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To

D. B. B.

TO WHOSE FAITH AND CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT IS DUE WHATEVER OF GOOD THERE IS IN THIS VOLUME.

FOREWORD.

THE origin of the myth of Lilith is lost in the maze of early religious beliefs and superstitions.

In the early passages of the Talmud, she is shown as the first wife of Adam, existing before the creation of Eve.

Later, Demonology presents her as an evil spirit of the night, particularly inimical to mothers and new-born children, and, still later, as a seducer of young men.

In the following tale, introducing Lilith with reference to these three characteristics, I have attempted to supply what seems to me a logical reason for the murder of Abel.

E. W. P.

New York, Jan. 15th. 1907.

LILITH

LILITH

MIST-SWATHED in gray and rusty violet,
The sullen sun sank to a leaden sea,
That rose and fell in sluggish, oily waves
And broke in irridescence on the shore.
Across the skies strange birds in silent flight
Winged slowly on their clumsy, homeward way.
The heat and silence lay intense. On land
Where towering palms and monstrous fern-leaves
waved,
Throughout the jungle wilds, a note of fear
Swept ceaseless, till it seemed the very earth,
With throb of frightened heart-beats, quaked and
swayed.
High o'er a massive cone of mud, the East
Blazed in a copper glow, and blue-white sparks
Shot up, and scarlet, in a wondrous stream,
Until they dimmed and vanished.
Lilith woke.
Her eyes shone brilliant in the deepening gloom
As her quick glances searched the forest maze.
She sniffed the air, oppressive with the scent

Of sickening flowers and of rotting plants,
Then slowly rising, backward flung her robe—
The glorious, blue-black beauty of her hair.
    The nameless terror stirring all the world
Drew near and touched her soul. She gathered close,
And hugged her knees, and stared into the dark;
But from its depths no sound came to her ears
Save that of all the jungle's many tongues
That told again in ceaseless whisperings
The oft-repeated story of its life;
These, and of moving creatures hurrying
From what, nor why, they knew no more than she.
Nor could she fear the forest's mighty song,
Nor even the wild beasts; for since that day
When with its searing streams the fiery mount
Had cut them off from that beloved place—
The glorious Valley Beautiful—her home
Had lain within its shades by night and day.
Yet deeper grew her great uneasiness,
Her sense of some strange, ominous unknown,
That waxed as all the wind died out to spread
Upon the world a weird, unnatural hush.
    The stillness deepened. Not a sound of leaf
Nor crackling twig, nor lap of wave; the sea
Had deadened to a dismal calm. Her blood

Pulsated thick and chill. She wet her lips,
Nor dared to meet the fulness of her fear.
The night closed in. Huge stars loomed near
and bright
Beyond the velvet masses of the trees,
To fade against the silver of her light
As the wan moon crept slowly up the sky.
A bank of clouds hung heavy o'er the West,
And lurid streaks of lightning flashed and bathed
In vivid glare the strangely quiet world.
And Lilith sat with terror growing fast,
And trembled helplessly, and beads of sweat
Rose on her body, tense as for a spring.
A numbing, bitter cold had clasped her heart.
The silence grew—the moments agony.
In vain she sought to reassure herself,
The crushing force weighed down her slender
limbs
And broke the bonds of self-control, till prone
Upon the ground she flung headlong, and dug
With fierce, convulsive fingers in the mould.
A breath—a sigh almost inaudible—
Passed slowly through the night. A sudden surge
Of energy renewed swept thrill on thrill
Across this monstrous world.

And Lilith wept.

Adown the trunk of a gigantic tree,
Between the loops and wreaths of countless vines,
With skill that scarce disturbed the smallest leaf,
The sinuous Master of all Evil slid.
High overhead he hung in great festoon,
And swayed his huge, flat head from side to side
Above the sobbing figure on the ground.
And small she looked, and frail, and ivory-white.
He dropped beside her. Gliding as a thought
He wrapped her close within his shining folds,
And as his subtle voice caressed her name
She flung her arms on high in wild relief.
"Art thou then come?" she wailed. "O,
Wisest One!
Oh! tell me, Master, tell me what it is
That freezes all my heart." And soothingly
He sought to calm her fear. But all in vain,
For when to her repeated cry he spake,
"Forget, and let us tell of other things,"
His trembling voice betrayed an anguished mind
And Lilith guessed *his* fear, and sobbed again.
But as her slender, lithesome form was racked
In frenzied weeping, all his subtle wiles
Sprang to his aid; and soft as honey-drip
A low, unrhythmic chant fell from his lips:

"All the day I have been thinking of the Beautiful
Valley
How spacious were the hills—
How sweet the waters—
And the white flowers—the white flowers
that never faded.
Ah! Darling of the Twilight, surely thou hast
not forgotten!"

And she, as if a child, was lulled and soothed.
Across her eager memory there passed
The wondrous glories of those golden days,
And bathed her soul in shimmering happiness.
"Then surely thou, Belovéd, dost recall
The path by Gihon, the swift-rushing stream,
Whereby it ever was thy wont to come
Where I awaited. And we two would lie
Warmed by the smiles of the great orb of day,
Or stretched in cooling shade of those vast trees,
Where flowers bloomed in fragrance wonderful,
Which when we ate were sweeter to the taste
Than all the honey of this outer Place.
There, too, the gentle creatures were thy friends.
Dost thou remember not how oft I found
Thee resting 'twixt the tiger and his mate?"
Like the light ripple of a laughing brook

The liquid, silver tones, monotonous,
Slipt softly from his cunning, serpent tongue.
"Dost not recall the nights, Belovéd One,—
The nights of Paradise,—the wondrous nights,
The world asleep, and we alone awake—
The quiet Garden dripping sweet with dew,
And all the beauty of the heavens ours ?"
"Ah! how shall I forget ?" she wept reply.
"Then, with the evening, joy came to my breast,
And, with the twilight, utter blissful calm,
And sleep brought to mine eyes a welcome rest
From the dear labors of a happy day.
But now, O Master, now the black-hued night
Sweeps like a tempest o'er my quivering soul.
I grow as restless as a beast, and fierce.
And ever a red mist before my eyes—
A burning in my throat that has no peace
Or comfort of the bitter waters here.
"O dear lost nights of Eden—O ye stars,"
She cried, her longing rushing uncontrolled,
"O moon, whose beams brought bliss unto my heart—
O flower-songs, of faintest odors sweet
That sang of age-long love in endless theme—
O ye soft winds, that swept across my way
To whisper tender secrets to my soul—

Come back to me!—Come back!
"Ah! no, alas!
For *now* is come my night of fevered range,
Sly skulking to the careful, cringing theft
Of some poor creature's sustenance and gain.
"O Wise One, why is this? And what is
this,—
This torment that but now has shaken me,
As if a tree in grip of some wild storm,
And hurled me as a leaf before the wind?"
He answered not. But when he spake again,
As sudden as the thrust of his forked tongue,
The bitter question flashed from out his mouth:
"The man, O Lilith, dost remember him?"
"Speak, not of him!" she spat her fierce
command.
"I have forgotten him—I will—I *have*—
This Adam——"
"Nay, Belovéd, why forget?
The woman, too, the—other woman, Eve?"
She quivered and her face grew like a fiend's,
As with her puny strength she strove in vain
To fight from the vast coils that held her close.
He laughed, and cried, "Peace, Glory of the
Night,—
Dost think I credited thou hadst forgot

Who was a wife to him before Eve came?
Nay, struggle not. Thou knowest Pain hath come
Into the world, and I may do thee hurt,
And crush too far this beauteous form of thine
An thou dost heed me not. I am thy friend;
And all thy foes are mine. So listen now
Unto my words, and hear if they be wise.
"Thou knowest all the woes of which thou criest
Have come through her; for when I strove to learn
If 'it *was* good,' as viewing His great work
The Righteous One had royally proclaimed,
And laid a simple snare, she fell, and sinned.
And yet, despite this woe she brought to man,
She even now hath been exalted far.
Thou shouldst know well the value of her meed,
Whose coming hath but even now alarmed
And shaken all the world,—thee most of all.
Aye! wert thou not o'erwhelméd by its power—
Was it then not in humble homage there
I found thee, trembling, prostrate on the earth?
Didst thou not cry, 'All Hail'? So shouldst thou have,
For unto Eve this day hath Life been given!"
"Life! What is Life, that she should hold the gift?"

