

ODE TO GERALD FESTUS KELLY

CURLED eyelids that hide like a beetle
Black eyes that grow green for an hour ;
The weary wide limbs and the leetle
White hands, like a boot in a bower ;
When thou art gone down, as a jelly,
What shall rest of us then, as we part,
O mystic and dolorous Kelly,
Apostle of Art !

Seven sorrows are sung by the Herald :¹
But thy daubs, which are seventy times seven,
Will kill me my militant Gerald,
And then thy will haunt me in the heaven ;
Fierce eyebrow or famishing bosom,
Rossetti or Aubrey or Jones,
Some buxom, some frail as the dew, some
Mere bags full of bones.

You shift and bedeck and bedrape them
(Though some are both nude and antique) :—
Your epigrams, who shall escape them ?
Your metaphors often oblique ?
With words you have beaten and blessed us,
You caused us to shudder and smart,
O subtle, spontaneous Festus,
Apostle of Art !

By the ravenous teeth that have bitten
Through the salad of lobster and cheese ;
By the silliest lines I have written
(Though none are as silly as these) ;

¹ This phrase is, and must remain obscure, as I can't remember what, if anything, I meant by it.

By remarks I have made that were rude-io !
By the epigrams cruel and tart,
We beseech thee respond from thy studio,
Apostle of Art !

On canvas by paints never covered,
Nor wet with the washing of turps ;
On blocks where thy pen never hovered,
Nor pencil that crumbles and chirps.
(My fingers with ink are so inky,
I want to give vent to a phrase,
That would shock even Wee Willie Winkie
Or t' Owd 'n of Days.¹)

We shall know what the darkness discovers
When bald are the hairs of our head ;
For “ love and the pleasures of lovers
Are only well known to the dead.”²
We shall know if your heaven is helly,
Find out if your liver is heart ;
And if brains be the whole of thee, Kelly,
Apostle of Art !

¹ Macrophages, the “ Vast Countenance.”

². Original epigram, by G. F. K. Copyright in the United States of America.