

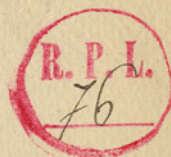
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English Poems



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III

EPITHALAMIUM

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III

EPITHALAMIUM

I

Set ope all shutters, that the day come in
Like a sea or a din !
Let not a nook of useless shade compel
Thoughts of the night, or tell
The mind's comparing that some things are sad,
For this day all are glad !
'Tis morn, 'tis open morn, the full sun is
Risen from out the abyss
Where last night lay beyond the unseen rim
Of the horizon dim.
Now is the bride awaking. Lo ! she starts
To feel the day is home
Whose too-near night will put two different hearts
To beat as near as flesh can let them come.
Guess how she joys in her feared going, nor opes
Her eyes for fear of fearing at her joy.
Now is the pained arrival of all hopes.
With the half-thought she scarce knows how to toy.

Oh, let her wait a moment or a day
And prepare for the fray
For which her thoughts not ever quite prepare!
With the real day's arrival she's half wroth.
Though she wish what she wants, she yet doth stay.
Her dreams yet merged are
In the slow verge of sleep, which idly doth
The accurate hope of things remotely mar.

II

Part from the windows the small curtains set
Sight more than light to omit!
Look on the general fields, how bright they lie
Under the broad blue sky,
Cloudless, and the beginning of the heat
Does the sight half ill-treat!
The bride hath wakened. Lo! she feels her shaking
Heart better all her waking!
Her breasts are with fear's coldness inward clutched
And more felt on her gown,
That will by hands other than hers be touched
And will find lips sucking their budded crown.
Lo! the thought of the bridegroom's hands already
Feels her about where even her hands are shy,
And her thoughts shrink till they become unready.
She gathers up her body and still doth lie.
She vaguely lets her eyes feel opening.
In a fringed mist each thing
Looms, and the present day is truly clear
But to her sense of fear.
Like a hue, light lies on her lidded sight,
And she half hates the inevitable light.

III

Open the windows and the doors all wide
Lest aught of night abide,
Or, like a ship's trail in the sea, survive
What made it there to live!
She lies in bed half waiting that her wish
Grow bolder or more rich
To make her rise, or poorer, to oust fear,
And she rise as a common day were here.
That she would be a bride in bed with man
The parts where she is woman do insist
And send up messages that shame doth ban
From being dreamed but in a shapeless mist.
She opes her eyes, the ceiling sees above
Shutting the small alcove,
And thinks, till she must shut her eyes again,
Another ceiling she this night will know,
Another house, another bed, she lain
In a way she half guesses; so
She shuts her eyes to see not the room she
Soon will no longer see.

IV

Let the wide light come through the whole house now
Like a herald with brow
Garlanded round with roses and those leaves
That love for its love weaves!
Between her and the ceiling this day's ending
A man's weight will be bending.
Lo! with the thought her legs she twines, well knowing
A hand will part them then;
Fearing that entering in her, that allowing
That will make softness begin rude at pain.

If ye, glad sunbeams, are inhabitèd
By sprites or gnomes that dally with the day,
Whisper her, if she shrink that she'll be bled,
That love's large bower is doored in this small way.

V

Now will her grave of untorn maidenhood
Be dug in her small blood.
Assemble ye at that glad funeral
And weave her scarlet pall,
O pinings for the flesh of man that often
Did her secret hours soften
And take her willing and unwilling hand
Where pleasure starteth up.
Come forth, ye moted gnomes, unruly band,
That come so quick ye spill your brimming cup;
Ye that make youth young and flesh nice
And the glad spring and summer sun arise;
Ye by whose secret presence the trees grow
Green, and the flowers bud, and birds sing free,
When with the fury of a trembling glow
The bull climbs on the beifer mightily!

VI

Sing at her window, ye heard early wings
In whose song joy's self sings!
Buzz in her room along her loss of sleep,
O small flies, tumble and creep
Along the counterpane and on her fingers
In mating pairs. She lingers.
Along her joined-felt legs a prophecy
Creeps like an inward hand.

Look how she tarries ! Tell her : fear not glee !
Come up ! Awake ! Dress for undressing ! Stand !
Look how the sun is altogether all !
Life hums around her senses petalled close.
Come up ! Come up ! Pleasure must thee befall !
Joy to be plucked, O yet ungathered rose !

VII

Now is she risen. Look how she looks down,
After her slow down-slid night-gown,
On her unspotted while of nakedness
Save where the beast's difference from her white frame
Hairily triangling black below doth shame
Her to-day's sight of it, till the caress
Of the chemise cover her body. Dress !
Stop not, sitting upon the bed's hard edge,
Stop not to wonder at by-and-bye, nor guess !
List to the rapid birds i'th' window ledge !
Up, up and washed ! Lo ! she is up half-gowned,
For she lacks hands to have power to button fit
The white symbolic wearing, and she's found
By her maids thus, that come to perfect it.

