

II

The Alchemist

I

Love is sore wounded by the dragon shame,
 O maiden o' mine ! its life in jets of blood
 Languidly ebbs. I see the gathering flame
 Aspire – expire. I see the evil flood
Of time roll even and steady over it,
 Bearing our God to the accurst ravines ;
 Bearing our God to the abysmal pit
 Whence never a God may rise. The wolfish queens
Of earth have set their faces stern and sour
 Against us ; we are bidden to cease – to cease !
 Ha ! how eternity laughs down their hour,
 Dragoons their malice with its dominant peace.
We are forbidden to love – as one who tries
 At noontide to forbid the sun to rise.

II

There is an alchemy to heal the hurt
Done to our love by shame the dragon of ill
With his allies the fear, that wars begirt
With clouds, and that sad sceptic in the will
That sneaks within our citadel, that steals
The keys and opens stealthily the gates
When we are sleeping, when the dawn conceals
Its earliest glimmer and our blood abates
Awhile its tide ! O mystic maiden o' mine,
Did I not warn you of the insulting foes ?
Blind worms that writhe for envy, pious swine
That gnash their teeth to espy the gold and rose
Out flaming like the dawn when kiss for kiss
Passed and for ever sealed our bale and bliss.

III

Behold ! the elixir for the weeping wound !
Is it that wine that Avallaunius poured
From the Red Cup when fair Titania swooned
Before the wrath of her insulted lord ?
Is it the purple essence that distilled
From Jesu's side beneath the invoking spear ?
Or that pale vase that Proserpina filled
From wells of her sad garden, cold and clear
And something overbitter and oversweet ?
Or in the rout of Dionysus did
Some Bassarid prophesy in her holy heat
On such a draught as I for you have hid
In this the Graal of mine enchaunted shrine
To pour for you, o mystic maiden o' mine ?

IV

Lola. The name is like the amorous call
Of some bright-bosomed bird in bowers of blue.
Tis like the great moon-crested waterfall
With hammering heart. 'Tis like the rain of dew
That quires to the angel stars. 'Tis like a bell
Rung by an holy anchoret to summon
Out of the labyrinths of heaven and hell
Some grave, majestic, and deep-breasted woman
To bring her naked body shining, shining
With flowers of heaven or flames of Phlegethon
Into his hermit cell, her love entwining
Into his life with spells that murmur on
Black words ! For one thing be you sure the same
My wine is as the music of your name !

V

Maiden. Believe me, mystic maiden o' mine,
That title shall assure the throne of heaven
To you – the more so that your love divine
That maidenhood to me hath freely given ?
Nor have I touched the ark with hands unholy,
Nor with unsaintly kisses soiled the shrine :
Nepenthe, amaranth, vervain, myrrh and moly
Are deathless blooms about our chaste design.
Not you resisting, but myself refraining,
Gives us the eternal spring, the elixir rare,
That mage and sage have sought, and uncomplaining
Never attained. We found it early where
The Gods find children. Maiden o' mine, be sure
My wine shall be as pure as you are pure !

VI

Sweet. O my sweet, if all the heavenly portion
Of nectar were in one blue ocean poured
Their fine quintessence were a vile abortion
Bitter and flat, foul, stagnant and abhorred
Should one compare it with the tiniest tithe
Of one soft glance your eyes on me might shed,
One gesture of your body limber and lithe,
One smile – the sudden white, the abiding red !
Then – should one slander you in idiot verse
By speaking of the subtle seven-fold sweetness
Your lips can answer me, all fate to amerce
In one mad kiss in all its mad completeness ?
O Gods and Muses ! give me grace for this
To match my wine for sweet with Lola's kiss.

VII

Mine. 'Tis impossible, but so it is,
My mouth is Lola's and my Lola's mine
Then in the trance, the death we call a kiss,
Earth is done down, and the immanent divine
Exists ! Impossible ! no mortal yet
Suffered such bliss from the all-envious gods ;
Whence we may guess we are immortal, set
From the beginning over the periods
Of ages, set on thrones of jasper and pearl,
Wreathed with the lilies of Eternity,
While on our brow the starry clusters curl
Like flashes from the sunkissed jewelry,
Dew on the flowers our garlands. Ay ! you are mine,
And mine as you are shall I pour the wine.

