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# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE



THE  
GARDEN OF DESIRE

LOVE SONNETS  
TO A SPANISH MONK

By  
EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD



NEW YORK & LONDON  
MITCHELL KENNERLEY

1913

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*THE GARDEN OF DESIRE*

“O, holy God of Love, thou guidest there the heart where hindrances are.”

Kalidasa. (*Malavika and Agnimitra*)



I

I HASTENED homeward through the twilight  
lone

While on my lips your kisses stung like flame,  
Burning to purest white the rose of shame  
That leaped between us, scarlet lipped, full  
blown;

Within my ears your Spanish speech made moan;  
I saw nor mud, mist, gray, wet streets; there came  
As in a vision, Spain of splendid name.  
Your castle in Love's Land—there, we, alone!

Gone! Gone! Here by the window now I wait  
For him to whom I owe yet give not love;  
Watching the bird-winged night drop from above,  
Grouped church spires, like frail hands up-flung  
to Fate,  
On windows through which answering night lights  
chime,  
I hear the passionless, cold rain of Winter time!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## II

How well, how well you woo me with soft speech,  
Fire swift my blood with wreathèd word divine!  
“If power to choose Love’s own pure tongue were  
mine,”

You said, “I’d choose Italia’s to teach  
You how I love; but if I must beseech  
As penitent, mercy, pardon divine—  
(As now in love’s proud passion I seek thine)—  
O! let us, Sweet, speak Spanish, each to each!”

“But if in haughtiness I would command,  
See armies, nations, bow beneath my word,  
Then let the bitter English tongue be heard!”  
“Love! Love!” I cried, “stretch out your  
sceptred hand,  
Put from you the soft vowels that sing of Spain—  
Look! Look! I kneel before you in love’s  
pain!”

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## III

No! No! I told you once, twice, thrice,—this  
wise,  
And firmly I said it despite the hand  
That clung about my breasts, the vice-like band  
That passion set on me; despite your eyes  
That eagerly sought mine, their wild surprise  
That trembling with 'desire I could withstand  
The majesty of Love's greatest command  
Laid on us with the weight of destinies.

I left, aye!—left you there and went my way.  
Outside I met a woman bent and old,  
A toothless, wrinkled hag, shrunk with Life's cold.  
That sight makes good all sin, I cried, Bright  
Day!  
If age were not and 'death—O! then—Here!  
Here!  
Outside your door keep me not waiting, Dear!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## IV.

Upon our first great love-night, Heart of Mine,  
You whispered in that golden speech of Spain,  
"My home was Malaga beside the Main."

'Twas there, I asked, where black the bunched  
grapes shine?

O sweet, sweet South, I cried, sweet South of thine!  
A silence fell. We spoke no more again.

Within your eyes I saw an olden pain;

O sad, sad South, I thought, sad South of thine!

Upon my breast bunched black your bright curls  
lay—

Bacchante then and Pan were we that night;  
Grape-God, I call you witness to the sight;

That night, Grape-God, beneath your mighty  
sway

Lay not upon my breast in love's sweet pain

Black grapes from Malaga beside the Main?

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## V

You said: "To make more sweet that which will  
be,

Let's play a part together, you and I.

See!—I'm a monk, who, in his garden high,

Doth fast and pray to banish things worldly.

Down there you come, sad faced, 'dreaming of me.

I feel that you 'twixt flowering trees draw nigh;  
I look not lest your lips let love flame high,

But, rising,—*thus*—I bless you prayerfully."

Señor!—that tone!—Those gestures strange yet  
stern!

Tell me, where did you learn them? Tell me  
true!

Great God, Señor, an unfrocked priest are you!

No, no! No, no!—Enough, your kisses burn—  
To-night—I swear it!—you shall be denied,

Grief-stricken glooms o'er us—*The Crucified.*

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## VI

Upon my eyes like rain your kisses fall,  
Soft rain that maketh to be sweet the Spring,  
The time of fairest love's first flowering,  
When mating birds so softly call and call.  
Like rain upon my eyes your kisses fall,  
Bright rain the royal Summer's crown to bring,  
Soft rain upon shy trees that croon and swing,  
Sweet bridal veil of mist that hideth all.

Kiss me not thus! No, no, not thus kiss me.  
The storm's kiss first!—when black the day suns  
grow  
And winds nor height, depth, hell nor heaven know—  
Yes, yes, the storm's kiss first! Thus—*thus*—  
kiss me!  
Unchain the whirlwinds of your wild desire  
'And blind me, blind me, with the lightning's fire!



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## VII

But when I'm worn and weary and would rest,  
And in my ears the storm sounds vaguely far,  
The lightnings fireless as that far night star,  
Then fold me in your arms, upon your breast.  
O! fold me in your arms! There let me rest,  
To watch, idly, the fleeing Storm-God's car,  
Rain-mist so soft it may not mark nor mar  
The lily's leaf—when sleep and dreams are best.

Then on my eyes like rain let kisses fall,  
Soft rain that maketh to be sweet the Spring,  
And Winter fields like pink pearls shimmering.  
The bridal veil of mist fall over all!  
From under, as shy crocuses 'do peep,  
New love shall bud and blossom while I sleep.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## VIII

Within a gloomy land our love did grow,  
    Within a city gray with mist and smoke  
Whose roofs lone prairie levels roughly choke,  
    Where no bright, seaward slipping rivers flow,  
Around us rose the din of toil and woe—  
    Straight church towers whence stern warring bell  
        tones broke  
With words of warning when their iron tongues  
    spoke,—  
    Such was the city that our love 'did know!

Think you we saw it? No, no! This saw we—  
    A waving field where flame-like flowers bloom,  
[(That fateful flower of old Sicilian doom—  
    Great Demeter, we thought not then of thee!)]  
We plucked. We ate. The fruit was strangely  
    sweet,  
And hell and heaven opened at our feet.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## IX

“Be at the opera”—you write—to-night—

The crimson rose I send on your breast wear,  
My lips had blessed it ere I sent it where  
They, too, have lain and learned love’s speech  
aright.

