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Flamma Vestalis

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Retrospect, and other Poems.

Brand.

Son of Don Juan.

Mariana.



Flamma Vestalis.

BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

Flamma Vestalis

AND OTHER POEMS

by

EUGENE MASON

CAMEO SERIES

T. Fisher Unwin Paternoster Sq.
London E.C. MDCCCXCV. 

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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*For Burne-Jones'
Flamma Vestalis.*



IN purple vestment, and in gathered hood,
The Vestal Virgin passes down the
street,

With recollected thoughts, and covered
feet,

And downcast eyes where folded memories
brood.

No love hath stirred her bosom, no man
wooded,

She walks on ways with holy tasks replete,
With half-told beads, and symbolled rai-
ment meet,

A handmaid vowed to Vesta, white and good.

Ah, Love, foreknown, compact of hope and
dream,

This painted ghost thy shadow as I deem,

To thee with beckoning hand and song
I cried ;
Haste, love, and tend the lit lamps of thy
shrine,
Warm breast and face at this red hearth of
mine,
No Vestal, but a woman, and my Bride.

A Love Duet.

MY heart and I beguile the weary ways
With dainty converse in our Lady's
praise.

In sweet duet we find our Lady fair
From slim white foot to dark upgathered hair.

Who loves the more, nor heart nor I can tell,
So dear she is and so desirable.

Yet when I sing my Lady's mist-veiled eyes,
Her mouth made tremulous with low replies,

The ordered fashion of her simple dress,
The slender wonder of her loveliness,

My heart rebukes me, pleading I prefer
This outward show and vestiture to her.

For this my heart repeats in every place,
That she herself is fairer than her face,

And sweeter far than voice, or lips, or cheek,
The candid thought that bids her mouth to
 speak.

Thus loving one her body, one her soul,
My heart and I together love the whole ;

And ease the burden of life's heavy ways
With dainty tribute to our Lady's praise.

*A Ballad of the Silver
Hind.*



“REST in my bower, dear Lord, to-day,
My soul is sick with fear,
My heart doth ache ; for Mary’s sake
Chase not the silver deer.

“Six months ago for my maiden wreath
You gave me a golden crown,
And the bridal gift I got that tide
I bear beneath my gown.”

“I cannot rest in thy bower, sweetheart,
Where the maidens sew and sing ;
To sit till night by the red fire-light
Would ill beseem a King.”

“ Last night I dreamed that I was dead
 And cold as any stone,
And a silver hind stood by my bed
 And bade my soul begone.”

He caught the weeping Queen to his breast,
 He kissed her pallid mouth,
“ Another dream you shall dream e'er morn,
 A fairer dream in sooth.”

He waved his hand as he rode away,
 “ Blow horns for the merry chase.”
But the Queen's lips stirred with no farewell
 word,
 And hers was an ashen face.

With winded horn and baying hound,
 With knife and hunting spear,
He sought till noon before he found
 The slot of the silver deer.

The hind sprang forth from a leafy brake
 Where the weary hunter stood,
Like sudden snow, like bolt from bow
 She sped for the distant wood.

Her hoof was white as the silver bright,
Like shining gold her horn,
Her body fair as a maiden's breast
And sweet as springtide thorn.

With winded horn and baying hound,
With knife and hunting spear,
O'er field, and hill, and forest glade,
Through mountain stream and dappled shade,
He followed the silver deer.

With voice, and rein, and bloody spur
He urged the swift steed on ;
The hounds drew close to the flying prey,
He gripped the knife in his lust to slay,
When, lo, the hind was gone.

The hounds crept back like a whimpering
child,
The stout steed plunged and neighed,
The King's blood pricked like points of ice,
So sore was he afraid.

He swore an oath and he crossed his breast,
To Saint Hubert paid his vows,
And staring round, but a bow-shot off
He marked a fair white house.

14 A BALLAD OF THE SILVER HIND.

“ A draught of wine for a weary man,”
 He beat on the oaken door ;
An eldrich laugh rang down the hall
 And a witch girl crossed the floor.

Her hair was red as the shining gold,
 Like silver her naked feet,
Her body lithe as the leaping fawn,
 Her breast as the whitethorn sweet.

Her gown was thin as the finest silk
 And laced with a purple band,
A garland fair was about her hair,
 A gold ring on her hand.

She poured the wine, and she pledged the
 cup,
 His cheek was of ruddy hue,
So fine were the folds of her silken vest
 Her limbs showed whitely through.

