
yet so far to go ?

How can our song be joyous when there still is
blood to flow ?

But we've done what in all ages now can never
be undone :

LYRICS

We have torn away the curtain, we have let in
the bright sun
To the prison-house of darkness ; we have
broken down the bars ;
And nothing now can hide from us the sun, the
moon, the stars.

Sad is our marching music : it was born of our
despair.

But hark ! and you will hear the note of those
who little care

If their fate be death or exile, and dishonour and
disgrace ;

Who will give up mother, brother, friend, the
darling one's embrace ;

And without the martyr's glory, and without the
hero's fame,

Are content to die for freedom, and to leave
behind no name.

Sad is our marching music : but pay heed and
you will hear

The pulse of dumb resistance, and the heart
that knows not fear ;

The voices that cry out that truth is truth, the
lie a lie,

Which only Death can silence, and whose triumph
is to die.

We were weak and we were vanquished ; we
were scattered, crushed and beat ;

But, hark ! the hundred thousand come !—the
fruits of our defeat.

THE SONG OF THE NAMELESS

Like bubbles on the water, and like helpless flakes
of snow,

We leave no trace behind us as we swiftly come
and go.

But the storms of God are brewing ; the moun-
tains huge and dumb

Will melt and loose the torrents, and the floods
of spring will come ;

The wonderful clean waters will descend and
drown the earth,

And all the morning stars shall sing at Freedom's
hour of birth.

And that is why we're marching in procession
dark and long,

To the sound of mournful music, and a tired
triumphant song,

With torches and with trumpets, and with
banners red as blood.

We carry neither gun nor sword ; but there's a
trembling thud

Of a hundred thousand footsteps, and the sky re-
echoes loud

With the wistful, marching murmur of the long
dark crowd.

LYRICS

THE CLOWN

TO G. K. C.

THERE was once a poor clown all dressed in white,
In a dungeon, chained to the bars ;
And he danced all day, and he danced all night,
To the sound of the dancing stars.

“ O clown, silly clown, O why do you dance ?
You know you can never be free.
You are tied by the leg to the strings of chance,
But you dance like captive flea.”

“ My chain is heavy, my dungeon is dark,
I know I can never be free,
In my heart, in my heart there's a dancing spark,
And the stars make music for me.

“ Oh ! muffle my cell and rivet my chains,
And fetter my feet and my hands,
My soul is a horse of foam without reins,
That dances on deathless sands.”

LYRICS

SIGURD

TO E. P. D.

THE king of men and heroes lay asleep,
Lulled by the murmurs of an inland sea.
His army slept along the gleaming sand,
Awaiting the great battle of the morn.
Out of the sultry sky there seemed to fall
Great drops of blood, and like a lonely ghost
The pale sea cried, while in the purple west
A star emerged not seen before of man,
Outshining silvery Sirius and red Mars.
And phantom armies ran upon the sea,
And in the forest was a noise of wings.

To Sigurd as he slept there came a dream
Of a sad, shining Angel with veiled eyes
And sable wings that rustled drearily,
Like autumn leaves blown to the doors of men ;
And bending down she spake. In the hushed
night
Her solemn words were sadder than the call
Of Roland's horn resounding in the hills
Of Roncevaux, when with his failing might
He blew a farewell blast to Charlemain.

LYRICS

And thus the Angel spake : “ Make ready,
Prince,
I am the holy harbinger of Death.
The Angel of the battle, I appear
To men that unto Death are consecrate.
To-morrow in the battle we shall meet ;
Amid the lightnings of the broken swords
Thou shalt behold unveiled my terrible eyes,
And hear my fatal bugle-call ; and I
Will bear thee swiftly through the starry ways
Of night, and trackless space ; but thou must first
Give ear unto the message of the gods.

“ Because thou hast been glorious in thy life,
Flinched not, nor swerved from the tremendous
task :
Because thou hast endured calamity,
And grief proportioned to thy mighty heart,
The gods have stored a certain gift for thee.
To-morrow thou shalt die. But though the gods
Are impotent to join the severed thread,
They bid thee choose the manner of thy life
For all eternity.”

The angel sang
Of high Valhalla where the heroes dwell.
“ A wondrous light shines in the Warriors’ hall,
And quiring stars intone their morning song.
Say, wilt thou soar to loud Valhalla’s hall,
And take thy place among the vanished kings ?
There shouldst thou drain the cup that overcomes

SIGURD

All eating care, disheartening weariness,
Anguish and memories, and heals the soul.”
Then Sigurd lifted his kind sea-grey eyes
And smiled most sadly, as an aged Queen,
Who once had seemed a dazzling garden-flower,
Smiles wistfully to see her grandchild weave
A coronal of daisies and wild grass.
And Sigurd to the Angel answered : “ No :
For in the phantom feast, although the cup
Should drown the memory of mournful things,
Though steeped in slumberous ease, the restless
soul
Would in her dream uneasily regret ;
And, as a vision captive in the brain
Lies furled and folded, so the past would dwell
Within the present. My desire would seek
The shadowy years that beckon like far lights,
The glimmering days I could not quite recall,
The past I might not utterly forget.
Moreover, her whom I have loved on earth,
Brunhilda, in Valhalla would not dwell.
And how without her could I dwell in bliss ? ”

And then her voice grew gentle as a flute
Blown o'er the levels of a glassy lake
At twilight. “ Wouldst thou the dominion
Of earthly paradises, pleasant fields,
And chaliced lilies and white asphodel ?
There are the orchards of immortal fruits,
Lands ever golden with ungarnered corn,
And yellow roses teeming with brown bees.

LYRICS

Like stars in a deserted firmament,
Thou and Brunhilda shining will abide
By crystal streams and cool melodious woods,
Where nightingales and fireflies never leave
The aisles of dusk ; or near some shadowed
pool

Starred with the water-lilies' golden shrines.”
And Sigurd smiled, “ Nay, but the past would
rise

And drown in tears our unforgetting souls.
As when the moon, a luring sorceress,
Casting enchantment on the stealthy tide
Compels the salt and bitter flood to creep
And nestle in the inlets of the world,
And fringe the darkling beaches with pale
surf ;

Thus round the island of our blissfulness
The envious flood of memory would rise.
Soon should we pine in listless apathy,
And yearn in inconsolable regret.”

The angel questioned Sigurd once again :
“ Wouldst thou another world wherein to love,
Labour and struggle on the battlefields
Of old, and win the crown of bitter leaves ?
Taste the fleet minute, dizzy and divine,
Of rapture, and then feel the hand of Fate
Withdraw the chalice from unsated lips ?
The agony of parting, and the years
Of treachery and falsehood ? the dark web
Of poisonous deceit encompassing

SIGURD

The love not slander nor the tongues of men
Nor power of Gods might else have over-
come ?

Wouldst thou renew thy love, to be betrayed
And fall beneath calamity once more ? ”

Then before Sigurd, like a pageant, passed
The ghosts of all the ancient troubled years.
He saw the forest where, a careless child,
He lived in a green cave, while rustling leaves
And sighing branches made a cradle song ;
He saw the tall trees shiver in the dawn,
And heard the dewy matins of the lark ;
He trampled meadows of anemones,
White crocus fields and lilies of the valley,
Which paved with ghostly silver the dim floor
Beneath the dome of Dawn, until they gleamed
At sunrise through a cloud of mist and dew,
As tapers through a veil of incense burn.

Once more he wandered through the coverts
green.
And mocked the blackbird on his hemlock
flute ;
Through golden drowsy noons in the deep grass
He lay half sleeping, and yet half aware
Of woodland sounds and the delicious noise
Of summer ; the warm droning insect-hum,
Cuckoo and calling dove, and the cool glimpse
Of speckled fishes in the running stream.

LYRICS

And when the Twilight made the woodways
dim
And veiled the skies with a mysterious pall
Of emerald, he would seek a dark recess
Of leaves and moss, to sleep, while overhead
Hesperus quivered in the liquid sky
And nightingales made music to the moon.

He saw again the years of wandering :
The travel over many lands and seas,
The years of service for an alien King,
And at the last Brunhilda on the hill,
Encompassed with a ring of snow-white fire.
Once more he kissed the sleeping Queen to life
And caught the splendour of her opening eyes.
And in that daylight all the fire grew dim.
And then a vision of the lagging years
Revealed the mystery and all the threads
Close-woven in the tangled loom of Fate—
By reason of what spell unwittingly
He won Brunhilda for an alien King.
At length the awakening from the trance, the
dawn
Of sunless morning and the huge despair.

Thus, in a dim procession, passed the years,
The crowded years of his tormented life.
And Sigurd said to the angel, " I have loved
Once, and for ever, and in eternity.
Such love as this can never be again.

SIGURD

Though I were to be born in a new shape,
And banished to the furthest star of Heaven,
And though I drank of the oblivious wave,
Yet if I met my love again, my soul
Would recognise and clasp her, soul to soul.
Then like to exile angels we should seem,
Or children banished from the blissful years
Of childhood, and returning there anew
After long toil, not able to regain
The childish soul, nor find the old delight.
I that have battled though my soul despaired,
And loved with love more great, more sad than
death,

I that have borne irreparable wrong,
Which ages of bright bliss cannot repair ;
I, knowing that the hour of Fate has come,
Would fain at last possess the whole of peace.
Let me be drenched in Death's divinest dew,
Let me be cradled in immensity,
Let me inherit all oblivion
And the impregnable night of the dumb grave,—
The night unvisited by any star,
The sleep unvexed by any wandering dream.
Then shall I be rewarded with the void,
The inviolable darkness and the dust,
The secrecy, the silence, and the sleep
Unbroken by the struggling pangs of morn."

So Sigurd chose.

The morrow in the fight
He beheld silver armour and the eyes

LYRICS

Unveiled and terrible. Now once again
He tasted rapture dizzy and divine
And knew the Gods had heeded his one prayer.
Then the strange star not seen before of man
Sank in the inland sea as Sigurd died.

And somewhere in the vastness Sigurd sleeps.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE BLACK PRINCE AND
THE ASTROLOGER

[A SCENE FROM A PLAY]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ
EDWARD, THE BLACK PRINCE.
AN ASTROLOGER.

THE BLACK PRINCE AND THE ASTROLOGER

Interior of Astrologer's Tower in the Pyrenees

ASTROLOGER

The planets speak of an impending task,
A work of bitterness to be fulfilled
Now, in the instant future. Who shall come
To break the undisturbed serenity
Of my long solitude? The night is quiet,
My sole companions are the wandering stars,
Whose silence I can spell. [*Goes to the window.*]

But hark! I hear
The sound of trumpets in the hollow valley,
And shifting torches flicker in the night.
Again the trumpet calls. It is a camp,
And I can hear the champing of the horses,
The clank of men in mail. It is an army.
Perchance a battle has been fought, perchance
It is the eve of battle. Calling echoes
Of horn and clarion wander in the valley;
And many hundred flickering torches flare

DRAMATIC POEMS

Down the dark depths. I hear a step. Perchance
Some wounded man has come to me for aid ;
Some shepherd. [*A sound of knocking is heard.*

No, it is the visitant

Of whom the planets spake. Come in, and wel-
come,

In Heaven's name, whoever ye may be.

[*Enter the BLACK PRINCE, alone.*

ASTROLOGER

Who art thou, stranger ? Crav'st thou food and
shelter ?

EDWARD

I am a knight, the captain of an army,
And what my name is boots not ; from the wars
I have come hither.

[ASTROLOGER

Wherefore cam'st thou hither ?

EDWARD

My camp is in the valley, whence I spied
A light that glimmered from a far-off mountain,
Like a bright beacon ; when I spake thereof,
They of the village said a holy sage
Dwelt there, and communed with the silent stars.
They said that he held converse with the dead,
And read the riddle of the skies.

BLACK PRINCE & THE ASTROLOGER

ASTROLOGER

I knew
That thou should'st come. I read it in the sky.

EDWARD

I crave a boon, that you should lend me know-
ledge
To lighten me of my perplexity.

ASTROLOGER

Unfold thy tale, and I will then afford
The help I can.

EDWARD

It is a simple tale.
I am a captain, born to lead and rule,
I would that my dominion should be great
And wise and bountiful, as wide it shall be.

ASTROLOGER

Is that the only thought that haunts thy life ?

EDWARD

Nay, there is one who in my little world
Shines for me more than sun or moon or star.
One woman, whom devoutly I adore,
With ceaseless worship, such as the pure saint
Breathes in his silent cell, and with a might

DRAMATIC POEMS

Of sacrifice, as perfect to the end,
As that of racked unconquerable martyrs.
My life is lit by two great orbs ; the one
Is thirst for glory, and the second, love.

ASTROLOGER

Where is the canker ?

EDWARD

Lately I have known
The fear of coming doom. This fight is fought,
And I have won another victory ;
But I am still unquiet.

ASTROLOGER

Speak thy fear.

EDWARD

An ague stealthily creeps through all my limbs
And lassitude invades me. I had mocked
At this, did not a dream that came to me
Last night, lie heavily upon my soul.
I cannot rede its meaning.

ASTROLOGER

Thou shalt tell
Thy vision.

BLACK PRINCE & THE ASTROLOGER

EDWARD

It was after the great battle
We fought at Navarettè, and I slept.
And to the shadow of my dream, an angel
Came, as the rainbow comes to the grey sea.
He seemed the living spirit of the morning,
Winged with the golden fleeces of the dawn ;
Sandalled with fire, and diademed with dew,
Clothed in the orange ripples of the sunrise
As with a royal robe. A burning torch
He placed within my hands, and guided me
To paths of paradise ; there, while I walked
In bliss, I saw another angel come.
His face was calm and dazzling as the snow
Upon the mountains, pale as Hesperus,
Alone in the sad firmament of May.
He took the living torch from out my hands ;
Then the bright world grew pale, and cold with
fear,
I knew that I was face to face with Death.
He led me to a sad triumphant portal,
Which opened on a silvery hall of dusk ;
And there I saw the heroes and the kings,
The valiant dead who perished unafraid,
Sleeping beneath a radiant vault of peace ;
White as cold marble in the ghostly mist,
Their faces glimmering with unearthly calm.
And those who fell forgotten in the fight,
And those whose names still shine above the
world

DRAMATIC POEMS

Like the fixed stars. There in tranquillity,
Equal they lie, the heirs of happiness,
Rich in their long inheritance of sleep.
And round the glistening temple I could see
The yawning darkness of a great abyss.
Then, as I made to enter, the stern angel
Forbade me, pointing to the world, and I
Followed with lingering steps, and at the
margin
Of the abyss craved darkness, and access
To that immensity. But once again
The angel turned, and pointed with pale hands
Unto the toiling world. Death who had snatched
The torch of Life from out my hands, denied
Even his utter darkness unto me.
And then methought I woke, with a deep
breath,
Attaining the ineffable release.
I said unto my soul : It was a dream !
But daylight came not, and I seemed to linger
Eternities in a cold sunless place.
And all at once I felt as though a fiend
Were binding me in fetters, and I heard
A noise of rivets hammered into steel.
I strove to move, but I was tightly bound ;
And tentacles unseen dragged me to Hell.
I screamed, and, screaming, found myself awake.

ASTROLOGER

Was that the end ?

BLACK PRINCE & THE ASTROLOGER

EDWARD

Yes ; but I woke in terror,
A stone upon my heart ; and since that hour
I cannot chase the melancholy fit.

ASTROLOGER

Into the holy crystal I will gaze,
Although already I discern some meaning
In this, thy dream. *[Fetches crystal.]*

O stranger, art thou sure
That thou would'st peer into futurity ?
[Gazes into crystal.]

EDWARD

Yes, I am sure. And if untimely death
Be written in the book of fate, make haste,
Nor hesitate ; for I have faced great dangers,
And have looked Death so often in the face,
That I shall neither quiver nor draw back
From the cold touch of his imperious hand.

