

DREAMS.

WHAT words are these that shudder through
my sleep,
Changing from silver into crimson flakes,
And molten into gold
Like the pale opal through those gray may sweep
A scarlet flame, like eyes of crested snakes,
Keen, furious, and too cold.

What words are these ? The pall of slumber lifts ;
The veil of finiteness withdraws. The night
Is heavier, life burns low :
Yet to the quivering brain three goodly gifts
The cruelty of Pluto and his might
In the abyss bestow :

Change, foresight, fear. The pageant whirls and boils ;
Restricted not by space an time, my dream
Foresees the doom of Fate ;
My spirit wrestles in the Dream-King's toils
Always in vain, and Hope's forerunners gleam
Always one step too late.

Not as when sunlight strikes the counterpane ;
 Half wakening, sleep rolls back her iron wave,
 And dawn brings blithesomeness ;
Not as when opiates lull the tortured brain
 And sprinkle lotus on the drowsy grave
 Of earth's old bitterness ;

But as when consciousness half rouses up
 And hurls back all the gibbering harpy crowd ;
 And sleep's draught deepeneth,
And all the furies of hell's belly sup
 In the brain's palaces, and chant aloud
 Songs that foretaste of Death.

Maddened, the brain breaks from beneath the goad,
 Flings off again the foe, and from its hell
 Brings for a moment peace,
Till weariness and her infernal load
 Of phantom memory-shapes return to quell
 The shaken fortresses.

Till nature reassert her empery,
 And the full tide of wakefulness at last
 Foam on the shore of sleep
To beat the white cliffs of reality
 In vain, because their windy strength is past,
 And only memories weep.

Why is the Finite real ? And that world
 So larger, so more beautiful and fleet,
 So free, so exquisite,

The world of dreams and shadows, not impearled
With solitary shaft of Truth ? Too sweet,
O children of the Night,

Are your wide realms for our philosophers,
Who must in hard gray balance-shackles bind
The essence of all thought :
No sorer sexton in a grave inters
The nobler children of a poet's mind
Of wine and gold well wrought.

By the poor sense of touch they judge that this
Or that is real or not. Have they divined
This simplest spirit-bond,
The joy of some bad woman's deadly kiss ;
The thought-flash that well tunes a lover's mind
Seas and gray gulfs beyond ?

So that which is impalpable to touch,
They judge by touch ; the viewless they decide
By sight ; their logic fails,
Their jarring jargon jingles—even such
An empty brazen pot—wise men deride
The clouds that mimic whales.

My world shall be my dreams. Religion there
And duty may disturb me not at all ;
Nor doubts, nor fear of death.
I straddle on no haggard ghostly mare ;
Yea, through my God, I have leapt o'er a wall !
(As poet David saith.)

The wall that ever girds Earth's thought with brass
Is all a silver path my feet beneath,
And o'er its level sward
Of sea-reflecting white flowers and fresh grass
I walk. Man's darkness is a leathern sheath,
Myself the sun-bright sword !

I have no fear, nor doubt, nor sorrow now,
For I give Self to God—I give my best
Of soul and blood and brain
To my poor Art—there comes to me somehow
This fact ; Man's work is God made manifest ;
Life is all Peace again.

And Dreams are beyond life. Their wider scope,
Limitless Empire o'er the world of thought,
Help my desires to press
Beyond all stars toward God and Heaven and Hope ;
And in the world-amazing chase is wrought
Somehow—all Happiness.