

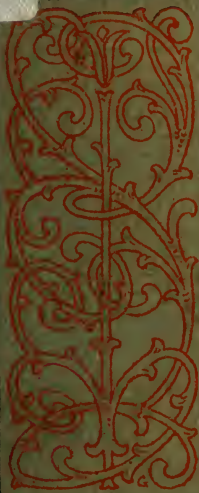
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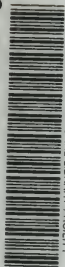
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LAUS  
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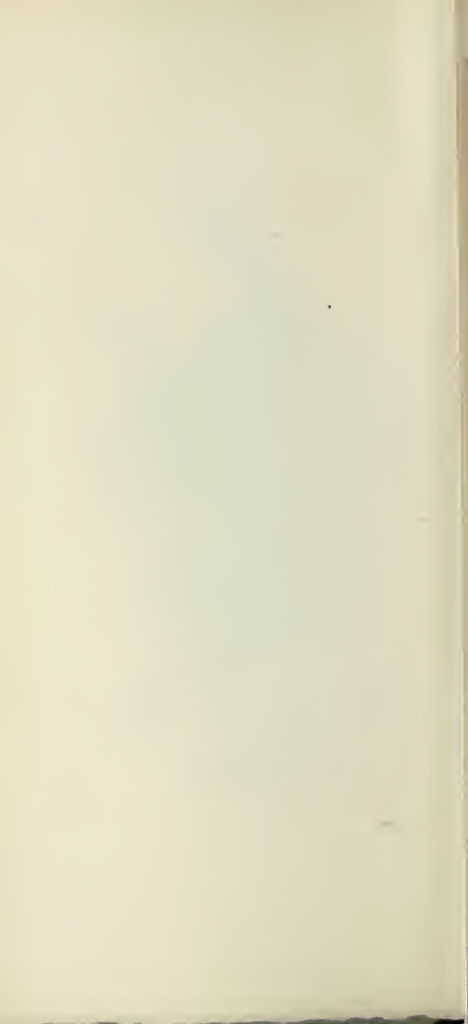


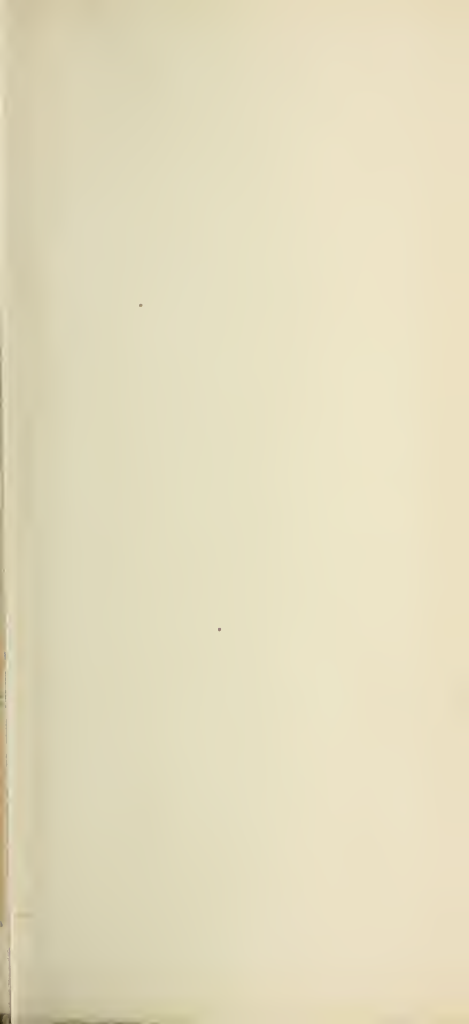




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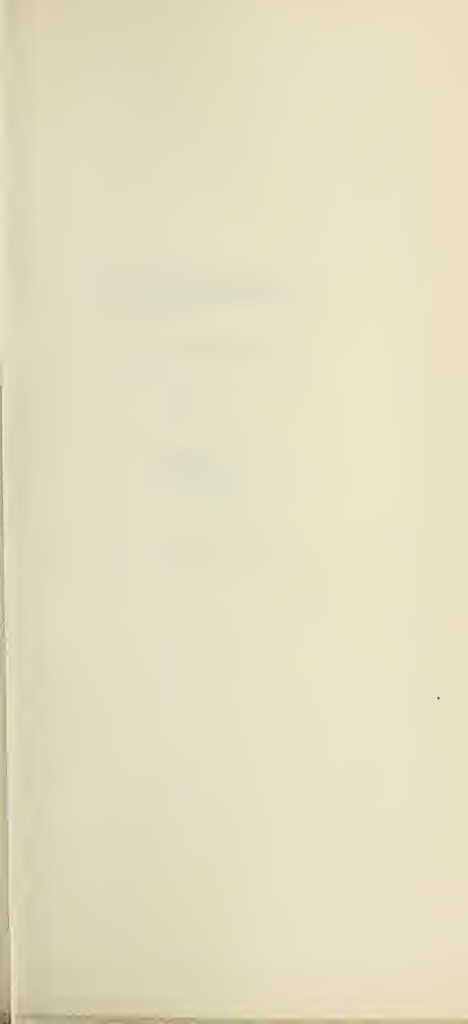
