ASTROLOGER (*slowly turning from the crystal*)

My son, thou needest all thy courage now.

EDWARD

Then it is worse than Death ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

ASTROLOGER

Art thou still sure
That thou would'st know ?

EDWARD

I pray you, make an end.

ASTROLOGER

Then summon now thy courage, noble child ;
For in the crystal there were piteous sights :
Thou spakest of an ague in thy bones,
And of a creeping lassitude. My son,
Thou hast a mortal sickness ; that fell fever
Will never now depart.

EDWARD

Is there no more
Than this, Death's simple sentence ? We must all
Die on a certain day ; much better then
To fall in the full flower and bloom of youth,
As though the new untarnished moon were torn
From the first hour of dusk, and never knew
The fulness and the majesty of midnight,
Leaving on earth remembered witchery,
And unassuaged regret.

*[After a pause, pacing up and down in
rising excitement.]*

Then I die young.
And I shall meet the warriors of the past

BLACK PRINCE & THE ASTROLOGER

Who fell like torches flaring for a moment
In the dark night. And foremost I shall meet
Balder, of whom my old nurse used to croon
A cradle-song ; the great and glorious god ;
The living sun ; the spirit of all youth,
Fated to meet eclipse and suffer darkness.
I shall meet Alexander, that swift soldier,
Blushing with glory like a rose of fire.
Achilles, splendid as a milk-white steed
Impatient for the battle ; I shall hear
Unhappy Roland blow his horn, and see
The lightning in the eyes of saddest Siegfried,
These shall I see, the brave, the fallen stars,
The young whom the gods loved.

ASTROLOGER

No, Edward, no !

[EDWARD starts.

Not for thee, Edward, Duke of Aquitaine,
And heir of England, Edward the Black Prince ;—
Not such a gift the Fates have stored for thee ;
For thee no boon of swift untimely death
Is kept. Thou shalt live on.

EDWARD

I cannot trace
Thy meaning, gentle sir ; I am in darkness.

ASTROLOGER

My words shall be but few, since I must stab.

DRAMATIC POEMS

EDWARD (*seating himself*)

Nay, tell me ; even to the bitterest end.

ASTROLOGER

Edward, thou shalt not die, but rather live ;
Yet neither shalt thou reach a mellow age
Of plenitude and ripeness. Pale disease
Shall linger by thy side, and thou shalt know
Eternal autumn to thy day of death.
There shall be battles fought and thou not there ;
Dangers to dare, and thou within the tent,
And foes to face, and thou upon thy couch,
The warhorse idle, and the sword undrawn ;
And from afar the voice of drums and trumpets
Shall call ; but thou shalt not obey the summons.
There shall be thunder of a thousand hoofs
Upon the plain ; and in the woodland aisles
The horn shall echo, and the hounds shall bay ;
Listless, thou wilt not heed : and thou shalt drink
The waters of despondent lassitude,
And taste the ashes of indifference ;
And from Despair thou shalt run out to Death,
But Death shall send thee to his child, Despair,
Denying thee his darkness, for a while,
For many weary years, as in thy dream.
And now thou knowest all. Thou hast been
brave ;
But there are fairer fields for bravery
Than Poitiers or than Crécy—to live on
With the foreknowledge of the nothingness,

BLACK PRINCE & THE ASTROLOGER

Yet never to succumb unto despair ;
To bear in silence the deep wound of Fate.

EDWARD

Is there no more ?

ASTROLOGER

That is the end.

EDWARD

I thank you—

I thank you for your pains, and say farewell.
The evil is sufficient for to-day.

THE DEATH OF THE
BLACK PRINCE

[A SCENE FROM A PLAY]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EDWARD, THE BLACK PRINCE.

RICHARD. (*His Son.*)

PRINCESS JOAN. (*His Wife.*)

Lords and Barons.

Nurse.

THE DEATH OF THE BLACK PRINCE

A Room in Westminster. Priests are discovered standing round the Black Prince, who is lying on a couch. His NURSE is sitting beside him. As the curtain rises the priests go out.

EDWARD

Oh ! I am well content
To die upon a Sunday and in summer.
Upon the high day of the Trinity
Which all my life I kept with solemn feast.
Sing to me, nurse :

NURSE *sings*

From the bleak sand and the grey sand
(O son o' mine, good-bye),
To the shore of gold and the cornland
To conquer or to die.

DRAMATIC POEMS

The low cloud and the grey cloud
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*),
It hangs and lowers like a shroud
Across the blood-red sky.

The soft sound and the loved sound
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Mother, I have a mortal wound,"
It is my own son's cry.

The horn call and the glad call
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Now dig the grave and weave the pall,
For I am soon to die."

The lone bell and the sad bell
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Tell them, mother, before I fell,
That I fought gallantly."

The known tread and the strong tread
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"One told me you were cold and dead,
But I heeded not the lie."

By sunshine or by moonshine
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*):
"Come back to me, O son o' mine,
I've waited patiently."

THE DEATH OF THE BLACK PRINCE

The loud song and the strange song
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*) :
“ I've watched and waited now so long,
Come back before I die.”

From the bleak sand and the grey sand
(*O son o' mine, good-bye*) :
To the shore of gold and the cornland,
To conquer or to die.

EDWARD

I wish to speak with my son Richard, now,
While yet my feeble utterance may be heard.
Open the doors, call hither all my men,
That I may thank them for their services ;
That they may swear allegiance to my son.

Enter LORDS and BARONS

EDWARD [*To the Barons.*]

Sirs, it is strange that, when I was but young,
When I came home from Crécy, you would speak
Of times when I should prove myself a King,
Haply the greatest of my country's Kings,
And win large lands and many victories.
The victories I won : but where are they ?
All that we fought for has been lost again ;
My conquests are a half-forgotten dream.

DRAMATIC POEMS

Yet haply, but the bare names of my battles
May strike a spark in English hearts some day,
In the far future ; haply, hearts will beat
Quicker when they shall hear those names but
spoken,
Poitiers and Crécy—faint and far away
It seems—as though the long wars had befallen
Some other man, not me. Yet now I die ;
I rail not at the past, and I would live
My life again, save the last shadowed years.
My death-knell rang on Navarettè field.
Since then I have not lived, or lived in vain.
Sirs, you have served me loyally, and though
To each I cannot give his guerdon, God
By His most holy Name shall give it you.
I recommend to you my son ; as yet
He is but small, but, as you have served me,
So, from your heart, I pray you to serve him.
Call Richard and my wife : I wish to see them.

Enter RICHARD *and* PRINCESS JOAN

EDWARD

Joan, I have begged forgiveness for my sins,
I have been shriven by the holy priest :
My soul is clean ; I am prepared to die.
I die contented ; I leave little Richard,
Take care of him ; and thou, my son, remember
Thou had'st a father who did never know
A coward's heart, nor saw the face of fear ;

THE DEATH OF THE BLACK PRINCE

Nor thought upon the whereabouts of Death ;
Whose motto was " High Spirit " ; who at one
time,

When God bereft him of his hopes and dreams,
His strength, his health, his power, his happiness,
Was tempted to surrender, to despair,

To make Death his ally ; but being a soldier,
Defeated, he deserted not the field,

While the fight lasted. Thus must thou do also ;

That, when thou diest, men may say of thee,

" The Prince of chivalry in all the world,

Has left in no dishonourable wise

The lists, to go and slumber in his tent."

For though my lot in life was with the conquered,

I have yielded not till the hour of death ;

But now at last I may lay down my arms.

Hark ! a strange bugle-call that summons me,

Far-off from the dominion of the dead !

Soon shall I pass into my kingdom, soon

Shall I assume my high inheritance,

Where there awaits no throne nor crown for me ;

Naught but the friend to whom I looked for help,

The sure friend and the strong, unfailing friend,

Who held aloof his hand and veiled his face ;

Now I shall feel the solace of that hand,

And gaze upon the glory of that face.

For Death, my friend, who shunned me for so
long,

Holds out his hand, and hides his face no more.

Can you not hear the roll of phantom drums ?

The noise of arms ? For now the sleeping dead,

DRAMATIC POEMS

The valiant dead who perished unafraid,
All stir to welcome me, and while I march
To Death's triumphant portal, I shall hear
The clash of ghostly arms and the strange bugle ;
But once within the silvery hall of dusk,
There will be no more noise. I shall forget
The rolling echoes of the battlefield.
At last I shall lie down among the dead,
And shut my eyes without the dread of dawn.
I, likewise, now, the heir of happiness,
Rich in my portion of the priceless gift,
Shall sleep beneath the radiant vault of peace,
Among the brave who lie for ever still.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

TO H. B.

Не видѣли они, какъ время пролетало,
Бывало грустно имъ, а скучно не бывало.

NOTE.—*The subject-matter of this play is almost entirely taken from M. Joseph Bédier's compilation of the Tristram Legends*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING MARK. (*King of Cornwall.*)

TRISTRAM. (*His Nephew.*)

ANDRET.

DENOALEN.

DUKE HOEL.

THE DUCHESS. (*His Wife.*)

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. (*Their Daughter.*)

SIR KAY HEDIUS. (*Her Brother.*)

A HERMIT.

GRISELDA. (*Iseult of Brittany's Lady.*)

PERSIDES. (*Tristram's Page.*)

ISEULT THE FAIR. (*King Mark's Wife.*)

BRANGWAINÉ. (*Her Lady.*)

ACT I

SCENE I—*Hall in the Castle of Tintagel*

KING MARK

Tristram, my friend, thou who hast been to me
More than a son, say wherefore art thou sad ?

TRISTRAM

King Mark, I am not sad.

KING MARK

In olden days
Tintagel echoed with thy careless song.

TRISTRAM

Those days were long ago ; I was a boy ;
Since then so many crowded years have passed,
And I have wandered long and far away.

KING MARK

Tristram, it hurts my heart to see thee sad.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

Let not the King heed Tristram ; I deserve
No passing thought, for fortune has bestowed
Too many gifts on me.

KING MARK

O heart of gold !
Tristram, my son, no gift would be too great
For thee.

TRISTRAM

I pray thee speak not thus, O King.
[*Horns sound.*]

KING MARK

Hark ! the horn calls us ; wilt thou to the hunt?

TRISTRAM

I come.

KING MARK

Then let us follow the glad horn. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter ISEULT and BRANGWAINE

ISEULT

How mournful is the murmur of the sea !
How heavy is the curtain of the sky !
How dark the daylight and how cold the sun !

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

BRANGWAINÉ

I pray you, Queen, be governed.

ISEULT

Who can guess
The torment of my heart ?

BRANGWAINÉ

Alas ! too clear
Your fiery dream is written on your face.

ISEULT

You know the sorrow that I nurse, but they,
How should they know ?

BRANGWAINÉ

When Tristram is not here
Listless and ghostly are the words you speak ;
Your soul is far away ; but when he comes,
You rise to life like some pale drooping flower
Refreshed by timely rain.

ISEULT

You fancy this.

BRANGWAINÉ

Not I alone : all see the self-same thing—
Blind must they be to whom it is not clear.

DRAMATIC POEMS

When you and Tristram meet, they can but see
Love, like a shadow following you ; and love
Burns in your eyes and trembles in your speech.

ISEULT

What should I do ?

BRANGWAINÉ

Make of your face a mask,
And like a mummer strive to talk and smile
Before the Courtiers, and before the King.

ISEULT

I try, but I forget ; and like a wave
The thought of Tristram sweeps me far away.

BRANGWAINÉ

Queen, be advised, before it is too late.

ISEULT

You know that it already is too late.

BRANGWAINÉ

Ay, truly vain it is to say " turn back "—
It is too late. There is no turning back.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT

I sought not Tristram's love ; I strove to hate ;
I hated him.

BRANGWAINÉ

How could you fight the fate
That lurk'd within the drink your mother brewed?
Blame me, for through my fault you drained the
cup,
The curséd draught made for the King and you.

ISEULT

It was no fault of yours.

BRANGWAINÉ

Ah ! fate made sport,
Sad sport of us.

ISEULT

And never till the day
We die shall Fate release us from the spell.

DRAMATIC POEMS

SCENE II.—*Same Hall in the Castle.* KING MARK
is seated on his throne

Enter ANDRET *and* DENOALEN

ANDRET

We claim an audience of the King.

KING MARK

Speak on.

ANDRET

Our words, most gracious Mark, cannot but stir
Great wrath in you ; yet is our duty plain
To lay the unwelcome truth before your eyes.
Tristram, in whom you placed your heart and
faith,
Would shame you ; Tristram loves Iseult the
Queen.

KING MARK

You lie ! Knaves, envy hath made black your
hearts.
'Tis true that Tristram holds my heart in pawn ;
The day the stranger challenged you to fight
Tristram encountered him and laid him low,
And red blood flowed from many a gaping wound ;
And that is why you hate him ; that is why
I love him. What is it you feign to know ?

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ANDRET

We see but what is plain ; what all men see ;
We only pray you, sir, to use your eyes ;
For haply even now 'tis not too late.

KING MARK

Leave me, sirs.

[*Exeunt ANDRET and DENOALEN.*
[*To SQUIRE.*] Send Sir Tristram here to me.

Enter TRISTRAM

KING MARK

Tristram, make haste to leave these Castle walls,
Nor cross the moat again ; for men accuse thee
Of treachery ; ask me no question, friend,
I could not speak their hateful speech again
Without dishonour for us both ; nor seek
For soothing words ; I know they would be vain ;
Yet I believed them not ; if I believed
How could I look on thee and let thee live ?
Go. Mark, that loves thee, bids thee go, my son.
[*Exit* TRISTRAM.
Some demon in my heart has sown a doubt.

DRAMATIC POEMS

SCENE III.—*An Orchard. Night*

Enter TRISTRAM

TRISTRAM

Iseult, far off from you I cannot stay,
I cannot live. And I have come again,
Though death and shame may wait for you and
me.

There is a bubbling spring that rises here
Beneath the shadow of this friendly pine ;
It wanders through the trees a running stream,
Between these grassy banks where cowslips
grow,

And reaches at the end the Castle yard.
I have cast shreds of bark upon the stream ;
Through the green orchard they will wind their
way

And speak a silent message to Iseult,
And she will see, and understand, and come.

[*Pause.*

A gentle ghost is flitting through the trees,
She touches but she tramples not the flowers ;
For she was made one with the springtime's
blossom,

A sister to the bending daffodil.
It is Iseult.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

Enter ISEULT

ISEULT

Upon the rippling stream
I saw the floating bark. And swift I came.

TRISTRAM

There never was so sure a messenger.

ISEULT

And though he whispers an unceasing tale,
He never tells the secret that he bears.

TRISTRAM

I breathed the secret to the spring ; it wells
Beneath this tree and fills the marble cirque,
O'ergrown with moss, with a clear silver film.
Hark, is the murmur mournful ? Is it glad ?

ISEULT

Like all sweet things, it is both glad and sad.
The dancing wave, the laughing wind, the chime
Of bells, the shepherd's reed, the woodland horn,
The words of love we speak ; in all of these
There is a seed of sorrow.

TRISTRAM

It is true ;
For every smile that like a sunbeam shines
Is followed by his shadow.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT

Brightest things
Cast darkest shade. Such is our love, O friend.

TRISTRAM

Yet think not of the shadow, but the sun.

ISEULT

For us there is no sun. Like happy men
We cannot taste the laughing light of day ;
For us the day is cruel. Only here,
Beneath the branches of this silent tree,
We can be safe and still.

TRISTRAM

Then let us think
The world beyond the orchard is a dream.

ISEULT

The moon has touched the slumber-scented trees ;
How dim, how frail the apple-blossom shines.

TRISTRAM

The birds are sleeping, and the noisy chough
Is far away.

