

# THE STAR & THE GARTER

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## THE STAR AND THE GARTER

### I

WHAT sadness closes in between  
Your eyes and mine to-day, my queen ?  
In dewfall of our glance hath come  
The chill of sunset in hot lands  
'Mid iris and chrysanthemum.  
Well do I know the shaken sands  
Within the surf, the beaten bar  
Of coral, the white nenuphar  
Of moonrise stealing o'er the bay.  
So here's the darkness, and the day  
Sinks, and a chill clusters, and I  
Wrap close the cloak : then is it so  
To-day, you rose-gleam on the snow,  
My own true lover ? Ardentlly  
I dare not look : I never looked  
So : that you know. But insight keen  
We (laugh and) call not "love." Now crooked  
The light swerves somehow. Do you mean—  
What ? There is coldness and regret  
Set like the stinging winter spray

Blown blind back from a waterfall  
On Cumbrian moors at Christmas. Wet  
The cold cheek numbs itself. A way  
Is here to make—an end of all?  
What sadness closes in between  
Your eyes and mine to-day, my Queen?

## II

You are silent. That we always were.  
 The racing lustres of your hair  
 Spelt out its sunny message, though  
 The room was dusk : a rosy glow  
 Shed from an antique lamp to fall  
 On the deep crimson of the wall,  
 And over all the ancient grace  
 Of shawls, and ivory, and gems  
 To cast its glamour, till your face  
 The eye might fall upon and rest,  
 The temperate flower, the tropic stems.  
 You were silent, and I too. Caressed  
 The secret flames that curled around  
 Our subtle intercourse. Profound,  
 Unmoved, delighting utterly,  
 So sat, so sit, my love and I.  
 But not to-day. Your silence stirs  
 No answering rapture : you are proud,  
 And love itself checks and deters  
 The thought to say itself aloud.

Oh ! heart of amber and fine gold  
Silverly darting lunar rays !  
Oh ! river of sweet passion rolled  
Adown invisible waterways !  
Speak ! Did I wound you then unguessed ?  
What is the sorrow unexpressed  
That shadows those ecstatic lids ?  
A word in season subtly rids  
The heart of thoughts unseasonable.  
You are silent. Do they speak in hell ?



### III

Is it your glance that told me? Nay!  
I know you would not look that way.  
Seeing, you strove to see not. Fool!  
I have ruined all in one rash deed.  
Learnt I not in discretion's school  
The little care that lovers need?  
For see—I bite my lip to blood;  
A stifled word of anguish hisses:—  
O the black word that dams thought's flood!  
O the bad lip that looked for kisses!  
O the poor fool that prates of love!  
Is it a garter, or a glove?

### II

#### IV

A FOOL indeed! For why complain,  
Now the last five-barred gate is ope,  
Held by a little boy? I hope  
The hour is handy to explain  
The final secret. Have I any?  
Yes! the small boy shall have a penny!  
Now you are angry? Be content!  
Not fee the assistant accident  
That shows our quarry—love—at bay?  
My silver-throated queen, away!  
Huntress of heaven, by my side,  
As moon by meteor, rushing, ride!  
Among the stars, ride on! ride on!  
(Then, maybe, bid the boy begone!)

V

I AM a boy in this. Alas!  
 Look round on all the world of men!  
 The boys are oft of genus "ass."  
 Think yourself lucky, lady, then,  
 If I at least am boy. You laugh?  
 Not you! Is this love's epitaph,  
 God's worm erect on Herod's throne?  
 "Ah, if I only had not known!"  
 All wrong, belovéd! Truth be ours,  
 The one white flower (of all the flowers)  
 You ever cared for! Ignorance  
 May set its puppets up to dance;  
 We know who pulls the strings. No sage;  
 A man unwashed, the bearded brute!  
 His wife, the mother-prostitute!  
 Behind the marionetted stage  
 See the true Punch-and-Judy show,  
 Turn copper so to silver! Know,  
 And who can help forgiving? So

Said some French thinker. Here's a drench  
Of verse unquestionably French  
To follow ! so, while youth is youth,  
And time is time, and I am I,  
Too busy with my work to lie,  
Or love lie's prize—or work's, forsooth !—  
Too strong to care which way may go  
The ensuing history of woe,  
Though I were jaw, and you were tooth ;  
So, more concerned with seeking sense  
Than worried over consequence,  
I'll speak, and you shall hear, the truth.

## VI

TRUTH, like old Gaul, is split in three.  
A lesson in anatomy,  
A sketch of sociology,  
A tale of love to end. But see!  
What stirs the electric flame of eyes?  
One word—that word. Be destiny's  
Inviolable fiat rolled athwart  
The clouds and cobwebs of our speech,  
And image, integrate of thought,  
This ebony anthem, each to each :—  
To lie, invulnerable, alone,  
Valkyrie and hero, in the zone,  
Shielded by lightnings of our wit,  
Guarded by fires of intellect  
Far on the mountain-top, elect  
Of all the hills divinely lit  
By rays of moonrise! O the moon!  
O the interminable tune  
Of whispered kisses! Love exults,  
Intolerant of all else than he,

And ecstasy invades, insults,  
Outshines the waves of harmony,  
Lapped in the sun of day ; the tides  
Of wonder flow, the shore subsides ;  
And over all the horizon  
Glow the last glimmer of the sun.  
Ah ! when the moon arises, she  
Shall look on nothing but the sea.