LAUS VENERIS

1866





ALGERNON CHARLES  
SWINBURNE

LAUS VENERIS



PORTLAND MAINE  
THOMAS B MOSHER  
MDCCCXCIX

FIRST EDITION,            JULY, 1900  
SECOND EDITION,         JUNE, 1909



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## PREFACE



The following remarks are taken from the *Notes on Poems and Reviews*—that magnificent impeachment of his detractors which Swinburne put forth shortly after the publication and during the temporary withdrawal of his *Poems and Ballads* (London, 1866). It may here be said once and for all that no word or line of *Laus Veneris* has ever been altered from the first to the latest edition. As it was originally given to the world so, in the words of Richard Grant White, it stands to-day—"an expression of beauty and passion in this fearless old fashion; naked, free and strong. Naked not for the nakedness, but for the sake of freedom, strength and beauty."



## PREFACE

OF the poem in which I have attempted once more to embody the legend of Venus and her knight, I need say only that my first aim was to rehandle the old story in a new fashion. To me it seemed that the tragedy began with the knight's return to Venus — began at the point where hitherto it had seemed to leave off. The immortal agony of a man lost after all repentance — cast down from fearful hope into fearless despair — believing in Christ and bound to Venus — desirous of penitential pain, and damned to joyless pleasure — this, in my eyes, was the kernel and nucleus of a myth comparable only to that of the foolish virgins and bearing the same burden. The tragic touch of the story is this: that the knight who has renounced Christ believes

## PREFACE

in him; the lover who has embraced Venus disbelieves in her. Vainly and in despair would he make the best of that which is the worst — vainly remonstrate with God, and argue on the side he would fain desert. Once accept or admit the least admixture of pagan worship, or of modern thought, and the whole story collapses into froth and smoke. It was not till my poem was completed that I received from the hands of its author the admirable pamphlet of Charles Baudelaire on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. If any one desires to see, expressed in better words than I can command, the conception of the mediæval Venus which it was my aim to put into verse, let him turn to the magnificent passage in which M. Baudelaire describes the fallen goddess, grown diabolic among ages that would not accept her as divine. In another point, as I then found, I concur with the great

## PREFACE

musician and his great panegyrist. I have made Venus the one love of her knight's whole life, as Mary Stuart of Chastelard's; I have sent him, poet and soldier, fresh to her fierce embrace. Thus only both legend and symbol appear to me noble and significant. Light loves and harmless errors must not touch the elect of heaven or of hell. The queen of evil, the lady of lust, will endure no rival but God; and when the vicar of God rejects him, to her only can he return to abide the day of his judgment in weariness and sorrow and fear.

A. C. SWINBURNE.







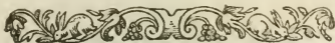
LAUS VENERIS

1866









## LAUS VENERIS

### I

**A** SLEEP or waking is it? for her  
neck,  
Kissed over close, wears yet a  
purple speck  
Wherein the pained blood fal-  
ters and goes out;  
Soft, and stung softly — fairer for  
a fleck.

### II

But though my lips shut sucking  
on the place,  
There is no vein at work upon her  
face;  
Her eyelids are so peaceable,  
no doubt  
Deep sleep has warmed her blood  
through all its ways.

III

Lo, this is she that was the world's  
 delight ;  
 The old grey years were parcels of  
 her might ;  
 The strewings of the ways  
 wherein she trod  
 Were the twain seasons of the  
 day and night.

IV

Lo, she was thus when her clear  
 limbs enticed  
 All lips that now grow sad with  
 kissing Christ,  
 Stained with blood fallen from  
 the feet of God,  
 The feet and hands whereat our  
 souls were priced.

V

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great  
 and fair.  
 But lo her wonderfully woven  
 hair !  
 And thou didst heal us with thy  
 piteous kiss ;  
 But see now, Lord ; her mouth is  
 lovelier.

## VI

She is right fair; what hath she  
done to thee?

Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine  
eyes and see;

Had now thy mother such a  
lip — like this?

Thou knowest how sweet a thing  
it is to me.

## VII

Inside the Horsel here the air is  
hot;

Right little peace one hath for it,  
God wot;

The scented dusty daylight  
burns the air,

And my heart chokes me till I  
hear it not.

