

THE BRIDEGROOM

NO passion stirs the cool white throat of her ;
 No living glory fills the deep dead eyes ;
 No sleep that breaks her Southern indolence ;
Not all the breezes out of heaven, that stir
 The sleepy wells and woodlands, bid her rise ;
 Nor all a godhead's amorous violence.
She is at peace ; we will go hence.

Warm wealth of draperies, the broidered room,
 And delicate tissues of pale silk that shine
 About her bed : all kiss the dead girl's face
With shadowy reluctances that gloom
 Over and under, and the cold divine
 Presence of Death bedews the quiet place.
She was so gracious ; she Was grace.

Once, in the long insidious hours that steal
 Through summer's pleasant kingdom, she would
 weave
 Such songs, such murmurs of the dusky breeze
That passed, like silken tapestries that feel
 The silkier cheeks of maidens as they cleave
 Tender to patient lovers, for the ease
 Of lips fulfilled of harmonies.

Such songs were hers. What song is hers to-night
 When she is smitten in her bridal bed,
 Because I would not trust the God that gave
Her smooth virginity to godlier might,
 My glory ? There she lies divine and dead
 Because I would not trust the sullen wave
 Of time ; and chose this way—her grave.

I had not thought the poison left her so—
Smiling, enticing, exquisite. I meant
Rather that beauty to destroy, to leave
No subtle languors on that breast of snow,
No curves by God's caressing finger bent,
To bid me think of her: I would deceive
My memory—now I can but grieve.

Perhaps our happiness, despite of all,
Would have grown comelier and never tired;
Perhaps the pitiful pale face had been
Always my true wife's; let me not recall
Her first shy glance! This woman I desired,
And sealed my own for ever by this keen
Death that crowns her Death's queen.

Death's and not mine: I was a fool to kiss
Her dead lips—aye, her living lips for that!
I cannot bid her rise and live again.
I would not. Nay, I know not; for is this
My triumph or my ruin, satiate
Of death, insatiate alway of pain?
What have I done? In vain, in vain!

I will not look at her; I dare not stay.
I will go down and mingle with the throng,
Find some debasing dulling sacrifice,
Some shameless harlot with thin lips grown grey
In desperate desire, and so with song
And wine fling hellward. Yes, she does not
rise—

O if she opened once her eyes!