

FLOWERS OF PASSION
By George Moore
Edited by Robert Becker

George Moore (1852-1933) was a creative Irish writer of modernist fiction, memoir, essay, drama and poetry. He was a contributor to several “movements” and is fondly remembered as a purist who made art for art’s sake.

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Dedication: to L —

Lean meward, O beloved! let me crown
Thy brows with chaplet. Votive wreath I twine
Of symbol flowers, and therein weave for sign,
From graft of passion, roses that have grown
Bitter as frothing of blood; yet cast not down
As worthless weeds, but set upon Love's shrine
In vase full filled with memories of mine,
These bloomless blossoms of a time long flown.

Frail fledglings of heart-hidden memories,
Pale passion flowers I bring to thee, my sweet,
As Mary brought her offerings of white doves;
No greater gifts have I to give than these
Of seeds we sowed. I lay them at thy feet;
For they are thine, and being thine are Love's.

Ode to a Dead Body

Is it a garden of eternal sleep
Where dreams laugh not or weep?
A place of quiet below the tides of life
Afar from toil or strife?
A deep calm sea our souls may yearn unto
Where memory never flew?
A darkling void cloaked in a clinging night
Unstirred by any light?
The tomb is veiled — these are its mysteries,
That no man ever sees.

O! queen of love discrowned and stripped to-day
Of all thy gold array
Save the pale gold of thy enwoven hair
Which drapes thy body bare.
Thou wast in life a creature of the hour,
No graver than a flower,
A gilded fly who played in the high noon
Of pleasure's waning moon,
Until at last thou fellest, a withered leaf
Worth gathering in no sheaf
Of memory, to be upstored and kept
By none who watched and wept.

Ay verily, thou art a piteous thing,
So awful is death's sting.
Poor shameful lips! that never knew a kiss
Of innocence, I wis.
Poor breasts! whose nipples sins alone have fed.
Poor desecrated head!
Poor lily hands! steeped in the mire of shame,
Poor heart! whose love ran lame.
Thou hast no lover now, Why have they gone
And left thee here alone?
Is there not one of all the hundreds who
Once kissed thee thro' and thro'
In the deep silence of the summer night
In rapture and delight,
Whose memory a little gold might crave
And give to thee a grave,
Afar from city's roar, amid tall trees
In nearing of the seas,
Whose sighing voices whispered in thine ear

In childhood's happy year,
When thou wast dreaming dreams in the high grass,
Watching for ships to pass
And fade beneath the long horizon line,
Taking each for a sign?

The legends say that 'twas in woman first
Love's lips grew dry with thirst,
And held to man the poisoned apple Lust,
Whose core is burning dust
That fills the well-springs of the heart, and dries
Their sources to arise
No more, and slake the dry Sahara plain
Of passion and pale pain.
Or do the legends lie, and was it man
Whose fleshly wings did fan
Those scorching winds whose fiery flame-like breath
Pursue the soul to death?
It matters nought, the imminent end is one
To harlot and to nun,
Virtue and vice conceived in one womb
Sleep in the self-same tomb.
The head of Lust was coined from thy face,
And bought in market place
Plain passion, and strange sins without a name
E'en in the lists of shame;
And thou wast hated, trodden underfoot
With gibe and laugh and hoot,
And loved and kissed with wild delirious kiss,
Till Death took thee in his
Breast, laying thee asleep afar from love
Or any scorn thereof,
Equal to all. For dust is e'er the same
And free from taint of shame.

A wondrous race is thine. Since time began,
Since love to lust first ran,
And plighted faith was broken and cast down
As an unkingdomed crown,
And Vice took seat upon the world's high throne
To reign and rule alone,
And Virtue as his queen was placed beside
To serve him for a bride,
Hast thou been knelt to and with tears adored,
And bought with gold and sword.
The grave takes thee, another of thy race

Soon fills the vacant place,
As rose replaces rose upon the tree
As sweet each to the bee.
So to the furthest end of history
The self-same thing shall be,
For lust is love, and love is king o'er kings
And master of earthly things.

I gaze upon thy face now changed in death
In fear and awe-held breath,
And ponder if this clay-built tenement
Be of divine intent;
If for it God has not conceived a soul
And made a perfect whole
To live transfigured through all change and time
Immutable, sublime;
Or if 'tis nothing but an instant part
Of this world's mighty heart,
Wandering thro' space in every shape and form,
Like changing cloud in storm;
Either may be! two roads to left and right,
Unknown, both lost in night.

Ginevra

[Four corrections listed in an errata slip have been made in this transcription.]

SCENE — *A bridge in the city of Verona.*

TIME — *Nearly midnight.*

ANTONIO. If every man had on his brow engraved
The sorrow he had known, what mockery
Would pity be! Life's pleasures are but few,
Life's griefs are many, and their end the same.
Yet sometimes in the silent solitude
Sorrow doth seem most like a comforter;
Her very pain is sweet, her very tears
Like oil assuage and calm life's weary waves.
How wonderfully sweet the midnight hour!
How silent and mysteriously still
A city seems by night! Now all is hushed
Beneath the spell of sleep. The heavens lie
Buried in deep repose. The river flows
Serenely on in silent stateliness;
With all its sad and secret histories
Hidden within a time-unwrinkled breast:
It passes like a dream whose skirt we strive
To seize when waking's night eluding us.
How like it is to life! It comes and goes,
Changing, yet e'er the same. The domes and temples
Lie quivering in its breathless atmosphere,
And are erased by every passing cloud
And every wandering air, like dreams by dreams.
'Tis strange that all must die. If some bright spirit,
Pausing on its aerial way, would tell
To listening ears why rainbows gleam not ever;
Why wind and cloud and fairest flowers must die;
Why all things come and go mysteriously.
Then we should know; the highway would be lit
With light that darkens sun and moon and star,
And we might drink of joy and call life pleasure.
The earth would give no longer thorns to tread,
And sorrow no more bitter tears to weep.

Man, Lord of things, encrowned in wisdom of years,
Would sit supreme, God over gods dethroned.

(Enter ORISINO.)

ORISINO. Heigh ho! Antonio, as usual.
Dreaming some faint sick dream.

ANTONIO. What, is it thou?

ORISINO. Yes, it is I who wake thee from thy dreams;
And yet, methiriks, withal thou art most carnal,
And lovest well the pleasures of the flesh.
Yea, I will warrant that a lady is
The cause of all this moonlight meditation.

ANTONIO. It may be that thou hast divined it rightly.

ORISINO. Well! love is fair and very beautiful.
What sweeter than a tender lily girl,
Who clings to you in devout simplicity,
Like ivy to the oak!

ANTONIO. It may be so;
But I aver your girls do weary me.
I long for that more spiritual essence
Of soul-predestined love, that, like a star,
Flames burning bright and unconsumably,
Shedding a light and radiance through the deep
And middle night of soul despondency.
And though a distance limitless doth now
Divide me from my soul conceived soul,
Yet I, without sign-manual of love,
Or God, or any human precedent,
Do blindly and unreasoningly adore.