## VIII

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body,  
lies

With my love laid upon her gar-  
ment-wise,

Feeling my love in all her limbs  
and hair

And shed between her eyelids  
through her eyes.

## IX

She holds my heart in her sweet  
 open hands  
 Hanging asleep; hard by her head  
 there stands,  
 Crowned with gilt thorns and  
 clothed with flesh like fire,  
 Love, wan as foam blown up the  
 salt burnt sands —

## X

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow  
 spume  
 That shift and steam — loose clots  
 of arid fume  
 From the sea's panting mouth  
 of dry desire;  
 There stands he, like one labour-  
 ing at a loom.

## XI

The warp holds fast across; and  
 every thread  
 That makes the woof up has dry  
 specks of red;  
 Always the shuttle cleaves clean  
 through, and he  
 Weaves with the hair of many a  
 ruined head.

## XII

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I  
 deem ;  
 Labouring he dreams, and labours  
 in the dream,  
 Till when the spool is finished,  
 lo I see  
 His web, reeled off, curls and goes  
 out like steam.

## XIII

Night falls like fire ; the heavy  
 lights run low,  
 And as they drop, my blood and  
 body so  
 Shake as the flame shakes, full  
 of days and hours  
 That sleep not neither weep they  
 as they go.

## XIV

Ah yet would God this flesh of  
 mine might be  
 Where air might wash and long  
 leaves cover me,  
 Where tides of grass break into  
 foam of flowers,  
 Or where the wind's feet shine  
 along the sea.

XV

Ah yet would God that stems and  
 roots were bred  
 Out of my weary body and my  
 head,  
 That sleep were sealed upon me  
 with a seal,  
 And I were as the least of all his  
 dead.

XVI

Would God my blood were dew  
 to feed the grass,  
 Mine ears made deaf and mine  
 eyes blind as glass,  
 My body broken as a turning  
 wheel,  
 And my mouth stricken ere it  
 saith Alas!

XVII

Ah God, that love were as a  
 flower or flame,  
 That life were as the naming of a  
 name,  
 That death were not more pitiful  
 than desire,  
 That these things were not one  
 thing and the same!

XVIII

Behold now, surely somewhere  
there is death :

For each man hath some space of  
years, he saith,

A little space of time ere time  
expire,

A little day, a little way of  
breath.

XIX

And lo, between the sundawn and  
the sun,

His day's work and his night's  
work are undone ;

And lo, between the nightfall  
and the light,

He is not, and none knoweth of  
such an one.

XX

Ah God, that I were as all souls  
that be,

As any herb or leaf of any  
tree,

As men that toil through hours  
of labouring night,

As bones of men under the deep  
sharp sea.

## XXI

Outside it must be winter among  
 men ;  
 For at the gold bars of the gates  
 again  
 I heard all night and all the  
 hours of it,  
 The wind's wet wings and fingers  
 drip with rain.

## XXII

Knights gather, riding sharp for  
 cold ; I know  
 The ways and woods are strangled  
 with the snow ;  
 And with short song the maid-  
 ens spin and sit  
 Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like,  
 arow.

## XXIII

The scent and shadow shed about  
 me make  
 The very soul in all my senses  
 ache ;  
 The hot hard night is fed upon  
 my breath,  
 And sleep beholds me from afar  
 awake.



## XXIV

Alas, but surely where the hills  
 grow deep,  
 Or where the wild ways of the  
 sea are steep,  
 Or in strange places somewhere  
 there is death,  
 And on death's face the scattered  
 hair of sleep.

## XXV

There lover-like with lips and limbs  
 that meet  
 They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of  
 life and eat ;  
 But me the hot and hungry days  
 devour,  
 And in my mouth no fruit of  
 theirs is sweet.

## XXVI

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my  
 desire,  
 For her love's sake whose lips  
 through mine respire ;  
 Her eyelids on her eyes like  
 flower on flower,  
 Mine eyelids on mine eyes like  
 fire on fire.

## XXVII

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by  
 death,  
 With heavy kisses and with happy  
 breath;  
 Not as man lies by woman,  
 when the bride  
 Laughs low for love's sake and  
 the words he saith.

## XXVIII

For she lies, laughing low with  
 love; she lies  
 And turns his kisses on her lips to  
 sighs,  
 To sighing sound of lips un-  
 satisfied,  
 And the sweet tears are tender  
 with her eyes.

## XXIX

Ah, not as they, but as the souls  
 that were  
 Slain in the old time, having found  
 her fair;  
 • Who, sleeping with her lips  
 upon their eyes,  
 Heard sudden serpents hiss across  
 her hair.

## XXX

Their blood runs round the roots  
of time like rain :  
She casts them forth and gathers  
them again ;  
With nerve and bone she weaves  
and multiplies  
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme  
pain.