“I cannot wait”—you say—“till comes our night;

*Tu esposito*—I know, yes, he’ll be there,  
But that I’ll suffer if you’ll grant me, Fair,  
One glimpse of you. O! let me know. Write!  
Write!”

Yes, Sweet! and when the trumpets leap and sing,

And fiddle-bows rise, fall, like trees swaying  
Beneath an angry storm when winds are strong,  
Ear-dulled, the present blotted with the past,  
My love shall rise and reach you, hold you fast,  
And vanish with you on the wings of song!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## X

What pictures do we see when memories frown  
Alone and here together, Dearest One!  
I first saw light beneath a pallid sun,  
The northern stars upon my youth looked down.  
You, where the earth wears best its flowery crown,  
Where fiercest, mightiest, doth blaze the sun,  
Not star-like to it was my pallid one,  
The Southern Cross upon your youth looked  
down.

O! shed upon me all your blaze of lights,  
Fill well my soul for what it missed of yore,  
Enrich me ever with your flowery lore!  
I can recall no more the northern nights!  
I know when on my mouth is set your mouth  
The sensuous, sweet savors of the South.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XI

There was a little garden that I knew  
Far, far to north—where still my childhood  
stays—  
The garden of my girlhood, of its Mays,  
Where frail and strange, unreal, dream-flowers  
grew.  
Within that little garden that I knew,  
O! prim the beds were, straight and white the  
ways,  
All simply made and plain for childhood days,  
There little Love, white-winged, unspotted, flew.  
Think you aught great there is for you I've done?  
My Dream-Tree I have plundered of its toys  
That grew within the garden of my joys!  
In little paths where once sweet Love did run,  
Roam wildly now the gaunt Wolves of Desire—  
And blurred the ways, with dead flowers flecked—  
and mire.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XII

Unto that little garden sometimes, Love,  
I hasten yet to—to—yes, to forget—  
Tell all its quaintnesses again and let  
Myself learn peace of her who knew not love.  
Yes, yes, unto that garden sometimes, Love,  
I hasten yet to—to—yes, to forget—  
To feel its dear, deep calm again and let  
Hover above my heart Youth's white, white dove.

No, no!—you need not worry lest I stay,  
Forget the lore that I of grief have learned,  
The lore sin red upon my soul has burned—  
Tell me why should you worry lest I stay?  
Surely you've heard when of blood tigers taste,  
Not seas can keep them from it—mountain—  
waste!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XIII

They say that they who've sinned this sin of ours  
May never after death know aught of light;  
Naught can once cleanse their souls, nor make them  
white,  
Nor Lydian scents make sweet the sin-stained  
hours.  
A gate whose whirling swords have lightning's  
powers  
To blast and burn flash outward with such might  
The black and barren road is bleached to bright  
That leads down, downward, where the darkness  
cowers.

Come, Sweet, lift up your eyes! Be not afraid.  
Behold!—within that pit a giant rose,  
Its million, million petals, hearts of those  
Who sinned this sin of ours all undismayed,  
So rich, colossal, glorious and fair  
It dims the white sword-whirl of judgment there!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XIV

*"Quare, dum licet, internos laetemur amantes;  
Non satis est ullo tempore longus amor."*

PROPERTIUS

Your love has clothed me with a garment fair  
That covers up all soil and smirch and sin,  
From folded feet folds whitely to the chin  
And hallows me as those the saints do wear.  
O, trust me—I will keep it spotless, fair,  
For this, your gracious gift, my dreams shall win  
A purity serene, no more therein  
May creep a false thought ever anywhere.

Yet underneath this love-robe—gift of thine—  
I know that you'd not sinned this sin of mine  
Nor broken sacred vows as I have done;  
Yet judge me not too harshly, Dear, Dear One,  
Than mortal women I have been most lone,  
The heart must have a home! Let that atone.



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XV

Do you recall the day when first we met?

In The Cathedral 'twas. The service o'er  
Friends introduced us, passed, and said no more,  
And we were left alone, strangers as yet.

A sad monastic gloom on you was set.

I sensed your thirst for life, more life, yet more—  
And I, too, was athirst because I wore

The slave's badge that so sharply helps to whet.

I went not home. I loathed the narrow streets.

I longed for country lanes, deep peace of air.

I left the black-roofed city, hastened where

I saw the hills. Upon them—O! so sweet—

Thick-bank'd stood trees like pink mist in the sun,  
Aloud I cried:—Thank God! The Winter's  
done!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XVI

We must be kinder to each other, Dear,  
Than others are whose love by law is blest,  
Slower to wound, cavil, think ill—grieve—lest  
We break the iris band that binds us near!  
We must be crueller to each other, Dear,  
Than others are whose love by law is blest,  
Quicker to know Truth's shining scalpel's best  
'And use it bravely. No blot can be here!

Have you thought where 'tis set, this great love-  
dower?

There! pendulous 'twixt sacrilege and shame,  
Uncertain, floating, impotent to bring  
A permanence. O! would ours were the power  
God-like to make, create a soul, a name,  
And touch it whitely with Life's deathless wing!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XVII

You've heard how after some great victory  
The Cæsars triumphing came gayly home,  
Red-robed, gold palm-embroiderèd—to Rome—  
Gods like unto, with glory good to see,  
On cars charioted of ivory,  
Through gates triumphal, flower-up-built to dome,  
While at their feet the masses moaning roam  
And they, joy-drunk, cry:—“*Io Triompe!*”

Thus, Love, at life's high noon enter my heart!  
(Not like one monkish bred, cringing with fear,  
Black clad, furtive of eye for dangers near,  
Come as the Cæsars came! Be that your part,  
Bright robed, triumphant, bold for victory,  
And o'er my conquered soul cry—“*Triompe!*”

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XVIII

You praised my speech to-day. You said I'd caught,  
Wandering in many lands 'mong many men,  
Colorful vowel richesses learned then  
Of many tongues. When first we met you  
thought  
This gave me added charm, that thus I ought  
Be not one woman—O! proud praise again!—  
But many since I had their tongues and then  
Their charm. Thus, thus you praised me who  
should not.