## VII

O LOVE! and were I with thee ever!  
Come with me over the round earth,  
O'er lake and fountain, sea and river!  
Girdle the world with angel girth  
Of angel voyage! Shall we roam  
In teeming jungles poisonous?  
Or make ourselves an eyrie-home  
Where the black ice roars ravenous  
In glittering avalanche? Or else  
Hide in some corrie on the fells  
Of heather and bracken, or delight  
In grottos built of stalactite?  
Or be our lonely haunt the sand  
Of the Sahara: let us go  
Where some oasis, subtly planned  
For love, invites the afterglow!  
There let us live alone, except  
Some bearded horseman, pennoned, ride  
Over the waste of ochre, swept  
By wind in waves, and sit beside

Our tent a little, bring us news  
Of the great world we have lost for—this !  
What fool exclaims—" to lose ! " ? To lose ?  
Ay ! earth and heaven for one small kiss !  
But he shall sing beside our fire  
The epic of the world's desire ;  
How Freedom fares, how Art yet revels  
Sane in the dance of dogs and devils.  
His thunder voice shall climb and crash,  
Scourge liars with tongue's lightning lash,  
Through ranks of smitten tyrants drive,  
Till bosoms heave, and eyes outflash,  
And it is good to be alive.  
He shall ride off at dawn, and we  
Shall look upon our life again ;  
You old, and all your beauty be  
Broken, and mine a broken brain.  
Yet we shall know ; delighting still  
In the sole laughter death derides  
In vain ; the indomitable will,  
Still burning in the spirit, guides  
Our hearts to truth ; we see, we know  
How foolish were the things he said,  
And answer in the afterglow  
How good it is that we are dead.  
Will you not come ? Or, where the surf  
Beats on the coral, and the palm



Sways slowly in the eternal calm  
Of spring, I know a mound of turf  
Good for our love to lie on ; good  
For breezes, and for sun and shade ;  
To hear the murmur of the flood ;  
To taste the kava subtly made  
To rouse to Bacchic ecstasy,  
Since Dionysus silently  
Faded from Greece, now only smiles  
Amid the soft Hawaian isles ;  
Good, above all the good, to keep  
Our bodies when we sleep the sleep.

## VIII

MAKE me a roseleaf with your mouth,  
And I will waft it through the air  
To some far garden of the South,  
The herald of our happening there !

Fragrant, caressing, steals the breeze ;  
Curls into kisses on your lips :—  
I know interminable seas,  
Winged ardour of the stately ships,

Space of incalculable blue  
And years enwreathed in one close crown,  
And glimmering laughters echoing you  
From reverend shades of bard's renown :—

Nature alive and glad to hymn  
Your beauty, my delight : her God  
Weary, his old eyes sad and dim  
In his intolerable abode.

All things that are, unknown and known,  
Bending in homage to your eyes ;  
We wander wondering, lift alone  
The world's grey load of agonies.

Make me a roseleaf with your mouth,  
That all the savour steal afar  
Unto the sad awaiting South,  
Where sits enthroned the answering Star.

## IX

WILL you not come : the unequal fever  
Of Paris hold our lives for ever ?  
Were it not better to exceed  
The avenging thought, the unmeaning deed,  
Make one strong act at least ? How small,  
How idiot our lives ! These folk  
That think they live—which dares at all  
To act ? The suicide that broke  
His chain, and lies so waxen pale  
In the Morgue to-day ? Did he then fail ?  
Ay, he was beaten. But to live,  
Slink on through what the world can give,  
That is a hound's life too. For me,  
The suicide stands grand and free  
Besides these others. Was it fear  
Drove him to stand upon the bank ?  
The Paris lights shone far and drear ;  
The mist was down ; the night was dank ;  
The Seine ran easily underneath ;  
The air was chill : he knew the Seine

By pain would put an end to pain,  
 And jumped,—and struggled against death,  
 I doubt not. Ye courageous men  
 That scorn to flee the world, ye slaves  
 Of commerce, ye that ply the pen,  
 That dig, and fill, and loathe your graves !  
 Ye counter-jumpers, clergy, Jews,  
 All Paris, smug and good, that use  
 To point the index scorn, deride  
 The courage of that suicide—  
 I ask you not to quit us quite,  
 But—will you take a bath to-night?  
 Money might make you. Well : but he,  
 What was his wage, what was his fee?  
 Fear fiercer than a mortal fear.  
 Be silent, cowards, leave him here  
 Dead in the Morgue, so waxen pale !  
 He failed : shall ye not also fail ?  
*Ah ! love ! the strings are little ;*  
     *The cords are over strong ;*  
*The chain of life is brittle ;*  
     *And keen the sword of song.*  
 Will you not seize in one firm grip  
 Now, as I hold you, lip to lip,  
 The serpent of Event, hold hard  
 Its slipping coils, its writhe retard,  
 And snap its spine ? Delicate hands

You have : the work is difficult ;  
Effort that holds and understands  
May do it : shall our foes exult,  
The daughters of Philistia laugh,  
The girls of Askalon rejoice,  
Writing for us this epitaph :  
“ They chose, and were not worth the choice ” ?  
You are so pure : I am a man.  
I will assume the courage tried  
Of yonder luckless suicide,  
And you—awaken, if you can,  
The courage of the courtesan !

X

To sea! To sea! The ship is trim ;  
The breezes bend the sails.  
They chant the necromantic hymn,  
Arouse Arabian tales.