She held the draught to his eager lips,
 A leman to his mind,
He gazed o'er the wine to her subtle eyes
 And knew the silver hind.

He sought her love as a wondrous thing,
(God grant him shameful death),
“Thou hast a bride to thy bed, O King,”
(The Queen’s heart sickeneth).

“Give me the spousal ring from her hand,
The circlet from her head,
(List what the wise leech saith),
And thrust her forth to her father’s land
And crown me Queen in her stead.”
(The Queen swoons on to death.)

They wrapt the Queen in her grass-green
cloak,
With a shroud o’ the sendall white ;
Her maidens filled in the new-digged grave
At dusk, by the red torch light.

Next morn where once was a fresh-digged
grave
They found a garden fair,
With grass as green as a grass-green cloak
And tendrils curled like hair.

16 A BALLAD OF THE SILVER HIND.

All pleasant flowers and smelling herbs
 Stood thick about that place,
Wet roses red as the Queen's true heart,
 Pale lilies like her face.

In a hidden spot where the leaves grew close
 A pool rose still and clear,
'Twas deep as the eyes of a six months bride,
 And a white bird fluttered near.

The King wed fast with that subtle witch,
 He loved her passing well ;
She prayed no prayer at the bridal mass,
 Nor knelt at the sacring bell.

In cloth of gold and cloth of silk
 They sought the banquet hall,
Betwixt her head and the staring sun
 Lords bore a crimson pall.

“ What garden fair, my little page,
 Hath grown before my door ? ”

“ It grew last night from my lady's grave,
 It ne'er was seen before.”

“ Whence came this bird, my little page,
That flutters there alone ? ”

“ O that, my lord, is your dead Queen’s soul,
She makes a weary moan. ”

The witch sped fast to that painful bird,
Her face was drawn and wan,
She gave her many a bitter word,
“ I bid thy soul begone. ”

The white bird passed like a little cloud,
The flowers hung faint and wan,
The garden shrunk to a new-made grave,
The Queen’s fair soul was gone.

The witch bride held with charm and spell
Her groom in silken bower,
Such wondrous love did king ne’er prove
For dame nor paramour.

The dead Queen’s kith for their sister’s wrong
Harried with torch and sword ;
She crooned in his ear a magic song,
He marked no other word.

18 A BALLAD OF THE SILVER HIND.

The poor folk clamoured at his gate,
 Lean, ragged, nowise fed,
They marked his sloth, his pomp of state,
 His luxury of bread.

They cried, " See how these wantons fare,
 They lie on down and furs ;
We snatch our victuals from the dogs,
 We kennel with the curs."

One morn they burst the gilded gates
 With weapons grim and rude,
They plucked the King from his leman's arms
 And slew him where he stood.

They mocked his brows with a tinsel crown,
 They filled his mouth with chaff,
But the rudest stayed in his bloody toil
 To hear the witch bride laugh.

She fled through the crowd of the gaping
 men,
 She gleamed down the burning street,
Her golden hair was stained with fire,
 Blood stained her silver feet.

She passed to the haunts of the foolish men
 With the spell of her subtle eyes,
Her breast is a snare, and her fallen hair,
 And her mouth of wine and lies.

Woe to that man who is lured by her face
 And her specious words and kind,
He shall break his heart in the headlong
 chase,
His soul shall pass quick to its destined place,
 For the love of the silver hind.

Ideal Love.

AS one who passes from the busy street
Within the hush of some religious place,
May kneel awhile upon the altar-pace,
And pray, forgetful of the noise and heat.
He hears the fall of unscen angel feet,
Faint incense odours breathe against his
face,
And where the tapers light a little space
He sees the pictured Mother, sad and sweet.

So in my heart I have a chapel fair
For Love to pray in, hid from common
stir,
Enriched by music, dim with burning
myrrh,
But all the worship, all this glow of prayer
Are hers to whom dear love doth minister,
A slender girl, pure-eyed, with gold brown hair.



My High Princess.

AS midst the jewelled throng some high
princess
Might pass unwitting of her father's thrall,
Moving with gracious laughter down the
hall,
Shod with red silk, and tired with pearl
decked tress—
He marks the dainty fashion of her dress,
Her bright flushed face, her foot's rose-
softened fall,
The perfume, and the blaze of festival,
And all the love that serves her loveliness.

He dare not choose but worship,—not as one
Who craves for guerdon,—what may his
deep shame
Possess in common with her stately name!
Yet though his ways may never know the sun,
Though but a slave whose summer hours
seem run,
Deep in his soul is kindled love's white
flame.