But now what think you I have learned of you?  
The Tongue of Love! which I knew not before,  
Nor can they learn it who o'er books 'do pore.  
That taught you me. It sounds most sweetly too.  
I learned it easily as children play  
When first you said: "*Yo, yo amo à te!*"

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XIX

From Peking westward thirty *li* there stands,  
To one forth faring through the Tschengi-Thor,  
The Lo-ku Bridge, buttressed, barred both sides o'er  
With lions cunningly so wrought by hands  
Long dead, no one who counts them lives, it stands  
Recorded. Whoso tries, counts o'er and o'er,  
May not cease counting, of aught else think more,  
But goes mad dreaming of a lion that stands

Upon the Lo-ku Bridge. You said 'twas true.  
And added softer—should life call me where  
You are not, and can never be, O! there  
I'd go mad dreaming of the lips of you,  
Counting the kisses that you gave to me  
In midnights dark as old Teng's dynasty!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XX

You said—O! how the words did surge my soul  
And to far finger tips send blood to spin—  
That always ere the bold day does begin  
You think of me; your thoughts my thoughts control

Ere day does of its noisy strife unroll;  
Far, far across the sweet, unreal, mist-thin  
City that sleeps, you claim me yours and win  
A space for us not time's—unspotted, whole.

And always in the 'dawn I feel you near.  
Then like souls in gray Hades we two go  
Forth through the silvery silence, there to know  
The things that they know not whose love's less dear.

Be this our dwelling, this pale silent land  
Where Life—a dream like day—waits our command.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXI

Our love is like a Japan print, you think,  
Rare mulberry-paper one, like gold that's dead?  
Foreground a garden, kiosk-canopièd  
O'er moon-eyed, magic flowers of black and pink;  
Curved, quaint-bridged river; temple on the brink  
Where lidless eyed sits Buddah unwearièd,  
Dreaming that time is naught, the now even sped.  
To westward over all black bird-dots sink.

Background, a fairy sea of dreamland blue  
Whence mountains rise that surely once we knew  
In some dim other life too sweet for words.  
Aye! Aye! our Love-Land! But those black,  
black birds—  
Too like they are to monks who hovered where  
That old Greek garden of the world was fair.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXII

*"Flutes and mandolins—a Spanish melody—nothing more. Yet it seemed as if the night were speaking, or out of the night some passionate life long since melted into Nature's mystery."* .

LAFCADIO HEARN

Last night—shall I forget it ere I die?

I lay within a chamber curtained in  
With red rich hangings such as Arabs spin,  
Sombre of depth, tragic, where shadows lie.  
You reached your lute and played a song keyed high  
Upon soft undercurrents, trilled and thin,  
Weaving an old love-song of Spain's therein,  
Sprayed fine as waters are when winds are nigh.

And then you played no more again that night.

Nor of song's silver stream did I care more.  
I looked into your eyes. There black and bright  
An ocean did unroll *sans* sound, depth, shore—  
Across it sped as once of old the dove,  
The golden, glittering, galleons of love!



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXIII

*"Quanto e bello giovinezza!  
Ma sen fugge tuttavia,  
Chi vuol esser lieto sia—  
Di doman non v'e certezza."*

LORENZO DE MEDICI

No, no, why talk of this, your faith, to me!  
In life are nobler things than fast and prayer  
Or silent meditation cloistered where  
The real things cannot touch us vividly.  
Give me the storm, the struggle! Aye! give me  
A taste of all that is or here or there,  
For I would touch life richly everywhere—  
An earth-lyre for emotion's mastery.

Dear One, Dear One, I firmly do believe—  
(O! look not at me thus with eyes that grieve!)  
That if there is the Heaven to which you pray  
Unto the cloistered will its keeper say:  
"A garden rich I gave you. Now speak truth—  
What did you with my greatest gift—your  
youth?"

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXIV

You spoke upon a sudden words like these  
    Towering above me in the crimson room  
To anger stung by some word said too soon:

*"Aman terriblemente en mi país!"*

*Terriblemente aman en mi país!*

    Cold sensuality's not there the boon  
We crave; instead, the force, fury of noon  
    Which like flame purifies impurities.

The whirlwinds gulfed me from your passion's  
    height

    And swept me outward, 'cross a sea of night,  
Night amethystine, purple, rich, and deep

    Where multi-colored stars their watches keep  
And sing in whirling splendor words like these—

*"Aman terriblemente en mi país!"*

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXV

### *Mazeltov*

O! sweet is your forgiveness, Dear, to me,  
How sweet I think and think and cannot tell;  
If Love's a great, great thirst it is the well  
Where I, a desert wanderer, drink gladly;  
But if it's health and life lived brave and free,  
It is as pure white lilies that for a spell  
Cool fever's brow and of green meadows tell—  
Such, Dear, has your forgiveness been to me.

And then the little word with which it came,  
The Hebrew "*mazeltov*"—To you joy's flame!  
I hug it to my heart as they of yore  
Who heard it, perchance, by the palace door  
Of one who gloried in proud Babylon  
And learned of love beneath a younger sun.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXVI

*Mazeltov*

To-day is still the day that sweet word came  
Yet must I watch it ebb to Time's great sea  
And there to mingle with eternity,  
Lose sense and form and be no more a name.  
And yet 'tis still the day. The words I frame,  
While ocean-like night's mists rise stealthily;  
Beneath my window here there spreads a sea  
From which twin church-spires spin like fireless  
flame.

Behold! the west has opened. Bless you, Day!  
You would be gracious to me? You would stay?  
And all the sky is flecked with tumbled light,  
Wave beating upon wave, outbreasting night,  
Up-wrapped as in a glory I do feel  
Seeing outflung the roses of Castile!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXVII

'Tis only these our bodies that are near!

