

THE GOD AND THE GIRL
(Imitated from the Greek of Misander)

To Dorothy L—

THERE was a God (well-skilled of touch and tongue)
For all his wisdom that was yet babe-young.

He took the gilded dung called womanhood,
And fed it daily with his heart's best blood.

With sun and moon he worked by day and night,
Wedding the greater and the lesser light.

So sought he to excite that leprous mould
Even to the pure, the vegetable gold.

He licked it over with his silver tongue
Sang golden songs to the disdainful dung.

Regenerating starlight of the vault
He called ; and sulphur, mercury, and salt.

Long years he laboured at the cucurbite :
Long years he thrilled the alembic with his light.

Long years he travailed at the athanor :
Inert the dung was as it was before.

Yet the God smiled ; for in his heart there grew
Nursed at dawn's breast, and watered by its dew,

That seed that is not bought and is not sold
Of veritable, vegetable gold.

Whereat he marvelled. In Eternity
There only lived one wiser God than he.

He posed his 'Why?'. "Young God!" He made retort;
"Know, the first matter of the Work is naught.

"Know, the pure gold is naught: for all decays.
It is the Working of the Work that pays!

"More, thou mistakest in thy mind of mist
Matter for man, and dung for alchemist.

"Woman, for all thy skill of touch and tongue,
Remains, poor poet! only gilded dung.

"But thou, First Matter of the Work that art,
Defiled by contact with her hemlock heart,

"Dost blacken to the Dragon of the Sages
Whence grows the Gold. For her, throughout the ages,

"As it was ever, is, and ever shall be—on
Earth everywhere—especially in Albion—

"World without end, Amen, I see no germ
Of life to make such dung evolve a worm.

"Use her, a poisonous purge that irritates
The clogged-up bowel till it evacuates;

"For so it may be thou shalt ease thy brain.
But dung she is, and dung she must remain."

Thus then with proud humility the younger
Answered that holy ancient Wisdom-monger:

“The Way grows clear as crystal to my ken.
Let me to teach this alchemy to men.”

“Do!” answered He, “and learn. The race shall
rage
Through to the blackness of the Dragon-stage :

“Few may pass on.” The younger God essayed
The scheme—and a nice mess of it he made!

So that—or trousers, petticoats, or tights
Hide what makes honest men turn sodomites.

Hence our joints ache, and life is out of joint—
All ways we turn we stumble over coynte,

Slip in the slime, and sicken at the stench
Of English widow, wanton, wife, and wench.

And as the fairest cloak hides foulest skin
Hence thou—O snare that I am taken in,

Delicious Doris! Luckily for me
I know the whole theurgic alchemy

And breed a boon (where God begat a curse)
From thee, best coynte of His brave universe!