

The Poet's Picture

By Olive Custance

THE pent-up passion of her soul
Deepens the pallor of her face,
Against her throbbing heart the whole
Wide sorrow of the world finds place,
And deep compassion and love's grace.

The forehead 'neath the cloudy hair
Is like a child's—so pure and white—
Sweet words have curved the rose-lips fair—
And in the wistful eyes a flight
Of fluctuant dreams pass, day and night.

Frail girl in whom God's glories meet,
Why was she so divinely made?
Surely the angels, when complete
Her radiant spirit stood arrayed
In such fair flesh, felt half afraid!

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The dust of earthly days and years
Scarce dims her delicate loveliness—
Only the eyelids, tired of tears,
Droop low—their flower-like pallidness
Bruised faintly by pain's bitterness.

Only her hands, like ivory,
Are stained a little by the sun,
And roughed with constant use—for she
Is careless of their beauty won
From dawn of life so easily.

Alas ! that her slim feet should tread
The world's uneven stony ways !
That she should know dull cares and dread—
Long lonely nights and sordid days,
Being so fashioned for love's praise.

Lest she should sin or faint from fear,
Let one swift angel heed my prayer,
And straight descending to this sphere
Spread wide wings o'er her everywhere,—
Lest she should fall—who is so dear !