At Benediction.

SHE knelt beneath the flaming central light,
Whereon was wrought Maid Mary in her
cell
Heark'ning the cold high words of
Gabriel,
Who bore three Lady-lilies, tall and white.
My love's bowed face was hidden out of sight
In tender palms, and on her bright hair
fell
Faint stains of crimson, whilst the organ's
swell
Shook the hushed church in pauses of the
Rite.

The dusk drew down, the gold and purple
went,
Yet still she knelt,—ah, surely not in vain
Was that dear prayer, but from the
darkened pane
To hear her words the Virgin Mother bent,
Whilst on her soul was shed, like silver
rain,
The Benediction of the Sacrament.

The Nuptial Mass.

THE chancel glows like Paradise above—
Glorious with gold to shadow forth
Christ's Bride,
Gleaming with lights to hail the Crucified,
Fragrant, to speak the unction of the Dove.
Surely His Banner over us is Love,
As knit for ever, kneeling side by side
In prostrate worship of the Lamb Who
died,
We break that Bread the world knows
nothing of.

Love, I am all unworthy thus to gain
Your gracious gift of spotless womanhood,
About you Raphael's guardian angels
brood,
And how dare I profane their sweet
control;
For should your stainless soul from mine take
stain
Surely my soul must answer for your soul.

The Blue Rose.

I HEDGED and tended my strict garden
close,
I rid the soil of each infructuose weed,
In patient hope I gave my plot good heed
Through autumn languor, and the winter
snows.
In pain and tears, with more than woman's
throes,
I strewed the ground with myth and
dream for seed,
Watered with brooding mists of many a
creed,
So I might raise one magical Blue Rose.

And now that summer's gold is nearly done
I know my garden but for barren sand,
Enchanted blossoms fail the naked land,
And in the chill warmth of a sunken sun
I pluck the single prize my toil hath won,
This spray of withered hedge flowers in
my hand.

The Rose Garden.

ONCE in my dreams I found an ivory house
Gardened with rose and vine-leaf for a
screen,

Wherein a maid walked reading, grave
of mien,

Whose Eastern eyes knew well the coming
spouse.

Then one ran softly, flushed by holy vows,

Who closed the painted hours of Mary,

Queen,

And led his bride across the petalled
green

To love's own home, and ent'ring, kissed her
brows.

Ah, God! the sunshine shivered off the close,

Music and colour fled the darkened day,

My dream wailed low, with golden face
turned grey,

And as it passed a winter's wind arose,

The garden whitened under sudden snows,

And I,—I crossed my breast and turned
away.

*For Burne-Jones'
Dies Domini.*

LORD, not in terrors, not with falling stars,
Eclipse, and moaning sea, and quaking
earth,
Despair, division, monstrous things at
birth,
Loud war, and flying rumour of loud wars.
Think rather, Christ, upon Thy piteous scars,
Remember not our sins, our little worth,
Or then indeed would Hell enlarge her
girth,
And cheerless laughter shake her molten bars.

Come, Lord, on angel pinions, grave and calm,
Ringed round with tender face, and
flame-crowned head,
Their raiment blue as hope, yet plumed
with red,
And bearing in Thy raised and wounded palm
Healing and consolation, oil and balm,
Divine Physician of the quick and dead.

Giorgione's Kiss.

THIS man the gods loved blindly ; moon
and sun

And stars bowed down before him. Each
good thing,

—Fame's rustling raiment white and
glistening,

A presence maidens turned to gaze upon—

Became his portion, and his work was done

In shadowed gardens where the women
sing,

By marbled wells whence mirroring
waters spring,

Near sea-wed Venice, noiseless as a nun.

And lest his years should sink with sad eclipse

In dull senescence, grudging, lost to praise,

Ere youth and love withdrew their
golden haze,

They broke life's thread with piteous finger
tips,

And gave him in the shortness of his days
Death, caught like perfume from his lady's
lips.

Biblia Pauperum.

(ST. MARY THE VIRGIN.)

SERVANTS of Mary they, and dear to God,
Who wrought this painted scripture of
His spouse,
This cloistral girlhood hid within God's
house,
The mystic bridegroom with the liliated rod.
Or one fraught hour when Gabriel's feet,
flame-shod,
Bore the swift Ave, and her sevenfold
woes,
Till clothed in flesh, Christ's circlet on
her brows,
Free from the festal grave Heaven's courts
are trod.

