

To Salomé at St. James's

By Theodore Wratishaw

FLOWER of the ballet's nightly mirth,
Pleased with a trinket or a gown,
Eternal as eternal earth
You dance the centuries down.

For you, my plaything, slight and light,
Capricious, petulant and proud,
With whom I sit and sup to-night
Among the tawdry crowd,

Are she whose swift and sandalled feet
And postured girlish beauty won
A pagan prize, for you unmeet,
The head of Baptist John.

And after ages, when you sit
A princess less in birth than power,
Freed from the theatre's fume and heat
To kill an idle hour,

Here

Here in the babbling room a gleam
With scarlet lips and naked arms
And such rich jewels as beseem
The painted damzel's charms,

Even now your tired and subtle face
Bears record to the wondrous time
When from your limbs' lascivious grace
Sprang forth your splendid crime.

And though none deem it true, of those
Who watch you in our banal age
Like some stray fairy glide and pose
Upon a London stage,

Yet I to whom your frail caprice
Turns for the moment ardent eyes
Have seen the strength of love release
Your sleeping memories.

I too am servant to your glance,
I too am bent beneath your sway,
My wonder! My desire! who dance
Men's heads and hearts away.

Sweet arbitress of love and death,
Unchanging on time's changing sands,
You hold more lightly than a breath
The world between your hands!