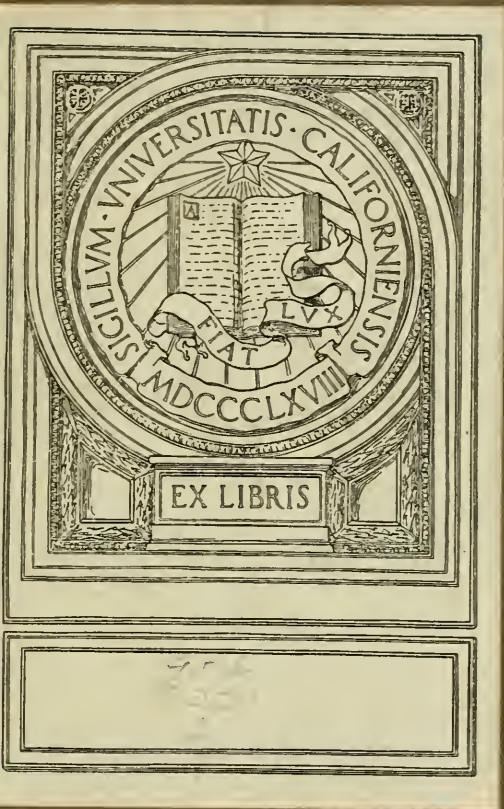






Francis Mosny.
D.C.L.



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THOMAS À BECKET.

A DRAMATIC CHRONICLE.

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

GEORGE DARLEY,

AUTHOR OF "SYLVIA, OR THE MAY-QUEEN," ETC.

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PREFACE.

BEING impressed with an idea that the age of legitimate Acting Drama has long gone by,—that means to reproduce such a species of literature do not exist in our present cast of mind, manners, and language,—I have under this persuasion spent no vain time upon attempts to fit ‘Thomas à Becket’ for the public scene. Yet a subject more nobly suited thereto could scarce be chosen, if dramatic faculties to grapple with its colossal nature were forthcoming. I feel bound to point the attention of my brother-authors towards it, as some among them may consider my above-mentioned opinion mistaken, and no theme would afford a better chance of refuting it than the one here suggested. Despite of all his faults, and all our prejudices, we must admit the grandeur of Becket’s character, his indomitable resolution, his sublime arrogance itself, the ability and rectitude which distinguished much of his conduct: experienced eyes will perceive the *stage-effectiveness* of his peculiarities, his triumphs, his failures, and the terrific pathos of his fate. Again: just such an antagonist as drama requires to wrestle with and at length overthrow this potent spirit, our Chronicles tell us, did stand up against him—Henry the Second; so precise a counterpoise for Becket, that to make either preponderate, a sword had to be cast into the scale. Henry is moreover an admirable type of his times,

when the Norman population was about to blend with the Saxon, or rather both were about to form a new one combining their distinctive qualities. His character exhibits the romantic and adventurous spirit, the wit, brilliancy, passionate temperament, and fitful despotism of the former ; as well as the wisdom, solid worth, rough humour, good-fellowship, and good-nature of the latter. England perhaps owes more to Henry the Second in the way of those corner-stones for a free Constitution—Equal Laws—than to any other among her monarchs between Alfred and Edward the Third. Queen Eleanor furnishes an excellent though very opposite stage-character, being strongly marked by her vices, by her very weaknesses. But in truth the era itself, when Feudal, Ecclesiastical, Political, and Academical Institutions were establishing themselves broader and firmer on the rude bases left by previous barbarity ; when men had still about them all the vigour of their primitive life, and all the enthusiasm of commencing civilisation ;—such an era by natural consequence teemed with characters, enterprises, vicissitudes, &c., dramatic because so pregnant with individualism and with action. I have adopted without scruple the rough, bold features of these times, wherever, like rocks and cataracts in a landscape, they appeared to give the scene poetical impressiveness. If they realised, as it were, those times to myself while ruminating over them, I supposed they would have a like effect upon the reader. He will recollect, however, the popular distinction between History and Chronicle,—the latter admitting a degree of romance and intermixture of tradition, besides a picturesque enrichment by materials which are splendid rubbish to the mere annalist, but to the dramatist most precious. Though preserving the general line and sequence of facts as they happened, I have subordinated them, of poetic right, to poetic purposes ; and moreover taken the privilege to modify

uncertain points at will. Thus my Heroine, being less a historical than romantic personage, is made contemporaneous with, although in truth somewhat antecedent to the facts dramatised. No important falsification of history is committed by this anachronism, yet the interest of a gracious female character is acquired. Other real personages of the time, but about whose private qualities we know little or nothing, I have likewise delineated as was most conformable to what we do know, or most convenient to dramatic ends: John of Salisbury, the profound scholar and author of "*Nugæ Curialium*," Walter Mapes, translator of "*Sang-Real*," are examples.

Perhaps every species of literature, wherein persons come under view, is the better for being, as far as it may be, dramatic: history, epic poetry, ballad, novel, become more vivid and truth-like, by the adoption of dramatic form and spirit: Plato in this way dramatises his philosophy, Socrates his morality, Dante his religious poem. It will therefore seem natural enough that a dramatic intention should evince itself throughout a Dramatic Chronicle: there is little fear of any dramatist now-a-days, whether he write for the stage or no, writing *too* dramatically. In accordance with this belief, I have seldom made my characters what the metaphysicians call *subjective*, but on the contrary made them agents of the first person, themselves doing and suffering, where possible, that which they are supposed to have done and suffered. Let me signalise the opposite practice as most antidramatic, yet as one much too frequent and always fatal among writers for the stage. Subjective composition is however the natural tendency of our refined age, and on this postulate founds itself an argument I fear convincing against the probable regeneration of Acting Drama. Can we restrain that tendency? or *should* we, if we could? Though fatal to the drama, it may be vital to something else as desirable.

Those singularities and salient particulars, customs, phrases, even fabulous notions, superstitions, &c., which characterise the Feudal and Romantic ages, forced themselves perpetually into my mind and often into my work. Need I crave pardon for what seems to reflect these ages best? I certainly need not offer any illustrative notes upon them, in this era of universal enlightenment, as all of them lie at the surface of our numerous histories. Thus no one requires to be told that Britain, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, derives its name from *Brit* or *Brut*, a Trojan prince, who fled hither after an accidental parricide: that a grudge long prevailed between the Norman settlers here and the Saxons and Saxonising Britons, which only began to subside about the time of Becket: &c. &c. Details less important or familiar than these would not, however true, have shed a broad or strong enough colour upon the scene; and in attempting to portray antiquity, a dramatist paints with a very different pencil from that of an antiquarian.

PERSONS.

HENRY II.

PRINCE HENRY, RICHARD (*afterwards* RICHARD I.), and JOHN (*afterwards* King), Sons of HENRY II.

EARL OF CORNWALL, *the King's Uncle*. Earls of CLARE and of LEICESTER.

RICHARD DE LUCY, *High Justiciary*.

HUMFREY DE BOHUN, *High Constable*.

RICHARD DE HASTINGS, *Grand Prior of the Templars*.

WILLIAM DE EYNSFORD, *a Military Retainer of the King*.

LORD WALTER DE CLIFFORD.

SIR REGINALD FITZ-URSE,

SIR HUGH DE MORVILLE,

SIR WILLIAM DE TRACI,

SIR RICHARD BRITO,

RALPH DE BROKE.

SIR MOTTRAM FIER-À-BRAS, *Warder of Woodstock*.

CARDINAL PHILIP, *the Pope's Legate*.

BECKET.

ROGER, *Archbishop of York*.

HENRY DE BLOIS, *Bishop of Winchester, Brother of King Stephen*.

FOLLIOT, *Bishop of London*. *Bishops of Salisbury and of Norwich*.

GEOFFREY RADEL and RICHARD GRYPE, *Priests*.

JOHN OF OXFORD.

GLANVILLE, *a Jurisprudent*.

JOHN OF SALISBURY,

PETER OF BLOIS,

WALTER MAPES, *Chaplain to the King*,

HENRY BOSHAM, *Secretary to Becket*,

GABEL, *a Park-Keeper*.

} *Knights of the Body.*

} *Scholars.*

Physician. Conjurer. Pursuivant at Arms. Inn-Keeper. Boy. Ostler. Beggarman. Henchman.

ELEANOR, *Queen of Henry II*.

ROSAMOND DE CLIFFORD.

Maids of Honour to the Queen.

DWERGA, *female Dwarf to the Queen*.

Knights and Ladies. Minstrels. Soldiers. Monks and Nuns. Attendants, &c.

THOMAS À BECKET.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Street in London.

DE MORVILLE, DE TRACI, and BRITO, *meeting.*

De Traci. Good morrow, Hugh de Morville!—Richard Brito,

Grandson, how great I know not, of the BRUT
That kill'd his father, and gave life to Britons,
(*Brutings* they should be call'd!),—*bon jour*, Sir Richard!

Brito. I love but little to be jeer'd, Sir Gwillim,
By you, or any spring-heel'd Norman knight,
About mine ancestors. That Trojan Brutus
Was a king's son, and Conqueror of this Isle,
No Bastard Conqueror neither!—I have heard
Our learned Chancellor tell of it.

De Traci. What, Becket?
Learned he is in sooth; and gallant too,
And wise, as few of his compatriots are.

Brito. Gallant as ye! gallant and wise as ye,
Half-brethren of the seagulls! whom foul blasts,
Loosed from her wallet by some Lapland witch,

Blew o'er the Northern foam to France, and thence
The next ill wind puff'd hither !

De Morville.

Down with these swords !

Will ye ne'er stop this brawling ? Fie ! be friends :
He's young, Sir Richard ; he's hot-brain'd, De Traci.—
Yes, as you said, Becket's a cunning clerk,
Or he would scarce be an Archdeacon ; wise
As Guiscard's self, or what had made him Chancellor ?
For boldness, he exceeds all priests ; and dares
Take even the very Devil by the horns
Did he fall out with him.

De Traci

Well, if he be

Falcon in fight, he's vulture after it !

De Morville. He'll have his pickings ! Know you not
our adage—

The Church's crook
When rightly shod,
Is a reaping hook
On a fishing-rod !

De Traci. Yet he's against the Bishops, in this strife
About their jurisdiction ; so 'twould seem
At least : and echoes our sharp-witted king,
Who cries them up as 'Shepherds skill'd to fleece,
Drive, and make market of, those sheep the people.'—
Allons, Fitz-Urse ! what think you of this man ?

Enter FITZ-URSE.

Fitz-Urse. Whom ?

De Traci. Why, the man of men—him with more names
Than blaze in Doomsday-Book—the Provost of Beyerley !

De Morville. Dean of Hastings !

Brito. Constable of the Tower !

De Morville. Secretary of State ! Chancellor of the
Realm !

Archdeacon of Canterbury ! Castellan of Cahors !
Lord of the baronies of Eye and Berkham !

With some few other—scores of trusts and titles,
Enough to break Ambition's back withal.

He's a mere sumpter-mule for robes and riches,
Save that he trots with them to his own stall,
Where sables are his litter, cloth of ermine
His housing, and his fodder golden corn.
But more :

As if the custody of the Royal Seal,
With all the perquisites thereto belonging,
The administration of all Sees and Abbeys
Whilst vacant—which they are whene'er his purse is !—
The Wardship of all Minors, whose revenues
Leave a rich crust in running through his hands ;
As if these gifts sufficed not to fulfil
His huge capacity for power and office,
He is made tutor to the Prince himself,
Young Henry, whom the crown o'er-hangs—this Becket !
This son of a Saxon truckster, Gilbert Becket,
And a bought Moor-woman !—this Jack o'the Beanstalk,
That climbs up to the clouds, lark-swift, and there
Mocks the mazed world beneath him !

Fitz-Urse.

Very true.

De Morville. This glib Bologna lawyer—

Fitz-Urse.

True, but yet—

De Morville. But what, Fitz-Urse ?

Fitz-Urse.

Thirty-five score pick'd lances

He brought us, when much needed at Toulouse :
Twelve hundred in the Norman wars. King Harry
Owes him some precious jewels of his crown.

De Traci. *Pardie*, but he has claim'd them ! If he saved
them,

'Twas for himself, to perk in his own cap.

Fitz-Urse. He's a stout soldier—that's well : sits his horse
Firm as St. Michael sits his Mount ; no storm
Moves him a hair : Can drive his lance right through

A mailed breast, and out between the shoulders ;
That 's pretty well too !

Brito. I have seen him strain
One of our bows, our mightiest English bows,
Till the tough yew bent withy-like ; and when it
Whirr'd straight again, his shaft was in an oak
Barb-deep, twelve-score yards off :— that 's not ill neither !

De Traci. He gives brave galas, keeps a *Cour d'Amour*
And *Castle-Joyous*, throug'd with dames and knights,
One blaze of brilliant arms and brighter beauty,
Where minstrels warble thick as birds on boughs,
And softest instruments thrill through the halls,
And murmurs sweet make up the swarming sound,
And merry bells ring aye a *gaudeamus* !
This holy Chancellor hawks, hunts, jousts, drinks,
Games, and *etceteras*—'slife, a noble fellow !

De Morville (aside). Our youth's brain is all feathers,
so his thoughts
Are of the flightiest—

Fitz-Urse. As for me, gentlemen,
While Becket aids the king, with sword or pen,
With head in helm or cowl, I am content
To like him.

De Traci. Bah ! so am I.

Brito. And I.

De Morville. Then I.

Enter a Beggerman.

Beggarman. Your charity, brave gentlemen !

De Traci. If a pennon were as tattered as this fellow's
cloak, 'twould be called the more honourable, and per-
chance hung up in a chapel.—Here 's money for thee—go !

De Morville. 'Tis so small a piece of brass, that it shines
in the abyss of his hat, like a glow-worm in a dark ditch.
Here 's another munificent speck—go ! we are but poor
Knights of the King's Body.

Beggarman. Bless ye, but I am poverty itself!

De Traci. Thou? thou art a Knight of the Hospital, no less, as I see by thy crutch and bandages. Get thee away, Sir Lazarus! here comes the king.

Brito. Heaven smiles in his blue eye, and from his brow
The sun himself shines out!

De Morville.

Becket is with him.

They seem right jocund. How they laugh! as boys,
With their ripe-apple cheeks.

Brito.

The Chancellor's a wit,

And our good Harry loves it, seasoning wisdom,

As an abbot loves a pot of ale with spice in't.—

Get thee along, fellow!

Beggarman (going behind the knights). I'll steal, if nothing else, a look at him. What's a king like? Good lack, I suppose St. George-and-the-Dragon. He has two bodies, that's sure!

*Enter HENRY and BECKET, the King with his hands on
BECKET'S shoulders.*

Henry. Ha! ha! ha! ha! By Mahound, an excellent tale!

Come, let us have the other! Press thee a little;

Thou overflow'st with humour, like the gourd

With richest juice.—Come, shall we hear it, ha?

Becket. May't please you, sire, now that the evening sun
Reflects him somewhat redly in our looks,

Which he perchance,—so tinged are they with wassail,—

Mistakes for clustering grape, whereon he loves

To hang with warmest kisses—

Henry.

Let him kiss!

And send his burning soul into our cheeks,

Till he change back our blood again to wine,

That fed it! An old Wassailer himself!

That swills the nectarous ether till he reels.

Look you, he wears an after-dinner flush
 Crimson as ours! Rogue, he has had his drench,
 And purple streams run down his fleecy skirts,
 Staining them deep as thine!—Ha? what, Fitz-Urse?
 What news from Canterbury?

Fitz-Urse. My liege, his Grace
 The archbishop gasps so hard for life, he scarce
 Had breath to make fit answer to your Highness.

Henry. Poor man! Heaven's gates stand aye ajar for him:
 He has a very Saint been ere he died:
 A meek, good man!—What mightiness in mildness!
 I've never gain'd from his soft nature half
 I had wrung from a stern one.—But he gave some proof
 That he agreed the felon-priest should stand
 Trial in our Courts, not his?

Fitz-Urse. Ay, my liege:
 Here is the instrument his death-stricken hand
 Marked with the cross. [*Giving a parchment.*]

Henry. So! well. Keep it, Chancellor,
 [*Handing it to him.*]
 Till further time.—Have with you to your palace,
 And we will hear that story by the way,
 You promised us. [*BECKET stands abstracted.*]

Prithee what mood and figure
 Is this deep syllogism thou'rt solving now?
 He's sunk within himself!—Ho, Chancellor!

Becket (starts). I was but conning o'er the tale—my
 memory—

Henry. Since you can fold you in your loose fur-sleeves,
 And in the sable pall of thought besides,
 You want not this warm gown?

Becket. I would in truth
 Put it off—soon—with your good leave—

Henry. See'st there
 [*Pointing to the Beggarman.*]

You shiverer, in rags as few as hang
 Upon the roadside thorn?—Were it not well
 To give that wretch, who shakes i' the summer's sun
 Like Winter's image, something of your too-much
 For his too-little?

Becket. I am all content,
 And will provide him quickly.

Henry. Thou wert ever
 Most charitable, Thomas!—Come, strip off
 This superfluity. [*Laying hold of his robe.*]

Becket. Nay, nay, your Highness.
 [*Struggling to keep it.*]

Henry. I swear I'll have it!—You shall walk the town
 Naked as dame Godiva, and more stared at,
 But I will have it! [*They struggle.*]

Knights. Ha! ha! ha!—the King will carry it!—the
 Chancellor doubles it close!—'Tis a stiff tussle!—Lion
 against Bear!

De Morville. No; but shepherd against wolf in sheep's
 clothing! 'T will be rent between them!—

Becket. It is the maddest humour!—[*He lets the cloak go.*]

Henry. 'Tut, man! thou need'st but bury thee again
 In Meditation's solemn robe: it much
 Becomes so grave a lord!—Ha! ha!—I never
 Saw thee so lost in foggy thought before.
 'Twas a rich mantle, but thou wilt be cover'd
 With blessings far more precious.—Give it him!
 [*It is flung to the Beggar.*]

Beggarman. Heaven guard your Majesty, and send my Lord
 All that he wishes! And for his good-will
 In leaving me this benefit, may he live
 A glory to the Church, and at his death
 Be worshipt 'mongst the blessed saints and martyrs!
 No worse I pray for him—

Becket.

Enough, enough !

[*Exit* Beggar.]

Henry. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

'Thou 'rt well repaid for thy benevolence !—

Fitz-Urse, I say ?—Again to Canterbury :

Stay by the Primate ; let no buzzing monks

(Save his confessor, Gryme, whom we can trust,)

Haunt his bedside ; nor, while he drops to slumber

On the eternal pillow of repose,

With pestilent whispers sting him in the ear.

He's not to change the instrument—mark that !—

He has given o'er the priest to the King's Bench,

Lawful tribunal for such crime.—And Reginald !

If the Archbishop hold his promise well,

Give his meek spirit my god-speed, and send me

Immediate tidings when he is in heaven.—[*Exit* FITZ-URSE.]

Have with you, Chancellor. "

Becket.

At your Grace's pleasure.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE II.

*A Royal Apartment.—*QUEEN ELEANOR *alone.*

Eleanor. Henry, thou play'st me false ! With whom, I
know not,

But to find that out, feel myself all eyes :

Each sense, except my sight, is numb, null ! null !

I do not taste my meats ; I hear no music

Even when the trumpet brays it at my side ;

To me the rose is scentless as the briar ;

What touches me might be a burning share,

Or wedge of ice, they are indifferent :

But I can see! see—atomies! "Thou shalt not,
Minion, escape me! 'Mongst ten thousand faces
Were thine one, I could swear to its bold blush.

O! I could guess her from a gown, a glove,
A cap, or aught her wanton form had ever
Swell'd out!—Suspicion, thou art call'd the dam
Of false conceits, to which the Devil is sire;
To me thou seem'st somewhat almost divine,
That canst discern all things at once—a searcher
Into the murkiest heart! Come, Inspiration
Of the abused; suggest the shape, the air,
The vision of my rival, and my victim!—
Let me consider:—

I should know something of the stratagems
Play'd off by tricky woman; all the webs
She weaves before men's eyes to hide herself;
The painted bashfulness she can put on,
To seem what she is not; the brazen front
She steps so high with, to be thought impregnable
As Pallas, when as slippery as Venus:
All these, ere my divorce from that nice fool,
Louis of France, punctilious Louis! I
Had perfect-making practice in; and if
I have the pain of such repute, I'll have
The gain, please Vengeance!—Oh, she must find out
Some holier sanctuary than the sepulchre,
Even for her dead bones, that I shall not gibbet them
As high as Haman's, to the grinning world!—
My Maidens there?— [Enter the Maids of Honour.

If ye be such?—Now, Bold-face!

Are you the King's—toy?

First Maid.

Madam, my humbleness never

Reach'd the majestic level of his eyes.

Eleanor. Nor you, stale Prudery?

Second Maid.

Madam, not I!

Eleanor. You'll all say so ! you'll all say so ! when even
The infamous brand had burnt plain *Harlot* there
On the convenient tablet of your brows.—
Get ye all gone !—Come back, and dress me quick—
(*To herself.*) I will go talk with that same cunning man
At Clerkenwell, who kens all covert doings
Which Night's dark mantle wraps.—(*Aloud*) Is there, or no,
A haunt of wise-folk near the brambled fields
By Old-Bourne hill ?

Third Maid. Great madam, ay.

Eleanor. Had ye not, one of ye, your fortune told,
Even to the pettiest freak ?

Third Maid. Your Grace, they told me :
“ You are to serve a Queen, and gain one day
A pair of royal ear-rings for your pay.”

Eleanor. Darling of Destiny ! they said you sooth,—

[*Pinches her ears.*

I'll see if they tell me such punctual truth.—

Hie to your chambers !—*Dwerga* ! [*The Dwarf peeps forth.*

Make the bolt

Upon these gadders, and these gossip-goers,

As wandering and as wanton as the vines

That must be nail'd up.—

[*Exeunt Maids.*

I will now to Becket's,

But in another hood. Ho there, *Abortion* !

Enter DWERGA.

Dwerga. Here ! here, my grandam !

Eleanor.

Thine, prodigious Imp ?

Dwerga. What, am I not thy grand-child ? thou that
bought'st me

Of my Norse dam, when scarce the size of a crab,

And fed'st me to my present stature with

Dainties of all kinds—cocks' eggs, and young frogs

So freshly caught they whistled as they singed,

Like moist wood, on the spit, still bubbling out
 Dew from their liquid ribs, to baste themselves,
 As they turn'd slowly!—then rich snails that slip
 My throttle down ere I well savour them;
 Most luscious mummy; bat's-milk cheese; at times
 The sweetbreads of fall'n mooncalves, or the jellies
 Scumm'd after shipwreck floating to the shore:
 Have I not eat live mandrakes, screaming torn
 From their warm churchyard-bed, out of thy hand?
 With other roots and fruits cull'd ere their season,—
 The yew's green berries, nightshade's livid bugles,
 That poison human chits but nourish me,—
 False mushrooms, toadstools, oak-warts, hemlock chopt?

Eleanor. Ay, thou'rt an epicure in such luxuries.

Dwerga. My fangs still water!—Grandam, thou art good!
 Dost thou not give me daily for my draught
 Pure sloe-juice, bitter-sweet! or wormwood wine,
 Syrup of galls, old coffin-snags boil'd down
 Thrice in fat charnel-ooze, so strong and hilarious,
 I dance to a tub's sound like the charmer's snake
 We at Aleppo saw? What made me, pray you,
 All that I am, but this fine food? Thou art,
 Then, my creatress; and I am thy creature.

Eleanor. My creature, not my offspring.

Dwerga. Oh, thou thought'st
 I meant thy very babe—by the young Saracen
 Of my swart favour, whom thou loved'st in Jewry—

Eleanor. Small monster! I will crush thee like a hornet
 If thou darest buzz a word of that—

Dwerga. Sweet grandam!
 I would not for the world, save here alone

That we may chuckle at thy husband's honours!

Eleanor. Fetch me my hood,—
 The yellow one.

Dwerga. Yes, grandam !

(*Sings*) As the browns are for the clowns,
And the blacks are for the quacks,
So the scarlets for the harlots,
And the yellows for the jealous !

[*Exit.*]

Eleanor. Venomous spider ! I could pierce it through
With a witch's bodkin, but it does me service.

Dwerga (*re-entering behind her*). Doats on thee too, dear
grandam !—less in gratitude
Than that, as *Dwerga* does and all her race,
Thou work'st ill to those gawkish, smooth, soft things,
Call'd *mortals*.—Shan't I go with thee, my Dame ?

Eleanor. Thou wouldst be mischievous.

Dwerga. Lovest thou not mischief ?
No !—hatest it, worse than the horse-leech hates blood !

Eleanor. In, cockatrice !—that wouldst sting even the hand
Which feeds thee, and caresses !—In, deformity !

Dwerga. Must I sit purring like a tigress-cub
Over my paws alone ? or peer from out
These bars, like a new-caught baboon ?

Eleanor. Attend
Thy duty ; or I'll pack thee to the chymist,
Who'll drown thee first in vitriol, and then
Bottle thee up as a false birth of Nature,
To draw the passing gaze with. 'Tend thy duty !
Thou'lt have enough to keep those skittish fillies
From whinnying out of bounds, if they should hear
Even a jackass bray.

Dwerga. I'll fetter them !
They are as fearful of me as a fiend.
If they dare venture forth, I'll spit green fire,
Pinch them about the ancles, fly upon them
As a wild cat, and score their waxen cheeks,
Distract them with such dissonant yells and screams
That they shall think ten furies flicker round them !