ORISINO. Thy brain is sick with dream and fantasy.
Hast thou, then, met this shadow of thy soul?

ANTONIO. If I were e'er to speak my secret mind,

In bitter loathing thou would'st turn from me.

ORISINO. Thou knowest well I never judged thee harshly;
Since we were boys 'twas I that did excuse thee
When others blamed. Nay! speak, Antonio.

ANTONIO. I tell thee, if I speak, that thou wilt hate,
Ay, even full as much as thou dost love.

ORISINO. It grieves me sore to hear thee speak so.

ANTONIO. Yes,
'Tis as I say; but speak of other things.

ORISINO. Nay, nay, Antonio; 'tis twenty years
Since, on my or on thy dear mother's knee,
(I know not which, for they were loving friends,
As we have been, and were inseparable)
We first did enter into friendship's bonds.

ANTONIO. I know thou lovest me, thou art my friend;
But there are things that some see black as night,
Yet others think as bright and pure as day.
I tremble at my love. The human heart,
Like brooks and wells, has many flowers that bloom
Beneath the lucid wave. These flowers ever
Turn their eyes towards the sun, and seek to pierce
The green gloom of the silent atmosphere;
They struggle hard, and when at length their roots
Give way, released they rise to the topmost wave,
And gaze upon the long-imagined sun;
But, like a tame bird in an unknown land,
They find no kinship, only enmity.
The killing insect and the gnawing worm
Soon seize the fragrant blossom, and deflower
Its loveliness.

ORISINO. If love's attainment be
So cast, why seek predestined bitterness?

ANTONIO. Because 'tis better far to see the sun
And die, than live purblind eternally.

ORISINO. Trust me, Antonio; my counsel will
Help thee, perhaps.

ANTONIO. Ask me no more, but list.
Long I lay in the shadow of my thought,
Where all was shrouded 'neath the inky veil
Of storm-closed clouds of doubt and misery;
My soul raged like a midnight sea, that writhes
A wounded thing beneath the lashing scourge
Of wind and rain. The storm lulled suddenly,
And a green patch of sky between the clouds
Shone like a burning emerald; green glancing
Shadows played o'er the sea's marmoreal breast,
And, midway 'tween the sea-line and the sky,
A plenilune of love hung motionless;
And myriad stars of joy and hope shone bright
Within the deep unfathomably. It was
My own fair sister, who stood signal-wise,
Lighting the beaconed wintry wilderness
That I called life. The first snow-drop that peeps
From earthly nest, and gazes tremblingly
Upon the bare, bleak world, is not more dear
To mother Spring than this sweet child to me;
But custom's bitter mouth had cursed the love
That might 'tween brother and a sister grow.

ORISINO (*aside*). Have I gone mad, or do I hear aright?
My brain reels round; I feel a dizzy sickness
Seize hold on me; a something glues my lips
And clings, and eats into my very bones.
I am like one in loathsome charnel pit
Where things are veiled in pestilential haze.
Pah! What a nauseous hell-born infamy!
My hand would stab him in the very mouth,
Would pluck forth by the roots that fetid weed,
His tongue, and cast it to the dogs. But no,
The dogs would vomit sick with loathing hate.

And this is whom I loved. What scorpion
Lay in my breast! But I will listen yet
Tho' his words sting me unto bitter death.

ANTONIO. Our father first encouraged our sweet love,
But when at length the whole truth dawned on him,
He tried by threats and prayers to wean us from
What he did blindly term unholy passion;
But finding then, too late, it was most useless
To separate two hearts that love had joined,
He prisoned her within a convent wall.

ORISINO. Most merciful God! my cup of bitterness
Indeed is full, aye filled to overflowing:
To know the girl that I thought pure and chaste,
So black, so false, and full of infamy,
The girl I loved with a great unuttered love.

(Searches for dagger.)

Not now, the guard comes by. It must be done
Most silently and secretly.

(Soldiers pass singing.)

Fill high the stoup of wine; fill high,
And drink to our sweethearts dear;
We laugh and sing but never sigh.
Unless in a lady's ear.

(Chorus.)

A soldier's life, a soldier's life,
A soldier's life for me;
In every town we have a wife,
In every city three.

ANTONIO. What noise those roistering fellows make; one's speech
Is drowned in utterance.

This very night

I meet her in the convent cemetery.
Love lends her wings to pass the gate and wall,
And she will fly with me to some far land,
Where none will ever know the double love
That binds us two.

What thinkest thou? My plan.

Does it not seem to thee most feasible?
The strangeness of my love bewilders thee;
The prejudice of years and teaching blinds.
Sweetness can ne'er be wrong. Nay, thou wilt help
And aid me. Why those passion-pale bent brows?

ORISINO. I prithee, pardon. Th' wildness of thy words,
The darkness of the night, a hundred things,
Unnerve my thoughts.

(Aside.) I'll let him meet her there,

And then, before her very eyes, this steel
Shall kiss his foul black heart, and send his soul
To writhe in darkness of tempestuous fire.
Then, long sweet years of undiminished love,
And prayers and hopes will I lay round her feet;
And, if from this most baneful lust I wean
Her once bright pure ethereal soul, my life
Will have attained its furthest end.

SCENE II.

An old ruinous cemetery, ivy-grown walls, dilapidated, tombs and gravestones.

(Enter ANTONIO and ORISINO.)

ANTONIO. No sound disturbs the night. Wild clouds like hounds
A weary moon do chase thro' starless fields
Of wintry sky. The wandering wind doth sigh,
As might a spectre lady sorrowing
Around the nuptial bed of her beloved.
The yews and cypresses, the waving grass,
Seem instinct with the grave. How painfully
Those whitening willows swing their mystic branches
On every passing air. Do they not seem

To whisper to the mist-wrought phantom forms
That rise from out the wormy earth, and float
Folding themselves into a hundred shapes,
Divided by the wind. The tomb-cast shadows
Steal weirdly to and fro winding across
The cemetery. How pallid is the light
Of the cold smitten moon! Here all is death,
And images of death. This silent earth
Holds men and maids who loved; holds sin and crime,
Strange hates and bitter wretchedness. O Earth!
Thou mother of us all, I kiss thy face,
I brush my cheek amid thy grass and leaves.
Thou art the final end; thou askest nought,
Thy mute lips question not; thou givest peace
To harlot and to nun, to atheist
And priest, alike, a sweet eternal peace.

ORISINO. Methinks the scene is not the cheerfullest.
You do but dream. The place oppresses me,
This gravestone's opportune, let us sit here.
Some minutes yet must pass before the hour
Doth strike, that day from night divides. But hark!
What is that awful penetrating sound?
It fills the mind with fearful trembling.

(Chorus of Nuns.)

From out of the deep sea of time, we arise,
Whose depths are unstirred by the pulse of the years,
Whose waters are waveless, unbittered with tears;
Where all is a sleep without ears, without eyes;
We arise, we awake, on the stroke of the hour
When virginal love blooms into an infinite flower.