## XXXI

Her little chambers drip with  
flower-like red,  
Her girdles, and the chaplets of  
her head,  
Her armlets and her anklets ;  
with her feet  
She tramples all that winepress of  
the dead.

## XXXII

Her gateways smoke with fume of  
flowers and fires,  
With loves burnt out and unas-  
suaged desires ;  
Between her lips the steam of  
them is sweet,  
The languor in her ears of many  
lyres.

## XXXIII

Her beds are full of perfume and  
 sad sound,  
 Her doors are made with music,  
 and barred round  
 With sighing and with laughter  
 and with tears,  
 With tears whereby strong souls  
 of men are bound.

## XXXIV

There is the knight Adonis that  
 was slain ;  
 With flesh and blood she chains  
 him for a chain ;  
 The body and the spirit in her  
 ears  
 Cry, for her lips divide him vein  
 by vein.

## XXXV

Yea, all she slayeth ; yea, every  
 man save me ;  
 Me, love, thy lover that must  
 cleave to thee  
 Till the ending of the days and  
 ways of earth,  
 The shaking of the sources of the  
 sea.

## XXXVI

Me, most forsaken of all souls  
 that fell;  
 Me, satiated with things insa-  
 tiable;  
 Me, for whose sake the extreme  
 hell makes mirth,  
 Yea, laughter kindles at the heart  
 of hell.

## XXXVII

Alas thy beauty! for thy mouth's  
 sweet sake  
 My soul is bitter to me, my limbs  
 quake  
 As water, as the flesh of men  
 that weep,  
 As their heart's vein whose heart  
 goes nigh to break.

## XXXVIII

Ah God, that sleep with flower-  
 sweet finger-tips  
 Would crush the fruit of death  
 upon my lips;  
 Ah God, that death would tread  
 the grapes of sleep  
 And wring their juice upon me as  
 it drips.

## XXXIX

There is no change of cheer for  
 many days,  
 But change of chimes high up in  
 the air, that sways  
 Rung by the running fingers of  
 the wind;  
 And singing sorrows heard on  
 hidden ways.

## XL

Day smiteth day in twain, night  
 sundereth night,  
 And on mine eyes the dark sits as  
 the light;  
 Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know  
 not, having sinned,  
 If heaven be clean or unclean in  
 thy sight.

## XLI

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled  
 over me,  
 Such chafed harsh earth as chokes  
 a sandy sea,  
 Each pore doth yearn, and the  
 dried blood thereof  
 Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims  
 heavily,

XLII

There is a feverish famine in my  
veins ;  
Below her bosom, where a crushed  
grape stains  
The white and blue, there my  
lips caught and clove  
An hour since, and what mark of  
me remains ?

XLIII

I dare not always touch her, lest  
the kiss  
Leave my lips charred. Yea,  
Lord, a little bliss,  
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a  
great sin ;  
Nathless thou knowest how sweet  
a thing it is.

XLIV

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls  
are thrust  
Into the pit? yet had I a good  
trust  
To save my soul before it  
slipped therein,  
Trode under by the fire-shod feet  
of lust.

XLV

For if mine eyes fail and my soul  
 takes breath,  
 I look between the iron sides of  
 death  
 Into sad hell where all sweet  
 love hath end,  
 All but the pain that never  
 finisheth.

XLVI

There are the naked faces of  
 great kings,  
 The singing folk with all their  
 lute-playings;  
 There when one cometh he shall  
 have to friend  
 The grave that covets and the  
 worm that clings.

XLVII

There sit the knights that were so  
 great of hand,  
 The ladies that were queens of  
 fair green land,  
 Grown grey and black now,  
 brought unto the dust,  
 Soiled, without raiment, clad about  
 with sand.



XLVIII

There is one end for all of them ;  
     they sit  
 Naked and sad, they drink the  
     dregs of it,  
     Trodden as grapes in the wine-  
     press of lust,  
 Trampled and trodden by the  
     fiery feet.

XLIX

I see the marvellous mouth where-  
     by there fell  
 Cities and people whom the gods  
     loved well,  
     Yet for her sake on them the  
     fire gat hold,  
 And for their sakes on her the  
     fire of hell.

L

And softer than the Egyptian  
     lote-leaf is,  
 The queen whose face was worth  
     the world to kiss,  
     Wearing at breast a suckling  
     snake of gold ;  
 And large pale lips of strong  
     Semiramis.

## L.I

Curled like a tiger's that curl back  
 to feed ;  
 Red only where the last kiss made  
 them bleed ;  
 Her hair most thick with many  
 a carven gem,  
 Deep in the mane, great-chested,  
 like a steed.

## L.II

Yea, with red sin the faces of  
 them shine ;  
 But in all these there was no sin  
 like mine ;  
 No, not in all the strange great  
 sins of them  
 That made the wine-press froth  
 and foam with wine.