Break out?—Let one o' them,—with my spongy lips
 I'll suck a blood-spot on her neck will spoil
 Her beauty for a month! Not the Nile weasel
 Falls with such malice on the crocodile's eggs,
 As I will on these glossy ones!

Eleanor. Do so!—yet take
 Some heed,—for mortals have their malice too.

Dwerga. Ha! ha! ha! ha!
 They cannot hurt me, as my skin is thick
 And bags about me all in dewlaps—see!
 Then I can roll me up into a hedgehog,
 And put out prickles that would pierce their feet,
 Did they tramp on me; I can slip away
 Like a sleek otter when they grasp at me,
 And then turn short and bite till my teeth meet.
 Let me alone for them!

Eleanor. In, then, and watch.—

[*Exit DWERGA.*]

The Chancellor holds a feast: there my false Harry
 Will be, no doubt, by preconcert, to meet
 His *bellu donna*. None thinks of Eleanor!
 Her bloom is flown, as are the amorous bees
 That once clung to it!—I am left forsooth
 With a few manikins and greensick girls,
 To lead an old-maid's after-life with apes
 In this hell-gloomy palace!—But I'll follow!
 I'll be a guest they neither wot nor wish!
 I'll be a go-between,—to part, not couple!—
 Are they assembled yet?—Some half-hour gone!—
 'Tis time!—Ha! ay!—he bows her to the dance.
 They smile—they lisp—they make dove's eyes—they murmur.
 He leads her now to a dim, curtain'd room—
 They rush to the love-wrestle—kiss—they kiss!—
 O serpents in my heart!—methinks my flesh
 Turns to a swarm of them! I feel my hair

Tangle and writhe and swell like sinewy creatures !
 I 'm Fury's self,—all but her scourge !—Oh, lend it,
 Vengeance !—this hand with palsy of eagerness shakes
 To use it on these kissers !—Kiss? hiss ! kiss !
 My blood turns poison at the sound !—Kiss ! hiss ! [*Erit.*

SCENE III.

Apartments in BECKET'S Palace, gorgeously set out and illuminated. Knights, Ladies, Squires, Pages, Minstrels, Attendants: the former attired or disguised in different quaint or characteristic dresses. Cates and wines served round. Music. The King seen apparelled as a Soldan in an inner chamber.

BECKET enters, and signs to DE MORVILLE.

Becket. De Morville, you love not these mummeries,
 Whilst, as all other wise men, you allow them.
 Hie to the porch, good sir; you know the Queen;
 Should Jealousy, that ignis fatuus,
 With green and flickering taper light her hither,—
 Though she pretends in sourness of her soul
 To love retreat, and feasts but on her spleen
 (Which sprouts the more she crops it—crude refection,
 That makes her meagrer still !); and though she is
 Too proud for mirth's equality;—yet should she
 Perchance come—

De Morville. I am to give notice.—[*Aside*] Hang him !
 I scorn these gauds no more than Eleanor,
 Though I scoff at them too.

Becket. Brito is there,
 But—"Two heads," says the proverb. If she come,
 Delay her with some shows of reverence,
 Whilst you send word. There's reason high—look to 't.
 [*Passes on.*

De Morville. I'll fill Sir Richard like a leathern jack
Up to the lips with Winton wine; and then
You shall have Roland for your Oliver! [Exit.

[Several personages move through the rooms; among
them a Veiled Lady, followed by a Gentleman-
Usher. After they go out, re-enter BECKET.

Becket. Another guest I've mark'd within the halls,
Unbidden as the Queen,—at least by me!
When I besought her name, that frowning Usher
With courtesy more haught than baron's, said
Between his teeth,—*Demoiselle Disconnue.*
Whom she may be indeed, I but surmise,
For still she flits and flits, fair Spectre, gliding
Speechless along, nor mixing with us mortals,
More than the pale Moon with the enamour'd trees
Through which she glances, coldly beaming on them.—
Much time is in the minute. This bright thing,
Like some rich gem, is for a monarch's hand,
I guess, not being unskilful in such jewelry:
Let me do him—and some one else—a service,
By keeping it from the Gryphon; Eleanor
Must not lay clutch on it, lest she perhaps,
Like the Egyptian drunkardess, dissolve it
In some sharp menstruum—yea, so devour it,
Through luxury of revenge!—
Good king, thou 'lt thank me better for this deed,
And faster bind me friend, than had I saved
Rouen or Caen! Our private services seem
Love to the king, public but to the kingdom.
Harry of England!
Albeit thou hast much wisdom, for one born
But to be made a fool of from the cradle,—
Yet so predominates the weaker element
Of that same earth-and-water compost—*Man*—
That even the fiery spirit heaven put to it

Cannot drink up the spring of softness in thee,
But leaves thee mouldable by skilful hands —
What 's this? I am forgotten!

Most by myself, and worst— [Turning to the guests.

Drink, gentlemen!

Ye trifle with me only!—Fill me there [To a Page.

A horn of hippocras, so amber-pure
The yellow lights shall flame more lustrous through it!
Brim it up, boy! till the fresh dazzling foam
Swell o'er its burnish'd lip, like these fair bosoms
Above their bordering gold!—Health, beauteous Dames!
Sweet Demoiselles! health, noble Chevaliers!
Pledge me, I pray you, all!—my wishes are
So personal for the health of each, they ask
Unanimous return!

Guests. Be happy, sir,

As you deserve; we need not wish you more!

Becket. Thanks! thanks!—Now let the flood of joy roll on
And bear us with it,—so we keep our feet!
Now let the perfumed air with pleasure glow
Till even the hard heart melt, the iciest burn!
Now, gallants, lead your mistresses a measure
Where they can prove the Graces are not fled
With classic times!—Come, ladies!—Sooth I'll swear
You've not fine ancles if you fear to show 'em!—
Minstrels, strike up! let the gay mandolin
Mock the grave-voiced theorbo; whilst the harp
With intricacy sweet of various chimes,
Bewilders its own strain; and fife and shalm,
Piercing the tabret's solid-booming hum,
Give a clear edge to music!—*Trouveurs! Conteurs!*
Spread, spread about your free wits and yourselves!
Hie to the bow'rd chamber and alcove
Whither Love's chief luxuriasts retire,
And in the ear of bending beauty pour

Your amorous songs, and tell soul-moving tales,
 Or mirthful, to such triumph of your skill,
 That these vast domes re-murmur with sweet sighs
 Or throb with echoing laughter. Make all pleased
 To be here, as I am to see them ! [*Passes on.*

1st Lady. A gallant man, our Host! the cream of courtesy!

2d Lady. Oh a magnificent creature!—such a leg!—

1st Cavalier. He is the prince of priests!

An Alderman. Ay, and a learned, I 'll assure you: he has read Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Lives of the Saints—in Latin; besides being deep in Romance as not a minstrel of them all!

An Abbot. O sir, his accomplishment has gone much farther than your imagination: Venerable Bede himself, who read so much he did not know the extent of his own knowledge, was an ignoramus to our Chancellor.

2d Cavalier. Truly it is possible: what with his embassies to Rome, and his studious sojourn among the Italians, he must have their Latin talk as much at his tongue's end as a nun's parrot has the vocabulary of scandal.

Abbot. It must be so, for never unfledged wit
 Could take such flight as his, so near the sun!

2d Lady. He has learned somewhat better than your learning, I'm sure! What is it all to *La gaie Science*? In that he is perfect!

3d Cavalier. Well, I forgive him being able to read and write, which is only fit for those slugs of the cloister-garden, the monks, but the disgrace of a *preux chevalier*; I forgive it him all, because he can sing the *Song of Roland* better than any man since—what-d'ye-call-him? that led us on at Hastings.

Abbot. You speak of *Taillefer*, the warrior-minstrel—

Enter BRITO behind, intoxicated, with a leathern jack.

3d Cavalier. *Taillefer*, or *Tell-fair*, either will do—he told us fair enough we should be conquerors.

4th Cavalier. This Becket is a Saxon—where did he get so much fire of genius to clarify his fatness of brain derived from such ancestors? What are the Saxons fit for, but to swill, sleep, and tend swine?

Brito. That's a libel, by St. Edward the Confessor!—I confess it a most nefarious libel, and will prove it so on this spot!

4th Cavalier. You lie there as you stand, and shalt lie again where you fall! [*Draws.*

Brito. Come on with your bull-rush, you perpendicular French frog!—Here's my battle-axe! [*Swinging the jack.*

An Esquire. Oh, he is drunk, he's drunk!—tongue and all totter! [*Supporting BRITO.*

Brito. You're drunk yourself! You've drunk so much, everything dances before you, and so you think I totter!—Tend swine, indeed? Saxons only fit to tend swine? You, Norman squire jackanapes! you're only fit to tend me,—and that's not much better!

Guests. Ha! ha! ha! ha!—truth is in wine!

Brito. I heard what ye said, backbiters—swine forsooth only fit to tend Saxons!—Oh, I shall never forget it!—Was not Harry Beauclerc (bless his scholarship!) half Saxon at the least?

4th Cavalier. Norman, to the backbone of his heart!—how prove you him half Saxon?

Brito. Ay, and more! Wasn't his wife, Maud Atheling, Saxon,—and what call you that but his better half? Pish! it is child's-play to put you addle-headed Normans down! Was Alfred the Great Saxon or no? tell me that. And was he only fit for a hog-herd, a tender of bristled sheep?

Did Alfred lack genius or learning? Didn't he translate the *Pater Noster* into English, which every good Saxon, who doesn't carry his prayers in his check, has by heart? —Didn't he cudgel those sea-robbers the Danes (birds of the same nest with the Normans, I trow!) till he hammered the laws of propriety into their loggerheads?

4th Cavalier. Cudgel the Normans?—(*Drawing.*)

Brito. Ay, Normans or Lord-Danes, 'twas all one!

[*They fight.*]

Guests. Part them! Peace, peace; here comes our Entertainer!

Becket (re-entering). What is the matter? Revelry is not riot!—

How now, Sir Richard! wherefore thus come up
From the guard-chamber?

Brito. Come up? marry come up!—I'm come up because I was elevated!

Becket. Who put this porker into such a pickle?

Brito. Why, good Sir Hugh, none else! Sir Hugh was my pickler, and preserver likewise — with drink — or I had perished of a dry rot in your guard-cellar below! —He thought to keep me from mounting, the knave! but I roared beyond all forbearance.

Becket. De Morville? ha! I smell a viper.—

(*To the Attendants.*)

Look,

This swollen wine-skin tumble not about— [Exit.]

Brito. Now a tankard of brown ale to damp my lips with, and a song, when my throat is cleared for a chaste melody— [Singing as he is led off.]

Then a catch we'll troll,
While the beechen bowl
Trundles along the table—O!
And we'll drink and sing
Like a priest or a king,
As long as we are able—O!

Scene changes to another Room, embowered, and opening on an Orchard.

HENRY (*as Soldan*), LA DISCONNUE, and her Gentleman-Usher.

Henry. Shine forth, fair Moon! I prithee, from beneath
The cloud which floats between me and thy beams,
To bless me with the soft blaze of thy beauty!
I am an eagle of the night, that dares
Fix on the glorious Sister of the Sun
His ardent eye, which broadens as she brightens,
To take in more of her loved radiancy
With which his rapt soul kindles!—Oh, at length
Put off that shroud; unless thou'lt have me think
Death hath o'er-marbled thee, so cold thou seem'st,
So mute, so still!

La Disconnue. Alas! I am yet living!—
But we are now alone, and shelter'd here:
Yet here, in secret and heart-quivering sounds,
I must speak only to thee, as a bird
That warns her mate the fowler is too nigh.
Thou know'st whose will it is has brought me hither
To-night, unto this Castle Dangerous,
No Joyous one to me!

Henry. Fair Rose of England!
My flower! my bosom's sweet!—look not, I pray,
With such a sadness and lost pensiveness
Upon this secret venture for my sake,
Thy harmless presence here: nor ever deem
Love's blossomy ways are so bestrewn with thorns
To pierce all tenderest things.

La Disconnue. Ay, to the heart!

Henry. Nay, nay, not thine!
They shall not: trust thy puissant king and knight!

La Disconnue. Well! well!

Henry. I wish'd thee here, it is so rare for us
And difficult to meet; what with the jealousy
Of my gaunt Queen, and thy self-chariness,
Which ne'er confides thy honour unto mine,

[*Nodding at her Attendant.*

Sans surveillance, for all my promises,
My book-sworn faith and heaven-register'd vows.

La Disconnue. Ay me!

Henry. Thou murmuring dove!—fear not; shalt soon,
And safe, betake thee to thine own dim bower.
Meantime thou'rt here but *La Belle Disconnue!*
Unknown and unsuspected.

La Disconnue. Let me still

To all here seem a vision, save to thee.

Henry. Nay, by Love's shaft! thou art no substance yet
Even to me!—I have not touch'd thy hand—

[*Taking her hand.*

Most delicate thing! let mine eyes drink thy lustre!

Can o'er-and-o'er refined earth become

Indeed so dazzling-pure? I could scarce guess thee

From lightest leaf freighted with new-fall'n snow

Which the chill evening sun tinges so faint,

Save that thou throb'bst (as thou wert all one pulse)

Though laid in my soft clasp!—Sweet, tremble not!

England himself's thy champion!—Once to my lips—

Once, and no more!—

Kisses her hand.

Dian, who gazes on us,

Might consecrate this sin!

La Disconnue.

O no! methinks

Yon moving shrine of purity doth shudder—

It sheds bright tears—grows dim—We have offended!

Let me depart.

Henry. Wilt thou be yet so coy

And credulous of ill?—Take this as seal [Shows a Ring.

Of my drawn bond to thee: canst thou have more?

When Eleanor of Guienne makes one among
 The carved saints and sovereigns in our Abbey,
 (Which she is wrinkled grim enough to be!)
 Thou art my Queen!—By all above I swear it,
 And all beneath!—Is this enough, suspectful?

La Discounue. Hear'st thou, Lord Walter?

Gentleman-Usher.

I am satisfied!

Becket (passing swift behind, mutters)—The Queen! the
 Queen!

Henry. Now wish I from my soul
 Louis had kept her or the Devil ta'en her!

[*Exeunt different ways: the Ring drops in the confusion.*]

Enter QUEEN ELEANOR.

Eleanor. Plantagenet, by his port—Vain guise! I know
 Well, the crown-bearing air of that proud head,
 And fitful clenching of that hand, as if
 It aye grasp'd at a sword!—I can see all!—
 Were no companions here? Methought I heard
 The rustling harsh of gauzes, and light step
 Of silver-slipper'd woman, fleeting away!—
 They've barred my passage, but I'll break one—

[*Turning towards the Verandah.*]

Vengeance!

I pray'd thee for a vision of my rival,
 And there it is—vanish'd into the night!
 Curses on both!—

[*Seeing the Ring.*]

What's this? thou basilisk,
 That kill'st me with thy fatal glare! cold glitterer,
 Which, like the jewel that the bright-eyed toad
 Voids from his head, poison'st e'en by thy touch,—
 How I abhor—nay, love thee!—

[*Snatching it up.*]

Thou that show'st

The wrong, wilt haply cast some little ray
 On the wrong-doer. One gleam, where'er so deep

She hides her this side hell, will strike her guilt
 Aghast,—as to all workers in dark ways,
 One sunbeam is a thunderbolt!—Good night,
 Thou whom they blazon—*La Belle Disconnue*,
 For ignorance is idolatrous. We yet
 May know each other; till then, rest ye well!

[*Exit.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The King's Closet.

HENRY and FITZ-URSE.

Henry. Old Theobald is dead: well, Heaven send him
 More peace than he gave us from fractious monks,
 Our mild Archbishop!

Fitz-Urse. He's not stiffer now
 In body than he ever was in spirit.

Henry. By Mahound thou say'st true, rugged-mouth'd
 Reginald!

Your lawn-lapt bishop is less flexible
 Than baron stark in steel. The Christian Pharisees!

Fitz-Urse. Dog's death to them, and ass's burial
 Outside the gates!

Henry. We'll crush them, Reginald!
 We'll crush the stiff-necked shavelings now, if any
 Iron be in this arm!—Go you and haste
 The Council—let me see—to the Red Chamber:
 They've had a summons; haste them! [*Exit FITZ-URSE.*

He shall be Primate.

Not that his learning, wisdom, and state-craft,
 So much commend him to the office ; nor
 That courage of the head, which few men have
 (Heart-courage is beast-common !) to dare look
 Beyond this petty wave of time, and scan
 Futurity's spreading deep ; nor yet in sooth
 His life, which, I confess, like mine, gives forth
 Some odour of unsanctity :—but that
 He is my friend, who loves his self for me ;
 Whom I can trust with all my thoughts as freely
 As the two-headed God could let his flow
 From one brain to its neighbour. For these matters
 Touching the Church, wherefore should he oppose me,
 Now, after long agreement ? He has oft
 Said Amen to our secular anathema,
 Against encroachers on our civil rights.
 No, I could ne'er select a fitter tool !
 He ever to my will has been obsequious,
 To my least wishes, even when his hatred.
 He help'd me to the crown too !—Though he have
 Small influence, as a losel, with his order,
 So best ; he 'll have less interest for them too !
 With a rough besom I must sweep this Church,
 For it is foul ; albeit at the same time,
 I scratch some reverend bare legs within it.
 'Tis a bold move ; and may e'en shake the kingdom
 Till the throne totter ; but it must be made !
 No blenching, Harry ! Deeds become great by danger :
 Upon Destruction's hair-broad margin still
 Success doth love to walk !—Let 's to the work :
 'Twill halve itself upon me and my choice,
 So become light to the joint labourers.
 He shall be Primate !

[*Exit*

SCENE II.

A Conjuror's Cell. Apparatus for magic.

ELEANOR *disguised, and the Conjuror.*

Eleanor. Make me to see her who doth own this ring
In what so cloudy and disfigure form
You will,—but make me see her.

Conjuror. Give me the jewel
First: there is nothing can be done without
The jewel.

Eleanor. There!—Shew me her in the arms
Of Satan's self, burning in his embraces,
If possible, good Wizard!

Conjuror. Madam, whoe'er
You boast yourself, your accents are more terrible
Than those I conjure with! They scare my wits,
And make me use wrong mixtures. Yea, they seem
To scare the very demon I would summon,
Mine own familiar!

Eleanor. Cite him again! It is
My heart-wrung groans to Vengeance make me hoarse,
'Tearing my gorge:—cite him again, I say!

Conjuror. Then keep you silence!—(*Aside*) The she-
bandog's throat
Is furr'd and dry, she breathes so hot for blood!
Such horrible and hollow, hell-drawn sounds,
Ne'er came from sepulchre unconsecrate,
At whose dark bottom moan the tortured dead.
Bless me from this grim harridan!

Eleanor. Thou caitiff!
What keep'st thou muttering there thy husky charms?
Shriek out thy incantations and commands
Till the deaf adders of the pit shall hear thee!

Conjuror. She's more a domineerer over demons,

Than I!—Is't Hecate's self?—Madam, perchance
 My black-bird would come to your chirrup rather?
 (*Aside.*) So wrapt she is in fardingales, I cannot
 See by her foot if she's the Devil's dam,
 But truly I do think it!—Let me stand
 Safe in my circle— [Gets within his circle of gallipots.

Eleanor. Slaverer! idiot!

Mumbling thy mummeries, and dropping drivell
 Into thy row of potsherds, raise me a fume
 Blood red and black as the two elements
 That make hell's atmosphere,—where I may see
 Some Power of Darkness, who shall give me light,
 Volume himself abroad!

∟ *Conjurer.* I will! I will!—(*Aside.*)

Fulgor ex fumo is beyond my art,
 However I must raise a good thick smoke
 To smother her, if but to stop her noise.—

(*Muttering.*) *Caballo! caballavi! caballero!*
Mescoskylaxinax! I conjure thee
 By the rains and the winds and the thunder,
 In the name of the stars of power
Algoth and *Algol* and *Aldebaràn*,
 Through the decocted virtue of these herbs,
 Devil's-bit, dragon's-wort, death's-foot,
Per medium et mixtram mineralion,
Quantum et qualium sufficit,
Mescoskylaxinax! I conjure thee,
 Arise! arise! arise!

[*A volume of lurid smoke rises: in the midst
 a fiendlike shape appears.*

Conjurer. Who art thou, villain!—Mark with what respect
 He'll take my greeting—

A Voice. Thy familiar spirit!

Full of thy nature! thy swart other self!
 Therefore most truly—villanous!

[*DWERGA comes forth, the fiend-shape flies.*

Conjurer. Mercy!—I never
Raised such a real devil before!—Avaunt!

[*Quits his circle, and runs behind the Queen.*

Dwerga (*getting into the circle*). Hu! hu! hex! hex!

Now I'll be conjurer!

First let me lay this gibbering, ghost-like form

In a Red-Sea—of ruddle!— [*Dashing a gallipot at him.*

There's pot-luck for thee!

(*Dashing another.*) There's a hot cordial to keep life in thee,

Thou bloodless wretch! that even at thy birth

Wert a half dead-born thing!—Mistress, I'll spit him

On his own rod, and roast the tame goose here

With his pale liver stuck beneath his arm-pit—

Eleanor. Forbear!—

Dwerga. I'll do him a nice delicate brown
Upon the sulphur, a tit-bit for Baal!

Eleanor. Bring not the people in with this strange hurley—

[*Exit Conjurer.*

Dwerga. Hu! hu! hex! hex!—He could not charm an owl
Out of an ivy-tod to play the wiseacre,

Or screech wild oracles!—I have more craft

In this hard, knotted skull, than deep-read dunce

Ere drew from his dry parchments!—His familiar?

Ay!—she has been—for 'twas a female spirit

Gross as a male—familiar enow with him!

Six white-faced imps, as like to both of them

As tadpoles are to toads, squat by the fire

Under that trap-door, whence your fine diabolus

Rose vapouring in rank perfume, from a pile

Of pitchwood; o'er whose blaze in cauldron huge

Welter'd their soup of cabbage. I'd have scratch'd

Those pap-soft faces while within my claw,

But fear'd to make them squall.

Eleanor. How got you there?

Dwerga. From outside, where you left me snivelling.

Worse than a beggar's brat, with cold, I scamper'd
 On all-fours, like a black cat, in the dusk,
 Down their blind stairs, into their reeky kitchen,
 When you stept up aloft: there sat I squinting
 Out of a rat's nest, and saw all.

Eleanor. And am I

The dupe of such poor tricksters, then?

Dwerga. No, grandam;

Of thy own folly rather!—But take comfort:

It is not the first wife has play'd the devil

In her own house—

[*Clutching up the Ring.*

Ho! ho! a prize! a prize!

Eleanor. Reptile! render me that.—

Dwerga.

Not till I've lick'd it

[*Scrambling to the roof.*

Clean from the colley, and decypher'd it.

I'm out o' thy reach among the rafters. Nay,

Whirl aught at me, I'll tear a hole in the roof,

And blazon shrill as the crack'd trumpet blows,—

The Queen of England in a Conjuror's garret!

Thou wert best let me alone. I'll suck the virtue

Out of this talisman, and spirt it down

Upon you, grandam!

Eleanor. Thou art all lie! a warp

Of subtleties! all malice, mockery!

As treacherous and unreliable

As the parch'd reed is to a drowning man!

I cannot trust one word thou say'st, except it

Condemn thysel.

Dwerga. Or thee, thou mayst trust that too!—

But hey?—What's here?—A *Rose* within a *Snake*

[*Examining the device.*

Coil'd huge about her: good!—in a love-symbol,

The serpent aye should couch him by the rose!

What's this again that twists the flower around,

Strangling her, as the ivy doth the elm
 In his lithe arms? A feather'd sprig, with blossom
 Shaped like a cockle-fish or butterfly:
 Why there's your secret!

Eleanor. Where? tell me! I'll give thee
 Comfits made from the whites of deadmen's eyes!—

Dwerga. Pish on thy comfits and thy deadmen's eyes!
 Let me torment these lovers for thy meed.

Eleanor. What lovers? who?

Dwerga. The Broom-sprig and the Rose,
 Thou silly Queen!—Malice and silliness
 Make up earth's meanest creature!—Who is now
 The sprig that bears the cockled-butterfly,
 But thy Plantagenet—*planta-genista*?

Eleanor. And who the rose?

Dwerga. That's more a riddle to me.—
 Sweat brain!—Perchance some trull whose name is Rose,
 Or Rosalind, or—stop! it lightens on me!—
 This undulous snake cut here, great *Jormungandr*—
 As Runic rhymesters call him—doth set forth
 Ocean, that ever on his belly rolling,
 Coils round the convex world; which world the rim
 Doth therefore stand for: whence the Rose itself
 In our quaint stone-cutter's device but means,
 Rose of the World,—that is, plain *Rosa-Mundi*;
 Plantagenet and Rosamond are the lovers!

Eleanor. But there ~~may~~ be many Rosamonds in the realm?

Dwerga. Seek the most fair: that's she. Plantagenet hath
 A hawk's eye for sweet duckling, though he stopp'd
 His maw with fishy thee.

Eleanor. Would I could do
 Without thy hateful service!

Dwerga. Thou canst not:
 A weak and wicked mind must ever have
 A cunning, evil-loving minister

To work its ends ; must be the jest at once,
 Hatred and scorn and tool of its own slave.
 I 've a rare merit for a minister,—
 Sincerity ! What think ye, grandam ?—Go you
 Now to the wise-folk to colloque with them
 Who Rosamond, the fair unknown, may be ?

