

GAUTIER
THÉOPHILE

ENAMELS AND
CAMEOS AND
OTHER POEMS

Théophile Gautier

**Enamels and Cameos
and other Poems**

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THE GOD AND THE OPAL

TO THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Gray caught he from the cloud, and green from earth,
And from a human breast the fire he drew,
And life and death were blended in one dew.
A sunbeam golden with the morning's mirth,
A wan, salt phantom from the sea, a girth
Of silver from the moon, shot colour through
The soul invisible, until it grew

To fulness, and the Opal Song had birth.
And then the god became the artisan.
With rarest skill he made his gem to glow,
Carving and shaping it to beauty such
That down the cycles it shall gleam to man,
And evermore man's wonderment shall know
The perfect finish, the immortal touch.

Agnes Lee.

PREFACE

When empires lay riven apart,
Fared Goethe at battle time's thunder
To fragrant oases of art,
To weave his *Divan* into wonder.

Leaving Shakespeare, he pondered the note
Of Nisami, and heard in his leisure
The hoopoe's weird monody float,
And set it to soft Orient measure.

As Goethe at Weimar delayed
And dreamed in the fair garden closes,
And, questing in sun or in shade,
With Hafiz plucked redolent roses, —

I, closed from the tempest that shook
My window with fury impassioned,
Sat dreaming, and, safe in my nook,
Enamels and Cameos fashioned.

AFFINITY – A PANTHEISTIC MADRIGAL

On an ancient temple gleaming,
Two great blocks of marble high
Thrice a thousand years lay dreaming
Dreams against an Attic sky.

Set within one silver whiteness,
Two wave-tears for Venus shed,
Two fair pearls of orient brightness,
Through the waste of water sped.

In the Generalife's fresh closes,
By a Moorish light illumed,
Two delicious, tender roses
By a fountain met and bloomed.

In the balm of May's bright weather,
Where the domes of Venice rise,
Lighted on Love's nest together
Two pale doves from azure skies.

All things vanish into wonder,
Marble, pearl, dove, rose on tree,
Pearl shall melt and marble sunder,
Flower shall fade and bird shall flee!

Not a smallest part but lowly
Through the crucible must pass,
Where all shapes are molten slowly
In the universal mass.

Then as gradual Time discloses
Marbles melt to whitest skin,
Roses red to lips of roses,
And anew the lives begin.

And again the doves are plighted
In the hearts of lovers, while
Ocean pearls are reunited,
Set within a coral smile.

Thus affinity comes welling;
By its beauty everywhere
Soul a sister-soul foretelling,
All awakened and aware.

Quickened by a zephyr sunny,
Or a perfume, subtlewise,
As the bee unto the honey,
Atom unto atom flies.

And remembered are the hours
In the temple, down the blue,
And the talks amid the flowers,
Near the fount of crystal dew,

Kisses warm, and on the royal
Golden domes the wings that beat;
For the atoms all are loyal,
And again must love and greet.

Love forgotten wakes imperious,
For the past is never dead,
And the rose with joy delirious
Breathes again from lips of red.

Marble on the flesh of maiden
Feels its own white bloom, and faint
Knows the dove a murmur laden
With the echo of its plaint,

Till resistance giveth over,
And the barriers fall undone,
And the stranger is the lover,
And affinity hath won!

You before whose face I tremble,
Say – what past we know not of
Called our fates to reassemble, —
Pearl or marble, rose or dove?

THE POEM OF WOMAN MARBLE OF PAROS

Unto the dreamer once whose heart she had,
As she was showing forth her treasures rare,
Minded she was to read a poem fair,
The poem of her form with beauty glad.

First stately and superb she swept before
His gazing eyes, with high, Infanta mien,
Trailing behind her all the splendid sheen
Of nacarat floods of velvet that she wore.

Thus at the opera had he watched her bend
From out her box, her body one bright flame,
When all the air was ringing with her name,
And every song made her fair praise ascend.

Then had her art another way, for look!
The weighty velvet dropped, and in its place
A pale and cloudy fabric proved the grace
Of every line her glowing body took;

Till softly from her shoulder marble-sweet
The veil diaphanous fell, the folds whereof
Came fluttering downward like a snowy dove,
To nestle in the wonder of her feet.

She posed as for Apelles pridefully,
A lovely flesh and marble womanhood: —
Anadyomene, she upright stood
Naked upon the margent of the sea.