Our souls are sphered in two far heavens of space  
Where naught each of the other may we trace

Nor feel the freshness of a love-wrung tear.  
All kindliness does your heaven ensphere,

Mercy—and the tender, piteous grace

Of Judah's chosen, the divine, sad face

That smiled its blessing down the ages drear.

Within my heaven ideal Beauty stands,

The chaste white goddess of the cruel hands  
And smileless lips who gives naught and asks all,

From whom our praises slip as scorned gems fall.  
Yet would I have her other if I could?

Her slaves have said—Beauty's as great as Good!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXVIII

You asked me why I love you. This is why,  
Told in the Hebrew lore: The Mischna tells  
How Abraham, a boy, his idols sells,  
Then, tiring, searched for God both far and nigh.  
Night came. He saw the stars strew thick the sky,  
"Surely that's God!" The moon rose with her  
spells.  
"No, no, that's God!" Awe from his spirit wells:  
But moon and stars fade fast and night passed  
by.

Rich with the fervor of its sun rose day.  
"I know now none has found God and none may!  
The force is He behind the day and night!"  
Cried Abraham in rapture at the light.  
Thus I love not for outward shows nor gold,  
But for the silent love your heart does hold.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXIX

I, too, have touched Life's idols, found them clay,  
Then, broken-hearted, sought some better thing,  
The while unfolded o'er me like a wing  
The panorama of the night and day.  
A petty part I played within a play  
While Spring and Summer scenery did fling  
Round me fit for the great gods glorying,  
And set suns, gem-like, on the breast of day.

At last the power behind it I did learn.

I met you and the meaning was made clear;  
Then I built worthy of the garden here.

My heart's a dwelling now gods may not spurn,  
So high it towers it tops the clouds above.

To house you fittingly, my Love, my Love!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXX

### *Gale'd*

Jacob and Laban for their love's great need  
A stone tower built—as Hebrew scholars know—  
To mark the ending of a grievous woe,  
Upon stone then set stone, crying—"God-  
speed!"  
Finished, they prayed: "Be this now called *Gale'd!*  
Past it let each to other never go  
With thought of anger, grief, suspicion, woe,  
For peace must rest upon the tower *Gale'd.*"

Thus to us be, O Love! this crimson room  
So rich with curtains of an orient bloom  
Which sun-pale women wrought, dreaming of men  
Who'd rush to meet them with the dusk again;  
Whene'er we enter here let sad thoughts be  
Deep buried in our love's immensity.



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXI

Faith is the soul's pure garment, is it not,  
That covers well from cold within a world  
Divine things had not been in, had not whirled  
From battlemented light the Demon, Thought;  
Whose soul-garment is richest he cannot  
See grief nor sorrow plainly, though unfurled  
The black, tear-dyed pinions of Death's own world  
A-flutter o'er his head, of horror wrought.

Outside your sheltered warmth, a pilgrim, I  
Do come and lowly kneel where you sit high—  
Soul-naked do I come as humble ones  
Who in some fair, far south seek meed of suns—  
O! crueller than to them rude Winter's wing,  
Life's storms to her who seeks such sheltering!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXII

That little song you sang to me, Dear One,  
Has blotted out the present, brought to view  
This painted vision that a pagan knew:  
Quai of Alexandria, low, fading sun,  
Frail, floating, purple night-shadows that run  
Across sands deeply bronze, dulled by no dew;  
A maid, nude, save for gauze crocus in hue  
Through which shines polished flesh like to a sun.

Two flute players stroll past unto the feasts,  
Flower-ankleted and girdled—Joy's young Priests;  
Beside the crocus maid they pause and sing  
In shrill tones colored like the bronze evening.  
She hears and trembles her gold gauzes through:  
*"O le désir est douloureux et doux!"*

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXIII

We met last night beside a northern lake  
Whirled there 'cross prairie levels bleached with  
heat,  
For rain athirst, as we athirst to meet  
And in the northern night our longing slake.  
Beneath our window spread, far, pale, the lake  
Crooning a song of sleep, belated, sweet,  
Away, away, the veiled moon did fleet,  
Dream shadow for the rhythmic night to wake.

Clear came the dawn, and chill and coldly blue,  
Black, stern, upon the shore pines rose to view.  
Beneath our window floated in from far,  
Dead fish, silver, shining, as young moons are;  
Out o'er that azure distance pure as prayer  
I looked and knew that that night storms dwelled  
there.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXIV

Just as we left the lake I saw near by

A night-bird sheltered in a black pine's shade,  
By bold bright thunder of the light dismayed,

There fled to shelter till dusk touched the sky.  
Within his mimic night he nestled nigh

Unto the great tree's trunk, blinking, afraid;  
Grief clutched my heart. Like him you are not  
made

For noisy daylight, I think quick, and sigh.

You are my black, black night-bird! Well I know

You'll leave me for the dusk again and go  
Through twilights on and on, forgetful, free,

Pale silences down-floating, far from me,  
And I shall be as in daylight a star

That fades and falters where the lightnings are.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXV

O! Love's a crystal cup filled rim to rim  
And set for us by gods at Life's banquet,  
Where we may drink and drink as Titans yet  
Find always there is sweetness at the brim:  
When laughter's ringing loud, who sits there grim  
And scorns the gift, the best the gods have set,  
Will find it empty if he try to wet  
Late at Life's banquet board dead lips and dim.

Come, Love, I pledge you in this goodly gift!  
High! high! above our heads the cup now lift!  
Let's drain it here together, you and I,  
For ages that come after we'll not sigh,  
For we have bought the best with this our breath—  
Alone remembered joy is safe from death.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXVI

*"O! palagio d'Ilio, in alta stanza—"*

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

I'm grateful for that sonnet that you read  
With such a thrill of voice I seemed to see  
The laughing Cyclades again, gayly  
Ships slipping down the shining wind's roadstead  
That sweeps to Troy. 'Twas like a frame you said  
That sonnet in the tongue of Italy,  
To frame one fine last line, clean-chiselled, free—  
The love-night of two lovers long since dead.