Eleanor. I must gulp this,
 Howe'er so bitter ; but the long, large draught
 Of honey-sweet revenge will drown it all ! [Exit.]

Dwerga. Go on, good grandam ! I'll stick in thy skirts,
 Like a live burr ; Fear not ! Hu ! hu ! hex ! hex !
 [Sings as she follows.]

Speckle-black Toad and freckle-green Frog,
 Hopping together from quag to bog ;
 From pool into puddle
 Right on they huddle ;
 Through thick and through thin,
 Without tail or fin ;
Croakle goes first and *Quackle* goes after,
 Plash in the flood
 And plump in the mud,
 With slippery heels
 Vaulting over the eels,
 And mouths to their middles split down with laughter !
 Hu ! hu ! hex !

SCENE III.

A State Chamber. The Council assembled.

CORNWALL, CLARE, LEICESTER, BECKET, DE BOHUN,
 DE LUCY, GRAND PRIOR, WINCHESTER.

Cornwall. Well met, my lords : what makes us here so
 soon after cock-crow ?

Clare. I can tell as little as Sir Chanticleer himself ;—
 perhaps his Highness's conscience-keeper has the secret ?

Leicester. Ay, Chancellor, how judge you ?

Becket. What I, gentlemen? In good truth my knowledge on the matter does not exceed your own, nor is my judgment any deeper than yours,—(*Aside*) and that is very shallow; my guesses may pierce a little farther indeed!

De Lucy. Silence; here 's the King!

Enter HENRY.

Henry. Fair morning.—Ha? when comes the trial on Before our bench, of that law-breaking priest?

Becket. To-morrow, Sire, I hope.

Winchester. It cannot be.

Henry. It cannot, bishop? wherefore?

Winchester. Sire, I fear

There may be obstacles.

Henry. Pshaw!—cliffs and gulfs
Are obstacles to grasshoppers, not eagles.—
Archbishop Theobald is dead, my lords:
Whom shall we give the regular chapter leave
To elect? Who shall be Primate, cousin Clare?

Clare. What thinks your Highness of the Abbot Blaise?

Henry. Too old! too old!—I've had enough of greybeards!
Age renders obstinate, and knots and gnarls
The bent of our green-grown opinions. I
Still less than conjugal, love stale episcopal
Petticoat government!—Your man, Grand Prior?

Grand Prior. My Lord of Winton here, though like an
Hoary at top, has sap enough; and fame [oak
Of wisdom for a kingdom.

Henry. He has too little
Even for himself, or else he had not cross'd me.—
O Prior, 'twere too rough and wearisome
An office for my lord; too full of 'obstacles;'
I would not throw them in the velvet path
His wisdom rightly chooses to the grave.—You, Constable?

De Bohun. I'm no thinker.

Henry. What say you, Chancellor?

Becket. My gracious liege, I have no choice but yours :
That will, as ever it is, be most discriminate,
Profoundest, wisest ; all-advantageous,
For him, the kingdom, and your royal self.

Henry. So think I !—Gentlemen, salute his grace
Thomas à Becket, our good Chancellor,
Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of all England.

Lords. Our best congratulations to his grace !

Becket. My liege, let my humility decline
This honour, I beseech—

Henry (in his ear). Nay, Thomas, keep
For imposition-time i' the church, your *Nolo*
Archi-episcopari !—Put this other
Pigeon into thy scrip, poor man !—

(*Aloud.*) We've said it :

Now that is done we call'd ye hither for,
To give some state and solemnness to the deed
Ere it be sanctified by ritual
Which we much reverence, and will observe
In all its just assumptions,—now disperse,
Each to his several duty. I to mine.

[*Exit.*

[*The Lords take leave, with much courtesy*
towards BECKET.

Becket. Your lordships' lowliest, most devoted slave !—

[*Exeunt Lords.*

The Second Man of the kingdom !—My ambition
Mounts then its hoped-for towery throne ; and there
Sits crown'd with the proud mitre, scarce o'ertopp'd
By one star of the regal diadem !—
Am I indeed the son of Gilbert Becket ?—
How my soul swells !—like his who pinnacled
On some high-pitch'd, realm-skirted promontory,
Takes in the immensities around, beneath,
Skies, seas, and continents, with rapturous gaze !

How mine eye kindles ! How my spirit burns
 Like yon great sun, brighter as it moves higher !—
 My very frame seems grown gigantical !
 I feel as I could overstride the earth—
 Yea, grasp heaven's ruling orbs in my two hands !
 Thou purer air that makest the mountain-pine
 Shoot up till he befits his lofty station,
 Why shouldst thou not descend in nourishing dews
 To make high-natured men pre-eminent
 Of form as mind ?—Becket ! thou 'rt in the clouds ;
 Sublimity makes thy brain swim—thou 'rt not fit for it !
 He 's only great who can despise his greatness.
 Be not the night-fly drawn into the flame
 By thy blind love of splendour, and there burnt !
 True Magnanimity hath no outward measure,
 Nor is reveal'd by that. Is not the emmet
 Sagacious as the elephant ? To our minds
 Alone, we may—by custom of great thoughts,
 By venturous deeds and versancy with power,
 Ambrosial food of books, august discourse,
 By ever straining towards some height from which
 Our former selves look little—to our minds
 We may add stature, cubit upon cubit,
 Until in them we become Anakim,
 Nobler than earth e'er form'd !—

'Tis reasonable,

I do confess, to think that this fine essence,
 Grandeur of soul, should breathe itself throughout
 The mien and movements : every word should speak it,
 Howe'er so calm—like the pleased lion's murmur !
 Each tone, glance, posture, should be great with it.
 All levity of air, too buoyant cheer,
 The o'er-familiar smile, salute, and chat
 Which sinks us to the low and common level,
 Should be dismiss'd, and giant-minded things

Disclaim the pigmy natural to most men.—
 No doubt!—that 's well!—that 's very well.—
 The Second Man of the kingdom!—This is much,
 And yet I might be more!—Not just the first,
 That were scarce possible; but—but—co-equal!
 To become which there gleams a ray. O Becket!
 What a brave course to run! lustrous, celestial,
 As thy bright birth-star's, when he would ascend
 To the world's zenith! Clouds and storms will gather
 Round him—nay, blot him o'er; but through them he
 Bursts soon, as I shall!—If at last he falls,
 He falls in splendour,—and all men must die! [Exit.]

SCENE IV.

The Queen's Apartment.

Maids of Honour.

1st Maid. Set all to rights: stir! stir!—See that the royal stool has its valance tucked up behind, like a house wife's skirt of a week-day,—or we shall get a scolding only proper for scullions.

2d Maid. Be brisk, lasses!—no one can tell when the devil 's at our elbow till we feel it pinched.

3d Maid. Will you never put away that mirror, Marian? The Queen detests all reflectors as much as you doat on them.

4th Maid. Do ye know why? Because Eleanor sees a black angel in them, and Marian a blonde one.

3d Maid. Ha! ha! ha! the vanity—look at her simperings!

1st Maid. Hush for your lives! Don't let a cricket's

mirth be heard among us; she hates that too worse than a death-watch.

3d Maid. She thinks every jest aimed against herself—she's so good a but for it: that is her jealous and suspicious nature.

4th Maid. Pooh! then we shall have all the magpies banished from the park, because in her walks they seem to chatter and chuckle at her. [*Exit, and returns.*

2d Maid. Get thee gone, i' the Witch of Wokey's name!—here she comes, pondering and plotting with her Evil Genius.

3d Maid. What! with our dwarf governess? that extract of nettle-stings?

2d Maid. No, thank our stars!—but with the devil that possesses and tears her, Jealousy? Mum!

[*Enter ELEANOR, who sits. The Maids of Honour stand a-row behind her.*

Eleanor. One of you has a sister, or some relative, called Rosalind—or Rosamond—eh? Or some such fantastical embroidery of plain Rose—eh?

3d Maid. Yes, Madam: the name of my cousin's step-mother's niece,—no, my cousin's step-father's grand-niece, by the female side,—is, if it please your highness, Rosette.

Eleanor. Nothing but Rosette, after such an ear-breaking pedigree?—away with her! None other of ye,—eh? Confess the truth, or it shall be torn from your tongue's-ends by burning pincers: confess!

2d Maid. I have a sister Rosamond, your highness.

Eleanor. Ha! I thought truth would come out! Is she well-favoured?

2d Maid. Yes, Madam; fresh and fragrant, as bright of bloom and as innocent as a rosebud itself.

Eleanor. Innocent? hear this!—So! so! so! so!—She was at the Chancellor's revel last night, your immaculate Rosebud?

2d Maid. Madam, I believe not—

Eleanor. She was—Hypocrisy! Disguised there, and skulking into every corners save the kennel, where she should!—She was there, I say!

2d Maid. Truly then, Madam, not to contradict your highness, it must have been unknown to her nurse,—for she is yet but seven years old.

Eleanor. Indeed?—(*Aside.*) How the Fury, for all her blazing torch, misleads me! Well, knows any one besides of a Rosamond, kin or acquaintance?

1st Maid. There's Rosamond de Ros—

Eleanor. What years has she?

1st Maid. As I guess, Madam, some fewer than ninety—She is one of the Gray Sisters.

Eleanor. Humph!—a withered Rose; let her rot! Who else?—tell me no more of your babes or bearded women.

4th Maid. O lack! there's another Rosamond—the goatherd's daughter!

Eleanor. Goatherd? goatherd? Paint her to me. The king in sooth has some goatish propensities.

4th Maid. Madam, red-haired as a fox, and of a roan complexion: she is as huge of mouth and hideous as the Ogress that makes but four mouthfuls of an ox, and bolts little children for white bread—

Eleanor. Good: that's enough.

4th Maid. There's Rosamond de Clifford too, Madam.

Eleanor. Ay, what's she?

4th Maid. Why, Madam, if it please your grace, as beautiful as Aurora of a May-morning.

Eleanor (*starting up*). Tell me her height to an inch—her hair, her walk?

4th Maid. Madam, so please you, her shape is about mine, as near as may be.

Eleanor. Your shape?—She's taller, is she not? Less pury too; less fat of the land upon her,—eh?

4th Maid. My very form and mien, Madam.

Eleanor. The King love such a blowsabel?—Has any one else seen this Rosamond? Is she like our dairymaid here?

3d Maid. Madam, as like as if they were stamped with the one butter-print!

2d Maid. O yes, Madam: both made of the same Dutch cheese!

1st Maid. Twin-dishes of last week's curds, garnished with carrots to give them a colour!

Eleanor. So much the better!—Her eyes, nose, mouth, complexion, what?

4th Maid. My own, Madam.

Eleanor. Why, your eyes are round, small, green-gray, and rimmed with red like a carrier-pigeon's; your nose perks out from the middle of your face like the boss of a child's target; and your complexion is as pallid and silver-sick as a leper!

4th Maid. Madam, indeed, notwithstanding my disparagers here, Demoiselle de Clifford is called in her own shire—Fair Rosamond.

2d Maid. Fair, means nothing but white there: she has, you know, as her highness said, your parsnip skin and complexion.

1st Maid. Besides, she squints, and can look all round her, before and behind, like a rabbit.

3d Maid. Like a rabbit? nay, she has something of a hare-lip, that's certain; but to my thinking the worst about her is, she halts on the right leg.

4th Maid. Indeed I did hear she has six fingers to one hand,—now I have but five to either.

Dwerga (from behind). That's she! that's she! as sure as jealous Folly
Is of the feminine gender!—None but one,
The paragon of her sex, could stir so much
Green gall against her; as we see the Moon

Hooted by choleric owls for her strange brightness!—
 Fair Rosamond is thy foil, thy rival, Queen!
 Seek her; she'll soon shine out. Why, she must be
 A blazing-star of beauty, who can make
 These pale-faced mortals see such ruin in her!

Eleanor. Rather that yellow worm whose reptile fire
 Shall lead my foot to tread it out!

Dwerga. True! true!
 Sweet grandam!—Like a she-fox driven to cover,
 The death-expecting glare of her fine eyes
 Shall beacon us towards her den. I'll be the terrier
 To worry her out; but you shan't muzzle me.

Eleanor. How is it I ne'er heard of her before?

Dwerga. O! O! O! O! tell thee of a ripe cherry
 Which all the birds peek at, and thou thyself
 A piece of wither'd bark, fit for the tanner!
 That were rare courtiership!

Eleanor. 'Fit for the tanner!'
 I'll see if I can pierce thy hide, thou harden'd one—
 [*Strikes a silver bodkin into her.*]

Next time I'll stitch thy saucy lips with it.
 Scorn is thy mother-tongue, and borne because
 Thou speak'st none else: but thou'rt of late become
 Malicious as old Hecate's pet of monkeys.

Dwerga (between her teeth). Curse thee!—

Why, so I am old Hecate's pet,
 Being thine!—No more of that sharp nudger, pray thee!—
 [*ELEANOR threatens it.*]

Not saucy, Mistress sweet! but cockahoop
 With pride and hope to serve thee!—(*Aside.*) I could maul
 her!

Eleanor. To roost there!—go!—begone!

Dwerga. In you, before me,
 Spawn-colour'd things! I'll give ye chalk enough
 To feed ye white.—Must they not in with me?

Eleanor. Ay!— [Exeunt DWERGA and Maidens.
 I'm sick of ye all, myself, mankind, the world,
 And gladly could groan out my rest of life
 Upon the dust this moment!—Thou shalt rue
 Thy pretty nickname yet, Fair Rosamond!
 To compass that will be a pastime!—Yea,
 I shall love well to catch this noxious gnat,
 And lean upon my wrist to mark its pain
 As it writhes round my bodkin, buzzing there
 Its feeble soul away in shrilly cries.—
 Beware of Eleanor, *La Belle Disconnue!*

[Exit.

SCENE V.

A Room in the Palace.

HENRY, PRINCE HENRY, CLARE, DE LUCY, DE EYNS-
 FORD, GLANVILLE, DE BOHUN, FITZ-URSE, RADEL,
and other Courtiers.

Henry. We are now at the goal of all our wishes,
 Now have we all our quarries within clutch,
 Both Church and State are now beneath our rule,
 The Crosier being fast bound unto the Sceptre;
 Now are we doubly king—ha, cousin Clare?

Clare. Most true, my liege! for now your other self
 The Archbishop reigns associate in the realm,
 Heaven save your Majesties!

Henry. Nay, one too much!
 But you shall shout that blessing with more joy,
 Albeit less jocular, when some seasons hence
 My little Harry here and I sit crown'd
 Together. Will it not be brave, young Sir?

Prince Henry. Yes, and 'twill be my right ; my mother told me.

Oh, I'll be such a king ! I'll have a gown
Of velvet stiff with gold, and a tall plume
Shall flap you in the eyes when you look o'er me.

Henry. Bold boy !—He makes a cock-horse of my truncheon

When he can snatch it ; and will make me, too,
Bear him about the chamber on my back
When Dick and he play kings ; then both will mount
And lead their jaded father such a time !
You'd laugh to see the round-faced little villains,
How earnest they're about it !—You are a father
Too, Cousin !

Clare. Yes, but not an o'er-indulgent.—
Mark how his kingling-ship strides through the hall !

Henry. He's proud of his great yesterday ; when
Gwyneth

Prince of North Wales, and Rheese of South, did homage
At Woodstock, to us both as suzerains.

The memory glads even me ; 'twas a white day,
And promises long peace : that Scotland's king,
Malcolm the Maiden, likewise, should bow down
Before my throne, and give his brother David
As hostage for his faith—yes, all this fill'd
My cup of joy to overflowing. France
Hates us, but dreads ; and hoists her ensign pale
Begging for truce, where late her oriflamme
Hung dripping o'er War's bed its bloody sheet.
Now shall my subjects, like myself, throw by
Contention's pillow, set with iron thorns,
And rest from home as well as foreign brawls.—
My Lord Justiciary !—

[*To him.*

We must reform
The Courts ; look you to that, Richard de Lucy !

Justice, not blind, nor with both eyes a-squint
 As they are deem'd, but even and lustrous-bright,
 Shall fix their cold orbs on all things beneath her,
 With thorough-piercing rays, like winter stars,
 And not less pure from earthly influence.

Plantagenet will be *Pater Patriæ*.—

My Lord High Constable!—

[*To him.*]

Let Commissioners

Take census of all knights' lands which were known
 Under my grandsire Harry Beauclerc; state
 The services of each due to the crown,—
 Their name, their neighbourhood, their punctual nature;
 That so we may, at once and without fail,
 As Paul's bell sets the curfeus all a-tolling,
 Summon the realm's strength to defend its rights.

De Bohun. 'Twill be a work like Domesday-Book, or
 better!

Henry. But most we must restrain those sacred robbers—
 Those cowl'd and hooded highwaymen, the priests,
 Who fright my lieges, with the deadliest threats,
 Out of their coin, for venial faults; those Jews
 In Christian gaberdines, whose belts of rope
 Should be about their necks, and not their middles;
 Who drain the poor man's purse, for penances
 And absolutions, till it hang as meagre
 As a dried eel-skin, and himself scarce fatter.
 They, by this means, more taxes raise, 'fore heaven,
 Than come to our Exchequer!—What say you,
 Glanville, our jurist deep?

Glanville.

Their bold rapacity

Stops not at threats; nor their licentiousness
 At love of money. My report saith here,

[*Taking out a scroll.*]

An hundred murders, besides rapt and thefts,
 Have been, by priests alone, committed, since

Primo Henrici Secundi to this present—

I would say since your Majesty's accession—
That's scarce a dozen years. This Clerk, to wit,
Of Worcester, now before the Court, at first
Seduced the daughter, and then slew the sire—

Henry. Yet these hot sons o' the Church will have him
stand

Before their loose tribunal! to amerce him
Perchance in one cup less of wine per day
Out of his flagon—that themselves may sin
And suffer at like rate!—It shall not be!

De Eynsford. Fain would the Mitre jostle with the Crown.

Henry. Then let the weaker vessel of the two
Be crack'd, be crush'd to dust, though it be mine!
No! that bold rivalry must have an end;
Now is the time, now while my own Archbishop
Is aidant and abettant—

De Eynsford. Here he comes.

Henry. Good! Make him broad way for his suite and
train,
Until he stand before us.

*Enter BECKET in monk's apparel, a small crucifix in his hands ;
attended by GRYME.*

Welcome, our Chancellor!

Our Primate, and chief Dignitary of the Crown!—

(*Seeing him.*) Hey, Thomas?—No?—My lord!—Your
Grace!—how's this?

Are we to masquerade it o'er again,
By day as well as night?—What means this drugget?
A shirt too of black horse-hair that peeps out
Coyly beneath his tunic! and clog-slippers
To sheathe his hoseless feet!—Where shall I find
Thomas à Becket under all these weeds?

Becket. He will be seen anon.

Henry. Thou 'rt in eclipse
 Show forth thy honest face again!—Thou who
 Wert wont to look so boon, and meet thy king
 With aspect shining in the oil of gladness,
 And such a flush of fervour on thy cheek
 That every feature melted in the smile,—
 Wherefore this face of adamant to me now?

Becket. I am not what I was!

Henry. What! not my Chancellor?

Becket. No more, my liege:
 I come to render up that worldly office
 So ill-beseeming one now minister
 But to the King of Kings—Pray you, receive it.
 [*Surrendering his staff of office.*]

Henry. Ay? cast your staff official from you thus,
 Without consulting me?

Becket. Sir, even so:
 I did consult two things which cannot err,—
 My conscience and this blessed crucifix. [*Kisses it.*]

Henry. Ha!—Has a serpent crept from out the dust
 Up my throne-steps to sting me i' the back,
 And slide away under the altar then?

Becket. You do mistake me much: I have put off
 My former self as worse than childishness,
 The pomp and pride of state, the carnal mass
 Of sin that swell'd most hideous on my shoulders
 Bending me to the earth: I would become
 By prayer, self-discipline, and mortification,
 In very deed the consecrated thing
 I am in name. But this is all! My love,
 Allegiance, loyalty, are what they were,
 And should be, still.

Henry. “You do mistake me much”—
 “A consecrated thing”—and “that is all”—
 Then prithee, Heart's-Ease! since you show two faces

Under one hood—changed, and not changed—let 's have
Some proof you are the man we spoke with yesterday :
The trial of that Clerk comes on at noon
Before our Bench—is it not so ?

Becket. My liege,

I have considered—much—upon the matter—

Henry. Ay, with your conscience and your crucifix,
Which you took but small counsel of before !—
Hypocrite !

Becket. Nay, most faithful, frank, and fair !
See you how innocent am I of this :
Here is a rescript of Archbishop Theobald
(And I must yield unto so good a man !)
Inhibiting the trial of all priests
Before profane tribunals.

Henry. That I gave you
Admitted, not inhibited, false monk !

Becket. But this another is, and later one.—
Good Richard, show his Majesty the parchment
[*To GRYPME, who shows it.*]
Sign'd by my predecessor, and given up
Even with the ghost.

Henry. Fitz-Urse, I say ! Fitz-Urse ?

Fitz-Urse. Dread sire, I fear 'tis so : that villain Gryme,
Your Grace's confidant, betray'd his trust,
And in the old man's moments of last weakness
(I being shut out as one of the profane)
He got this ready deed Death's signature,
Incapable of correction or erasement,
And gave 't to Becket.

Becket. Becket, thou insolent !
Know who I am—beneath the King alone,
And him but in a temporal sense—above
Even him, as representative of St. Peter,
And God's vice-gerent on this English earth.

Clare (to *GLANVILLE*). I thought humility sat heavy on
So off he throws it—like a sin ! [him,

Glanville. He's evidence
Against himself. Mark how the King's eye glitters !

Henry. Have I then thrust my most delicious sops
Into the mouth of an ungrateful dog
That turns and strives to tear the hand which fed him ?—
Well then, our Saxon proxy of St. Peter,
To give thee further time for prayer, full swing
For self-disciplinace (which I confess
Thou hast great need of !) here thou art relieved
Of that most duteous office, and much worldly,
The Arch-deaconship—thou'lt find perchance in this
Some taste of mortification to begin with !

Becket. My liege, the archdeaconry is a church holding—

Henry. By Mahound, you say well ! and therefore shall
A churchman have it :—Geoffrey Radel, ha ?

Radel. *Sire.*

Henry. Be the new archdeacon of Canterbury.—
Farewell, Saint Thomas !—Ply your beads and scourge
Fast as you please : we will not stay to lett you !

[*Exeunt King and Courtiers.*]

Becket. My heartiest hate, and hater, made archdeacon
Of my own See !—that is a thorn which gores,
Not merely pricks the side !—Archdeacon ? rather
Arch-devil !—He will raise a hurricane
To rock my belfries—yea, will ride it too !
But let him fear a shower of blood may lay it,
From his own sides !—This fate of grandeur, I
Look'd for ; the sky-ascending bird becomes
The plainer mark. Why, hypocrite ?—hypocrite !
Were not my services unto the King
Sincerest, whilst I was his servant ? Now
That I am servant of the Church alone,
Should they not be sincere to it ? His fault,

If foe to it, he thus will make him mine !
 No man can serve two masters,—save they be
 At one !—Am I to blame that loftier steps
 Give larger views, and clear from mists, through which
 Haply I err'd where they are thick below ?—
 Howe'er he choose to reason it, let him !—Here
 He hath mark'd out the mortal lists, and trumpeted
 Himself to the high combat ; he hath thrown
 His glove even in my cheek ! Becket may chance
 Return it with a gauntlet, that shall fall
 Upon him like an iron meteor !—
 I can divine him thoroughly, and his purposes !
 This king delves hard beneath St. Peter's rock ;
 But ere it sink an inch, the mighty coign
 Shall bruise him, past more sapping, with its shoulder !
 We are upon the eve of chances strange ;
 Heaven will defend its own !

SCENE VI.

A Street in London. FITZ-URSE and FIER-À-BRAS.

Fitz-Urse. Spare not the rowel, good Sir Mottram ! Speed
 To Clifford Castle, and fetch thence as swift
 Thy precious charge, girt with a loyal band
 Of lusty gentlemen, for grace and guard,
 To Woodstock, to the Labyrinth ; of that,
 As of the Lady's self, thou art made Warder.

Fier-à-bras. Thou 'rt the king's under-voice ; 'tis he that
 speaks ?

Fitz-Urse. He ! (*Showing a signet.*)

Fail in nought : thou know'st his fiery humour
 When his strong will is foil'd ; though he be else
 So mild of mood and soothable.

Fier-à-bras.

Gramercy !

I love not dallying with the lion's beard
 Though he 's a generous beast !—it has been pluck'd too,
 Sorely of late.—I would I were an arrow ! [Going.

Fitz-Urse. You'd miss your mark then ! Stay a pace :
 take this,— [Giving a letter.

Else will the turtle-dove scarce trust herself
 I' the clutches of so grim a kite—flee ! flee !

[Exit FIER-À-BRAS.

Her father sickens, and fierce Eleanor threatens,
 Or she would never leave her brake at Clifford
 For all this Woodstock cooing of the king !—
 Plague on 't ! what trouble and lost time to lay
 Love's ambush ! If not all beset with flowers,
 And a plush alley made to 't for her feet,
 Dove-calls to lure her, streams to purl persuasion,
 Nice-footed Woman will not step into 't !
 She will sin daintily, be humour'd to 't,
 Or take huff, and not sin at all ! She loves
 The pleasant way to 't more than the place itself !
 When you find Reginald Fitz-Urse employ'd
 Digging a pitfal for a fawn to pet,
 May he be caught himself !—Plague on the foolery ! [Exit.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Base-court of the Palace.

