

## THE BRIDEGROOM

NO passion stirs the cool white throat of her ;  
    No living glory fills the deep dead eyes ;  
    No sleep that breaks her Southern indolence ;  
Not all the breezes out of heaven, that stir  
    The sleepy wells and woodlands, bid her rise ;  
    Nor all a godhead's amorous violence.  
She is at peace ; we will go hence.

Warm wealth of draperies, the broidered room,  
    And delicate tissues of pale silk that shine  
    About her bed : all kiss the dead girl's face  
With shadowy reluctances that gloom  
    Over and under, and the cold divine  
    Presence of Death bedews the quiet place.  
She was so gracious ; she Was grace.

Once, in the long insidious hours that steal  
    Through summer's pleasant kingdom, she would  
    weave  
    Such songs, such murmurs of the dusky breeze  
That passed, like silken tapestries that feel  
    The silkier cheeks of maidens as they cleave  
    Tender to patient lovers, for the ease  
    Of lips fulfilled of harmonies.

Such songs were hers. What song is hers to-night  
    When she is smitten in her bridal bed,  
    Because I would not trust the God that gave  
Her smooth virginity to godlier might,  
    My glory ? There she lies divine and dead  
    Because I would not trust the sullen wave  
    Of time ; and chose this way—her grave.

I had not thought the poison left her so—  
Smiling, enticing, exquisite. I meant  
Rather that beauty to destroy, to leave  
No subtle languors on that breast of snow,  
No curves by God's caressing finger bent,  
To bid me think of her: I would deceive  
My memory—now I can but grieve.

Perhaps our happiness, despite of all,  
Would have grown comelier and never tired;  
Perhaps the pitiful pale face had been  
Always my true wife's; let me not recall  
Her first shy glance! This woman I desired,  
And sealed my own for ever by this keen  
Death that crowns her Death's queen.

Death's and not mine: I was a fool to kiss  
Her dead lips—aye, her living lips for that!  
I cannot bid her rise and live again.  
I would not. Nay, I know not; for is this  
My triumph or my ruin, satiate  
Of death, insatiate alway of pain?  
What have I done? In vain, in vain!

I will not look at her; I dare not stay.  
I will go down and mingle with the throng,  
Find some debasing dulling sacrifice,  
Some shameless harlot with thin lips grown grey  
In desperate desire, and so with song  
And wine fling hellward. Yes, she does not  
rise—

O if she opened once her eyes!