

“MANY WATERS CANNOT
QUENCH LOVE.”

IN my distress I made complaint to Death :
Thy shadow strides across the starry air ;
Thou comest as a serpent unaware,
Striking love's heart and crushing out man's breath :
Thy destiny is even as God saith
To mark the impotence of human prayer,
Choke hope, sting all but Love ; and never care
If man or flower or sparrow perisheth.

Thee, I invoke thee, though no mercy move
Thy heart ! No power is to thy hate assigned
On love (sing, poets ! shrill, Pandean reeds !).
But me, look on me, how my bosom bleeds—
Invoke new power of cruelty ; be kind,
And ask authority to quench my love !

“La cour d’appel de la volonté de l’homme—
C’est le ventre!”—*Old proverb.*

The worst of meals is that we have to meet.
They trick my purpose and evade my will,
Remind my conscience that I love her still,
And pull my spirit from its lofty seat.
For I withdraw myself: my stealthy feet
Seek half-ashamed the alembic which I fill
To the epic-mark—one sonnet to distil,
In this poor miracle—my love to cheat.

Dinner clangs cheerily from my lady’s gong.
A man must eat in intervals of song!
Swift feet run back to hide my hate of her.
And then—that hate flies truant, as my thought
Rests (surely it beseems the overwrought)
And I am left her slave and minister.