From out of the deep sea of time, we awake,
Where sleep has no current, nor tide to upcast
The tall foundered wrecks of the pale dead past;
Where the stars of the future ne'er tremble and break;
We arise, we awake, for the dawning is near,
And is whitening the surge of the hours that pour out the year.

(Voices front above.)

Our passions sustain us, and move
To the motion of instinct desire;
With the rhythmical anguish of love,
And the heaving of tremulous fire.

(Voices front below.)

The thirst unassuaged yet unsloken
Will be drowned in the fiercest delight;
And love will be rent and be broken.
And kissed out of feeling or sight.

(A Voice.)

Our virtue resisted
The passion, that twisted
The sense in its coils, till our senses were withered and sere.

(Another Voice.)

Now all that love's passion
Can mould, or can fashion,
We will know, we will taste, this night of the hundredth year.

(Voices from above.)

We nestle, like nestling of doves,
We hover on shadowing wings,
O'er the eyes and the lips of loves
Dreaming unreachable things.

(A Voice.)

No love will be rootless,
No joy will be fruitless,
All things will be sweet, and passion the thing the most dear.

(Voices from below.)

The shuddering of eyelids and lips;
The trembling of senses that die;
The spirit too weary, that trips
And falls like the breath in a sigh.

(Chords of Nuns and Virgins.)

Laid low by the gods in the deep,
In the deep below vision or dream,
Where the worm her vigil doth keep
Together with the soul supreme;
On the threshold of Adenn, we seem
To gaze down a vista of light,
To float on a magical stream,
 In the sight
 Of delight
That is seen like a gleam through the night.
 We have wandered
 A hundred
Dim weary years on the bound,
On the limits of heaven and earth, awaiting the trumpet to sound.

Unmingled with passion for leaven,
Our love grew as bitter as dust;
And we gazed on unreachable heaven,
Leaving our bodies to rust.
We arise from the earth, for we must,
With lips all alive with desire,
With sense o'erladen with lust;
 Like the fire
 Of a pyre,
Like the tones of a vibrating lyre,
 Like the moon.
 In a swoon
Of love on the bosom of night,
Our senses are panting, are trembling, and fainting, i' a dream of delight.

(A Voice.)

Oh, take ye and eat.
Our love is most sweet;
Our lips are as honey, our bosom the milk of desire.

(Voices from above.)

Come, kiss ere the dawn be risen,
Our kisses are strange and unknown;
Come, sleep in our bosom's fair prison,
Till pleasure be bloomless and blown.

(Another Voice.)

Our limbs are as white
As snow in the night;
Our breath is as balm when the soul sinks down to expire.

(Voices front below.)

We mete out a measure of passion,
A measure of mixed gall and wine;
And love we re-model and fashion,
Till love doth sink down supine.

(Semi-chorus of Nuns and Maidens.)

To love's translucid waters
We immaculate daughters
Pass on, arrayed and garlanded as brides;
Athirst with love's sweet want,
Around the sacred font
We kneel, and pray for love and what besides,
With bent reverted heads
And faces veiled, awaiting Love's communion breads.

ANTONIO. I hear sweet singing in the upper air,
That fills mine ear with strange, sweet harmony;
My soul doth beat her wings in vain endeavour
To break the prison bars, that sepulchre

The spirit in this tenement of clay.
And wander forth in the untainted air.

ORISINO. My heart is dead. It is not mortal music.

ANTONIO. List well. Their voices are with lightning crowned;
They roll like thunder on the midnight wind,
Ebbing and flowing like advancing tides;
And, as each white crest rears, and falling swells
In wild majestic consonance, pausing
A moment, that the two united strains
May fall in justly-balanced unison,
Note how each separate wave of sound doth rise
In one undeviating mystic measure.

ORISINO. A moment hence those clouds of phantom forms
Did whiten in their flight the vault of heaven.
They seem to pass away, and I to think
That all was but a dream's imaginings.
But, lo! they are now nearer than before.
My God! they seem to sweep, to touch the earth.
I hear a rush of wings. A sense of dread
That lifts the hair on end, an icy glare
And the damp smell of clay cling round my lips.
Does not one glide from their receding ranks?
Methinks I see a woman standing there.
Woman or ghost, I know not which, or what,
This night has been so terrible.

ANTONIO. O where?

ORISINO. Beneath the moon.

ANTONIO. That white-robed maiden there,
So wild, so strangely, beautifully bright:
Her faultless form is seen so varyingly,
Seeming beneath her transitory robe
Like restless gossamer; her pale white hands
Are moveless as dead things; her eyelashes
Are worn away with tears. From her faint lips

Colour and smile seem to have fled for ever.
Toward us she doth glide. Her golden hair
Cloud-like floats down the wind of her own speed.
'Tis she whom I have waited for so long,
It is my sister.

(Rushes forward into her arms, but starts back as soon as he touches her.)

ORISINO. The time is now arrived, his days are counted.

*(He draws his dagger. GINEVRA waves her
hand, the dagger falls.)*

The terror of the night unnerves my will,
I shake as if with ague, my hand, palsied,
Falls like a dead thing useless: but the sight
Of their incestuous love sends new blood back,
Filling the wells and springs of my weak heart.

*(He draws his sword, she waves her hand, and
the sword breaks.)*

What devilish spells are these? But though he be
Leagued by a million bonds to the Evil One,
He shall not now escape my just vengeance.
Thy spells are vain, my hands will strangle thee.

(Tries to advance, but retreats instead.)

SCENE III.

Room in the house of ANTONIO.

ANTONIO and GINEVRA sitting on a couch.

ANTONIO. My love doth take one like the sea; it swells
With wash of thickening waters, when sweet dreams
Make its heart leap with such a might of joy
As hurls its waves together, and then again
When they have fled into their furthest caves,

And left its bosom glassy as a mirror,
I gaze therein upon the tearful face
Of my despair. Thou art too lovely, sweet.
I can but close my eyes, and dream a dream
Of many strange and feverish agonies.
O love! thou knowest not how weak I am;
How overlaid my soul is with desire
That longs yet loathes. This hour has come at last.
How I have sighed for it! how it has been
Bound up within my life as the end of all!
The supreme, gracious end that life might pour
Into her vase, till all was overflowed
With very sweetness. Turn meward thy lips,
That chalice ruby-wrought. Let loose, let slide
Thy girdle's clasp, I fain would kiss thy bosom,
Those snow-white roses, blooming into red.
There let me lay my head, and dream away
What we call life; and firewise let love burn
And smoulder into ash. Nay, nay, my sweet,
Let me weave thy soft hair around thy hands,
Tying the other braid across my throat,
I would so sweet a rope might strangle me.

(He kisses her.)

Thy cheeks are cold, more chilly than the snow;
Thine eyes are glassy like a midnight sea,
And thy lips hold a pale and moony smile,
As in a dream's strange wild imaginings.
I clasp thy fair sweet body in my arms,
But it doth freeze my breast that burns with love.
Oh! why that wild and wonder-stricken air?
Knowest not me! thine own Antonio.
Lie closer on me, breathe the fire
Of love in thee.