Fairer than any foam-drops crystalline,
Great pearls of Venice lay upon her breast,
Jewels of milky wonder lightly pressed
Upon the cool, fresh satin of her skin.

Exhaustless as the waves that kiss the brim,
Under the gleaming moon of many moods,
Were all the strophes of her attitudes.
What fascination sang her beauty's hymn!

But soon, grown weary of an art antique,
Of Phidias and of Venus, lo! again
Within another new and plastic strain
She grouped her charms unveiled and unique.

Upon a cashmere opulently spread,
Sultana of Seraglio then she lay,
Laughing unto her little mirror gay,
That laughed again with lips of coral red;

The indolent, soft Georgian, posturing
With her long, supple narghile at lip,
Showing the glorious fashion of her hip,
One foot upon the other languishing.

And, like to Ingres' Odalisque, supine,
Defying prurient modesty turned she,
Displaying in her beauty candidly
Wonder of curve and purity of line.

But hence, thou idle Odalisque! for life
Hath now its own fair picture to display —
The diamond in its rare effulgent ray, —
Beauty in Love hath reached its blossom rife.

She sways her body, bendeth back her head.
Her breathing comes more subtle and more fast.
Rocked in her dream's alluring arms, at last
Down hath she fallen upon her costly bed.

Her eyelids beat like fluttering pinions lit
Upon the darkened silver of her eyes.
Her bright, voluptuous glances upward rise
Into the vague and nacreous infinite.

Deck her with sweet, lush violets, instead
Of death-flowers with their every pearl a tear;
Scatter their purple clusters on her bier,
Who of her being's ecstasy lies dead.

And bear her very gently to her tomb —
Her bed of white. There let the poet stay,
Long hours upon his bended knees to pray,
When night shall close around the funeral room.

A STUDY OF HANDS

I

IMPERIA

A sculptor showed to me one day
A hand, a Cleopatra's lure,
Or an Aspasia's, cast in clay,
Of masterwork a fragment pure.

Seized in a snowy kiss, and fair
As lily in the argent rise
Of dawn, like whitest poem there
Its beauty lay before mine eyes,

Bright in its pallor lustreless,
Reposing on a velvet bed,
Its fingers, weighted with their dress
Of jewels, delicately spread.

A little parted lay the thumb,
Showing the undulating line,
Beautiful, graceful, subtlesome,
Of its proud contour Florentine.

Strange hand! I wonder if it toyed
In silken locks of Don Juan,
Or on a gem-bright caftan joyed
To stroke the beard of some soldan;

Whether, as courtesan or queen,
Within its fingers fair and slight
Was pleasure's gilded sceptre seen,
Or sceptre of a royal might!

But sweet and firm it must have lain
Full oft its touch of power rare
Upon the curling lion-mane
Of some chimera caught in air.

Imperial, idle fantasy,
And love of soft, luxurious things,
Frenzies of passion, wondrous, free,

Impossible dream-flutterings!

Romances wild, and poesy
Of hasheech and of wine, vain speeds
Beneath Bohemia's brilliant sky
On unrestrained and maddened steeds!

All these were in the lines of it,
Of that white book with magic scrolled,
Where ciphers stood, by Venus writ,
That Love had trembled to behold.

II

LACENAIRE

Strange contrast was the severed hand
Of Lacenaire, the murderer dead,
Soaked in a powerful essence, and
Near by upon a cushion spread.

Letting a morbid fancy win,
I touched, despite my loathing sane,
The cold, hair-covered, slimy skin,
Not yet washed clean of deathly stain.

Yellow, uncanny, mummified,
Like to a Pharaoh's hand it lay,
And stretched its faun-shaped fingers wide,
Crisp with temptation's awful play;

As though an itch for flesh and gold
Lured them to horrors yet to be,
Twisting them roughly as of old,
Teasing their immobility.

There every vice and passion's whim
Had seamed the flesh abundantly
With hideous hieroglyphs and grim,
That headsmen read with fluency.

There plainly writ in furrows fell,
I saw the deeds of sin and soil,
Scorchings from every fiery hell
Wherein corruptions seethe and boil.

There was a track of Capri's vice,
Of lupanars and gaming-scores,
Fretted with wine and blood and dice,
Like ennui of old emperors.

Supple and fierce, it had some dower
Of grace unto the searching eye,
Some brutal fascination's power,
A gladiator's mastery.