Enter DE MORVILLE and DE TRACI, meeting JOHN OF SALISBURY and WALTER MAPES.

De Traci. Hey, Master Bookworms! have ye heard the news—the wonderful news?

Mapes. Heard it forsooth?—had I no more ears than a fish, I must have heard it. Hath it not stricken the whole city aghast, like an earthquake? All London is in the streets; yet who told it me I cannot guess, for every one seemed dumbfounded!

John of S. I am sorry the Primate has gone so far.

De Traci. Ay, ay, here's a feat indeed!—put this in your next Romance, Master Walter! put this in your “Sang-Real,” or what d'ye call it?

De Morville. Let it be *Sang-episcopal*, and no Romance, if you love me!

Mapes. Nay, by King Arthur and all his Knights! there will be some dragon's blood spilt at all events. Both are such fire-breathers!

John of S. But is the tale as true as it is new? Hath he indeed cited into Court the great Earl of Clare, cousin and friend to the king? and launched excommunication against William de Eynsford, as puissant a knight as ever wore spurs, and as proud a baron as ever tramped over drawbridge on steed shod with silver?

De Morville. No less true than portentous. Becket was born for a soldier, though he has turned out but a

bishop. Seeing battle inevitable he strikes the first blow, and if not a crusher 'tis a confounder.

Mapes. What! he lays church-claim to Tunbridge-Castle?

De Morville. Ay, "cousin Clare's" castle, as an apanage of his own diocese; and his pet-incumbent being ejected by Sir William, head-foremost, from some church—I forget its name—he ejects Sir William, *sans cérémonie*, from all churches whatsoever!

Mapes. How does the king take this?—does he not rage, foam, call down the devil's blessing upon Becket?

De Traci. Oh, sir, no torrent half so still! no cataract Is quieter!—Ha! ha! ha! ha!—how goes the *chanson*, Walter the Jongleur?—thus?

Sings. Taillefer, qui très-bien chantoit,
Sur un cheval qui tôt alloit,
Devant eux alloit chantant
De Charlemagne et de Rolant,
Et d'Olivier de Vassaux,
Qui moururent en Roncevaux!

Mapes (to JOHN OF S.). Mark this French popinjay: he sees the air

Grow clouded with thick shafts of death, yet still
Chatters and hops and sings!

John of S. Ay, light of heart
As heels!

Mapes. Yea, and as light of head as either!—
Sir Hugh, 'twill be a bustle!—'Twere more strange
The king should not be vex'd, than vex'd beyond
All measure. He has been disappointed much!

De Morville. His swan has turn'd a rank wild-goose!

Mapes. Or rather
His duck has turn'd a fire-drake!—Welcome, Peter!

Enter PETER OF BLOIS.

Run not so fast, good brother-scribe!—Hast thou too
Been frightened by this thunder-storm just burst
As broad as England, out of thy calm cell?

Peter. Marry, my wits are so distract, I run
Two ways at once,—and all ways but the right!
I wish'd to seek the father of the flock,
Th' Archbishop,—and find me i' the lion's den!

De Morville. Alas, poor sheep!

Peter. Pray tell me, have the sun
And moon not come together—clash?

De Morville. Thou 'lt see
The whole land cover'd with their fiery splinters,
Ere long, be sure of it! Dost thou not feel
The air about thee glow with agitation?

Peter. Methinks my ears do feel a little hot!

Mapes. I'll make them tingle. What say'st thou for thy
patron?

Thou 'dst ever have it he was too immersed
I' the fount of England's Helicon; or entangled
In the fine meshes of philosophy;
Given up to science mathematical,
Arithmetic, astrology, and so forth;
To rhetoric, logic, ethic, and to law,
Besides those gallant studies, wit conceits,
We lighter gentry deem of weight: why, man!
Those maggots of his brain are very snakes,
Which one hot day has brought forth ready-fang'd
And wing'd, to be the plague of this poor realm!

Peter. Thy crany seems something worm-eaten too,
And leaks apace; or warm imagination
Hath crack'd thy poet skull, and out fly crotchets!
But Walter, all thy volatile grubs o' the brain
Are harmless—only to thyself!

Mapes. Heaven grant
The same may still be said of Becket's too,
Harmless,—save to himself!

John of S. A truce of tongues!—
But what will come—what can—except vast ill,
From this fierce struggle between Church and State?
Which of these wrestling Titans shall be thrown?

Peter. England's too little to contain them both,
I fear—I fear!

Mapes. How does the Primate bear him
During this rout?

De Morville. I've come from him but now:
My message was, that he might please recal
His rash anathema against De Eynsford,
As ne'er such sentence has been, since the Conquest,
Fulmined without fore-notice to the king.

Mapes. Well, how demean'd he him?

De Morville. Meek as a nun.

Mapes. Nay, but in very truth?

De Morville. In downright truth!
He neither stamp'd, nor champ'd, nor raved, nor swore,—
Except by St. Bartholomew's holy thumb,
Which he (who whilome play'd as lief with dice
Of dead saint's bone, as ivory!) now caresses
Linnet-like in his breast, and kisses oft
And soft, as he e'er did sweet sinner's hand!—
No, sir! he sucks his tooth, and sends me back
With this submiss and placable reply—
His humble service, 'twas not for the king
To tell him whom he should absolve, or whom
Pronounce accursèd.

Mapes. An ungracious speech!

De Traci. I say unmannerly! most unpolite!—

(Sings.) Telle est coutume de bourgeois,
N'en verrez guères de courtois!

His father was a London cit and his mother a Syrian bond-slave: where should he get good-breeding?

De Morville. The saucy shaveling! Were it left to me, I'd so mash his lips together with a blow of my steel glove, they should no more separate again than if Death had glued them into one—the traitor!

John of S. Nay, not a traitor; 'tis too hard a word.

Enter BRITO.

Brito. Gentlemen, to the King!

De Morville and De Traci.

We're with him!

[*Exeunt these and BRITO.*]

Peter. The men of war gone!—what will become of us?

Mapes. We have nothing to do but sit agape at each other and croak, like a congregation of toads round a pool—till we are squash'd into mummy by a shower of missiles.

Peter. Saint Longinus preserve us!

John of S. Why seek we not our calm, secluded cells,
 And there in study or dim meditation
 Consume the soul-improving hours? Let death
 Come when it will, and how it will, what matter?
 Since it will come at last!—These mad turmoils
 Of the outer world, what are they unto us
 But noise of Centaurs and of Savages
 Fighting ev'n at their feasts?—For idle Courts,
 The mountain-shaded moors where nothing stirs
 Save the wild daffodil or crispèd fern
 Or long lithe broom that flows with every breeze,
 Or thistlebeard scarce wafted on, less make
 A melancholy desert unto me:
 The murmuring branches and the flowers that kiss
 Each other's ear in talk, please me far more
 Than whisperers of follies, hearers of them,
 Or those who lay their fond heads on your neck
 But to void scandalous venom there at ease:

For blustering camps, I love the liquid brawl
 Of rivulets, the caw of rooks, much better;
 Yea, than the lisp of a Circean dame
 Or babble of a living doll, had rather
 Hear the soft winnowing of a pigeon's wing
 As it doth circle round its dovecote o'er me;
 And fain this challenge proud of trumps would change
 For sound of shepherd pipe or village bell:
 Would'st thou not, Peter?

Peter. Yes,—so I'll away

To the Archbishop's palace! [*Exit.*

Mapes. Ha! ha! ha! the village-bell?—the dinner-bell,
 he thought you spoke of! Among all flowers 'tis the Can-
 terbury bells he is most in love with: these are the rural
 objects which give Peter a taste for the country!

John of S. He is a Frenchman too!—I'll to my dormi-
 tory, and finish my "Contemptibilities of Courts." [*Exit.*

Mapes. And I as his chaplain must attend the king, to
 preach patience, and give him absolution for his oaths—
 after each repentance. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

The King's Closet.

HENRY *enters, and sets down his cap.*

This bonnet galls me: 'tis too tight—or stiff—
 Or ire hath swoln my brow.—Who could be calm?
 A hypocrite! an upstart! an arch-traitor!
 Rebel! apostate from his civil faith!
 But worse—far worse! false-hearted to his friend!—
 And such a friend! who made him all he is,
 Far more than he should be!—O soft of brain!
 My lady-mother, Empress Maud, was right

When she did warn me 'gainst this wily priest ;
But women are suspicious where they hate
As credulous where they love ; I did not trust her :
That was o'er-wisdom ! Men themselves
Affection oft makes womanish,—nay weaker !
Friendship like love is folly, and the fervider
The blinder !—How he hath illuded me !
I might have known his bold and dangerous nature
When at Toulouse, with vehement desire,
He urged me lay imprisoning hands upon
The person of my suzerain, there besieged,
Louis of France ; this show'd how light he deem'd
Of fealty and firm devoir to kings.
What ! he will have his rochet for a flag
Flaunt over Tunbridge Castle ? Ay, and hurl
Heaven's own stored bolts, with hand unscrupulous
As he would fling a quoit, 'gainst whom he will ?—
Becket, bethink thee : that same Hill of Fortune
Thou clomb'st so fast by the precipitous side
And takest high airs upon, hath broke more necks
Than Rock Tarpeian or Leucadian !
'Twere safer to have mounted by the slope,
And kept thy senses steady !—Thou would'st fain
Play Dunstan o'er again, but we'll enact
No Edwy, no girl-king !—Be sure of it.—
Now ere we buckle us to this business,
One thought for my fair Rosamond. Poor bird !
I must weave close thy verdant Woodstock bower,
And make thy prison blissful as secure ;
Fitz-Urse hath had command. There is a Labyrinth
Of marbled halls and rooms ; of orchard walks,
Fountains and freshening streams and bright parterres,
All hidden in a dell, and umbraged o'er
With the huge crests of brow-commingled trees,
Disposed in such erroneous ordinance

As leads all progress retrograde, and makes
The intruder quaintly turn himself still out.
It was devised by my late Chancellor,—
'These Churchmen ever were great architects,
Planners and plotters—maledictions on them!—
But will at least serve now my dearest need.
The she-hawk is less keen to track her prey,
Less fell to swoop upon it, than is Eleanor
On her that flees for shelter to my bosom.
Lord Walter is fall'n sick, they say—death-sick;
He hath no masculine heir; so if he die
His gentle daughter will, by right of kings
And custom of the realm, become my ward,
Her fortune and her fate be in my hand:
Perchance I scarce had else been chosen protector,
Or she at Woodstock now. 'Tis well even so!
'Twill be my refuge too from toils of state
And broils of home: not a mere dull repose,
But sweet intoxication of delight
With one whose gracious beauty is a frame
Only to close in far more precious charms,
Exquisite tastes, refinèd sense, and wit
Which once shone forth with playful lustre, till
Of late, alas! bedimm'd too oft with tears.
I must restore her by all fondest means
Unto her peaceful self and placid cheer,
Or the sweet Rose I've gather'd to my breast
Will die there with the very warmth it feels.—
Much is before me. Now to Clarendon,
And bend my haughty Primate till he kiss
His own feet if not mine.—Ho! there—

Enter Knights of the Body, and MAPES.

Arm, gentlemen!

Make yourselves steel from top to toe, and bear

Your battle-axes bright. Let a stout score
Of men-at-arms attend us.— [Exit Knights.

Walter Mapes,

Go you to Bishop Folliott, our good friend,
Say he will ride with us to Clarendon.

No quips nor quillets now, sir ; make no legs,
But use them nimbly rather than your tongue,
As we have told you !—

[Exit MAPES.]

Wit hits all things nicely

But the right times ; it will be always shooting !—

Now my ex-Chancellor !

[Exit.]

SCENE III.

An Alcove at the Labyrinth.

DE CLIFFORD, *in a chair, sick.* ROSAMOND *attending him.*

De Clifford. No, no, there is no hope, fond child ! for me :
The sun of my life's day is in the west,
And shortly will go down !

Rosamond. Droop not, my father !
Let not the heavy spirit sink the flesh
To earth before its time !—This journey sure
Hath shaken you over-much ?

De Clifford. Not it ! not it !
I follow'd at full easy pace : the change
Took me so far from the grave-side at home ;
That's all !—for here's another at my feet.

Rosamond. Think less on Death, and he 'll think less on
thee,
Dear sir !—There's medicine that the mind may minister
To the afflicted clay, its partner frail,—
A hopeful spirit !—'tis the best restorative !

Most life-giving Elixir!—The good Nuns
 Who taught me the whole little that I know,
 As art's choice secret taught me this. Look up!
 Look on thy Rosamond, thy bower-maiden,
 Look in her brightening face and learn its smile!

De Clifford. I do look on thee—as my Minist'ring Angel,
 That soothes, but cannot save!—And I do smile
 To see thy vain dissembling with thyself
 Of the sad truth thou know'st at heart—Now, now
 Put up thy wings to hide thine eyes, and weep!

Rosamond. I'll not believe 't! It can—shall, not be
 true!—

The king's physician will be here anon,
 A learned leech who studied with the Moors,
 He is infallible!—Meanwhile this air
 Which keeps the woods so green, the birds so gay,
 The flowers so blooming-fresh, must revive thee:
 Doth it not breathe most duleet o'er thy brow?
 Full of most cordial balm, warmer, and friendlier
 Than at the Cliff which overhangs the Ford
 Where our bleak Castle stands?

De Clifford. Ah Girl! thou wert not
 Born there, nor reared, as I; else thou hadst loved
 Those barren rocks like one of their young eagles!—
 Bred up at Godstowe Nunnery hard by,
 Thou, like the hunted coney, fain return'st
 To thy old covert here, howe'er so fatal!

Rosamond. I thought it might preserve thee at the least,
 If none else.—O dear father! call me not
 Cold-hearted to the cradle of my sires!
 'Twas but in thy health's cause that I dispraised it.
 How oft I've ranged o'er those far-sighted peaks,
 Gazing as full-eyed as the mountain-roe
 On the great prospect, feeding but on its beauty,
 Rude pasture though it be! How long stood mute,

Or like a willow whispering to myself,
Down by the stream who swallows his own roar
In his deep gorge, dread moat ! which Nature delved
With course irregular round our fortress-hill.

De Clifford. My cloud-hung aerie !—blank for every storm,
And baffler of it !—Ocean bursts to spray
On the firm rock, and so to hurtless showers,
Heaven's deluge upon thee !—You draw the picture
Featly, my girl !

Rosamond. 'Tis graven trait for trait
Upon my heart.—I'm a De Clifford too,
Though last, least, lowest ! Even to girlish me
Stern Nature hath her terrible charms sublime.

De Clifford. Better than these slight bowers !

Rosamond. O far other !

De Clifford. It warms my veins like spiced wine to see thee
Swell thy young throat as a sweet bird, and praise
Thy dwelling in the wilderness !—Go on :
Thou 'rt full of it.

Rosamond. I see it now before me,
Rearing its bulk precipitous from the strand.
From crag to steepy crag the eye mounts up,
Although the foot may not, those giant stairs
Listed with verdure, fathoms aloft !

De Clifford. A bow-shot
Full—at the least !

Rosamond. Those air-suspended eaglets
Soar, far beneath the summit, and like rooks
'Gainst abbey walls, scream hovering at their nests,
Within its rifted face : Pines on its ledges
Waver like plumes ; and yon small patch of briars
Like blustry mosses, sway in the wild wind
You cannot hear sing through them.

De Clifford. O but they do
Whistle most shrill !

Rosamond. Heightening the Cliff's tall front
Sits our huge Castle, like a crown of towers;
Their rugged coigns, grey jewels! in the beam
Smooth glittering; whilst o'er those battlements
Darker than thunderclouds, the warder's lance
Peeps like a rising star!

De Clifford. Ay, and my pennon
Upon the Keep itself?—

Rosamond. Blazons the sky
With flickering hues, broad Streamer of the North,
And blends them with the rainbow's!

De Clifford. As brief-lived
Will now be all its bravery!—Yet it brings
Me back some youth to think of my past days,
And my loved birth-place!—But I'm better here,
I am, my child!—Ay, ay, proud Clifford Castle!
Thou like thy master nodd'st unto thy fall,
And soon like him wilt moulder down to dust!

Rosamond. Alas! alas! both may live long!—

De Clifford. Proud fortress!
I have no son, no heir who can uphold
Thy feudal strength and grandeur with his own.
Thou'rt but the changeful birthright of the winds
From henceforth, or their reckless tenancy!
Foul ravens will thy ruins hoar inherit,
The wildcat litter there, the Moon alone
With vacant gleam light up thy roofless hall,
Or smile, pale Lady! through thy lattices:
Along thy festive floors will reptiles creep
With slimy trails, and make vile sport in corners,
Sole revellers here! whilst the more brutish kind
Graze thy rank courts, or use thy stalls, which echoed
The war-horse neighing 'mid his amber corn,
As mangens bone-bestrewn and dens to rot in!

Rosamond. Let's home, my father! let us once more home!

Enter FIER-À-BRAS.

De Clifford. Noble Sir Warder!—

Fier-à-bras. Greeting from the King;
Who promises, if business hold him not,
To sup at Woodstock Palace, and to-morrow
Visit De Clifford with his noble Daughter.

De Clifford. We thank his Majesty. Save you, Sir

Mottram!

[*Exit FIER-À-BRAS.*]

No, thou soft-passion'd creature! thou self-sacrifice,
Still offering up thy life for those thou lovest,
We will not home again, because my follies
Forsooth talk louder than thy gentle wisdom.
The she-wolf shall not ravin my poor lamb
That would, too fondly, follow me to the wilds
From its warm fold,—and I o'er-weak to save it!
Thou camest here for my cause, dreading thyself
The insidious wiles of love more than of hate,
Henry than Eleanor: but listen, dear-one!
Whether I live,—as juggling hope suggests
To thy most cheatable affection,—
Some little time, or die—Nay, cease thy tears,
And listen: thou wilt have defender none
Against thy willing blood-quaffer the Queen,
Except his Majesty. Besides, me dead,
Thou 'lt be his Ward, and he can then enjoy
His will of all thou hast, in thy despite,
Thy lands, thy tenements, thy gold, thy jewels,
The virgin treasure of thy beauty,—all!
Such is the royal licence of these times,
At least if might makes not the right, it takes it,
Fatal no less to thee!—

Rosamond.

Then I'll return
To Godstowe Convent, and give up at once
All, with the world,—except what I prize more.

They love me there, and will with matron arms
Receive their filial Novice back again.

De Clifford. Novice in sooth thou art!—Each Convent,
girl!

Is but a home-preserve of game for kings,
A coop where liquorish Barons fat betimes
Their fowls of whiter meat; and ruffian losels
Poach—when the glutton lord o' the manor sleeps!
Go not thou back to Godstowe: 'tis in vain!
The grating is no bar, the shrine no sanctum,
The veil itself to dead-cold Chastity
No shroud from violating eyes, no cyprus
Wherein her pure composèd limbs may keep
Their icy form and bloodless tint, untouch'd,
Unstain'd by sacrilegious hands! They would
Rifle a heaven-descended Saint, if tangible,
Who stood for adoration on the altar!

Rosamond. I know the times are fearful.

De Clifford.

Better far

Than trust their lawlessness, trust to his love
Who has oft sworn thee his next Queen. Dame Eleanor,—
Besides that she might mother thee in years,—
Drinks a slow poison daily—enviousness!

Rosamond. His Majesty, though generous, most sincere
Of purpose—

De Clifford. Move not then, I say, his pride
By seeming doubt; nor stir and thwart at once
His hot desires by over-coyness. Be
Trustful, and thou wilt make him more trust-worthy.
Mine own ambition prompted me before
To weave the bond between ye, as a cord
Whereby to climb up silkily myself
Unto dame Fortune's chamber of intrigue:
But now my love for thee—my fears—my hopes—
Ambitious hopes for thee alone, my child!—

Prompt the same counsel. Do not break that bond :
 'Twill be a cable to thy safest mooring
 In the fierce storm which shall take up my dirge
 And fill the land with sighs.

Rosamond. What mean you, Sir ?

De Clifford. I am already half i' the other world
 And catch a glimpse of fate !—It shall be so !
 England will soon be rent from sea to sea,
 And throne and altar slide to the abyss !—
 Now lead me in, for I am faint and chill.

Rosamond. O for this sluggard leech !—he crawls, though
 life
 Is in his lips !

De Clifford. And death too !—It will come
 Quickly enough without him !

Rosamond. He will give you
 Wormwood, if you're so bitter. Come, you jest—
 That 's well ! There 's hope when the heart laughs,
 Even though the brow be grave.—Lean on me, Sir !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

A Walk in the Labyrinth.

Enter a Physician blindfold, led by GABEL.

Physician. Am I to go much farther in the dark ?

Gabel. Only one other round, and a quirk, Sir.

Physician. Bless me I think I have gone as many as
 an ass in a mill !—This muffling is worse than that of a
 Moorish damsel, for she at least has the use of her eyes :
 mine are no more use to me than if they were glazed with
 green lead like a stuffed owl's.

Gabel. Come on, doctor: don't hurt that post with your head. What a pity!

Physician. Pity! pity you didn't speak a little sooner!—Pity forsooth?

Gabel. Ay, pity on my life Sir, that such a learned head as yours should have got such a crack!

Physician. Take care it happen not again, or thy own numbskull shall get a crack, and that about the nape of the neck too!—'Tis hanging-matter to mistreat a man of my importance, let me assure thee.

Gabel. Lord, Sir, are you a man of importance? I never could ha' guessed it!—Come on again—Stoop, Sir, like a goose under a gate, stoop!
[*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to an Inner Court. Re-enter Physician and GABEL.

Gabel. You are to stand here, Sir, awhile, by yourself, please you Master man of importance!

Physician. What, still in the dark!

Gabel. Why yes, doctor; every dunce can stand in the dark—'tis only shutting your eyes and looking straight forward before you. It is my way, and a shrewd one, trust me.

Physician. I do believe thou art skilful in standing i' the dark!—Get thee gone, for a perfect dunce! and send me a leader who is not absolute knave as well.

Gabel. If he is to be found, with all haste doctor! [*Exit.*]

Physician. Pestiferous lout!—There is in simple-hood Ofttimes a sleek-soft, sleepy cunningness Which moves more bile than roguery direct. But I've that here perchance will bring ye begging To Charity's bleak door, from this warm berth, For swine's soup and black bread!—I can avenge My sovereign-queen and self at the same time;

'Tis good craft to hit two birds with one bolt,
 Though but a sparrow and a cock o' the woods.—
 Mum! I hear ringing footsteps on the stones,
 Heavy as hammers' clang; some horse curvets
 Hither upon two legs—

Enter FIER-À-BRAS.

Fier-à-bras. Physician, follow me.

Physician. What! in these winkers,
 Clamped on me, like a hoop about a hogshead?

Fier-à-bras. Take this strong rein into thy hand: now
 follow!

Physician. O Avicen! thy son playing bo-peep!—
 Hold fast, good sir, or I shall fall on my sinciput. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

The Court before King's-Manour Palace, Clarendon. A Sentinel on guard. Several persons assembled. JOHN of OXFORD and GEOFFREY RADEL.

John of O. What breeds the Council better than debate
 I marvel? It sits long.

Radel. Would it were up!
 The wind is icy-keen within this court.—
 Hey! here comes Walter all a-muck!—Wrap up!
 It blows steel-needles!—

Enter MAPES as from the Council Room. After him DE BROKE.

Mapes. Pewh! a delicate storm
 To that within!—Could'st stretch thy neck
 Door-wards, and yon tall axe-man not behead thee,
 Thou'dst hear a storm indeed!

John of O. We have heard much tumult.

Radel. Tell us, good Walter! what is't like?

Mapes. What like?

The roll of thunder, roar of seas, and groan
Of heart-burnt mountains, crash of cataracts,
All mingled dense as the dark angels' cry
Of mutual torment; or those threatening voices
From Chaos 'gainst Creation, yell'd by night,
Which make the firm stars tremble in their spheres.

John of O. Englisht,—a mighty hubbub.

Mapes. I do assure you—

The roof rebounds as from a Cyclops' forge
At full-sledge work above it; you expect
The stones to fall each moment on your head—

John of O. Well, well! but does the Primate yield?

Mapes. Our Bishops

Stand front to front as on a chess-board; some
Are the King's bishops, some the Archbishop's bishops:
These be the fiery tongues that make the blaze
Hottest, and keep the fiercest bicker up;
To which the laity's is but lambent flame
Crackling and spitting. These, claw'd close together,
As mill-wheels tooth in tooth, each urges on
His giddy-pated neighbour, shoulders him,
Kisses him hatefully with bespattering lips,
Or stares quite mute with ire.

De Broke. Furies in frocks!

Mapes. I marvel the walls bilge not, with so much
Foul fluency as swags within them.—Peter!

Enter PETER of BLOIS.

What news? what news? how goes it on? is't done?

Peter. 'Tis done—and undone—we are all undone!
I know not what! They say there are no wolves
In England since the Conquest—there's a den of them!

John of O. But tell us, will the Archbishop brave it out,
So obstinate?

Peter. He stands like twice his size,
The sole immoveable thing in that commotion!

Mapes. I think he hath a cloven hoof, to stand
So firm, on but two legs!

Peter. I fear he'll have
What's worse,—a cloven head!

John of O. Doth the king speak?

Mapes. The king speaks thunder-claps; and every word
Blasts where it strikes!—'Tis fearful even to friends.

De Broke. I ne'er saw steed upon the edge of battle
With such a bloodshot eye or nostril broader!
Methinks the very fierceness of his glance
Cuts like a shining sword.