Star of the Sea—when white the surge, and
wild,
And hidden fears grow instant, and
revealed,
If self itself prove recreant and would
yield,
In that dread tide, O Fountain undefiled,
Fast Ivory Tower, O Garden fenced and
sealed,
Mother of God, remember me, thy child.

*Suggested by Perugino's
Madonna and Child.*



CHOKED, barren, blind, the desert
stretches wild,
The haunt of robber band, and hidden
slaves,
With sultry wastes one winding river laves,
Where no bird sings, and never flower has
smiled.
Yet here are fled the Mother and her Child,
And Mary kneels adoring him she saves
From Herod's fear, and with pure praying
craves
God's pity on the weak and undefiled.

Mark well the answer. Sky and dreary sand
Burgeon to life with cohorts of the Lord,
Michael stands girded with the flaming
sword,

Raphael who led Tobias by the hand
Now guides these Pilgrims, yea, all understand
As hand to lip Christ signs "I am the Word."

Spiritual Art.

WITHIN the hush of some tree-hidden
bower,
 Beneath the sombre breaking of the day,
 In soft dead grace Eve's tender body lay
Till God gave spirit to complete her dower.
Then burst the opening bud to perfect flower,
 Then flesh woke manifest from senseless
 clay,
 Then voice, and life, and movement,
 marked the sway
Of some divine impenetrating power.

So in these latter days our English art
 Like mother Eve lay fair yet deathly
 numb,
 Till God's own breath aroused her from
 the trance,
 And—giving speech to her who yet was
 dumb—
Mated to outward grace the better part
 The soul of rich and high significance.

In the National Gallery.

A SQUARE with fountains, slopes of steps,
a hall,
And then the magic of this jarring room ;
Here, pallid Christs adored within a tomb,
There, the White King, or whirling Bacchanal.
Here scourge and vigil hold the flesh as thrall,
There Venus smiles, rose-crowned, with
burthened womb,
Or women struggle in the ravished
gloom
Whilst lusty life keeps riotous carnival.

Is it indeed all well that here we praise
Contending schools, and creeds that dwell
apart !
We walk like wizards on divergent ways,
But ah, we love not with the single
heart,
Better, perchance, to build in temporal days
Narrow, but deep, the channels of our art.

Art of Arts.

THIS is the land of make-believe and
masque,
 Haunted by flute, and horn, and lilting
 rhyme,
 Where rhythmic feet pulse fast in ordered
 time,
And gilt-haired dancers pose in languid task.
Romance moves here in plume and glancing
casque
 Through dreams of dainty love, exotic
 crime
 Here dwells delight, with fool and
 lacquered mime,
Or draped in purple wears the brazen mask.

Mirage and rainbow gold are ours to gain—
A fairer world where art and song have
 strayed,
Loves lovelier far than love of mortal
 maid,
Ideals fruition spoils not nor makes vain,
A faery place where weeping leaves no stain,
And sorrow is but joy in masquerade.

From a Library Window.

THESE are the golden streets, whereon for
gain
Girls harshly laugh, and worn men flag
and tire,
Where whoso walks is spotted with the
mire,
And hopes die down, and dreams are dreamed
in vain.
Symbols of sickness, Hospital and Fane
Speak soul and body passed through
Moloch's fire,
Whilst all sweeps blindly to the common
pyre
And God keeps silence.—Leave the window
pane.

Here life goes softly as before a shrine,
These ways with children's tears are
never wet,
Things fair and lovely in this place are
set,
Tristram and Yseult knit by flower and spine
Lie here, and deep mid daisied grasses shine
The gleaming feet of moonlit Nicolette.

Colombe's Birthday.



THUS from my hair I pluck the coronet,
 —My brow throbs easier now I lose its
 weight—
 Unclasp the brooch pin of this robe of
 state,
 A year's mistake, please God, not life's regret.
 Woman, not duchess—now I quite forget
 The empire Fortune carried as her
 freight,
 And simple maid choose simple man for
 mate,
 So thou wilt wear me as love's amulet.

Give me your hand. You called me once
 “play queen,”
 Love is the priest, he crowns me ever
 thine,
 Anoints with sacred oil this head of
 mine,

Garbs me in cloth of gold with jewels sheen,
Thrones me for good or ill, through rain
and shine,
Queen of thy soul, Colombe of Ravestein.

Winter Evenings.

WITH what keen joy I hear the clock
strike five,

For rising from my chair I drop the pen,
And mixing with the crowd of passing
men,

Swarm homewards, as a weary bee to hive.

I sometimes dream I am but half alive,

Till, with the lamplight, in some cosy
nook,

I feel the firewarmth on my cheek, and dive

Within the pearl-strewn depths of some
loved book.

