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CHAPTER I.

O that Decay were always beautiful !
How soft the exit of the dying day,
The dying season too, its disarray
Is gold and scarlet, hues of gay misrule,
So it in festive cheer may pass away ;
Fading is excellent in earth or air,
With it no budding April may compare,
Nor fragrant June with long love-laden hours ;
Sweet is decadence in the quiet bowers
Where summer songs and mirth are fallen asleep,
And sweet the woe when fading violets weep.

O that among things dearer in their wane
Our fallen faiths might numbered be, that so
Religions cherished in their hour of woe
Might linger round the god-deserted fane,