

JEZEBEL.

PART I.

A LION'S mane, a leopard's skin
 Across my dusty shoulders thrown ;
A swart fierce face, with eyes where sin
 Lurks like a serpent by a stone.
A man driven forth by lust to seek
Rest from himself on Carmel's peak.

A prophet with wild hair behind,
 Streaming in fiery clusters ! Yea,
Tangled with vehemence of the wind,
 And knotted with the tears that slay ;
And all my face parched up and dried,
And all my body crucified.

Ofttimes the Spirit of the Lord
 Descends and floods me with his breath ;
My words are fashioned as a sword,
 My voice is like the voice of death.
The thunder of the Spirit's wings
Brings terror to the hearts of kings.

Anon, and I am driven out
 In desert places by desire ;
My mouth is salt and dry ; I doubt
 If hell hath such another fire ;
If God's damnation can devise
A lust to match these agonies.

The desert wind my body burns,
 The voice of flesh consumes my soul ;

My body towards the city turns,
My spirit seeks its fierier goal;
In wells of heaven to quench my thirst,
And take God's hand among the first.

I conquered self; I grew at last
A prophet chosen of the Lord;
I blew the trumpet's iron blast
That called on Zimri Omri's sword;
My voice inflamed the fiery steel
That was to smite upon Jezreel.

And now, I haste from yonder sands,
With fervour filled, to say God's doom
To Ahab of the bloody hands,
The spoiler of his father's tomb,
The slayer of the vineyard king.
God's judgment, and his fate, I bring.

The city gleams afar; I see
Samarina's white walls on high;
The mountains echo back to me
The vengeful murmur of the sky;
All heaven and earth on me attend
To prophesy the tyrant's end.

The gates are close because of night
Whose heavy breath infects the air;
The dog-star gleams, a devilish light:
I thought I saw behind me glare
The eyes of fiends. I thought I heard
An evil laugh, a mocking word.

The gates swing open at the Name,
Without a warder roused from sleep;
I pass, with face of burning flame,
That is not quenched, although I weep.
(For even my tears are tears of fire,
For loathing, madness, and desire.)

Ah God! the traps for fervent feet!
The morrow beaconed, and I came
By where the golden groves of wheat
In summer glories fiercely flame;
To those white courts, by princes trod,
Where Ahab sat, and mocked at God.

Where Ahab sat:—but lo! I saw
No king, no tyrant to be curst;
But she, who filled me with blind awe,
She, for whose blood my thin veins thirst;
The blossom of a painted mouth
And bare breasts tintured with the south.

For lo! the harlot Jezebel!
Her hands dropped perfume, and her tongue
(A flame from the dark heart of hell,
The ivory-barred mouth, that stung
With unimaginable pangs)
Shot out at me, and Hell fixed gangs.

Her purple robes, her royal crown,
The jewelled girdle of her waist,
Her feet with murder splashed, and brown
With the sharp lips that fawn and taste,
The crimson snakes that minister
To those unwearying lust of her.

And all her woman's scent did drift
A steam of poison through the air;
The haze of sunshine seems to lift
And toil in tangles of black hair,
The hair that waves, and winds, and bites,
And glistens with unholy lights.

For lo! she saw me, and beheld
My trembling lips curled back to curse,
Laughed with strong scorn, whose music knelled
The empire of God's universe.

And on my haggard face upturned
She spat! Ah God! how my cheek burned!

Then, as a man betrayed, and doomed
 Already, I arose and went,
And wrestled with myself, consumed
 With passion for that sacrament
Of shame. From the day unto this
My cheek desires that hideous kiss.

Her hate, her scorn, her cruel blows,
 Fill my whole life, consume my breath;
Her red-fanged hatred in me glows,
 I lust for her, and hell, and death.
I see that ghastly look, and yearn
Toward the brands of her that burn.

Sleep shuns me; dreams divide the night,
 (My parched throat thirsty for her veins)
That she and I with deep delight
 Suck from death's womb infernal pains,
Whose fire consumes, destroys, devours
Through night's insatiable hours.

And altogether filled with love,
 And altogether filled with sin,
The little sparks and noises move
 About the softness of her skin.
Her pleasures and her passions purr
For the delight I have of her.