Helen, the white loved one, it said, grieved not  
Nor evermore of Greece, home, kindred, thought  
The while the ship sped on. There rose to mind,  
Like visions of the day unto the blind,  
A room wherein rich gems Love's luster shed  
Upon a cedar-wrought, gold, gleaming bed.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXVII

*"Mujer mas pura que la luz serena,  
Mas negra que la sombra del pecado."*

How I do love your voice when thus you read  
The poets of your soft and southern tongue  
Whose vowels are like silver prayer-bells rung  
Within the oratory of Love's creed,  
Where longing is the incense to up-speed,  
And consonants are hushed like prayer among  
Gray, gliding nuns, when vesper songs are sung  
And they ask pardon for sins sweet indeed.

The last line! How your voice did tremble there,  
Caressing lovingly each cadenced sound,  
Tonal sonorousness, new, rich, soon found  
To weave a magic on the waiting air!  
I love you for that subtle sense of art  
Where one with me forever is your heart.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXVIII

My heart is filled with joy like spring-fed streams  
Which bubbling overflow a barren land,  
To leave with lavishness on either hand  
Green ripple of leaf-dance, and petal gleams.  
My heart is filled with joy like spring-fed streams  
By floating, fragile, white mist-billows fanned,  
Prismatic curtains by the sun's light planned,  
The substance iridescent of our dreams.

My heart is filled with joy, for Love dwells there,  
New Heaven for me making and new Earth—  
Love! Love!—the God-dream, that to joy gives  
birth.

'Tis this I know well makes the world so fair,  
'Tis this which is the music all things sing—  
The crocus dawn—the sunset crimsoning.



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XXXIX

Late met we last night by the lake again  
When faint for dawn I felt the dark to be;  
Mist-veiled, the water lay all silently,  
An opal, mystic, dim, Hungarian.  
Beneath its milky whiteness I knew when  
The call of day came crisping clear and free,  
Troubling within the trees birds dream-drowsy  
A maze of misty flame would leap again.

So from my heart as night mists dropped adown  
And earth became an opal for Love's crown,  
No real world anywhere, nothing but this,  
I knew that with sun-splendor of your kiss  
There'd come a wonder as with dawn there came  
And from Love's opal heart would leap a flame.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XL

We waked not till again the cruel 'day came.  
The level lake with fire was burnished white.  
It bit into the eyes, wounded the sight,  
And all the barren land was like a flame.  
We lay beside a window wherein came  
The scent and sight of cedars, their slim height  
Above them, higher towering, black as night,  
One sad and sombre pine—the badge of shame

Within its glooming shadows I saw glare  
The night-bird of the wild and awful stare,  
My black, black Bird of Night, to you I cried,  
In peace let me a little, pray, abide,  
Then to your twilights take me, Bird of Night,  
Since now I'm one with you: I fear the light.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLI

Again, again you ask how you can know  
How much I really love you? This to me!  
All women I do envy that I see  
If they have aught of youth or charm to show,  
And wonder, would you like me better so,  
If better thus, if thus changed I might be,  
Count o'er the years of youth still left to me  
Praying: "Dear God, make time go very slow!"

For you I've plunged me from calm's peerless  
height,

And dwarfed my soul for Envy's shabby door;  
Yet know that I would cry: "Dear God, give  
more!"

If for the asking I could have to-night  
Gold Helens and all dear dead ones' beauty  
Since for your love so little it would be.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLII

He said when ready for the ball I stood—

*Mi esposito*—“These gems will you not wear?”

Down bending then to fasten pearl tears where

You've set the rubies of Love's solitude.

And I said, laughing strangely, wild of mood—

“I'd like a corsage gem of grapes to wear

Upon my breast, my arms, my throat, my hair—

Black, bursting grapes, the fiercest suns have  
wooded!”

And all night while the music rose and fell

I felt your black curls touch me, loved them well

Felt float across my face spice scents from south,

Felt on my lips the hot breath of your mouth,

Vineyards I saw, gold-dusted grapes in stack—

Your black, black curls flung passionately back.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLIII

How ebon rich, how wondrous, is your hair!

When here it floats beside me darkly free,

This is the vision that I seem to see:

A roof in Nineveh the Ancient where

Night long there pulses upward on the air

The breath of the great earth-breast's heat  
fiercely,

A Titan's passion like to, first set free

With blackness of the night, exhaustless, there.

A woman, passion-pale, with gems like rain,

Leans listless by stone parapets, again

Lifts arms voluptuous toward where afar

A rider's armor shines beneath a star,

Her jewels all a-shiver as a pearl

When into ocean depths the sun-rays whirl.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLIV

To-night a magic sail, Love, is your hair  
That wafts o'er waters that know not the sun,  
Where stars come not, nor bright the dawn lights  
run,  
And black a basalt palace towers there.  
There mingle all night long upon the air  
The murmurings of Love's oblivion,  
With songs of many waters, one by one  
Flung o'er stone dream of arches black and bare.

Voluptuously listening here I lie  
Learning the languors of that unseen sea,  
Its rich accords, its magic, mystery.  
The night grows deep within your eyes—my sky.  
There wild stars rise. Soon, soon our love will be  
Swelling the black night palace harmony.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLV

Your hair I love despite its selfish hue  
    Made up of treasured sun-gold held in fee,  
Not one reflected ray has been set free,  
    Therefore it is so brightly black to view.  
Ages of eastern passion made this hue  
    Dark as its deepest midnights ere can be,  
Splendid as noons the skies strike blanchingly,  
    So fiercely black, so cruelly bright it grew.