ISEULT

This morning, in the trees
I heard the cuckoo's cry ; but now he sleeps.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

All happy creatures sleep, but you and I
Watch.

ISEULT

In the wakeful darkness there is peace,
And silent sadness greater than all joy.
How still and strange the blue deeps of the trees !
The silver air ! I feel a dreamy spell,
As though a wizard's wand, dipped in cool dew,
Had touched and changed us into ghostly leaves.

TRISTRAM

Or drowned our souls beneath the bubbling
spring.

ISEULT

Ay, it were sweet beneath the rippling water,
Captive in those cool liquid deeps, to dream.
Ah ! sad would be the music of the brook
If it were laden with our sighs.

TRISTRAM

Who heard it would weep tears of blessed joy.
And they

ISEULT

So still it is ; listen, the very stream
Seems drowsily to mutter in his sleep.

DRAMATIC POEMS

Haply the world beyond the orchard trees
Is but a lying dream, and this is true.

TRISTRAM

I touch your hand and wake from the world's
trance,
And only this is true. I come to life
When I am here beneath the silent tree,
With you ; but when I go, I fade away,
To wander like a phantom in the night ;
For all the world where you are not is dim,
And all the dwellers in the world are ghosts.

ISEULT

Tristram, without you, empty is the world,
And blind I wander in the light of day.

TRISTRAM

That is the lying dream : the truth is here
In every whispered word and silent kiss.

ISEULT

Tristram, my friend.

TRISTRAM

Iseult, Iseult, my life.

ISEULT

Hold me and kiss me till the world shall end.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

The world is dead—but we shall never die.

ISEULT

Or haply we have died, and the world lives
As far away, as silent as the moon ;
But thou art still my friend.

TRISTRAM

Iseult, my death !

ISEULT

Say not the sea-folk that Tintagel's towers
Are spellbound, and by magic melt away
Twice in the year ? That breathless hour has
 come ;
Tintagel's walls have vanished, and these trees,
This orchard is the orchard of the song.

TRISTRAM

Whisper the story softly in my ear ;
Thy voice is sweeter than all song to me.

ISEULT

It tells of a strange orchard, walled around
With wizard air and starred with shining flowers ;
There the frail blossom falls not from the tree,
And there the warrior wanders with his love.

DRAMATIC POEMS

Nought can molest their dream, no enemy
Can break the wall of air.

[Dawn breaks. Trumpets sound.]

TRISTRAM

The wizard wall
Is shattered ; no, that orchard is not here ;
Nor shall we find its like upon the earth ;
But one day, I shall bear you, O my friend,
To the pale gardens where the minstrels sing,
Where flutes and harps for ever sigh and sound ;
Never the sun shines, but the dwellers there
Ask for no sunshine.

ISEULT

Take me thither, friend.

[Trumpet sounds again]

TRISTRAM

The trumpet calls us to the cruel day.

ISEULT

Farewell, my friend.

TRISTRAM

Iseult, Iseult, farewell.

ISEULT

God guard you ! O God guard and keep us both.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

SCENE IV.—*An orchard. Night*

Enter KING MARK *and* ANDRET

ANDRET

Hide yourself, sir, behind this pine-tree trunk ;
Soon will they come, and you shall slay me, sir,
If the Queen meets not Tristram on this spot.

Enter TRISTRAM

TRISTRAM

The moon is full, and like a silver thread
The stream winds glittering through the tangled
grass.

[He throws shreds of wood on to the stream
How swift the little ships float down the stream ;
They meet, they drift apart, they meet again,
They rise, they sink, like lives of men on earth ;
And at the end they reach tranquillity,
Where the bright fountain splashes on the stone.

[He sees the KING's shadow
What is this phantom flitting through the trees ?

Enter ISEULT, *who also sees the KING's shadow*

ISEULT (*Aside*)

God grant that I may be the first to speak.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT

Tristram ! What, have you dared, in such a place
At such an hour to wait for me ? Ah ! oft
You bade me come to heed your prayer, you said.
What is this prayer ? What do you want of me ?
For I have come at last.

TRISTRAM

Yes, often, Queen,
I sent for you ; but always sent in vain ;
For since I have been banished by the King,
You have not deigned to heed my mournful call.
Have pity ! for the King now hateth me.
I know not why—haply you know the cause.
And who could calm his rage so well as you,
Gentle Iseult ?

ISEULT

Oh ! know you not, the King
Suspects us of a shameful infamy ?
Must I, O shame ! reveal this news to you ?
He thinks that we are bound by guilty love.
God knows—and let him kill me if I lie—
That I have only loved one man.

TRISTRAM

I pray
That you may plead for me, O gentle Queen.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT

He'd kill me if he knew that I was here.

TRISTRAM

How came he to such thoughts ?

ISEULT

It was not he,
But traitors led him to believe this lie.
"They love," they said. 'Tis true you love me,
sir.

Have I not saved you twice from death, and I
Have loved you in return, for are not you
My kinsman ?

TRISTRAM

Beg the King to pity me.

ISEULT

Tristram, you must not ask this thing of me.
The world's my foe, and should I say one word
I risk a shameful death. Ah ! may God help you.
So often have I whispered to this stream
My sorrow, and told my trouble to the leaves.
Ah ! it is sad, now all the world is joyous,
That I alone should hide a heavy heart,
Because my Lord suspects me of great wrong.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

And I, when twilight steals upon the world,
Have often sat beside this mossy stone,
Where the spring rises. I have told my tale
To the clear water, and methinks its song
Has sighed a sadder burden since that day ;
And I have prayed the water-sprites to bear
The story of my sorrow to the King,
For it is clear and truthful as the stream.

ISEULT

God help you, for the King has been deceived ;
I pray that he may pardon you. I go,
For I am fearful. I have stayed too long.
Farewell, O gentle sir.

TRISTRAM

Farewell, O Queen.
[*Exeunt* TRISTRAM and ISEULT

KING MARK

Oh ! blessed be this hour ! Praise be to God !
Tristram, my son, why did I doubt of you ?

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

SCENE V.—ISEULT'S *Chamber. Night*

ISEULT

I know not why, but I am cold with fear.

Enter TRISTRAM

ISEULT

Tristram! Make haste to go! Ah! you are mad
To seek me in the chamber of the King!

TRISTRAM

The King has left the Castle these three hours.
He bade me start before to-morrow's dawn,
To take a written scroll to Carduel's King.

ISEULT

It is deceit! A traitorous stratagem.
Go! quickly, go, before they find you here.

TRISTRAM

How could I go, Iseult, nor say farewell?

ISEULT

I, too, had grieved had you in silence gone.
But we have said farewell. Make haste to go,
I fear the traitors.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

What is fear to us ?
Surely fear died upon that summer morn
We drank by chance from the same silver cup.

ISEULT

The sail was flapping idly in the air.

TRISTRAM

There was no land in sight.

ISEULT

And in the sky
No cloud.

TRISTRAM

The drowsy mariners all slept.

ISEULT

Only a seagull circled in the air
And cried a strange cold cry ; it made me shiver.
I thought the golden sea, the burning sky,
Must have turned grey ; but no, they had not
changed.

TRISTRAM

The sea was like a glittering coat of mail.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT

And pitiless and cruel was the sun !
I thought of the cool streams of my green home.

TRISTRAM

You bade me fetch you water.

ISEULT

It was wine
You brought.

TRISTRAM

Ah ! no, Ah ! no, it was not wine ;
But bitter bliss, and anguish without end,
Love, Death.

ISEULT

I drank, and gave the cup to you.

TRISTRAM

And then began the torment in my heart.

ISEULT

For many days I strove to hate you still ;
I strove ; the ecstasy within my heart
Was bitterer than all anger then to me.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

And for three days we spoke no word ; but I
Was tortured and my heart was full of shame ;
During those days I dared not show my face.

ISEULT

On the last day you sought me in my tent
You said to me, " What is it troubles you,
Iseult——? "

TRISTRAM

And wildly then you cried to me ;
" This sky, this sea, my body and my life ! "
And your eyes filled with tears ; you laid your
hand
Upon my arm.

ISEULT

And once again you said
Softly : " Iseult, what is it troubles you ? "

TRISTRAM

You looked at me ; and whispered " Love of
you."

ISEULT

And you made silent answer.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

With a kiss.

ISEULT

Brangwaine then came and cried, " You drank of death."

While love and life leapt in our veins like fire ;
You cried, " If this be death then let us die."

TRISTRAM

A breeze came with the sunset. I can hear
The lapping of the surge about the ship.

ISEULT

And Brangwaine weeping in the silent night.

TRISTRAM

I can still see the hot midsummer sky.

ISEULT

The million stars that watched upon our love.

TRISTRAM

That white Star in the East, so still, so clear.

ISEULT

The morning-star ! We thought it Hesperus.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

So swiftly had the hours of darkness flown,
We thought that twilight lingered in the sky.
It was the dawn.

ISEULT

Tristram, it is the dawn !
And all the night has in a moment passed.

Enter KING MARK, ANDRET

KING MARK

Tristram, to-morrow you shall die : no prayer,
No vow, no word of protest will avail.
You and Iseult shall suffer the same death.

ACT II

A Forest. Summer

HERMIT

Tristram, a price is set upon your head.
The Barons swore to capture you alive
Or dead. Tristram, repent, for God forgives
The sinner who repents.

TRISTRAM

But of what crime ?

HERMIT

Your lawless love.

TRISTRAM

Ah ! little do you know
The truth, who judge us. Know you of the
wine
We drank together on the fatal ship ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

HERMIT

God help you ! for the traitor's end is death !
You have betrayed your King. Tristram, give
back
The Queen unto her lawful Lord.

TRISTRAM

No more
Is he her Lord. She was condemned to death,
And we would both have perished at the stake,
Had I not broken loose and set her free.

HERMIT

You cannot change the truth with subtle speech.
Repent : for he who lives in sin is dead.

TRISTRAM

I live and I repent not. This great wood
Shall keep us safe. Come, come to me, Iseult !
[*Exit* HERMIT

Enter ISEULT

TRISTRAM

The Hermit bids me take you to the King.

ISEULT

The world has lost us ; we have lost the world ;
How say you, Tristram !

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

Friend, so long as you
Are with me, what is there that I can wish ?
If all the stars and worlds were ours, I'd see
You only.

ISEULT

I would think in days gone by
That peaceful happiness was not for us.
Yet in this forest we can taste of joy.

TRISTRAM

And every hour unveils another bliss.
Hark to the tinkle of the running stream !

ISEULT

Hark to the rustle of the lime trees' leaves !
It is a haunted tree, within whose heart
Some spirit dwells and whispers to the wind.

TRISTRAM

The noon is humming his soft sleepy song.

ISEULT

And far away I hear a shepherd's flute.
The tune is like a sunbeam to my heart.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

The notes have died away upon the breeze,
And all is still.

ISEULT

Save where the woodpecker
Taps on the bole of some sequestered tree.

TRISTRAM

This forest is our court. Its branches spread
A royal canopy above our heads.

ISEULT

Our courtiers are the purple butterflies.

TRISTRAM

Our squires and henchmen are the wild brown
bees.

ISEULT

Our gems are drops of dew ; our gold the broom.
Lest we should miss the shimmer of bright robes
The darting kingfisher delights our eyes.

TRISTRAM

Our morning herald is the lark, the thrush
Our ballad-monger, and the whistling blackbird
Our flute-player.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT

The squirrel is our fool.
Our chapel lies in the dark forest aisle.

TRISTRAM

Where the stream tells its rippling rosary.

ISEULT

At Vespers incense rises from the pool.

TRISTRAM

And fireflies are the tapers of the shrine.

ISEULT

The nightingales the Ave Mary sing.

TRISTRAM

The noon is heavy : let us seek our cave.

DRAMATIC POEMS

SCENE II.—*The Forest. Autumn*

HERMIT

How long, O Tristram, will this madness last ?
Have courage, take Iseult back to the King.

TRISTRAM

Ask me not this : for it can never be.

HERMIT

Have you no thought for her ? What piteous
plight

Is hers through you ? She, born to be a Queen,
Is now no better than a hunted beast.

What is her lot ? Instead of silken robes
And glittering courts, you give her this wild wood,
A cave, and roots to eat, the frost, the cold ;
All this for you she bears without a word.

Shame, shame upon you, Tristram ! Is not she
His bride, true wedded by the rite of Rome ?

[*Exit* HERMIT

Enter ISEULT

TRISTRAM

Your cheek is pale and wistful is your smile.
Iseult, tell, tell me, if your heart be sad.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT

Tristram, you know full well I am not sad.

TRISTRAM

Are you not wearied of this life, Iseult,
Of these rough days ?

ISEULT

My friend is with me still :
I know not if the days be rough or fair.

TRISTRAM

Nay, you are sad.

ISEULT

To see the swallows fly,
To see the faded leaves fall one by one ;
And sad because I know that what is fled
Shall never be again.

TRISTRAM

Already sown
Are golden seeds of blissful hours to be.

ISEULT

But this long dream can never be again :
The first free wanderings in the leafy wood :
Those hours are dead. Tristram, methinks that
you
Have sadder thoughts than I.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

Iseult, my joy,
How can the sun give darkness ?

ISEULT

You are sad.

TRISTRAM

I grieve to see you beaten by the wind,
To see you sleep upon the rugged ground.
Iseult, when winter comes, what shall befall ?

ISEULT

When winter comes we in the hermit's cave,
Beside the blazing boughs, shall little heed
The storms ; the snow shall be our coverlet.

TRISTRAM

Yet my heart aches for you. I fear you hide
Your grief.

ISEULT

One thing alone can sadden me :
To see that you are mournful. O my friend,
Great is my happiness if you are glad.
Only I fear lest you be wearied now
Of loneliness and of this savage wood.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

There where my daylight is, my life, my joy,
There is no loneliness. One thought is dark :
To think the happiness must have an end.

ISEULT

It shall not end.

TRISTRAM

I know the end must come ;
We never shall be free from our dark fate,
Free on the earth like other happy men.

ISEULT

Think not of what has been, nor what shall be,
But say you are not changed.

TRISTRAM

Iseult, my life !

ISEULT

Enough. Tristram, my friend, it is enough.

Enter HERMIT

TRISTRAM

It is the holy hermit. Speak with him.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM.]

DRAMATIC POEMS

HERMIT

Iseult, God bids thee seek thy lawful lord.

ISEULT

Forsaking Tristram ? No, it cannot be.

HERMIT

It shall be, if your love is great enough.
Should Tristram live an outcast in the woods ?
Tristram, the brave, the great adventurous Knight.
Tristram, who in the Castle of a King
Should live surrounded by a hundred squires.
He who should visit the great fields of war,
And run at tilt in tourneys with the brave.
For you he leaves the world ; for you he roams,
An outlaw wandering homeless in a wood.

ISEULT

O hermit, leave me, for you tear my heart.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

SCENE III.—*Another part of the Forest. Autumn.*
On one side of the Stage is the HERMIT'S Cave
where ISEULT is lying asleep

Enter KING MARK

KING MARK

They told me that within a leafy cave
A shining fairy slumbered in a trance.

[*He walks to the cave and sees ISEULT*
Iseult! Oh! canst thou live and be so fair?
Thy face and features wear the blessed peace,
The radiant smile that lights the happy dead;
And yet thou art alive, for wert thou dead,
Thy cheek would not be tinged like a soft rose;
Inscrutable and wondrous is thy smile;
Oh! would to God thy heart were innocent!

Enter HERMIT

I found Iseult the Queen in this thy cave;
Now tell me where is Tristram's hiding-place?