VIII

Look how over her seeing-them-not her maids
Smile at each other their same thought of her !
Already is she deflowered in others' thoughts.
With curious carefulness of inlocked braids,
With hands that in the sun minutely stir,
One works her hair into concerted knots.
Another buttons tight the gown ; her hand,
Touching the body's warmth of life, doth band

Her thoughts with the rude bridegroom's hand to be.
The first then, on the veil placed mistily,
Lays on her head, her own head sideways leaning,
The garland soon to have no meaning.
The other, at her knees, makes the white shoon
Fit close the trembling feet, and her eyes see
The stockinged leg, road upwards to that boon
Where all this day centres its revelry.

IX

Now is she gowned completely, her face won
To a flush. Look how the sun
Shines hot and how the creeper, loosed, doth strain
To hit the heated pane!
She is all white, all she's awaiting him.
Her eyes are bright and dim.
Her hands are cold, her lips are dry, her heart
Pants like a pursued hart.

X

Now is she issued. List how all speech pines
Then bursts into a wave of speech again!
Now is she issued out to where the guests
Look on her daring not to look at them.
The hot sun outside shines.
A sweaty oiliness of hot life rests
On the day's face this hour.
A mad joy's pent in each warm thing's hushed power.

XI

Hang with festoons and wreaths and coronals
The corridors and halls!
Be there all round the sound of gay bells ringing!
Let there be echoing singing!
Pour out like a libation all your joy!
Shout, even ye children, little maid and boy
Whose belly yet unfurled yet whitely decks
A sexless thing of sex!
Shout out as if ye knew what joy this is
You clap at in such bliss!

XII

This is the month and this the day.
Ye must not stay.
Sally ye out and in warm clusters move
To where beyond the trees the belfry's height
Does in the blue wide heaven a message prove,
Somewhat calm, of delight.
Now flushed and whispering loud sally ye out
To church! The sun pours on the ordered rout,
And all their following eyes clasp round the bride:
They feel like hands her bosom and her side;
Like the inside of the vestment next her skin,
They round her round and fold each crevice in;
They lift her skirts up, as to tease or woo
The cleft hid thing below;
And this they think at her peeps in their ways
And in their glances plays.

XIII

No more, no more of church or feast, for these
Are outward to the day, like the green trees
That flank the road to church and the same road
Back from the church, under a higher sun trod.
These have no more part than a floor or wall
In the great day's true ceremonial.
The guests themselves, no less than they that wed,
Hold these as nought but corridors to bed.
So are all things, that between this and dark
Will be passed, a dim work
Of minutes, hours seen in a sleep, and dreamed
Untimed and wrongly deemed.
The bridal and the walk back and the feast
Are all for each a mist
Where he sees others through a blurred hot notion
Of drunk and veined emotion,
And a red race runs through his seeing and hearing,
A great carouse of dreams seen each on each,
Till their importunate careering
A stopped, half-hurting point of mad joy reach.

XIV

The bridegroom aches for the end of this and lusts
To know those paps in sucking gusts,
To put his first hand on that belly's hair
And feel for the lipped lair,
The fortress made but to be taken, for which
He feels the battering ram grow large and itch.
The trembling glad bride feels all the day hot
On that still cloistered spot

Where only her nightly maiden hand did feign
A pleasure's empty gain.
And, of the others, most will whisper at this,
Knowing the spurt it is;
And children yet, that watch with looking eyes,
Will now thrill to be wise
In flesh, and with big men and women act
The liquid tickling fact
For whose taste they'll in secret corners try
They scarce know what still dry.

XV

Even ye, now old, that to this come as to
Your past, your own joy throw
Into the cup, and with the younger drink
That which now makes you think
Of what love was when love was. (For not now
Your winter thoughts allow).
Drink with the hot day, the bride's sad joy and
The bridegroom's haste unreined,
The memory of that day when ye were young
And, with great paeans sung
Along the surface of the depths of you,
You paired and the night saw
The day come in and you did still pant close,
And still the half-fallen flesh distending rose.

XVI

No matter now or past or future. Be
Lovers' age in your glee!
Give all your thoughts to this great muscled day
That like a courser tears
The bit of Time, to make night come and say
The maiden mount now her first rider bears!

