

Weird Tales

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Despair and the Soul

LEADENWORTH MACNAB



She comes to me in the midnight oft, when the pleasures of day are fled
And their dregs leave bitterest longing and unspeakable regret—
A hopeless, hung'ring yearning that in vain I would forget—
Then the mists back roll, and my naked soul with her presence is beset.

Her eyes outrival the mist-moonshine in their silken, soulless glow;
The tints of the yellow autumn cling to her billowy hair;
Cold as the hand of Death, with no life-light lingering there,
Is her ashen cheek, and the wan lips speak ever Despair, Despair.

She points me back to the far-fled past—a weary waste outspun—
Where unfinished tasks are lying that my hands had cast aside,
And smoldering ashes, telling where the old ambitions died
When the scarlet flame of carnal shame to the heart was made a bride;

And onward points to the nearing end where shadows close and cling,
While my shriveling form stands quaking on the brink of the black un-
known:

Afar, like glints of Dawning, Life's Ideal Heights are shown
But hope has fled, for the soul lies dead where the wasted days are strown.

And I shudder back in the ghostly arms and the soulless eyes I seek,
Which gleam 'neath the yellow autumn tints that cling to the billowy hair,
Cold as the hand of Death, with no hope-light lingering there,
Is the ashen face, and the wan lips trace ever Despair, Despair.