Gold hair gives back again whate'er it takes,  
    Much shine and shimmer in the sunlight makes;  
Your hair for æons has drunk deep the sun;  
    Slow ages swirl beneath me, one by one;  
Unto my heart come thoughts that I fear there,  
    At sight of the black passion of your hair!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLVI

When in your hair like this I hide my face

I sense sharp savors of Autumn divine,  
See tree-boles black against the dusky shine

Of early night; frost-blooms like flaunted lace  
Upon the hills; flocked birds sweeping through  
space;

Sombre the forest aisles, all powdered fine  
With twilight dust—sepia crystalline—

And to my heart, too, twilight comes apace.

What is that numbing fragrance in your hair!

Down those dim forest aisles,—lo! dancing there,  
One scarlet clad! Slow notes shiver the night.

They tremble 'down her head disks like sunlight;  
By subtle Moorish scents my face is fanned—

O! dance for me again the Saraband!



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLVII

*Couleur tabac d'Espagne*—your eyes are, Love,  
Clearly and sweetly brown, with sun shone  
through

At mid-day when of merry mood are you—  
Mirth's mirrors, such as brooklets to the dove.

*Couleur topaz d'Espagne*—my tawny Love—  
Topazes filled with diamond's eyes of you  
When shadows lengthen and soft falls the dew—  
Dusk's jewelled passion—Oh! my tawny Love!

But when midnight her magic does distil,  
Then fathomless, a black abyss, your eyes  
Where 'death, destruction lurk, and whence arise  
Sweet danger calls that swift my pulses thrill.  
Yes, yes, 'tis Fate that's king and ruleth all;  
Lo! I am one to whom the deeps do call.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLVIII

Our arms together twined twin marbles are:  
Yours, brown, Numidian, warm, turquoise-veined,  
Mine, pale Pentelican, rose, faintly stained—  
Two tinted figurines of Tanagra.  
In mine I see the north which snowfields mar,  
In yours I see the languors unrestrained  
Of Asiatic noons—Afric regained—  
Life lived beneath a sun oracular.

Be to me, Sweet, a city of the south,  
The garden of its richness be your mouth;  
In kisses pour Egyptian lavender,  
The strange, sleep-swaying scents of Lydia,  
Pour on my arms to dull their sharp whiteness  
Rose-liquor from the mountains of Cyprus!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## XLIX

*“Chiunque venne qui, portò con sè il suo mistero amoroso.”*

MATILDE SERAO

This vision of my childhood comes to me:

A little river by my northern home,  
A mountain river, noisy, white with foam,  
Brave-hearted, full of laughter, song and glee,  
Myself like to in those old days care-free,  
It longed for other scenes and left the home;  
I met it far away, now silent grown  
Mid meadows; sad, with nearness of the sea.

O little mountain river! I'm like you,  
Hushed, silenced, by the wonder of life, too,  
Struck fear-dumb by the nearness of a sea  
Which, as for you the ocean, waits for me;  
Were it not there with cruel, baleful glow  
I'd not have lived life thus—O no, no, no!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## L

O let me be a child to you to-night!  
Take from me lore of love and all its pain,  
Then tell some fabled tale of olden Spain  
And let me listen with a child's delight!  
O let me be a child to you to-night!  
So tired am I of stress and strife and strain—  
Of life—the puzzle naught can now make plain,  
Of balance keeping between wrong and right!

You've asked me often if I ever pray.

Can any to that question answer—nay?  
What are ambition, effort,—life—but prayer,  
What are all great desires everywhere?  
I'm praying now beneath your eyes' love-light—  
O let me be a child again to-night!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LI

Upon this point of time flung island-wise  
Between two boundless oceans deep as thought,  
With up-surge of the world-tides we are caught  
And for a moment held in poised surprise.  
The beacon of desire flames in our eyes,  
We stretch out tremblingly hands love-distraught  
And clasp each other close, caring for naught,  
High on the pinnacle of destinies.

And you are happy, Love! You think we go  
On, on, hand clasped in hand, forever so,  
And carelessly kiss me with soft caress;  
I kiss back with a passion measureless  
Because I know that even to hope is vain—  
The deeps will never let us meet again!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LII

I look out toward the gray Missouri Hills.

Behold!—there Spring comes back to us again,  
Upon my window beats its first wild rain

And scents of Summer now the dawn distils.  
Trees, prayerful, armed, ascetic, some joy thrills.

Shining gun-metal gray the long streets stain  
Where pales the passion of the first Spring rain,  
Sweeping from off the gray Missouri Hills.

Adown their shimmering length looking I see

The colors as of rainbows steal softly;  
Unseen hands crocuses and jonquils fling,

I see the splendors of immortal Spring  
And know 'tis but reflection of my heart—

Eternal Spring dwells where enthroned thou art.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LIII

You took my fingers—thus—and bent them back,  
Slowly, then one by one, giving to each  
Some special love-name from your Spanish speech—  
“*Muy cariñoso*,”—sadly said—Alack!  
Plucked them as petals from your passion’s track,  
Stripped bare the trembling flower-heart to beseech  
The red, red rose your lips leaned low to reach  
Unto my palm—the fingers thus bent back.

You said: “Now close your hand, quick! quick, Dear  
One!

I’ve sealed upon it there in Moorish guise  
The rose-tree seal of Allah’s Paradise;  
Should I be ever where you’re not, Dear One,  
Like Life’s tree which by sacred Tesnim grew,  
This rose shall bud and blossom—shelter you!”

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LIV

How can it matter what they were to me,  
The old, old lovers of the days long dead,  
Nor what they whispered fondly, what I said,  
Since it is all so far away from me!  
O! blot not thus hours bought so bitterly  
By useless brooding o'er things vanished,—dead;  
The past, Dear, is a tide that's hastenèd  
Back, back again unto the shoreless sea.

O foolish, foolish fond one that you are!  
How much you owe them of the long ago  
Who taught me lore of love, its restless woe—  
Love! Love! the bitter art whose masters are  
Than Spartan mothers crueller since they say—  
The arms that bring you joy likewise must slay!



