

THE ROMANCE OF OLIVIA VANE

To "OLIVIA VANE"

AND HER OTHER LOVER

*Paris, March 1909*

*Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—*

KEATS.

*Iam veniet virgo, jam dicitur Hymenaeus.*

CATULLUS.

I

WHEN first the golden trumpets came  
To set my soul in fire and flame,  
I lay unheeding, blind and dumb,  
Ere ever wizard Night was come.

But, in the gloaming, light flashed by,  
And cast me on the burning sky;  
A river of light thrilled through my being,  
And made my eyes bright and unseeing.

II

**S**WEET wizard, in whose footsteps I have trod  
Unto the shrine of the most obscene god,  
So steep the pathway is, I may not know,  
Until I reach the summit, where I go.  
My love is deathless as the springs of Truth,  
My love is pure as is the dawn of youth,  
But all my being throbs in rhythm with thine,  
Who ledest on to the horizon-line.

III

O PAN, my slave and lord, god who hast turned  
the key  
Within the rusty ward—the chambered mystery  
Hath lain beneath mine eyes! Ah! I have known, my  
sweet,  
The wonders of thy thighs, thy face and hands and feet:  
O thou hast sucked my soul, lord of my nights and  
days,  
My body, pure and whole, is merged within the ways  
That lead to thee, my queen, who gav'st thy life to me  
When all my heart was green, a lost wave in the sea.  
I thank thee; thou hast been the way of life to me.

#### IV

I HAVE found the light and the shadows,  
The night-fall over the meadows,  
The night-fall over the sea;  
The night is the soul of me.

I have the way and the truth,  
O thou, who hast given me youth,  
O thou, who art fair and wise,  
Whose words are the fairest lies.

I have heard the soul of thee say  
The glorious legend of the day,  
The glorious way of the wise,  
And the glorious youth in my eyes.

I have spoken; the four-fold word  
In my soul hath been echoed and heard,  
In my soul hath renewed the spring;  
My soul is dark, and doth sing.

V

**I** CROSS the water with the sun;  
The light plays on the sea.  
The Channel waters race and run  
Betwixt thy soul and me.  
Ah! Never shall the song be done  
That's sung 'twixt me and thee.

I give my song the fevered breath  
That from thee I have won;  
I love thee ever, unto death—  
Till the last star-crowned sun  
In glamour of spring-tide witnesseth  
The thing that we have done.

VI

L IGH T wind, night wind,  
Starry fold and fell,—  
Thy light, my light,  
Who shall know and tell?  
Hark! hushed singing! Dawn is springing  
On us in love's dell.

Gray world, gay world,  
World of thee and me,  
Red day, dead day,  
This our song shall be:—  
I have found thee, I have bound thee,  
One in Pan are we!

## VII

**A**LL yesterday died hosts of angels in me,  
I was cast out from hell, and found the earth;  
And it was thou, sweet poet-soul, didst win me  
To that most glorious, subtile, pagan birth;  
Lady of light, take thou my lips, and be  
The sunlight flaring on the blue-gold sea.

I crossed the channel, yesterday, with singing  
I could not still afoam within my heart;  
For unto thee I fain had still been winging  
Mine eager way since from thee I did part.  
Come thou and slumber with me; there is rest  
For thee and Love together, in my breast.

Slow was thy wooing, so I crept upon thee  
Until thy radiant face from sleep did rise;  
And in the moment that I leapt upon thee,  
I felt the agony of thy burning eyes,  
And all my heart was thine; and now I know  
The depth of fire beneath life's glittering snow.

## VIII

I THINK that never in my loneliness  
    May I forget my glory and my shame,  
    Nor the swift lightning-flash that 'twixt us came  
To strike the tower of my soul's distress:  
And thou, who hast been my heart's glad mistress,  
    Who hast burned the lumber of my cross with flame  
    Drawn from my heart;—Oh, thou hast made me tame  
With love, and with the loss of thee no less.

Come back across the sea to comfort me  
    With purple kisses, touches all unplanned!  
Let me once more feel thy strong hand to be  
    Making the magic signs upon me! Stand,  
Stand in the light, and let mine eyes drink in  
The glorious vision of the death of sin!

IX

**L**YRIC light is mine  
Brother of the way;  
Give me yellow wine,  
Sing me songs to-day—  
I am thine, and thine  
I shall be always.

Laughter of the gods  
Makes melodious song  
In the phallic rods  
Of those who dare and long:  
The dull world slowly plods;  
Our pinions shall be strong.

Thou art mine, for I  
Live my life in thee:  
While beneath the sky  
Thou remember'st me—  
Till at last we die—  
One in Pan are we.

The light that thou hast given  
Lights my muse to bed:  
Thou hast starred my heaven  
With planets wild and red:  
Twin stars and planets seven  
Are lighted overhead.

X

**A**LL yesterday the spring was born,  
The spring that Ovid sang of old;  
All yesterday the birth of morn  
Held all the daylight wrapt in gold.  
The buds unfold! The buds unfold!

All yesterday the olden lore  
Was true to me; I saw how I  
Had lived and loved and died before  
In every land beneath the sky.  
And we must die! And we must die!