HERMIT (*Aside*)

Praise God! I will fulfil the work of peace.
[*To KING*] O King, Sir Tristram dwells not in
this cave,
But far away in the deep forest's heart;
And only when Iseult has fallen asleep

DRAMATIC POEMS

He ventures here and feeds his gaze awhile
Upon her sleeping form, and when she stirs
He flies into the thickets of the woods.
And ofttimes, when the sun beats on her face,
He shields her from its rays with shady leaves.
And, as he gazes, tears bedim his eyes ;
But never comes he here at other times,
Lest he should do dishonour to his King.
Has he not sworn his innocence to thee,
O King ? thou didst not deign to heed his word.

KING MARK

Speak you the truth ? Dark, dark has been my
fault.

Great-hearted Tristram, must my meaner heart
For ever doubt of you and be deceived ?

But I am ready to set right the wrong.

See, I will signify my will : I take

This ring from Iseult's finger, in its stead

I place my own, the ring she gave to me,

And when she wakes my message will be clear.

[*Exit* KING MARK

HERMIT

O God, forgive the lie upon my lips,

I spoke the falsehood in the cause of peace.

[*ISEULT awakes*

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

Enter TRISTRAM

ISEULT

I dreamt that one was watching while I slept,
And, while he watched, he wept, then he bent
down,

And took away my ring, and in its place
He put his own. Look you upon my finger,
The ring is changed, Hermit. It is the ring
I gave King Mark upon our bridal day.
Who hath done this ?

HERMIT

The King himself was here
And wept for pity as he gazed on you.
His heart is full of sorrow, he believes
The oath of innocence that Tristram swore,
He minds how he condemned you both unheard,
And now his only wish is to forgive.

TRISTRAM

Forgive ! Ah ! who could pardon such a fault
Without ignobleness ? No, Hermit, no ;
But he remembers how, a little child,
I, at his feet, played on a golden harp ;
He minds how oft my blood has flowed for him ;
The oath I swore, the judgment that I claimed ;
He cannot guess the riddle of our lives ;
He doubts, he hopes ; now he will let me prove
My words in combat ;—I must then give back
Iseult. O wherefore did he come ? Before

DRAMATIC POEMS

I could feel hate for him, but by his deed
He stirs the old compassion in my heart.

HERMIT

Tristram, be brave and bring the Queen to him ;
Tristram, the time has come to take the Queen
From this wild forest and this savage life.

TRISTRAM

What thinkest thou, Iseult ?

ISEULT

What passeth speech ;
Yet if you will it so, so let it be.

TRISTRAM

Then holy hermit, heed ; I will obey ;
Help me to make agreement with the King.
Go back, Iseult, and I will leave this land,
I will to Brittany, and if one day
The King should call me, I will come once more.

ISEULT

It is so willed, it must be, and although
I do not now repent me that I loved
Tristram, and that I love him ; still from now
Our lives must be divided, though my heart
Shall never leave his heart.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

HERMIT

O praised be God !
The King is hunting in the wood to-day ;
I will to him and bring him here to you.
[*Exit* HERMIT

TRISTRAM

Iseult, Iseult, dark is this hour of grief !
It is the bitter end of the sweet cup.

ISEULT

Nay, not the end. And was not the first drop
Bitter and sweet as is the last ? For us
There is no end, but we, until we die,
Shall drift together like two floating leaves
Upon a running stream ; never for long
Together, never parted utterly.

TRISTRAM

Like the small shreads of bark I used to cast
Upon the orchard stream in days gone by ;
Yet now our parting must be long.

ISEULT

A night,
Lingering and dark perchance, but dawn will
come.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

There may be glimpses at the dawn and dusk
For us ; but we shall never more be free
To wander throughout all the careless day.

ISEULT

Till Death ; then, in the night or in the day,
Together, unmolested, we shall roam.

TRISTRAM

Not yet, Iseult : that hour has not yet come ;
And oh ! the bitter grief to lose you now !

ISEULT

Take this green ring and wear it for my sake ;
And should you ever send this ring to me,
No walls, no chains, no bars, nor stern command
Shall keep me from fulfilling my friend's wish.

TRISTRAM

God bless the ring and her that gave it me.
How shall I live without her ?

ISEULT

Fate has bound
Our lives together and I dare not think
How I shall live ; but this alone I know,
My heart will follow you o'er all the world.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

O friend, I go. I know not to what land ;
But should I ever send you the green ring,
Will you fulfil the wish that it shall bear ?

ISEULT

Thou knowest well no walls, no chains, no bars
Shall keep me from fulfilling thy heart's wish,
Be it wisdom or mad folly.

TRISTRAM

God be good

To you !

ISEULT

God guard you always, O my friend !

Enter KING MARK, ANDRET, HERMIT *and* BARONS

TRISTRAM

O King, I give you back Iseult the Fair ;
And I stand here to prove to all the world
In combat that I never loved the Queen
With guilty love, that had offended you.
Deceived by traitors you had had us burnt
Untried, unheard, had God not pitied us ;
No hearing was I given. Let me now
Be judged, and let me justify myself

DRAMATIC POEMS

In battle. And if vanquished, kill me, sir,
If victor, let me serve you as before.

ANDRET (*Aside to the KING*)

Sir, heed my counsel. Wrongly evil tongues
Spake slander of the Queen, yet if Sir Tristram
Returns to Court, those tongues will speak once
more.

TRISTRAM

Who will accept my challenge ?

[*Silence*

There is none

Who dares. O King, you speak no word to me.
Take back the Queen. And I will leave you, Sir,
And seek a far-off country ; Brittany
Or Wales.

KING MARK

My son, O whither will you go
Thus ragged, thus unbannered ? Here is gold.

TRISTRAM

King, I will take no single piece of silver,
But, as I am, I shall in distant lands
Offer my service to some alien King.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM

ACT III

SCENE I.—ISEULT'S *Room in Tintagel*

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Brangwaine, I know not why, but these last
days
There have been moments when my heart seemed
light,
As though my pain had melted quite away.

BRANGWAINÉ

Time heals the bitter wounds of fate.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Ah, no!
A million centuries might o'er me roll
And undiminished would my sorrow be.

BRANGWAINÉ

And yet you say your heart seems light at
times.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

It is since Tristram sent me the small bell,
The silver bell that hangs about my neck.
I wear it now ; strange when I hear it tinkle,
A sudden ray of sunshine warms my heart,
And I am sad no more.

BRANGWAINÉ

It is his gift.
The thought of Tristram makes life sweet to you,
Whene'er you listen to that little bell.
[ISEULT *takes off the bell*

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Hark to its silver sound ! Ah ! I could cry
For joy ! I feel a gladness in my heart.

BRANGWAINÉ

It is the thought of Tristram.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Nay, that thought
Would rather bring me pain.

BRANGWAINÉ

They say the bell
Was brought by Merlin from Avilion's Isle.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

The bell is faëry ! He has sent it me
That I might lose my sorrow and forget.
I will not taste of comfort while my friend
Suffers. He might have kept the magic solace.
He kept the sorrow and he gave the joy.
It shall not be. For Tristram, I will suffer
As well as you, so long as you are sad.
I cast you, cursèd bell, into the sea !

[*Goes to the window*

Brangwaine, 'tis true : a curtain veils the sun :
And in my heart the ancient sorrow aches.

SCENE II.—*Hall in the Castle of Carbaix, Brittany*
Iseult with the white hands, and DUCHESS HOEL

DUCHESS

Thy bridal robe is almost ready, child.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

When will the feast be ? for the days pass by
But Tristram never speaks of it to me.

DUCHESS

Methinks he loves you well, and that his days
Pass wondrous sweetly, like a dream of bliss.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Haply he loves me : dreamy is his mood :
It is as though his mind were far away.

DUCHESS

And yet he loves you.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

He is kind to me.
And when the Minstrels sing of me in song,
His face lights up with a strange wistful smile.

DUCHESS

He loves the Minstrelsy ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

He loves the song
“ Iseult ” the Minstrels made upon my name.

DUCHESS

He is a warrior. It is sweet for him
To rest and bask in a soft dream of love :
He fears to break the spell.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Yet sometimes, Mother,
It seems as though I were a ghost to him.
He gazes through me on the vacant air.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

DUCHESS

That is love-sickness.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Sometimes, too, methinks,
He seems to listen to a hidden voice ;
To gaze upon a shape I cannot see.

DUCHESS

That is but love that rises up to you,
Like a great cloud of incense, from his heart.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Is it for me ?

DUCHESS

For whom else could it rise ?
Why has he lingered if he loved you not
After he drove away the enemy ?
And when your father offered him your hand,
He could have answered " No " and left our land,
But it was plain he loved you from the first.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

I thought he looked on me with loving eyes.

DUCHESS

I mind the day your brother brought him here,
Into our chamber, as we worked and sang.

DRAMATIC POEMS

“ This is Iseult,” your brother said, and Tristram
Smiled a strange smile, and softly said “ Iseult ! ”

Enter TRISTRAM

He comes. I leave you, child, alone with him.

[*Exit* DUCHESS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Good-morrow, Tristram.

TRISTRAM

Hail ! little Iseult.

What is the robe you work with your fair hands ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

It is my bridal veil.

TRISTRAM

Our wedding ? Strange !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Why strange, my Lord ?

TRISTRAM

Nay, nay, it is not strange.

Yet it is strange that I, in Brittany,

Should wed : so far away from Cornwall's shores

Where I have lived.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Why left you Cornwall's shores ?

TRISTRAM

To seek adventure, for I always loved
To wander.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

O'er the plains and in the woods.

TRISTRAM

Long, long ago I wandered in a wood :
For days which seemed like months, for months
like years.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Were you alone ?

TRISTRAM

I had a faithful friend.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Where is he now ?

TRISTRAM

Gone, gone, I know not where.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

When is our marriage day ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

Whene'er the Duke
Decrees. I shall be ready ; but these days
Are soft and pleasant as a summer dream.
I would not break the spell of the still hours.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Think you the clarions of the wedding feast
Will break the spell ?

TRISTRAM

Perchance they'll bring to us
Another dream, more sweet, a longer dream.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

You love to dream.

TRISTRAM

In slumberous forest lands
They rocked me to the sound of a sad sea.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Is it as fair a land as Brittany ?

TRISTRAM

Just such a land. Another Brittany ;
The woods are darker and the billow's song
Is sadder.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Ah ! the sadness of that sea
Is in your eyes. You must have tasted grief,
Once, long ago.

TRISTRAM

So long ago, that now
It seems as though it had not ever been.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Tell me your tale of grief.

TRISTRAM

There is no tale,
Some birds there are who twitter merrily,
Others who sing a plaintive song ; of such
Was I ; for I was born in grief.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

But now
You feel no grief ?

TRISTRAM

My grief was long ago,
Now I am lapped in stillness and content.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

And love ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

Oh ! yes, and love, gentle Iseult.

Enter the DUKE

THE DUKE

The marriage feast shall be to-morrow's morn,
If such your pleasure.

TRISTRAM

I am ready, sir,
To wed your child Iseult before the priest.
[*Exeunt DUKE and ISEULT OF BRITTANY*

Enter PERSIDES

PERSIDES

To-morrow the wedding feast shall be held.

TRISTRAM

So they have told me.

PERSIDES

Are you ready, Sir ?

TRISTRAM

Ready for what ?

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

PERSIDES

To wed Duke Hoel's child.
Oh ! little did we dream in days gone by
That you would wed Iseult of Brittany.

TRISTRAM

Devious and strange is the dark path of Fate.

PERSIDES

Mind you the orchard by Tintagel's tower ?

TRISTRAM

It seems as though I had been dead since then,
And all those years are like the shadowy ghosts
That roam beyond the dark forgetful stream.

PERSIDES

And are you happy, Sir ?

TRISTRAM

I know not, boy.
I am not sad, and tranquil is my heart.
Yet all is strange to me ; this life, this Castle,
Iseult of Brittany. Is this a dream ?
And have I died and found another world ?

PERSIDES

It is no dream.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

I feel that I am borne
Gently upon a river to the sea,
To a wide ocean of content and calm.

PERSIDES

Perchance a storm awaits you on that sea.

TRISTRAM

I know not ; but I know that it is sweet
To drift upon the flood and to forget.

PERSIDES

Have you forgotten ?

TRISTRAM

All is strange and dim ;
I am secure in the strong hand of Fate ;
I feel as though, from a long fever freed,
I looked with dreamy eyes on a new world.

PERSIDES

Know you this song ? It is a lullaby.

Sings

*An orchard grows beyond the sea,
Encircled by a wall of air ;
The blossom falls not from the tree,
The earth smells sweetly there.*

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

*Two lovers dream within that wall,
The night it lasts forever there ;
For in the dawn no bugle-call
Can break that wall of air.*

TRISTRAM

Haply I heard it in the days gone by.

SCENE III.—ISEULT OF BRITTANY'S *Room. Wedding Procession, with Torches, passes across the stage*

Enter TRISTRAM *and* ISEULT OF BRITTANY

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

It is a wondrous night, the sea is singing
A lullaby of love ; was ever night
As soft and warm as this on Cornwall's shores ?

TRISTRAM

Yes, often there the nights were soft and warm.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

And there you used to wander in the woods ?

TRISTRAM

Ah, yes !

L

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

To seek adventure, to set free
Captives, and to deliver lovely Queens ?

TRISTRAM

I never met but with one lovely Queen.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

What was her name ?

TRISTRAM

The self-same name as thine,
“ Iseult.”

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Did you deliver this Iseult ?
From whom ? and how ?

TRISTRAM

A King had sentenced her
To death : he thought that she was false to him.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Had she been false ?

TRISTRAM

Nay, she was never false.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

You set her free, and then ?

TRISTRAM

And then she fled.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Alone ?

TRISTRAM

A faithful slave had followed her.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

And what became of her ?

TRISTRAM

The King forgave,
And she returned and dwelt with him in peace.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

And did she give you no reward, no gift ?

TRISTRAM

I asked for no reward. What should she give ?
Nay, it is true, bidding farewell, one gift
She gave.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

What gift ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

A ring ; I had forgot.
But see, it is upon my finger still—
This little jasper hoop that glitters green.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Give me that ring !

TRISTRAM

You have the ring I gave
Before the priest. 'Twould not be meet to change.
[TRISTRAM goes to the window and gazes out
on to the sea

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Tristram, my Lord, what is it ails you ? Speak—
Come to me : seal our marriage with a kiss.

TRISTRAM

Iseult, I pray you be not wrath with me ;
But long ago I made a solemn vow—
I was in dreadful peril in a battle,
When, mindful of the Blessed Virgin's name,
I vowed, that if She saved me from the peril,
I would, when wedded, let a whole year pass
Before I gave and took the wedding kiss.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

So be it ! Oh, my Lord : fulfil thy vow !

ACT IV

Hall in Tintagel. KING MARK and ISEULT are seated on two Thrones surrounded by Courtiers

Enter TRISTRAM disguised as a Madman

COURTIER

A crazy madman, Sir, has come to Court.

KING MARK

Let the mad fool approach.

[*They lead him to the KING*
Welcome, Sir friend.

TRISTRAM

Hail ! best and noblest of all Kings ; I knew
My heart would melt if I should see thy face.

KING MARK

What seek you here, Sir fool ?

TRISTRAM

I seek Iseult ;
Iseult the Fair I loved in days gone by.
I bring you, sir, my sister ; let us change :
For the Queen wearies you, give her to me.

DRAMATIC POEMS

KING MARK

And whither would you take Iseult, the Queen ?

TRISTRAM

Beyond the clouds and far above the sun ;
To where my castle with the filmy walls
Hangs like an opal in the morning air.

COURTIERS

The madman speaketh well.

KING MARK

What made thee hope
The Queen would heed a crazy fool like thee ?

TRISTRAM

I have the right to hope. I for her sake
Have suffered many things, and lost my wits.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Who art thou, Madman ?