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LV

Sadly I watched the 'dancers gayly dressed—  
A silken river of frail iris sheen  
O'er-fluttered by winged fans; watched heads down  
lean  
In languor to be sweetly word caressed;  
O! weary was the heart within my breast  
Though ribboned light on mirrored walls such  
sheen  
Of bright foam flung, as when flowers overlean  
A river's marge and 'dance at wind's behest.

Outside within the night your lute-string trilled.  
The yellow whirling ball-room floated far,  
We stood together 'neath the morning star;  
You reached a lilac branch with blossoms filled,  
O'er me was flung its jewelled, fragrant rain—  
"Love! clasp me close," I cried,—“the dawn  
again!”

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LVI

I dreamed a dream of fields vivid with Spring,  
Strown o'er with scentless flowers of fleckless  
white

Which said: "We are thy youth's first loves!"  
Aright

They seemed to me as snow upon the Spring.  
This dream passed. Next into Doom's Land I  
swing,

Before from the abyss there rose to sight  
One giant amorous lily, black as night—  
A flame of ebony the days there bring.

The Doom-Pit and the lily were as one.

I dropped down their entangling, dim twilight,  
In sable petals folded deep as night,

Dreaming how once you said to me, Dear One,  
When eagerly you leaned my hair to kiss—

"Your eyes are a black dangerous abyss!"

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LVII

*“Espejo encantado? . . . Espejo encantado  
gomo en el que Fausto mirò à Margarita,  
donde se proyecta, donde resuscita  
visiones efimeras—todo lo pasado.”*

FRANCISCO VILLAESPESA

At night, twin urns, your eyes are filled with sleep  
From some far, silent sea I do not know,  
Some far, far sea whither I may not go,  
Where you do leave me for the tideless 'deep.  
'At dawn when you come back again you keep  
Your soul so recessed, hidden from me so,  
Our old love seems as steps in melting snow  
Hastening unto the twin, dim urns of sleep.

As one within a twilight lone I feel  
While gorgeous-winged some great strange bird  
sweeps past  
And brushes me with wings—ah! brightly vast.  
The promise that Life longs for most I feel  
Has flashed its gold upon me. I can keep  
Only the shadow in the urns of sleep.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LVIII

The Spring sun has swathed us in its toga'd light.

O! why were we not born in Sybaris!

I smell Damascus roses, sharp iris,

See streets Lucanian, gay, thus by night:

Rich balconies of marble hid from sight

By tapestries and silks of Sybaris;

The peplus purpling, the bold chlamys;

Greeks ankleted in gems; while buskined bright

Soft-footed Asiatics come and go;

Women with pale eyelids powdered blue,

Upon their lips that smile the sphinxes knew;

Men calm of face as chiselled cameo,

All sauntering unto some love-bought bliss.

O! why were we not born in Sybaris!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LIX

### *With a Gift of Eastern Perfume*

Egyptian baccharis! This gift I prize.

Of old your slave as now I watched you go  
With one crowned with the pheasant's topaz glow.

"Who's that," she cried, "whose heart shakes in  
her eyes?"

To me pointing. I dared not run nor rise,  
But, crouching, o'er your baccar buds bent low.  
A slave with flowers only a queen may know?  
Some royal lover, hath she, I surmise!

Straightway within her eyes my doom I read.

Like lightning blue the lances shook o'er me.  
I was not worth your crown! How could I be!  
But when within your eyes the look I read,  
I thought: "For this death's cheap—aye! cheap  
the price—  
For one such other I would meet it twice!"

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LX

*“Che fai tu, luna, in ciel? dimmi, che fai,  
Silenzio sa luna?”*

LEOPARDI

How sad, how sad the moon is, Dear, to-night,  
And strangely chill the wind, as if it came  
From barren space beyond the bright sun's flame;  
To-night there dwells a horror in the night.  
How sad, how sad the wind is, Dear, to-night,  
And O! so full of grief, regret, and shame  
And fear of thousand things that have no name!  
The stars even wink back their tears, to-night.

O! break upon me, storm of grief—break! break!  
Hiding black hearts behind that pallid moon,  
The sooner will come calmness, sun, and noon.  
Take me within your arms, Dear, quickly take!  
I'm so afraid of life, aye!—love—I seem  
To want to die awhile—then wake—to dream.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LXI

How sad, how sad the moon is, Dear, to-night—  
Pale woman in her grave-clothes seeking there  
Along the azure meadows of the air,  
The way that leadeth back to life and light.  
She trembles and her face with fear is white  
Astray amid that cold strange splendor there;  
Gold star-flowers stare with eyes that do not care  
While she gropes broken-hearted down the night.

Pull low that purple lilac! Yes!—this way.  
When—list!—you kiss me thus, let her not see,  
She's so athirst for love she'd envy me,  
Poor, poor lost lonely one, wound her not, pray!  
Why, Dear, the glad great gods themselves I think  
For kisses such as these would cross death's brink!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LXII

*"Venisti. O nuntii beati."*

CATULLUS

The stars are trembling wind-blown lamps to-night  
By nymphs upheld whose bare, white feet now flee  
Adown the winding stairs of ivory  
That cross the terraced Garden of the Night.  
Sly Nymphs! How they spin on in fluttered flight  
Their misty, gossamer gowns out-floating free,  
Dot-like, red, little mouths; eyes wide to see;  
Hair like sun-flushed tree-tops at sweet twilight.

Unto the Opal Chambers of the Moon,  
The irised chambers of old revelry  
They hasten 'down Night's stairs of ivory.  
Faint grow the little star-lamps. They fade soon.  
But through frost ferns faint, pallid lustres creep  
Where white-armed little Nymphs sleep love's deep  
sleep.