Her question sprang like fire to her lips
That curled from the hot venom of her voice.
"Show me, that I may hurl it from her grasp—
That I may make her cringe in craven fear,
In fear of Lilith, Daughter of the Night,
Who bows her head to no one till she choose!"
    Then, smiling quick behind his serpent eyes,
He answered once again in subtle tones,
"Come, if thou wilt, and dare to face her joy."
    Through all the crowded dark, they sped
        amain,
And lo! the tangled mass gave no rebuff,
That unto others would have proved a bar
But through long years of labor. Now the shades
Of vast ungainly vegetation passed—
Now black morasses, where the heavy mists
Wrapt close the stagnant waters, save where lit
By weird, phantasmic gleams of pallid light.
O'er sluggish rivers rimmed by sombre trees
And huge, distorted fungi fast they flew,
And every movement of the torpid streams
Disclosed the phosphorescence of the rot
That choked from bank to bank. And on—and
        on—
Up to the higher regions where cool airs
Fell from the lofty, frowning hills above

Upon the level of a bare plateau.
He pointed out across the dreary plain,
And bade her gaze and note each separate thing,
And questioned what she saw.
"The ground gapes wide
With some new-riven wound upon its breast."
"Aye! so,—the furrow—for now Adam toils.
Look well, for so shall all the earth be torn
By man for countless ages. And what else?"
"Are those not sheep close-gathered on yon
hill?"
"Yea, man must clothe himself, aye! soon
must *eat*
These living things, as now he eats the fruit
And product of the soil. What else, Most Fair?"
"Beyond the furrow and the sheep, quite far,
A shelter wove of branches, and a fire
That burns before it, and to Heaven sends
Its offering, a slender stem of smoke.
There watches one who kneels. Can he see us?"
And now her gaze was tense upon the scene,
Else she had seen the sidelong, evil glance
That watched her close, and she had been aware
Of that quick smile, as soft he answered her:
"Not so. His eyes can see but the one face—
That of his helpmeet, Eve—nay! and the face

Of that new Life which has been given her."
And well the bitter poison of his tongue
Worked the dark wishes of his evil mind,
For both her eyes burned dim and sadly wan
Like the last embers of a lonely fire,
And softly to the breeze she breathed a name.
She knew not that she spake, but yet he heard
The tender accent like a dear caress,
And knew the founding of his scheme was good,
And said:

"Aye! Adam, and within is Eve.
Go close. I promise thee they shall not see,
For *she* beholdeth but the countenance
Of her new Lord—the Gift—the new-born Life,
The Life that knoweth even not itself."

Swift as a spirit 'cross the barren plain
Sped Lilith, till the tiny hut was reached,
And, bending, parted noiselessly the boughs,
To peer within. Asleep upon a couch
Rough-made of branches lay the mother, Eve.
Her face all drawn and pale—her closed eyes
ringed,
But spread above her tender weary form
The wondrous, splendid mantle of her hair.
Close to her breast in her enfolding arm
She, held the Gift, the first-born baby—Cain,

Who stirred; and, even as the watcher gazed,
Across the mother's face there crept a smile.
Well was it that the Evil One had guessed,
And followed close behind her to the hut,
For now in blazing eyes and maddened mouth
He read the raging riot of her heart—
The will of evil—envy—and the fear—
The hate and lashing of her jealousy;
And, e'en as from her lips she hissed her mind
To take this Gift—this Life—the mighty coils
Enfolded her once more in their embrace
To hold her struggling, wild but powerless.
And lo! he soothed her spirit yet again
With honeyed promises and witching words,
Till quietly she lay; then with his speech
He lashed her fury to its height anew.
"Belovéd, thou *shalt* take it, but not yet.
To Eve hath come a wondrous gift indeed,
The gift of bringing Life unto the world.
But hark! I swear to thee in solemn oath
For thee a greater thing hath been reserved.
I promise it to thee if so thou wilt.
But heed thee well, O Lilith, ere too late!
E'en that which entereth now thy heart must stay,
And hold unquestioned sway forevermore.
Thou shalt be enemy of Motherhood,

The fearful demon that all women dread;
The bitter winds of night shall be thy steeds,
And all the thunder echo back thy song.
The very whisper of thy hated name
Shall speed a shudder through each woman's soul,
And they that lie as she lay yester eve
Shall pray their Lord in awful fear of thee.
Bethink thee well, thy vengeance lies at hand
To clasp or spurn. And too I promise thee
That, e'en as Eve for disobedience
Hath been rewarded, so shalt thou for hate.
And now thy answer? Shall yon rising sun
Greet but a woman, helpless, weak, and frail,
Burned by a passion that she cannot slake,
Or Lilith, dreaded demon of the night?"

Maddened she hurled defiance to the skies
In one long shriek, "Oh! Fiend, I choose, I choose!"
And like a very fury flung herself
Back toward the hut—But lo! the serpent skin
Slipped to the ground, and in a blaze of light
The mighty Lord of Evil barred her way
With all the glory of his hellish flame.

Adam, reclining patient by the fire,
Heard but the songs of night-winds sighing soft.
Eve, in her peaceful slumber, saw in dreams

The wondrous beauty of the Garden lost;
But by her side the little new-born babe
Awoke from out its tender sleep, and wept.

. . . . . .

"Wake, Lilith, and arise!" The clarion voice
Of him, the Master Tempter, smote her ear.
"Wake, Lilith, it is time! Behold! the years
Have come and gone, and come and gone again.
Great rains and floods have swept over the land,
And all its face is wrinkled with their tears.
There have been many springtimes, harvests too,
Flowers in order, and in season fruits.
Behold, the mounts of fire have burned away,
And licked with liquid breaths their blackened
paths.
Rivers have changed their courses. Giant trees
Lie now beneath the sea, and the morass
Hath been exalted unto a high hill.
Earth hath been filled with trembling while thou
slept'st
In the deep slumber that I laid on thee.
Awake, O Lilith, Daughter of the Night,
For lo! it is the very dawn of night
And all thy day beginneth at its break."

Upstarting, Lilith opened wide her eyes;
All yellow-ringed they were, like to a beast's—

The pupils small, contracted; and a snarl
Lay like a leopard's greeting on her lips.
"Why did'st thou drag me back, thou master
fiend,
Ere I could snatch that Life of Eve from her?
Why didst thou hold me with thy promises,
And with the magic music of thy voice?
I *hate* thee—as I hate all living things.
To what new woe hast thou awakened me?
Ah! get thee gone!"
But soft the soothing voice:
"What woe?—nay! thou hast wakened to great
things.
Come! for the twilight creeps upon the sky.
It is the hour of reverie and love,
And rest from weary labor of the day;
When thoughts turn back to home, and the
hand-touch
Of understanding. Come! O Lilith, rise!
Across the distance to the lofty hills,
Where Adam's flocks graze on the new spring
grass,
Like unto breaths of tempests we will speed.
The gift I promised ripeneth for thee,
And waits upon the tree of all the world.
Rise! lave thy body in yon silver pool;

Bind up thy hair, and hang thy head with
flowers—
The scarlet flowers of a slumbrous smell.
Braid jasmine buds to make a necklet fair;
And crush the flesh of lilies 'twixt thy hands
That all thy touch may be perfumed and soft
As every tender breath of summer night."
And lo! the fierceness faded from her eyes—
The yellow, leopard eyes; the pupils grew,
And o'er the baleful, shining glint the lids
In heavy languor drooped. Her mouth relaxed.
She stood no more th' embodiment of hate,
But luring, soulless, and all powerful,—
Of wondrous carnal beauty. Dreamily
She did the Serpent's bidding. As she moved
Each motion showed the litheness of her form,
That swayed and curved in glorious, passionate
grace.
He watched her, and his eyes were glowing
stars;
And presently he broke into a chant
Monotonous and low, yet every note
Full of a music of surpassing charm:
"Eyes like the sea, be treacherous and deep.
Mouth like a flower, be poisonous and sweet.
Hair like the night, be a curtain and a snare.

O fair body, slender as the young tree,
strong as the jungle vine, be cruel and
insatiable as the gift thou bringest—
O quivering hands, rose-colored as the dawn, be
quick to seize and strong to hold as the
talons of the eagle—
O small feet, pale and light as the sea foam, mark
thou the ways of evil by thy seal in the dust!
O Lilith, come! Belovéd of the Stars!"
Her head drooped forward, and her eyelids
closed,
And turning at his bidding helplessly
She followed blindly—hearing, seeing naught.
Once more they sped like thought across the
world:
By the long, high-ridged sea, where monsters
splashed
And roared in fearsome combat on its breast;
By towering trees in silent forest depths,
Where all the birds rose shrieking at their flight;
Past mud-encumbered rivers, where the slime
Lay crawling with its venomous, loathsome breed,
And on to where the hillsides rose again,—
Where on the outskirts of a wood they paused.
Lilith breathed deep and oped her leopard
eyes.

"How sweet the air, ah! it is Eden's breath!"
"Nay," and the Serpent smiled, "it is but Spring.
I leave thee, Lilith; soon shalt thou meet Youth,
Which is that same, that Life of Eve thou knowest.
Forget not now th' injustice of that gift,
Nor who was wife to Adam ere she came."
"Adam!" cried Lilith, and her head tossed back,
And loosened the red flowers in her hair
Till dusky tendrils strayed. "I will—I will—"
And paused all impotent in rage. She turned to him
And shivered—He was gone! and o'er her heart
A strange new loneliness had swiftly swept.
Softly the purple twilight shadows fell,
And overhead the first stars, large and bright,
Shone down serene. The new moon dipped to set.
The perfume-laden silence seemed to speak,
And by its very stillness hold a voice,
Till suddenly a song burst joyfully—
The first spring-song of all the mortal world.
Entranced she stepped from the protecting shades,
And looked toward where the day's huge funeral pyre
Burned crimson in the west. A flock of sheep—

A moving mass of low, gray, woolly backs
And rattling hooves—came slowly into view,
With moist, warm breaths that steamed in the
cool air.
Behind them was a man of Adam's mould—
The happy man as Lilith knew him first,
Not as the weary watcher at the fire
The night that Life was born into the world.
He moved as one wrapt in a pleasant dream,
His eyes uplifted to the quiet stars—
His true voice lilting softly to the swing
Of his swift stride. Lilith stretched forth her
hand.
"Adam," she whispered, "surely it is thou."
Then raised her eyes, and saw his hair was gold!
They stood and gazed—he wondering, overawed,
If this could be a woman that he saw.
She was so like, and yet so far unlike
His own sweet mother Eve. Her eyes were fire.
Her flowing hair was black as night itself.
About her neck and in her tresses hung
Strange flowers. Her body breathed perfume
and warmth,
And gleamed like phosphor in the gathering dusk.
"Why name me as my sire?" he asked at
length,

"For I am Cain, his son; and these great flocks
Are those of Abel, whom my father sent
But yester eve upon a journey far."