Peter. There will be mischief!
Heaven guard his grace, the Primate!

Sentinel. Haro! Haro!

[FITZ-URSE, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACI, BRITO, with
men-at-arms, rush across brandishing their battle-
axes, and enter the hall. DE BROKE joins them.]

Mapes. 'Dame! this looks serious.

John of O. Will they stain their souls
With such a crimson and redeemless sin
As murder of God's High-Priest? It is horrible!

Mapes. What care these swashing blades? One thing to
them
High-priest or heretic! Are not their acts
All of the one blush-colour? Their most innocent,
Rapine and ravishment! Men bred up in blood,
They shed it free as wine.

John of O. A Christless race!

Peter. Mapes, jest not now:—Can their thick senses,
judge you,

Tell the fine difference 'tween sacred priest-flesh
And popular carrion?

Mapes. Not, though that were smoked
In the rich fume o' the chalice 'till it smell'd
A whole aisle off!

Peter. *Ventre!*—I am a priest!—
I'll back to Blois!—*Courez, mes enfans! courez!*—
Sauve qui peut! [Runs off.]

Mapes. Ha! ha! ha!

Radel. Walter Mapes,
Thou can'st do grinning mischief like a monkey!

Mapes. Who could be grave to see a man frightened, like
a crow from his provender, by a hollow rattle or red rag
shaken in the wind?

John of O. If danger did not make all things look
serious, how ridiculous does it make most of our actions
really!

Mapes. Come, we will all laugh at this Frenchman to-
morrow!

John of O. Heaven grant it! [Exeunt omnes.]

SCENE VI.

An Apartment in the Primate's house at Clarendon.

*Enter BECKET with a sour stateliness; followed by the
Bishop of NORWICH, and GRyme.*

Becket. Sign all of ye!—Not even my ink's black cross
Shall sanctify his godless *Constitutions!*
I am no reed,—to bend at every whiff
Of blustering tyranny!—no supple flagger!
Ye Suffragans infirm!

Norwich. My gracious lord!

Will you then be the oak, whose testy pride
Lowered not its head, till torn up by the roots?

Becket. I will,—a stout, stern, soil-bound English oak,
Shelt'ring a lowly church, a pious people,
Which hears the wind's fierce whistle through his boughs
Age after age, and scorns it—as a whistle!—
Had ye but stood like me—by me—behind me—
This storm had puffed its full, and we but waved it
Off, with scarce-raised arms. We had not lost
An acorn!

Norwich. Please you, sir, our very lives!
Marked you not those grim hatchet-men, that shook
Aloft bright edges through the hall, to show
Where death might drop from?

Becket. Tut, a trick terrific
To fool old babes into obedience! Me
It fooled nor quelled.

Gryme. Thrice Sanctimonious! here
Are lords who crave admittance.

Becket. I'll not see them:
Begging-faced Bishops! paupers for pity's dole!

Gryme. Your very venerable Grace! I spy
A red broad hat, and leopard crest, among them.

Becket. O! 'tis the Cardinal and the Uncle of the King:
Let them come in! (*Exit GRYPME.*) This seems respect
at least.

*Enter Cardinal PHILIP, Earl of CORNWALL, and the
GRAND PRIOR.*

Cardinal. Highest and mightiest Prelate of the realm,
We come, negotiators of Peace, if not
Plenipotential to conclude it, hoping
Your Grace is thereto well disposed.

Becket. Why not,
Most Eminent? Within me all is calm

As the hushed sea between his ebb and flood,
 Balancing when to roll.—Wherefore should I
 Love not this halcyon state?—love it not round me,
 Well as within me? Can the sea less whelm
 When smooth than rough, the headlong who disturb
 The stillness of its pure and deepy bosom?
 Kings—moonstruck kings! may lash that sea to foam,
 But not my mildness. They upon its rage
 Their puerile chains will as successful throw
 As upon Becket's ire,—if ever roused!

Cornwall. My lord! my lord! you take too much upon
 you—

Becket. My lord! my lord! you take much more to
 say so!

Who am I but the Sacerdotal King
 Of this great state? who you?—a king impossible!

Cardinal. You do forget your halcyon calm.

Becket. The ox

Of quietest front sublime, may be yet stung
 To anger, by a gadfly! What's your need with me?

Cornwall. If you are bland again, we would say thus—

Becket. Cannot his Eminence, the Legate, speak?

'Twere best, methinks, on church affairs. I listen!

Cornwall (aside). If this pride fall not, Lucifer's
 never did!

Cardinal. Let me, in mine Italian humour, serve
 For spokesman, though unwilling, to this mission.—
 It ne'er has been the policy of Rome
 To play the cat's-paw.

Cornwall (aside). No, the lion's rather
 Making a prize of all!

Cardinal. Nor meddle much
 With the hot instruments of civil broils,
 Except as mediator 'tween those who sway
 Such utensils, (you'll pardon, on the feast

Of good St. Hilary, my lepid vein
 Which means to soothe, not stir!)—Now, my dear lord,
 Let me approach you in that blessed wise
 Of Peace-maker. A little hear me, pray :
 The Constitutions, called of Clarendon—

Becket. Not so—they are not passed, wanting my sign !

Cornwall (*aside*). How hushed a sea he is !

Cardinal. Well then, these Articles

To be called Constitutions with your sign—

Becket. Never !—What Sixteen Articles which make

The mitre a huge tassel to the crown !

—A bare appendage !—the grave Bishops merely

Chief foot-kissers of the King, not of the Pope,

Sole osculation, sacred and sublime !—

Which make all priests what'er amenable

Like common subjects to the Common Laws,

And spiritual culprits even mount the block

Where secular caitiffs die ! O monstrous ! monstrous !

Most despot Articles which make the King

Head of the Church, supreme, unqualified,

Throughout his whole dominions !—'Tis impossible !

Can ne'er in England come to pass such things !

Cardinal. My lord, you state them with too round a mouth

Of eloquence, too loosely large ; at least

As we do understand them.

Cornwall. They are no more

In substance than those which at Westminster

You gave assent to.

Becket. Be't so ! Why repeat it ?

If it were given, 'twas given, and there's an end.

Cornwall. Pardon me, humbly I beseech your grace,

But that assent was far too vague and general,

So boundless that it bound to nought at all !

Becket. I'll give none other. That's a word of Fate !

[*Retires.*]

Grand Prior. O ! miserable kingdom !

Becket. What wouldst have ?

Grand Prior. A patriot's wish ! an old man's wish !—
peace ! peace !

Cornwall. A good man's thou might'st add—a wise man's
too !

Becket. Ay, and a fool's as well ! The idiot loves
To bask against a sunny wall his days,
With arms like dead boughs hanging, vacant eyes
Fixed on the straw he sees not, and his mouth
Gaping so idly it chops not the mess
Laid 'twixt his teeth : He wishes, and has, peace :
Is that to sample us ?

Cornwall. You are too keen
And subtle a logician to be coped with
By us, my lord. But there are reasoners
Upon the side of these same Articles,
You cannot easily silence.

Becket. Which be they ?

Cornwall. Three hundred broad-mouthed bugles, whose
Echoing through each portcullis, will call up [loud blare
The embodied Baronage of this realm, as one
Mail-clad Colossus.

Becket. I call down another
More dread—the Angel of the English Church,
With thunders armed,—whose very breath will scorch
Your idol into ashes !

Cardinal. Brother, perpend !
You bring not king and kingdom under ban
Without the Legate's voice : you are but chorus
To his pre-eminent curse !

Becket. Ay, but that Legate
May be of other name than *Philip* then ;
Of clime less out-land to us ; and of mood
Less that of a good easy man than thine !

Norwich (to *GRYME*). His Legateship had better have continued

To pour some oil on these contentious waves,
And haply smoothen them.

Gryme. Had he more oil
In his soft tongue than any whale, 'twould not
Have stilled the master-wave at least!

Cornwall. With us
Are all the bishops—

Becket. Traitors to God and me!
Who treble-bolt against themselves each blade
Of heaven's already forked fires!—Avaunt!

[*To NORWICH, who approaches humbly.*]

Touch not my hem with thy Iscariot kisses!

Cardinal. He is too much for us—'tis all in vain!

Grand Prior (*falling on his knees to BECKET*). Wilt thou
spurn my grey hairs?—and from thy hem
Dash these half-childish tears?

Becket. Richard de Hastings!
Heir of the oldest Norman name renowned!
Grand Prior of the Templars! thou kneel thus,
Sacred with age and station?

Grand Prior. I am almost
Mere earth already: bowed towards the dust,
To which I moulder inly, by the weight
Of years and ills: 'tis little lowliness
To kneel, where I must lay me down so soon.

Becket. Prythee, arise—it not beseems thee—

Grand Prior. Never!
Till thou descend from what beseems not thee!—
I am as fixed in humbleness, as thou
In pride!—The shame of my prostration hang
On thee alone!—My tears, an old man's tears,
Damning as blood, be on thee, and cry up
To piteous heaven for vengeance!

Becket. Hold!—this hath
The awe of very anathema in its sound,
Though launched by lips unqualified!—Rise, sir!
'Tis as the Patriarch Israel on his knees
Before another Joseph.—I am moved:
That's much.

Grand Prior. Then say thou grant'st my prayer, good
son!

Becket. I'll sign these Articles—with a mere clause
For mine own dignity—that they shall stand
As laws of the kingdom, *Salvo ordine nostro.*

Grand Prior. That salvo is more worthy of a sophist
Than of a deep philosopher, my son!
Ill Latinists though we barons be, 'tis plain
Those learned words mean—*Saving your own Order*—
And to sign Articles with such reserve,
Is but to say,—these shall stand laws, when for us,
But when against us, by no means!—'Tis but
To sign in joint-bond for a general debt,
With this provision—such bond shall be binding
On all who have subscribed it—*Save ourselves!*—
My son, be honester and more politic.

Becket. Thou too, Grand Prior! join this league?—
thou too,
A military Monk, and altar-sworn
To be true soldier of the Church!—Wilt thou
Stab at her thus through me?

Grand Prior. Alas! I am liker
To fall on my own sword for patriot sorrow,
If now such death were virtue:—I am old,
And feeble, very feeble!—All my strength
Is in my hoary locks!—but I would spend it,
Laying that white appeal before thy feet,
To save the Church and thee from their great foe—

Becket. Why that's the king!

Grand Prior. Thyself!—thou 'rt her chief foe,
And thine own likewise!—Suicide prepense,
Parricide of thy Holy Mother the Church!—

Cornwall (to NORWICH). Truth comes from Heaven, most
sure! How it inspires
That weak old man with vigour strange, and sense
So super-natural to his own!

Norwich. He pauses :
He draws hard breath—he swoons—

Grand Prior. Both—both shall perish—
Hark! how the King raves!—See those glistening swords!—
The Primate grasps the altar—blood! blood! blood!
Save him!—His brains are on the floor!—O Becket!
Hadst thou but listened when the old man prayed,
This sacrilege had not been! [Swoons away.]

Becket. Great God! I yield!—
Raise thee, good father! I have signed the scrolls—
Thy prayer is heard!

Grand Prior. Now lay me i' the tomb—
[He is borne off.]

At Battle-Abbey, with mine ancestors—
I 'm a Crusader, let my legs be crossed;
Mark you?—Go tell the king—that—that—I'm dead.
[Scene closes.]

SCENE VII.

ELEANOR'S Closet.

ELEANOR and the Physician.

Eleanor. But wherefore not, old dotard! have at once
Poisoned him?

Physician. "Poisoned!"—speak not so broad, your
highness;
You talk of poison as a common dose

Like coloured *aqua pura*, with us,—*ditto, ditto*,
To be repeated every night at bed-time!

'Tis not just so.

Eleanor. How long will he be dying?

Physician. Is not this chamber very old?

Eleanor. What mean'st?

Physician. Is there no craziness about it?

Eleanor. Some

I think within it!

Physician. Ha! ha! ha!—But think you
Are not the walls cracked here or there?

Eleanor. As much as
The emptier chamber of thy brain.

Physician. No more?—

I did but dread those seamy auricles
Which oft to little ears without betray
Secrets most close, and with their mystic echoes
Magnify all that's breathed, as the lithe horn ..
Reverberates mightily the small bray of man.

Eleanor. I do not understand your chymic speech:
Talk plain as me. Have you made sure the death
Of old De Clifford?

Physician. Hush! hush!—Thus it stands:
I've given him—Who's behind that tapestry there?
It moves!—it doth conceal some prowler!—

Eleanor. True;
A felon watcher; go you, pull him out
By the ears, still longer than your own.

Physician. Ho! ho!

[*Pulling aside the curtain.*

Feline you meant, not felon: here is nought
Save old Grimalkin!

Eleanor. Watching for a mouse
Less timorous than thee!—Go on, sir!—Now,
What dost thou gape at?

Physician. Here's a sliding pannel
Under the fringe!—I see it!

Eleanor. Cunning fox!
That dost mistake a hencoop for a trap!—
'Tis an *armoire*, a cupboard, where I keep
Some cates and cordials for refection:
I see thou smell'st at it like other vermin.

Physician. Truly a glass or so of *aqua vitæ*,
Most gracious Mistress, were restorative
After these fainting fits—

Eleanor. Help thyself; go!

Physician (*filling a glass*). This *aqua vitæ* is not that same
draught
You spake so freely of distributing?—
Not simple *aqua mortis*, no?

Eleanor. Thou fool!
Thy low suspicions almost make me smile.
Dost think I'd poison thee with *aqua vitæ*,
When ratsbane's to be had?

Physician. Faith, that is true!
'Tis cheap and potent death; but leaves the corse
Unsightlier than should be, livid, and drawn
Distort, as 'twere, within by tenter-hooks,
With its last agonies upon it featured
Too strong, and tale-telling. It is not safe,
Never make use of it!

Eleanor. Not even on thee:
I will be guided by thy old experience
In safe and skilful murder.—Now, good doctor,
Go on.

Physician. This poisonous talk hath almost choaked me.
But to our case. The old lord ere I came
Had long been under care o' the President
Himself of our grave College, an adept
At manslaughter—who hath saved me much trouble.

Eleanor. Thou wert the first.

Physician. Pardon me, gracious Madam :
Ere me had President *Disease* been with him,
Under whom doctors but licentiates are ;
I found the patient well prepared ; for he
Had Death's pale brand upon his wrinkled brow
Marking him for the tomb. I only minister'd
A gentle—quickenner.

Eleanor. Hastener, hurrier ?

Physician. Madam,
Nought as I live, but somewhat—to help Nature,
As we physicians say,—for he was dying ;
Merely instead of a preservative,
A small exasperative,—nothing more !

Eleanor. Then how soon is he dust ?

Physician. I could not say
At all !—but, as I guess, he should be in
His rattles about now.

Eleanor. That 's well !—here 's gold.
And the gay Rose, didst drop a canker in it,
To kill it quickly too ?

Physician. Madam, impossible !
Were I so reckless and precipitate
As you would have me, all would be found out,
And we both hang'd together !—I'm too bold,
I should hang miles below your Majesty !—
Besides that, Mistress Rose sips like the birds
Only pure water, which all minglement
Would stain ; and, like them too, cats, I believe,
But what she culls herself. 'Tis hard to syrup her ;
Nathless, I'll find a way—

Eleanor. Do, and thou 'lt find it
Strown with gold blocks to build a palace of !—
Meantime go brew me something rich with venom,
For household use.

Physician. Dear Madam, be discreet !

Eleanor. Discretion is a virtue for the mean,
Not for the mighty !

Physician. I 'm of the mighty ones !
Thou ne'er hast done half the fine knaveries
With thy bold indiscretion, which my "meanness"
Hath wrought unknown in every civil land !—
But for my exquisite discretion, I
Had never scaped the tithe, nor been admitted
As a preserver, where I have proved, and may
Again prove, a destroyer !

Eleanor. I have chafed
Thy noble pride in villany, it seems,
So loud a claim thou lay'st to bear the bell.

Physician. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !—your Highness might
contend !

Eleanor. Begone, sir, as you came ; down those wry stairs,
Through the court vaults, and out by the sewer.—Begone !

Physician. It is the safest way, though none of the
sweetest ! [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Before the Temple Church, at Northampton.

DE BOHUN, CLARE, and LEICESTER.

Clare. His grace was very meek !

De Bohun. He almost prayed

On mouth and nose, as I have seen a Saracen !

Leicester. And with what unction rare he scrubb'd the feet
Of thirteen Beggars, like a polisher

Who files the brazen toes of tarnish'd Saints
Clean-yellow !

Clare. But the best was, when he mix'd
Among the poorer sort ; 'twas as King Log
Leapt on by swarming frogs !—how patiently
He bore their foul splay hands on him, and saw
Them wide agape with wonder at the lowliness
Of such a heaven-sent thing !

Leicester. Four ancient hags
With beards like leopardesses, skins, and claws,
Grossly familiar, would almost have torn him
To quarters, each one striving to grasp all,
So fierce their ravenous affection !

De Bohun. See you
Whither this sycophancy to the base people,
And over-sanctity tends ?

Clare. O plain ! He needs
Support against the King, Barons, and Bishops
Assembled now at Northampton to try him.

Leicester. Yea, he will find 'twas not so light a fault
To break his oath at Clarendon late signed,
He would observe the Constitutions !—Shame
Upon the Pope too that absolved him from it,
As easily as for breaking a love vow !

De Bohun. By Tyrmagaunt ! the King will make him
In something bitterer than ashes ! [rue it

Clare. Harry
Hath so much of the royal lion in him,
That even when playing, faith, he gives a pat
With closed paw, worse than an earnest blow
From other hand ! Now that he's sworn with rage
Heaven help the hunter who has goaded him !

Leicester. He 'll do such witty wicked things too !—What
are here ?
Some of the royal grooms.

Enter several Grooms.

I'll lay my spurs

They have committed some new piece of roguery
Worth hearing!—Well, good knaves, why d' ye laugh?

Groom. My lord, at the brave guests we have just left at the Archbishop's inn, and their gambols there!

Leicester. Guests? gamboling guests at the Primate's!

Groom. We warrant they'll do justice to his stock of provender: not a grain of barley have they had these two days, that their stomachs might be a good guage for it.

Leicester. Whom do you speak of—beggars, base-born churls?

Groom. No, no, sir!—all high-bred as Pegasus himself; and bear their necks so proud, his Grace would fear even to caress them. If he attempted to curry their hides, they would kick his Sanctity into the kennel.

Leicester. This fellow is so full of his trade, he can only speak in its figures. You do not mean your horses, villains! that you have left gamboling and gorging at the Archbishop's inn?

Groom. No, Sir Knight, not our horses, but the King's—a score of them! all in his grace's saloon and parlours, for lack of better stables! A dozen of ourselves remain to wait on the guests, and see they have enough of forage and litter.

Leicester. I told you what a pestilent wit the king could be!

Clare. This is horse-play indeed!

Groom. Ha! ha! ha! yes, sir, playing at all-fours!—plenty of horse-laughter too, ha! ha! ha!—there is such whinnying and squealing and flinging up of hoofs, and all fierce racketing and royster, that 'tis as good as if the inn were haunted by the Nightmare and her brood of foals, the noise sounds so infernal! Ha! ha! ha!—his grace himself, I think, will go prancing mad!

Clare. But was this done by his Highness's order, sirrah?

Groom. Can't say, my lord; I only did Master Adam the equerry's.—Come on, Sim! come on!—Ha! ha! ha!

[*Exeunt Grooms laughing.*]

Leicester. There needs no order to the imps of mischief,
From the great Father of it! nor to these
Mock-devils, from the king: their piercing eyes
Catch from his single fiery glance full light
Of what shall please him, when himself scarce knows it.
'Tis marvellous the kind of intuition,
And quick invention, even fools will have,
If mischief 's to be done!

Clare. There 's no one thing
Perchance could gall the pride of our haught prelate
More than this insult!

De Bohun. His ill-faith deserves it!

Leicester. We shall be late to Council. Mark the sun.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The Council-room.

HENRY, DE LUCY, CORNWALL, DE EYNSFORD, *Arch-
bishop of YORK*; *Bishops of WINCHESTER, SALISBURY,
LONDON, NORWICH*; GLANVILLE.

Henry. Glanville!—there is a thing I'd say to you
Before we enter on this business.—

What was it? Pshaw! my head is in the mists,
Or they in it!—O!—true!—We must not, Glanville,
Let these poor squabbles 'tween that priest and us
Prejudice nobler matters. You can guess
What's in my mind.

Glanville. I judge, Sire, as you speak
Of noble matters, you must mean the cause

You've had so much at heart—the restitution,
 Betterment, stablishment, and general use
 Of that, long fallen into desuetude,
 That noblest of all noble things which man
 Ever invented for behoof of man,
 Trial of all accused, by their sworn peers
 Called jurors; and the name of the said practice,—
 Which shall go sounding down to latest times
 Join'd with your own, as its chief Advocate,
 Trial by Jury.

Henry. Yea, good Ranulph, yea;
 But you great lawyers, in your deep research,
 And dabbling in a flood of words, oft sink
 Out of the common sight, like birds called divers,
 Than which you're more long-winded. Mend that fault!—
 You have been pondering o'er the theme, I see,
 And that was well. Draw up your thoughts upon it
 For my perusal, and in plain short terms;
 D'ye hear?

Glanville. They shall be brief, my gracious liege!

Enter DE BOHUN, CLARE, and LEICESTER.

Henry. Ha! whence come ye?

Leicester. From the round church, my liege,
 Beside us here; where Becket was at mass.

Henry. So! ye look grave: as if he being at prayers,
 Did more than merely recommend his soul
 To God and ours to Satan. Heard ye aught strange?

De Bohun. Nought strange in such a darer, though 'twere
 monstrous
 In any other man!

Henry. What was that, ha?

Clare. Besides his affectation palpable
 Save to the mole-eyed people, of distress,
 Disaster'd state, rapt piety, resignation,

Sanctified patience, sufferance supreme,
 By dress, air, act, long moan, loud sob, large tears,—
 He ordered as *Introit* to the service
 With blasphemous self-allusion—*Princes sat*
And spake against me.

Henry. O ! he would set up
 As mark'd for martyrdom !—with that angel face
 Of his,—the Syrian blackmoor's son !—Himself
 Persecutor of his king !

Leicester. He comes, my liege :
 His Meekness comes !

*Enter BECKET, arrayed in purple and pall, with his Crosier
 elevated, and a proud retinue.*

Henry. Heyday ! the Pope of Canterbury !
 Or Babylonian Lady all a-flame
 For hot contést !—What think ye, cousins, are we
 To have our heads broke with the pastoral Cross ?

Becket. I bear it for my sole protection !

Henry. Ay !
 What dread'st thou ? else than paying thy just debts
 To me and to the state ? Dost need protection
 Against thy creditors, like a prodigal ?—
 Glanville, that scroll !—

[*Reading.*

Item ; three hundred pounds,—
 Which thou didst levy upon Eye and Berkham,
 Lately thy honours ; *Item ; five hundred marks,*
I lent thee at Toulouse ; Item, five hundred,—
 For which I stood thy surety to a Jew,
 Whom thou dealt'st much with, till thy credit broke,
 What time thou wallowedst in the wanton streams
 Of Luxury most dissolute ; Besides
 An *item*, which to small rogues we set down
 Plain theft, but to thy Grace embezzlement,—
 Forty-four thousand marks, the balance due

From rents, proceeds, and profits of all prelacies,
 Abbeys, and baronies, by thee administer'd
 When Chancellor. *Item*—

Becket. My liege! my liege! my liege!

Henry. Oh! I am then thy sovereign yet, it seems!

Most affable subject, still to call me liege!—

(*To himself*) I've snapt that nerve which keeps up most
 men's pride,

The purse-string!

Becket. I did never lack allegiance.—

But for my lavishness as Chancellor,

Call it more loose than his who lets the wealth

Of 'Tagus' bed roll down by golden shoals

Into the wasteful ocean,—'twas a thing

Praised, as magnificence in the minister

Which made for the more glory of the master,

Whose humour now condemns it!—Was he, Sire,

Who had been found a fraudulent Chancellor

Deem'd fit to be a Primate?

Henry. 'Tis not what

He had been deem'd, but what we've proved him since.

Becket. Crying injustice! able to bring down
 Those spheres in molten fragments on mankind,
 But that 'twould crush the guiltless with the guilty!

Henry. Thank heaven we have one milk-white soul among
 Thou scarlet sinner!—Why—My gorge is swoln [us!—
 With names, not huge enough for thy vast insolence!—
 Tell me this—thou—who claim'st the Saintship next
 Vacant i' the Calendar,—this, Immaculate!—

'Thou didst subscribe in these law-guarded terms,

'Legally, with good faith, and without fraud,

Without reserve,'—to certain Constitutions,

Which thou abjur'st now: does such perjury

Merit no lapidation from the spheres

If they did hurl their hissing firestones at us?

Becket. There was no perjury !

Henry. Hear this ! hear this !—
Sun-dwelling Truth, hast thou not one bright dart
To strike him through the brain with ?—Ye, grave
Suffragans ! [*To the Bishops.*
Did your supreme here (give me your corporate voice)
Swear to our Constitutions, yea or no ?

Bishops. Yea !

Becket. Foolish children that would judge their father !—
I kept to what I swore, those Constitutions,
While they were such : but when a power beyond
Thine to enact, annull'd them, how could I
Observe non-entities ?

Henry. Fraud within fraud !
In this same wise you may play fast and loose
With any oath ; may be, for aught I know,
My very true, sworn subject, on proviso,
Till you're absolved by bull into a traitor !