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## LXIII

*"Scrivo sol per sfogar l'interna doglia"*

VITTORIA COLONNA

My heart's a wound of piteousness to-day  
Because our crimson room last night was seen  
The shadow of all sin since time has been—  
That color that Macbeth washed not away.  
Fear came between our kisses then. "Nay! nay!—  
The world, how can it know our love has been?"  
The moon—look!—tells it now to stars that lean  
In eagerness; and they to winds that sway  
The talking trees. 'Ah! when I leave you, Dear,  
What horrors in the dawn upon me'll seize  
At many fingered mockery of leaves  
A-point at me! The world will see—will hear—  
The merciless white Day no one deceives,  
And O! all those black-fingered, scornful trees!



## II

# *THE PASSING OF LOVE*

“Now, thou Hyacinth, whisper the letters on thee  
graven and add a deeper *ai, ai* to thy petals.”

—Moschus



I

*"Partir—c'est mourir un peu!"*

FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI

**D**AY! and its light falls on a thousand hills!  
Day! and its strength flows in upon the heart!  
High up in air fine fleece-white clouds do part,  
And countless little valleys now light fills.  
Midsummer's ecstasy the whole world thrills;  
Drowsing the ox pulls slow the creaking cart  
Nor pauses at bird-trill to look, or start,  
Nepenthes with the Summer day distils.

O Summer, red-lipped Summer, on my soul  
Pour all your sleep-sweet balms! There stop the  
roll  
Of longing, futile thought, repining—pain—  
That like thy hills I, too, may know again—  
Though he be gone—the mid-day's drowsy deep;  
Summer, for me dreamless nepenthes steep!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## II

### *The Dream of Spain*

Tad'ma's Italian Spring!—the languor, light,  
That bathes in lucent waves that marbled sweep  
Veined rich as are those women there who keep,  
Idling by day, flower-crowned, a dream of night!  
Frail, blossom-hung, a pink Spring tree to right,  
Where silent, saffron-robed, one watch does keep  
O'er waters deep as are his own thoughts deep,  
Scorning near joys for fancy's fond delight.

O! never yet saw sun a sea so blue,  
So Tyrian-toned, so violet-rich in hue!  
There he who watches sees—(or is't a dream,  
Or where sunbeams, glancing, on billows gleam?)  
Haze-crested hills, a gold and magic main,  
And whispers softly as now I: "Spain! Spain!"

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## III

Let there be dance and laughter, sound of song,  
Soft glances interchange and merriment,  
That from Joy's too full cup to others sent  
Drops overflowing to me may belong.  
Let me be 'mid the laughter-loving throng,  
To my dead heart their life-passion be lent,  
Who now am but a beggar worn and bent,  
Crouched down by others' fires when winds are  
strong.

That it could not have lasted, well I know—  
Too few—alas!—youth's years now left to me;  
Love's spared itself a hideous tragedy,  
Than which none bitterer life has to show—  
The tragedy of them that Time has sold,  
The vision of a woman growing old!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## IV

Within the Summer dawn I dreamed a dream  
Of sand wastes where a strange procession came:  
Men patriarchal, stern, robed in white flame,  
Who knelt and lifted empty hands that seem  
To plead for something, while with scorn supreme:  
"Thy future years are we! Ask not our name!  
We empty-handed come. Each one the same."  
I knew they reached the gray horizon's gleam.

"Look! Look behind!"—I cried—"the cherubs  
there

Upholding each a wine glass, rich, flower-crowned,  
Mirrored within whose radiant deeps is found  
My love and I—immortal—earth-gods fair.  
The future, stern, stern keepers, take! 'tis thine.  
I care not, for that red rose past is mine!"



# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## V

If life and love are garments that grow old  
And frayed and soiled as those that beggars wear,  
I'll put them from me while they still are fair.  
And purplely splendid, still undimmed their gold.  
I will not suffer word of them be told  
That's pitiful or hath a grievous air,  
Joy shall be on them blazoned everywhere  
As on twin standards of the warrior soul.

I will not wait till Hope—that coward bird—  
Does backward fly becoming Memory,  
Untruths to prattle to me foolishly.  
The day that first my heart shall bring me word  
I'll leave forever these twin robes of state  
And laugh to know Grief could not make me wait.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## VI

For days I sit and think and cannot speak.

Forgotten have I how to live, it seems,  
Without you—altar-place of all my dreams—  
The heart it is so pitiful and weak.

For days I sit and think and cannot speak

While round me living murmurs till it seems  
The rushing water round some wrecked ship's beams,  
Nor know day's joined with day, nor week with  
week.

And then some word you said to me comes back,

Some little word you whispered long ago,  
And I forget my grief and wake to know  
The miracle the rolling year brings back,  
The miracle of joy one word can bring—  
That one small violet can make a Spring.

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## VII

To Spain, Good Stranger? There it is you go!

I pray you then seek out one that I knew  
And for me tell him—O! I pray you to!—

Look not for him where piled up gold's aglow,  
Nor where the servile courtier bendeth low,  
Nor yet indeed where banked spears filtering  
through

Sharp steel light falls pallid and cold as dew,  
Where'er the humble kneel in prayer, there, go.

'Tis there you'll find him where the tapers show  
His hands in blessing lifted. Then, O then,  
For me say this—say it again! again!

(I crave your pardon, Stranger. Say not so.)  
But is he happy? That I have not heard—  
Look in his eyes and then—then—send me word!

# THE GARDEN OF DESIRE

## VIII

Theocritus who sang in Sicily,

By Ætna where are shepherds' pipes a-ring,  
Made thus unto the night a maiden sing:

“Moon-Wheel, the one I love draw unto me.”

O! would that I could pray thus, Moon, to thee,

And be as sure as she some peace to bring,

Simætha, 'neath the laurels silvering,

In old Sicilian gardens by the sea.

I pray to thee, Great Moon, make me forget!

O! gracious Lady Moon, let me forget

And love but beauty only as of yore!

Soon now upon the grass beside my door

The Fall will fling the poplars' pallid gold—

Let me forget and love it as of old!



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