TRISTRAM

I no longer know ;
But in the days gone by I was a Minstrel ;
I loved the moon, and all night long I sang
Louder and sweeter than the nightingale.
Song made me mad at last.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

What is thy name ?

TRISTRAM

“Wanderer,” for I have wandered o’er the world,
And seen the dark dominions of the dead ;
There on the sable throne a pallid Queen
Sits crowned with flowers that grew by streams
of dusk ;
Her eyes are sadder than the withered flowers,
And sad and listless is her silent smile.

KING MARK

Spake you with her ?

TRISTRAM

I sang her a soft song
Of a strange orchard walled about with air,
Where yellow daffodils upon the grass
Are sprinkled thick like stars ; and when I sang
She wept, for she remembered flowers like those.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Sing us the song.

TRISTRAM

I have forgotten it ;
And there is no more song within my heart.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Know you the ballad of the jasper ring ?

TRISTRAM

A thousand ballads echo in my brain ;
I cannot sing ; the lute within my heart
Is broken, and its strings can only wail ;
Yet, long ago, I loved the silver moon ;
She came to earth and kissed me while I slept.
It was a foolish thing to love the moon.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Then it was love that made you mad ?

TRISTRAM

Not love

Alone ; I was enchanted by a spell.
I sailed upon the broomstick of a witch
Who willed that wheresoever I should go
Her name should haunt me like a jingling bell ;
I could not rid me of the silver sound
That tinkled in my heart : it made me mad.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

What was the witch's name ?

TRISTRAM

It was Iseult.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF CORNWALL (*To King*)

Was ever there so mad a loon ?

[*To TRISTRAM*] They say
There was a wizard in Avilion's Isle,
Who bore around his neck a faëry bell ;
And they who heard its sound forgot their grief.
Know you of this ?

TRISTRAM

Once, it was long ago,
I met a knight who had a faëry bell ;
He gave it to his lady-love, and she
Forgot him.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Thou dost lie !

TRISTRAM

Know you the Knight ?

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

How should I know him, crazy fool ? and yet
Thou shalt not blame a woman here.

TRISTRAM

Iseult,
O give me back my wits you stole away,
When in the guise of the bright moon you lived.
Give me the wits you stole a second time,
When you bewitched me with a haunting name.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

King, bid this fool begone ; he wearies me.

TRISTRAM

O ! see you not the Queen is smit with love ?
Mark you how pale she is, how bright the
flame
That glistens in her eyes. She is a witch !
O, burn her at the stake, King Mark, for she
Would shame you for the love of a mad fool.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

O curséd madman, you are crazed with wine.

TRISTRAM

'Tis true that I am crazed ; but with a wine
Whose bitter fumes will never die away.
O Queen, can you recall that summer noon ?
The sail was flapping idly in the air ;
There was no land in sight, the sailors slept.
The sea was gold ; the sky was hot like fire,
And you were thirsty ; have you quite forgot ?
We drank together of the self-same cup.
Since then I have been maddened with that wine.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Sir, drive this man away. I will not hear him.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

KING MARK

Wait : let us hear his madness to the end.
Say, fool, what canst thou do ?

TRISTRAM

I play the harp,
And in the forest like a thrush I sing,
And in the orchard like a nightingale.
I can slay dragons, kill false-hearted Knights,
Throw shreds of bark upon the running stream ;
Love Queens, and live on berries in a wood.
Am I not, Sir, a goodly minstrel ? See !
[He belabours the COURTIERs with his stick

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Sir, I am weary ; let me seek my room.
I can no longer hear this noisy fool.

KING MARK

'Tis we will leave you. Follow us, mad fool,
And show your skill in sport and song.
[Exeunt KING MARK, TRISTRAM, and COURTIERs

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Brangwaine !
Brangwaine ! My heart is sick with hope and
fear ;
A fool, a madman, has been here, and he

DRAMATIC POEMS

Must be a wizard, for he knows my life.
The secret things none know but you and I ;
Unless——

BRANGWAINE

Unless 'tis Tristram !

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Oh, the hope !
The fear ! If it be he, how dares he come
And risk a shameful death ?

BRANGWAINE

Queen, calm thyself :
Haply this man is Tristram's messenger.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Go, bring him hither ; I will to my chamber ;
Fetch me, if haply what you think be true.

*[Exit ISEULT. Exit BRANGWAINE and returns
with TRISTRAM*

TRISTRAM

Brangwaine, Brangwaine, have pity upon me !

BRANGWAINE

Madman, what demon taught my name to you ?

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

Ah ! long ago, Brangwaine, I learnt your name,
And if my wits have left me it is you
Who are the cause ; for should you not have
guarded

The poison that I drank upon the sea ?
Out of a silver cup, in the great heat
I drank, and gave the goblet to Iseult ;
Brangwaine, can you recall that breathless hour ?

BRANGWAINE

No !

TRISTRAM

Pity, pity on me !

Enter ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Pity, Queen !

[He opens his arms to embrace QUEEN ; *she
shrinks, shuddering, from him*

[Exit BRANGWAINE

TRISTRAM

Ah ! truly I have lived a day too long,
For I have been rejected by Iseult.
She spurns and shrinks from me. Iseult ! Iseult !
Slow to forget is he who loveth well.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

I doubt ! I am afraid ! I do not know !

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

Iseult, I am that Tristram whom you loved,
Who loved you for so long. Have you forgot
The shreads of bark I cast upon the stream ?
The friendly shadow of the tall pine tree ?
The orchard like the orchard of the song ?
Have you forgot the forest where we dwelt ?
Our Courtiers that were purple butterflies,
Our gems the dewdrops, and our gold the
broom.

The blackbird was our minstrel all day long ;
At dusk, in the dark aisle by fireflies lit,
The nightingales our " Ave Mary " sang. . . .
She speaks no word. Ah ! will she know this
ring ?

The little jasper ring she gave to me.
No walls, she said, no bars, no stern command
Will keep me from fulfilling my friend's wish.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

O ! Tristram, take me : I am here for thee.

TRISTRAM

But why were you so long to know me,
friend ?

What is the ring ? It had been sweeter far
If you, but by the memories of our love,
Had known me.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Sooner than you spoke I knew.
Think you I did not know your sad, sad eyes ?
I knew ; but, Tristram, I was sick with fear ;
For enemies surround me on all sides.
I thought that haply an enchanter's spell
Deceived me, that some foe was mocking me.
I knew, yet dared not know, that it was you ;
I trembled lest my heart should lend them sight.
I feared ; I waited for the jasper ring.
And, now I see the ring, I yield to you ;
I swore to do what you should wish, O friend,
If I should see that ring, and here am I:
Wisdom be it or folly, take me now.

TRISTRAM

Know you, Iseult, why I have sought you here,
Disguised in this wild garb ? I came, Iseult,
Because I know the hour of Death is nigh :
I know that I shall perish far away
From you, and banished from my heart's desire.
I know the hour of Death is almost come.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Hold me and kiss me, so that our two hearts
May break, and that our souls may fly away.
Oh ! take me to the far-off land of bliss
Of which you used to tell me long ago :
To the green orchard walled with wizard air.

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

Yes, I will take you to the land of bliss.
The hour is nigh. Have we not drained the
dregs
Of bitter misery and bitter joy ?
The whole of happiness, the whole of grief ?
The hour is nigh when all shall be fulfilled ;
If I should call you, will you come to me ?

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Call me, my friend ; you know that I will come.

TRISTRAM

God bless you, friend, for this, your loving
thought.

Enter HERALDS, COURTIERs, KING MARK, &c.

HERALDS *blow their trumpets*

KING MARK (*To* ISEULT OF CORNWALL)

Fair Queen, the King of Carduel, with his
Knights

Is here ; come, let us go to welcome him.

[*He takes* ISEULT *by the hand and leads her to
the door, followed by the BARONS and the
COURTIERs*

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

A SQUIRE (*To* TRISTRAM)

Fool, heard you not that Carduel's King had
come ?

Your place is with the beggars and the dogs ;
Get hence.

TRISTRAM

'Tis fruitless toil to banish me,
For here my task is finished to the end.

ACT V

SCENE I.—*Castle of Carbaix*

DUCHESS HOEL

My child, what ails you ? Listless, sad, and pale
You seem to me.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Have I not cause for care,
Since to-day Tristram leaves me for the fight ?

DUCHESS

What is the fight to him ? He all his life
Has fought ; and on the earth he has no peer.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Yet it is sad for me to say farewell.
Last night I dreamed that Tristram came to me,
Back from the battle, crowned with leaves of fire ;
And from his forehead, darker than a ruby,
The red blood dropped, and he was pale as death,
I cried, but oh ! he paid no heed to me !

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

DUCHESS

My child, this is but folly.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

It is true ;
But I am foolish, for my love is great.

DUCHESS

See, it is he : he comes to say farewell.

[*Exit* DUCHESS

Enter TRISTRAM

TRISTRAM

The hour has come to say farewell, Iseult.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

But when wilt thou return ?

TRISTRAM

Soon, soon, Iseult,
Unless I fall in battle.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

God forfend .

TRISTRAM

It were a goodly death.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

O, speak not thus.

TRISTRAM

It were a goodly death to fall in battle ;
Yet have no fear, for I shall soon return.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Tristram, my Lord, I am a foolish child.
In everything I would fulfil thy wish ;
But one thing I desire : I pray you stay,
And go not to this fight.

TRISTRAM

I gave my word.
Iseult, I swear thy fears are foolishness.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

This is the only boon that I have craved,
The only gift I need. If in your heart
There be a little love, I beg you stay.

TRISTRAM

Iseult, my little lily-handed child,
I swore to meet this foe ; my word is pledged.
I swear to you there is no cause for fear.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Then be it as you will. Farewell, farewell.

TRISTRAM

Farewell, gentle Iseult, few days shall pass
Before I come again.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Farewell, farewell.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM

Griselda !

Enter GRISELDA

He is gone ! Tristram is gone !

GRISELDA

What troubles you ? We knew that he should go.
Before three days are past he will return.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

I prayed him not to go. Last night I dreamed
That he was dead.

GRISELDA

Lady, dreams are deceit.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

'Tis not my dream that saddens me ; but now
I suffer with great sadness, for I know
That Tristram loves me not, and never now
Will Tristram love me.

GRISELDA

Nay, you are distraught !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

I know ; I know. For were there in his heart
One ray of love, he would have seen the thought
That lies within the darkness of my heart,
And he could not have gone.

GRISELDA

These words are folly,
Begot of groundless fear.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

He loves me not.
Ah ! long ago I feared he loved me not ;
But foolishly I thought that love would come ;
But now there is another whom he loves.

GRISELDA

Lady, 'tis madness !

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

No, it is the truth,
I know not whom he loves, but there is one ;
He could not gaze and gaze across the sea
With such sad, wistful eyes, did he not love.
I know not who she is ; I only know
He loves her, and that she is far away.

SCENE II.—*Castle of Carhaix.* TRISTRAM *lying
on a Bed*

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

How fares it, Tristram ?

TRISTRAM

It is well, the wound
Aches not so sorely ; soon will it be healed.
Iseult, bring me thy brother. I have words
That I must speak to him.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

He comes, my Lord.

Enter SIR KAY HEDIUS

TRISTRAM

And I would speak with him awhile alone.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

'Tis well. I go.

ISEULT goes, but hides behind the arras of the door

TRISTRAM

My friend, my wound is sore.
The sword of Bedalis I slew, from whom
I got this wound, was poisoned, and I know
That it will never heal, and I shall die.

SIR KAY HEDIUS

Nay, speak not thus.

TRISTRAM

Already I can hear
The muffled step of Death upon the stair ;
There is no doubting of that sound : I die.
But O true friend, who knowest all my story,
Who, understanding all, hast pardoned me ;
Before I die I fain would see Iseult,
Iseult the Fair, Iseult whom I loved well ;
And, had I but a messenger to send,
I know that swiftly she would come to me.

SIR KAY HEDIUS

I will to Cornwall. I will bring her here :
Tristram, for you I would risk many deaths,
And nought shall hinder me in this attempt !
Give me your message and I will set out.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

TRISTRAM

I thank you. Take this jasper ring to her ;
If she but see it she will find a way
To hear you. Tell her I am dying now ;
That only she can bring me help and life.
Bid her be mindful of our happy days,
Of all our joy, of all our misery ;
Our love, the cup we drained upon the sea ;
The oath I swore to love but her alone.
I kept the oath. The oath she swore to me
To come if she should see my jasper ring.

SIR KAY HEDIUS

'Tis well.

TRISTRAM

But to thy sister say no word.
Tell her you go to seek a leech for me.
Two sails take with you ; one black and one
white ;
And if you bring Iseult with you, then hoist
The white sail ; if without her you return,
Let it be black. I have no more to say.
Farewell, and may God bring you safely home.

SIR KAY HEDIUS

I go. I will bring back Iseult the Fair.

[Exit SIR KAY HEDIUS

DRAMATIC POEMS

Enter ISEULT OF BRITTANY

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Where is my brother ?

TRISTRAM

He has gone, Iseult,
Far off to fetch a sage, who, skilled in herbs,
Alone can heal my aching wound.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

'Tis well :
I for his swift and safe return will pray.

SCENE III.—*Hall in Castle at Carbaix*

GRISELDA

My Lord still sleeps.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Oh ! It fares ill with him.
He has not bid us bear him to the beach,
Whence all day long he gazed upon the sea.

GRISELDA

He is too weary.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Weary, too, am I.
My heart, too, has been poisoned with a wound.

GRISELDA

What wound ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

My heart is full of bitter hate,
And with a great desire to be revenged.

GRISELDA

On whom ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Griselda, dark is my despair !
'Twas bitter when I feared he loved me not,
But oh ! the greater bitterness I taste
Now, that I know my utmost fear was true !
I loved him so. And who is there on earth
Who could have given him greater love than I ?
I hoped, I dreamed that he could love me too.
And cold is the awakening from that dream !

GRISELDA

Thy grief has made thee wild.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Hush, hush, he wakes !

DRAMATIC POEMS

TRISTRAM

See you the white sail ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

On the wide grey sea
There is no sail.

TRISTRAM

My wound, my wound is sore.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Sleep, Tristram, sleep ; soon will the ship be here.

TRISTRAM

I have just slept. I dreamed a wondrous dream
Of a cool orchard walled about with air,
And watered by a rippling silver stream.
See you no sail ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Upon the wide grey sea
There is no sail.

TRISTRAM

I dreamed that on the grass
I lay, and listened to a summer song,
Softer than any song the Minstrel sings.
See you no ship ?

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

The sea is calm and still.
As far as the sky-line there is no sail.

TRISTRAM

All day, all night, strange visions visit me ;
I dreamed that I was sailing in a ship,
On a hot summer noon, and called for water,
And in a silver cup they brought me wine ;
It seemed so cool, but ah ! it was not cool,
But hot and bitter, I can taste it still.
Oh ! will the fiery fumes not melt away ?
Will nothing cool the fever in my brain ?
Will nothing stay the aching in my heart ?
Alas ! Alas ! it was a poisoned wound.
Look ! Haply now across the sea there comes
The ship that bears the herb to heal my wound.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Out of the west a little breeze has sprung.

TRISTRAM

Hark ! I can hear the tinkling of a bell !
O faëry chime, I recognise thy voice ;
It is the music of Avilion's isle,
The wizard bell I gave unto my friend ;
Glad is the heart of him who hears that bell.
A shining light has filled the lampless world !

DRAMATIC POEMS

Feel you the fragrance of the breeze ? The ship !
The ship ! I hear the motion of the sail ;
I hear the bubbling of the flying foam.
The ship has come with sunlight and with song
To bring me life.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

'Tis true : around the cliff
A ship is coming and is running swift
Upon the beach.