"Son," she repeated, "son,—I know it not.
But surely *thou* art not the Life of Eve?"

"Aye, truly I and Abel too, my brother—
For she hath said so many, many times——"

"It cannot be," she murmured all confused—
"Thy brother Abel,—is he weak and small?"
He laughed. "Nay! for his stature is as great
As this of mine. And too his strength is such
That I who am his elder in this Life
Have but a small advantage in our games."

"I understand it not," she faltered low.

"Who art *thou*, then?" he questioned. "Thou art strange,—
All strange and new, and wondrous beautiful.
Thy father and thy mother—who are they?
And whence now hast thou come unto this land?"

"Nay, I know but the Serpent. Long ago
E'en in the Valley Beautiful, was one—"

"Thou too!" he cried with eager, earnest face,
"Thou too didst know the Valley Beautiful?
Ah! when we were but children at the feet
Of our dear mother, often she hath told
Unto my brother Abel and to me

Of all this wondrous Garden,—till she wept.
But thou wilt tell me of it,—for thine eyes
Are surely not for tears. Come home with me,
And thou shalt have good shelter 'neath our roof,
And welcome. For behold, night grows apace."
But back she started quick: "I will not come!
Nor shalt thou dare to mention aught of me
Unto thy father, Adam, or to Eve.
For, if thou dost,—I will not come again."
"Oh! wherefore, wherefore not?" he cried
amazed;
"They sure will question why I tarried late."
"And thou shalt tell them that the sheep had
strayed,
And being Abel's hearkened not thy voice."
"If so, the morrow shall I find thee here?
And wilt thou tell me of the Glorious Place
And why we could not stay? For wondering oft
Yet I nor Abel never dared to ask."
"Yea," answered Lilith, "yea, and I will tell
With whom was all the fault—yea, truthfully!
At this time in the evening will I come.
Go now, nor wait no longer, lest thy sire
Come forth in search of thee." With sudden
thought
She gave a fragrant flower from her crown,

And eagerly his hand shut on the prize,
And crushed the crimson blossom in its grasp.
Then twice he started, and again returned
To where against the masses of the trees
Her tender beauty, faintly luminous,
Shone like a fairy figure in the gloom.
He gazed once more, and from his parted lips
Slipped soft the prayer, "May no harm come to thee,"
And with a low call to his wandering flock
He took his homeward way across the plain.
"Ah!" whispered a familiar, subtle voice,
"Thou hast done well! For see, when Adam feared
He sought some paltry, weak excuse to plead;
But thou hast taught his eldest son to lie!
Hail, to thee, Lilith! Hail!"
But Cain strode on.
Before his downcast eyes the wondrous form
Of the strange woman grew insistently:
All the alluring whiteness of her skin—
The flaming, glorious peril of her eyes—
The darkness of her blossom-wreathéd hair,
That glistened as the very night itself.
Ah! she *was* beautiful as night itself;
More beautiful than Eve—his mother Eve,

Whose hair was as spun sunlight of the spring,
Whose eyes were of the hue of noonday skies:
Once more he sang, but choked, and on his lips
The music failed and died. The thousand tongues
Of evening called to him in novel tones.
The stars shone with a greater glory, and the winds,
That swept across the hills mysterious,
Spoke to his soul, and whispered strange new words,
And sang a wondrous song of happiness
That seemed accorded to his leaping pulse.
He could not understand, nor did he try,
But pondered only whence she came, and why
He had not found her many times before;
For all the world seemed very small to him,
Whose limits were the fields of daily toil.
So musing woke he to his mother's voice,
And found his flocks close by the fold at home.
His mother's question at the second time
Fell clearly to his mind, and lo! the lie
Sprang to his lips, and left them ere he knew:
"Nay, all is well. The sheep knew not my voice
And went astray." He flushed, and then broke out
In further explanations—the black lamb

Had wandered far—the blind ewe fallen faint.
Adam came forth, and too his younger son.
"The sheep knew not his voice," Eve reassured,
And Abel laughing answered, "Aye, indeed,
They love me well and will no other herd."
He uttered a low call, whereat the flock
Came snuffling happily toward where he stood.
"What should a clumsy tiller of the soil,
A furrow-maker, know of creatures' ways.
'Twas even as I told thee, father mine."
But gentle Eve led Cain within the cave,
And placed his food before him carefully;
Where, as he took the milk, he smiled his thanks;
And motherlike she felt herself repaid.
The best of fruit and tenderest of herbs
She spread before, and, seated at his side,
Gazed fondly at her son—her loved first-born,
In whom the miracle of Life had come.
Cain ate but little, and with downcast eyes
Sat staring at the beaten earthen floor.
His weariness had passed,—his hunger gone,
And e'en his home and mother's presence flown,
For clear before his mind the vision rose
Of Lilith—Lilith the mysterious.
"What thinkest thou, my son?" He half arose,
As, starting from his reverie, his hand

Flew to his breast where lay the crimson flower;
And Eve, the tender, watched with questioning
eyes.
"What is it?" she asked softly. "Tell thy mother.
Thou dost not suffer pain? Is aught amiss?"
"Nay, all is well," he laughed, "I nod with sleep."
And turning to the food he ate again.
"It is but the hot winds and the white sun
That have caused sleep to fall, O mother mine."
"Then rest thee, rest thee, Cain, my little son."
She kissed him very gently on the lips,
And held his face between her little palms
To gaze into his eyes. The cave was dim
And she read nothing; yet he turned away,
And quickly for her feared.
With troubled sigh
She rose, and pushed the sunlight of her hair
Back from her forehead with a weary hand,
And, dimly wondering, walked back in the cave.
A silent voice seemed whispering to her soul
And spoke of evil, weakly first, and faint,
But, as her mind turned slowly o'er and o'er
The circle of her thoughts, the warning rang
With clear insistence to her mother-heart,
Until it heard, and throbbed with worried beat.
Some inner instinct cried a fateful change

In this her son, her greatest joy in life.
His deep preoccupation as he ate
Had been so different from his usual self,
For all the happenings of his busy day
It had been generally his wont to tell
To cheer the evening meal. His merry laugh,
As he and Abel mocked in happy jest
Each one the others toil, had often raised
The weight of bitter, penitent regret
That her dear sons by her great sin alone
Should lose their heritage of Paradise.
Never before had he throughout a meal
Sat silent at his food as there this night,
With such a far-off look upon his face
That told of something turning in his mind.
Why had he started so? Why had his hand
Flown to his breast when she had asked his thoughts—
Why had he turned his eyes away from hers
When she had sought to read perchance therein
What brought this change upon him?
Some new thing
Had come that day, something she felt was bad,
Else he had told the reason of his thoughts,
And sought an explanation from his sire.
Aye! something wrong she felt—she *knew* had come

To stain his soul—surely to bring him care.
She even dared to doubt within her heart
His explanation for his tardiness;
For, though her sons had never tried to hide
From her or Adam aught that had occurred,
That same still voice cried in her mother breast
That his excuse was false. She minded now
His flushed, averted face; how like to theirs
When she and Adam hid behind the trees
Nor dared at first reply unto the Lord.
And then in sudden consequence she thought,
With painful gasp of dread, of him the Snake,
And felt his evil touch behind this all.