Is this the wandering
Of insane brain? Ginevra! art thou dead
Before the fulfilment of my love? Ginevra!
Speak one low whispered word to me, and say
That thou dost live.

SCENE IV.

Outside the door of ANTONIO'S chamber.

ORISINO (*listening*). I hear their mingling voices,
Like cooing doves in newly-budding trees:
I hear kiss laid on kiss, sigh breathed on sigh.
What super-human power has chained my will?
I will, but cannot act. Most merciful God
Thou hast revealed to me the agony
And bloody sweat of dire Gethsemane,
The scourging of the pillar, the crown of thorns,
The cracking, splitting nerves, and racked joints
Of three hours' crucifixion. Thine anguish
I here do feel, O God! bound, crucified.

Scene inside.

(ANTONIO kisses GINEVRA, but starts back as if stung.)

ANTONIO. The same cold corpse-like chill, the livid hue,
The wan and sunken outline as before.
Ginevra! art thou dead? Ginevra, speak!
Speak, or my brain goes mad with agony.

GINEVRA. When from her antenatal dreams the moth
Doth prune her trembling wing, and soars away
Amid the sunny skies and sweet spring flowers,
She leaves behind an empty chrysalis:
Like her, we mortals cast a shell called life,
When the soul spreads her pinions heavenward
To flowerful fields of immortality.
The gates of love are the outer gates of heaven,
Each thought a step toward the spirit divine,
Each deed a link of one stupendous chain
Stretching from depth to height. Good bye, O! brother,
Soon we beyond the portals of the tomb
Shall meet for ever.

(GINEVRA *vanishes*.)

ANTONIO. I must be mad, or dream;
I stretch my arms and clasp but yielding air.
The lips and hands I kissed, the eyes that gazed
In love and fear, the faultless, peerless form
That these arms held in amorous embrace,
Are dissolved into unsubstantial air.
I must be mad or dream. Here is the place
Her leaned back head did bow the pillows in
When my lips closed upon the fragrant flower
Of her sweet breast, kissed till the pained blood quivered.
Art thou gone? speak; my brain reels dizzy, speak!
My breath doth take me by the throat, a chill
Lays icy hand upon me, the pavement sinks
Beneath my feet, my eyes are blind with blood.
I strive to catch my thoughts that swoop meward
Like hawks that stoop, but to the lure to strike,
And tear at it with ravening beak and talon,
And then uncaptured slide back in high air.

ORISINO (*rushing in*). Thy spells are broken now, my will asserts
Again its sovereignty. Incestuous villain! yield!
My sword doth guard. No more canst thou flee me
Than thou canst flee thy shadow, which is Death.

ANTONIO. My brain is fire, and every thought a flame.
Whose flickering forked tongues do burn and smite
As the foul kisses of some leprous bride.
I cannot follow thy loud storm of words;
Go hence, leave me, to-morrow we will speak.

ORISINO. Draw sword, defend thyself, and yield her me.
I come not here with fair and specious words,
But drunken with my hate's fierce fumes, and with
Plain passion, that doth seek its ends by straight,
Not crooked path.

ANTONIO. Thy wandering windy words
Do drift their way but slowly thro' the sense,
And I have neither strength nor will to seek
Their meaning. Go; my brain is in a whirl

Of trouble-tost tempestuous thoughts. Begone!

ORISINO (*advancing*). Defend thyself, if thou would'st seek to save
Thy venomous life, or I will tread thee out
Like crawling reptile.

ANTONIO. I scarcely fathom yet
What thou dost will. Why seekest thou to fight
With me, thy friend? Thou art but drunk, go hence!

ORISINO. Liar! I own no friendship bond with thee.
"Defend thyself," are the last words I speak,
Until I lean hellward to curse thee there.

ANTONIO. Assuredly, I have no humour now
To bandy words with thee as thou willest.

(They fight, ANTONIO is killed).

Annie

O list, beloved, calm your tremulous heart,
Your tears are vain, you will forget full soon;
Love is but like a sensual, sweet tune
That stills the sense; for when the last notes part,
We wake to consciousness with a faint start.
The love birds pair and build again in June,
And weave new dreams beneath a latter moon.
Courage, 'tis but a momentary smart.

Your lips are sweet, and your sad face as fair
As pale white rose that blooms into a red;
And those curled locks of hyacinthine hair,
That drape in golden fleece thy neck and head,
Still hold my sense and heart within their snare
Thoughli destiny another word has said.

My heart is like a crystal filled with tears,
That the least breath will break. Speak not a word,
For each doth pierce me like a sharpened sword
That quickens in the sense. My open ears
Hear but the sighing sound of stricken fears,
And my eyes see but ghosts who lean meward
Wringing their hands. Too weak am I, O Lord!
To bear the burden of the looming years.

I dare not raise my face to look at ye,
Ye years-still dreaming in futurity,
Ye barren days and fruitless nights unborn.
The dark wall of the present is too steep —
No gleam of sun or moon therein doth creep —
And veils a night that ne'er will look on dawn.

Nay, think it not so hard, I loved you well
And even now I will aver that love
Still lives. Nay, gaze not so like wounded dove,
But kiss me, sweet, before we say farewell.
God wot, it was not my unguided will
That led me to the altar. My soul was rife

With grief when my lips spoke the name of Wife,
For I loved you and love you even still.

Nay, do not weep. Nay, clasp your hands not so.
Your grief is mine, your sorrow is mine own,
And wrings my soul with the like suffering.
Come, Annie, kiss me once before I go,
And think of me when sitting here alone,
As I of thee, though life may sigh or sing.

My sweet, kill me not so, but lay the steel
 Against my heart.
Fear not, I will not cry, I will not feel
 Nor even start.

I will but clasp and kiss thee till I die;
 It will be worth
More than my life, for I shall know that I
 Kept thee till death.

And if thou wilt, then lay me in some place
 Where thou must pass
Often, and cull the flowers that interlace
 Amid the grass.

I shall be happy; they will be from me
 An offering,
And whisper, sweet, the love I keep for thee
 All blossoming.

Believe me, Annie,
 'Tis want of money
That forces us apart:
 It is not any
Capriciousness of heart.
 Pity me, Annie.

Believe me, Annie,
There are not many
Truer loves on earth than mine;

Flowers in a cranny
Of desert wall must pine.
Pity me, Annie.

It is weary regretting,
There is no forgetting
Of sorrows.

Come days and come nights,
Ye bring undelights
And morrows.

Come winter and spring,
No summer can bring
Me gladness.

Come months and come years,
Ye bring me new tears
Of sadness.

Yet beneath and above,
Float the spirits of love
Condoling.

And when they have passed,
Death comes up at last
Consoling.

How sweet it is to lie
Amid the soft cool grass,
And watch the evening sky
Change grey, and changing pass.
I listen to the drowsy bee
And wonder what are we;
I listen to the stream,
It murmurs like a dream;
And listlessly I linger
Weaving with busy finger
These varied flowers into
A wreath of varied hue;

And as I weave, I throw
Into the stream below
The flowers I refuse,
As men throw the love they use.