To sea! Before us leap the waves ;  
The wild white combers follow.  
Invoke, ye melancholy slaves,  
The morning of Apollo !

There's phosphorescence in the wake,  
And starlight o'er the prow.  
One comet, like an angry snake,  
Lifts up its hooded brow.

The black grows grey toward the East :  
A hint of silver glows.  
Gods gather to the mystic feast  
On interlunar snows.

The moon is up full-orbed : she glides  
Striking a snaky ray  
Across the black resounding tides,  
The sepulchre of day.

The moon is up : upon the prow  
We stand and watch the moon.  
A star is lusted on your brow ;  
Your lips begin a tune,

A long, low tune of love that swells  
Little by little, and lights  
The overarching miracles  
Of love's desire, and Night's.

It swells, it rolls to triumph-song  
Through luminous black skies ;  
Thrills into silence sharp and strong,  
Assumes its peace, and dies.

There is the night : it covers close  
The lilies folded fair  
Of all your beauty, and the rose  
Half hidden in your hair.



There is the night : unseen I stand  
And look to seaward still :  
We would not look upon the land  
Again, had I my will.

The ship is trim : to sea ! to sea !  
Take life in either hand,  
Crush out its wine for you and me,  
And drink, and understand !

## XI

I AM a pretty advocate !  
My speech has served me ill. Perchance  
Silence had served : you now look straight  
On that clear evidence of France,  
The embroidered garter yonder. Wait !  
I had some confidence in fate  
Ere I spoke thus. For while I spoke  
The old smile, surely helpless, broke  
On your tired lips : the old light woke  
In your deep eyes : but silence falls  
Black, blank : the species that appals,  
Not our old silence. I devise  
A motto for your miseries :  
"There an embroidered garter lies,  
And here words—they lie too?" I see  
Your intuition of the truth  
Is still in its—most charming—youth.  
You need that physiology !

## XII

I LOVE you. That seems simple? No!  
Hear what the physiologist  
Says on the subject. *To and fro*  
*The motor axis of the brain*  
*Hits on the cerebellum hard,*  
*Makes the medulla itch : the bard*  
*Twitches his spinal cord again,*  
*Excites Rolando's fissure, and*  
*Impinges on the Pineal gland.*  
*Then Hippocampus major strikes*  
*The nerves, and we may say "He likes,"*  
*But if the umbilical cord*  
*Cut the cerebrum like a sword,*  
*And afferent ganglia, sensory bones,*  
*Shake in the caecum : then one groans*  
*"He likes Miss What's your Name." And if*  
*The appendix vermiformis biff*  
*The pericardium, pleura shoves*  
*The femur—we may say : "He loves."*

Here is the mechanism strange  
(But perfectly correct) to change  
My normal calm—seraphic dew!  
Into an ardent love for you.

### XIII

Is there a soul behind the mask?  
What master drives these slaves to task  
Thus willing? Physiology  
Wipes the red scalpel, scorns reply.  
My argument to please you swerves,  
Becomes a mere defence of nerves.  
Why they are thus, why so they act,  
We know not, but accept the fact.  
How this for my peccation serves?  
Marry, how? Tropically! Pact  
I bind with blood to show you use  
For this impertinence—and add  
A proverb fit to make you mad  
About the gander and the goose,  
Till you riposte with all your force  
A miserable pun on sauce.  
The battle when you will! This truce  
I take in vantage, hold my course.  
I see mechanic causes reach  
Back through eternity, inform

The stellar drift, the solar storm,  
 The protoplasmic shiver, each  
 Little or great, determinate  
 In law from Fate, the Ultimate.  
 If this be meaningless, much more  
 Vacant your speech and sophic skill  
 (My feminine and fair Escobar!)  
 To prove mere circumstance is no bar  
 Against the freedom of the will.  
 However this may be, we are  
 Here and not elsewhere, star to star!  
 Hence then act thou! Restrain the "Damn!"  
 Evoked by "I am that I am."  
 Perpend! (Hark back to Hamlet!) If  
 You stand thus poised upon the cliff  
 Freewill—I await that will; (One) laughter;  
 (Two) the old kiss; (Three) silence after.  
 No? Then vacate the laboratory!  
 Psychology must crown the event,  
 And sociology content,  
 Ethics suffice, the simple story!  
 (Oh! that a woman ever went  
 Through course of science, full and whole,  
 Without the loss of beauty's scent,  
 And grace, and subtlety of soul.  
 Ah God! this Law maketh hearts ache,  
 "Who eateth shall not have his cake.")

#### XIV

ACCEPT me as I am ! I give  
All you can take. If you dislike  
Some fragments of the life I live,  
They are not yours : I scorn to strike  
One sword-swift pang against your peace.  
See ! I'm a mountaineer. Release  
That spirit from your bonds : or come  
With me upon the mountains, cease  
This dull round, this addition sum  
Of follies we call France : indeed  
Cipher ! And if at times I need  
The golden dawn upon the Alps,  
The gorges of Himalayan rock,  
The grey and ancient hills, the scalps  
Of hoary hills, the rattling shock  
Of avalanche adown the hills—  
Why, what but you, your image, fills  
My heart in these ? I want you there.  
For whom but you do I ply pen,  
Talk with unmentionable men

Of proofs and types—dull things!—for whom  
But you am I the lover? Bloom,  
O flower, immortal flower, love, love!  
Linger about me and above,  
Thou perfumed haze of incense-mist!  
The air hath circled me and kissed  
Here in this room, on mountains far,  
Yonder to seaward, toward yon star,  
With your own kisses. Yes! I see  
The roseate embroidery  
Yonder—I know: it seems to give  
The lie to me in throat and teeth.  
That is the surface: underneath  
I live in you: in you I live.