And so each anxious, trembling moment gave
Its drop, until the bitter flood of fear
Welled fast, to break its bonds and wildly rush
Through all her being, shrinking in its path.
Tears filled her eyes as she crouched motionless,
Weighed by her self-raised burden of despair
That every effort served but to increase.
This suffering was new—a novel fear,
More terrible, more awful than the first,
The bitter dread when once her sin was done,
And they were driven to the outer world.
This was the torture of the mother, wrung
By prescience of a danger to her child—

Danger impalpable, intangible,
Impossible to guess or guard against.
She threw herself upon her face and prayed,
Silently, from unsounded depths of grief;
Nor heeded Abel and her husband when
They came within and took themselves to rest,
But softly laid her woes before the Lord,
In mute petition.
So the night wore on,
And hour on hour crept in darkness by.
The stars swung slowly, a celestial wheel,
And hid their brilliance 'neath the shadowed hills.
Eve heard her husband's breathing, and her son's;
But ah! the breath of Cain caught like a sob.
She softly rose, and stole to where he lay,
And watched him tossing in uneasy sleep,
That led half-uttered words unto his lips
To drop the veil of incoherence there.
She spoke his name, and, as before that day,
His hand sprang sudden to his breast and clutched
The rude-formed garment, as if to conceal
Some treasure from her sight. But still he slept;
And carefully she slipped her palm and felt,
And drew forth something from beneath his grasp.
She moved back where the fire flickered low,
And, dreading what its light would bare to her,

Close to the embers held the crimson thing,—
A blossom fading fast, but deadly sweet,
The like of which she ne'er had seen before;
A flower, red and frail and beautiful,
That fell and lay before her, and the heat
Curled up its petals. Undecidedly
She stood. Should she return this wicked thing—
This strange mysterious flower which she felt
Must be all evil? She looked down at Cain;
And with a shudder cast it on the coals
To watch it shrivel, blacken, and fall dead.
The morning dawned with carolling of birds,
And sparkle of the jewel-bedizened fields;
And yet the world's great joy found no response
In the sad soul of Eve. For anxiously
She watched with pain-filled eyes for the first sign
Of Cain's awakening, and dared not approach
Lest her nocturnal theft should be supposed.
At last he stirred, and sighed and oped his eyes.
She saw his start—his look of deep dismay—
As he discerned his loss. He sprang erect,
And hurriedly began a futile search;
Then turned, and gazed, with quick suspicion, where
His brother's form lay sleeping peacefully.
Eve saw his look, and, lest there should be strife

Between the two, asked falteringly: "My son,
What is it that thou seek'st? Was it—a flower?
A faded crimson flower?" He stood confused,
And his tanned forehead flushed beneath her gaze.
"Alas! I—found it,—thought it of no worth,
And cast it in the fire. I—forgive:
I meant no wrong. But why, oh! why, my son,
Didst cherish this—this plant—this useless thing?"

Resentment surged across the face of Cain,
And made him bold. He answered angrily,
To follow Lilith's teaching without thought:
"I marked an ailing lamb that ate thereof,
And thereby was made well nigh instantly.
Thou hast destroyed it now, and it may be
That we shall find it not, nor know it more."
Eve turned to the cave entrance and stood still,
And gazed through tear-dimmed eyes across the world.

Not only had the tone of deep reproach
Bruised her soft heart, but, too, she felt the lie.
Deceit had dropped its stinging, filmy veil
Across her soul that shuddered at its touch.
She knew herself divided from her son,

Yet feared to tell him so and beg the truth,
And with an effort of her self-control
She held herself, and turned to daily tasks.
In silence she prepared the morning meal;
Heard Abel and her husband as they planned
The ordering of the day, and watched perplexed
The absent gaze upon the face of Cain.
Abel arose, and went forth to his flocks,
Calling them lightly, every one by name;
They answered, bleating low, and followed him.
Adam departed to the forest depths.
Cain bound upon the forehead of the bull
The woven fibre harness, crude but strong,
And went into the fields to till the soil,
And Eve with her new sorrow sat alone.
The sun blazed fiercely as the day advanced.
The fields and hills lay quivering, as the land
Sent up its protest to the brazen sky.
Unceasing, Cain toiled on, and blindly trod
Behind the patient footsteps of his beast;
And turned each furrow half mechanically,
And dreamed, nor watched his feeble tree-branch plow.
The day—the bitter, burning, garish day—
Was but a torment to be scarce endured
Until the coming of the evening's cool.

For, in the drifting, shimmering mirage
Of plain and hill, shone clear and bright to him
The vision of the woman in the dusk—
The savage-leopard eyes, the hair of jet,
The passionate, sensuous, perfume-laden mouth.
    Noon passed. The stealthy, silent, shadows
        grew,
And lengthened purple-blue on the torn earth.
Lower and lower sank the blazing sun,
And sent up thousand brilliant shafts of light
To gild the western sky, and put to shame
The gentle radiance of the tender moon.
    At last, with beating heart and stifled breath,
Cain paused. Sweet winds romped down the
        hills, and brought
Intoxicating perfumes from the blooms
Of unknown flowers, and sang mysteriously.
He coiled the rudely-fashioned harness frame
About the horns of the dumb animal,
And set it free, and homeward toward the byre,
As was his wont, for instinct led it safe.
    Turning he ran, and as he neared the wood
His heart leaped high, and paused,—to race again,
For there a luminous whiteness 'gainst the dark
Fulfilled his hopes, and all creation smiled.
All now was beautiful—the hills, the sky,

The soft, gray dusk of twilight, the sweet breath
Of Nature weary from her day of toil;
The thousand exhalations of the earth,
The balmy air, the sounds, and all throughout
The subtle, blissful joy that it was Spring,
Mysterious in every land and time—
The last of Eden's haunting memories
That comes to the lone exiles of the world.

Again the urge of song swept over Cain;
Words crowded to his lips with glorious ease.
He was impelled to sing in woman's praise;
Her maddening beauty,—"Oh! eyes like the sea!"—
Did he *hear* words, or were they from himself?

"Eyes like the sea, ever-changing and deep,
Mouth like a flower, caressing and sweet,
Hair like the night, a curtain of silence!
O fair, slim body, slender as the young tree,
strong as the jungle vine,
Thou art the most gracious of gifts.
O quivering hands rose-colored as the dawn,
Thou art gentle as twilight.
O small, pale feet, light as the sea foam,
My soul will kiss thy print in the dust!"
He paused abruptly, and his two hands clenched.
A serpent glided swiftly by his side!

No—there was nothing but a broken branch;
And there before him smiling Lilith stood.
"So thou art come at last, O Cain," she said,
And every word seemed as a soft caress.
"Lo! I have waited long. And as for rain
The arid desert thirsteth, even I,
I, Lilith, thirst for thee and all thy youth."
"Lilith," he echoed softly to himself,
Caught by the wondrous music of the name.
"Ah! Lilith, through the night I dreamed of thee,
And all the day thy presence held me close."
"Thou—thou art fair," she whispered, "fair
and strong—
Strong as the lion, aye, and even more.
Thy words are as sweet honey, and thy voice
Sweeps o'er my soul, and maketh glad my
heart."
"Oh, Woman, *thou* art beautiful! Thy lips
Are as a flaming flower, and thine eyes
Are but two stars of midnight; and thy hair
Hath caught my spirit in its wondrous snare.
My blood is weak within me, for the fire
Of thy hot breath hath seared and sapped its
strength.
Whence art thou come, O Joy of all the World,
And whither goest thou?—for there I go."

"Nay, thou wilt not leave all," she lightly
laughed,
"Thy father Adam, and thy mother Eve.
My ways are of the darkness, and my paths
Are strange and weird. I want no sheltering
cave,
No warming fire by my resting place.
But Oh! mine own belovéd, list to me!
The forest is a place most wonderful,
And freedom is the very breath of Life.
I know the beasts—aye! know them in their lairs,
And, too, the creatures of the surging sea.
I know the night and its deep mystery,
The voices of the world in harmony—
The songs of waters, and the tales of trees,
The chants of tempests, and the sighs of winds—
All these, my own, will I unfold to thee!"
"Thy words are wisdom, and thy paths are
fair."
Cain eagerly stretched forth a trembling hand.
"Lead me where'er thou wilt!"
Her fingers closed
And held him with a quick, possessive grasp.
He started at the contact, and the blood
Leaped in his veins with maddened energy.
His vision dimmed—his shaken will dissolved.

They stood together, gazing soul to soul,
Till Lilith felt an alien influence,
And guessed the coming of another man.
A sharp, magnetic thrill swept o'er her nerves
And premonition touched her listening heart,
To waken curious thoughts and longings there.
She did not wish to see—just to enjoy
Unto the full this new experience.
She drooped her head until the glorious hair
Concealed her face, and all her weird desire
Lay concentrated on the Destiny
That neared in the new presence. Then a sound,
An even tread, drew nearer, and the noise
Of tiny, rattling hooves came swiftly close.
She heard the shifting of the flock in fear,
And knew the steps had ceased beside them there,
And stood in breathless ecstasy a space,
Then slowly, very slowly, raised her head.
Her phosphorescent eyes gazed full and long
Into the face of Abel, Pure of Heart.
But his attention centered not on her;
His glance was fixed upon his brother's form,
Who, conscious only of his wondrous prize,
Was unaware of aught but her warm clasp.
Her eyes dropped disappointed, for the flame
That leaped from out them kindled no response.

"Who is this woman?" Cain sprang guiltily.
His face turned crimson with a sudden wrath
At this rude interruption of his dream.
"I know not—neither do I care," he snarled,
When he had gained possession of his speech.
But Lilith gazed at Abel, and her eyes
Shone with their marvel at his graciousness.
For he was lithe of figure, and his face
Glowed bright with an exceeding loveliness.
His blue eyes were the tender ones of Eve;
His locks were clustered in unruly curls—
The soft, brown clusters that graced Adam's
brow,—
And 'neath his tawny skin the blood ran red
As in a ripe pomegranate.
Side by side,
Stood the two brothers, each of youth and
power,
Of symmetry unmarred by slightest fault,
Each perfect in the beauty of his kind,
Yet differing as the Autumn from the Spring.
"Who art thou, woman?" Abel spoke again.
"Who art thou? Answer!"
Lilith moved a step.
"Thou—*thou* art Abel surely—Adam's son,
Of whom thy brother hath but told me now?"

