

## THE CHALLENGE

Now your grave eyes are filled with tears ;  
Your hands are trembling in my own ;  
The slow voice falls upon my ears,  
An undulating monotone.  
Your lips are gathered up to mine:  
Your bosom heaves with fearful breath;  
Your scent is keen as floral wine,  
Inviting me, and love, to death.  
You, whom I kept, a sacred shrine,  
Will fling the portals to the day;  
Where shone the moon the sun shall shine,  
Silver in scarlet melt away.  
There is a yet a pang: they give me this  
Who can ; and you who could have failed ?  
Is it too late to extend the kiss ?  
Too late the goddess be unveiled ?  
O but the generous flower that gives  
Her kisses to violent sun,  
Yet none the less in ardour lives  
An hour, and then her day is done.  
Back from my lips, back from my breast !  
I hold you as I always will,  
You unprofaned and uncaressed,  
Silent, majestic, and still.  
Back! for I love you. Even yet  
Do you not see my deepest fire  
Burn through the veils and coverings set  
By fatuous phantoms of desire ?  
Back! O I love you evermore.  
But, be our bed the bridal sky!  
I love you, love you. Hither, shore  
Of far unstained eternity!  
There we will rest. Beware! Beware!  
For I am young, and you are fair.  
Nay! I am old in this, you know!  
Ah! heat of God! I love you so!