

**PROSE FANCIES:  
SECOND SERIES**

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Prose Fancies: Second Series by Richard Le Gallienne

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**RICHARD LE GALLIENNE**

**PROSE FANCIES:  
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My dear Tom

In memory of the  
Sul-la-itor, & much else that  
is fugitive send you  
these.

W. M.

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PROSE FANCIES



SECOND SERIES



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TO MAGGIE LE GALLIENNE, WITH  
LOVE



## PROSE FANCIES—VI

### THE ANSWER OF THE ROSE

THE Sphinx and I sat in our little box at *Romeo and Juliet*. It was the first time she had seen that fairy-tale of passion upon the stage. I had seen it played once before — in Paradise. Therefore, I rather trembled to see it again in an earthly play-house, and as much as possible kept my eyes from the stage. All I knew of the performance—but how much was that!—was two lovely voices making love like angels; and when there were no words, the music told me what was going on. Love speaks so many languages.

One might as well look. It was as clear as moonlight to the tragic eye within the heart. The Sphinx was gazing on it all with those eyes that will never grow old, neither for years nor tears; but though I seemed to be seeing nothing but an advertisement of Paderewski pianos on the

programme, I saw it—O did n't I see it?—all. The house had grown dark, and the music low and passionate, and for a moment no one was speaking. Only, deep in the thickets of my heart, there sang a tragic nightingale that, happily, only I could hear; and I said to myself, 'Now the young fool is climbing the orchard wall! Yes, there go Benvolio and Mercutio calling him; and now—he jests at scars who never felt a wound'—the other young fool is coming out on to the balcony. God help them both! They have no eyes—no eyes—or surely they would see the shadow that sings "Love! Love! Love!" like a fountain in the moonlight, and then shrinks away to chuckle "Death! Death! Death!" in the darkness!

But, soft, what light from yonder window breaks!

The Sphinx turned to me for sympathy—this time it was the soul of Shakespeare in her eyes.

'Yes!' I whispered, 'it is the Opening of the Eternal Rose, sung by the Eternal Nightingale!'

She pressed my hand approvingly; and while the lovely voices made their heavenly love, I slipped out my silver-bound pocket-book of ivory and pressed within it the rose which had just fallen from my lips.

The worst of a great play is that one is so dull between the acts. Wit is sacrilege, and sentiment is bathos. Not another rose fell from my lips during the performance, though that I minded little, as I was the more able to count the pearls that fell from the Sphinx's eyes.

It took quite half a bottle of champagne to pull us up to our usual spirits, as we sat at supper at a window where we could see London spread out beneath us like a huge black velvet flower, dotted with fiery embroideries, sudden flaring stamens, and rows of ant-like fireflies moving in slow zig-zag processions along and across its petals.

'How strange it seems,' said the Sphinx, 'to think that for every two of those moving double-lights, which we know to be the eyes of hansoms, but which seem up here nothing but gold dots in a very bar-