

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 ! – swoonds  
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 !