But he drew back, as shrinking from her touch.

"Yea! I am even Abel, Adam's son.
And who art thou?"

"Lilith am I," she cried,
"Lilith the daughter of the glorious night.
Nay, draw not from me—for I wish thee well.
What hast thou then to fear? Thou art not blind,
And surely I am fair to look upon."

He hesitated, glancing quick to Cain.

"Brother, when didst thou find this woman here?"

She interrupted; "Hark, O thou most stern!
Last night I saw him yonder on the hill,
And watched him keep the flock, but until now
Have spoken not to him—now when he went
Upon his way to meet thee with thy sheep.
What have I done that thou shouldst stand aloof
And look upon me as a thing unclean?
I will not have it so. It is unjust!
Aye, more! for who art thou, thou son of sin,
To hold thyself so far superior—
The son of that weak witling, Adam called,
And Eve, the curse—"

But Abel's flashing eyes

Hurled forth defiance as he answered her,
To stem the bitter torrent of her words.
"Now get thee gone, thou woman! Thou art mad
To so misname our gentle mother Eve,
And him our father. Go! lest I forget
And drive thee as a beast before me hence!"
"Thou art too stern," she sighed in seeming grief,
For slyly from the swaying boughs above
A voice crept to her ears, "Beware, beware,
O Lilith, lest thou stumble in thy haste!"
"Thou art too stern. It was but wounded pride
That spake unsummoned through reluctant lips.
I meant it not. Forgive me, for I go.
But, Abel," and her voice grew cold and hard,
"By the Most Righteous One, I charge thee now
That thou speak naught of me unto thy kin,
Lest dire evil should befall ye all.
Nay—threats are needless, for thou hast my trust,
Thou wondrous brother of a wondrous man,
And if thou dost repent thy churlishness,
Remember—at the twilight I am here.
To thee, O Cain, farewell, yet not farewell!"
Lo! she was gone! As if the forest gloom
Had snatched her bodily into its depths.

The brothers stood and wondered—face to face.
"Yea, she is beautiful," the younger mused,
As beautiful as is her mother night.
Yet I do fear her, Cain." He placed his hand
In firm affection on his brother's arm.
"Cain, dost thou too not fear? Something within
Cries loud of awesome danger, and my soul
Is shaken, trembling at I know not what.
All that we dread is pain—pain this is not.
She is too frail to harm us, or to take
Against our joinéd wills aught that we need.
She cannot bring us hunger, cold, or thirst.
What is it, then, I feel? Dost understand?
What it is seems to threaten, and to drive
My spirit into this strange maze of dread?"
Cain shivered: "Nay, I know not, brother mine,
But I too tremble now, and seem to fear
A sorrow—misery such as never known;
As if the world had waxed malevolent,
As if the sun no longer shone with warmth,
As if the winds in anger swirled at me;
As if the beasts fled from my paths in dread,
And my dear father, and my mother too

Disowned me as their son!"

"Come," Abel cried,
"Let us make haste returning to our home.
We will say naught of this, but we will swear
Forevermore to shun and flee from her."
Cain paled. "That will I covenant, O my brother!"
But even as he spake, the poignant sense
Foreboding all his bitter, vain remorse
Passed from him, and his eyes turned once again
Where Lilith but a moment since had stood.
And in his heart he spake a sudden thought:
"Abel will keep this covenant sacredly,
And secretly will I come here alone.
So shall I see the beauty of her form,
And none shall know."

Then calling to his flock
That gathered slowly, seemingly in fear,
Abel spake to them with a soothing voice
Till gaining courage they moved swiftly on.

The brothers walked in silence. In Cain's heart
Resentment grew, and rankled as he mused.
Why had his brother come? Why by his words
Had Abel shattered all his great new joy?
Why had the rainbow glamor passed away

Before that angry voice? And by what art
Had that mean shepherd won his promises
To see Lilith no more? The recent cry
And warning of his spirit was forgot,
And all his fear lost in the depths of scorn.
Was it not Abel with his *talk* of fears
And phantom dangers who had cast that dread
Upon him—him the elder—the first-born?
Suspicion, fostered by his own intent
To break his promise, rose and grew apace.
Was it not Abel's plan to cozen him—
To force a promise from his halting tongue,
That he the younger might bear off the prize?
    So fear gave way to scorn, and reason fled
Before the deep injustice of his thoughts;
Wherein deceit begat unshackled hate,
Till all the world seemed enemy to him.
    The joy of living—joy of strength and youth,
That had but now been magnified tenfold,
Had gone as Lilith vanished in the wood.
The refluent tide of his emotions ebbed
And left but the bare ugliness of all.
His brother's happy smile and careless stride
Became a covert sneer to his red eyes,—
The seed of discord, dropped from Lilith's hand,
Had taken root and sprung to horrid life.

But Abel, notwithstanding outward looks,
Wherewith he sought to cheer his brother's mind,
Was deeply moved. This evening's happenings
Were no light things to be so quick forgot.
Their portent shadowed, huge and menacing.
He could not formulate his sudden fears.
Upon his world, unshaken theretofore
By anything unusual, a new
And bitter order of conditions swept;
An avenue of suffering had been laid,
He felt Cain's evident duplicity,
And the suspicion under which he stood;
And feared to find this unfamiliar strain
Grown too between his father and himself.
Why had he feared this woman? Like in form
Was she unto his well-loved mother, Eve,
And yet—what strange sensation of delight
Had stung like liquid fire in his blood
When her fierce eyes had fastened upon his;
When her quick hand had moved to touch his arm.
What deep, mysterious promise filled her words,
And dwelt within the music of her voice;
And what great power lay behind the trust
That she expressed in him, to hold him yet,
Against the sternest mandates of his will?
So first the awful dread of the unknown

And then the woman's wondrous, evil charm
Swept over his emotions, till they came
From out the fields close to their rough-made
home.
He herded carefully the flock into the fold,
Then followed Cain, who went within the cave.
Their father, Adam, had not yet returned,
And Eve was busy with the evening meal.
The light was dim, and both her weary sons
Were too absorbed in their own anxious thoughts
To note her swollen eyes and anguished mouth.
Once more the mother instinct spoke, and told
That Abel shared the threatening secret now,
And cruel despair swept o'er her quivering form.
She strove to win them in a thousand ways,
With loving, sweet attentions, to herself,
By a renewal of the tender care
That she had lavished in their childhood days.
She strove to reassure herself. Ah! could she be
Convinced of but the falseness of her fears.
But no light shone within her darkened heart
Except that Adam still, despite her faults,
Shared all her joys and woes and kept in touch
With her sad struggling self.
At last he came,
All weary from his tasks, and took his place

Close by her side. She welcomed him and sped
To minister to all his half-named wants
With sacramental fervor, born in pain
Of her new crushing sorrows, and the sense
Of her own weakness. But she dared not speak
Of that which lay the closest to her heart.
She feared his blame—all wrong had come through
her.
Was there yet punishment to be observed—
Still unguessed depths of misery to sound,
And untold terrors yet to face? Her soul
Shrank feebly back from premonition's verge.
Lightheartedness and simple sweet content
Had once been theirs—the gratefulness of rest—
The joy of living—and with labor done
A happy satisfaction of the mind.
Now heaviness of spirit, cruel suspense,
Had seized their place. "Ah! woe!" her heart
cried loud,
"The Lord hath now because of my great sin
Forsaken us entirely, and we fall."

. . . . . .

When Lilith had withdrawn into the woods,
She dropped upon the ferns, and listened there;
She could distinguish voices, not their words.

A raging anger filled her breast and grew.
Why had young Abel looked with unmoved eyes
Upon her beauty, and withdrawn from her?
His scorning she resented, but the more
Desired speech with him. The burning will
To conquer his repugnance placed him far
Before the image of his brother Cain.
His soft, brown hair and sky-blue eyes had snared
The fierce, wild spirit of this woodland thing
And drew her more, perchance, by memory,
Than all the golden locks and fervent gaze
Of Cain.

In the new interest in Youth
She quickly lost her bitterness toward Eve,
And her revengeful hate to Adam. Youth!
How wonderful a thing, and how divine!
"Hail to thee Lilith!" spoke the Serpent's voice,
And dropped from close above. "Hail, once again!
For thou hast set the brothers 'gainst themselves.
Now is the heart of Eve struck yet anew
With dread of thee,—thee whom she knoweth not.
Revenge is sweet, O Lilith, is it not?
Think! Thou hast snatched from Eve both of her sons,

And made them even strangers to themselves.
Thou mayst lead them to hate their mother, too.
See now how they must toil, and suffer pain,
And weariness, and hunger, cold and thirst,
And evils of all manner, knowing not
That it was Eve that brought these things to be.
She sinned and tempted Adam to his fall,
Thereby denying to her unborn sons
Their heritage of great eternal joy.
Thou, Lilith, *thou* can'st tell them all these things,
So shall they know their mother and revile.
"Yet who am I, that I should point a path,
And make a way for thee and for thy hate?
Who was it stole thy Adam? Even Eve!
Was he not quick to change, and to forget
Thy kindness and thy beauty? Was it not
Because of them that thou wast also shut
From out the Valley Beautiful with them?
The great humiliation—that was thine;
The fault was Eve's—the fair and tender Eve's!
As well as I thou knowest all of this—
Better than I thou knowest all thy power!"
His words rose to his angry listener's mind
Like some new bitter-sweet intoxicant,
And poisoned all her soul with deeper hate.

