

A SESTINA

I see her now as on that perfect night
 Beneath the rosy Harvest-moon; the hour
Was full of glory and for us more bright
 Than high noon-tide; the sleepy lily flower,
Its heavy scented head all silvery light,
 Breath'd perfume o'er the threshold of her bower.

She came, my Lady, from her jasmine bower
 And turn'd the darkness of my life to light;
She fairer was than rose or lily flower
 And lent new radiance to the radiant night;
Her eyes, lit with the wonder of that hour,
 Were as the dreaming stars, serene and bright.

No thought of past or future dimm'd the bright
 Glad present of our meeting by her bower;
The past was gone forever—like last night;
 The future, folded close as poppy flower
That waits the first hot kiss of golden light,
 To flaunt its beauty thro' the sunlit hour.

To us, the joy of Eden came that hour;
 We trod the paths of Paradise that night.
Within the leafy shadow of her bower
 A ray, divine, shone clear as crystal bright,
Waking the sleeping bud of sweet Love's flower
 To perfect blossom by its own pure light.

With burning hearts—lit by Love's own great light,
 Thrilling to that sweet anguish from the bower,
Where sang the nightingale, who shuns the bright
 And garish day, loving the moonlit hour,
Our hearts together whisper'd "Good, good-night,
 Sweet with the breath of Love's eternal flower."

Fairer than Summer noon, bedeck'd with flower,
 Was the soft splendour of the moon's full light,
A silvery glamour lay o'er mead and bower
 Making the shining laurel leaves more bright.
An echo of the rapture of that hour,
 Throbb'd in the little brown bird's throat that night.

The cold moonlight falls on a ruin'd bower;
 Beneath her beam no lily flower shines bright;
Yet memory, tonight, gives back that hour.