

VIII.

FLAVIA

I KISSED the face of Flavia fair,
In the deep wet dews of dawn,
And the ruddy weight of my lover's hair
Fell over me and held me there
On the broad Italian lawn.

And the bright Italian moon arose
And cleft the cypress grove ;
For sadness in all beauty grows,
And sorrow from its master knows
How to appear like love.

Alas ! that Falvia's gentle kiss,
And Flavia's cool caress,
And Flavia's flower of utter bliss
Must fade, must cease, must fall and miss
The height of happiness.

The moon must set, the sun must rise,
The wind of dawn is chill.
Oh, in this world of miseries
Is one hour's pleasure ill to prize ?
Is love the means of ill ?

Oh, if there were a God to hear !
Or Christ had really given
His life ! Or did a Dove appear
Bearing a rosebud, we might fear
Or hope for hell or heaven.

Alas! no sign is given. But short
Bliss of the earth is ours ;
The kiss that stops the avenging thought ;
The furtive passion shrewdly caught
Between the summer flowers.

So, Flavia, till the dawn awake
Cling close, cling close, as this is !
While moonlight lingers on the lake,
Our present happiness we'll take
And fill the night with kisses !