For then I quite forget my poor estate,

The hidden future, and my restless heart,
And soul absorbed in some soft poet's
page,

Hear low-voiced damsels whispering
apart,

Mark silken galleys laden with rich freight,

And breathe the perfumes of another age.

*For J. K. Huysman's
A Rebours.*

WHENCE came this woman to our alien
air!

What sun-steeped lands, what teeming
mines and seas

Gave this rich gaud of fringed embroide-
ries,

These lucid gems her gilded bosoms bear?

She dwells in western towns, perversely fair,

The fume of opium dreams within her
eyes,

Her body impregnate with essences,

And spotted, leprous orchids in her hair.

The taint of moist decay is on her breath,

The sense of wasting hours and fetid death,

And in her proffered hand strange gifts
she brings,

A palsied will, a heart's paralysis,

Satiety and loathing—these and this,

A snake that turns upon itself and stings.

*After reading "Mdle. de
Maupin."*



YEA, though the carven work be fair and
good,
The arches shapely, and the rich shrine
dim,
Though through the silence steals a
perfect hymn
And all be wrought in Art's divinest mood,
Yet think not that the goddess deigns to
brood
Above the altar reared and decked by
him
To whom the body's beauty, white and
slim,
Is all the fair and true of womanhood.

A woman's love is other than you deem,
And only those are worthy of the prize
Who mate high living with a noble
creed ;
Who strive by self-control and tender
deed
To catch the spirit-love which never dies
When flesh is clean forgotten as a dream.

Rossetti's Gift.

AS the white soul sped up the golden stair
On which the new-born ghosts make
passing moan,
He brought his dead—ere burial flowers
were strewn—

Those oft-read rhymes which called her beauty
fair.

Then stooping o'er the still form lying there
Grey lips spake low to ears that heard
no tone,
As falt'ring that his songs were hers
alone,

He placed love's gift between her cheek and
hair.

May it not be that when his wearied soul
Gleamed through the mists that veil the
spirit lands,
One broke the order of Our Lady's bands
—Clothed in sad garb with mystic aureole—
And fleeting to his side with fluttered stole,
Held forth love's gift in passionate clasped
hands.

Dante's Grief.

WHICH woe of all the lifelong woes that
beat
On Dante's soul lay sorest? Not the
bread
—Tares mixed with salt—on which his
exile fed,
Not the steep stairs which scorned his weary
feet,
Nor the grim sentence, moans, and fiery heat
At hell's perse portal,—but that one dear
head,
By his most grievous sin discomforted,
Denied him salutation on the street.
Love—my heart's refuge—soft, devout, and
shy,
Loved half as maiden, rev'renced half as
queen,
If you but knew my days as coldly seen

By Michael's eyes, — stained, froward, all
 awry,
 You too would rise with proud averted
 mien,
Gather your raiment close, and pass me by.

In Memory of John Keats.

THE voice which told the soft voluptuous
 tale
 Of Madeline and love-lorn Porphyro
 Is silent now : the breezes creep and blow,
 Rustling the thin brown grass with piteous
 wail
 Above his grave. No grudging hearts now
 rail
 On one whose ever-spreading fame doth
 flow
 From a clear clarion, yet who long ago
 Was met with scoff, and sneer, and fierce
 assail.

For now that years have blown aside all mist,
 And we appraise him at essential worth,
 He stands amongst the singers of our
 earth,
 The fairest form of that fair company
 Which climbed the rugged mountain-tops,
 and kist
 The maiden lips of deathless poesy.

A Woman's Hair.

A WOMAN'S worship, Paul the Apostle
said,
Is in her tresses, yea, her hair hath been
The gold-fringed napkin of the Mag-
dalene,
A stair which thrilled beneath its lover's
tread.

In northern runes a maiden's silken head
Hid beggar rags with purple of a queen,
Her locks girt Galahad—as virgin clean,—
And served love's pillow for the laurelled
dead.

Men cry abroad its virtue, Nature's art,
Praise gloss and texture, find this colour
fair ;
But ah, the magic—rich, exotic, rare,—
He only knows who feels upon his heart
The treasured wonder, sacred and apart,
Dear gage of love, a maiden's fragrant
hair.

Prisoners of Hope.

WHAT part have I in Jesse—for the King
Scorns lukewarm service ; white of soul
are they

Who wear white raiment, victors from
the fray

Who wave His palm, and cast their crowns,
and sing.

