

OREITHYIA

(FROM BRECHTHEUS)

Out of the north wind grief came forth,
 And the shining of a sword out of the sea.
 Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude of
 this last,

The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.
 Out of the north skies full of his cloud,
 With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd
 At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,
 At the axle of a strong king's car
 That has girded on the girdle of war—
 With hands that lightened the skies in sunder
 And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,
 A God, a great God strange of name,
 With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,
 To the mountain bed of a maiden came,
 Oreithyia, the br'ide mismated,
 Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed
 With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth dead;
 Without garland, without glory, without song,

As a fawn by night on the hills belated,
Given over for a spoil unto the strong.

From lips how pale so keen a wail

At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,
When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of
her hair,

It rang from the mountain even to the wave ;

Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me !*

From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea :

And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,
As a virgin overborne with shame,

She besought him by her spouseless fame,

By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried,

And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,

And all her flower of body, born

To match the maidenhood of morn,

With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and torn.

Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision

Falling by night in his old friends' sight,

To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light ;

Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour

Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,

And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.

With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his lips
as of thunder,

In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,

From the height of the heaven that was rent with the
 roar of his coming in sunder,

 Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.

And the pines of the hills were as green reeds shattered,

And their branches as buds of the soft spring scattered,

And the west wind and east, and the sound of the south,

Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,

 At the cry of his coming out of heaven.

And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows

Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,

And the depths of the sea were aghast, and whitened,

And the crowns of their waves were as flame that
 lightened,

 And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.

But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not
 her wrong that he wrought her,

 When her locks as leaves were shed before his breath;

And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the cry

 was a God's that besought her,

 Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas with
 death.

For the heart was molten within her to hear,

And her knees beneath her were loosened for fear,

And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,

And the soft new bloom of the green earth's daughter

 Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree ;

As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast lifted,
On the strength of the stream of his dark breath drifted,
From the bosom of earth as a bride from the mother,
With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother,
As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.