

SONNET—THE LOTUS¹

Love came to Flora² asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power
5 Had sung their claims. “The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno³ mien”^o— *look*
“But is the lily lovelier?” Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche’s bower,⁴
“Give me a flower delicious as the rose
10 And stately as the lily in her pride”—
“But of what colour?”—“Rose-red,” Love first chose,
Then prayed,—“No, lily-white,—or, both provide;”
And Flora gave the lotus, “rose-red” dyed,
And “lily-white,”—the queenliest flower that blows.^o *blooms*

¹ The lotus, a large water-lily, is a sacred flower in Hinduism.

² Flora is the Roman goddess of flowers.

³ Juno, the consort of Jupiter, is the most powerful Roman goddess and her name often was invoked as a type of feminine beauty. Further, Juno’s rose is another name for the white lily.

⁴ Psyche is the love object and, eventually, the wife of Cupid in Roman mythology. Before their marriage, Cupid had brought Psyche to a beautiful bower (a private recess covered all around with plants).