



UNDER A PURPLE CLOUD

UNDER a purple cloud along the west
The great brown mother lies and takes her
rest,
A dark cheek on her hand, and in her eyes
The shadow of primeval mysteries.

Her tawny velvets swathe her, manifold,
Her mighty head is coifed in filmy gold,
Her youngest babe, the newly-blossomed rose
Upon her swarthy bosom feeds and grows.

With her wide darkling gaze the mother sees
Her children in their homes, the reddening trees,
Roofing wet lawns, fruit-laden lattices,
Blue mountain domes, and the grey river-seas.

A myriad flowering faces flush the air
Sun-kindled eyes, and flaming outspread hair
And vermeil cheeks, the children of her love
Whose rapid heart-beats all her deep veins move.

The sun's fair children, he whose kisses burned
 Upon her wedded lips, and now hath turned
 Life-giving ardours upon other spheres,
 Leaving their radiant offspring to her tears.

Still laugh they in their joy, with sapphire eyes,
 And leafy wings of gold, and singing cries,
 Still clap their rosy hands, and on the breeze
 Cast fragments of their jewelled draperies.

With tranquil heart the mother watcheth them,
 Each flower erect upon its fearless stem :
 A wind-tost head hath lost its ruby crown,
 A sapphire zone is unaware let down.

There a wing drooped, and here a love-lit face
 Darkens and drops from its irradiate place ;
 A swaying of sweet limbs, and there a fall—
 Bewildering terror seizeth upon all.

They rush with stumbling feet and blinding hair
 To her who waiteth in her darkening lair,
 Destruction following : their anguished cry
 Rings in her ears, 'O mother, must we die?'

Then openeth she, the mighty one, her breast,
 And folds them all within her arms of rest :
 'Ye are immortal, children of my pain ;
 Sleep unafraid, for ye shall live again.'

ROSA MULHOLLAND.