Cold aristocracy of crime!
No plane inured, no hammer spent
The hand whose task for every time
Had but the knife for implement.

The hand of Lacenaire! No clue
Therein to labour's honest pride!
False poet, and assassin true,
The Manfred of the gutter died!

Romances wild, and poesy
Of hasheech and of wine, vain speeds
Beneath Bohemia's brilliant sky
On unrestrained and maddened steeds!

VARIATIONS ON THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

I

ON THE STREET

There is a popular old air
That every fiddler loves to scrape.
'T is wrung from organs everywhere,
To barking dog with wrath agape.

The music-box has registered
Its phrases garbled and reviled.
'T is classic to the household bird;
Grandmother learned it as a child.

The trumpet and the clarinet,
In dusty gardens of the dance,
Blow it to clerk and gay grisette,
In shrill, unlovely resonance.

And of a Sunday swarm the folk
Under the honeysuckle vine,
Quaffing, the while they talk and smoke,
The sun, the melody, the wine.

It lurks within the wry bassoon
The blind man plays, the porch beneath.
His poodle whimpers low the tune,
And holds the cup between its teeth.

The players of the light guitar,
Decked with their flimsy tartans, pale,
With voices sad, where feasters are,
Through coffee-houses fling its wail.

Great Paganini at a sign,
One night, as with a needle's gleam,
Picked up with end of bow divine
The little antiquated theme,

And, threading it with fingers deft,
He broidered it with colours bright,
Till up and down the faded weft

Ran golden arabesques of light.

II

ON THE LAGOONS

Tra la, tra la, la, la, la, – who
Knows not the theme's soft spell?
Or sad or light or mock or true,
Our mothers loved it well.

The Carnival of Venice! Long
Adown canals it came,
Till, wafted on a zephyr's song,
The ballet kept its fame.

I seem, whene'er its phrase I hear,
A gondola to view,
With prow voluted, black and clear,
Slip o'er the water blue;

To see, her bosom covered o'er
With pearls, her body suave,
The Adriatic Venus soar
On sound's chromatic wave.

The domes that on the water dwell
Pursue the melody
In clear-drawn cadences, and swell
Like breasts of love that sigh.

My chains around a pillar cast,
I land before a fair
And rosy-pale facade at last,
Upon a marble stair.

Oh! all dear Venice with her towers,
Her boats, her masquers boon,
Her sweet chagrins, her mad, gay hours,
Throbs in that ancient tune.

The tenuous, vibrant chords that smite,
Rebuild in subtle way
The city joyous, free and light
Of Canaletto's day!

III

CARNIVAL

Venice robes her for the ball;
Decked with spangles bright,
Multi-coloured Carnival
Teems with laughter light.

Harlequin with negro mask,
Tights of serpent hue,
Beateth with a note fantasque
His Cassander true.

Flapping loose his long, white sleeve,
Like a penguin spread,
Through a subtle semibreve
Pierrot thrusts his head.

Sleek Bologna's doctor goes
Maundering on a bass.
Punchinello finds for nose
Quaver on his face.

Hurling Trivellino fine,
On a trill intent,
Scaramouch to Columbine
Gives the fan she lent.

Gliding to the tune, I mark
One veiled figure rise,
While through satin lashes dark
Luring gleam her eyes.

Tender little edge of lace,
Heaving with her breath!
"Under is her own dear face!"
An arpeggio saith.

And beneath the mask I know
Bloom of rosy lips,
And the patch on chin of snow,
As she by me trips!

IV

MOONLIGHT

Amid the chatter gay and mad
Saint Mark to Lido wafts, a tune
Like as a rocket riseth glad
As fountain riseth to the moon.

But in that air with laughter stirred,
That shakes its bells far out to sea,
Regret, a little stifled bird,
Mingles its frail sob audibly.

And in a mist of memory clad,
Like dream well-nigh effaced, I view
The sweet Beloved, fair and sad,
Of dear, long-vanished days I knew.

Ah, pale she is! My soul in tears
An April day remembers yet: —
We sought the violets by the meres,
And in the grass our fingers met..

The vibrant note of violin
Is the child voice that struck my heart,
Exquisite, plaintive, argentine,
With all the anguish of its dart.