## L.III

For I was of Christ's choosing, I  
 God's knight,  
 No blinkard heathen stumbling  
 for scant light ;  
 I can well see, for all the dusty  
 days  
 Gone past, the clean great time of  
 goodly fight.

## LIV

I smell the breathing battle sharp  
 with blows,  
 With shriek of shafts and snapping  
 short of bows ;  
 The fair pure sword smites out  
 in subtle ways,  
 Sounds and long lights are shed  
 between the rows

## LV

Of beautiful mailed men; the  
 edged light slips,  
 Most like a snake that takes short  
 breath and dips  
 Sharp from the beautifully  
 bending head,  
 With all its gracious body lithe  
 as lips

## LVI

That curl in touching you; right  
 in this wise  
 My sword doth, seeming fire in  
 mine own eyes,  
 Leaving all colours in them  
 brown and red  
 And flecked with death; then the  
 keen breaths like sighs,

LVII

The caught-up choked dry laugh-  
 ters following them,  
 When all the fighting face is  
 grown a flame  
 For pleasure, and the pulse that  
 stuns the ears,  
 And the heart's gladness of the  
 goodly game.

LVIII

Let me think yet a little; I do  
 know  
 These things were sweet, but sweet  
 such years ago,  
 Their savour is all turned now  
 into tears;  
 Yea, ten years since, where the  
 blue ripples blow,

LIX

The blue curled eddies of the  
 blowing Rhine,  
 I felt the sharp wind shaking  
 grass and vine  
 Touch my blood too, and sting  
 me with delight  
 Through all this waste and weary  
 body of mine

## LX

That never feels clear air; right  
 gladly then  
 I rode alone, a great way off my  
 men,  
 And heard the chiming bridle  
 smite and smite,  
 And gave each rhyme thereof  
 some rhyme again,

## LXI

Till my song shifted to that iron  
 one;  
 Seeing there rode up between me  
 and the sun  
 Some certain of my foe's men,  
 for his three  
 White wolves across their painted  
 coats did run.

## LXII

The first red-bearded, with square  
 cheeks — alack,  
 I made my knave's blood turn his  
 beard to black;  
 The slaying of him was a joy to  
 see:  
 Perchance too, when at night he  
 came not back,

## LXIII

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom  
 this thief  
 Would beat when he had drunken ;  
 yet small grief  
 Hath any for the ridding of  
 such knaves ;  
 Yea, if one wept, I doubt her  
 teen was brief. ·

## LXIV

This bitter love is sorrow in all  
 lands,  
 Draining of eyelids, wringing of  
 drenched hands,  
 Sighing of hearts and filling up  
 of graves ;  
 A sign across the head of the  
 world he stands,

## LXV

As one that hath a plague-mark  
 on his brows ;  
 Dust and spilt blood do track him  
 to his house  
 Down under earth ; sweet smells  
 of lip and cheek,  
 Like a sweet snake's breath made  
 more poisonous

## LXVI

With chewing of some perfumed  
 deadly grass,  
 Are shed all round his passage if  
 he pass,  
 And their quenched savour  
 leaves the whole soul weak,  
 Sick with keen guessing whence  
 the perfume was.

## LXVII

As one who hidden in deep sedge  
 and reeds  
 Smells the rare scent made where  
 a panther feeds,  
 And tracking ever slotwise the  
 warm smell  
 Is snapped upon by the sweet  
 mouth and bleeds,

## LXVIII

His head far down the hot sweet  
 throat of her—  
 So one tracks love, whose breath  
 is deadlier,  
 And lo, one springe and you are  
 fast in hell,  
 Fast as the gin's grip of a  
 wayfarer.

LXIX

I think now, as the heavy hours  
 de cease  
 One after one, and bitter thoughts  
 increase  
 One upon one, of all sweet fin-  
 ished things;  
 The breaking of the battle; the  
 long peace

LXX

Wherein we sat clothed softly,  
 each man's hair  
 Crowned with green leaves beneath  
 white hoods of vair;  
 The sounds of sharp spears at  
 great tourneyings,  
 And noise of singing in the late  
 sweet air.

LXXI

I sang of love, too, knowing  
 nought thereof;  
 "Sweeter," I said, "the little  
 laugh of love  
 Than tears out of the eyes of  
 Magdalen,  
 Or any fallen feather of the  
 Dove.



## LXXII

“The broken little laugh that  
 spoils a kiss,  
 The ache of purple pulses, and the  
 bliss  
 Of blinded eyelids that expand  
 again —  
 Love draws them open with those  
 lips of his,

## LXXIII

“Lips that cling hard till the  
 kissed face has grown  
 Of one same fire and colour with  
 their own ;  
 Then ere one sleep, appeased  
 with sacrifice,  
 Where his lips wounded, there his  
 lips atone.”

