

KALI.

THERE is an idol in my house
By whom the sandal always steams.
Alone, I make a black carouse
With her to dominate my dreams.
With skulls and knives she keeps control
(O Mother Kali!) of my soul.

She is crowned with emeralds like leaves,
And rubies flame from either eye ;
A rose upon her bosom heaves,
Turquoise and lapis lazuli.
She hath a kirtle like a maid :—
Amethyst, amber, pearl, and jade !

Her face is fashioned like a moon ;
Her breasts are tongues of pointed jet ;
Her belly of opal fairly hewn ;
And round about her neck is set
The holy rosary, skull by skull,
Polished and grim and beautiful !

This jewelled shape of gold and bronze
Is seated on my bosom's throne ;
She takes my muséd orisons
To her, to her, to her alone.

Oh Kali, Kali, Kali, quell
This hooded hate, O Queen of Hell!

Her ruby-studded brow is calm ;
Her eyes shine like some sleepy flood ;
Her breast is oliban and balm ;
Her tongue lolls out, a-dripping blood ;
She swings my body to and fro ;
She breaks me on the wheel of woe!

To her eternal rapture seems
Mere nature ; underneath the crown
Of dusky emeralds there streams
A river of bliss to sluice me down
With blood and tears, to drown my thought,
To bring my being into naught.

The cruel teeth, the steady sneer,
The marvellous lust of her, I bring
Unto my body bright and clear
(Dropped poison in a water spring!)
To fill me with the utmost sense
Of some divine experience.

For who but she, the adulterous queen,
Made earth and heaven with all its stars,
The storm, the hunger epicene,
The raging at invisible bars,
The hideous cruelty of the whole?—
These are of Kali, O my soul!

The sterile force of bronze and gold
 Bends to my passion, as it grips
With feverish claws the metal cold,
 And burns upon the brazen lips
That, parted like a poppy bud,
Have gemméd curves like moons of blood.

The mazes of her many arms
 Delude the eye ; they seem to shift
As if they spelled mysterious charms
 Whereby some tall gray ship should drift
Out to a windless, tideless sea
Motionless from eternity.

This then I seek, O woman-form !
 O god embowelled in curves of bronze !
The shuddering of a sudden storm
 To mix me with thy minions
The lost, who wait through endless night,
And wait in vain, to see the light.

For I am utterly consumed
 In thee, in thee am broken up.
The life upon my lips that bloomed
 Is crushed into a deadly cup,
Whose devilish spirit squats and gloats
Upon the thirst that rots our throats.

Gape wide, O hideous mouth, and suck
 This heart's blood, drain it down, expunge

This sweltering life of mire and muck!
Squeeze out my passions as a sponge,
Till naught is left of terrene wine
But somewhat deathless and divine!

Not by a faint and fairy tale
We shadow forth the immortal way.
No symbols exquisitely pale
Avail to lure the secrets gray
Of his endeavour who proceeds
By doing to abolish deeds.

Not by the pipings of a bird
In skies of blue on fields of gold,
But by a fierce and loathly word
The abomination must be told.
The holy work must twist its spell
From hemp of madness, grown in hell.

Only by energy and strife
May man attain the eternal rest,
Dissolve the desperate lust of life
By infinite agony and zest.
Thus, O my Kali, I divine
The golden secret of thy shrine!

Death from the universal force
Means to the forceless universe
Birth. I accept the furious course,
Invoke the all-embracing curse.

Blessing and peace beyond may lie
When I annihilate the “I.”

Therefore, O holy mother, gnash
Thy teeth upon my willing flesh!
Thy chain of skulls wild music clash!
Thy bosom bruise my own afresh!
Sri Maharani! draw my breath
Into the hollow lungs of death!

There is no light, nor any motion.
There is no mass, nor any sound.
Still, in the lampless heart of ocean,
Fasten me down and hold me drowned
Within thy womb, within thy thought,
Where there is naught—where there is naught!