In truth all things seemed wrought in strangest way
To work the maddening wishes of her heart.
She could assuage her curiosity,
And satiate her hate, yet satisfy
Her deep infatuation; making too
The instruments of pleasure arms of hate.
"O Wisest One!" she cried, as she caressed
The reptile, stroking soft his polished head,
"Thou ever wast a marvel. Thou canst read
My wish, though I am blinded by my wrath.
Thou set'st my feet upon the very path
Whereon I long to tread. Now do I see
The wisdom of that patience which withheld
My early vengeance. Oh! I worship thee,
Master of Evil, Lord of All the Night,
I do rejoice in thee. Thou art my strength,
And thee do adore and magnify!"
"Haunt thou this wood at twilight," he replied
"For Cain will surely come unto thee here.
Then such a wealth of evil shalt thou reap
That it may not be reckoned, O Most Fair.
Rest now, Daughter of Night, and have no fear.
No tide-pull draweth in th' uneasy sea
As drawest thou the mind, the soul, of Cain."

But for the Serpent's patience, though, and wit
The heart of Lilith soon had failed indeed.
Day followed day, and twilights grew to nights,
And neither Cain nor Abel neared the wood.
In vain she wandered through the jungle wilds,
To find still fairer flowers of wondrous hue
With wealth of more intoxicating scent
To deck herself for tryst upon the hill.
She sat alone and angry, save indeed
When the soft, velvet voice of Him of Sin
Brought confidence anew, and soothed her wrath.
Then came an evening. She unclosed her eyes
To the sweet sound of music like a dream:
"The moon is at the full. The tide is high.
Awake, O Lilith, for thy hour hath come!"
She sprang quick to her feet, yet was alone.
New exultation swept over her heart
And ran in vicious riot through her veins.
She peered between the branches of the trees.
There on the far horizon lay the moon,
Lay for a moment ere it soared aloft
And hung in beauty 'gainst the dusky sky.
She glanced down at herself,—her lithesome form
That always shone as faintly luminous,

A curious glow amid the clasping dark,—
And now it seemed to her that on this night
It gleamed more vividly, as if white flame
Had clothed her in a quiv'ring radiance.
And as this throbbed and glowed, so waxed and
waned
The joyous sense of power that thrilled her
through.
Aye! what she willed now, even so must be.
First came a longing for the younger man,
But quickly dominating that she willed
A deep, humiliating blow to Eve,
And that would be achievéd best through Cain.
Into his ears then she would pour the Tale.
He could be made to listen and believe.
Not so with Abel. Rightly she divined
His scornful disbelief of what she told,
And deep resentment at the part she played;
She would subdue him later, now 'twas Cain.
"Cain,—Cain!" she cried with breath of great
command,
A fierce compulsion of desire and will,
And with a sense of gratified control
Far in the distance saw his figure pause,
Then hastily stride on.
She laughed aloud,

The white fire rippling over her slim form,
And softly she began a dreamy chant,
And like the Snake unrhythmically sang:
"He cometh, my Belovéd cometh!
How gracious are his glances, how welcome
Are his footsteps on the ground.
The hair of my Belovéd is as fine gold;
His eyes shine as the stars of the morning.
My heart is lifted up.
Yea, I sing as the birds of the air.
Belovéd, I give thee glory without end,
And honor without stint.
Hasten thy steps; I faint for thy presence!"
"Oh! Lilith, Lilith, I am come," cried Cain.
"My covenant is broken, I am here.
I felt thy will of me. It was my will.
Oh! Lilith, let me not depart from thee!"
"Come, come within the shadows. Come,
Mine Own,
Here none may see us in the loving dark;
Neither thy father, brother, nor thy mother Eve,
Whom thou, in truth, hast little cause to love!"
Cain shrank from her, but Lilith held him
firm.
"Oh! fool, fool that thou art," insisted she,
"Thou knowest not, nor dream to understand

Why all the Valley Beautiful is closed,
And none may enter from this outer Place.
Yet, without knowing, thou wouldst worship Eve,
And shower thy contempt and fear on me."

He sank down weakly on the cushioned moss
Where Lilith crouched; and both her eyes shone red.
"Nay, if thou dost not wish to know, O Cain—
If thou wouldst rather keep belief in Eve
Than know the truth—I will not tell it thee."

Cain trembled violently. "Who art thou,
What art thou, Lilith, that I fear thee so?"
"I dreamed a dream that thou didst love," she cried,
"And knowledge would have lent thee for that dream.
Taught thee thou wast made subject unto them
To whom thou owest nothing—less than that,
For they have robbed thee of thine heritage.
For my dream's sake, I would have shown the path
Of freedom; made thee ruler of the wilds,
The forests and the creatures there within,
And of the sea, and too the creatures there;
Made thee my equal in a wondrous might.
Behold! I have been blinded—have been mad,

As when thirst drives the beasts to do strange
things.
I go!"
But Cain lay prostrate at her feet.
"Leave me not, Lilith! Lilith, leave me not!
Nay, I fear thee no more. I know thee kind,
And full of justice. Teach me what thou wilt,
Ope thou mine eyes, and take me as thy slave!"
Relenting, Lilith sank upon the ground
And suffered him to kiss a wandering curl
That strayed from out the glory of her hair.
"Lo!" she went on, "Mine Own, I would
free thee,
Free thee from Adam's yoke and Eve's caress.
I will lift useless duty from thy path,
For naught is ever due to them that prey.
Listen, O my Belovéd, to my words,
And thou shalt meet the scourging, naked truth!"
The risen moon shone wondrous clear and
soft,
And wrapped the world in dreamy silver mist.
The winds of night sang sweetly from the hills.
The voices of the trees, and of the earth,
Of plants, and all the tiny living things,
Chorussed an even and a plaintive song
That rose above the pleading of her tale.

Under her skilful, magic husbandry,
Evil took shape within the heart of Cain,
Hate grew and spread, and over all his soul
There rolled a stinging flood of bitterness
Forgotten was the loving care of Eve,
His father's self-denial, patient toil;
There but remained the galling cognizance
That, through one's fault, the other's feebleness,
They had been driven from his heritage.

As Lilith watched her work in great delight,
She chanted of the Garden's heavenly joy—
Of warmth that burned not in its soft caress,
Of tempered winds with sweetest odors freight,
Of all things in perfection without toil,
And with no weary heaviness of heart;
Of shining rivers—of the draughts therefrom—
Delicious as golden honey and white milk;
Of fragrant flowers in eternal bloom,
Forever budding to a new delight;
Of trees of beauty and such magnitude
That mortal mind despaired to picture them;
Of grass so soft and fresh to weary feet
It was as treading upon finest sand;
A land of peace and plenty, infinite,
Of love unceasing, gladness without end.

So sang she of lost Eden's wondrous bliss,

Her longing lending wings unto the words,
So that they sped with such a graciousness
It was of Eden's self they seemed to spring.
"Thou seest," she concluded, "naught is due
To these thy parents, upon whom the fault.
In ignorance have they kept thee,—and for what?
That they might profit by thy bitter toil.
Arise and come with me. Depart from them,
And let them know that thou no more art blind.
So shall they be confounded, till thou seest
And know'st indeed that these my words are true.
Thou shalt read in averted eyes their guilt,
Nor shall they dare deny the truth of this!"
She glowed with vivid flame that slowly dimmed
To phosphorescence vague, —and then was gone!
Cain staggered to his feet—his world destroyed.
He could not—dared not—doubt what he had heard,
Nor yet could he forgive the glaring wrong.
Blindly he rushed through the enfolding dark,
And vainly searched for Lilith. Nevermore
Did he wish to return into his home,
To see again those faces, once beloved,

But now grown hideous to his haggard eyes.
The silent blackness of the forest mocked;
The creeping fingers of the roots and vines
Reached out and twined about his stumbling feet,
Till panting breathlessly he halted, lost.
    How quiet was the night, how white the moon,
Which peeped between the interlacéd boughs!
And as he stood its heavenly peace slipped down
And stilled the raging madness of his wrath.
Instinct and habit brought his senses back.
As of their will his feet retraced their steps
And led him back along the broken ground;
His hands stretched out before him in the dark
To part the tangled twigs and foliage.
Once more he stood upon the quiet plain,
Wearily walking toward his cave-made home.
    He kept a semblance of his self-control,
But all within his spirit rose and fought,
Nor e'en the glorious beauty of the night
Brought comfort to his fierce, rebellious soul,
Or slow abatement to his bitterness.
His tender mother he had always loved
With adoration, great and passionate,
That brooked no flaw in her; his father too
With admiration full of deep respect.