XV

WILL you not learn to separate  
The essential from the accidental,  
Love from desire, caprice from fate,  
The inmost from the merely mental?  
Our star, the sun, gives life and light:  
Let that decay, the aeons drown  
Sense in stagnation; death and night  
Smite the fallen fragments of the crown  
Of spring: but serves the garter so?  
What wandering meteor is this  
Across the archipelago  
Luminous of our starry bliss?  
Let that be lost: the smile disputes  
The forehead's temple with the frown,  
When gravitation's arrow shoots,  
And stockings happen to slip down.  
You are my heart: the central fire  
Whereby my being burns and moves,  
The mainspring of my life's desire,  
The essential engine that approves

The will to live : and these frail friends,  
The women I shall draw you, fail  
Of more importance to earth's ends  
Than to my life a finger-nail.  
'Twere pain, no doubt, were torn away  
One, a minute distemperature.  
I spend a fraction of the day  
Plying the art of manicure.  
But always beats the heart : the more  
I polish, tint, or carve, I ask  
Strength from the heart's too generous store  
To bend my fingers to the task.  
Cease : I am broken : nought remains.  
The brain's electric waves are still ;  
No blood beats eager in the veins ;  
The mind sinks deathward, and the will.  
It is no figure of boy's speech,  
Lover's enthusiasm, rhyme  
Magniloquent of bard, to reach  
Truth through the husk of space and time :  
No truth is more devout than this :  
" In you I live : I live in you."  
Had Latmos not known Artemis,  
Where were the faint lights of that dew  
Of Keats? O maiden moon of mine,  
Imperial crescent, rise and shine !

## XVI

I was a fool to hide it. Here  
Phantoms arise and disappear,  
Obedient to the master's wand.  
The incense curls like a pale frond  
Of some grey garden glory about  
This room ; I take my sceptre out,  
My royal crown ; invoke, evoke  
These phantoms in the glimmering smoke ;  
And you shall see—and take no hurt—  
The very limb yon garter girt.

## XVII

I AM a man. Consider first  
What we may learn, if but we will,  
From that small lecture I rehearsed  
With very Huxley's strength and skill  
And clarity. What do I mean,  
Admitting manhood? This : to-day  
I fed on oysters, ris-de-veau,  
Beefsteak and grapes. Will you repay  
My meal with anger, rosy grow  
With shame because instead of you  
I went to feed chez Lavenue?  
The habit anthropophagous,  
Nice as it is, is not for us.  
I love you : will you share my life,  
Become my mistress or my wife?  
Agreed : but can your kisses feed me?  
Is it for dinner that you need me?  
But think : it is for you I eat.  
Even as the object that I see,  
The brain 'tis pictured in ; the beat

Of nerves that mean the picture are  
Not like it, but dissimilar.  
How can a nervous current be  
Like that Velasquez? So I find  
Dinner a function of the mind,  
Not like you, but essential to  
(Even it) my honest love of you.  
Consider then yon brodered toy  
In the same aspect! Steals no joy  
Glittering beneath the sad pale face?

## XVIII

STILL grave, my budding Arahāt ?  
I see the crux of my disgrace  
Lies in the mad idea that—that !—  
Is not dissimilar, usurps  
The very function I have given  
Blissful beyond the bliss of heaven—  
Aha ! there is a bird that chirps  
Another song. Here's paint and brush  
And canvas. I will paint anon  
The limb yon garter once was on ;  
Sketch you a nude—my soul—and nude  
The very human attitude  
We all assume—or else are posers.  
Such winners are the surest losers.  
I paint her picture, recognise—  
Dare you ?—one glimmer of her eyes  
Like yours, one shimmer of her skin  
Like that your flesh is hidden in,  
One laugh upon her lips enough  
Like yours for me to recollect,  
Remind, recall, hint ? Never ! Stuff !

You are, as aye, alone, elect.  
Shall we then dive in Paris sewers?  
Aye! but not find you there, nor yet  
Your likeness. Did you then forget  
You are my love? Arise and shine!  
It was your blasphemy, not mine.

## XIX

A FAINT sweet smell of ether haunts  
Yet the remembrance. Hear the wizard  
His lone and melancholy chaunts  
Heard in the rain-storm and the blizzard !  
The ancient and devoted dizzard !  
Appear, thou dream of loveliness !  
She wore a rose and amber dress,  
With broidery of old gold. Her hair  
Was long and starry, gilded red.  
Her face was laughter, shapen fair  
By the sweet things she thought and said.  
Her whiteness rustled as she walked.  
Her hair sang tunes across the air.  
She sighed, laughed, whispered, never talked.  
She smiled, and loves devout and rare  
Flickered about the room. She stayed  
Still in the dusk : her body sang  
Out full and clear "O love me !" Rang  
The silver couplets undismayed,  
Bright, bold, convincing. In her eyes