These counted this rich life a common thing,
They wrought in sterile vineyards all
God's day,

Their sweat and blood made green a
grassless way,—

What part have I with such high following !

Ah, Lord, constrain me,—if not here and
now,

Then far through mystic æons, vast,
unknown,

Seek the faint soul and seal it for thine
own.

With skilled transplanting graft the barren
 bough,
Shed lustral dews, and lively heats enow,
 So this sick weed may flower before Thy
 Throne.

A Child's Dreams.

WHEN bed-time came, and childish
prayers were prayed,
She fell asleep, for all dear tales were
told—
Aladdin's lamp, the dwarf's enchanted
gold,
And simple rhymes that please a little maid.
And now her curls—how like the soft dark
braid
Worn next my heart—fall, tangled fold
in fold,
Whilst with kissed cheeks deep pillowed
from the cold
She dreams, watched close by love, and
unafraid.

What silver shapes and shining fantasies
 Make night dreams strange as day
 dreams, and more fair !
 The red-cloaked witch who climbed
 Rapünzel's hair
Haunts she this slumber ? or may now arise
 Her mother's presence stooping softly
 there,
With shadowy hair, and misty love-lit eyes ?

The Dream Child.

I.

WRAPT close in folds of ante-natal sleep,
Thank God, dear child, that thou hast
never been,

Thine ears have heard not, nor thine
eye hath seen,

Nor heart conceived life's sombre ways and
step.

Rest warm in soft oblivion, dreamless, deep,
Where poppies bloom, and all the graves
are green,

With spotless heart, with soul unstained
and clean,

Thank God, sleep soundly, laugh not, neither
weep.

Better th' untimely birth, the Preacher saith,
Than dead or living ; his the greater gain,
For him the senses spread their snare in
vain,

He knows not with the taking of each breath
Life's doubtful pleasure, and its certain
 pain,
The squalid grave, the tragedy of death.

II.

And yet, perchance, were death the goal of
 life,
 Its written Finis, and the end of all,
 'Twere good to live awhile, the senses
 thrall,
And learn the worth of peace by means of
 strife.
'Twere good to woo a maiden, wed a wife,
 To pluck the common flowers that blow
 and fall,
 To dance a little in the carnival,
Perchance, perchance, were death the goal of
 life.

Ah, when th' outwearied body flags and dies,
 Might sleep and silence follow, all were
 well.
 But when the soul, reluctant, quits its
 cell,

A tragic ghost with haunted, fearful eyes—
Perchance the lurid dawn in orient skies
 May prove the smoulder of the fires of
 Hell.

The Flower Bride.

LOVE heaped the glowing harvest, argent,
 pied,
 Deep coloured, richer blooms than earth
 hath doled,
 And framed his perfect dream, shy,
 silver-stoled,
To ease the heart no love had satisfied.
Whiter than lily gleamed the maiden's side,
 He spun her fallen hair of mary-gold,
 Shaped the still bosom on a rose's mould,
And wrought of scent and bud a flawless
 Bride.

Ah, types may paint her beauty to the eyes,
 But flowers, though red as gold, more
 pure than snow,
 Soft as south winds that from the spice
 lands flow,
These fail to tell her thought's sweet charities,
Her heart's red love, her soul's white
 ministries ;
 These have no symbol, these but one
 may know.

Raymond's Mistress.

“YOU say my life is led through pleasant
ways,

By fragrant myrtles, and the ripe gold
grain,

A lily-life, untouched by care or stain,
Fulfilled with beauty, rich in love and praise.

Yet who can thread the mystic tangled maze

Which fences round a soul, or who make
plain

The barren purpose of a life-long pain
Made hid and sacred from the common gaze?”

And speaking thus she plucked her kerchief
down,

And lo, her lover saw the tender side

Fretted and wasted, “Ah mine own,” she
sighed,

“If thus all eyes could pierce 'neath husk and
gown

In whose young heart would love be
deified,

Whose dainty head would men delight to
crown?”

In Memory of David Gray.

IS this the end,—a life of twenty years,
A barren longing, and an aching heart,
A voice unheard midst tumult of the
 mart,
A poet's raptures, and a lover's fears?
And then a white-haired mother's bitter
 tears,
A blind surcease from God's appointed
 work,
A grave beneath the shadow of the kirk,
Marked by the carven stone which love
 uprears.

Is this the end?—for then were living nought
 But helmless voyage, and impending
 wreck,
A school wherein the lie is ever taught,
 A painted horror for the fool to deck,
A mocking puzzle to our weary thought,
 A curse which follows at the devil's beck.