TRISTRAM

Oh, look ! look at the sail !
Is the sail white ? Can you not see the sail ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

I see the sail, for they have hauled it high.
Tristram, the sail is black.

TRISTRAM (*Turning to the wall*)

Now I can live
No more. Iseult my life ! Iseult my death !
Iseult !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

What have I done ? Speak, Tristram !
Speak !
What have I done ? Griselda ! come to me.
Tristram is dead !

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

Enter GRISELDA *and* KNIGHTS

GRISELDA

Woe! Woe! Tristram is dead!
Let the bells toll. Tristram the brave, the true;
Tristram is dead! The peerless Knight! Woe!
Woe!

Enter DUKE *and* DUCHESS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Oh! come not near me: leave me to my grief!
[KNIGHTS *carry the body of* TRISTRAM *and lay it on a bier. They spread a rich cloth over it, and lay his sword on it.* ISEULT OF BRITTANY *kneels down by the bier*

DUKE

O faithful Tristram! No one in the world
Has ever served his King as you served me.
[Bells toll]

Enter ISEULT OF CORNWALL

ISEULT OF CORNWALL

Tristram, where is he?
[*She walks up to* TRISTRAM'S *body*
[*To* ISEULT OF BRITTANY] Lady, go you hence
And let me come. I have the greater right

DRAMATIC POEMS

To weep upon his body, for I loved him
More than you loved him.

[*Turning to the East*
God receive my soul.

Tristram, out of the cup you gave to me
I drank my death, but with the death was love,
The love that lives for ever. O my friend.

PROSERPINE

A MASQUE

Καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι

TO MADAME BULTEAU

PERSONS OF THE MASQUE

PROSERPINE, *disguised as* ROSEMARY.

THE PRINCE.

KING PHARAMOND.

THE PRINCESS (*his daughter*).

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

ROSALIND.

HEARTSEASE (*a dairymaid*).

A MONK.

A MERCHANT.

A SOLDIER.

A JUGGLER.

A SHEPHERD.

AN OLD MAN.

A SQUIRE.

Soldiers, Courtiers, Maidens, Ghosts.

Place : Sicily.

Time : Indefinite.

PROSERPINE

A MASQUE

ACT I

SCENE I

SICILY. *A grove in a cirque of purple mountains. On the LEFT is a doric temple built of golden coloured marble. Behind it a large clump of cypress trees. On the RIGHT a sloping hill also crowned with cypresses. The grass is bright with anemones and spring flowers.*

CHORUS OF MAIDENS *enter R. and cross the stage singing. They are dressed in many-coloured draperies and wear garlands of flowers, and bear branches of blossom in their hands.*

CHORUS

Where does the Queen of the Fairies dwell ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
Whisper her name by the wishing well,
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

Missing Page

Missing Page

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE PRINCE

But wherefore did you sing a festal chant ?
And wherefore are you garlanded with flowers ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY

We maidens still in the mute sanctuary
Pay homage to the goddess of the spring.
The village folk avoid the lonely place ;
They say that he who after set of sun
Lingers here, falls beneath a deadly spell.

THE PRINCE

A spell ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY

The witchery of Proserpine.

THE PRINCE

And he who is bewitched ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Untimely dies.

THE PRINCE

But you are not afraid ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Queen Proserpine
Is favourable to our minist'ring.

PROSERPINE

We are her trustful slaves, she harms us not.
We fear not even though the village tales
Of hauntings and of sorcery be true.
They say that flames, lit by no mortal hand,
Are seen here in the first warm nights of
spring ;
And that the dead in legions numberless
March to the temple through autumnal mists ;
The tales they tell are many, many, many,
Of visions, and of elfin voices heard.
Lately new rumours to the village came
Of how the ancient gods had been dethroned,
And wandered homeless in the haunts of men.
Of how the elves of meadow and of wood
Begged Proserpine to come and be their Queen.
Some say in this green cirque of cypresses,
Before the temple on Midsummer Night,
The faëry people worship Proserpine ;
That mortals who behold this mystery
Must die within the year. And Rosalind,
One of the suppliants, saw the shadowy dance ;
The elves like fireflies twinkled in the grass,
And Proserpine walked down the temple steps.

*ROSEMARY enters from the temple. She remains on
the steps and sings*

*I came with the swallow and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

DRAMATIC POEMS

*The hemlock flute in the spring and the grass-
hopper's song
For ever shall sound in your dream ;
My dream is dark, my dream is silent, my dream is
long,
By the reeds of the sable stream.*

THE PRINCE

Who is this maiden singing a strange tune ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY

We call her Rosemary. A maiden strange
And wistful even as her sad slow song.
She came with the wild tulips in the spring ;
We know not whence—she never told her story.
She loves the temple ; every day she brings
Bright garlands and a sacrifice of flowers.
She sleeps within the temple's dreadful courts
Unterrified, and heedless of the dark.
We love her ; for her ways are soft and gentle,
Even as the flute-like sadness of her song,
And the great liquid deeps of her dark eyes.
She is the priestess of the sanctuary,
And there's a something sacred clings to her,
A secret majesty, a royal fervour.
The villagers with mingled fear and love
Regard her, though some say she is a witch,
Others that she was born in faëryland.
Yet they are glad she offers sacrifice,
Deeming it brings good fortune to the place.

[ROSEMARY comes down the steps

PROSERPINE

LILY OF THE VALLEY (*To the Prince*)

I leave you. Yet beware ; for twilight falls.

[*She goes up the temple steps*]

ROSEMARY

Are you a suppliant ?

THE PRINCE

No, by chance I found
The temple. I am for a neighbouring place :
The sea-girt city of King Pharamond.

ROSEMARY

His daughter is the fairest in the land.

THE PRINCE

So it is said.

ROSEMARY

Beyond all mortal beauty.
She is the first-born rose of summertide,
With heart of fire, and petals of pale dawn ;
He who beholds her loves her until death.
Ah ! bright the lot of mortals born to love !

THE PRINCE

Is not your lot to love ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

ROSEMARY

My lot is dark ;
Alien to mortal joy my destiny.

THE PRINCE

May you not love ?

ROSEMARY

Unearthly is my fate.
I serve a jealous goddess.

THE PRINCE

Mortals say
The gods have been dethroned and cast from
Heaven.

ROSEMARY

Immortal are the gods ; though cast from
Heaven.
They still shall find on earth a dwelling-place.
Albeit men forsake the broken altars,
And seek strange gods and raise new images,
Yet shall the ancient gods endure, nor pass.
So long as men shall live and men shall die
So long in majesty shall Proserpine
Await their shades beyond the Stygian stream.

THE PRINCE

Though all mankind should follow the new gods,
I still shall kneel and worship Proserpine !

PROSERPINE

ROSEMARY

Why do you kneel and worship Proserpine ?

THE PRINCE

What other gods have gifts to give like hers ?
Their gifts are crowns of laurel, myrtle crowns.
I do not need these things ; I yearn and seek.
But Proserpine bestows the great reprieve—
The sleep that hath no ending and no dream.

ROSEMARY

The sleep is endless ; endless too the dream.

THE PRINCE

Who knows what lies beyond the gates of Death ?

ROSEMARY

The pale dominions of Queen Proserpine ;
The waters of white Lethe, where the soul
Washes away remembrance of this earth ;
The endless dream in measureless dim fields,
A life of shadows and a silent world.

THE PRINCE

My soul is drawn towards that silent world,
And if I could escape the dream of life
I would yield gladly to the dream of death.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ROSEMARY

There is no springtide in the dream of death.

THE PRINCE

The dream of life is sultry, brief and loud.

ROSEMARY

There are no voices in the dream of death.

THE PRINCE

Life is a garment sewn into the flesh,
Dusty and hot it weighs the body down.

ROSEMARY

The dream of death is spacious, cool and dark.

THE PRINCE

The dream of life is full of sorry sights,
And shot with grief and many coloured pain.

ROSEMARY

There is no sorrow in the dream of death ;
There is no mirth, no laughter, and no song.

THE PRINCE

How do you know the secrets of the tomb ?

PROSERPINE

ROSEMARY

I am the votaress of Proserpine ;
She favours me, she visits me in dreams.
But lieth life, then, heavily on you ?

THE PRINCE

I know not ; I am haunted by a voice
That comes I know not whence, a silvery voice
That steals towards me over the high hills,
And speaks of spacious cool immensities,
And forests dense and endless aisles of night,
And glassy reaches of a sunless river
Dim and more broad than any earthly sea ;
Of harbours dark, where many silent ships
At anchor ride, and stir not in the night.
A land beyond the sunset and the clouds,
East of the sun and westward of the moon.

ROSEMARY

East of the sun and westward of the moon
Dwells Proserpine, the sovran of the dusk.

THE PRINCE

The twilight deepens. See, how tall and strange
The columns gleam against the purple sky.

ROSEMARY

And presently the moon with her few rays
Will touch their ghostly stature.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE PRINCE

Verily

This is a fitting haunt for Proserpine.
When in the dawn I galloped on the hills,
My heart was light with mirth. The setting
sun.

The cypresses, the temple and the song
Have charmed away the mirth of me, and yet—
And yet the shadow which they bring to me
Is lined with magic, like a wandering tune
Heard in the night, that fills the captive soul
With melancholy which is more than joy.

[Enter THE PRINCE'S SQUIRE

THE SQUIRE

The night comes on apace.

THE PRINCE

We must be stirring.

Farewell, fair priestess; when you offer praise
And prayer to Proserpine, remember me,
A stranger, who within these haunted precincts
Lingered no longer than a twilight hour,
And forthwith rode away into the night
To come again no more. Farewell.

ROSEMARY

Farewell.

PROSERPINE

[THE PRINCE and THE SQUIRE walk up to
the top of the slope on the right. As they
go ROSEMARY sings :

*I came with the swallow, and with the swallow
I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

[THE PRINCE and THE SQUIRE disappear
behind the hill. From the Temple a
Chorus of voices is heard singing :

The moon has risen in the night of spring,
The sea is marble-smooth, and dark as wine ;
Oh ! hoist on thy dark ship a silver wing,
Come to the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.

Bring the swift fireflies, bring the nightingale,
And on the furrowed hills of corn and vine
Scatter red poppies, and wild roses frail,
Upon the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.

Come ! Leave the woods and valleys of the
night ;
The world is breathless with a hope divine.
A million swallows from the south take flight,
Come, Queen of spring and swallows, Proserpine.

DRAMATIC POEMS

Beneath thy footsteps, like the milky way,
The little twinkling asphodels shall shine ;
With flutes of June and cymbals of glad May,
Come, wake the slumbering earth, Queen Proser-
pine.

*[The moon rises and lights up the figure of
ROSEMARY, which all at once becomes
spectral and majestic. A silver halo
shines round her head and a crown of
red flowers is seen in her hair.]*

SCENE II

The Palace of KING PHARAMOND

A large and spacious hall in the palace, looking on to the street. The architecture of the hall is Byzantine ; the walls are a dusky gold. Round the room there is a gallery supported by short columns of coloured marble. In the centre there is a great gateway wide open on to the street. Outside a variegated crowd is seen, waiting for the marriage ceremony ; they are kept back by halberdiers in parti-coloured dress. It is a bright summer day.

On the RIGHT there is a raised platform where, under a golden dais, two large thrones are placed.

PROSERPINE

THE KING and THE PRINCESS enter, attended by a squire and three maidens. The King is an old man, dressed in gold and wears, like a Byzantine Emperor, a long train, and a plain gold circlet round his head. The Princess is dressed all in silver, with a white veil.

KING PHARAMOND

Now let the heralds sound a triple blast ;
Let bearers of the fluttering oriflammes
Form into rank. Let maidens strew the way
With myrtle boughs, with lilies white and red.

THE PRINCESS

Last night a sybil from the mountains came,
And prayed I would delay the marriage rite ;
Ill-starred, she said, was this, the chosen day,
And marked with evil for the Prince and me.
Let all be done to-morrow, for I dreamed
A dream that bodes ill chance and grim event.

THE KING

Put these sick fancies from thy fearful mind.

THE PRINCESS

My Lord, I know disaster lies in ambush.

[THE PRINCE enters R. followed by a train
of courtiers and ladies. He kneels on one
knee to the King.]

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE KING

The people wait. Let the procession form.

[THE PRINCE *rises*. THE KING *leads* THE PRINCESS *to the throne and they both seat themselves*. THE PRINCE *stands on the right of the throne*. *The heralds and the bearers of the oriflammes, followed by men-at-arms, form themselves into ranks*. *The heralds blow a blast on their trumpets*. *The Bells of the Cathedral are heard ringing*.

A COURTIER

Pale is the Prince.

ANOTHER COURTIER

More pale is his betrothed.
Look, clouded are her eyes, and large with fear.

FIRST COURTIER

Astrologers foretold disastrous happenings ;
They read sad presage in the sky last night.

SECOND COURTIER

A wizard said the marriage should not be.

[*From the street come sounds of music. A high wailing chant is heard to the accompaniment of pipes and flutes. A pro-*

PROSERPINE

cession of youths and maidens dressed in white draperies and bearing lighted tapers moves up the street. They carry a bier on which lies the body of a young maiden covered with lilies of the valley ; and they halt in front of the open door of the palace.

FIRST COURTIER

A funeral bars the way to the marriage feast.

SECOND COURTIER

A dismal omen for a day of joy.

[Outside the maidens are heard singing ;

CHORUS

Drop lilies of the valley on her bier,
For Rosalind is dead, fair Rosalind ;
Fair as the first white windflower in the wind,
And frail as the first windflower of the year.

Her smile was like the foam before a wave,
Like water lit by stars her slow grey eyes ;
Her sisters were the dancing dragonflies,
And now the wingéd moths shall haunt her grave.

There is no stone shall mark her grassy tomb,
But once a year, when dies the early bloom,

DRAMATIC POEMS

The cherry tree shall mourn for her, and shed
Frail tears, and softly shall the petals lie,
And softly fall, and falling seem to sigh :
“ Fair Rosalind, frail Rosalind, is dead.”

*[The Maidens form a circle round the bier
and drop flowers on it*

She has gone down into the sunless day,
There where the beckoning springtime never
comes,
To scentless fields, where the bee never hums,
To silent woods and skies for ever grey.

Ah ! weep, for she was young and she was fair ;
She was athirst for sunshine and for mirth,
For the glad sights and sounds of the sweet
earth,
And now she wanders cold in the pale air.

Have pity on the shade of Rosalind,
She stretches out her hands in vain regret,
For in thy kingdom there is no west wind,
No wheat, nor any roses, and no vine ;
She loved these things ; grant that she may
forget,
And drown her dreams in sleep, calm Proserpine.

*[The Mourners raise the bier and form into
procession once more.*

A single voice is heard singing :

PROSERPINE

*I came with the swallow and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow ;
The evening has come and the end.*

*The hemlock flute in the spring and the grass-
hopper's song,
For ever will sound in your dream ;
My dream is dark, my dream is silent, my dream is
long,
By the reeds of the sable stream.*

[THE PRINCE starts, and, like a man in a dream, he walks to the gateway opening on the street and walks out and mingles with the mourners ; the funeral chant continues and THE PRINCE disappears. THE PRINCESS turns pale, THE KING and the courtiers stare at THE PRINCE as he goes in silent amazement. A cloud seems to come over the sun and the whole room becomes nearly dark. The procession passes the window, and in the distance the funeral chant and the high piping of flutes are heard dying away.]

ACT II

The cypress grove by the Temple, as in Act I

It is summer. The chorus of maidens enters, singing as at the end of the last scene, followed by LILY OF THE VALLEY and THE PRINCE.

CHORUS

When Rosalind across the dark stream sped,
The shades that wait beside the Stygian stream
Wondered, for never came so fair a ghost ;
They thought the moon had risen in their
dream ;
Then softly bowing down, the shadowy host
Sighed : “ Rosalind, fair Rosalind, is dead.”