Aching with all the pangs of night
 My shuddering body swoons; my eyes
Absorb her eyelids' lazy light,
 And read her bosom to devise
Fresh blossoms of the heart of hell
And secret joys of Jezebel.

Her lips are fastened to my breast
 To suck out blood in feverish tides ;
The token of her I possessed,
 Still on my withered cheek abides.
Thus slowly the desire grows
To kill and have her yet—who knows ?

PART II.

I Know. When Ramoth-Gilead's field
Grew bloody with hot ranks of dead,
I smote amain with sword and shield ;
My brows with mingled blood were red ;
And on my cheek the kiss of hell,
The hatred of my Jezebel.

I waited many days. At last
The rushing of a chariot grew
Frightful through all the city vast :
Men were afraid. But I—I knew
Jehu was here, whose sword should dip
Deep in my love's adulterous lip.

The spirit filled me. *And behold!*
I saw her dead stare to the skies.
I came to her; she was not cold,
But burning with old infamies.
On her incestuous mouth I fell,
And lost my soul for Jezebel.

I followed him afoot, afire ;
Beneath her window he drew rein ;
She looked forth, clad in glad attire,
Haggard and hateful, once again ;
And taunted him. His bastard blood
Quailed, but his violent soul withstood.

He blenched, and then with eyes of flame,
"Who is on my side? Who?" he said.
Three eunuchs, passionless, grown tame,
Grinned from behind her laughing head.

“Throw down that woman!” And my breath
Caught as they flung her out to death.

I think I died that moment. He,
Foaming for vengeance and blood-lust,
Laughed his coarse laugh of hideous glee.
Her sweet bad body in the dust
He trampled. Royal from the womb
A martyred murderess lacks a tomb!

A tigress woman, clad with sin,
And shod with infamy, who pressed
The bloody winepress of my skin,
And plucked the purple of my breast—
Her lovers in their hearts shall keep
Her memory passionate and deep.

They cast her forth on Naboth’s field
Still living, in her harlot’s dress;
Her belly stript, her thighs concealed,
For shame’s sake and for love’s no less.
Night falls; the gaping crowds abide
No longer by her stiffening side.

I crept like sleep toward the place
That held for me her evil head;
I bent like sin above her face
That dying she might kiss me dead.
I whispered “Jezebel!” She turned,
And her deep eyes with hatred burned.

“Ah! prophet, come to mock at me
And gloat on mine exceeding pain?”
“Nay, but to give my soul to thee,
And have thee spit at me again!”
She smiled—I know she smiled—she sighed,
Bit my lips through, and drank, and died!

Her murders and her blasphemies,
Her whoredoms, God has paid at last ;
Upon my bosom close she lies ;
Her carnal spirit holds me fast.
My blood, my infamy, my pain,
Seal my subjection and her reign.

My veins poured out her marriage cup,
For holy water her cruel tongue ;
For blessing of white hands raised up,
These perfumed infamies unsung ;
For God's breath, her sharp tainted breath ;
For marriage bed, the bed of death.

The hounds that scavenge, fierce and lean,
Snarl in the moonlight ; in the sky
The vulture hangs, a ghost unclean ;
The lewd hyaena's sleepless eye
Darts through the distance ; these admit
My lordship over her—and it.

The host is lifted up. Behold
The vintage spilt, the broken bread !
I feast upon the cruel cold
Pale body that was ripe and red.
Only, her head, her palms, her feet,
I kissed all night, and did not eat.

So, and not otherwise, the word
Of God was utterly fulfilled.
So, and not otherwise. I heard
Her spirit cry, by death not stilled :
“My sin is perfect in thy blood,
And thou and I have conquered God.”

Now let me die, at last desired,
At last beloved of thee my queen ;
Now let me die, with blood attired,
Thy servant naked and obscene ;

To thy white skull, thy palms, thy feet,
Clinging, dead, infamous, complete.

Now let me die, to mix my soul
With thy red soul, to join our hands,
To weld us in one perfect whole,
To link us with desirous bands.
Now let me die, to mate in hell
With thee, O harlot Jezebel.