Death's Gifts.

ON hidden ways I met the Lord of Dread ;
His breath hung frosted on the summer
heat,
The noontide sunshine blackened at his
feet,
And in his shadow bud and bloom lay dead.
For awe I made a darkness round my head
And did such rev'ence as to Death is
meet,
Yet all my days from bitter turned to
sweet
Within the gloom that silent Presence shed.

But when Death spake peace sank upon my
breast,
"Thy heart beats yet thine own for
certain days,
Prepare therein to meet my face with
praise,
For at my touch life's aim grows manifest,
My gifts are tireless work, or stirless rest,
And peace for those who wept on hidden
ways."

A Ballade of Proserpine.

1.

I BRING no gifts of spice and bread,
Of Ophir's gold and dye of Tyre,
To deck Astarte's ivory bed
Or heap beside her altar fire.
No grace of love do I require,
I haunt no garish rose-hung shrine,
But crave for ease of heart's desire
The dreamy eyes of Proserpine.

2.

Within the kingdom of the dead
Grey Charon plies his ghostly hire,
And man and maid with soiled bare head
Wail near the river's marsh and mire.
Yea, never kiss, nor touch of lyre,
Nor dancing girl, nor scented wine
May glad those souls who hymn in choir
The dreamy eyes of Proserpine.

3.

Queen of the dead whom Death's self wed,
Whose white flesh knew no burial pyre,
On heart and brow has Lethe shed
Forgetfulness of home and sire.
In this thy piteous realm and dire
May peace yet cause that face to shine,
And soothe with popped soft strung
wire
The dreamy eyes of Proserpine.

ENVOY.

Queen, when my fated days expire,
Grant me to know those eyes on mine,
Eyes clear from tears, and joy, and ire,
The dreamy eyes of Proserpine.

The Song of Her Body.

THIS is the song of her body, rose-red,
wonderful, white,
A graft from the flora of Eden, a maid for
her lover's delight,
A comfort of cloud from the sun, a glow of
soft flame in the night.

God wrought her beautiful body, her limbs
He shaped at His ease,
He graced her with colour and worship, and
all that a lover might please,
And set His bright work 'gainst a background
of flow'rs and flowering trees.

How may I sing of her body—her face flushes
hot for a word,
It is hidden 'neath delicate raiment, it is sweet
as the song of a bird
In some leafy recess of the woodland, unseen
yet the clearer heard.

I am bound to her beautiful body by bands of
 crepuscular hair,
 It is heaped on her head as a circlet, or falls
 as a cloak she would wear,
 My heart is enwebbed in its meshes, and beats
 content in the snare.

God set in her beautiful body twin casements
 to lighten the gloom,
 There exquisite dreamings move whitely, like
 maids through a room,
 They flicker with passionate torches, lit,
 dearest, for whom!

In the midst of her beautiful body the virginal
 bosom is spread,
 It stirs to her breath and her pulses, it pillows
 one fortunate head,
 And serves in a wonderful fashion for our
 love-child's daily bread.

How may I sing of her body—her face flushes
 hot for a word,
 It is hidden 'neath delicate raiment, it is sweet
 as the song of a bird
 In some leafy recess of the woodland, unseen
 yet the clearer heard.

This is the song of her body, rose-red, wonderful, white,

A graft from the flora of Eden, a bride for her husband's delight,

A comfort of cloud from the sun, a warmth of live flame in the night.

A Spring Carol.

I HEAR the sound of growing grass,
Of climbing sap, of bursting bud,
The wonder of the spring doth pass
Like wine within my blood.

The trees were thick with singing birds,
I read Dan Chaucer in my chair,
There fell across the coloured words
The shadow of your hair.

Your voice their song, his rhyme, outsung,
Your mouth was sweeter, love, than
each,
The soft contralto of your tongue,
The cadence of your speech.

Ah, if in ghostly counterfeit
Your breathing presence came so near,
Since dreams may prove so kind a cheat
Think how I need you, dear.

I need you as a bird the south,
I seek with passion no man knows
The scarlet lilies of your mouth,
Your bosom's pallid rose.

I hear the sound of growing grass,
Of climbing sap, of bursting bud,
The magic of the spring doth pass
Like wine within my blood.

Then haste, dear love, like sudden spring
O'er stable lands, o'er shifting sea,
Most sweet, most fair that welcoming
When hands are clasped with thee.

Prelude to a St. Dorothy.

