

THE WAIF OF OCEANUS

TO FRANK HARRIS

SHE is like a flower washed up
On the shore of life by the sea of luck;
A strange and venomous flower, intent
To prove an unguessed continent.
New worlds of love in the curve of its cup!
New fruits to crush, new flowers to pluck.

White waif, white champak-blossom blown
From the jungle to the lost lagoon!
White lily swayed by the wind of time!
Grey eyes that crave the chrism of crime!
Blanched face like a note on a clarion!
Red mouth like the sun through simoon, typhoon!

Hurricanes howl, howl in her heart;
Serpents sleep in her smile; I hear
Horrible happenings long ago,
Direful deeds, weirds of woe,
Things beyond history and art
In the tresses that tumble over her ear!

In what grim gloom did Satan get
This child on what wood-nymph dishevelled?
Whence was the wind that swayed the woods
On their bestial beatitudes?
Or what garden of rose and violet
Lay under the moon wherein they revelled?

She is like a poppy-petal.
All the seas of sleep are hidden
Under the languorous eyelids, whose
Lashes are long and strong to bruise
My heart where her lusts like hornets settle
On sacred leaves, on flowers forbidden.

She is like a drug of wonder.
All the limits of sense dissolve
When we fall like snows from the precipice
Sun-kissed to the black ravines of ice.
I am drowned in the universal thunder;
The hours disrupt, the aeons involve.
Ah! not in any mortal mood
Ends the great verb we conjugate.
From the highest hyperbole she doth swerve
In an incommensurable curve,
And the line of our beatitude
Is one with the sigil of our Fate.

Pallid, a mummy throned, she sits;
The Egyptian eyes, the Egyptian hair,
The band on her brows, the slender hands,
All hieroglyphs of a God's commands
Beyond the rimes that a poet knits
With fruitless travail, sterile care!

Marvellous! marvellous, marvellous!
And again a marvel, a lotus-bud
Dropt from the brows of a Goddess unknown
On the ivory steps of the golden throne,
Virginal brows and luminous
With the star-stream flowing therein for blood.

Ah, but electric thrills the Host
Of the esoteric Eucharist!
The Pagan power of the corn and wine
Mystical, magical, hers and mine,
The dove-plumed snake of the Holy Ghost
That wings and writhes in the wounds unknissed!

Lie there, love—if I love you indeed
Who adore and wonder and faint for drouth
Of the passion-flower fallen from the other side
Of time and space the tedious tide.
Lie there, lie there, and let me bleed
To death in the breath of the murderous mouth!