Glittered enamelled sorceries.  
She was a piece of jewel work  
Sold by a Christian to a Turk.  
She had fed on air that day : the flowers  
About her curled, ambrosial bowers  
Of some divine perfume : the soul  
Of ether made her wise ; control  
Of strong distilled delight. She showered  
Wit and soft laughter and desire  
About her breasts in bliss embowered,  
And subtle and devouring fire  
Leapt in live sparks about her limbs.  
Her spirit shields me, and bedims  
My sight : she needs me : I need her.  
She is mine : she calls me : sob and stir  
Strange pulses of old passionate  
Imperial ecstasies of fate.  
Destiny ; manhood ; fear ; delight ;  
Desire ; accomplishment ; ere night  
Dipped her pale plumes to greet the sun  
She was not ; all is past and done.  
A dream ? I wake from blissful sleep,  
But is it real ? Well, I keep  
An accidental souvenir  
Whence thus to chronicle small beer ;  
There is the garter. Launched our boat,  
The stately pinnace once afloat,

You shall hear all ; we will not land  
On this or that mediate strand,  
Until the voyage be done, and we  
Pass from the river to the sea,  
And find some isle's secluded nook  
More sacred than we first forsook.

XX

Yes, there are other phases, dear !  
Here is a pocket-book, and here  
Lies a wee letter. Floral thyrses ?  
Divine-tipped narthex of the pine,  
Or morphia's deceitful wine ?  
The French is ill, the spelling worse !—  
But this is horrible ! This, me ?  
The upholder of propriety,  
Who actually proposed to form  
A Club to shield us from the swarm  
Of common people of no class  
Who throng the Quartier Montparnasse !  
I wear a collar : loudly shout  
That folk are pigs that go without,—  
And here you find me up a tree  
To make my concierge blush for me !  
A girl "uncombed, so badly dressed,  
So rudely mannered—and the rest ;  
Not at all proper. Fie ! away !  
What would your lady mother say ?"

I tell you, I was put to it  
To wake a wonder of my wit  
Winged, to avail me from the scorn  
Of my own concierge. Adorn  
The facts I might ; you know them not ;  
But that were just the one black blot  
On this love's lesson : still, to excuse  
Myself to you, who could not choose  
But make some weak apology  
Before the concierge's eye !  
True, you are far too high to accuse—  
Perhaps would rather not be told ?  
You shall hear. Does a miner lose  
If through the quartz he gets to gold ?  
Yes : Nina was a thing of nought,  
A little laughing lewd gamine,  
Idle and vicious, void of thought,  
Easy, impertinent, unclean—  
Utterly charming ! Yes, my queen !  
She had a generous baby soul,  
Prattled of love. Should I control,  
Repress perhaps the best instinct  
The child had ever had ? I winked  
At foolish neighbours, did not shirk.  
Such café Turc I made her drink  
As she had never had before ;  
Set her where you are sitting ; chatted ;

Found where the fires of laughter lurk ;  
Played with her hair, tangled and matted ;  
Fell over strict nice conduct's brink,  
Gave all she would, and something more.  
She was an honest little thing,  
Gave of her best, asked no response.  
What more could Heaven's immortal king  
Censed with innumerable orisons ?  
So, by that grace, I recognized  
A something somewhere to be prized  
Somewhat. What portress studies song ?  
My worthy concierge was wrong.

## XXI

THEN let not memory shrink abashed,  
Once started on this giddy whirl!  
Hath not a lightning image flashed  
Of my divine boot-button girl?  
She is a dainty acrobat,  
Tailor-made from tip to toe;  
A tiniest coquettish hat,  
A laughing face alight, aglow  
With all the fun of life. She comes  
Often at morning, laughs aloud  
At the poor femme de ménage; hums  
Some dancing tune, invades my cloud  
Of idle dreams, sits poised upon  
The couch, and with a gay embrace  
Cries out "Hullo, my baby!" Shone  
Such nature in a holier face?  
We are a happy pair at least:  
Coffee and rolls are worth a feast,  
And laughing as she came she goes!  
The dainty little tuberoses!

She has a lithe white body, slim  
And limber, fairy-like, a snake  
Hissing some Babylonian hymn  
Tangled in the Assyrian brake.  
She stole upon me as I slept :  
Who wonders I am nympholept ?  
Her face is round and hard and small  
And pretty—hence the name I gave her  
Of the boot-button girl. Appal  
These words ? Ah, would your spirit save her ?  
She's right just as she is : so wise  
You look through hardly-opened eyes  
One would believe you could do better.  
Ma foi ! And is your God your debtor ?  
So, my true love, I paint you three  
Portraits of women that love me.

## XXII

THESE portraits, darling, are they yours?  
And yet there sticks the vital fact  
That these, as you, are women. Lures  
The devil of the inexact  
With subtle leasing? Nay! O nay!  
I'll catch him with a cord, draw out  
By a bent fish-hook through his snout,  
Give to my maiden for a play.  
You, they, and dinner and—what else?—  
However unlike, coincide  
In composition verified  
Of final protoplasmic cells.  
Shall this avail to stagger thought,  
Confuse the reason, bring to nought  
The rosebud, in reflecting: Hem!  
What beauty hath the flower and stem?  
Carbon we know, and nitrogen,  
And oxygen—are these a rose?  
But this though everybody knows,  
That this should be the same for men  
They know not. Death may decompose,



Reduce to primal hyle perchance—  
I shall not do it in advance !  
So let the accidental fact  
That these are women, fall away  
To black oblivion : be the pact  
Concluded firm enough to-day,  
Not thus to err. So you are not  
In essence or in function one  
With these, the unpardonable blot  
On knighthood's shield, the sombre spot  
Seen on the photosphere of sun.