Becket. His Holiness can ne'er absolve, except
To save or serve the Church—

Henry. Yes, you may load
The winds with loyal oaths, to place your heart
Between mine and all stabbers, yet, even now,
Bear in one sleeve a permit to kill kings,
And in the other a poniard !

Becket. My dear liege !—
This is uncharitable.

Henry. To serve the Church !
To serve the Church, man !—Did the Romish altar
Burn for thy sovereign, as a sacrifice,
Thou'rt bound to slaughter him !—O Thomas ! Thomas !
Could I e'er think that thou wouldst pierce the heart
Of thy kind, loving, generous, royal master ?

Becket. Not generous now, to say I'd pierce thy
heart !

Henry. Thou hast done so!—if not with knife or brand,
 With keen-cold weapon of ingratitude,
 More poignant still!—But 'tis no matter: go!
 There is a gulf as wide as heaven from hell
 Between us, across which 'tis vain to think
 Of ever shaking hands!—I am thy enemy,
 To thy perdition or my own!

Becket. I know it,
 So would betake me into banishment,
 And save a sacrilege unto thy soul.

Henry. Good man!—Thou wouldst betake thyself to
 Louis,
 To the French court, which breeds intriguants,
 Fast as Lutetian filth breeds vermin vile,
 Against my kingdom.—Twice thou hadst fled thither,
 But that the roaring winds, our rough allies,
 Forbade thy ship to fetch and carry treason!
 My very seas rose up, upon my side,
 Against thy steps!—Stay, and be baited here,
 Till thy proud dewlaps drop with sweat and foam!—
 As a first humbement, thy goods and chattels
 Be all confiscate for contempt of court
 And breach of fealty, in not attending
 Our summons, when John Mareschal appeal'd thee
 About the manour of Pageham—

Becket. On that summons
 I, being sick, sent four good household knights
 To plead for me. Was this contempt? Was this
 Devoir left unperform'd?—Yea, when the cause
 Itself, was weigh'd at mine own spiritual Court
 In scales which might have dropp'd from Libra stars,
 As nice as Conscience trims with trembling hand—

Henry. Ha! ha!

Becket. Sir! Sir! 'tis truth; and he who here
 By royal subornation brings that cause,

Would blush for it,—but before this grave Council,
Like it iniquitous!

[*The Barons start up, and BECKET'S train advance. BECKET raises his Crosier and HENRY his Sceptre between them.*]

Henry. These sacred wands,
Not unanointed swords, decide the fray!—
Archbishop, from thy last words, if no more,
I see thou art a self-devoted man
Unto destruction imminent!—Take your way.

Winchester. My liege, accept two thousand marks from him,
In lieu of all demands.

Henry. I will not, Winchester!
But thou another froward priest, de Blois,
Whose mitre coped thy brother Stephen's crown,
Shalt pronounce sentence for the full amount.

[*They retire some paces.*]

Norwich (to BECKET). My lord, beseech you on my knees,
submit,

Or you, the Church, and all of us are lost!

Salisbury (to him). We cannot be thy sureties for such sum,
Though for the less we might.

York (to him). Take exhortation
From one a Primate like thyself, and moved
By most disinterested love,—resign
Thy see, to gain full peace, release, and pardon.

London (to him). 'Twas thou thyself who led'st us to
subscribe

The Constitutions, yet, when all too late,
Wouldst have us now proclaim ourselves, with thee,
Rebels to royal power, and renegades
To our own oaths!

Becket. Folliott, thou shalt be ever
A stench i' the nostril of posterity!—
Thou art corrupted, man!—Primate of York,

This pall is much too weighty for thy shoulders!—
 Sarum, I always knew thee as a gryphon
 Keeping thy claw fast on thy hoarded gold!—
 Poor Norwich, thou art pitiful!—Ye Suffragans,

[Turning to the other Bishops who implore him.

Ay, who will suffer again, again, again,
 (Spare me the pertinent quibble!) all the ills
 That tyranny can heap on callous meanness,—
 Repose your deprecativè arms! they 'll soon
 Have beggar's-work enough, when ye are turn'd
 By foes o' the Church, 'gainst whom ye raise no finger,
 To mendicant monks and almsmen!—Stay me not,
 I will go forward!

York. There's no stopping some men

Upon their course down the steep fall of RUIN!

Becket. 'Tis plain, Sir King!—lord of these lower skies!
 Where you point all your thunder-bolts. But let them
 Break first on this bare head, as yon poor image
 Placed shelterless aloft that pinnacle
 Bears with mild brow the elemental brunt
 To shield his fane beneath!—Thou hast resolved
 I know, thy throne shall rise above all height
 Upon the ruins of the downcast Church,
 Thy Babel-towering throne, from which shall come
 Confusion o'er the land!—Have then thy will!
 On this offensive mount, flourish a time,
 Perish eternally!

Henry. At thy behest?

Becket. There is a throne, compared to earthly ones,
 Higher than heaven above the hills: dread thence
 Thunderings, which shall shake thy throne to dust,
 And bury thyself beneath it, and thy barons
 Send down with blasted fronts, to be the spurn
 Of devils less degraded towards their king!

Henry. All this, because I summon a state debtor,

Punish a peculator, and attach
The goods of a disrespectful feudatory—
By Mahound, that 's strange doctrine!

Becket.

Mere pretences

To crush the Church in me!—I do appeal
'Gainst all your sentences and penalties
Unto the Pope; and henceforth do commit
To his safeguard, myself and my whole See!

Barons. High-treason, an appeal to Rome!

Becket.

High-traitor,

I then!—too high for ye to touch!—though graspers
For whom the sacristy holds no sacred things!—
Nay, scowl on others, king!—it daunts not me!—
Thou—thou shouldst rather quail beneath my frown!—
Thy sword may kill the body, but this staff,
Sword of the Militant Church, which I do wield,
Can kill the soul!

Henry.

Pronounce his sentence straight!

He is deprived of all his lands and holdings!

Becket. I will not drink pollution through mine ears!

Breathe it not, Winchester! till I am gone,
Lest it scorch up thy lips to whitest ashes!

Henry. Hear how the wolf can howl!

Becket.

Since impious men

Whom strength makes wrongful, wrongfulness makes
strong,

Plunder-swoln, gross with produce of all crime,
Band them against the battlements of heaven
On earth, to wit the bulwarks of the Church—

Henry. He means his turreted Elysium

At Saltwood-park,—to touch which we are Titans!

Becket. And have decreed its sole defender here,
Me!—me!—most violently trampled down—
Their mounting-step to that assault sacrilegious,—

Henry. Why thou wert far above our reach but now?

Becket. Since prayer, plaint, rhetoric's mingled honey
and gall,
Cannot withhold them from the fathomless pit
Gaping beneath their steps,—if they must follow
Satan's dark inspirations to such deeds,
Flagitious, dreadless, godless—which mute heaven
Permits, but weeps at—good men's mazement,
The angels' horror—

Henry. Wipe from thy blest mouth
That surge of foam !

Becket. Since then, Perverse ! thou seem'st
Desperate on self and state destruction both,
What more but this can parting Becket say,—
Thine and Hell's will be done !

[*Exit.*

Henry. The wolf's dog-mad !

[*Scene closes.*

SCENE III.

A Street in Northampton.

After some time, enter JOHN of OXFORD.

John of O. How still and dead-struck seems the air,
which late

Was but one maddening whirl ! The pause itself
More fearful yet ! 'Tis like that breathlessness
On some blank heath, when rival storms retire
Quick from their lightning-blasted battle-field,
And leave the waste more wild ! They but recoil
To gasp, and 'gin their mighty rack again,
Distract the fugitive tribes and darken Nature !—
O these are ominous, gloomy times !—Proud Becket
Bears into banishment a heart more fell
Than tiger's towards his victim ere he spring :

Henry (no lamb before him !) spurs to London,
 Like the Red Spirit northern Skalds describe
 Breathing pure flame, his very flesh a-glow,
 And fiercer blazing the more fast he flies !—
 However lamely, I must follow him ;
 There will be need of me at Sens to smoothe
 These differences with a polish'd tongue
 And urge with subtle one the royal pleas ;
 For Harry, stout and little superstitious
 As is his mood, loved fondly by his commons
 And dreadingly by his nobles, yet hath fears
 Political ; he will woo the Pontiff more
 To quit his holy pout at these late doings,
 Than he would Pope Joan for her dearest favours.
 So John of Oxford haste to make his peace
 As Sens's papal court, and also there
 Make your own English fortune, if you may. [Exit.

SCENE IV.

An Inn and Smithy by the roadside.

DE MORVILLE, BRITO, and DE TRACI.

Brito. Sir William, we must leave you : the time hastes.

De Morville. Almost as quickly as the king, whose steed
 Seems to have feather'd hoofs, like one of old
 Our scholars prate of.

De Traci. Had mine but plain shoes
 He 'd make the wind a laggard !—Leave me not
 Good Gentlemen !—I 'll with you straight.—Stir ! stir !
[To the Blacksmith.

Thou sledge-arm'd slug !

De Morville. Well the Archbishop stood
 Toughly up to 't : I almost honour him.

Brito. Didst thou remark his spirit how it rose,
As sinewy brawn doth on a boxer's arm,
Elastic, after every blow?

De Morville. Well! well!

De Traci. Had he but kept his temper to the last?

De Morville. Turbulence is the nature of a priest,
And while he rein'd it, 'twas as rocks upon
A burning mountain's mouth, which close it only
Till vent be found, and then they 're spit at heaven.

Brito. Nothing will e'er bring down his haughty front
But what brings down a bull's—the blow of a pole-axe!

De Morville. He'll get a tap from that same filliper,
Will make him stagger.

De Traci. Shall we have war?

De Morville. Most like :

A civil one—no more!

De Traci. Pardon! what means

Un-civil war? I never for my part,
In fight, slay any man but civilly ;
With compliments I deal him *coup-de-grâce*,
Nothing less courteous will he get from me !
I'm no ox-leveller like Sir Richard here.
Mortbleu! what is a battle but a tilt
Without its mockery? To Mars's lists
I, at the tongueless summons of the trump,
Come, as at love-call to my ladye's bower,
Gallant, and *debonair*, heartwarm, and trim,
In *gentil* hauberk, glistening helm, and arms,
But to disport me at the play of lives
With ill intent to no man! 'Tis most churlish
To fight for hate, and pash a stranger's head
Because he 's stout ; live he on if he may,
After I let the light through him! who cares?
My devoir has been done!—*Saint Gris*, my horse!

[*Going to the Smithy.*]

Brito. Shoe him with quicksilver, good Smith!

De Morville.

Brave damosel!

I've seen him kiss his hand to a gallant plume
Before he strook it, dyed with sanguine, off,—
Then cut a capricole!

Brito.

Mine ancestors,

'Tis said, were taught to dance among the points
Of sharpest swords and spears, for pastime; he
Seems to do so by nature!—How he skips
About the Smith, like gnat about a horse
Before it fixes!

De Morville. Come!—What! ostler there!—

We will not stay. Boy! bring our horses out.—

Enter Boy.

Boy. Horses, sir? there's not a four-legged beast in the stable but the ass and John Ostler.

De Morville. What is 't thou say'st? Innkeeper! scoundrel! thief! horse-stealer!

Enter Innkeeper.

Innkeeper. Sir Knight, I pray you—

De Morville. None of your prayers, Infidel! Fetch me my horse in a trice, or I'll cut off thy head, and nail it up over thine own door for a Saracen's!

Innkeeper. Why, Sir, your horses have been just led out the back way.

Brito. By whom, knave?

Innkeeper. By two servants at command of my lord the Archbishop, who said he would explain all to your worships.

De Morville. Here's pretty doings!

Brito. By St. Edward, this passes!

De Morville. Which way are they gone?

Innkeeper. Round about, sir; but his Grace is here.

[*Exit.*

Enter BECKET, GRYME, *and* BOSHAM.

Becket. You took, my menials tell me, certain horses
Out of mine inn to-day ; was it not so ? [To GRYME.

Gryme. Two sorrels and a black.

De Morville. They were our own.

Becket. They were of twenty sent me yesternight,
As present from the King : I cannot lose them !

Brito. Sir Primate, they are ours, and we will have them !

Becket. When you shall prove them yours, as it may be,
By words of better credence than your own ;
Till then I know not who has right to come
Rifle my mansion, and call what he steals
No thievery.

De Morville. ‘Thievery!’—the king’s gentlemen
Thieves ?

Becket. No ! by no means ! if indeed ye be
The gentlemen ye call yourselves ; but I
Cannot yet guess ye such, whilst ye seem felons.

De Morville. What ! have we stolen out of your remem-
brance,
My lord Archbishop?—You did know us once.

Becket. I have, methinks, seen visages like yours
In the King’s shadow, darkly, times ago ;
But I am oft oblivious of such things,
My memory being throng’d with better.—Pray you,
Go from me now.

De Morville. De Morville is a baron,
Proud prelate !—Lord of Knaresborough Castle, I !

Becket. A lesser baron—it may be, perchance—

Brito. The Britos were born sovereigns, when the Becketts
Were but their slaves and villeins.

Becket. Bosham, my book :
I’ll read a prayer or two, whilst the mules bait.

[*He begins to read while the Knights threaten him.*]

Bosham. Will't please your grace retire into the house,
Or shall I call your knights?

Becket. Who needs defence?
England's most sacred head?—go to! go to!

De Traci (returning). *Allons, mes enfans!* See you
how my steed
Pants hotter than the bellows, now he's shod:

Allons. [GRYME whispers BECKET, pointing to the forge.

Becket. Ha!—that's another of the twenty!
Bosham, go tell a groom to seize that horse
For the Archbishop's use. [Exit BOSHAM.

De Traci. *Diable!* my horse?

Becket. Gryme, set these cavaliers aright upon
This trivial matter. [Walks apart reading.

Gryme. Sirs, if you'll examine
These chargers; underneath their housings rich,
You'll find them branded with the letter B
And a large crook crossed: this is for archbishop,
That is for Becket: you've but to examine,
And be full satisfied.

De Traci. What tell you me
Of B's and crooks and Becket's?—He shall have
My steed by neither crook nor hook—

Becket. You are loud:
It is irreverent in this presence. Are ye
Of the King's body-guard, I can but say
The master's conduct shows it in the men
Most coarsely mimick'd.—Ye shall have no steeds,
So follow him to London as ye can.

De Traci. Yield we thus, friend? [To DE MORVILLE.

De Morville. What say you, Brito?

Brito. I?—

Even what you say!

De Morville. Though I'm no church-goer,
There is an awe hangs round this priest: I cannot

Draw anything sharper on him than my tongue.

(*To BECKET*) Granted these beasts were of your household,
Sir,

They 've been attach'd to-day with all your goods.

Becket. Does that give you a right to nym them, friend ?
It more behoves me guard what I must soon
Surrender to the Sheriff, or be deem'd
A petty-traitor. Meantime they will serve
To bear me on the road to Canterbury ;
My servants want good steeds.

De Morville. O that thou hadst not
This sacred stole upon thee—

Becket. That I have it
Is well for ye !—or my good sword had sent
Your souls a-horseback on the current winds
To serve the king of darkness !—Speak once more,
I will dismiss them to eternal pain
Even with this naked arm. Begone !—or stay
Accursed for ever ! [*They withdraw intimidated.*]

Now they have given ground,
I will retire. Go you before me, Richard !

[*Exit with GRYPE.*]

The Knights come forward.

De Morville. 'T was all in vain ; I could not meet his
eye !

De Traci. *Pardie*, his lance-point were the easier parried !

Brito. You 'd have found even that no knitting-needle
In an old nurse's hand.—Mars was his sponsor ;
He had his first meat put into his mouth
Upon a sword's point ; that was his spoon-feeding !

De Traci. He has affray'd us, three puissant knights,
By his mere growl, as a grim mastiff would
A leash of greyhounds.

De Morville. Let us bide our time !—

Come, we must e'en creep forward if we may
On any churl's old dobbins we can seize.

Brito. Be the priest hang'd as high as his own pride!

De Morville. And without benefit of clergy!—Come.

De Traci. I'll make that whisperer, Gryme, cry out
at least

One day or other!—*Allons, mes amis!*

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

An Alley in the Labyrinth.

Enter JOHN of SALISBURY, with a book.

John of S. “*Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida sylvas.*”—

Let me pause here, both tongue and foot. Such melody
Of words doth strike the wild-birds mute to hear it!
Honey-lipp'd Virgil, 'tis an ignorant truth
To name thee—Sorcerer; for thou dost indeed
Enchant by happiest art!—Here is a place
To meditate thy sylvan music in,
Which seems the very echo of these woods,
As if some Dryad taught thee to resound it.
O gentle breeze, what lyrist of the air
Tunes her soft chord with visionary hand
To make thy voice so dulcet? O ye boughs
Whispering with numerous lips your kisses close,
How sweet ye mingle secret words and sighs!
Doth not this nook grow warmer with the hum
Of fervent bees, blithe murmurers at their toil,
Minstrels most bland? Here the dim cushat, perch'd
Within his pendulous arbour, plaintive woos
With restless love-call his ne'er-distant mate;
While changeful choirs do flit from tree to tree,
All various in their notes, yet chiming all

Involuntary, like the songs of cherubim.
 O how by accident, apt as art, drops in
 Each tone to make the whole harmonical,
 And when need were, thousands of wandering sounds
 Though aimless would, with exquisite error sure,
 Fill up the diapason!—Pleasant din!
 So fine that even the cricket can be heard
 Soft-fluttering through the grass. Long have I mark'd
 The silver toll of a clear-dropping well
 Peal in its light parishioners, ouphes and elves:
 'Tis nigh me, certes?—I will peer between
 These honeysuckles, for it.—Lo! in verity
 A Sylph, with veil-fall'n hair down to her feet,
 Bending her o'er the waters, and I think
 Giving them purer crystal from her eyes—
 O learned John, but thou art grown fantastic
 As a Romancer! thou art quite bedream'd,
 A sleep-walker even in the breadth of day,
 That err'st with wide eyes!—Hark!—

[*A lute is heard.*

O me! O me!

It is the Lady Rosamond herself,
 Nymphlike beside her Well!—She sent long since
 For me, her youth's dear tutor, to have given her
 Lessons of Delphic lore she ever loved,
 And now, methinks, the better that she's sad.
 I should be out of all good grace with her!

[*Exit.*

Scene changes to Rosamond's Well.

Rosamond (singing to her lute).

Listen, lords and ladies all,
 O listen to my lay!
 And I will sing the fate and fall
 Of a gentle Ladye gay!

Enter JOHN of SALISBURY.

John of S. Pardon thy ancient master, fairest Pupil !
They left me wandering in this wilderness,
Where I did lose myself ; yea, deeper still
I' the labyrinth of meditation wild
And maze of fancy, wherein whoso gets,
Heaven help him ! he is self-inextricable.

Rosamond. Pardon ? O give me yours—I am most lost !

John of S. Sad in Elysium, lady ?

Rosamond.

Ay, forsooth !

John of S. That's discontentful.

Rosamond.

Thou didst tell me once,—

It was thy earliest and thy latest lesson,
(O that I ne'er had conn'd it, or had kept it !)—
' Be satisfied of thyself, that's the first thing,
Contentment will come after with all else.'

John of S. And yet thy merit, less of form and face,
Though these be Wonder's gaze—

Rosamond.

Yes, I am fair,

Outside !

John of S. Less than thy bosom'd ones, have raised thee
To the throne's highest step.

Rosamond.

Unto the lowest

Before Humiliation's shrine, have brought me !
There lies she bleeding tears deplorable,
Whom the world calls most happy ! Should she be so ?

John of S. I can but say what I have ever found thee :
Filial to very piety ; a mistress
Serving thy servants more than they could thee ;
Unto the poor a virtual Charity,
A comfortable Pity to the sad ;
Docile with me and duteous as a daughter,
Than which I more have loved thee, and must still ;
A pleader for the people to their king,

Who dost allure with beauteous wile the sword
Of Vengeance from his hand, and there insinuate
The sword of Mercy for it ! O whatever
Thy faults, Fair Rosamond, to latest time
Thou shalt be loved in England !

Rosamond.

Quite deserveless !—

Yet 'twas my father's counsel and command,
If not those of my conscience. Come, good master !
Since thou hast cheer'd me with thy praise, and hope
At least of man's forgiveness,—read me, I pray you,
Some lines that teach submission and content
From thy belovèd book.

John of S.

If it please you,

Most gentle mistress, you shall read, while I
Look o'er the page.

Rosamond.

Well, I will English it

Precisely as I can, and you 'll correct me.
What is it ?

John of S. Virgil's pastoral address

To the old Shepherd.

Rosamond.

“ *Fortunate senex.* ”

How !—let me see—it would go somewhat thus :
' Happy Old Man !—here mid thy well-known streams
And sacred founts, shalt thou the umbrageous cool
Inhale ! This neighbour hedge of willow flowers
Still pasturing Hyblæan bees, shall oft
With their light murmur lure thee to repose !
Here shall the woodman sing unto the winds
Beneath the lofty rock ; nor shall thy care
The deep-voiced doves, nor shall the turtle cease
From the aërial elm-tree to complain.'—
How poor my English sounds !

John of S.

Nay, it comes well

So musically tongued : and faithful too.

Rosamond. No ! no ! its excellence is unreachable

Even by skill less schoolgirl-like than mine.
That of the doves, "*Raucæ, tua cura, palumbes*—"
How hoarsely-sweet! just as they murmur now!

John of S. Doth it not breathe a sweetness o'er thy mind,
Restful content and placid joy; this picture
Of the old happy swain?

Rosamond. Happy he was,
For he was innocent! But peace without
Doth not give peace within; it must be felt
Here first, or the other is not seen. O would
My breast and I were friends! O that I were
At peace even in the grave— [*A clarion sounds.*

Henry! [*Exit.*

John of S. The king!—

There flies she to her bower, wing'd by love,
Straight, low, and swift, like blackbird to its nest!
How soon love's soft alarum silenced, too,
Conscience, the wren, which but in stillness cheeps!
Well, if a lover, handsome, young, and brave,
Courteous and generous, a prince of princes,
Wise, witty, learned, skilful in all arts
To do, or undo, what and whom he wills,
Sparing nor pains, nor promises, nor pacts,
Nor power itself, to triumph—were excuse
For helpless woman erring, 'tis my pupil's.
Many a one with not the tithe so much
To warp her way, goes tenfold wider wrong;
Yea, scouts the dallyer by Virtue's path,
Whilst she herself is on the slide to sin.
I have remark'd it, and will set it down
In my court-commonplaces, for my book.
Now let me find mine own right way, if possible.
What, Gabel, are you there?—Come hither, friend

Enter GABEL.

Gabel. O sir, I was looking for a stray sheep,—a black one, sir—or rather iron-brown, the colour of your cloak, sir: have you seen it?

John of S. Not I.

Gabel. It did not come here to the well, sir, with you?

John of S. I never looked.

Gabel. Ah! he did not look at the water, or he'd have seen the sheep there I was in search of!—Come, sir, I'll guide you to the pen.

John of S. “*Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes.*”

Gabel. How prettily he bleats! Come, sir, you must not stand, like a new-yeaned lamb, whose legs are too long for walking.

John of S. Come on, good Gabel!—though I had rather stay—“*Flumina amem, sylvasque inglorius!*”

Gabel. He's a born idiot! I shall have as much ado to drive him forward, grunting Latin with his nose to the ground, as a hog in canonicals! [Exeunt.]

Scene changes to an Alcove.

HENRY and the Earl of CORNWALL.

Henry. So, he is fled, uncle?

Cornwall. Coastward, as they tell me.

Henry. To France. Some storm embargo him once more!

I could forgive those seabord thieves, called wreckers,
Who pounce like cormorants on half-drown'd men,
If they would now make prey of my Archbishop:
The law I threat against them shall not pass
Till we have heard his fate. Well, we'll sequester,
At least, his revenues of Canterbury,

And let this high-flyer on ether live,
Like bird of Paradise, as he is !

Cornwall. He hath
Many relations, friends, domestics, here
Who eat no other's bread ; they'll not have husks,
Now he has left them almsless.

Henry. Banish all to him !
So, hanging on his emptiness, they'll help
To bring his haughty stomach down. Ay, banish them !
'Tis a good thought : I thank thee for it, uncle.

Cornwall. Nay, the whole credit of it is your majesty's !

Enter an Attendant.

Attendant. My liege, the Lady Rosamond awaits
Your presence or your pleasure in the bower.

Henry. Say we attend on hers. [*Exit Attendant.*
Clouds, from my front !

Now be my face the mirror of the sun,
No heart like mine glows in his ardent breast !
Away all storms for one sweet summer eve,
Away all cares but those of love alone !

[*Returning.*] Uncle ! You'll mention not this banishment
Of Becket's household, to the Lady Rose,
Else will she bend the strength of all her tears
To shake my purpose. You conceive ? [*Exit.*

Cornwall. Most well !—
Stern with the stubborn, tender with the mild,
Fiercest in battle-field, gentlest in bower,
Heart rough of rind, but melting soft at core,
That's the right chivalrous spirit ! Now he'll woo
As if he, aye, sigh'd at a lady's feet,
And never stretch'd a dragon at his own !
Come ! I have stay'd the length of twenty kisses,
Each a breath long ; 'tis proper to walk in.

[*Exit.*

Scene changes to Rosamond's Bower.

HENRY *and* ROSAMOND.

Rosamond. You must have ta'en a bird's flight from so far.

Henry. No coming rainbow spans the sky so swift,
As I cross'd hither.

