



Conceive a bridegroom wooing, and a bride
 Heart-hungered for the bliss of his embrace,
 But grown aware, on sudden, how, inside
 Her wedding-raiment, lurketh a disgrace
 Of spotting leprosy. O God! her face
 The whence pollution, oozing, issues through,
 He kisseth, her beloved! O, for place
 To hide the horror of her shame from view!
 O, terror of the heart his heart is throbbing to!

Behold, the prayers of mortals unto us
 Are unguents that may cleanse us of our stain,
 Or dews to wash us thoroughly. Amorous
 Of swift purgation, that the kiss of pain
 May grow the kiss of peace, shall we in vain
 Call to our careless brethren of the earth,
 For that which doth not stint them of a gain?
 We, who have shared their sorrow and their mirth,
 And housed with them, erewhile, in dwellings of the earth.

Are olden days forgotten—all their cheer,
 And all their sorrow-sharing? Are the dead
 Less quick than we, the living? Did the bier
 So take us wholly from you? Nay, we tread
 The olden places! Nay, our hands are spread
 For clasping and for aiding, as of yore!
 By bed, and board, and hearth, our prayers are said
 For you, the loved who pray for us no more.
 Sweet brethren, lo! we starve while ye have ample store!