

ASSUMPTA CANIDIA.

*Written in Mexico City.*

WATERS that weep upon the barren shore  
Where some lone mystery of man abides ;  
As if the wailing of forsaken brides,  
Rapt from the kiss of love for evermore,  
Impressed its memory on the desolate  
Sounds at its edge ; on such a strand of tears  
I linger through the long forgetful years,  
My sin for mother, and my woe for mate.  
I am a soul lost utterly—forbear !  
I am unworthy both of tear and prayer.

The mystic slumber of my sense forlorn  
Stirs only now and then ; some deeper pang  
Reminds despair there is a sharper fang,  
Reminds my night of a tempestuous morn.  
For I am lost and lonely : in the skies  
I see no hope of any sun or star ;  
On earth there blooms no rose, no nenuphar ;  
No cross is set for hope of sacrifice.  
I cannot sleep, I cannot wake ; and death  
Passes me by with his desired breath.

No shadow in my mind to prove a sun ;  
No sorrow to declare that joy exists ;  
A cycle of dim spectres in the mists  
Moves just a little ; lastly there is One,  
One central Being, one elusive shape,  
Not to aspire to, not to love ; alas !  
Only a memory in the aged mass  
Of chained ones bound to me without escape !

Oh, doom of God! Oh, brand how worse than Cain's!  
Divided being, undivided pains!

What is this life? (To call it life that grows  
No inch throughout all time.) This bitterness  
Too weak and hateful to be called distress?  
Slow memory working backward only knows  
There was some horror grown to it for kin;  
Some final leprous growth that took my brain,  
Weaving a labyrinth of dullest pain  
From the sweet scarlet threat I thought was sin.  
I cannot sin! Alas, one sin were sweet!  
But sin is living—and we cannot meet!

So long ago, so miserably long!  
I was a maiden—oh how rich and rare  
Seemed the soft sunshine woven in my hair!  
How keen the music of my body's song!  
How white the blossom of my body's light!  
How red the lips, how languorous the eyes,  
How made for pleasure, for the sleepy sighs  
Softer than sleep; amorous dew-dreams of night  
That draw out night in kisses to the day!  
So was I to my seeming as I lay.

That soft smooth-moving ocean of the west  
Under the palm and cactus as it rolled,  
Immortal blue, fixed with immortal gold,  
Moving in rapture with my sleeping breast!  
The young delicious green, the drunken smell  
Of the fresh earth, the luxury of the glow  
Where many colours mingled into snow,  
Song-marvels in the air desirable.  
So lazily I lay, and watched my eyes  
In the deep fountain's sun-stirred harmonies.

I loved myself! O Thou! (I cried) divine  
Woman more lovely than the flowers of earth!  
O Self-hood softer than the babe at birth,

Sweeter than love, more amorous than wine,  
Where is thy peer upon the face of life ?  
    I love myself, the daughter of the dawn.  
    Come, silken night, in your deep wings withdrawn  
Let me be folded, as a tender wife  
    In my own arms imagined! Let me sleep,  
    Unwaking from the admirable deep!

My arms fell lazily about the bed.  
    I lay in some delicious trance. I fell  
    Deep through sleep's chambers to the gate of Hell,  
And on that flaming portalice I read  
The legend, "Here is beauty, here delight,  
    Here love made more desirable than thine,  
    Fiercer than light, more dolorous than wine.  
Here the embraces of the Sons of Night!  
    Come, sister, come; come, lonely queen of breath!  
    Here are the lustres and the flames of death."

Hence I was whirled, as in a wind of light,  
    Out to the fragrance of a loftier air,  
    A keener scent, and rising unaware  
Out of the Palace of Luxurious Night,  
I came to where the Gate of Heaven shone,  
    Battled with comet and with meteor.  
    Behold within that crested House of War,  
One central glory of a sapphire stone,  
    Whereon there breathed a sense, a mist, a sun!  
    I stood and laughed upon the Ancient One.

For He was silent as my body's kiss,  
    And sleeping as my many-coloured hair,  
    And living as my eyes and lips; and where  
The vast creation round him cried "He Is!",  
No murmur reached Him; He was set alone,  
    Alone and central. Ah! my eyes were dim.  
    I worshipped even; for I envied Him.  
So, moving upward to the azure throne,  
    I spread my arms unto that ambient mist;  
    Lifted my life and soul up to be kissed!

A million million voices roared aloud!  
A million million sabres flashed between!  
Flamed the vast falchion! Fiery Cherubin  
Flung me astounded to the mist and cloud.  
A stone, flung downward through eternal space,  
I dropped. What bitter curses and despair  
Rang through wide aether! How the trumpet blare  
Cursed back at me! Thou canst not see His Face!  
Equal and Spouse? Bring forth the Virgin Dower,  
Eternal Wisdom and Eternal Power!

I woke! and in a well's untroubled pool  
I saw my face—and I was ugly now!  
Blood-spattered ebony eyelash and white brow!  
Blood on my lips, and hair, and breast! "Thou fool!"  
A horrid torture in my heart—and then  
I licked my lips: the tigress tasted blood.  
My changed features—wash them in the flood  
Of murder! This is power over men  
And angels. I will lift the twisted rod,  
And make my power as the power of God!

I made my beauty as it was before.  
I learned strange secrets; by my love and skill  
I bent creation to my wanded will.  
I tuned the stars, I bound the bitter shore  
Beyond the Pleiads: until the Universe  
Moved at my mantra: Heaven and Hell obeyed;  
Creation at my orders stayed or swayed.  
"Take back," I cried, "the mockery of a curse!"  
"I wield Thy Power." With my magic rod  
Again I strode before the Throne of God.

"Forgone my Virgin Splendour! I aspire  
No longer as a maiden to thy Love.  
We twain are set in majesty above:  
My cloud is mighty as thy mystic Fire."  
Vanished the mist, the light, the sense, the throne!  
Vanished the written horror of the curse;  
Vanished the stars, the sun, the Universe.

I was in Heaven, lost, alone. Alone!  
A new curse gathered as a sombre breath:  
“Power without Wisdom is the Name of Death!”

And therefore from my devastating hand  
(for I was then unwilling to be dead)  
I loosed the lightning, and in hate and dread  
Despairing, did I break the royal wand.  
Mortal, a plaything for a thousand fears,  
I found the earth; I found a lonely place  
To gaze for ever on the ocean’s face,  
Lamenting through the lamentable years;  
Without a god, deprived of life and death,  
Sensible only to that sombre breath.

Thus wait I on the spring-forgotten shore;  
Looking with vain unweeping eyes, for aye  
Into the wedding of the sea and sky,  
(That do not wed, ay me!) for evermore  
Hopeless, forgetting even to aspire  
Unto that Wisdom; miserably dumb;  
Waiting for the Impossible to come,  
Whether in mercy or damnation dire—  
I who have been all Beauty and all Power!—  
This is thine hour, Apollyon, thine Hour!

I, who have twice beheld the awful throne;  
And, as it were the vision of a glass,  
Beheld the Mist be born thereon, and pass;  
I, who have stood upon the four-square stone!  
I, who have twice been One—! Woe, woe is me!  
Lost, lost, upon the lifeless, deathless plane,  
The desert desolate, the air inane;  
Fallen, O fallen to eternity!  
I, who have looked upon the Lord of Light;  
I, I am Nothing, and dissolved in Night!

(THE SPIRIT OF GOD, DESCENDING, ASSUMETH HER  
INTO THE GLORY OF GOD.)