

A FRAGMENT.¹

“In the midst of the desert of Libya, on a mound of sand, lieth a young man alone and naked. Nightfall.”

NIGHT the voluptuous, night the chaste
Spreads her dark limbs, a vaulted splendour,
Above the intolerable waste.
Night the august one, night the tender
Queens it and brides it unto me.
I am the soul serenely free ;
I dare to seek the austere ordeal
That drags the hoodwink of the Real
Back from the Maker's livid eyes
Lustred with hate. At noon I came
Blind in the desert, saw the sun
Leap o'er the edge, a fury of flame

¹ Intended as the prologue to a history of an initiate in semi-dramatic form.

Shouting for rapture over his prize,
The maiden body of earth. Outrun
The violent rays; the dawn is dashed
In one swift moment into dust.
Long lies the land with sunlight splashed,
Brutally violate to his lust.
Alone and naked I watched through
The appalling hours of noon; I parched;
I blistered: all the ghastly crew
Of mind's sick horror mocked me; arched
The flaming vault of hell and pressed
Its passionate murder in my breast.
Seven times I strove to slay me: filled
My mouth with sand to choke my breath.
In vain! No loftier purpose willed
The iron miracle of death.
So, blind and strangled, I survive.
So, with my skin a single scar,
I hail the night, the night alive
With Hathor for the evening star.
O beauty! See me broken, burned
Lone on the languorous Lybian plain!
Is there one lesson to be learned

From this my voluntary pain,
My dread initiation, long
Desired and long deferred? The Master—
Is he the secret of the song,
Portent of triumph or disaster
The night wind breathes upon the air
Still shimmering from the fearful heat?
Can I still trust who have learned to dare?
All others I have known effete,
Bid them await. Who knows to-day
The purpose of the dread essay?
Surely I, earlier, further fared!
I knew the deed that closes clay,
Division's sword by sense unbarred,
A living lie. The deep delusion!
Dividuality—confusion!
These I unmasked of yore. To-day
The hideous blue, the hideous gold
Of sky and sand their wrath unrolled,
Their agony and hate proclaimed.
Is it that night shall kiss to peace
The furious carnival that flamed
Its ruinous ardour from the sun!

Nay, let all light, all things, but cease!
Sense is the seal of double rule.
The million oracles that run
Out of the mouth of God the fool
Are not myself. To nothing turn!
To nothing look! Then, then!—discern
Nothing, that one may one remain.
So I am paid the horrible pain
That these my brothers ordered me.
I look upon their brows—I see
Signs many and deep of torture past;
A star, yon star, true peace at last.

*(There approacheth an aged man, riding upon an ass,
with a led ass, and a Nubian servant.)*

The Adept. In the name of God, the One, the
Great,
Merciful and compassionate,
Acclaim the perfect period
Of ordeal past!

The Neophyte. There is no God!

A. Rise! in the name of obscure Fate,
Ruthless and uncompassionate.

N. Of endless life, of toil and woe
I am the burned and branded foe.
I came to this torture to endure
That I might make my freedom sure.

A. No soul is free.

N. There is no soul.
See yonder gleams the starry shoal
Of orbs incalculably vast.
They are not present: they are past,
Since the long march of shuddering light
Made years the servants of its might.
There is no soul.

A. These star thou seest
Are but the figuring of thy brain.

N. Then of all things the soul were freest.

A. Move then the centre of thy pain!

N. 'Tis done.

A. A trick to cheat a child.

N. It is the truth that I am naught.
Hear what I have gathered in the wild,
Flowers of imperishable thought
With glory and with rapture clothed.
This being, thinking, loved or loathed,

Then backward work; the name becomes
With pomp of metaphysic drums
A *causa causans*—God, soul, truth.
So raves the riot, age and youth,
The cart before the horse. Revered
And reverend master, is your beard
Darwin's survival of some tail?
Who rants of soul were best to saddle
His face, his arms the ass to straddle
Since for his voice the part thus bare
Would serve as well to scent the air.

A. Where reverence ceases, ribald jest
Breaks forth, the wise allow the rest.
The perfect master stands confessed.

N. Why! I supposed your wrath would
burst;
My name and number stand accurst
In the great Order of the West!

A. Nay: Buddha smiles; 'twas Jesus wept!
Arise, O brother and adept!

N. Master!

A. The torture-hours are past.

N. The peace of pain is mine at last.

A. Ere the moon rise, the brethren meet.
Come, let us turn toward the South.
N. Lord, I embrace thy holy feet.
A. Nay, let me kiss thee on the mouth.