Some how it happeneth
They weave a fairy wreath,
The basil and mignonette,
The rose and the violet,
The graceful eglantine
With the scented jessamine,
And hundred other buds
Entwine within the floods.
Now all the flowers lie
Opposed harmoniously,
And seem to glide and dance
In love and radiance;
One flower alone is left
Within my lap bereft;
It is the sorrowing aloe
Crowned with unearthly halo
Of a hundred weary years;
I will water it with tears
And place it in my bower,
For I am an aloe flower,
And sisters we will be,
Peaceless and sorrowful we.

The ground is sparkling bright with dew,
The stars bathe in the silent stream, —
The moon a light white, green, and blue,
Thro' every copse and glade flings through,
And nightingales dream a singing dream
 That fills the skies
With sad sweet harmonies.

The trembling odorous air is filled
And overlaid with too much sweet;
The wandering breeze is almost stilled,
Like a girl whose passion's rage has killed

All consciousness, save love's sweet heat.
 Love doth present
To all his sacrament.

The castle is black against the sky,
Sleep reigns in every room save one,
But sitting in the garden, I,
Without a tear, without a sigh,
Watch like a calm-eyed sphinx of stone
 That window's light.
Where passes a bridal night.

I watch the moon with a steadfast eye,
 She glides like a ghost away
Thro' long unending reaches of sky
 That seem like an azure bay;
Half veiled in a veil of spray
 In a swoon she is gliding by.

I follow her course with weary brain,
 Unheeding the thoughts that sigh.
For I am tired of pleasure and pain,
 And only long to die,
To sleep with no dream nigh,
 Where love and longing are twain.

My body wet with dew,
 I shiver on the stair;
The wind is wandering thro'
 My fluttering dress and hair.

I turn to look again
 Upon the moon and sky;
I press my weary brain
 And hopeless long to die.

For life is but a snare,
 An empty, idle boast,
A chalice filled with care,

A fleeting shadowy ghost.

I am almost now afraid
To climb the echoing stair,
For every rustling air,
And wandering light and shade.
Seem to be mocking me and my despair.

The oriel window there
Weaves shadows on the floor;
The pallid moon doth stare
Right down the corridor,
Sealing with signet seal their chamber door.

Seeming to say, Beware!
His lips are not for thee,
Walk through thy life and wear
Humbly thy destiny,
Till opens imminent eternity.

The door is past,
I stand aghast,
And, with emotion pale,
I draw the bed's white veil.

Face leaned on face,
In last embrace
They lie in the still gleam,
Like shadows of a dream.

Ay! she is fair,
Cheek, lips, and hair,
She smiles within her sleep,
As though she saw me weep.

His hands entwine
Linked in thine.
Life gave him unto thee,
But Death restores him me.

O for a heaven of singing,
Of delight and of love,
Where all the heavens are ringing
Beneath and above,
With music as soft as the light of the wings of a dove.

Where roses for ever are blooming
'Mid myrtles and vine,
Where stars and moon are illuming
The bowers where twine
The mystical eons, the glory of vision divine.

Where breezes for ever are sighing
Their love to the stream,
Whose murmur is ever replying
Like a dream to a dream.
Whose harmony wanders as fitful as wind-driven gleam.

Where passion and love never dwindle;
Where love is not lame;
Where delights for ever enkindle
And pass into flame,
In splendours undying, for dying they come as they came.

Where there is delight and no sorrow
'Tween the bud and the fruit;
Where there is no past and no morrow,
Where the spirit is mute
Listening sadly to dreams between music of harp and of lute.

All this I can give to thee, dearest,
This fire will give death.
Breathe, therefore; the fumes that thou fearest
Are sweeter than breath,
For they will give death and death is sweeter than earth.

Shadows and lights wax dimmer,
Shaping a mystic glimmer,
A gloom of sullen red;
The air grows heavy and thicker,

The lamplights tremble and flicker,
In the darkling and dead
Vapours that spread.

Between the mists unfolden,
Unto mine eyes beholden,
Pale phantoms lean to me;
Their hands for pity reaching,
Their voices grace beseeching;
I see them pass and flee
Sorrowfully.

How fair his face doth seem
Beneath the white moonbeam,
Like a sweet passing shape within a passing dream.
Oh! vase of burning tears
Bound in the frost of years,
Break now thine icy chains for the dawn of a new day nears.

The morn is breaking now.
Around, above, below,
Winnowing the white clouds as wind doth winnow snow.
Brow bound with golden plumes,
The sun again illumines
The orange widening sky, and Day his reign assumes.

A long, white shroud of light
Is spreading o'er the Night,
And all her raven tresses are turning gold and bright;
My dress I throw away,
For, sinless now, I may
Intwine my limbs in thy dispassionate cold clay.

The night's dark race is run,
Day is not yet begun,
And side by side we lie the dead by the living one.
Oh! hail. Oh! hail. Oh! hail,
Deliverance cannot fail,
Life closes her weary life at last, so weak and pale.

We shall wake to laugh or weep,
We shall know if death be deep,
Or we shall sleep perhaps a calm and dreamless sleep,
And men will shed their tears,
Aye, for a million years,
Till each in turn his burden lays at this goal of fears.

Bernice

To B — .

Pale in moonlight glistening

Water lilies lie,

I at window listening

Hear the fountain warble

Softly to the marble,

Breathing to the sky

Echoes of a cry.

Upon the purple bosom of the night

The moon is dreaming softly, she doth seem

Like a pale beauty languidly reclining

Amid rich silken cushioned canopies.

The winds are hushed, no breeze disturbs the scene,

Only the warbling of the fountain's song

And the full molten murmur of a bird

The silver silence break with melody.

The sultry air is filled with rose perfume

And soft-shed scent, whose wings up-bear my soul

Higher than wildest music ever flew,

Into a heaven where mystic chords unite

Shadow with heat, the day unto the night.

Here in this garden, thro' the odorous summer

I dream with many yearnings in my heart,

Strange bitter blossoms born of tears and fire,

Whose passionate and sweet solitudes

Feed vulture-wise upon my bloodless life

Of sleepful vigils, and short starting sleeps,

And famine-smitten nights of impotence,

And hungering days yet knowing no desire.

Here in the shadow of the purple roses

I listen to the fountain murmuring

Softly, O softly, to the water lilies.

The secret of Bernice. I see her face

Arise from out the blanching water flowers,

Her face of white rose, gazing on me sadly.

O would I might forget, but when I hearken
Unto this fountain's mazy murmuring,
I fain would hear her story, none is listening,
The old sad tale of Bernice and the lilies,
No one is listening, all is silent here.
Yea, I can tell it softly, breathe it low,
In under voice to this sweet purple rose.