### XXIII

"NAY! that were nothing," say you now,  
Poor baby of the weary brow,  
Struggling with metaphysic lore?  
"But these, being women, gave you more :  
"You spoke of love!" Indeed I did,  
And you must counter me unbid,  
Forgetting how we must define  
This floral love of yours and mine.  
That love and this are as diverse  
As Shelley's poems and my verse.  
And now the bright laugh comes in spite  
Of all the cruel will can do.  
"I take," you say, "a keen delight  
In Shelley, but as much in you."  
There, you are foolish. And you know  
The thing I meant to say. O love!  
What little lightnings serve to show  
Glimpses of all your heart! Above  
All, and beneath all, lies there deep,  
Canopied over with young sleep,

Bowered in the lake of nenuphars,  
Watched by the countless store of stars,  
The abiding love you bear me. Hear  
How perfect love casts flying fear  
Forth from its chambers ! Those and this  
Are utterly apart. The bliss  
Of this small quarrel far exceeds  
That dervish rapture, dancer deeds  
Strained for egregious emphasis.  
These touch you not ! You sit alone  
Passionless upon passion's throne,  
And there is love. Look not below,  
Lest aught disturb the silver flow  
Of harmonies of love ! Awake !  
Awake for love's own solar sake !  
Diverse devotion we divide  
From the one overflowing tide.  
Despise this fact ! So lone and far  
Lies the poor garter, that I gaze  
Thither ; it casts no vivid rays.  
But hither ? I behold the star !

## XXIV

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 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 the 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 ! heart of God ! I love you so !

## XXV

O WHAT pale thoughts like gum exude  
From smitten stem of tropic tree !  
I talk of veils, who love the nude !  
Witness the masterpieces three  
Of Rodin that make possible  
Life in prosaic Paris, stand  
About the room, its chorus swell  
From the irritating to the grand.  
Shall we, who love the naked form,  
The inmost truth, to ourselves fail,  
Take shelter from love's lightning-storm  
Behind some humbug's hoary veil ?  
Ah ! were it so, love, could the flame  
Of fast electric fervour flash,  
Smite us through husk of form and name,  
Leave of the dross a little ash,  
One button of pure fused gold  
Identical—O floral hour !  
That were the bliss no eyes behold,  
But Christ's delighted bridal dower

Assuming into God the Church.  
 But—oh ! these nudes of Rodin ! I  
 Drag one more linnet from its perch  
 That sang to us, and sang a lie.  
 Did Rodin strip the clothes, and find  
 A naked truth fast underneath ?  
 Never ! Where lurks the soul and mind ?  
 What is the body but a sheath ?  
 Did he ply forceps, scalpel, saw,  
 Tear all the grace of form apart,  
 Intent to catch some final law  
 Behind the engine of the heart ?  
 He tried not ; whoso has, has failed.  
 So, did I pry beneath the robe,  
 Till stubborn will availed, nor quailed,  
 Intimate with the naked probe ?  
 I know the husks to strip ; name, form,  
 Sensation, then perception, stress  
 Of nature thither ; last, the swarm  
 Of honey-bees called consciousness.  
 These change and shape a myriad shapes.  
 Diverse are these, not one at all.  
 What gain I if my scalpel scrapes,  
 Turning before some final wall  
 Of soul ? Not so, nothing is there.  
 The qualities are all : for this  
 I stop as I have stopped ; intrude

No science, for I love the fair ;  
No wedlock, for I love the kiss ;  
No scalpel, for I love the nude.  
And we await the deep event,  
Whate'er it be, in solitude ;  
Silent, with ecstasy bedewed ;  
Content, as Rodin is content.



## XXVI

I WILL not, and you will not. Stay !  
Do you recall that night of June  
When from the insufferable day  
Edged out the dead volcanic moon  
Solemn into the midnight? You  
Shone your inviolate violet eyes  
Into my eyes less sad, and drew  
Back from the slender witcheries  
Of word and song : and silence knew  
What splendour in the silence lies,  
The soul drawn back into itself.  
It was the deep environing  
Wood that then shielded us : the elf  
And fairy in an emerald ring,  
And hamadryad of the trees,  
And naiad of the sleepy lake,  
That watched us on the mossy leas  
Look on each other's face, and take  
The secret of the universe

To sleep with us : you knew, and I  
The purport of the eternal curse,  
The ill design of destiny.  
You know, and I, O living head  
Of love ! the things that were not said.

## XXVII

Do you recall? Could I forget?  
How once the full moon shone above,  
Over the houses, and we let  
Loose rein upon the steeds of love?  
How kisses fled to kisses, rain  
Of fiery dew upon the soul  
Kindled, till ecstasy was pain;  
Desire, delight: and swift control  
Leapt from the lightning, as the cloud  
Disparted, rended, from us twain,  
And we were one: the aerial shroud  
Closed on us, shall not lift again  
For aught we do: O glamour grown  
Inseparable and alone!  
And then we knew as now the tune  
Our lives were set to, and sang back  
Across the sky toward the moon  
Into the cloud's dissolving wrack,  
Vanished for ever. And we found

Coprolite less than chrysolite,  
Flowers fairer than their food, the ground ;  
We knew our destiny, saw how  
Man's fate is written on his brow,  
And how our love throughout was hewn  
And masked and moulded by the moon.

