

To Ada

Sept 14/65

"You never loved me," Ada! - These slow words
Dropped softly from your gentle woman's tongue,
Out of your true and tender woman's heart,
Dropped - piercing into mine like very swords,
The sharper for their brightness! Set no wrong
Lies to your charge; nor cruelty, nor art;
Even while you spoke, I saw the ready tear-drop start.

You never loved me?" - No, you never knew -
You, with youth's dew yet glittering on your soul -
What this love; slow, drop by drop, to pour
Our life's whole essence, perfumed through and through
With all the best we have, or can control,
For the libation; cast it down before
Your feet - then lift the goblet, dry forevermore!

I shall not die, as foolish lovers do:
A man's heart beats beneath this breast of mine;
The breast where - curse on that fiend's whispering,
"It might have been!" Ada I will be true
Unto myself - the self that worshipped thine.