

THE SIXTEENTH DAY.

“My chastity’s the jewel of our house
Bequeathed down from many ancestors,
Which were the greatest obloquy i’ th’ world
For me to lose.”

All’s Well.

THERE was no secret cave of the wood’s womb
Where we might kiss all day without a start
Of fear that meant to stay and must depart,
Nor any corner where the sea’s perfume
Might shelter love in some wave-carven tomb.
But Maytime shone in us ; with words of art
I drew her down reluctant to my heart,
When night was silence and my bed the gloom.

So without sin we took strange sacrament,
Whose wine was kisses, and whose bread the
flower
Of fast and fervent cleaving breast to breast.
As lily bend to lily we were bent,
Not as mere man to woman : all the dower
Of martyred Virgins crowned our dangerous quest.