

THE CANNIBALS.

ALL night no change, no whisper. Scarce a breath,
But lips closed hard upon the cup of death
To drain its sweetest poison. Scarce a sigh
Beats the dead hours out; scarce a melody
Of measured pulses quickened with the blood
Of that desire which pours its deadly flood
Through soul and shaken body; scarce a thought,
But sense through spirit most divinely wrought
To perfect feeling; only through the lips
Electric ardour kindles, flashes, slips
Through all the circle to her lips again,
And thence, unwavering, flies to mine, to drain
All pleasure in one draught. No whispered sigh;
No change of breast; love's posture perfectly
Once gained, we change no more. The fever grows
Hotter or cooler, as the night wind blows
Fresh gusts of passion on the outer gate.
But we, in waves of frenzy, concentrate
Our thirsty mouths on that hot drinking cup,
Whence we may never suck the nectar up
Too often or too hard; fresh fire invades
Our furious veins, and the unquiet shades
Of night make noises in the darkened room.
Yet, did I raise my head, throughout the gloom
I might behold thine eyes as red as fire
A tigress maddened with supreme desire;
White arms that clasp me; fervent breast that glides
An eager snake, about my breast and sides;
Teeth keen to bite, red tongue that never tires,
And lips ensanguine with unfed desires,
A very beast of prey; hot hands caress,
And violent breath that surfeits not excess.

But raise no head! I know thee, breast and thigh,
Lips, hair, and eyes, and mouth: I will not die
But thou come with me o'er the gate of death.
So, bloody and body furious with breath
That pants through foaming kisses, let us stay
Gripped hard together to kiss life away,
Mouths drowned in murder, never satiate,
Kissing away the hard decrees of Fate,
Kissing insatiable in mad desire,
Kisses whose agony may never tire,
Kissing the gates of hell, the sword of God,
Each unto each a serpent or a rod,
A well of wine and fire, each unto each,
Whose lips are fain convulsively to reach
A higher heaven, a deeper hell. Ah! day
So soon to dawn, delight to snatch away!
Damned day, whose sunlight finds us as with wine
Drunken, with lust made manifest divine
Devils of darkness, servants unto hell—
Yea, king and queen of Sheol, terrible
Above all fiends and furies, hating more
The high Jehovah, loving Baal Peor,
Our father and our love and our god!
Yea, though he lift his adamant rod
And pierce us through, how shall his anger tame
Fire that glows fiercer for the brand of shame
Thrust in it; so, we who are all fire,
One dull red flare of devilish desire,
The God of Israel shall not quench with tears,
Nor blood of martyrs drawn from myriad spheres,
Nor watery blood of Christ; that blood shall boil
With all the fury of our hellish toil;
His veins shall dry with heat; his bones shall bleach
Cold and detested, picked of dogs, on each
Dry separate dunghill of burnt Golgotha.
But we will wrest from heaven a little star,
The Star of Bethlehem, a lying light
Fit for our candle, and by devils' might
Fix in the vast concave of hell for us

To lume its ghastly shadows murderous,
That in the mirror of the lake of fire
We may behold the image of Desire
Stretching broad wings upon us, and may leap
Each upon other, till our bodies weep
Thick sweet salt tears, till, perfected of shames,
They burn to one another as the flames
Of our hell fuse us into one wild soul:
Then, one immaculate divinest whole,
Plunge, fire, within all fire, dive far to death;
Till, like king Satan's sympathetic breath,
Burn on us as a voice from far above
Strange nameless elements of fire and love;
And we, one mouth to kiss, one soul to lure,
For ever wedded, one, divine, endure
Far from sun, sea, and spring, from love or light,
Imbedded in impenetrable night;
Deeper than ocean, higher than the sky,
Vaster than petty loves that dream and die,
Insatiate, angry, terrible for lust,
Who shrivel God to adamant dust
By our fierce gaze upon him, who would strive
Under our wrath, to flee away, to dive
Into the deep recesses of his heaven.
But we, one joy, one love, one shame for leaven,
Quit hope and life, quit fear and death and love,
Implacable as God, desired above
All loves of hell or heaven, supremely wed,
Knit in one soul in one delicious bed
More hot than hell, more wicked than all things,
Vast in our sin, whose unredeeming wings
Rise o'er the world, and flap for lust of death,
Eager as any one that travaileth;
So in our lust, the monstrous burden borne
Heavy within the womb, we wait the morn
Of its fulfilment. Thus eternity
Wheels vain wings round us, who may never die
But cling as hard as serpent's wedlock is,
One writhing glory, an immortal kiss.