

RED POPPY.

I HAVE no heart to sing.
What offering may I bring,
 Alice, to thee?
My great love's lifted wing
Weakens, unwearying,
 And droops with me,
Seeing the sun-kindled hair
Close in the face more fair,
The sweet soul shining there
 For God to see.

Surely some angle shed
Flowers for the maiden head,
 Ephemeral flowers!
I yearn, not comforted.
My heart has vainly bled
 Through age-long hours.
To thee my spirit turns;
My bright soul aches and burns,
As a dry valley yearns
 For spring and showers.

Splendid, remote, a fane
Alone and unprofane,
 I know thy breast.
These bitter tears of pain
Flood me, and fall again
 Not into rest.
Me, whose sole purpose is
To gain one gainless kiss,
And make a bird's my bliss,
 Shrined in that nest.

O fearful firstling dove!
My dawn and spring of love,
 Love's light and lure!
Look (as I bend above)
Through bright lids filled thereof
 Perfect and pure,
Thy bloom of maidenhood.
I could not: if I could,
I would not: being good,
 Also endure!

Cruel, to tear or mar
The chaliced nenuphar;
 Cruel to press
The rosebud; cruel to scar
Or stain the flower-star
 With mad caress.
But crueller to destroy
The leaping life and joy
Born in a careless boy
 From lone distress.

More cruel than art thou
The calm and chaste of brow,
 If thou dost this,
Forget the feeble vow
Ill sworn: all laws allow
 Pity, that is
Kin unto love, and mild.
List to the sad and wild
Crying of the lonely child
 Who asks a kiss.

One kiss, like snow, to slip,
Cool fragrance from thy lip
 To melt on mine;
One kiss, a white-sail ship
To laugh and leap and dip
 Her brows divine;

One kiss, a starbeam faint
With love of a sweet saint,
Stolen like a sacrament
 In the night's shrine!

One kiss, like moonlight cold
Lighting with floral gold
 The lake's low tune ;
One kiss, one flower to fold,
On its own calyx rolled
 At night, in June!
One kiss, like dewfall, drawn
A veil o'er leaf and lawn—
Mix night, and noon, and dawn,
 Dew, flower, and moon!

One kiss, intense, supreme!
The sense of Nature's dream
 And scent of Heaven
Shown in the glint and gleam
Of the pure dawn's first beam,
 With earth for leaven ;
Moulded of fire and gold,
Water and wine to fold
Me in its life, and hold!—
 In all but seven!

I would not kiss thee, I!
Lest my lip's character
 Ruin thy flower.
Curve thou one maidenly
Kiss, stooping from thy sky
 Of peace and power!
Thine only be the embrace!—
I move not from my place,
Feel the exultant face
 Mine for an hour!