Rosamond. Nor so swift again
Vanishes!—Ah, thou truant!

Henry. Faithfuller
Than ray-crown'd Lucifer is to the dawn,
Or Hesperus to eve!

Enter CORNWALL.

Rosamond. You are indeed
My star! the ruler of my horoscope!
On whose bright circlet, loftiest in the spheres,
Depend my weal and woe!

Henry. Doubt it not, sweet!
Uncle of Cornwall, will you scold your niece
(That is to be), for her sad-heartedness?
I cannot.

Cornwall. Fairest niece, you are to blame—

Henry. Come, that 's enough! She smiles, which is a sign
You've touch'd her deeply, and she will amend.
How likes my Lady the new cast of hawks
I sent her—do they fly?

Rosamond. They soar!—yet come
Down again to my wrist as straight as larks,
Whene'er I call them.

Henry. That's because the lure
Is dazzling white, and sparkles in their eye;
This lily wrist, I mean.

Rosamond. Ah, flatterer!—

And the two greyhounds are a brace of spirits
 In canine form ; they course the fields as light
 As gossamer, yet strong their slender limbs
 As bows of springiest yew. 'Tis beautiful
 To see them toss themselves like bounding hoops
 About you, with such gentle tamelessness
 Which knows not how to still itself, and mocks
 The hand that would caress them into quiet !
 They are a pair of Graces in their kind !

Henry. Well, we will go a-falconing to-morrow,
 And run them quiet. How is your white palfrey,
 Fleet Solyman, whom we got o'er from Spain ?

Rosamond. Then you will stay with me—all—all to-morrow ?
 'Tis but one, single day. O recreant knight,
 That will refuse a lady !

Henry. I must to Caen,
 For England's good : and thy true patriot heart
 Hath even more pride in me as her Champion
 Than as thy own ! Yet I shall, peradventure,
 Cheat her of some few hours.

Rosamond. Not one for Rosamond !
 Serve England, that 's thyself ; thyself, that 's me.—
 Well, I 've another favour you must grant.

Henry. Uncle, what covetous creatures women are !
 If not this, why then that ! but something ever.

Cornwall. Nay, it is true ! 'tis true !—the King says true.

Rosamond. In faith I will not be a loving niece
 If you take part against me thus, my lord.

'Tis for poor master John of Salisbury,
 My good, kind Tutor !

Henry. He 's a friend of one,
 Rank foe of mine : let him still follow Becket,
 Who 'll make provision for him.

Cornwall (aside). Such as will not
 Lie heavy on his stomach !

Rosamond. Now you are cold,
And cold to me !

Henry. Well, sweet ! we will translate him.

Cornwall (aside). To some French benefice, with a rich
glebe-field
Of water-cresses, where he may take in kind
His tithe-frog if he will !

Rosamond. Well ? Have you thought ?
Bishop of what ?

Henry. Take your arms from about me ;
It is a kind of main force—a sheer laying
Of violent hands upon me—is it not, uncle ?

Cornwall. Assault and desperate seizure, I am witness !

Rosamond. Then I will hang here, where it was committed !

Henry. O thou—thou twining, clasping, tendril thing,
That to my proud top creep'st thy flexible way,
And makest it bend to thee ! Have what thou wilt :
John shall be our next Bishop.

Rosamond. I will call him :
He should be in the cabinet.—Master John !

[*Going to the door.*]

His Highness. Come !

Enter JOHN of SALISBURY.

Henry. So, master John !—We'd make you
A bishop, master John ! at your and our
Sweet Lady's suit.

John of S. Beholden ever
To dear and fair my Scholar ! *Pace tuá !*
(Somewhat be-mazed yet !), I would have said,
My gracious Mistress.

Henry. Hark'ee : you're my Bishop,
Not Becket's, who and his chief partisans
Are banished.

John of S. Then I'm still plain master John :
Yea, and an exile too !

Cornwall. Art a fool also ?
Wilt give up for an outcast, a vile lack-penny,
A high-road starver,—hope, and home, and king ?

John of S. Never my king, but not more soon my friend.

Henry (aside). He 's steadfast—that's a man to gain. I'll
think of him.

Rosamond. Dear Master !—dearest Liege !

John of S. Sire, thy true subject. [*Exit.*

Henry (to ROSAMOND). You see 'twas not my fault : but
be at ease. [*They converse apart.*

Cornwall. Were ever dunces like your deep-read men !
Lunatics like your poets ! There he walks
Leisurely as an ass, though March-hare mad,
Away from Fortune, having spurn'd her wheel !
Scholars, forsooth, and heaven-born Bards !—Sheer idiots !
That shade themselves from every shower of gold
Thinking it meant to crush them ; or if not,
Scorn even to pick it up ! 'Tis as good calling
Sea-gulls to dovecotes, as them to warm cribs ;
Both feed upon the estrays of the elements,
Famine's allowance ; when they might grow fat
Merely by opening mouth at rich men's tables.
Let them go hang like bats in caves together,
I'll pet such purblind flitter-mice no more !

Henry (to ROSAMOND). John shall be cared for, though he
flies from me.

Believe it, dearest ! Becket's venom lies
At root of all this rebel faith I reap ;
'Tis he corrupts my vassals—he !—he !—he !

Rosamond. Nay but, my sovereign love, think how most apt
All are to deem the wronger knows he wrongs,
And thence our bitterest quarrels : Becket may
Do wrong more ignorantly than malignantly.

Henry. Malignantly, say I ! and that admitted,
As ignorantly as you please. Ah ! thou 'rt too clement :
A beauty in your sex, in ours a blemish.

Rosamond. I am not all so peccantless myself !

Henry. O thou 'rt a sad one ! I do think thou wouldst—
No, I'll not say it !

Rosamond. Tell me it ! I will know it !
Tell me the whole, whole ill thou think'st of me !

Henry. Come hither to my arms, and then I'll tell thee.—
I think thou wouldst defend the Devil himself
If I accused him harshly !

Rosamond. No, in sooth !
But—save to me—bytimes I mark o'ermuch
Of thy great stock, the stern first William, in thee ;
And fear, when chafed, that thou mayst work thyself
As well as others woe. None are, perchance,
For all the blotch'd or beauteous mask they wear,
So virtueless as they seem, no more than viceless.

Henry. Well, you shall give the discipline yourself
To penitent Becket when he bares his shoulders ;
You shall your scourge of feathers, and your besom
Of flowers, lay on him sharply ! Come ! forget him.
Let us forth to the river. I had vow'd
These hours to pleasure only, love, and thee !

Rosamond. The barge hath all her rainbow streamers out,
You can behold them wavering in the breeze,
There, through the trellis.

Henry. And we'll take with us
Provençal Arnault with a minstrel band
To kindle glee amongst the squires and damsels :
Come, we will feast the winds with melody !
Through the enchanted air, along the flood
We 'll pour a stream of music as we row,
That shall lead captive every god o' the wave,
And thou shalt be chief Syren !—Uncle, come ! [Exeunt.]

Scene changes to a Lawn in the Labyrinth.

Enter JOHN of SALISBURY.

John of S. Farewell, sweet Woodstock bowers! blissful shades,

Through whose dim walks, so pleasantly perplext,
Oft have I wander'd, shadow-like myself!
Where with the finer spirits of the place
Communing, I have felt the bonds of earth
Fall gradual from about me, and it seem'd
Leave me at length mere soul, that purest state
Which man's last hope aspires! Farewell, ye lawns,
Ye silent meadows green, whose golden flowers
Breathe up rich vapour as floats o'er the fields
Of sun-fed asphodel. Ye willowy streams,
By whose wild banks my thoughts and I have stray'd;
Ye verdurous alleys, down whose tuftless sward
My foot has met no mossy obstacle
To wake me from my dream, while brow to book,
I walk'd oblivious of all else, yea letting
The insensible hours steal from me,—fare ye well!
I must no longer see thee, Woodstock! haply
Never again! nor even my native shores!
“*Nos patriæ fines et dulcia linquimus arva.*”
Alas, what difference sees the selfsame day,
Or moment, in the fates of different men!
Lo! for proof present, where from happy bower,
Throng down that jocund crowd unto the barge
Buoyant herself, light dancing on the wave,
Spreading her broad skirts to each errant wind
And flaunting her gay ribbons as a lure
For every amorous Zephyr. There they crowd,
Minstrels and all, each voice and instrument,
Their very laughter, shouts of firm command,

And cries of haste, and feignèd shrieks of fear
 At the unstable element,—all tuned
 To one high note of joy : like manor swans,
 Bright wantons of the water, every islet
 Is still their home ; they sail from home to home,
 And turn at eve, tired with their plashy play,
 Unto that home's dear homestead, their green nest.
 But dolorous John must far away to France,
 With none save Poverty for his guide, and Scorn
 For his close follower ! Well ! 'tis Heaven's will,
 And I submit mine. Farewell, Lady Rose,
 My pupil and my anxious patroness !
 Would that I were even sure of seeing thee
 Once more, wherever !—*Vale, vale, inquit Johannes !* [*Exit.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Queen's Cabinet at Windsor.

Enter ELEANOR with a letter.

Eleanor. What says our correspondent, the Archbishop ?
 This patch'd-up truce between the King and him
 Which has allow'd his late return to England,
 And re-instatement in full power and pride,
 Leaves them as bitter enemies as before.
 Either would juggle, or jugulate the other,
 Could he do so with safeness. But let's see.

(*Reading*). “ Sovereign Madam,

In answer to your Highness's letter
 touching a certain Dædalean work of my careless days, to

wit the Labyrinth called of Woodstock, accept this : I can be an open antagonist to a king, but a secret one to no man ; neither can petty intrigues of the royal bower concern the Primate of all England. Nevertheless,

“ Your Highness’s well-wisher,

“ THOMAS CANTERBURY.”

—Thomas Canterbury, what a Saint you are ! Pride makes him traitor on a large scale, yet keeps him true to his little allegiance ! But for his pride alone, he would love to pinch the King’s heart by this corner just as much as I do. —Now, what’s to be done ? If the dwarf comes back like others from their voyage of discovery, with the skin of an unknown weasel, and an extraordinary cockle-shell found on the coast, my own brain must work. Rather than lose the occasion, now Henry’s abroad, I’ll sack Woodstock itself, even if my Regent son will not wink at it ; and I am sowing a little rebellion-seed in his mind against his to me disloyal father. Yes, Eleanor will risk imprisonment for the rest of her life, but this “ Dædalean work ” of our Archbishop shall lay open itself and its monster. What ! baffle the Queen’s Majesty ! [Exit.

SCENE II.

A Coppice in the Labyrinth.

PRINCE RICHARD *and a Henchman, who trims him a club.*

Richard. Leave the knobs on’t : I’ll not have one o’ them Smoothed off thus !

Henchman. But your graciousness—

Richard. Give’t to me !

And the bill-hook too. Now, go you find the dog.

Henchman. Your grace will promise me not to stray farther
From Woodstock bounds? I shall be whipt and hang'd
If we are caught here in the Labyrinth,
Albeit but o'er the hedge.

Richard. No, I'll not stir ;
There is my knightly word.

Henchman (going). He will not break it,
Unruly little lurdane as he is ! [Exit.]

Enter ROSAMOND.

Rosamond. Who may this stalworth boy, with curls of
gold
Clustering adown his shoulders, be ?—'Thy name ?

Richard. Plantagenet !

Rosamond. What dost here, royal child ?

Richard. You are a sweet-voiced country lass, and so
I'll answer you. See you not what I do ?
Shape me a mall to brain the Saracens.

Rosamond. But wherefore venture hither, when thou
know'st
'Tis strict forbid ?

Richard. Why that's the cause I do't !
What bravery else in't ? When my mother Nell
Says, 'Richard, 'ware that blood-hound !' Straight I grip
him

Fast by the sullen muzzle till he grins,
Then give him a box i' the chaps to make him growl
Like thunder : ha ! ha ! ha !

Then she so shakes me, and I roar with laughter !
(*Turning, and seeing ROSAMOND.*) O !—O !—O !—
You are Fair Rosamond, I'll bet a kingdom !

Rosamond. How know you that, brave sir ?

Richard. Because—because
You have the sweetest lips—O now I see

What made you speak so sweetly to me here !

You cannot help it !

Rosamond. You are gallant, young sir !

Richard. And should not every Chevalier be that ?

Tell me—are you a Maid of Honour ?

Rosamond. Alas !—

(*Aside.* How every quibble starts me !)—No, my lord.

Richard. I'm sure you should be !—One so handsome ought
To be most honourable !

Rosamond. O how I blush
Before this little lecturer !—When youth
Can lesson years, 'tis sin's timidity
Cowed by strong innocence.

Richard. Perhaps you are not
Old enough for my mother's taste in Maidens ?

Rosamond. I'm old enough, sweet boy, to have a son
Almost thy twin.

Richard. Nay, you're too slim to have
Such a great boy as me !—Hey, here's a bevy !

Enter Damsels running.

1st Damsel. O madam ! madam ! madam ! save yourself !
There's such a monster coming after us !

Rosamond. What is it ?

1st Damsel. We cannot tell ! The many faces
It grinned at us, made us hide ours, and flee !

2nd Damsel. 'Tis like a she-baboon, but uglier !

3rd Damsel. Fangs

Like horns, and fiery eyes, and claws to boot
Like a dwarf ogre !

Richard. 'Tis a Saracen !
Everything grim and odious is a Saracen !

Damsels. It comes ! it comes ! jolting along the sward
Its hunch'd deformity on unequal legs,
Mowing and muttering !—Fly ! fly !— [*The Damsels fly.*]

Richard (*setting himself before ROSAMOND*). Fear you not,
I'll be your Champion!

Rosamond. Boy, mad boy, come with us!

Richard. Hold me not, Lady!—See how I'll make this
Saracen
One mummy with my mall!

*Enter DWERGA, horribly disguised, opposite to her the
Henchman.*

Henchman (*seeing DWERGA*). The fiend! the fiend!

[*Runs away.*]

Richard (*rushing upon the Dwarf*). Gog!—Magog!—
Mahound!—Tyrмагаunt!—

[*DWERGA, with doleful screams and yells, is driven
off by RICHARD.*]

Rosamond. O true son

Of my own knightliest hero!—Hark his shouts!

Anger, triumphant glee, and glorious laughter,

To mix in combat with a very demon!

Save him, O good St. George! thou patron saint

Of England's chivalry, save this gallant child!

Wretched suspense!—end! end!—O my young Champion!

Re-enter RICHARD.

Art safe? not wounded? hast thou lost no blood?—

Richard. No—but I've lost my breath!—What leathern
fells

Those Infidels have! There is no piercing them!

Re-enter Damsels and Henchman.

(*To the Henchman.*) Was I not right to have the knobs
left on?

Runagate!

Henchman. Sweetest prince, let us away!

Richard. Go hang!—Come, lady, now my guerdon of you!

Rosamond. To my young saviour-knight, what can I give?

Richard. Why, don't you know? do ye not know the rules?

You are to take me home, and feast me there
 With spiced wines, confects, and sweetmeats rich,
 In a grand lustrous Hall, where you and I
 Sit under a fine canopy; and, at last—
 No, both at first and last, you are to give me,
 With modesty all maiden and demure,
 A sweet, sweet kiss—

Rosamond. My warmest one—(*kisses him.*) Where read
 you
 Of all these gallantries?

Richard. Read?—plague on reading!
 One may learn gallantry without book, I hope!

Henchman. His brain is stuff'd with tales of old Sir Guy,
 Rolands, Round Tables, Tournies, and Twelve Peers,
 Dragons, and Saracens, which his ear picks up
 From Minstrels loose, that haunt the royal halls,
 And our romancing sempstresses.

Richard. Thou liest, [*Striking him.*]
 Base-hearted peasant!—Call them so again,
 I'll bang thee like the other unbeliever
 Into the slough there, and leave both of ye
 To choke i' the mire together! Madam, come!

Rosamond. O he's the very promise of his father!
 Whene'er he speaks to woman, his broad brow,
 Which noble ire contracts and knots betimes,
 Spreads to a radiant smoothness,—Shall I call you
 Herculean Cupid, for thy beauteous strength,
 Or, for thy generous courage, CŒUR-DE-LION?

Richard. I know not Cupid. I'll be CŒUR-DE-LION!

Rosamond. Thou shalt then!—Come!—His father's cheek
 will glow

With pride, to hear of Rosamond's protector.—

Come on, Prince Richard CŒUR-DE-LION!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A Street in Southwark.

DE EYNSFORD, JOHN OF OXFORD, WALTER MAPES,
DE BROKE.

De Eynsford. We are nicely pacified, are we not, now the king has sent home this belligerent Archbishop with the kiss of peace,—to pass it round among us?

John of O. Yes? have you ever heard the story of the Bear in the Boat? Methought our vessel rehearsed it: here sat the Primate i' the middle, clad even over the ears with his shaggy ermine, spreading his loose bulk from gunwale to gunwale, growling to himself, and snuffing for prey, whilst all the humanity aboard skulked out of his sight to the scuttle-holes. I who had been made bear-leader, shrank into a most distant follower of his movements: now he had got the ring out of his nose, a squeeze from him was strangulation and a snap demolition.

Mapes. He would at least have taken such a mouthful out of you as the Dragon does out of the full-moon—brought your plenitude to the wane—reduced your rotundity to the shape of a sickle!—Why, but now I went to pay him my humble devoirs, and his complaisance received me with a smile like a shark's, as if he would gladly have swallowed me wholesale.

De Broke. What are offenders so weak as I to look for, when my lord Primate of York has been suspended, and the two Bishops excommunicated with many others?

De Eynsford. Unless their journey to Rouen plead both their own cause and ours with success, our penitential knees will have to wear out the Black Mountain in Palestine. He is vindictive as a bloodhound!

John of O. Be of good hope: they have the King's whole heart already, and need only a little of his ear. This late

coming together at Fretville between him and Becket was about as cordial as that between the porcupine and the serpent: they may both have agreed to live crony-like together; but irascible readiness to bristle in the one, and most swelling venom in the other, will soon make them ill bosom-companions.

Mapes. Methought that kiss of peace the King gave him was not quite so warm as he would have given the Lady Rose. I was just beside his majesty, and he turned him about after it as if he could have spat it on the floor.

John of O. Yet he stooped with most gracious condescension from his horse, to hold the haughty Prelate's stirrup for him.

De Eynsford. Yea, that was stooping indeed! not from his horse alone, but his state of honour. I had rather have taken hold of Becket's toe, and tumbled him over his palfrey!

Mapes. Sir Bevis of Southampton on his proud war-horse Arundel, never looked such a self-promising, prodigious deed-doer as Becket on his little ambler.

De Broke. Well, and if so, how much more must it exalt him in his own conceit, this besotted adulation of him by the people on his progress to visit the young king? Woodstock palace will not have a room high enough for his haughtiness!

De Eynsford. Hear you how the base-born churls and citizens applaud him! Howling beasts! [*Shouts within.*]

Mapes. Will you go look at them?

De Eynsford. Who, I? rather at the infidel dogs fawning and yelping hymns before Mahound! [*Exit.*]

John of O. It behoves me to have an eye on the prelate.

Mapes. And me to have both mine on the people, for it is the more curious nondescript of the two.

[*Exit with JOHN OF OXFORD.*]

De Broke. If I can only keep my spoils from his See by it, I'll consent to be the last bob of the many-headed monster's tail! Let me join. [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

Before Lambeth Palace.

BECKET, BOSHAM, and several Monks; CLARE, DE LUCY, and some Knights. *A crowd of the lower order welcoming the Archbishop, who scatters a largesse.*

1st Mob. Welcome to his Grace, and ill go with them that wish it not! Welcome our fellow-citizen, mighty and worthy, home from France!

2nd Mob. Largesse! largesse! Cry out more welcomes—More welcomes and more largesse!

1st Mob. Welcome! welcome home the father of the poor! Welcome the 'fender of the church—largesse! largesse!

Beggarmen. 'Fender of the church? ay! didn't I foretell when he gave me his cloak long ago, that he'd come to be a shining 'fender of the church? and a saint and a glorious martyr into the bargain?

Becket. So have I been, my friends, a very martyr!

Mobs. Long live his grace the martyr!

Becket. Martyrdom, which I joyed in for your sakes.

Mobs. Heaven grant your Grace the joy of another! And soon!—Largesse!

Becket. Thanks for your kindly wishes, though not words! Now cease from both.

Clare. For more than either, say I,
Thanks for their silence! 'tis the gratefuller.

Becket. You have no cause to like it, Earl of Clare!

Enter JOHN OF OXFORD, MAPES, and DE BROKE, behind.

Clare. My gracious lord, I hope yes; for the King
Informs us here that we are to present
Our kneeling griefs before your Sanctity,
Which is oath-bound by covenant with him,

Stricken of late at Fretville, to absolve
 Me and my Lord Justiciary from the censures
 Your ire pronounced against us. And we hope
 In virtue of your faith and our contrition,
 To be ta'en once more to the Church's bosom
 As well as your good favour.

De Lucy.

With my own,

Here be petitions also on the part
 Of Hugh Earl Chester, Nigel de Sackville,
 Thomas Fitz-Bernard, and Archdeacon Radcl,
 Whom the said covenant gives a similar claim.

Becket. All of ye were accomplices and abettors
 In that most sacrilegious mummerly titled
 The young king's Coronation; when, last June,
 Roger of York dared pour the royal unction
 (My privilege sole!) upon Prince Henry's head;
 For which the vial of wrath shall scald his own
 Into a leprosy!—I will absolve
 None of ye! 'Twas a covenant at discretion.

Clare. What! are you desperate to bring fire and sword
 Into the kingdom?

De Lucy.

Is your olive-branch

Trim'd for a scourge?

Becket.

My congress hath of late
 Been with crown'd heads, wherefore I mell not now
 With coronetted ones!

(*To the crowd.*)

On Christmas day

Be it well known, we shall anathematise
 Robert de Broke, and Ralph, besides some other
 Odd servants of the king.

De Broke.

O pardon! pardon! [*Falling on his knees.*]

Becket. Thou cry me pardon? that didst rend and ravin
 My diocese, the endowment of the Church,
 With hand, which should have wither'd in such act,
 Tearing the coat of Christ!—Even from now

Be an abomination to man's eyes
For ever !

(*DE BROKE attempts to mingle in the crowds, which shun him with all horror. He rushes out desperately.*)

Friends ! let us forth upon our peaceful way
Towards Woodstock, to confer with the young Regent
About the Church's weal, including yours.

Enter DE BOHUN, and Men-at-arms.

De Bohun. Archbishop, his young Majesty commands
You pass no further.

Becket. Not with these rich presents
I bear him as a sign of amity ?
Will he not be as placable as Becket ?
Although my spiritual thunders may have reft
Three mitres from the usurpers of my state,
That does not touch his crown. He is a king
With my full secular consent ; and soon
Shall have my sacred benison.

De Bohun. 'Tis well
You think of it even now ! When he shall hear
This humble parley 'stead of the proud peals
That swell'd with your approach, his horn may chime :
Till then your Grace cannot pass on, nor enter
Any king's burgh ; but must return your steps
To Canterbury straight, and keep the confines
Of your own lands.

Becket (aside). Here's my reward for humbleness !
The virtue of the weak and mean and poor,
A vice in Becket ! (*Aloud*) Who dares stop my way,
Sub-Vicar of St. Peter o'er this realm ?

De Bohun. Humfrey de Bohun, Lord High Constable,
Of that same realm : a name and title proud
As loyal subject ever wore !—Stand fast,
My men-at-arms !

Becket. Lord Constable, will ye
Damn by this deed Humfrey de Bohun?

De Bohun. No, do it thou!—thy lips are grown fire-proof
With uttering fulminations that would blister
A bugle's mouth to blast them forth.—Sound out,
Trumpeters there! and pikemen, clear the way!

[*Trumpets drown the voice of BECKET, who retires in
furious chagrin before the advancing pikes. Monks,
Crowds, and BOSHAM, follow.*

De Bohun. I did not like to let his dragon-tongue
Hiss round us, and launch forth its sulphury flames
To singe my ensign and appal my men:
Tough Humfrey's self cares little for anathemas
More than for old wives' blessings: both, foul wind!

[*Exit after the Soldiers.*

Clare. Mark'd you how pale and purple Becket grew
By turns?

De Lucy. I ne'er saw face so mortified!

Mapes. It looked as grim and ghastly on his neck
Which bore it up stone-stiff, with chin in air,
As doth a felon's stuck o' the city gates.

John of O. Now will he to his Saltwood shades, and make
Black blood there; now he will spit venom at us,
As strong with gall as ever oozed from heart
So rancorous and so fester'd.

Clare. Let it be! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

The Queen's Apartment at Windsor.

ELEANOR. PRINCE RICHARD and PRINCE JOHN at games.

Eleanor. My doughty Urchin, that would thrust her head
Into the snap-trap, comes not back. I guess'd

Malice so sanguine defter to deceive
 Itself than others. Though she can transmute
 Those loose joints and flab features to all shapes
 But one not hideous,—such that I scarce know
 My own familiar devil when it appears,
 Deforming her deformity still more,—
 The hellicat hath been caught, and nine times kill'd,
 Else she had stolen to me ere now. I've lost
 My ablest minister, and must be henceforth
 Both council and executive myself.
 Yet I am all at fault!—They say this boy,
 In his wild hardihood, broke fence at Woodstock,
 For which the Warder sends him home but now :
 Perchance his errantry hath some apt thing
 Discover'd, and his innocence may betray it?
 Come hither, Dick Plantagenet!

Richard. Madam, ay.