## LXXIV

I sang these things long since and  
 knew them not ;  
 “Lo, here is love, or there is love,  
 God wot,  
 This man and that finds favour  
 in his eyes,”  
 I said, “but I, what guerdon have  
 I got ?

## LXXV

“ The dust of praise that is blown  
 everywhere  
 In all men's faces with the com-  
 mon air ;  
 The bay-leaf that wants chafing  
 to be sweet  
 Before they wind it in a singer's  
 hair.”

## LXXVI

So that one dawn I rode forth  
 sorrowing ;  
 I had no hope but of some evil  
 thing,  
 And so rode slowly past the  
 windy wheat,  
 And past the vineyard and the  
 water-spring,

## LXXVII

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-  
 tree  
 Held back its heaps of flowers to  
 let me see  
 The ripe tall grass, and one that  
 walked therein,  
 Naked, with hair shed over to the  
 knee.

## LXXVIII

She walked between the blossom  
 and the grass ;  
 I knew the beauty of her, what  
 she was,  
 The beauty of her body and her  
 sin,  
 And in my flesh the sin of hers,  
 alas !

## LXXIX

Alas ! for sorrow is all the end of  
 this.  
 O sad kissed mouth, how sorrow-  
 ful it is !  
 O breast whereat some suckling  
 sorrow clings,  
 Red with the bitter blossom of a  
 kiss !

## LXXX

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you,  
 and found  
 About my neck your hands and  
 hair enwound,  
 The hands that stifle and the  
 hair that stings,  
 I felt them fasten sharply without  
 sound.

## LXXXI

Yea, for my sin I had great store  
of bliss :  
Rise up, make answer for me, let  
thy kiss  
Seal my lips hard from speaking  
of my sin,  
Lest one go mad to hear how  
sweet it is.

## LXXXII

Yet I waxed faint with fume of  
barren bowers,  
And murmuring of the heavy-  
headed hours ;  
And let the dove's beak fret  
and peck within  
My lips in vain, and Love shed  
fruitless flowers.

## LXXXIII

So that God looked upon me  
when your hands  
Were hot about me ; yea, God  
brake my bands  
To save my soul alive, and I  
came forth  
Like a man blind and naked in  
strange lands

## LXXXIV

That hears men laugh and weep,  
 and knows not whence  
 Nor wherefore, but is broken in  
 his sense ;  
 Howbeit I met folk riding from  
 the north  
 Towards Rome, to purge them of  
 their souls' offence,

## LXXXV

And rode with them, and spake to  
 none ; the day  
 Stunned me like lights upon some  
 wizard way,  
 And ate like fire mine eyes and  
 mine eyesight ;  
 So rode I, hearing all these chant  
 and pray,

## LXXXVI

And marvelled ; till before us rose  
 and fell  
 White cursed hills, like outer  
 skirts of hell  
 Seen where men's eyes look  
 through the day to night,  
 Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh,  
 untunable,

## LXXXVII

Blown in between by devils'  
 wrangling breath;  
 Nathless we won well past that  
 hell and death,  
 Down to the sweet land where  
 all airs are good,  
 Even unto Rome where God's  
 grace tarrieth.

## LXXXVIII

Then came each man and wor-  
 shipped at his knees  
 Who in the Lord God's likeness  
 bears the keys  
 To bind or loose, and called on  
 Christ's shed blood,  
 And so the sweet-souled father  
 gave him ease.

## LXXXIX

But when I came I fell down at  
 his feet,  
 Saying, "Father, though the Lord's  
 blood be right sweet,  
 The spot it takes 'not off the  
 panther's skin,  
 Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be  
 bleached with it.

## XC

“ Lo, I have sinned and have spat  
 out at God,  
 Wherefore his hand is heavier and  
 his rod  
 More sharp because of mine  
 exceeding sin,  
 And all his raiment redder than  
 bright blood

## XCI

“ Before mine eyes; yea, for my  
 sake I wot  
 The heat of hell is waxen seven  
 times hot  
 Through my great sin.” Then  
 spake he some sweet word,  
 Giving me cheer; which thing  
 availed me not;

## XCII

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed  
 were said;  
 For when I ceased—lo, as one  
 newly dead  
 Who hears a great cry out of  
 hell, I heard  
 The crying of his voice across my  
 head.

## XCIII

“ Until this dry shred staff, that  
 hath no whit  
 Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom  
 and smell sweet,  
 Seek thou not any mercy in  
 God's sight,  
 For so long shalt thou be cast out  
 from it.”

## XCIV

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax  
 red and green,  
 Shall that thing be which is not  
 nor has been?  
 Yea, what if sapless bark wax  
 green and white,  
 Shall any good fruit grow upon  
 my sin?