## XXVIII

AND who is then the moon? Bend close,  
And clothe me in a silken kiss,  
And I will whisper to my rose  
The secret name of Artemis.  
Words were not needed then : to-day  
Must I begin what never I thought  
To do : mould flowers in common clay?  
Mud casket of mere words is nought,  
When by love's miracle we guess  
What either always thinketh. Yes?

## XXIX

So, love, not thus for you and me !  
And if I am man, no more, expect  
I shall remain so, till, maybe,  
The anatomist, old Time, dissect  
Me, nerve from flesh, and bone from bone,  
And raise me spiritual, changed  
In all but love for you, my own ;  
The little matter rearranged,  
The little mind refigured. This  
Alone I hope or think to keep :—  
The love I bear you, and the kiss  
Too soft to call the breath of sleep.  
And, if you are woman, even there  
I do decline : we stand above.  
I ask not, and will take no share  
With you in what mankind call love.  
We know each other : you and I  
Have nought to do with lesser things.  
With them—'tis chance or destiny :  
With us, we should but burn our wings.

We love, and keep ourselves apart :  
Mouth unto mouth, heart unto heart,  
Thus ever, never otherwise.  
The soul is out of me, and swings  
In desperate and strange surmise  
About the inmost heart of things.  
This is all strange : but is not life,  
Death, all, most strange, not to be told,  
Not to be understood by strife  
Of brain, nor bought for gleaming gold,  
Nor known by aught but love? And love  
Far from resolving soul to sense,  
Stands isolated and above  
Immaculate, alone, intense,  
Concentrate on itself. But should  
The lesser leave me, as it might ;  
The lesser never touch you ; would  
Your will be one with my delight ?  
Leave all the thoughts and miseries !  
Invade the glowing fields of sun !  
Cross bleak inhospitable seas,  
Until this hour be past and done,  
And we in some congenial clime  
Are then reborn, where danger's nought  
To mock the old Parisian time  
When fear was still the child of thought !  
So we could love, and love, and fate

Never clang brutal on the gong,  
And lunch, man-eating tiger, wait  
Crouched in the jungles of my song ;  
My gaze be steadfast on the star  
And never to the garter glide,  
And I on rapture's nenuphar  
Sit Buddha-like above the tide.



XXX

O BLUEBELL of the inmost wood,  
Before whose beauty I abase  
My head, and bind my burning blood,  
And hide within the moss my face,  
I would not so—or not for that  
Would so : the gods knew well to save  
The mountain summit from the flat,  
Youth's laughter from its earlier grave.  
It is a better love, exists  
Only because of these below it :  
Mountains loom grander in the mists :  
The lover's foolish to the poet.  
I know. Far better strive and earn  
The rest you give me than remain  
Ever upon the heights that burn  
Sunward, and quite forget the plain.  
Beauteous and bodiless we are ;  
Rapture is our inheritance ;  
You shine, an everlasting star,  
I, the rough nebula : but whence,

Whither, we know not. But we know  
That if our joy were always so  
We might not know it. Strange indeed  
This earth where all is paradox,  
Pushed to the truth : what lies succeed  
When every truth essential mocks  
Its truth in figure of a phrase ?  
How should I care for this, and tire  
Body by will to sing thy praise,  
Who take this lute, throw down the lyre  
As I have done to-day, to win  
No guerdon differing from the toil,  
Were that accomplished : pain and sin  
Are needed for the counterfoil  
Of joy and love : if only so  
All men had these in keen excess  
Those were forgotten : indigo  
Is amber's shadow, but—confess  
For all men but ourselves the tint  
Of all the earth is dull and black !  
Only some glints of love bestow  
The knowledge of what meteor wrack  
Trails pestilence across the sky.  
But we are other—you and I !  
So shall we live in deep content,  
Unchanging bliss, despise them still  
Groping on isle and continent

Wreathed in the mesh of woe and ill ?  
Ah ! Zeus ! we will not : be the law  
Of uttermost compassion ours !  
Our snows it shall not come to thaw,  
Nor burn the roses from our bowers.

XXXI

Av! There's a law! For this recede,  
Hide with me in the deepest caves  
Of some volcanic island ; bleed  
Our hearts out by the ambient waves  
Of Coromandel ; live alone,  
Hermits of love and pity, far  
Where tumbled banks of ice are thrown,  
Watched by yon solitary star,  
Sirius ; there to work together  
In sorrow and in joy but one,  
In black inhospitable weather,  
Or fronting the Numidian sun,  
Equally minded ; till the hour  
Strike of release, and we obtain  
The passionless and holy power,  
Making us masters over pain,  
And lords of peace : the rays of light  
We fling to the awakening globe ;  
The cavern of the eremite  
Shall glow with inmost fire, a robe  
Of diamond energy, shall flash

Even to the confines of wide space ;  
Comets their tails in fury lash  
To look on our irradiate face.  
And we will heal them. Dragon men  
And serpent women, worm and clod,  
Shall rise and look upon us then,  
And know us to be very God,  
Finding a saviour in the sight  
Of power attaining unto peace,  
And meditation's virgin might  
Pregnant with twins—love and release.  
Are you not ready? Let us leave  
This little Paris to its fate !  
Our friends a little while may grieve,  
And then forget : but we, elate,  
Live in a larger air : awake,  
Compassion in the Halls of Truth !  
Disdain love for love's very sake !  
Take all our beauty, strength, and youth,  
And melt them in the crucible  
To that quintessence at whose gleam  
Gold shudders and grows dull ; expel  
The final dross by intimate stream  
Of glowing truth, our lunar light !  
Are you not ready? Who would stay ?  
Arise, O Queen, O Queen of Night !  
Arise, and leave the little day !

