

On the Edge of the Desert

*Originally published in the June 1911 edition
of the English Review.*

You come between me and the night
 That was my queen till you arose;
You come between me and the light;
 You come between me and the snows.
The sun, the sands, the horizon:
Since you are come, all these are gone.

Leave me some love of flower and tree,
 Some passion for the moon and stars,
Some ache of spring, some sigh of sea,
 Some echo in love's ancient scars,
To witness ere your reign began
That among men I was a man.

No voice in life allures but yours;
 Nor sight nor sleep allays mine eyes;
Night sways my dull distemperatures
 Till light renews my scale of sighs.
Half a man's span I have lived. In sooth
You have found the elixir that gives youth!

From the most austral East you drove
 On the most fortunate wind that blows,
A galleon piled with treasure trove,
 The sun's gold, silver of the snows,
All jewels, all virtue far above--
O tall ship laden with true love!

You strode majestic and fierce,
 Armed, an avenging Amazon,
A warrior maiden mad to pierce
 With unfleshed steel man's morion.

You thrust the rapier of your art,
Singing for rapture, through my heart.

I died: and you by death refreshed,
 Washed in my blood, gave up my soul
To Love, who, seeing us enmeshed,
 Wept, and with one smile made us whole:
Whence you have all life's gold for gain
And I am grown a boy again.

I am a thousand worlds withdrawn
 From these lone leagues of sand and sun.
I am with you in the Windy dawn;
 I am with you when night's fingers run
Over the desert, when the dunes
Lift up their faces to the moon's.

I am blind to these: my life's one ache.
 My tongue is swollen; my lips are burnt;
My body shivers for your sake,
 For this last lesson I have learnt
(Laylah, my Night!) tragic and true:
I never loved till I loved you.

For you have fixed the boyish dream,
 And saved the man from "love's a wraith."
Your love rekindled hope's blue gleam,
 And hope fulfilled requickened faith,
And faith confirmed renewed the birth
Of a new heaven and a new earth.

Mine is the only star that ever
 Left the lone Cross to blend its ray
With my Lion's Heart in dear endeavour
 To knell the night and dim the day.
Mine is the only maiden worth
The wooing ever won on earth.

Laylah, my night! Enshadow me:

Draw down mine eyelids; bid me sleep
And dream of thee, and dream of thee,

Or wake and weep, or wake and weep.

I care not which, so thee I find
(Present or absent) in my mind.