## XCV

Nay, though sweet fruit were  
 plucked of a dry tree,  
 And though men drew sweet  
 waters of the sea,  
 There should not grow sweet  
 leaves on this dead stem,  
 This waste wan body and shaken  
 soul of me.



XCVI

Yea, though God search it warily  
 enough,  
 There is not one sound thing in  
 all thereof ;  
 Though he search all my veins  
 through, searching them  
 He shall find nothing whole there-  
 in but love.

XCVII

For I came home right heavy,  
 with small cheer,  
 And lo my love, mine own soul's  
 heart, more dear  
 Than mine own soul, more  
 beautiful than God,  
 Who hath my being between the  
 hands of her —

XCVIII

Fair still, but fair for no man sav-  
 ing me,  
 As when she came out of the  
 naked sea  
 Making the foam as fire whereon  
 she trod,  
 And as the inner flower of fire  
 was she.

## XCIX

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and  
 her mouth  
 Clove unto mine as soul to body  
 doth,  
 And, laughing, made her lips  
 luxurious;  
 Her hair had smells of all the  
 sunburnt south,

## C

Strange spice and flower, strange  
 savour of crushed fruit,  
 And perfume the swart kings tread  
 underfoot  
 For pleasure when their minds  
 wax amorous,  
 Charred frankincense and grated  
 sandal-root.

## CI

And I forgot fear and all weary  
 things,  
 All ended prayers and perished  
 thanksgivings,  
 Feeling her face with all her  
 eager hair  
 Cleave to me, clinging as a fire  
 that clings

## CII

To the body and to the raiment,  
 burning them ;  
 As after death I know that such-  
 like flame  
 Shall cleave to me for ever ; yea,  
 what care,  
 Albeit I burn then, having felt the  
 same ?

## CIII

Ah love, there is no better life  
 than this ;  
 To have known love, how bitter a  
 thing it is,  
 And afterward be cast out of  
 God's sight ;  
 Yea, these that know not, shall  
 they have such bliss

## CIV

High up in barren heaven before  
 his face  
 As we twain in the heavy-hearted  
 place,  
 Remembering love and all the  
 dead delight,  
 And all that time was sweet with  
 for a space ?

## CV

For till the thunder in the trumpet  
be,  
Soul may divide from body, but  
not we  
One from another; I hold thee  
with my hand,  
I let mine eyes have all their will  
of thee,

## CVI

I seal myself upon thee with my  
might,  
Abiding alway out of all men's  
sight  
Until God loosen over sea and  
land  
The thunder of the trumpets of  
the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS.





APPENDIX



“The ‘*Laus Veneris*,’ itself sufficiently independent of models, is prefaced by a paragraph in old French purporting to be extracted from a ‘*Livre des Grandes Merveilles d’Amour, escript en Latin et en François par Maistre Antoine Gaget, 1530,*’ but which we confidently father upon Mr. Swinburne himself.”

W. M. ROSSETTI.



## APPENDIX

### I

#### NOTE TO LAUS VENERIS

**L**ORS dit en plourant; Hélas trop malheureux homme et maudict pescheur, oncques ne verrai-je clémence et miséricorde de Dieu. Ores m'en irai-je d'icy et me cacherais dedans le mont Horsel, en requérant de faveur et d'amoureuse merci ma douce dame Vénus, car pour son amour serai-je bien à tout jamais damné en enfer. Voicy la fin de tous mes faicts d'armes et de toutes mes belles chansons. Hélas, trop belle estoit la face de ma dame et ses yeulx, et en mauvais jour je vis ces chouses-là. Lors s'en alla tout en gémissant et se retourna chez elle, et là vescu tristement en grand amour près de sa dame. Puis après advint que le pape vit un jour esclater sur son baston force belles fleurs rouges et blanches et maints boutons de feuilles, et ainsi vit-il reverdir toute l'escorce. Ce dont il eut grande crainte et moult s'en esmut, et grande pitié lui prit de ce chevalier qui s'en estoit départi sans espoir comme un homme misérable et damné. Doncques envoya force messaigers devers luy pour le ramener, disant qu'il aurait de

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Dieu grace et bonne absolution de son grand pesché d'amour. Mais oncques plus ne le virent ; car toujours demeura ce pauvre chevalier auprès de Vénus la haulte et forte déesse ès flancs de la montagne amoureuse.