One summer night, ah! years have passed since then,
I sat by Bernice 'neath the oriel window,
Drinking the dreamy splendour of the moon
And the delirious perfumes of the night,
Till in my feverish veins the blood took fire,
And love fell sick with famine for her face.
I held her feet between my hands, and laid
My head between her knees, and gazed upon
Her downward-gazing eyes in ecstasy.
I wound the heavy tresses of her hair
Across my face and tried to weep: passion
Had dried my tears, life longèd unto death.
The demon of her destiny then spoke:
"The night is fair, let us stray down the garden,
And sit beside the fountain where the lilies
Lie gazing on the moon. It will be sweet
To bathe by night." With linked hands we went
Unto the tiny lake of fountain born,
And bathed unwatched amid the flowers
She was a vision of voluptuousness,
And o'er the water streamed her wondrous hair
Like braids of gold, she standing bosom-deep
Leaning from out the silver gleaming wave.

The love of all my years came over me,
A fiery breath, and all my thoughts and dreams
Took fire, those unrealed fields of vision were
But one flame burning in that instant hour.
Her lips were fast upon my face, I gazed
Within the vaporous languors of her eyes
Until love's burden grew intolerable.

I know not how it was, her kisses stung,
Her bird-like throat full-filled with fluttering voice
Leaned over me, and all her sultry hair
Fell round my face. The perfume of the roses
Drove me mad. I know not how it was,
In kissing her, I held her face beneath
The pallid water-flowers, until it grew
More wan than they. The roses were asleep,
The moon saw not between the darkling trees,
Only the lilies saw her drowned face.

And now through all the odorous summer night
I hearken to the fountain's warbling song,
Murmuring softly, O softly, to the lilies
The secret of Bernice, my only love.

Pale in moonlight glistening
 Water lilies lie,
I at window listening
 Hear the fountain warble,
 Softly to the marble,
 Breathing to the sky
 Echoes of a cry.

Sonnet. Night Perfume

The sky is one bare blank, one sheet of lead,
Without a star or cloud. Low laid the moon
O'er dark dim trees floats like a gold balloon;
No breeze doth sigh, a silence still and dead
Hangs like a raiment round the fair night's head.
Even the fountain's weary warbling tune
Tells us of quiet. With orange odours strewn,
And rose-shed scent the breathless air is spread.

We listen to the night, the gleaming meadow
Is filled with long bright lines of light and shadow
And glitters like the sea. Her balmy breath
Falls on my cheek, and in the mystic gloom
Of silk and muslin filled with her perfume,
I lay my head, and dream that love is death.

Rondo [Did I Love Thee?]

Did I love thee? I only did desire
To hold thy body unto mine,
And smite it with strange fire
Of kisses burning as a wine,
And catch thy odorous hair, and twine
It thro' my fingers amorously.

Did I love thee?

Did I love thee? I only did desire
To watch thine eyelids lilywise
Closed down, and thy warm breath respire
As it came thro' the thickening sighs,
And speak my love in such fair guise
Of passion's sobbing agony.

Did I love thee?

Did I love thee? I only did desire
To drink the perfume of thy blood
In vision, and thy senses tire
Seeing them shift from ebb to flood
In consonant sweet interlude,
And if love such a thing not be,

I loved not thee.

Ballad of a Lost Soul

One night a ghost laid hands on me,
 The dernful spirit of my dream,
And led me wandering o'er the sea,
 A sea divided by a gleam.
The wind scarce moved the burnt black heath
 On dry cliff's edge, the fluctuant tide
In green foam-whitened waves beneath,
 Curled low against the steep rock's side.

He sate me on a narrow ledge,
 And at my feet he lay him there,
I could not flee, upon the ridge
 Of life he held me. In despair
I took my soul from out my heart.
 And flung it from me without care,
Skyward it flew like bow-shot dart,
 Or wrist-cast hawk that springs in air;

Then, swooping into sudden sight
 On straightened wings across my eyes,
Then wheeling, fled from left to right
 Sailing incessantly the skies;
Thro' pathless wastes of heaven unknown
 My soul did wander thus in fear,
Seeking the yet unrisen sun,
 Not knowing whither side to steer.

And sitting on the dusky height
 Over the moon-unbeaconed sea,
I watched my soul's unguided flight
 In terror and expectancy;
Until a star arose above
 The long wall of the green sea line,
I knew it was the planet of love
 By its cold crescent crystalline.

Astarte-ward my soul then fell,
 Beyond the light of Love's bent face,

Like passing star, from heaven to hell
 A down the interlying space;
Betrothed unto new bridal bed
 A bought slave kissed, and drugged, and sold,
Poppy and red rose chapleted,
 Cheek filleted and robed in gold.

The demon still glares in mine eyes,
 Stretched lying at my pale weak feet,
He counts on finger tips my sighs,
 And keeps my tears. He laughs a sweet
Low laugh within my stricken ears,
 And leads me weeping in control
Along this shore whose waves are tears,
 Until his shadow grows my soul.

Sonnet. The Corpse

Wondering I gaze upon each lineament
Defaced by worms and swollen in decay,
And watch the rat-gnawed golden ringlets play
Around the sunken outline, shrivelled, bent
In hideous grimace. The bosom rent
Is opening rose-like 'neath the sun's warm ray,
And Nature, smiling on the new-born May,
Doth own this corpse a part of her intent.

I try to lift it from the ground, but lo,
The poor head falls. A locket thus detached
Lies in my hand; fear seizes hold on me,
I gaze upon it, trembling, for I know
The trinket well, one word thereon is scratched,
I read, and, bending, kiss her reverently.

A Page of Boccace

A crimson light, all faint with delight,
 Steals thro' my lady's room,
And the scented air is moved by the rare
 Songs spun in the mystic loom
Of canaries' throats, whose untaught notes
 Float thro' the glimmer and gloom.

Dreaming she lies with fast closed eyes
 Within the dim alcove,
As I bend over her she seems to stir
 With the instinct of my love.
For down the streams of her drifting dreams
 I may be the spirit above.

The breath from her mouth is like air from the south,
 It kisses my face and eyes,
And the touch of her hair which falls everywhere
 In restless harmonies,
My spirit doth wake to joys that break
 In a broken song of sighs.

She is bathed in the deep dream-mist of sleep
 Guided by love's faint ray,
In her lap's soft bed lies a book half read,
 A book I read yesterday;
It tells how human is soft sweet woman,
 How her love doth pass away.

* * *

I gently took from her lap the book
 And opened it at the place
That she waking might see how erringly
 A woman may run in love's race;
I awoke not her, but without a stir
 I dreamingly kissed her face

Sonnet. The Suicide

Lying upon these slimy stones, I peer
Down in the inky tank of lonesome well,
Where never mirrored morn or star did dwell:
No nightingale from cypress covert near
The heavy hanging solitude doth cheer,
Only a hooting owl is audible,
Passing on silent wing he wails my knell,
Seeming to have divined what led me here.

Leaning I drink — this well I take for grave,
Afar from prying ken in one black night,
Unhallowed by a foul religious rite
My bleaching bones will lie in dernful wave,
For wolves and ravens would I hail to me,
Sooner than man's detested sympathy.

Serenade [The infidel has no heaven]

The infidel has no heaven,
 The Christian has but one,
Whilst I, fairest Queen! have seven,
 Each singly wooed and won.
Thy heart, O most soulful treasure!
 Thine eyes, limpid hazes of light.
Thy mouth, O most tuneful measure!
 Thy cheeks, roses red and white.

