

A DIALOGUE

I

DEATH, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee :
 Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
 One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
 Death, if thou wilt ?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
 Imperial : but some roof of wildwood tree,
 Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
 From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt ;
 Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
 Death, if thou wilt ?

II

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me ?
 What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
 What things I fashion ? Nay, behold and see,
 Man, what art thou ?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me: though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,
Man, what art thou?

III

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive: thy power is made but of our dread,
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee:
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed,
Shall vanish; all the shows of them shall flee:
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
Death, if thou be.