*Livre des grandes merveilles  
d'amour, escript en latin et  
en François par Maistre An-  
toine Gaget. 1530.*

## TRANSLATION

Then lamented he weeping : Alas, most unhappy and accursed sinner that I am, in that I shall never see the clemency and mercy of my God. Now will I go forth and hide myself within Mount Horsel, imploring my sweet lady Venus for favour and loving mercy, for willingly would I be forever condemned to hell for her love. Here endeth all my deeds of arms and my sweet singing. Alas that my lady's face and her eyes were too beautiful, and that in an unfortunate moment I saw them. Then went he forth sighing and returned to her, and dwelt sadly in the presence of his lady, filled with a surpassing love. And afterwards it came to pass that one day the pope saw many red and white flowers and leaf-buds spring forth from his staff, and all its bark bloomed anew. So that he feared greatly, and being much



## APPENDIX

moved thereby was filled with great pity for the chevalier who had gone forth hopeless like unto a man forever damned and miserable. And straightway sent he numberless messengers to him to bring him back, saying that he should receive grace and absolution from God, for this his so great sin of love. But nevermore was he seen; for the poor chevalier dwelt forever near unto Venus, that most high and mighty Goddess, in the bosom of the amorous mountain.

## II

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. *Laus Veneris*. / By / Algernon Charles Swinburne. / London : / Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street. / 1866.

Collation :— Octavo, pp. 28 ; consisting of Half-title (with blank reverse) pp. 1-2 ; Title-page, as above (with imprint — “London : / Bradbury, Evans, and Co., Printers, Whitefriars ” — in the centre of the reverse), pp. 3-4 ; passage from *Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour, escript en latin et en françoys par Maistre Antoine Gaget*. 1530, p. 5 ; p. 6 is blank ; and Text pp. 7-28. The head-line is *Laus Veneris* throughout, on both sides of the page.

Issued in plain paper wrappers, of various colours.

*Laus Veneris* was also included in *Poems and Ballads*, Moxon, 1866, pp. 11-30, and has been retained in each succeeding edition. The pamphlet, Mr. Swinburne has stated, was issued some months previous to the publication of that volume. Very few copies were printed, most of which were distributed amongst private friends. “In fact,” said Mr. Swinburne, “it was more an experiment

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to ascertain the public taste—and forbearance!—than anything else. Moxon, I well remember, was terribly nervous in those days, and it was only the wishes of mutual good friends, coupled with his own liking for the ballads, that finally induced him to publish the book [*Poems and Ballads*] at all.”

The original Manuscript of *Laus Veneris* has fortunately been preserved, and is now in Mr. Wise’s Swinburne collection. It is written upon sixteen sheets of blue foolscap, mostly upon one side of the paper only. The Manuscript (which is bound in red levant Morocco, by Riviere) is freely corrected, and contains moreover a number of cancelled stanzas, of which here is one:—

*The scent and shadow dead above me  
make  
The very soul in all my senses ache;  
My lips burn, yea mine eyes burn up  
with heat,  
My face is turned to dust for my pain’s  
sake.*

Of the first edition of *Laus Veneris* no copy is to be found in the British Museum. The only example of this exceptionally interesting little volume which has come into the market in recent years figured in one of Messrs. Robson & Co.’s catalogues, priced £30.

## APPENDIX

*(French Translation)*

II. *Laus Veneris* / Poème de / Swinburne / traduit par / Francis Vielé-Griffin / Paris / Édition du Mercure de France / 15, rue de L'Échandé-St.-Germain / MDCCCXCV.

Collation : — 24mo. pp. 105.

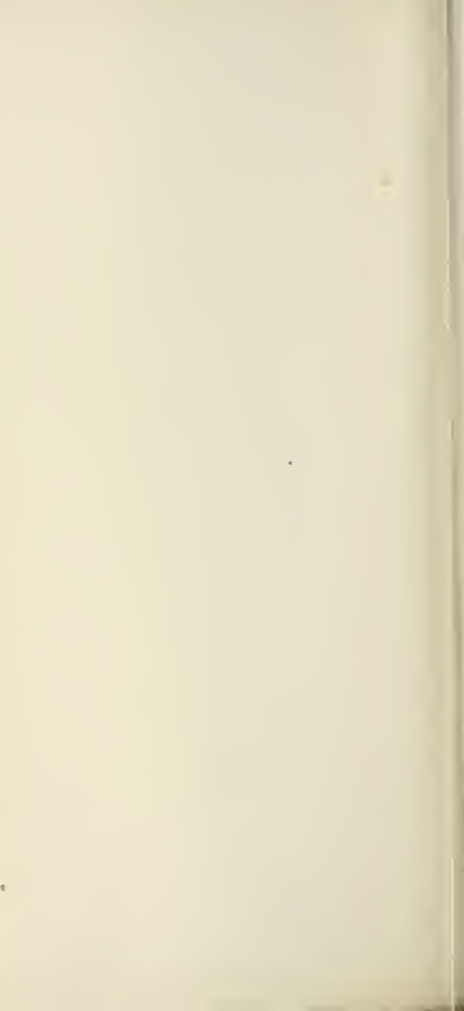
Issued in paper wrappers, printed in three colours. The edition was limited to 283 copies. The Translation is in French Prose.































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