VIII

Now I have told you all the ingredients
That go to make the elixir for our shame.
Already make the fumes their spired ascents ;
The bubbles burst in tiny jets of flame.
And you and I are half-intoxicated
(I hid the heart of madness in my verse)
Therewith, like Maenads ready to be mated
Before the Lord of bassara and thyse.
Yea ! we are lifted up ! Crested Kithairon
Shakes his black mane of pines, and roars for prey.
Heave all his bristling flanks of barb,d iron !
Flesh they red hunger on the bleeding day,
O fang,d night ! till from they mother maw
We wrench the lion child of wonder and awe !

IX

This wine is sovereign against all complaints.
 This is the wine the great king-angels use
 To inspire the souls of sinners and of saints
 Unto the deeds that win the world or lose.
One drop of this raised Attis from the dead ;
 One drop of this, and slain Osiris stirs ;
 One drop of this ; before young Horus fled
 Thine hosts, Typhon ! – this wine is mine and hers
Ye Gods that gave it ! not in trickling gouts,
 But from the very fountain whence 'tis drawn
 Gushing in crystal jets and ruby spouts
 From the authentic throne and shrine of dawn.
Drink it ? Ay, so ! and bathe therein – and swim
 Out to the wide world's everlasting rim !

X

To drink one drop thereof is to be drunk.

The firm feet stagger, and the world spins round;
The fair speech stammers – nature's God hath sunk
Into some trivial place of the profound.

But he who is drunk thereon is wholly sane,
Being wholly mad ; he moves with space-wide wings
Sees not a world – engulfed in the inane !
Nor needs a voice for speech, because he sings.

What then of them who are most drunk together
As you and I are, mystic maiden o' mine,
Beyond Dionysus and his tedious tether,
Beyond Kithairon and his topmost pine?

Why, even now I am drunk who scribble amiss
These lines, not thinking – save of your last kiss !

XI

So Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! peals,
And Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! echoes back,
Till Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Reels
The world in a dance of woven white and black
Shimmering with clear gold greys as hell resounds
With Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! and heaven responds
With Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! – swounds
All light to clustered dazzling diamonds,
And Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Rings
Ever and again on these inchaunted ears,
And Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Swings
My soul across to those inchaunted spheres
Where Lola is God and priest and wafer and wine –
O Lola ! Lola ! mystic maiden o' mine !

XII

I think the hurt is healed, for (by the law
That forms our being) you must suffer as I,
Hunger as I, rejoice as I, withdraw
Into the same far transcendental sky
Of this initiated rapture. Hurt
Of shame for me is past, beholding Gods
Only a little part of me, and dirt
Such as men fling and women paste, no odds.
Moreover, by the subtle and austere
Vintage we drain, albeit we drain the lees,
There is no headache for the morning drear,
No fluctuant in our tideless ecstasies —
Whereby, o maiden o' mine, the runic rime
Tells me we have ree'd the riddle of old Time.

XIII

Never, o never shall I call you bride !
 Never, o never shall I draw you down
 Unto my kisses by the dim bedside
 Bathing my body in the choral crown,
Your comet hair ! Nor smooth our shimmering skins
 Each to the other and mount the sacred stair
 Even from the lesser to the greater sins
 Up to the throne where sits the royal and rare
Vision of Pan. O never shall I raise
 This oriflamme, and lead the hope forlorn
 Up to the ruining bloody breach, to daze
 Death's self with pangs too blissful to be borne.
No ! dear my maid. A maiden as you be
 You may be all your lily life, for me.

XIV

Alas ! the appointed term is sternly set
 Inviolable to this our colloquy.
 For though you be afar, my Lola, yet
 You have been with me, whispering to me.
I bow my head to write, and on the nape
 O' th' neck I feel your lips. I raise my head
 To dream – your mouth achieves its luscious rape –
 I fall back – you are on me – I am dead.
Could it be better ? For I surely know
 That you will follow me adown the deep
 When I lay pen and paper by, and go
 Into the ardent avenues of sleep : –
There also will we drink the appeasing wine,
 Lola, my Lola, mystic maiden o' mine !