Flesh pinched, flesh bit, flesh sucked, flesh girt around,
Flesh crushed and ground,
These things inflame your thoughts and make ye dim
In what ye say or seem!
Rage out in naked glances till ye fright
Your ague of delight,
In glances seeming clothes and thoughts to hate
That fleshs separate!
Stretch out your limbs to the warm day outside,
To feel it while it bide!
For the strong sun, the hot ground, the green grass,
Each far lake's dazzling glass,
And each one's flushed thought of the night to be
Are all one joy-hot unity.

XVII

In a red bacchic surge of thoughts that beat
On the mad temples like an ire's amaze,
In a fury that hurts the eyes, and yet
Doth make all things clear with a blur around,
The whole group's soul like a glad drunkard sways
And bounds up from the ground!
Ay, though all these be common people heaping
To church, from church, the bridal keeping,
Yet all the satyrs and big pagan haunches
That in taut flesh delight and teats and paunches,
And whose course, trailing through the foliage, nears
The crouched nymph that half fears,
In invisible rush, behind, before
This decent group move, and with hot thoughts store
The passive souls round which their mesh they wind,
The while their rout, loud stumbling as if blind,
Makes the hilled earth wake echoing from her sleep
To the lust in their leap.

XVIII

Io! Io! There runs a juice of pleasure's rage
Through these frames' mesh,
That now do really ache to strip and wage
Upon each others' flesh
The war that fills the womb and puts milk in
The teats a man did win,
The battle fought with rage to join and fit
And not to hurt or hit!
Io! Io! Be drunken like the day and hour!
Shout, laugh and overpower
With clamour your own thoughts, lest they a breath
Utter of age or death!
Now is all absolute youth, and the small pains
That thrill the fillèd veins
Themselves are edged in a great tickling joy
That halts ever ere it cloy.
Put out of mind all things save flesh and giving
The male milk that makes living!
Rake out great peals of joy like grass from ground
In your o'ergrown soul found!
Make your great rut dispersedly rejoice
With laugh or voice,
As if all earth, hot sky and tremulous air
A mighty cymbal were!

XIX

Set the great Flemish hour aflame!
Your senses of all leisure maim!
Cast down with blows that joy even where they hurt
The hands that mock to avert!
All things pick up to bed that lead ye to
Be naked that ye woo!

Tear up, pluck up, like earth who treasure seek,
When the chest's ring doth peep,
The thoughts that cover thoughts of the acts of heat
This great day does intreat!
Now seem all hands pressing the paps as if
They meant them juice to give!
Now seem all things pairing on one another,
Hard flesh soft flesh to smother,
And hairy legs and buttocks balled to split
White legs mid which they shift.
Yet these mixed mere thoughts in each mind but speak
The day's push love to wreak,
The man's ache to have felt possession,
The woman's man to have on,
The abstract surge of life clearly to reach
The bodies' concrete beach.
Yet some work of this doth the real day don.
Now are skirts lifted in the servants' hall,
And the whored belly's stall
Ope to the horse that enters in a rush,
Half late, too near the gush.
And even now doth an elder guest emmesh
A flushed young girl in a dark nook apart,
And leads her slow to move his produced flesh.
Look how she likes with something in her heart
To feel her hand work the protruded dart!

XX

But these are thoughts or promises or but
Half the purpose of rut,
And this is lust thought-of or futureless
Or used but lust to ease.
Do ye the circle true of love pretend,
And, what Nature, intend!

Do ye actually ache
The horse of lust by reins of life to bend
And pair in love for love's creating sake!
Bellow! Roar! Stallions be or bulls that fret
On their seed's hole to get!
Surge for that carnal complement that will
Your flesh's young juice thrill
To the wet mortised joints at which you meet
The coming life to greet,
In the tilled womb that will bulge till it do
The plenteous curve of spheric earth renew!

XXI

And ye, that wed to-day, guess these instincts
Of the concerted group in hints
Yourselves from Nature naturally have,
And your good future brave!
Close lips, nude arms, felt breasts and organ mighty,
Do your joy's night work rightly!
Teach them these things, O day of pomp of heat!
Leave them in thoughts such as must make the feat
Of flesh inevitable and natural as
Pissing when wish doth press!
Let them cling, kiss and fit
Together with natural wit,
And let the night, coming, teach them that use
For youth is in abuse!
Let them repeat the link, and pour and pour
Their pleasure till they can no more!
Ay, let the night watch over their repeated
Coupling in darkness, till thought's self, o'erheated,
Do fret and trouble, and sleep come on hurt frames,
And, mouthing each one's names,
They in each other's arms dream still of love

And something of it prove!
And, if they wake, teach them to recommence,
For an hour was far hence ;
Till their contacted flesh, in heat o'erblent
With joy, sleep sick, while, spent
The stars, the sky pale in the East and shiver
Where light the night doth sever,
And with clamour of joy and life's young din
The warm new day come in.

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