All yesterday the way was paved  
With burnished mirrors picturing  
In all the lands, enthroned, enslaved,  
Love coming with the birth of spring,  
As now I sing! As now I sing!

All yesterday thou hauntedst me,  
As thou, I know, hast done of old;  
All yesterday I sought for thee  
Through all the paths of beaten gold;  
The ways unfold! The ways unfold!

## XI

SOME time, long hence, when I am old and gray,  
They will say, "Once you knew him?" I shall say,  
Smiling upon my eager questioners,  
"I knew him once in this wide universe."

And they shall ask me of your garb and port,  
And of the miracles men say you wrought,  
And I shall smile upon their questioning,  
And tell how in my soul you wrought the spring.

And they shall ask of this and that, and I  
Shall smile as old men do before they die,  
Anew shalt thou be born from my old tongue,  
And they shall wonder, for they shall be young.

And they shall know how once I gave my breath,  
My hand, my lyre, to thee, and said, "Till death  
The image of this man shall not depart  
Out of the inmost shrine within my heart."

But they shall know not how we entered in,  
Finding deliverance in the death of sin,  
How pagan laughter leapt from eye to eye  
Beside the sea, under a cloudless sky.

XII

A SONNET leaps unto my lips, O King,  
And every note shall be as first it springs;  
I may not check the hot speed of my wings  
Now I have found a voice and heart to sing.—  
For thou hast waved thy rod, and everything  
Hath been transmuted. Now the sunlight brings  
Desire of love, and longing for the stings  
That eat into me while I feel her cling

And cling about me, seeking all my gift  
Of body and soul; leaving no fragment mine,  
Yet taking all, herself she giveth me;  
She is the cloud that hides the sun, to drift  
Over the face of heaven, and feed the sea  
With a new-breaking flood of healing brine.

### XIII

I MAY not weep, for now mine eyes are tearless,  
But ah! my soul is bathed in bloody brine;  
I know no fear, for now my heart is fearless,  
For thou for ever and ever shalt be mine:  
I await thee in this city; when thou dost come,  
My songs shall end; thy lips shall make me dumb.

My virile soul shall tremble at thy coming,  
And thou shalt spend thy spirit's plenteous store  
On me, to sleep and death well-nigh succumbing  
Beneath thy body's weight. Ah, come once more;  
Grant me but that I seek, and I shall be  
For ever fastened on the breast of thee.

Oh, thou who art the red dawn's only singer,  
Take these my songs; take them, for they are thine;  
Be once again my muse's thunder-bringer;  
Her voice grows harsh for lack of thy bright wine.  
Oh, woo her forth! As to thine arms she slips,  
Stay thou her song with kisses! Stop her lips!

Come, and bring ease unto my thirsting soul;  
Give what thou hast, spare me nor pain, nor dread;  
Ah! Having taken love thou hast taken the whole:  
Come thou unto me now, and let thine head  
Lie on my breast, and let me stroke thy skin  
With my light hand! Come thou, and enter in!

XIV

**H**OW foolish are the men who make their heaven  
A distant vision of the world to be,  
When we found hell and heaven not bereaven,  
But brothers in the souls of thee and me.  
All schemes that men have wrought for life's undoing  
Found swift expression in our sudden wooing.

All hells, all heavens, still transcended be  
By him who in his ardent breast doth bear  
Knowledge that sets him from the gray world free,  
By reason of the master-spirit there.  
From my strong soul this charter I did win:  
Thou hast sinned in love; thou hast transcended sin.

It may be, as thou sayest, that old Horus  
Hath been re-born beneath these sunny skies,  
Here, when I hymn my love's low-sounding chorus,  
Warmed by the glamour of our merry eyes.  
Love! never more shall men's Utopias be  
As veils before the naked Mystery.

I see the summer sky break into rime,  
And I must sing in rhythm with it still,  
Until thou comest to me; all the time  
Thou art not here, with song dost thou fulfil  
The daylight, since the secret hour I won  
The lyric light of thee, my risen Sun.

XV

**F**RESH from the heaven of new-born desire,  
I wait thee here, and all my veins are fire;  
And all my breath is breathed in rhythm with thee;  
Come, therefore, and set free  
My voice, my lyre.

I knew not love, till thou hadst given me pain,  
Nor heard love's music, till the heavenly rain  
Descended on me, and the gray-lined cloud  
Left me new-born and proud.  
Come back again!

Ah, thou art wise and fair, and I am nought,  
Save as I dwell in thy most god-like thought.  
Take thou my body, now hermaphrodite,  
Pink-tipped and gleaming white,  
For love's sake wrought.

XVI

THE world without may never change,  
But still the changeless soul within  
Through worlds of spirit and sense may range,  
Unfettered by the primal sin  
That man did win.

So now the aspect of the sun  
Is turned to something fierier yet  
Than that old bright accustomed one  
Whose radiance was wont to set  
My body asweat.

For now the sun is grown a world  
Whose glances burn the earth with love,  
Whose rays are banners fiercely hurled  
Around earth's bosom from above,  
My soul, my dove.

Rejoice: The stars are yellow stains  
Set in our canopy aflame,  
That stir the agony in my veins  
To rapture, when I think we came  
From a star self-same.

