

WHITE POPPY.

AMID the drowsy dream,  
Lit by some fitful beam  
    Of other light  
Than the mere sun, supreme  
On all the glint and gleam  
    Shooting through night,  
Above the water-way  
Where my poor corpse must stay,  
I bend and float away  
    From human sight.

Unto the floral face,  
Carven in ancient grace  
    Of Gods or Greeks,  
The whole sky's way gives place :  
Open the walls of space,  
    And silence speaks.  
See! I am floating far  
Beyond space and sun and star,  
As drifts a nenuphar  
    Down liliated creeks.

Beyond the heavens I see  
The pale embroidery  
    Of some wan child  
Waster by earth and sea,  
Whose kisses were too free,  
    Too swift and wild ;  
A Maenad's floating tress  
Lost in the wilderness  
Of death's or my caress,  
    Discrowned, defiled.

Clad in pale green and rose,  
Her thin face flickers, glows,  
    Tempestuous flame.  
Horrid and harsh she goes,  
Speaks, trembles, wakes and knows  
    How frail is shame!  
Grows vast and cloudy and is  
The whole mouth's sobbing kiss,  
And crushes me with bliss  
    Beyond a name.

Then fall I from excess  
Of bitter ecstasies,  
    Pale ghosts of blood,  
To worlds where palaces  
Shine through dim memories  
    Of flower and flood,  
Shine in pale opal and pearl,  
Void of bright boy or girl,  
Desolate halls that furl  
    Their shapes subdued.

And wide they sunder, wide  
They fall into the tide  
    Of fallen things.  
Me, me, O meek-browed bride,  
Horrible faces hide  
    And devilish wings.  
Me the grim harpeis hold  
In kisses slaver-cold,  
Mute serpent-shapes of gold  
    With serpent stings.

The dreadful bridal won,  
The demon banquet done,  
    My flesh let loose :—  
Rises a strange red sun,  
A sight to slay or stun ;  
    Sepulchral dews

Fall from the rayless globe,  
Whose sightless fingers probe  
My golden-folded robe,  
    My soul's misuse.

And in that thankless shape  
Vines grow without a grape,  
    Thorns roseless spring.  
Nay! There is no escape:—  
The yawning portals gape,  
    The orbéd ring  
As by a whirlpool drawn  
Into that devil-dawn:—  
I sink and shriek and fawn  
    Upon the thing.

Ha! in the desperate pang  
And subtle stroke and fang  
    Of hateful kisses  
Whence devilish laughter sprang,  
Close on me with a clang  
    The brazen abysses  
The leopard-coloured paw  
Strikes, and the cruel jaw  
Hides me in the glutless maw—  
    Crown of ten blisses!

For all the vision world  
Is closed on me and curled  
    Into the deep  
Of my slow soul, and hurled  
Through lampless lands, and furled,  
    Sharp folds and steep:  
Till all unite in one,  
Seven planets in the sun,  
And I am deeplier done  
    Into full sleep.