## XXXII

LADY, awake the dread abyss  
Of knowledge in impassioned eyes !  
Fathom the gulphs of awful bliss  
With the poised plummet of a kiss !

Love hath the arcanum of the wise ;  
Love is the elixir, love the stone ;  
The rosy tincture shall arise  
Out of its shadowy cadences.

Love is the Work, and love alone  
Rewards the ingenious alchemist.  
Chaste fervours chastely overthrown  
Awake the infinite monotone.

So, Lady, if thy lips I kissed ;  
So, lady, if in eyes of steel  
I read the steady secret, wist  
Of no gray ghosts moulded of mist ;

I did not bid my purpose kneel,  
Nor thine retire : I probe the scar  
Of self, the goddess keen and real  
Supreme within the naked wheel

Of sun and moon and star and star,  
And find her but the ambient coil,  
Imagination's avatar,  
A Buddha on his nenuphar

Elaborate of Indian toil ;  
A mockery of a self ; outrun  
Its days and dreams, its strength and spoil,  
As runs the conquering counterfoil.

Thou art not ; thou the moon and sun,  
Thou the sole star in trackless night,  
The unguessed spaces one by one  
That mask their Sphinx, the horizon :

Thou, these ; and one above them, light,  
Light of the inmost heaven and hell :—  
Art changed and fallen and lost to sight,  
Who wast as waters of delight.

And I who am not, know thee well  
Who art not : then the chain divides  
From love-enlightened limbs, and swell  
The choral cries unutterable

Out of the salt, out of the tides,  
The sea, whose drink is death by thirst.  
The triumph anthem overrides  
The ocean's lamentable sides,

And we are done with life : accurst  
Who linger ; lost who find ; but we  
Follow the gold wake of the first  
Who found in losing ; who reversed

The dictates of eternity.  
Lo ! in steep meditation hearsed,  
Coffined in knowledge, fast we flee  
Unto the island from the sea.



### XXXIII

THE note of the silence is changed ; the quarrel is over  
That rather endeared than estranged : lover to lover  
Flows in the infinite river of knowledge and peace :  
Not a ripple or eddy or quiver : the monitors cease  
That were eager to warn, to awaken : a sleep is opposed,  
And the leaves of the rose wind-shaken are curled and closed ;  
Gone down in the glare of the sun ; and the twilight perfumes  
Steal soft in the wake of the One that abides in the glooms.  
Walking he is, and slowly ; thoughtful he seems,  
Pure and happy and holy ; as one would who dreams  
In the day-time of deep delights no kin to the day,  
But a flower new-born of the night's in Hecate's way.  
Love is his name, and he bears the ill quiver no more.  
He has aged as we all, and despairs ; but the lady who bore  
Him, Eros, to ruin the ages, has softened at heart ;  
He is tamed by the art of the sages, the magical art.  
No longer he burns and blisters, consumes and corrodes ;  
He hath Muses nine for sisters ; the holy abodes  
Of the maiden are open to him, for his wrath is grown still ;  
His eyes with weeping are dim ; he hath changed his will.

We know him ; and Venus sinks, a star in the West ;  
 A star in the even, that thinks it shall fall into rest.  
 Let it be so, then ! Arise, O moon of the lyrical spears !  
 Huntress, O Artemis wise, be upon him who hears !  
 I have heard thy clear voice in the moon ; I have borne it afar ;  
 I have tuned it to many a tune ; thou hast shewed me a star,  
 And the star thou hast shewed me I follow through uttermost  
     night.  
 I have shaken my spear at Apollo ; his ruinous might  
 I have mocked, I have mastered. All hail to the Star of  
     Delight  
 That is tender and fervid and frail, and avails me aright !  
 Hail to thee, symbol of love, assurance and promise of peace !  
 Stand fast in the skies above, till the skies are abolished and  
     cease !  
 And for me, may I never forget how things came well as they  
     are !  
 It was long I had wandered yet ere my eyes found out the star.  
 Be silent, love, and abide ; the wanton strings must go  
 To the vain tumultuous tide of the spirit's overflow.  
 I sing and sing to the world ; then silence soon  
 Be about us clasped and furled in the light of the moon.  
 Forget not, never forget the terrible song I have sung ;  
 How the eager fingers fret the lute, and loose the tongue  
 Tinkles delicate things, faint thoughts of a futile past—  
 We are past on eagle wings, and the silence is here at last.  
 The last low wail of the lyre, be it soft with a tear

For the children of earth and fire that have brought us here.  
Give praise, O masterful maid, to Nina, and all as they die !  
The moon makes blackest of shade ; the star's in the swarthiest  
sky.  
Be silent, O radiant martyr ! Let the world fade slowly afar !  
But—had it not been for the Garter, I might never have seen  
the Star.

ΟΝ ΟΥΝ ΑΓΝΟΩΝ ΕΥΣΕΒΕΙΣ  
ΤΟΥΤΟΝ ΕΓΩ ΡΟΔΟΣ ΚΑΤΑΓΓΕΛΛΩ ΣΟΙ