The furious rapture burns me through,  
The air brings waves of love to me,  
The gods' hot breath; the sea is blue  
Through endless yearning. Alas! poor sea,  
I pity thee.

For thou art changed from brine to fire,  
Whereby the fish that swim in thee  
Feel hotly as I the new desire  
That burns the nascent soul of me  
In fearless glee.

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I dare not sleep for long, for I  
Should wake in anguished dream, my sweet,  
And wander bare-head 'neath the sky,  
And roam half-raving square and street,  
In love's fierce heat.

## XVII

### I

**A** HUNDRED sonnets yesterday took wing,  
A thousand lyrics flew,  
From out my heart into the glowing sphere  
Of blazing golden blue.  
Ah, had I then but had the power to sing  
What trembled on my lyre  
More worthy gift my voice would yield thine ear,  
The song of young Desire.

### II

Where old Dieppe smiles by the narrow bay,  
I came, from o'er the sea,  
And now I strive to let my singing say  
Things my heart cannot bide;  
Let me not be quite dumb in love's first flush;  
Shyly I tell to thee  
The wonder thou hast wrought, lest I should blush  
When next I hail thee, Bride.

### III

So, singing in my heart's gold sunlight still,  
I reached the city rare  
Where art and life are one; the glorious light  
Shone round me everywhere,  
And as I rode unto the western hill,  
Where the sun sank in flame,  
I know my song would outlast all the night,  
And with the day it came.

XVIII

**C**REEP the little shadows  
Over all the meadows,  
The good green hills I knew of old still hold the  
steps of me  
The sunset in the South  
Still smiles upon my mouth  
And so I smile, my love, my love, to thee!

Oh, I know so well  
The water's floating spell  
Over all the greenest hills that ever man has known;  
I hold thee where I hold  
Sweet wonders manifold,  
Since thou hast made them all to be thine own.

The southern summers lie  
In my heart beneath the sky;  
Take all the hoarded gold I found, and spend and  
spend it still.  
For thou dwell'st there alone,  
My poet, O mine own,  
And ever shall thou dwell there at thy will.

XIX

**H**ERE in the City of Light  
There are music and wonder for me;  
Here in the star-guarded night  
Life breaks on the shore of time's sea.

Here in the sun and the spring  
The Luxembourg gardens are gay,  
And oh! but, my dearest, I sing,  
For I am the spring and the day.

I have laughed in the temple of God,  
I have dreamed in the temple of Man;  
Now I am free from the sod;  
Priapus hath grown into Pan.

I am the spring and the sun,  
Thou art the earth and the sea;  
Shake fiercely my soul. We are one—  
Sing on the bosom of me.

Give me thy love and thy strength,  
If it be for an age, for an hour.  
For alas! we grow old, and at length  
We love, and are shorn of love's power.

Oh, I shall see thee to-morrow;  
Clasped heart to heart we shall lie  
Naked; all day we shall borrow  
The space and the spread of the sky.

Come, and the day shall be ours,  
With music and wonder and me;  
Come, and be glad of the flowers  
I have plucked from the bosom of thee.

There are lilies and burning red roses  
That flame and grow strong with desire;  
Come thou, ere winter re-closes  
The wide brazen gateways of fire.

XX

**W**E will cross the green-wood and the salty sea;  
We will hear the thrushes thrill, the night-  
ingales awake;  
We'll let loose the reins of love until we are so free  
That none shall dare to bar our way through sea or  
hill or brake.

Who shall stay our footsteps? who shall call us back?  
Who shall quench the light from out our living  
breasts and eyes?  
Ah love, my love, remember to let love's rein be  
slack;  
Eros is still upon the wing, nor wearies as he flies!

XXI

**M**EN shall not soon forget,  
While deeds of love are done,  
The songs that my heart hath set  
    In rhythm to the pulsing sun:  
We are ever one in a golden net,  
    We are ever and endlessly one.

Ah! When we rose to greet,  
    Did we pierce through the outer gloom?  
When our eyes first came to meet,  
    Did we know of the secret doom  
That lay in our hearts, my sweet,  
    A perilous, tender bloom?

There are callings now on the wind,  
    Sweetheart; I must rise and go,  
For the day is far behind,  
    And the soft night-breezes blow;  
They call me out to the starlight blind,  
    And the pale moon's wonder-glow. . . .

XXII

**A**GES hence, my songs recording,  
Know, that here my seal I set;  
All time's shallow stream sure fording,  
These my songs shall ease the fret  
Of the lovers yet to be  
Who have dared a lonely sea.

Ages hence, know, this my singing  
Sprang from one great secret dawn;—  
Onward life is ever winging,  
Still to love that life is drawn,  
Lovers! ye shall dare to be  
Wise, and in your wisdom free.

Ages hence—my song grows fainter,  
For the light fades from my mind—  
Poet, player, singer, painter,  
Learn the secret: be not blind.  
Know the sign shall set ye free;  
Hear the word of mystery.

There is a maiden harp-player, and a silver flute  
is held  
In the hands of an hermaphrodite: this thing shall  
be fulfilled