So sweetly, falsely, doth it steal,
So cruel, yet so tender, too,
So cold, so burning, that I feel
A deadly pleasure pierce me through;

Until my heart, an archway deep
Whose waters feed the fountain's lip,
Lets tears of blood in silence weep
Into my bosom drip by drip.

O Carnival of Venice! – theme
So chilling sad, yet ever warm!
Where laughter toucheth tears supreme, —
How hast thou hurt me with thy charm!

SYMPHONY IN WHITE MAJOR

In the Northern tales of old,
From the Rhine's escarpments high
Swan-women radiant were beheld,
Singing and floating by,

Or, leaving their plumage bright
On a bough that was bending low,
Displaying skin more gleaming white
Than the white of their down of snow.

At times one comes our way, —
Of all she is pallidest,
White as the moonbeam's shivering ray
On a glacier's icy crest.

Her boreal bloom doth win
Our eyes to feasting rare
On rich delight of nacreous skin,
And a wealth of whiteness fair.

Her rounded breasts, pale globes
Of snow, wage insolent war
With her camellias and her robes
Of whiteness nebular.

In such white wars supreme
She wins, and weft and flower
Leave their revenge's right, and seem
Yellowed with envy's hour.

On the white of her shoulder bare,
Whose marble Paros lends,
As through the Polar twilight fair,
Invisible frost descends.

What beaming virgin snow,
What pith a reed within,
What Host, what taper, did bestow
The white of her matchless skin?

Was she made of a milky drop
On the blue of a winter heaven?
The lily-blow on the stem's green top?
The foam of the sea at even?

Of the marble still and cold,
Wherein the great gods dwell?
Of creamy opal gems that hold
Faint fires of mystic spell?

Or the organ's ivory keys?
Her wingèd fingers oft
Like butterflies flit over these,
With kisses pending soft.

Of the ermine's stainless fold,
Whose white, warm touches fall
On shivering shoulders and on bold,
Bright shields armorial?

Of the phantom flowers of frost
Enscrolled on the window clear?
Of the fountain drop in the chill air lost,
An Undine's frozen tear?

Of May bent low with the sweets
Of her bountiful white-thorn bloom?
Of alabaster that repeats
The pallor of grief and gloom?

Of the feathers of doves that slip
And snow on the gable steep?
Of slow stalactite's tear-white drip
In cavernous places deep?

Came she from Greenland floes
With Seraphita forth?
Is she Madonna of the Snows?
A sphinx of the icy North,

Sphinx buried by avalanche,
The glacier's guardian ghost,
Whose frozen secrets hide and blanch
In her white heart innermost?

What magic of what far name
Shall this pale soul ignite?
Ah! who shall flush with rose's flame
This cold, implacable white?

COQUETRY IN DEATH

I beg ye grant, when low I lie,
Before ye close my coffin-bed,
A little black beneath mine eye,
And on my cheek a touch of red!

Ah, make me beautiful as now!
For I would be upon my bier,
As on the night of his avow
Charming and bloomful, gay and dear.

For me no linen winding-sheet!
But gown me very grand and bright.
Bring forth my frock of muslin sweet,
With many ruffles soft and white.

My favourite frock! I wore it well,
Who wore it at love's flowering.
And since his look upon it fell,
I've kept it as a sacred thing.

For me no funeral coronet,
No tear-embroidered cushion place;
But o'er my fair lace pillow let
My hair droop free about my face.

Dear pillow! Often did it mark,
In mad, sweet nights our brows unlit,
And, all within the gondola dark,
Did count our kisses infinite.

About my waxen hands supine,
Folded in prayer at life's deep gloam,
My rosary of opals twine,
Blessed by His Holiness at Rome.

I'll finger it, when bedded cold
Where never one shall rise. How oft
His lips upon my lips have told
A *Pater* and an *Ave* soft!

HEART'S DIAMOND

Every lover deep hath set
In a sacred nook apart
Some dear token for the heart
In its hope or its regret.

One hath nested safe away
Blackest ringlet ever seen,
Over which an azure sheen
Lieth, as on wing of jay.

One from shoulder pale as milk
Took a tress more golden-fine
Than the threads that softly shine
In the silk-worm's wonder-silk.

In its hiding mystical,
Memory's reliquary sweet,
Glances of another greet
Gloves with fingers white and small.

And another yet may list
To inhale a faint perfume
Of the violets from her room,
Freshly given – faded, kissed.

Here a slipper's curving grace
One with sighing treasureth.
There another guards a breath
In a mask's light edge of lace.