Now they seemed to him only sinful, weak,
And hiding their responsibility—
The blame for this hard exile in the world—
Behind a coward silence. She was right!
This wondrous woman Lilith, she was right!
He owed no love or toil to such as these
Who owed him reparation. She was right!
He wandered on, and stood before the cave,
And the rough shelter built for Abel's flocks.
He gazed upon the old, familiar place
Grown dear through custom, and through weary toil,
And burning tears welled to his wretched eyes.
He hungered for the lost content and love
That but a short time since had filled his life.
His love was lost, his trust forever gone,
And all was hateful now, E'en Abel too—
His brother who as even he himself
Had been betrayed and made a helpless dupe
To share the wild injustice of the lot
That fell unto their youthful innocence—
E'en Abel too he hated. Abel too
Should know and taste the bitter fruit of truth.
Abel should suffer what he felt himself.
Why should he bear this crushing weight alone?
Nay! Abel too should shoulder half the load!

He wavered at the entrance of the cave,
But could not bring himself to go within
And find his place upon the couch of boughs.
A little distance back he drew, and stopped;
Then flung face downward on the dewy ground,
To bar the softening influence of the night.
Within the cave, Eve lay awake and watched.
She had divined the lie in his excuse
When she had asked his reason as he went,
And in an agony of anxiousness
Had lain awaiting what she feared would come.
Now that he had returned, she dared not speak
Or go to him; she dared not face the woe
She felt—she knew—to be in store for her;
Nor in the cup of trembling dared to look—
The cup she knew would be held to her lips,
Which she must empty to the bitter dregs.
The long night crept, and they two lay awake
And suffered; one within and one without.
When dawn came red as blood upon the sky,
Cain rose, sore spent with pain, and sought his bed.
He wished not to be questioned. In good time
He would reveal his knowledge, new and cruel,
But now he must gain rest. He fell asleep,
And lay exhausted in a heavy doze,

Through which fierce, awful dreams assailed his peace.
Dread visions, where to sweet accord of sound,
Announced by lulling, Lilith too appeared;
And in her hand a symbol he knew not;
A white thing like to ivory of teeth,
A fleshless form though still of human mould,
A thing with eyes in which there was no light—
A thing from which instinctively be shrank.
Yet she besought him—tempted him to take,—
E'en as the Serpent in her recent tale
Had tempted Eve.
He stretched his trembling hand
Out to the hideous gift. His fingers touched
It cold and terrible. He shrieked and woke.

Such was his joy to find himself once more
Within the safe-enclosing, homely walls,
With the familiar faces round about,
That heaviness was lifted from his heart.
The morning with its presence made him glad,
And Eve and Adam, Abel and the flocks,
And too the knowledge of his youth and strength.
The night seemed as a portion of that dream
From which he had but suddenly aroused.

For a brief while again, love and content
Came as of old to crown his wakening;

For one brief while—and then again they fled.
The poison in his soul proclaimed its power,
And without explanation he strode forth
Turning unconsciously out toward the fields.
His mother followed closely, sore distressed.
"Ah! whither goest thou, my son?" she cried,
Her pleading eyes upon his cruel face,
Set in its wrath and turned against the world.
Her hands unclasped, in bitter agony,
Unclasped and clasped.
"What is, it, oh! my son?
My little one, I can bear this no more.
What is it that has grown upon thy soul
And come between thy mother and thyself?"
His anger deepened at the frightened vóice.
"Knowledge!" He turned his head toward where
she stood,
And gazed upon his mother's piteous face
With eyes she knew not—haggard, maddened
eyes.
"Knowledge!" he thundered, "knowledge of
thy sin!
The knowledge that thou and our father too
Have robbed us of our birthright. Thou and he
Have profited from all our weary toil,
The toil of love, that ignorant we gave,

And, giving innocently, wronged ourselves.
Pain, weariness and hunger, cold and thirst
And sickness hast thou brought into the world.
I go! lest through thy evil damnéd self
More woe may come to Abel and to me!"
He flung her clutching hand-clasp from his arm,
And without looking backward strode away.
But scarcely had the curses left his lips
Than all his spirit cried in deep remorse—
Remorse sprung from the bitter, burning words
That he had been unable to restrain.
Remorse of renewed waking to the love
He bore his mother lashed his very soul.
He looked not back, yet saw the stricken face
All white and piteous, the heart-broken eyes,
The outstretched, begging arms, beseeching hands.
His conscience rose and cursed his wickedness.
"Return, return," it cried insistently,
"Fall at her feet and tell her of thy love—
Thy love, and great contrition for that speech.
Recall her kindness and her loving care.
She hath been cold that she might give thee warmth—
She hath been hungry thou that mightest eat;
All through thy childhood she hath sheltered thee,

And guarded thee in feeble helplessness,
Without a thought of self."
But sensitive,
Emotional as he was, the consciousness
Of his great fault pursued, and drove him on.
He ran as if he might outspeed his thoughts,
And leave them far behind him where there lay
The silent, moveless, sobbing form of Eve.
But all his flight stood him in no avail.
That image haunted him, where'er he turned,
Accused him—and within was misery.
He might not fly from it and so be free.
He ran on blindly—on and on and on
Unheeding—till he stumbled, tripped, and fell.
He raised himself from out the dust to look,
And gazed bewildered. Why had he run here?
It surely was the Heaven's own command,
And he must pray and seek forgiveness here.
Before him rose a cliff, with rugged arms
Thrown forward massively to right and left.
Below him sloped the valley. Trees grew close,
And tall and straight to such a dizzy height
They seemed to reach and touch the fleecy clouds;
And all their beckoning branches whispered soft
And lured the choral of the winds to song.
An altar, rough and crude in rugged form,

Stood at the mountain base; where he was wont,
And Abel too, to bring his offerings
When far afield with labors or the flocks.
Here Abel always loosed the first-born lamb
Unto the mercy of the silent hills;
Here from the hard-won harvest crop Cain laid
In solemn consecration the first fruits.
To this lone spot the brothers always came
To share communion with the Lord of All;
For they were taught to do Him reverence,
And lay their adoration at His feet.
    In childlike wonder often they had talked
Of this strange Power ever present there,
That watched, protecting, every mortal act,
And swayed the sweeping Heavens at His will;
Of hovering angels, and the seraphim,
All clothed in light and armed with brilliant
        flame,
That chanted everlasting praise to Him,
And lived but for the working of His wish.
A thousand times had they stood silent there,
Both hand in hand before the altar-stone,
To watch the wondrous fire consecrate
The offered token of the field's increase.
Upraised in spirit had they made their prayers,
And unafraid in heart and perfect faith.

Each stone, each tree, and each familiar thing
Spoke of those sacred, dedicated hours—
The calm of holy vigils, and the grace
Of vowed devotion.
Here then Cain had come,
Fresh from his sin, without the smallest gift,
Led by the bitter anguish of his heart,
And the unconscious instinct of his grief.
He neared the altar slowly and knelt down.
Across it lay his arm, his head bent low,
And all the woe of his poor, passionate soul
Poured forth in mute petition, for his mind
Was too perturbed to frame his prayer in words.
He could but feel the refuge he had found,
And offer silent thanks for the relief.
Forgiveness and the Lord's sweet grace would come.
The sun rose high and higher in the heavens.
The amphitheatre glowed with heat and light.
The huge trees stood as grave as watching spirits,
And silent, for the sighing wind had died.
The hard-baked earth flashed countless, diamond gleams,
That glittered bright against the setting's brown;
And Cain's bowed form was wrapped in radiance—
The quivering, brooding light of summer noon.

Noon passed. The stealthy, sombre shadows
grew,
And crept from out beneath each stone and tree.
They crossed the rim of hills, and silently
Changed to the other towering wall of cliffs.
The figure resting on the altar front,
Enveloped slowly in their cooing shades,
As though a benediction, felt their touch.
Then with the breath of evening came the
thought
That he must find some gift, some humble pledge
Of his repentance, and receive a sign
Of His dear mercy from the Lord above.
The fields were now new-sown; there was as yet
No fruit of his own laboring to give,
But meagre as his sacrifice might be
He felt the spirit of his true remorse
Would lend it value to th' All-seeing Eye.
Down on the plain below the flowers bloomed,
Sweet symbols of his newly found desire,
And, quickly rising, down the slope he ran
To where a tiny stream flowed through the fields.
There on the bank he found some blossoms pale,
With tender, blowing leaves and earthy smell,
And with a childlike faith he gathered them,
And turned again with almost joyful heart.