Sweet bosom, the sweetest and fairest,
 All given, all yielded to me,
Sweet body, the sweetest and rarest
 Surrendered, belonging to me.
But as night would be lonesome and dreary
 If star-eyes gazed never down,
So these would be loathsome and weary,
 Uncrowned with womanhood's crown.

Sonnet. The Lost Profile

Just like a pale white sea-shell misted rose
Is her small ear, and o'er her shoulders fair,
Like trailing hyacinth, flows the clustering hair;
And column-wise straight from her bosom grows
The large full throat. Upon a gold ground glows
The half-lost face; the shadows deepening where
Lie un beholden beauties, and her bare
Sweet arms an open vesture hiding shows.

Like this reverted head are memories:
For gazing on the past the dreamer sees
A vision of dead faces turned from sight,
Between the glooms of shadow-shapen night
Dimly portrayed; for blinding years reveal
Them unto us only in lost profile.

Song [Love gazed on sweet beauty]

Love gazed on sweet beauty, and said:
"Oh! there, I might pillow my head,
And dream o'er the love that is dead."

Love laid on the virginal bed
And kissed the rose breast blossoms red
Till the beauty faded and fled.

Love rose with his pinions outspread,
Forgetting the weak heart that bled,
For Love is by loveliness led.

Sonnet. Unattained

I sat beside a wondrous apple tree,
Whose branches were on every side weighed down
By rich and luscious fruit, some red, some brown,
Some pink, some white, all colours one could see.
The ripening fruitage stirred a thirst in me,
So, pulling one, I ate, but with a frown
Threw it aside; taste, colour both had flown,
Like dreams when gazed at through reality.

I plucked and ate until my taste was gone,
Then, viewed them with contempt. At last, one day
I spied upon a topmost twig a fair
Fruit which hung out against the sky alone,
I climbed and climbed, but out of reach it lay,
Till it fell withered grey from sun and air.

The Balcony

O mistress sweet! O mine! mistress adorable!
Thy memory doth shine thro' years unfathomable,
Paling all lesser loves, as Venus when she flies
Forth like a new-fledged dove athwart the starry skies.
I see thee in my dreams upon thy balcony,
Drinking the pale moonbeams, lost in a reverie;
As when I watched thine eyes and sang an under tune,
And all the southern skies seemed purple diamond strewn.
I see thee as thou wast upright majestic,
Thy full arms falling crost, and shadows mystical
Playing around thy face, that purely Greek profile
Of tender subtle grace as taken from a seal.

Art thou as fair as then, O thou! my mistress sweet!
Ah! I did know thee when kings knelt around thy feet,
When gold was spilt as water, when death was sought and found
For thee sin's fairest daughter, for thee love's empress crowned.

Is all now gone and passed? Is all now wrecked in dust?
Cannot a kingdom last ruled by the sceptre lust;
Have men set now above thee another, a younger queen?
Are there none now to love thee? Thy lovers who have been?
Is all thy beauty dead? Has ravening decay
Seized on thy peerless head and streaked its gold with grey?

May be! All things must pass, yet gazing in my dream
I see thee in its glass mirrored as in a stream,
Unchanged thou sleepest there tho' time doth fly so fleet,
Untouched by grief or care, impassionate and sweet.
If I should meet thee now, could I love as before?
A something whispers "No," within my ear, "No more.
For no man sinks to sleep and dreams his dream again,
A dream awakes to weep, and joy once past is pain."

Sonnet. Love's Grave

When the day of thought has passed I stray around
A sweet, retired grove, bedecked with flowers
Of widowhood; there are the tranquil bowers
Whose calm is never broken by a sound
Or echo from the world; there all is crowned
With still sad peace. So in the secret hours
Thither I turn my thoughts and weep fresh showers
Of love upon that verdant spot of ground.

What men call pleasure I have known, yet here
When all the bitter feast is o'er, I come
To kneel and pray and live within the year
That long has passed. It is my stricken home,
And sitting by its fireless hearth, I hear
Sad memories wail like night-winds round a tomb.

Serenade [I have wandered to my love]

I have wandered to my love
When the stars kiss in the sea,
When the breeze doth sigh above
In a love-taught melody;
I have wandered to my love
As the moth does to the light,
As the thrush does to the grove,
As the day does to the night.

Like the songs of hollow shells,
Or the music of a stream;
Like the murmur of sea swells,
Or the dreaming of a dream,
I do sing to her I love,
For the spirits guiding me
All my songs and dreamings move
By ineffable decree.

Sonnet. Summer

The tedded grass breathed fragrance of crushed thyme,
The swan seemed slumbering on the silent wave,
And linnets from the flowerful closes gave
Forth sweetly songs in sad uncadenced rhyme,
The setting sun unspeakable, sublime,
Gazed like a god; and down the blue concave,
Like nun adoring in cathedral nave,
The wan moon lay, awaiting her full time.

Drinking the rich deep music nature sang
I sat in dream, lost in a reverie
Of sound; for in a sweet possessive pang
The clear tones of the wondrous melody
Throughout my spirit rapt in worship rang
Hushing the pain of every memory.

Sonnet. Laus Veneris

I am most lovely, fair beyond desire:
My breasts are sweet, my hair is soft and bright,
And every movement flows by instinct right:
Full well I know my touch doth burn like fire,
That my voice stings the sense like smitten lyre;
I am the queen of sensuous delight;
Past years are sealed with the signet of my might;
And at my feet pale present kneels a buyer.

My beds are odorous with soft-shed scent,
And strange moon flowers a tremulous twilight air
Weave over all; and here, alone I sing
My siren songs, until all souls are bent
Within the subtle sweet melodious snare.
God, making Love, made me Love's grievous sting.

Rondel [Lady! unwreath thy hair]

Lady! unwreath thy hair
 That is so long and fair,
May's rain is not so sweet
 As the shower of loosened hair
 That will fall around my feet.
Lady! unwreath thy hair
 That is so long and fair.

The golden curls they paint
 Round the forehead of a saint
Ne'er glittered half so bright
 As thy electric hair:
 It pales the morning's light.
Lady! unwreath thy hair
 That is so long and fair.

Lady! unwreath thy hair
 That is so long and fair,
And weave a web of gold
 Of thy enchanted hair
 Till all be in its hold.
Lady! unwreath thy hair
 That is so long and fair.

Sonnet. In Church

From flowerful fields where a full summer glowed,
Calm with the passion of our love, we strayed
Into an antique chapel, where has prayed,
Since centuries, the peasant to his God:
Silence there reigned, in reverence we bowed
Before the altar. Thro' stained windows played
The red sunset, until with light and shade,
Purple and gold, the whole was overflowed.

'Tis there in sorrow time the crowds toil-tired
Seek consolation in their misery;
The stricken heart whose way is difficult
There leaves the burden of the thing desired,
And goes forth calm, with those mild hopes that see
Beyond the bitterness of things occult.