I LEARNED this legend from a silent
tongue

In simple days when faith was clear and
glad,

I cannot speak the spell its beauty flung
About one dreamy lad.

It haunted all the passage of my youth,
A mystic shadow moving near to me,
A Roman lady, witness to Christ's truth,
God's maiden, Dorothy.

And now in manhood if I dare rehearse
This saintly legend of dim Pagan days,
May her bright presence lighten my poor
verse,
Refine it to her praise.

May she who sent Theophilus the flowers
Grant in this rhyme some fragrance may
 arise,
Perfume of roses from uncantered bowers,
 Rich strays of Paradise.

Grant also, lady, some prevailing prayer,
 That after penal cleansing, by Christ's
 grace,
I too may tread those orchard gardens fair,
 And bow before thy face.

Old French.

IF Love should pass with trailing wing!
I may not sleep for sorrowing.

In dreamless watches of the night
Love's parted presence seeks my sight.

I left my bed at dawn of day
And took my cloak of fur and grey.

In orchard glooms birds sought their mate
I entered by a wicket gate.

And lo, the lark and nightingale
Told to my heart a wondrous tale.

For thus they sang that matin tide,
"My true love hastens to my side.

E'en now his boat of painted wood
Beats with swift oars the Seine to flood.

Her satin sails spread fold on fold,
With silken cordage manifold,
And rudder of the beaten gold.

Near ivory masts her sailors stand,
Fair men and strangers to this land.

One wears the broidered fleur de lys,
The King of France's son is he.

And eager, near the Prince's side
My true love hastens to his bride."

Sonnet.

(AFTER BAUDELAIRE.)



I N far south lands made sweet with fragrant
 balms
 I knew, beneath the shade of purpled
 trees
And drowsy stillness of the drooping palms,
 Afar from towns, withdrawn in slothful
 ease,
A Creole lady. Pale her tint, but warm,
 With soft brown skin, and nobly carried
 head,
With tranquil smile, and dainty slender form,
 Assured calm eyes, and supple springy
 tread.

If ever, madam, fate shall shape your ways
 To glorious France, your grace—which
 nothing lacks
 To flash the jewel of some ancient
 seat—
 Within the shadows of your sure
 retreat
Will cause a thousand sonnets in its praise,
 And make our hearts more humble than
 your blacks.

Exotic Perfume.

(AFTER BAUDELAIRE.)

I N autumn twilight, when with fast closed
eyes

I breathe the fragrance of thy fervent
breast,

About me spreads a reach of changeless skies,
And sunlit dazzling shores in happy rest.

A drowsy isle, the dainty forcing place
Of luscious fruits, and strange gigantic
trees,

The sultry dwelling of a slender race
Whose girls are frank and lightsome as
the breeze.

Led thus by dreams towards these sunset climes,
I gaze upon a crowded port, a throng
Of masts and sails, an open windswept
sea,

Whilst from the land the perfume of the
limes

Makes sweet the air, and comes across to
me

Blent with the chorus of a sailor's song.

An Old Goldsmith.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF HEREDIA.)

I HANDLED brush and graver with more
 ease,
 More deftness, than all Masters of the
 Guild,
 In jewelled work my subtle brain was
 skilled,
I shaped the vase, and wrought its storied
 frieze.
Now, silver and enamel fail to please,
 For there I traced—so my snared soul
 hath willed—
 No sacred Rood, no Deacon Lawrence
 grilled,
But vine-girt gods, or Danae's gold-clasped
 knees.

To Hell's own service my red forge inlaid
With fair devices some rich rufflers blade,
 Till deep in pride my part of Life is lost.

Thus seeing I grow fearful, and am old,
E'er death may come and falling dark enfold
 I chase a golden monstrance for the Host.

The Chatelaine.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF RICHEPIN.)

WITHIN a chamber dim with tapestry,
Stiff in her long straight girdle edged
with fur

And steeple cap, the Chatelaine broods
there,

The linen veil falls whitely to her knee.

She fingers at the rebeck listlessly

And dreams of him who plighted troth
with her,

He fights to gain Christ's holy sepulchre
In pagan lands beyond the weary sea.

When he shall come to wed the maid he
wood

And pluck the lily of her maidenhood

What priest may tell, what subtle wizard
know?

But should he die before the felon foe

True to her faithful promise, chaste and good,

No kiss shall warm her bosom's virgin
snow.

The Gresham Press,

UNWIN BROTHERS,

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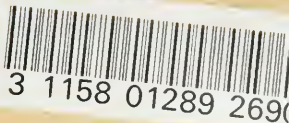
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