Thy slumber is unvisited by dreams ;
Thou hast forgotten the broad hours of noon,
The sunrise and the dusk, the rising moon,
The murmur of the fields, the tinkling streams.

The whistling of the men that mow and reap,
The winepress and the scent of mellow fruit,
The horn upon the hills, the answering flute,
Sweeten no more the softness of thy sleep.

PROSERPINE

Thou wanderest now amongst the drowsy flowers,
Tall twinkling asphodels and poppies red ;
On Proserpine's pomegranate thou hast fed,

Thou yearnest now no more for days and hours,
For the forbidden springtime and the showers ;—
Thou art contented now amongst the dead.

[THE MAIDENS and LILY OF THE VALLEY
walk into the Temple. THE PRINCE
*remains outside. He gazes at the Temple
as though dazed.*

THE PRINCE

Was it a dream, or have I just awaked
From life's brief dream ? Or am I dead indeed ?

[*A loud noise of laughter and talk is heard.*
A SOLDIER, A MERCHANT, A JUGGLER,
A SHEPHERD, A MONK, and an OLD
MAN enter. *They seat themselves on the
grass in front of the Temple.* THE PRINCE
stands aside and looks on.

THE MERCHANT

This is the place to spend a slumberous noon,
'Tis cool and shady.

THE OLD MAN

More than cool, 'tis cold.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE MERCHANT

Drink of this flagon. It is filled with wine
Potent enough to wake the sleeping dead.

THE JUGGLER

The dead receive their bellyful of fire.

THE MERCHANT

The damned.

THE JUGGLER

The dead, the damned, it is the same.

THE SOLDIER

Give me the flagon. Wine is for the living.
[*He takes a pull at the flask*]
A fiery wine.

THE MERCHANT

A wine for gods and kings !
To-night there will be need of fiery wine
At the King's table for the funeral feast.
[*He laughs*]
They say she wept a bucketful of tears.

THE JUGGLER

The tears of a Princess are short-lived tears.

THE MERCHANT

She will not quickly find a wealthier Prince.

PROSERPINE

THE PRINCE

Your pardon, sirs, I am from foreign lands ;
Was Pharamond's fair daughter wed to-day ?

THE JUGGLER

The festival had scarce begun at noon ;
When lo ! the bridegroom fled.

THE PRINCE

Whither and why ?

THE JUGGLER

He fled into the crowd ;
He vanished ; wherefore, whither, no man knows.

THE SHEPHERD

They say he loved her not.

THE MERCHANT

A Prince's love !
Princes are wedded to maintain their lineage ;
To fortify the state by regal ties,
And to bring gold to empty treasuries.

THE SHEPHERD

Princes are made of flesh like mortal men.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE JUGGLER

Flesh, rotten flesh ! the devil's savoury food.

THE PRINCE

Yet far and wide the minstrels sing the praise
Of the King's daughter.

THE JUGGLER

Yes, the lass is fair ;
Too fair, too swiftly fair ; the bloom will vanish
As soon as she has grown to womanhood,
And leave her parched and dry. Perchance the
Prince
Guessed at the truth and wisely went away.

THE SHEPHERD

Nay, beauty such as hers can never die.

THE JUGGLER

Hark at him ! Beauty lasts a fitful hour.
Queen Guenevere, for whom Sir Lancelot
Loved and fought hard, came to that nunnery
Crippled and bowed with ague and chill pains.
And when the knights rode past the convent gate,
And someone cried : " The nun with snow-white
hair,
Who totters feebly to the cloister well,
Is Guenevere," they laughed his words to scorn.

PROSERPINE

Iseult of Cornwall once was beautiful,
She loved her Tristram well. Alack! he found
In Brittany, betimes, a fresher face—
Iseult the Lily-handed; he forgot
His former love, although she sailed to him,
Across th' insensate sea, when he lay sick;—
And dying from her face he turned away,
Nor recognized the features of his friend.

THE SHEPHERD

And yet there is a wondrous thing called Love;
A mystery, a blessed miracle,
A sacrament, most holy, most divine.

THE JUGGLER

Fools call it love; and the priest calls it sin.
The Devil calls it lust. The Devil knows.
What made the sceptre of Imperial Rome
Fall from the grasp of brave Mark Antony?
Because a wasp-like gypsy stung his flesh,
And in his veins a riotous venom ran
Which maddened him and left him languorous.
A pretty scene! The high-souled warrior
Helpless and crazy as a rudderless ship,
Pinned to a petticoat, while empires crashed.
Regardless of his height and his renown,
And heedless of the fate of ruining worlds,
Languidly drifting to ignoble doom,
To satisfy a royal harlot's lust.
And Helen—what was the rare miracle

DRAMATIC POEMS

Which made fair Helen fly her husband's home,
And mowed, like grass, the chivalry of Greece ?
What was the sacrament, the mystery,
That bade false Paris seek a paramour ?

He sings :

Fair Helen wearied of her lord,
 And Paris pleased her eye ;
He looked at her ; she blushed and said :
 “ Together let us fly.”

With Paris Helen ran from home,
 She crossed the purple main ;
Ten thousand galleys followed her
 To bring her home gain.

Ten years the bravest sons of Greece
 Fought for a woman's shame ;
A faithless wife's desire that flared
 And died like fickle flame.

They fought beneath the walls of Troy,
 They fought for ten years long ;
The father died, the child at home
 Cursed Helen in his song.

They fought beneath the walls of Troy,
 They fought for ten long years.
And husbands died, and wives at home
 Cursed Helen in their tears.

PROSERPINE

They took by stealth the walls of Troy,
They burnt them to the ground ;
They buried Helen's lover deep
Under a heavy mound.

They brought false Helen home again,
And she grew old and grey ;
She mourned in vain her perished charms
Until her dying day.

She met her lover in the shades,
He turned his face aside ;
“ I am that Helen whom you loved,
Helen of Troy,” she cried.

“ Helen of Troy was young and fair,
I know you not,” he said ;
The shivering ghost of Helen moaned,
And bowed her royal head.

The Devil laughed and cracked his whip
And said : “ As I've heard tell,
On earth ye twain were lovers once :
Be lovers here in Hell.

For nothing now shall part ye twain,
And in the icy place
Paris shall have no other sight
Than Helen's wrinkled face.”

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE SOLDIER

I care not for your Helens and Iseults,
In yonder village there are red-lipped lasses,
Fresh as ripe cherries on the cherry tree,
To meet the warrior who returns from war.

THE JUGGLER

Sir Warrior, your philosophy is wise.
A soldier sees in every tavern drab
A Hebe, and the nectar of her lips
Is sweet and leaves no bitterness behind.
The soldier's love is very free from care ;
He shares the sacrament of bird and beast,
And greatly he enjoys the miracle !

THE SOLDIER

A fig for miracles ! I love a lass,
I love a fight ;—a fig for foolish dreams !

THE MERCHANT

The greater fools are you who seek the wars,
Endure the hardships of the rough champaign,
And sweat and labour, buffeted and starved,
And win but festering wounds and grisly scars
For all reward, or else untimely die,
So that an idle king may loll at ease
And dwell secure in rooted indolence.
One thing alone is worth the toil of search—
Gold, shining gold, red gold, omnipotent gold ;

PROSERPINE

For gold brings lovely lasses, foaming wine,
Gilt palaces and gems, and brazen galleys,
Glory and honour and dominion,
Ease, freedom, friends, and every mortal joy.

THE SOLDIER

We soldiers fight for glory, not for gold.
We fight because we love the clash of steel,
The shock, the charge, the bristling line of battle!
Not all the wealth of Asia buys these things.

THE MERCHANT

Such things are sought and won by fools alone.

THE SHEPHERD

But there is something greater than renown,
Than gold, than glory and dominion ;
Love, mortal love ; to him who loves, the world
Is faëryland and then is Paradise.

THE MONK

Shepherd, your words are true, for power and
glory
Are like the changing mist ; or flakes of snow
That melt and vanish when they touch this earth.

THE JUGGLER

Yet nothing drags man's soul to certain doom
So swiftly as this love of which you tell.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE MONK

I preach not earthly love, but love divine ;
For he who loses all upon this earth
And tramples on his dreams of power and glory,
And stifles longing, lust and all desires,
He finds eternal love, the love of God.
Love infinite that wrappeth up the whole.

THE SHEPHERD

But, holy man, the love divine you preach
Shields and enfolds a mortal's earthly love.

THE MONK

My child, the love of mortals is a snare,
A gilded picture painted by the Devil
To lure the soul to everlasting fire.
For lovers in the flesh are doomed and damned
To outer darkness and unending flames.

THE JUGGLER

And faithless lovers in the fires of Hell
Shall kindle one another's dead desire.

THE SOLDIER

Our business is to live, as men should live.
When life is ended, God shall deal with us.

PROSERPINE

THE JUGGLER

You put away the thought of death ; you shun it.
But there is none who hears unterrified
His footfall and the hissing of his scythe.

THE OLD MAN

There is a tournament where Death himself
Answers the challenge of a mortal knight,
And meets him in the lists.

THE JUGGLER

Death wins the fight.

THE OLD MAN

He who would win needs more than fearlessness.
He must renounce all longing for the day,
Desire the life in death ; thus only he
Who vanquishes and kills his love of life
And longs for Death and for the life in death,
Shall vanquish Death.

THE JUGGLER

To vanquish Death he dies.
Where is the conquest, what the victory ?

THE OLD MAN

He who shall vanquish Death shall live and love
In death, and Death shall have no hold on him.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE JUGGLER

'Tis better to be vanquished than to win ;
What is the profit for a gibbering ghost,
For rattling bones, to live and love in Hell ?

THE OLD MAN

I fought myself in that grim tournament.
I loved ; I thought my love was strong as Death ;
But when the trumpets sounded in the lists,
And bony Death came rattling on his steed,
I turned towards the sunny world, and fear,
Fear crept into the corners of my heart ;
I durst not ride into the dreadful lists,
I durst not meet the foe—I was afraid.

THE SOLDIER

You were no coward to refuse to fight :
The bravest man fears Death.

THE OLD MAN

I challenged him,
I feared to fight ; I paid the penalty.
Bitter and long has been the punishment ;
I wander restless o'er the changing world,
Aching and weary, and I find no rest,
For Death has shut his gates upon my soul.

THE PRINCE

But had you fought and failed ?

PROSERPINE

THE OLD MAN

I should have died
And found forgetfulness.

THE PRINCE

And had you vanquished ?

THE OLD MAN

I still should unforgetful live in Death.

THE JUGGLER

A living dog is better than a ghost.

THE MONK

Your talk is blind with error and with sin ;
Repent, and you shall find eternal rest
In Heaven, and everlasting happiness.

THE MERCHANT

Both Heaven and Hell are here upon the earth.

THE JUGGLER

Wait till you hear the waving of Death's wings,
The roaring of the furnaces of Hell.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE SOLDIER

The sun is high in the heavens, so fare you well ;
I'm for the city, I am for the wars.
To fight the Emperor of the Orient ;
So fare you well. Good luck to you, my friends.

THE MERCHANT

My argosies await me in the port,
Stout bales of precious stuff, pearls from Ceylon,
Nuggets of metal, tusks of ivory,
And amber and Phœnician spikenard.

THE MONK

And I am for the windy pinnacles ;
I go to intercede for your sick souls,
To mortify my flesh, to watch and pray.

THE OLD MAN

I am once more for, Oh ! the endless road.

THE JUGGLER

I go to juggle—with the souls of men.

[THE MERCHANT, THE JUGGLER, THE
OLD MAN *and* THE MONK *go down*
behind the hill. THE SHEPHERD *and*
THE PRINCE *remain.* THE PRINCE *with-*
draws into the cypresses by the Temple,
where he is half-concealed.

PROSERPINE

THE SHEPHERD *sings* :

The mower at his scythe
Is whistling in the hay ;
The world is fair and blithe,
O heart, keep holiday !

O gaudy month of June,
O vocal noontide-hours,
What care I for thy tune ?
What care I for thy flowers ?

No more I heed the song
Of thrush and calling dove,
For I hear all day long
The cooing note of love.

Upon her casement ledge,
To-day I saw the rose,
I flung across the hedge,
Into her orchard close.

“ Thy true love thinks of thee,
She thinks of thee to-day,”
So spake the rose to me,
O heart, keep holiday !

[*Enter Heartsease*

THE SHEPHERD

At last, O fairest ! I have waited long.

DRAMATIC POEMS

HEARTSEASE

I love you ; tell me that you love me true.

THE SHEPHERD

I love you true, Dear heart ! I love you true.

HEARTSEASE

If I should die ?

THE SHEPHERD

Then I should straightway die.

HEARTSEASE

Of if some black misfortune should befall—
If I grew old and ugly in a night ?

THE SHEPHERD

My love would kiss away your tears ; to me
You will be you, to-morrow and to-day,
And always, whatsoever fate may bring,
To me for ever you are beautiful.

HEARTSEASE

Last night I dreamed of you, and every night
I dream of you, and in my last night's dream
We sailed across the ocean in a boat,
We sailed across the sea to faëryland.

PROSERPINE

THE SHEPHERD

And there we built a castle on a hill.

HEARTSEASE

And round the castle there were orchards green.

THE SHEPHERD

Where silver apples glimmer through the dusk.

HEARTSEASE

And in the castle there is a tall throne
Whence we look down upon the coloured world.

THE SHEPHERD

A hundred nightingales shall sing to us,
Sing us to sleep beneath the apple-trees.

HEARTSEASE

A thousand larks shall wake us in the morn.

THE SHEPHERD

The elves shall come and crown you with soft
dew,
For you shall be their Queen.

HEARTSEASE

And you their King.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE SHEPHERD

And then, when we grow tired of faëryland,
We shall come back and build a little hut
In Sicily, amidst the corn and vines.

HEARTSEASE

Or nestling on the cliff by the blue sea.

THE SHEPHERD

And we shall live together till we die.

HEARTSEASE

Haply you'll find a fairer lass than me ;
Haply you will forsake me and forget.

THE SHEPHERD

There is no woman beautiful as you
In the wide world, Oh dear, in all the world !

HEARTSEASE

And there is none so glorious as my love.
I love you then, my joy, my good delight !
*[From the Temple a sound of singing is
heard*

HEARTSEASE

Come, let us go ; I hear the sound of voices.
[They go up into the hills

PROSERPINE

THE PRINCE

First love of mortal men ! Great ecstasy,
And seal of human things ! I dreamt a dream—
Oh ! I shall put away my sullen thought,
I shall go back into the noisy world
And find soft eyes to watch me, and sweet lips
To smile, embracing arms and a warm heart ;
I shall forget my melancholy dream.

[THE MAIDENS *come out of the Temple
and walk down behind the hill out
of sight except ROSEMARY, who walks
down the Temple steps.*

ROSEMARY

Why do you linger in this place of shadow ?
Go to the world and find felicity.

THE PRINCE

Why do you bid me go ?

ROSEMARY

Because I love you.
I love you, and I fear to do you harm.

THE PRINCE

At last the veil is lifted from my eyes ;
My deep and burning thirst is quenched at last,
And stilled the fiery restlessness within
'That all my life has sore tormented me.'

DRAMATIC POEMS

I love you. I have loved you all my life ;
This face has haunted me in countless shapes,
In every sight of earth and sea and sky ;
This voice has haunted me in every sound.
Now all is clear.

ROSEMARY

Then if you love me, go.

THE PRINCE

I will not go. My heart's desire is here.
Soft is the shipwreck in this sea of dream.

ROSEMARY

My love is overshadowed by black wings.

THE PRINCE

My love is strong enough to conquer Death.

ROSEMARY

Leave me and seek the Tournament of Life.