With deepest reverence, his eyes bent low,
He neared the altar-stone.
But sudden steps
Broke in upon his thoughts with jarring sound,
And turned his mind back to the outer world.
He guessed who came, and guessing woke again
The dying hate within his breast. The wrong,
The great injustice of his parents' sin
That punished him as well, though innocent,
Swelled back a bitter flood across his soul.
The wondrous woman Lilith grew again
A beauteous vision to his longing eyes,
And all that he had but just now forgot
In his desire and penitent remorse
Leaped to new life with doubled energy.
As Abel's footsteps neared upon the path,
His meek contrition failed; he could not pray.
Wild thoughts ran riot through his turgid brain.
He had been followed; Abel had come here
That he might reprimand his brother's acts—
That he might flaunt a spotless righteousness—
That he might mock his brother's humble gift,
And jeer, as he bestowed his firstling lamb.
It had been *Abel* who had raised this cloud
That hung above him now, for it was he
Who broke upon the joy of Lilith's love,

And dimmed the world of bliss by his swift
frown;
Abel, who posed as purest of them all,
Yet by his tricky words had frightened him
To make a foolish covenant. Now he came
To preach and rant of sin and evil deeds,
As if he were the Lord himself come down.
Cain quickly turned to where the altar stood,
And laid his offering down, but now, alas!
The giver's soul no longer was contrite.
He quite had ceased to wish forgiveness,
And but completed what he had begun
From habit long instilled. Then he moved back
Behind a massive boulder's covering shade,
That he might watch his brother as he came.
The steps drew close and, wrapt in anxious
thought,
Around the corner Abel slowly walked;
And in his arms he held a bleating lamb.
Cain's presence was unknown to him, nor yet
Did he perceive the flowers on the Stone,
Which lent an added madness to the wrath
That swirled like molten fire through the brain
Of him who watched. This blindness seemed to
be
Assumed, and but a cloak of lofty scorn;

And on the face of Cain a bestial snarl
Rolled back the lips.
The lamb has ceased its cries,
And stillness brooded o'er the sunset hour,
Save when a whispering murmur through the trees
Told of a breeze that bade the world good-night.
A peaceful calm wrapped all the earth. It seemed
As though some mighty hand had softly touched
All nature and commanded strife be done.
Yet in the breast of Cain a tempest raged
That blinded all the beauty of the night.
The praying shepherd knelt, and freed the lamb.
He did not even wonder at its way,
So sure was he of his own simple prayer;
And as the beast stood still a tiny space
He dropped his face into his lifted hands.
The watcher held his breath in deep suspense.
The lamb sniffed, trembled, and then trotted off
As if familiar with the mountain paths
And lost itself to sight among the hills:
This was the sign it was acceptable.
Cain's angry heart stood still with jealousy;
And, as he gazed, a puff of wanton wind
Sang for a moment in the sighing trees,

And, dropping, whirled across the altar space.
It caught the flowers lying on the Stone,
And swept them crushed and broken to the ground.
His gift had not been even left to lie
Unnoticed on the sacrificial place;
It was disdained—cast out before his eyes.
In wild rebellion all his spirit rose
And cried the great injustice to his ear.
The snow-white soul of Abel then was pure
Because to him had nothing been revealed.
Ignorance then was virtue, as it seemed.
His vicious laugh re-echoed from the cliffs.
The praying shepherd started at the sound,
And recognition sprang into his eyes,
While gladness shone therein as though a light.
The aura of his prayer enveloped him
So that he questioned not Cain's presence there.
"Thou too hast come to worship," said he soft,
"To beg the dissolution of this mist,
This dark misunderstanding round our home.
Behold! the best of all my tender flock
Hath been accepted as an offering;
And surely this new burden shall be raised."
But each word seemed a bitter taunt to Cain.

That Abel should have been entirely blind
Unto his presence and the offering
That had been scattered by the ruthless breeze,
Seemed quite impossible. With clenching hands
And face distorted by its rage, he came.
"Fool, fool," he cried, "and darest thou mock
at me?"
His brother, startled, gazed with wondering eyes,
But with the fury of his wrath Cain rushed,
And burning words poured from his fevered lips,
And revelations fierce and cruel burst forth.
Abel stood fast, and rigid as a stone;
But, as the import of the maddened speech
Reached to his brain, his loyalty arose.
"Where didst thou hear this—this untruth?"
he asked,
His voice grown sharp and hard. But quickly
knew,
For intuition spake ere Cain had time.
"The woman—the strange woman! It was she!
Thou hast then listened to her evil words,
And broken, too, thy covenant with me.
And now because of her thou darest to thrust
Eve our dear mother from thy traitor heart.
I tell thee, get thee gone—evil thou art,
As evil is the Serpent in thy tale!

On Lilith will I wreak my avenging will.
Her will I bind with cords and cast far off
Lest she should poison more our daily life,
And harm us with her venom. In the dust
She shall be humbled low, O Cain!"
"I shall be humbled, Abel, sayest thou?"
The velvet voice of Lilith sneered reply.
She stood far off upon the forest's edge,
And yet her words crept like a whisper there.
Cain stepped before with instinct to protect,
And Abel turned; revenge gleamed in his eyes.
Again the distant mocking voice like thought:
"I shall be humbled low, e'en to the dust?
Were these thy words—were these thy words to me,
O Abel, son of Adam? Dost deny
It was to meet me that thou camest here?
Wilt thou deny? Now hark to me, O Cain:
Thy brother has deceived thee—aye! and sought
To make me break my covenant with thee.
Yet 'She is evil' hath he said to thee,
'Behold, my brother, truth is not in her'!"
Astounded Abel heard the brazen lie,
Nor sought to answer her amazing charge,
Whose great untruth left him too stunned to meet

The utter falseness of her speech with words.
Then something snapped within the brain of Cain
As he stood waiting Abel's slow reply—
Something that, loos'ning o'er his breathless soul
A strange, unnatural rage, swept sense away.
For but a moment they stood facing thus,
Then with a sudden, crushing, demon might
His clutching hands closed on his brother's throat.
There was a blind mad struggle—short and fierce—
A crash—a cry of savage mastery—
The impact of a jagged, pitiless stone
Upon the yielding flesh—and Cain arose,
Blood-dabbled, reeling, crazy-drunk with fight.
The mountains trembled, and the wide plain shook,
And through the air there rang a soundless cry.
Great fear and horror leered from out the wood,
Where Lilith flamed in wondrous silhouette;
And, in the vibrant voice of Silence, shrieked
All Nature of her terror to the skies.
Death had come to the world! And Murder stood
Red-handed on the quiv'ring, shrinking earth!
Cain gazed upon the body on the ground.

As yet no comprehension touched his mind.
He stood, numbed by the madness of his rage
To all save that he was the conqueror.
Then as his senses cleared again, began
To feel that some great dreadful change had come;
That this relaxed inertia could not be
Alike to simple sleep.
A deep uneasiness
Spread over him and weighed him to the ground.
The hand he lifted fell back dull and limp.
A red stain grew beneath his brother's head
And gathered in a sluggish little pool
The which the earth received reluctantly.
He called the name of Abel, but the sound
Of his own voice filled him with strangest dread;
And, as his great anxiety grew fast,
With breathless eagerness, then mad with fear,
He strove in vain to wake the quiet dead.
Then to his ears the voice of Lilith came.
He raised his eyes; she stood beside him close.
Her head was thrown erect, her lips apart,
Each muscle fibre tense with ecstasy,
Her eyes grown filmy in her fiendish joy.
A savage song of battle wildly broke
And swept a fierce sirrocco through the air—
Full of the lust of blood, the joy of fight,

And in her voice the music of all war,
That countless generations grew to know.
"Kill! Kill! Kill!
The blood of the victim is sweet to my nostrils,
His cry is as song to my ears.
Earth drinketh his blood and is glad.
So doth my spirit taste of death and rejoice!
Kill! Kill! Kill!
The winds of the night shall re-echo his shrieking,
The glory of day shall be dimmed at my bidding!
Slay! Slay! Slay!
This is my gift that shall overcome Life,
This is my gift that is greater than Eve's!
Thou art the conqueror, O my Belovéd!
Thine was the strength, the might, and the glory!
Blindly I follow the bidding of evil!
Now am I given reward in its fullness!
Slay! Slay! Slay!
O Cain my Belovéd"
The frenzied chant rang to his spell-bound ears.
He listened, numbly, till the dead limp hand
Of Abel woke him by its new-born chill.
He felt the fingers stiffen in his clasp,
And looked down shuddering at his brother's form.
Across the eyes the glaze of death had spread,

And caught the fading light with brittle gleam.
Then suddenly he knew, and realized
That Abel never more would rise, and saw
With bright prevision all the hideous facts
Of coming dissolution. With a cry
He sprang fear-stricken to his feet and fled—
A cursed and branded outcast to the night!
But Lilith gave no heed unto his flight.
Rigid in ecstasy she stood above
The prostrate, blood-stained body of the youth.
Her slim form glowed, and, as the twilight grew,
Flamed with a vehement brilliance through the dark,
As silent o'er her fallen prey she watched—
The wild, triumphant minister of Death.

The blue night deepened fast and covered all.
The stars shone cold and distant, and the moon
Waned swiftly in the black of west, and set.
A chill wind rose, and, sobbing through the trees,
Wailed solemn, dismal dirges for the dead.

A woman stumbled o'er the rugged ground,
Groping and bent; her faltering steps now slow,
Now breaking into fevered, frenzied haste.
About her struggling limbs her gold hair fell,
A ragged mantle, wind-blown, wet with tears,
A tangled mass, unkempt with leaves and twigs.

And in the woman's brain there rang a voice,
Distinct, yet distant; dimly heard, but clear—
"Thy son, O Eve, is dead! Thy Abel dead!
For Cain with his own hand hath struck him down.
And I—I, Lilith—Daughter of the Night,
Thy Adam's once-beloved, have compassed this.
This miracle is mine, the birth of Death!
I taunt thee, Eve, for vengeance now is mine!"

. . . . . .

When dawn swept slowly o'er the silent world,
It found upon the bosom of the plain
A weeping woman, clasping to her breast
The lifeless body of her murdered son.