Sonnet. Summer on the Coast of Normandy

The wind takes breath and softly sighs its sigh
Thro' her fair fragrant hair. By sea-beach here
We listen to a music sad to hear,
That pours its soul from out the earth and sky
In one long lingering, loving melody.
The ocean waves are still, the sky is clear.
Buds blossom in the mild moist atmosphere
And Nature joys in her fecundity.

We see not Love; we only feel presence
Of something hovering yet invisible;
Not in the sight nor ear, but in the sense
Are his wings seen, and his voice audible,
A fragmentary music, whose intense
Tones find no words its secret soul to tell.

A Night of June

The night was drowned
And crowned
With over-much delight;
A breathless heat
Too sweet
Made faint the sense and sight.

Hanging between
The green
Of vine inwoven bower,
A plenilune,
In swoon,
Glowed like a golden flower.

The shadows slept
And crept
Like fairies to and fro;
And roses hung
And swung
Their censers high and low.

Her gleaming breast
Was dressed
In clouds of amber hair;
And her breath came
Like flame
Thro' the deep moon-lit air.

Her arms were wound
Around
My downward-gazing face;
And lips reposed,
And closed
Close kissing on the place.

Till passion's ache
Could take
No new breath to respire;

But sank to sleep
In deep
Visions of blind desire.

Our souls were filled,
And stilled
With weight of heavenly tears,
And sacred, glad,
And sad
Unreachable strange fears.

"Oh! Misery!
Ah! me!"
She murmured o'er and o'er,
"This night will pass
Alas!
As other nights before."

The moon doth bathe
Her path
In liquid light and splendour;
As even so
Doth glow
My soul with love most tender.

Life gives us gleams
In dreams
Of something in swift flight,
An instant star
Afar
Lost in the deeps of night.

Joy and delight
Are bright
Only a short-lived hour;
And day's too soon
In June,
And love's too frail a flower.

Sonnet. La Charmeuse

Come hither to my bosom, subtle snake,
And lie within my breasts; I fear no harm,
For us in spell a weird magnetic charm
Twain turns to one. My shuddering senses ache
On passion's bitter bound; strange dreams I slake
In kissing thee. Sleep on! what doth alarm
Thee, O my sweet? Is not my bosom warm?
Lie still, the hour is not yet come to wake.

Thy long lithe length entwines around my throat
In strong voluptuous coils; I watch thee float
Leaned out in air to strike the frightened dove,
Thy body oscillates, thy jet eyes glare
Lurid with fire. Oh! fly the circling snare
Bewitchéd bird, for here is death in love.

Song. The Assignation

Drinking the warm rich air
Laden with breath of roses,
I leaned and kissed her fair
Sweet bosom and her hair
Within the laurel closes.

The purple skies were strewn
With stars innumerable;
And in love-laden swoon
Upon Night's breast the moon
Lay half invisible.

Till, lo! Astarte bright
Rose o'er the shadowy vale,
And filled the whole deep night
With crystalline low light,
White, tremulous, and pale.

Then on the star-lit bank,
Dreaming of what love's bliss is,
We trembled and we sank;
And thro' her lips I drank
Her soul in rapturous kisses.

Sonnet. To a Lost Art

Gone from me, dead, O child of my weak heart!
Child, yet a mistress, wooed most lover-wise,
Wooed long, — but never won, — with weary sighs,
With toil and many tears; but tho' we part
For e'er I love thee still; I now must start
Upon another path, with other eyes
And hands to beckon me. Will they despise
Me as thou didst? my sweet, my own lost Art.

Tho' I have wed thy sister, thou, my sweet
Wilt keep thy place in my most hidden sense;
My dreams and secret thoughts will ever pour,
Not gifts of tribute shells around thy feet,
But love's sad offering of my impotence,
A fruitless wave that can but kiss thy shore.

Hendecasyllables

ELIANE.

Here is absolute love-time, hear me, Carmen,
Carmen, fairest of women, we are lovers,
Lovers such as the dreaming senses vision
In those luminous moments of immortal
And full mystical blisses where the soul is
As a blossom in summer's burning noontide.
Here we wandering through the gardens moon-lit,
And faint bowers of odour laden roses,
Sing songs womanly speaking sweetest passion,
Such as Lesbians, over-smitten lyres
Kissing sister-ward leaning o'er the chosen,
Sung to feverish under-tunes in list'ning
To the fluctuant breathing of the ocean.

CARMEN.

Leaving suppliant lovers (who are falsers?)
Beyond hearing of their bewailing. Within
Pale place, beautiful, full of fairest flowers,
In low glimmering of the fading twilight
Lying, hand upon hand we kissing softly,
Watching moon risen through the starless heaven.
Slowly burn to a fireless cinder pleasure.

Song [My soul is like a house of doves]

My soul is like a house of doves,
 Each day desires depart,
The doves return, but the desires
 Return not to the heart.

The azure of the sky is paled
 Beneath their flocks in flight.
That, passing, seek from star to star
 A refuge for the night.

O haste! my dream, or thou wilt find
 An empty nest in May,
Only the down and broken shells
 Of the birds flown away.

Le Succube

List well! I went towards a wood
By night when all was solitude.

There I surprised mine Enemy
In dark hair sleeping tranquilly.

She smiled amid the rippling deep
Of her dark hair, her eyes asleep.

"That smile by some cruel mystery
Thou hast despoiled from me," said I,

"And thou dost sleep, assuaged fiend,
The sleep that thou from me did'st rend!"

And then I killed the Enemy
In dark hair sleeping tranquilly.

Her fatal blood flowed here and there
Over the barren briars bare.

Her fatal blood amid the closes
Dishonouréd the white snow roses.

You have drunk up her life, O flowers!
From whom exude strange tears in showers.

The sombre purples of her wound
Shine in the clustering roses round.

Oh! could I fly your sight beyond,
Red flowerage of this rocky mound.

But the Charm with her sullen blisses
Re-lives in these flower chalices.

The languors of the ancient taint
Weigh heavy in their odours faint.

O conquered heart! thou hast no hope
To quit the coverts of the slope

Of this vast wood. O heart exiled,
Bewitched by roses and beguiled!

(Translated from the French of Catulle Mendès).

A Sapphic Dream

I love the luminous poison of the moon,
The silence of illimitable seas,
Vast night, and all her myriad mysteries,
Perfumes that make the burdened senses swoon
And weaken will, large snakes who oscillate
Like lovely girls, immense exotic flowers,
And cats who purr through silk-enfestooned bowers
Where white-limbed women sleep in sumptuous state.

My soul e'er dreams, in such a dream as this is,
Visions of perfume, moonlight and the blisses
Of sexless love, and strange unreachéd kisses.

AFTERWORD

This ebook of *Flowers of Passion* contains authentic text of the first English edition — London: Provost & Co., 1878.

The text was transcribed from the printed first edition and edited by Robert S. Becker, PhD, on behalf of George Moore Interactive LLC. Original spelling is preserved; printing errors are eliminated. Duplicated titles are differentiated with bracketed text.

All poems of *Flowers of Passion* are individually available on the [GMI website](#) with many other writings and artifacts of the author. Visitors to the website may post comments and questions for the editor and community.