THE PRINCE

I love you for your sorrowful soft eyes,
I love you for your pale unaltered face,
I love you for your wide and dusky hair,
I love you for your voice which is the world's.

PROSERPINE

ROSEMARY

I love you, friend, I who have never loved !

THE PRINCE

Long have I dreamed of you throughout the
world.

Far have I wandered, seeking for this face ;
Ah ! I have snatched the mask from many a face,
Yearning to find the twilight-laden eyes
That haunted me and never let me rest ;
Now I have found my dream ; my quest is done.

ROSEMARY

O heart's desire, I too have sought for you,
I too have sought and found a beckoning dream ;
I must no sooner find than lose my dream.
Alas ! that I should lose the long-sought prize !
Oh ! would this hour could last, that you and I
Might wander in deep woods for evermore,
Lost in the thickets of a leafy gloom.
For you are like the spirit of the woods,
The child of the cool forest and its ways.

THE PRINCE

And you are like the music of the trees,
The notes of calling flute and mellow horn,
That echo in the woodland far away.

DRAMATIC POEMS

ROSEMARY

O precious vision, O fugitive frail dream !
O would that you could last ! O would that we
Might hoist your wings for sails, and say farewell
Forever to the harbours of this world.

THE PRINCE

So shall it be. The vision shall come true.
We shall sail down the estuaries of time,
And reach the ocean of eternity,
East of the sun, and westward of the moon.

ROSEMARY

No, no, the dream must cease, and you must go.
Dark is my destiny. Ah ! question not ;
As soon as summer dies, I disappear,
And to my home you cannot follow me,
For I am plighted to one man alone.

THE PRINCE

Who is the man ? Reveal this destiny.
I cannot suffer greater hurt than death.
I cannot leave you now, unless I die.

ROSEMARY

There is one mortal man whom I may love.
That man must challenge Death and fight with
him ;

PROSERPINE

That man must vanquish Death, and if he fails
He dies, he passes to oblivion ;
He wanders, lost to me for evermore.
And many knights have fought for me and fall'n
Thus was I loth to tell the mystery,
Lest, like the others, you should fight and fall.

THE PRINCE

But I shall challenge Death and vanquish him.

[ROSEMARY *looks at THE PRINCE and
bows her head*
*In the distance the shepherd's pipe is
heard.*

ROSEMARY

The careless shepherd plays upon his reed,
The reapers rest beside the sunburnt corn,
The bee about the lily softly hums,
The maidens dip the pitcher in the well,
Through leafy ways the groaning wagons creak
Drawn by the slow white oxen, and the swain
Upon his fragrant load lies fast asleep.
The heat is twinkling o'er the yellow fields,
A myriad grasshoppers, the croaking frogs
Make music, while the mailed dragonflies
Poise o'er the glassy stream ; the world is bright,
The world is joyous, and the world is fair,
And pleasant are the noises of the noon.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE PRINCE

I crave the silence of a sunless world.

ROSEMARY

Sweet is the fragrance of the wild white rose,
The honeysuckle and the new-mown hay.

THE PRINCE

I crave the scentless slumber-laden flowers.

ROSEMARY

Soft are the hollow wood-notes of the dove,
And low the flight of swallows in the dusk.

THE PRINCE

I crave the woods unvexed by noise of wings.

ROSEMARY

Glad is the sight of scarlet-flaunted fields,
The waving wheat, the dancing corn-flowers,
The summer lightning and the falling stars,
The flickering of the fireflies in the wheat,
The hot green spaces of midsummer darkness.
Can you forego for ever these fair sights ?

THE PRINCE

The sights I need are mirrored in your eyes.

PROSERPINE

ROSEMARY

The sighing of the wind, the whispering sea,
The noise and laughter of the busy street,
The song of lovers and the shepherd's reed.
Can you forego for ever these sweet sounds ?

THE PRINCE

The sounds I need are echoed in your speech ;
The sights and sounds of life shall pass away,
And in the sunless place, for you and me
There shall be no more life and no more death,
No days, no hours, no seasons and no time,
But only love for all eternity.

[HEARTSEASE *is heard singing behind the trees :*

He came from Palestine last night,
At set of sun he came ;
Behind the casement shone for him
My silver lamp's thin flame.

He had forgot the ancient sign,
And heedless he passed by
The garden, where a year ago
We watched the swallows fly.

I heard him whistle in the lane,
I watched him from my bed,
I saw him pass the garden gate ;
He did not turn his head.

DRAMATIC POEMS

They said that I must surely die
Before the spring had come,
But I knew well that I should live
Until my love came home.

He came from Palestine last night,
And he is glad and well ;
And I have naught to wait for now.
“ False love, dear love, farewell ! ”

ACT III

The Temple, as in Act I

*It is autumn. The hills are parched by the heat.
The distant trees are red, brown and gold.
The ground is strewn with fallen leaves. It
is late in the afternoon. The sun is low in
the heavens. LILY OF THE VALLEY and THE
MAIDENS are discovered, moaning on the
steps of the Temple.*

[Enter THE MERCHANT, THE OLD MAN, THE
JUGGLER, THE SHEPHERD, and THE SOLDIER

THE SHEPHERD

What evil fortune has befallen you,
That you lament together, maidens, so ?

PROSERPINE

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Our loved companion, Rosemary, has fled.
She, whom they named the Priestess ; she most
fair,
Most gentle and most sad. Last night together
We brought the dying summer's rusty spoil
Unto the temple, and we left her here
And tarried for her underneath the hill.
For in the temple she'd make melody
Until the set of sun. When twilight fell,
Lo ! Rosemary had vanished, vanished too
The flowers upon the altar. Far and near
We sought and called in vain for Rosemary ;
Again to-day we searched the country-side,
In vain, for Rosemary has left no trace.

THE SHEPHERD

Last night when sunset burned beyond the trees,
I met a hooded maiden bearing branches ;
She wore a sable robe, but her pale brow
Was garlanded with poppies.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Rosemary
Was clad like us in garb of festal colour.

THE SHEPHERD

Haply she wanders on the windy hills.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE MERCHANT

In vain you seek her on the windy hills ;
Go to the glittering city ; 'tis the place
Where comely maidens find their heart's desire.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

This temple was the home of Rosemary—
And in this temple was her heart's desire.

THE JUGGLER

Your search is vain. She will return no more.

THE SOLDIER

Haply she went to see the tournament.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

What tournament ?

THE SOLDIER

Within the sea-girt city,
The far-famed tournament of Life and Death
Was fought to-day before King Pharamond.

THE OLD MAN

And to-day's tournament throughout the world
Shall be renowned until the end of time.
For Death was vanquished by Mortality.

PROSERPINE

THE SOLDIER

We soldiers oft need all our bravery
To fight the living ; this man fought with Death.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Who vanquished Death ?

THE OLD MAN

An unknown knight.

THE MERCHANT

Some say
It was the lost betrothed of the Princess,
Who fought to win forgiveness and new love.

THE OLD MAN

That cannot be, for when black-armoured Death
Fell rattling from his steed, a skeleton,
When that loud crash of thunder filled the air,
When the knight took the coal-black plumes of
Death
And marching to the maiden in her place,
Received of her the crown of victory,
With eyes that did not look he grasped the laurel,
And left the lists. He was so heedless, He ;—
Nor set the leaves upon his conquering brow,
Nor cast one glance upon the peerless face.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE SHEPHERD

Haply he loved another, now as then,
I gazed on the Princess, and when the knight
Took with averted eyes the crown of leaves,
A deadly pallor crept across her cheek,
She fell in helpless swoon.

THE JUGGLER

O foolish boy,
It was the presence of the kingly fear,
The icy wind which blows from Death's broad
stream,
That overcame her. And it was the sight
Of Death arrayed in armour forged in Hell,
Prancing upon a terrible war-horse, shod
In workshops of the damned, that scared her
thus.

THE OLD MAN

Perchance. It did not scare the fearless knight.

THE SHEPHERD

She swooned for joy because the knight had won,
She swooned for sorrow that he went away.

THE JUGGLER

She swooned for fear of the armed skeleton ;
To feel the darkness of the outer place
Where the damned souls wander in agony.

PROSERPINE

THE SHEPHERD

There is a quiet place beyond the grave
Where happy souls shall taste felicity.

THE MERCHANT

Within the grave is darkness and the dust,
And never-ending sleep. The tales of Hell
And Paradise are made to frighten babes.

THE JUGGLER

There is a place of bartering and no speech.
There you shall traffic with dim merchandise.
For ever shall you pile a hoard that fades,
For ever tell the tale of phantom gold,
And filled for ever with unquenched desire
And despair permanent, you, in that place,
Shall curse the dream that mocks but cannot cease.
There is a place where you, young Sick o' love,
Shall pipe to hags and upon fiery hills.
There is a place where you, tall, soldier-thing,
Shall charge the unsubstantial hosts of night
For ever, and for ever fail to charge,
And know defeat in battles never joined,
And hear such foemen as you shall not see.

THE SOLDIER

I have fought fairly on this earth ; the gods
Shall fairly deal with me ; unterrified,
At least, the knight who conquered Death himself
Shall dwell in Death's abode.

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE JUGGLER

O simple soldier,
His of all fates the most unhappy fate !
For he shall die, and that right speedily ;
Upon this world his fortune was despair,
Despair shall be his lot beyond the grave.

THE OLD MAN

The man who conquers Death, albeit he die,
Is freed for ever from all restlessness.

THE SHEPHERD

The sun is sinking, and the mist of night
Is full of shapes immortal. It is cold.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Methought I heard the voice of Rosemary.

THE JUGGLER

Far beyond earthly hail is Rosemary !

LILY OF THE VALLEY

Begone, false juggler ! hateful is your speech,
Loathsome your laughter and the sight of you.
This is a holy place. The shadows fall ;
It is not good for mortals to be here ;
You will offend immortal Proserpine.
Begone, I pray you. Leave me to my grief.

PROSERPINE

THE SOLDIER

She speaketh true. Come, sirs, let us be stirring.
Come, leave her to her grief.

THE JUGGLER

Your Rosemary
Has haply met a witch's fiery doom.

THE SHEPHERD (*To LILY OF THE VALLEY*)

May the gods bless you and requite your prayer.
[*They all go except LILY OF THE VALLEY,
who walks up to the Temple*

LILY OF THE VALLEY

I hear the faëry voices in the wind ;
The evening deepens, the forbidden hour
Is nigh. I must not desecrate the place.
O, Rosemary, come back to me once more ;
O, Proserpine, give back our Rosemary !

[*She goes out. PROSERPINE walks from the cypresses on to the steps in her true shape, in all her glory and majesty. She is clothed in dark draperies and wears a wreath of scarlet poppies. Below the Temple steps the ghosts of the dead rise and bow down before her, and are heard singing :*

DRAMATIC POEMS

CHORUS OF GHOSTS

The swallow seeks the southern land again,
The trees, but not the cypress and the pine,
Are splashed and dyed with autumn's crimson
stain ;
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

The fruit has fallen from the orchard trees,
And on the mountain-ash red berries shine ;
The ship awaits thee and the ghostly breeze :
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

The golden wheat was garnered long ago,
And ended is the harvest of the vine ;
Through ragged woods the winds of autumn
blow ;
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

Forsake the sunburnt hills of Sicily,
The laughter and the song, the flowery shrine.
Hark ! in the wind the wandering spirits sigh :
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

[THE PRINCE *is dazed and dazzled by her
appearance, and kneels before her.*

PROSERPINE

I am Queen Proserpine whom, till to-day,
You knew but in a mortal guise, and now
Behold in her unclouded majesty

PROSERPINE

And undiminished splendour ; to the earth
I came with the return of spring, and now
I go, with dying summer, to the dark.

THE PRINCE

Lady of Darkness, I have conquered Death ;
Here is the Helm of Death, and here the crown.

PROSERPINE

You do not wear the crown of victory,
The crown of life, which you did nobly win ;
What do you crave instead for recompense ?

THE PRINCE

To follow to your everlasting home,
To dwell for ever in the dream of you.
This is the only recompense I crave—
Ah ! you know well what is my heart's desire.

PROSERPINE

In my pale kingdom on a pillared throne,
I shall be far removed from you, for you
Shall dwell amid the myriads of the dead ;—
They may not even see my royal face,
And only you, of all the endless host,
Shall unforgetful gaze on Proserpine.
Will you receive that for your recompense ?

DRAMATIC POEMS

THE PRINCE

I shall behold your changeless face and dwell
For ever in the dream and sight of you,
For ever in the thought and light of you,
For ever in the shadow of your soul,
For ever in the stillness that is you,
Remembering all that was ; far off, but near,
Beyond the reach of Life and Death and
Time,
And linked by chains of silent song to you.
And though the rivers and the plains of Hell
Between us lie, if I behold this face,
I shall be one with your wide majesty,
And with your mute and dark dominion one,
One with your pale, your glimmering loveliness,
One with your sorrow endless and divine,
One with the vastness of your silver dream,
One with your deeps of silence infinite,
And one with your eternal life in death.

PROSERPINE

So shall it be.

THE PRINCE

Beyond the silent stream
I shall behold you far upon your throne.

PROSERPINE

So shall it be.

PROSERPINE

THE PRINCE

I shall behold your face,
And I shall share the sorrow of your dream,
And you shall feel my infinite desire.

PROSERPINE

Yet shall we be eternally apart,
Eternally asunder and apart.

THE PRINCE

Eternally divided and apart.
And yet my soul shall, like a drop of dew,
Dwell in the inmost petals of your soul.

PROSERPINE

Eternally asunder and yet near,
Together, though eternally apart,
So shall it be, according to your choice.
For you have conquered Death, and you can
choose
The fruit of darkness or the fruit of light,
The apple or the slumberous pomegranate.
So take this apple, take this pomegranate,
Await on earth the footfall of the spring,
Then, when the rapturous earth awakes from
sleep
And calls the summer to make love to her,
Look round and hear the music of the spring,

DRAMATIC POEMS

Look round and heed the glory of the world,
The pastures, the fresh woods, the cloudy hills,
The murmurous cities and the smiling sea ;
If on that day you still shall crave the dark,
The silence and the sorrow of my dream,
Taste the pomegranate ; you shall sleep to wake
Within my shadow ; but if smiling life
Be sweet to you, then taste the golden fruit,
You shall forget the dream of Proserpine,
And live contented in the world of men.
And with the spring I shall return once more,
And I shall love you with a mortal's love,
And you shall love me with a mortal's love,
With all a mortal's ecstasy of love,
With all a mortal's swift forgetfulness.
And when the summer dies, and I once more
Return to the dark realm, you shall forget ;
And, fancy-free, shall seek and find new joy.

THE PRINCE

And if I taste the other darker fruit,
Will you return with the returning spring ?

PROSERPINE

I shall be unaware of earth and spring,
I shall forget the vision of the world,
I shall have found the dream I sought on earth ;
And lost and drowned in my eternal dream,
I nevermore shall seek the earth in spring.

PROSERPINE

CHORUS OF THE DEAD

Pale Proserpine descends to her dark home,
And bow ye dead, bow down, ye voiceless dead ;
The scentless poppy bends its heavy head,
And silent is the sluggish Stygian foam.

In the dominion of the silent air
The shivering dead are comfortless and lone,
For Proserpine upon her pillared throne
Heedless beholds perpetual despair.

Pale Proserpine is mournful even as they,
For she remembers sweeter sound and sight ;
In vain she seeks the world in the sweet spring,
Her sojourn there is darkened by Death's wing,
Even as her dream within the halls of night
Is cursed by the remembrance of the day.

PROSERPINE

Farewell. I go to my dominion,
East of the sun and westward of the moon ;
But you await the coming of the spring.

[PROSERPINE *walks into the Temple.*