I've no slipper to revere,
Neither glove nor tress nor flower;
But I cherish for love's dower
A divine, adorèd tear, —

Fallen from the blue above,
Clearest dew, heaven's drop for me,
Pearl dissolved secretly
In the chalice of my love.

To mine eyes the dim-worn dew
Beams, a gem of Orient worth,
Standing from the parchment forth,
Diamond of a sapphire blue, —

Steadfast, lustreful and deep!
Tear that fell unhopèd, unsought,
On a song my soul once wrought,
From an eye unused to weep.

SPRING'S FIRST SMILE

While up and down the earth men pant and plod,
March, laughing at the showers and days unsteady,
And whispering secret orders to the sod,
For Spring makes ready.

And slyly when the world is sleeping yet,
He smooths out collars for the Easter daisies,
And fashions golden buttercups to set
In woodland mazes.

Coif-maker fine, he worketh well his plan.
Orchard and vineyard for his touch are prouder.
From a white swan he hath a down to fan
The trees with powder.

While Nature still upon her couch doth lean,
Stealthily hies he to the garden closes,
And laces in their bodices of green
Pale buds of roses.

Composing his solfeggios in the shade,
He whistles them to blackbirds as he treadeth,
And violets in the wood, and in the glade
Snowdrops, he spreadeth.

Where for the restless stag the fountain wells,
His hidden hand glides soft amid the cresses,
And scatters lily-of-the-valley bells,
In silver dresses.

He sinks the sweet, vermilion strawberries
Deep in the grasses for thy roving fingers,
And garlands leaflets for thy forehead's ease,
When sunshine lingers.

When, labour done, he must away, turns he
On April's threshold from his fair creating,
And calleth unto Spring: "Come, Spring – for see,
The woods are waiting!"

CONTRALTO

There lies within a great museum's hall,
Upon a snowy bed of carven stone,
A statue ever strange and mystical,
With some fair fascination all its own.

And is it youth or is it maiden sweet,
A goddess or a god come down to sway?
Love fearful, hesitating, turns his feet,
Nor any word's avowal will betray.

Sideways it lieth, with averted face,
Stretching its lovely limbs, half mischievous,
Unto the curious crowd, an idle grace
Lighting its marble form luxurious.

For fashioning of its evil beauty brought
The sexes twain each one its magic dower.
Man whispers "Aphrodite!" in his thought,
And woman "Eros!" wondering at its power.

Uncertain sex and certain grace, that seem
To melt forever in a fountain's kiss,
Waters that whelm the body as they gleam
And merge, and it is one with Salmacis.

Ardent chimera, effort venturesome
Of Art and Pleasure – figure fanciful!
Into thy presence with delight I come,
Loving thy beauty strange and multiple.

Though I may never close to thee draw nigh,
How often have my glances pierced the taut,
Straight fold of thine austerest drapery,
Fast at the end about thine ankle caught!

O dream of poet passing every bound!
My thought hath built a fancy of thy form,
Till it is molten into silver sound,
And boy and girl are one in cadence warm.

O tone divine, O richest tone of earth,
The beautiful, bright statue's counterpart!
Contralto, thou fantastical of birth,
The voice's own Hermaphrodite thou art!

Thou art the plaintive dove, the linnet rare,
Perched on one rose tree, mellow in one note.
Thou art fair Juliet and Romeo fair,
Singing across the night with one warm throat.

Thou art the young wife of the castellan,
Chaffing an amorous page below her bower, —
Upon her balcony the lady wan,
The lover at the base of her high tower.

Thou art the yellow butterfly that swings,
Pursuing soft a butterfly of snow,
In spiral flights and subtle traversings,
One winging high, the other winging low;

The angel flitting up and down the gold
Of the bright stair's aerial extent,
The bell in whose alloy of mighty mould
Arc voice of bronze and voice of silver blent

Yea, melody and harmony art thou,
Song with its true accompaniment, and grace
Matched unto force, – the woman plighting vow
To her Belovèd with a close embrace;

Or thou art Cinderella doomed to spend
Her night before the embers of the fire,
Deep in a conversation with her friend,
The cricket, as the latter hours expire;

Or Arsaces, the great and valorous,
Waging his righteous battle for a realm,
Or Tancred with his breastplate luminous,
Cuirassed and splendid with his sword and helm;

Or Desdemona with her willow song,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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