Eleanor. So, sir, you broke into the Labyrinth?

Richard. Yes.

Eleanor. Spite of penalties which make me pale
 With fear.—Even to the Bowery Palace?

Richard. Yes.

Eleanor. Iron-head! And where then?

Richard. Why to be sure

Into the Bower itself!—O fairy-land!

Eleanor. Well, and whom saw ye?

Richard. Saw?—the Fairy Queen!

At least the Queen of Fair Ones! Would I were
 But big enough to be her knight!—I'll tell you :
 As we sat feasting in her 'chamber-precious'
 (So it is call'd), with foliage all festoon'd,
 There was a maiden-blush hung by her cheek
 (Do ye know what a maiden-blush is, Madam?)
 And her cheek look'd the prettier rose of the two,
 Though white her brow as lily o' the valley.

That is the reason, now I think of it,
She is named Rosamond—fair Rosamond.

Eleanor. O! 'twas the minion then herself!

Richard.

The minion?

Minion! minion!—O you'd say *Mignonne*,
French for our home-word, darling?—Yes, it was:
Would I were with her now, instead of here!

Eleanor. Couldst find thy way back thither, think you, lad,
To feast in that same bower once more with her
Your maggot-pate so runs on?

Richard.

Let me try!

It has a thousand marks I can remember:
Let me, good Mother!

Eleanor. You'll take me along?

Richard. You?—O you'd be a spoil-feast! You would
sour

The wine; and keep me much too strict; O, no!
I could not take you with me.

Eleanor.

See what's here:

A silver-hafted poll-axe, which I got
Made for you, when you proved a docile boy.

Richard. I am a docile boy: give it me straight!

[*Snatching it.*]

Eleanor. Now what are those same marks which you
remember

To trace your path with through that winding maze?—
Let me but reach its heart, and I shall soon
Reach that of its foul Mistress!

Richard.

O ho, ho!—

Yes, I have heard you are very jealous of her,
Because she is so beautiful and young.
Here, take your silver toy again!—My wooden one
Can give as stout a thwack. I am no traitor!

Eleanor. No, but a naughty rebel!—Tell me all
Thou know'st, or I will cuff thee!

Richard. Do, good Mother!—
She 'll only hurt her hand upon my brawn,
And cry for pain, when she can give me none!

Eleanor (shaking him). Tell me, thou stubborn—

Richard. Not one word of it!
By Mahound I will not!

Eleanor. Hear how the monkey
Takes on the man! Talks of his maiden blushes,
And swears his Mahounds and his Tyrmagaunts
Like a bronzed warrior!—Incorrigible!
Thou 'rt not my son!

Richard. No! Sour-faced Jack i'the corner,
He is your own, own son; I am the King's!

Eleanor. Like him as lion's cub is to the lion,
Tan-hair'd and huge-limb'd, hot-brain'd and head-strong.

Richard. Yea, and heart-strong!—Did not Fair Rosamond
Christen me *Cœur-de-Lion*? better I wot
Than “duck” and “chick” you nickname brother John.

Eleanor. And what so gallant had you done, that she
So call'd you, my fine Squire of Dames?

Richard. Your ear!

Eleanor. Well? [*Bending down.*]

Richard. “*Chantons Rolant! le preux et puissant!*”
[*Shouting a song.*]

Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Eleanor. Get to thy chamber, thou unnatural knave!
Thou shalt have bread and water for three days!

Richard. Anything but the goodies you give John
To gulp—panado and sweet pap—I hate them!

“*Chantons Rolant! le preux et puissant!*”

[*Marches out singing, ELEANOR following.*]

Eleanor. Perverse, undutiful little villain! None
Can tame him, save the king, and with a strength
The father of his own. Get to thy chamber!

SCENE VI.

Porch of Westminster Abbey. A Snow-storm.

DE BROKE *outside on his knees, in squalid penitential attire.*

Enter persons of different ages, sexes, and conditions, who pass into the Church. Some turn away their heads from DE BROKE with horror and scorn and detestation; some hide their faces in their hands, some spit at him: the children throw ashes and filth, the old women scowl upon him, banning and reviling.

A procession of Nuns, who all close their veils and make a sign of the cross as they go by him. A procession of Monks, who all pull over their cowls, and cross themselves; the last puts into DE BROKE'S hand a scourge.

Enter then a Laybrother going to the Refectory with provisions, on which he is regaling himself.

De Broke (to the Laybrother). I starve!

[*The Laybrother flings a bare bone at him.*

De Broke.

O mercy! but one drop to warm

My freezing veins!

[*The Laybrother flings an empty flask at him, and exit.*

SCENE VII.

Saltwood Grange in Kent. Monks and Serfs employed at rural labours.

BECKET and JOHN OF SALISBURY *girt up as woodcutters.*

John of S. O how it glads me, my dear lord, to see you
Peacefully here among us! thus employ'd
In labours wholesome to the body and mind
Refreshing, sweetening, fortifying both,
For blood the sap is of the total man

Which feeds his powers throughout. Why do you start?
 Is not the pigmiest creature of us all
 In that a very Antæus, that he gathers
 New strength each time from Earth's maternal breast,
 When he is thrown upon it?

Becket. You are classical!

John of S. So says your lip, your nostril says—pedantic.
 'Twas the fit word, 'twas the fit word in sooth!
 But these old fables, let me tell you, are
 Often of larger, richer truth than facts.
 Pass that!—I say our good St. Benedict
 Ne'er show'd himself more Solomon in his rules
 Than when he this enjoin'd upon his Order:
 Give your minds hands; marry the practical
 To the contemplative, that joint fruit may follow
 With all the juice of both, earthful, ethereal.

Becket. 'Twas a good rule: so be it.

John of S. Here as thou stand'st
 Amongst thy household, like a Patriarch,
 While clouds are thickening o'er us, I could deem thee
 A Noah, when heaven's flood about to burst,
 Ponder'd above the world.

Becket. Let it come down,
 We are prepared for it!

John of S. No, not quite yet:
 We must fall to a little. [*Beginning to hew.*]

Becket. Simpleton!
 He cannot understand this weighty moment
 When there's a flood indeed may sweep us all
 Into confounding ruin.

John of S. Is not this better,
 Drawing moist fragrance from the rural air
 Than adding our foul sweat to the reek o' the city?
 This hurtless war against the yielding trees,
 Than broils with kings and barons?

Becket. John, I tell you,
Hurtless as this cool war to you may seem,
'Twill end in blood !

John of S. Blood?—I've read something
Like it in Virgil.

Becket. You are a dreamer, John !
You know not what we speak of. I do tell ye
This quarrel cannot end except in blood.
Are you awake? have you no eyes? no ears?
The King forswears himself, foregoes with me
All his concessions, promises, oaths, pacts !
Here am I sent to Saltwood home in shame
By that miscrownèd Youth they call a King,
Whom as a very mistress I set out
To woo with flattering words and dazzling gifts !

John of S. But where the need to dazzle him or flatter,
If you brought honest homage, liege affection?
Why did you, first, declining to absolve
Those Bishops on their penitence, give cause
King Harry should decline from favouring you?

Becket. The Bishops!—John, there is some buzz abroad
You would be one !

John of S. I am to be, good sooth,
By the King's gracious offer.

Becket. Ay, indeed?
Small wonder then you take his part against me !

John of S. Becket, you could not such mean thoughts
surmise

In me, were all your own magnanimous !
From heart unsound proceeds a breath which taints
The fame it blows on. Did you whilome take
The King's part, then, but to be made archbishop?
I deem'd it was through conscience,—though you changed !
Are these your acts, ostensive for the Church,
But to exalt, enrich, empower yourself?

In truth this has been “buzzed,” and loud enough,
 Yet with the bigotry of friendship, John
 Thought ’twas by wasps and idle gnats alone !

Becket. Forgive me, John : but I feel even the globe
 Hollow beneath me ; treason hems me round ;
 Destruction hatches under mine own eaves,
 Broods in the grove beside us. Even the Church,
 False to herself, cannot be true to me :
 Doth she not now adulterate with the King,
 His Holiness being pandar ? bribed thereto
 By his rich-worded promises to stop
 Fierce Barbarossa’s rage,—a gilded bait
 Which only gudgeons catch at ! Every Nuncio,
 Yea the whole Conclave, fill their purse with gems
 Torn from the English Mitre. Louis of France,
 My steadiest prop till now, begins to wax
 Rotten at core, and fails me at most need.
 Ah, simple John ! the world is not so smooth
 As scholars dream.

John of S. I did not say ’twas smooth,
 Unless men take it smoothly.

Becket. Wise good man !
 (*Aside.*) Blockhead ! who cannot see conspiracy
 Darken and thicken like those sinister rooks
 Upon the trees above us ; nay, even hear it
 Croaking in hoarse accord, like them, for carnage !
 (*Aloud.*) I muse on what you say : how best to meet
 With calmest dignity the coming storm.
 ’Twill come, be sure, and soon : for I know well
 The king holds by his Constitutions yet
 Stubborn, as by his crown. ’Tis all cajolery
 This truce with Louis, with the Pope, with me ;
 But to gain time and pick occasion
 For his unsleeping purpose. Becket alone
 Awakes to baffle it, and can, and will,—

Let him thereafter sleep as dead a sleep
As e'er laid head upon a pillow of dust !

John of S. Not all alone : I 'm with thee to the last !

Becket. Come on, then ! Thou shalt see my power compel
This proud king on his knees to me, albeit
The struggle lay me, too, breathless on earth ! [Exit.

John of S. Would there were less of passion and of pride
In our self-sacrifice ! oft made for self,
For our own glorification, when we seem
Devoted all for others ! Yet he thinks
It is the Church he serves, and if so, Heaven
Pardon him if he hurts her in himself ! [Exit.

SCENE VIII.

A Wood.

Enter FITZ-URSE.

Fitz-Urse. Here was our trysting-place ; by that bald oak
Riven from the crown to root ; they could not miss it.
So, you are come !

Enter BRITO.

Brito. What cheer ?

Fitz-Urse. Eh ! you can see :
The place is white with bones left by wild hounds
And ravens ; there 's no other cheer for us.

Brito. Sorry enough. Know you aught of the others ?

Fitz-Urse. Tortoises ! slow worms ! laggards ! But what
needs
More than our two stout selves ?

Brito. Nay, the whole town
Is for him : we must have a dozen more.
If our friends come here and not find us, they
Will raise the shire with noise. De Traci chatters
More than a cage of monkeys : we must wait.

Fitz-Urse. Heard you no trampling? Why do they
bring their horses
To litter here?

Brito. Only a carrier: mark
How cautiously he skirts the wood about;
It is an ill-reputed place.

Enter DE MORVILLE and DE TRACI.

Fitz-Urse. Sirs, we had turn'd
Almost to stocks and stones, with standing here
In watch for you.

De Traci. Pardon! good son of Urse.

De Morville. Is all agreed? are we to kill him straight?

Brito. Ay, if he do not yield.

De Traci. Descend, or fall!

De Morville. He'll never yield; it is as vain as praying
This oak to bow, or be cut down.

Fitz-Urse. Hark, gentlemen:
Debate it as ye will, I am resolved:
My king shall never say again before me,
'Have I no friend will rid me of this pest?'

Brito. Ay, while he raised his passionate hands, to hear
The Bishops' plaint.

De Traci. And spake of 'recreant knights!'

De Morville. Who were sustained by him, without sus-
taining!

Fitz-Urse. Stop ye, or go? Strike, or shill-shall-I?

All. On! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IX.

A By-way in the Labyrinth.

ELEANOR and DWERGA.

Dwerga. Hither, dull grandam!—this way; here's the
clue.

See where it threads the quickset roots along
 Under those nettles, thistles, and rank weeds,
 Pale glittering like the Fatal Sisters' yarn
 Weft out of dead man's skin.

Eleanor. 'Tis broken here.

Dwerga. 'Tis thou, most sovereign beldam, art blear-sighted!
 I, as the dew-born spider, span it slim
 Out of my ropy venom, but scarce breakable.
 Peer, peer about!—there 'tis again: some reptile
 Hath dragg'd it thus awry.

Eleanor. How didst thou manage
 To lay it so adroit?

Dwerga. Even though mine eyes
 Were film'd with slime out of the leech-pond there,
 Into which that curst whelp of thee and Satan,
 Lubberly Dick (whom I will plague anon!),
 When blows had stunn'd me quite, couching his club,
 Butted poor Dwerga like a battering-ram!—
 Yet forth I trail'd me soon; and while these orbs
 Were dim as leaden ones, I laid the clue
 Sly as thou see'st it! Was it not well done?

Eleanor. Shrewdly. Where is it now?

Dwerga. Here, i' the ditch.
 O 'twas well done of Dwerga! as emball'd
 Urchin-like, she did bowl herself unseen
 By the dusk hedges and rush-cover'd channels,
 Out of the maze as she had trundled in!
 Hu! hu! hex! hex!

Eleanor. The Bower! the Bower!

Dwerga. Trot on!
 Now we shall have a frolic worth the venture!—
 Trot on, sweet grandam! [*Sings.*

“Speckle-black toad and freckle-green frog,” &c.

Hu! hu! hex! [*Exeunt.*

Scene changes to the Bower inside.

ROSAMOND *alone.*

Rosamond. My spirits are heavy, and they lend all things
Their own dark nature ! See how the evening sun
Fills this green chamber with a golden gloom ;
The broider'd tapestry waves its lustrous folds
Dismal, as o'er some breathless Dame laid here
In proud, sad state ; yon cricket chirps as loud
And quick, as sounds a larum-bell by night ;
And when that sweet bird twitter'd past the bower,
Methought it was the screech-owl. O how long
Since I felt happy !—Since I left the heaven
Of innocent girlhood, when even sorrow's drops
Were bright and transient as an angel's tears.
Can I not pray ? When innocent, night and morn
I always pray'd for happiness, and it came.
Pray !—yet repent not of your sin !—Far worse
Than the mute sin itself. I will go back
To Godstowe once again ; I will beseech
The Nuns receive me as a truant wretch
Weigh'd down to heart-prostration by my guilt,
And there upon my face at Mercy's shrine
Beg for an age of suffering to wash out
The stain which blots my youth—

Eleanor (from behind). Wash it out here,
With this ! (*showing a phial*). It is a lotion most abstersive ;
'Twill cleanse you monumental-white, and save
A world of holy water !

Rosamond. Art thou a demon,
Or Eleanor the Queen ?

Eleanor. Either you like,
Or both, if it please you. There's my familiar !

[*Pointing at DWERGA*

Rosamond. Ah ! fiend assured, that canst return from hell,
Whither young Richard sent thee !

Dwerga. Hu ! hu ! hex !
Take to thy sucking-bottle, pretty child !
Take to it, lovesome ! 'Tis more precious milk
Than the slow-dribbling poppy gives ; yea better
Than the black suckle from my dam I drew,
Which makes me such a darling !

Rosamond. Fearful thing !
Comest thou to tear me through my opening grave
Into the house of torment for my sins ?

Dwerga. Just so !—But feel how tenderly I'll grip
Thy soft white limbs with my beak'd claws ! No blood
Shall ooze from them but I will kiss it up
Fond as a gloating lover, and each wound
Sear with hot caustic breath !—Try it, my sweetling !

Rosamond. Save me, ah save me, thou more human form !

[*Kneeling to* ELEANOR.]

Dwerga. Let me upon her ! my fangs itch.

Eleanor. Abide :

It were too soon to put her out of pain.
Tell me, young Mistress !—Nay, keep on your knees ;
No succour hears thee ; good Sir Fier-à-bras
Has been grave-sick these three days, and no other
Dares front the Queen ;—tell me, thou smooth-faced Witch !
What sorceries didst thou practise, to beguile
My husband of his troth—what sinful arts ?

Rosamond. None, as I am most sinful, but what nature
Taught him to wile me with—alas the day !

Eleanor. Ay, wilt thou boast thee of thy natural charms
Above all aid from art ? Thou dog-briar Rose !
Thou vile, poor, daggled, village-garden Rose !
Thou stuck upon the bosom of a king,
As the prime flower of England ?

Rosamond. All unmeet :
But 'twas love, not ambition, fixed me there !

Eleanor. Love! dost avouch it, brazen of tongue and brow

Rosamond. Ay me, is ever truth a wrong?

Eleanor. Audacious!

Dost thou, a base-born peasant Girl, dare vie
With Eleanor of Guienne for a king's heart?

Rosamond. I am a daughter of De Clifford, dame!
A high-born, high-soul'd race, till sunk in me.
But farewell pride!—'tis for the pure alone;
Vain flourish even for them, since humble or proud,
We are all equal in our winding-sheets,
The country-maid and queen!

Eleanor. No rug, vile Wretch,
Shall wind thy harlot corse! It shall be cast
Upon the cross-road, as a gaze for men,
A glut for dogs and daws!

Rosamond. O Queen, some pity
To thy own sex!

Eleanor. That thy so vaunted beauty
Be first the mock of every tongue, and end
The horror of all eyes!

Rosamond. O rather, rather
Bury me breathing quick ten feet in earth,
Build me up in these walls, and my last look
Shall stare dumb pardon on thee!

Eleanor. Drink off this!—
Here's a love-potion from me in return
For that thou gavest the king, to warm his blood
Tow'rds thee his paramour, freeze it towards his spouse.
Drain it up, sorceress!—no words, no prayers!

Rosamond. One moment, if thou 'rt not inexorable,
To plead with Heaven.

Eleanor. 'Tis deafer still than I!

Rosamond. But to confess my sins—

Eleanor. Fool, they are flagrant
In hell itself renown'd!—Hither, good Fury! [*To DWERGA.*]
Howl through her brain, flame round her with your eyes,

If she put off the cup once more, cling to her
And poison her with your kisses!

Dwerga.

Let me! I'll screw

Her soul out in my tortuous clasp—

Rosamond.

To the dregs!

[*She drinks off the poison.*]

'Tis bitter—as thy hate!—fierce—as thy rage!

My head swims!—Mercy, Heaven!—Too cruel Queen!

Relent when I am dead—O give me burial!

Cast me not out to gaze—Henry! defender!

The fiends are here!—Thy Rosamond is—no more! [*Dies.*]

Eleanor. The King's name on her lips even to the last!
She shall bleach for it!

Dwerga.

There's a drying wind

Out now, will make a precious mummy of her,

And with her thus thou canst present the King

To hang up in his cabinet as a study,

Like a stuff'd alligator—hu! hu! hex!

Eleanor. Fair Rosamond? Pale Rosamond, now, I ween!

Dwerga. Foul Rosamond she shall be, foul as she fair
had been!—

There's a quaint rhyme for thee!—I will turn minstrel

And make a doleful ditty of this drone—

'Fair Rosamond done to death in her sweet Bower,

By cruel Eleanor, that wicked Queen!'

It shall be famous! you shall have your meed,

As Cain's most pitiless Daughter, from mankind!

Eleanor. Make me not tremble, now I've done the deed,
With diabolic drolling: it and this

Would give a stone the shudders. Let's be gone! [*Exit.*]

Dwerga. I'll plague thee raving-mad with it each night,
Till thou shalt wish to sleep as sound as she!

Dwerga will be thy *Incubus*; and more,

Thy *Succubus* too, fattening upon thy gall,

And laughter at thy follies—hu! hu! hex! [*Exit after her.*]

SCENE X.

An Inn on the Road near Canterbury.

Enter a Pursuivant-at-Arms and an Ostler.

Pursuivant. Get me another horse for the king's duty—all bone and sinew, hark'ee! Shift the housings from my jade, fit or no fit, and in a trice—if you wouldn't have your hands cut off and nailed behind you, like a kite's wings on a barn-door!

Ostler. Yes, sir! (*Aside*) I'll bespeak you a toss i' the mire for that: the waters are out, you shall be made to play duck-and-drake in them! [*Exit.*]

Pursuivant. This crime will be consummate ere I reach them;

And church, prince, people, overwhelm'd in sorrow:
Themselves will walk the world with foreheads sear'd,
Every man's hand against them. Fie on their zeal!
Thus kings have ever-ready slaves to give
Their words the worst translation into acts,
For which the original's blamed: or vantage take
Of royal ire to sate their rascal own.

I fool the time!—My roadster, ho!—not yet? [*Exit.*]

SCENE XI.

Canterbury. An Apartment in the Archbishopal Mansion.

BECKET, JOHN OF SALISBURY, and HENRY BOSHAM.

John of S. I cannot cease my prayers—nay my rebukes,
Though you of consecrated wisdom are
Prime in all England. You have been too stern,
Imperious and impatient with these men.
I tell you they are not negotiators

Commission'd by the king. Did you not mark
That fellow whose straight, black brows, met i' the front,
How he pursed up his lips, nor seem'd to hear
One word, or pro or con, but kept his eyes
Piercing the ground, his right hand on his hilts?

Bosham. One Reginald Fitz-Urse.

Becket. I know it well:

Soldiers are cut-throats in the king's livery,
Murderers whom the laws make gallows-free.

John of S. Why then provoke them with such bitter
taunts,

Such scorn intolerant and intolerable?— [Noise without.

They are return'd!—I knew it!

Bosham. My dear lord,

I'm a weak timorous scholar; but for you
Feel myself strong both arm and soul to die:

'Tis not my cowardice speaks—flee, flee, dear Master!

Becket. Becket resists the Devil, and He shall flee!

Enter GRYPE hastily.

Gryme. To the Church! to sanctuary! fly! fly! fly!

Becket. Have they got in?

Gryme. De Broke, that privy traitor,

Mad to be excommunicated beyond all grace,
Hath join'd, and leads them up the postern-stairs,
When we had barr'd the portal.

Becket. How soon, think you,
Will they have burst their way to us?

Gryme. Five doors!

Becket. Five oaken, clouted doors?—Fetch me my robes.

John of S. My gracious lord—my friend—upon my
knees— [Kneeling to him.

Becket. Richard, obey me!—All in time, good John!
Get up and help me to array. [Noise without.

My alb—

My pall—my sandals ; let me have the mitre—
 You hurry, John : be calm ; more haste worse speed !
 Now, where 's my crosier ? [Noise approaches.

Henry Bosham, you

Go to my almery, here 's the key (remember
 'Tis somewhat stiff, so force it not !), and fetch me
 My emperor of rings, bright *Peretot*,
 Jewelry—all— [Exit BOSHAM, and soon returns.

John of S. (to himself). I know not which to name it,
 Grandeur of soul or pettiness, pride of state,
 Contempt of peril, calm from sense of right,
 Or contradictiveness insane !

Becket (putting on the ring). I'm ready.
 Nay, my precedence is to be preceded,
 The greatest comes the last. Go ye before me. [Exeunt.

FITZ-URSE, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACI, BRITO, DE
 BROKE, and others, break in.

Conspirators. Where is the traitor ? where ? where ? he
 is fled !

De Broke. Here is a secret passage to the Church :
 Thither the wild beast scours as to his den,
 I'll wind it like a terrier after him,
 And lead the pack into his very lair :
 Follow me, friends ! [Exeunt.

SCENE XII.

St. Benedict's Chapel in the Cathedral.

BECKET before the Altar. JOHN OF SALISBURY, BOSHAM,
 GRYME.

Becket. Who closed that door ?—Open it, I command !
 What ! will ye make a Castle of a Church ?

The Conspirators rush in.

De Traci. Where is the traitor ?

Brito. Where is the Archbishop ?

Becket. Here am I, an Archbishop, but no traitor !

De Morville. Will you absolve the Prelates ?

Becket. No !

Brito. Will you to Winchester,

And beg the young King's grace, for your attempt

Most traitorous to discrown him ?

Becket. I made none,

And will beg grace of none, save God on high !

De Traci. You are my prisoner ;—come along, proud
traitor !

Becket. Take off that impious hand, which dares profane

My stole immaculate ; or I will shake thee,

Vile reptile, off, and trample thee in the dust !

Bosham, let be !—I have an arm as stout

As any stalking Norman of them all !—

Away ! *[He casts DE TRACI from him, who draws.*

De Traci. (*Aiming at BECKET, strikes off the arm of
RICHARD GRYPE.*)

Get thee a wooden one, thou false confessor,

To bless thee with ! thou supple, whispering knave !

BECKET *and his friends are assaulted by the Conspirators, many
of whom BECKET overthrows.*

Fitz-Urse. Here strikes King Harry !

[Clearing BECKET down.

Becket. *Execrabilis esto!* *[Dies.*

Scene closes.

SCENE XIII.

*Before the Cathedral.**Enter Pursuivant as from the Porch.*

Pursuivant. Too late! too late! O how the King will
grieve!

O murderous sacrilege! beyond all tongues
'To cry out aught upon but Woe! Woe! Woe!
Woe to both king and kingdom! Years of tears
Will not from yonder chapel-floor wash out
The bloody desecration of such blots
As make the heart bleed through the eyes to see them!—
Woe to the nation, woe! [*Exit.*

SCENE XIV.

St. Benedict's Chapel.

*The ceremony of a Lustration performed by Monks and secular
Clergy. A procession.*

SCENE XV.

Choir of Canterbury Cathedral: to the left St. Benedict's Chapel.

*Becket's Corpse on a bier. Crowds of visitors, some gazing
at the death-place, some at the body, or paying it veneration
by kneeling around it, touching it, kissing the Primate's
robes, insignia, &c.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY. BOSHAM. JOHN OF OXFORD.

John of S. Lo! how the multitude flock in!—'Tis strange
This thing so soon was known; Bosham and I

Were too heart-sick to speak of it ; and Gryme
Is in a trance of agony even yet,
Through loss of limb and lord.

John of O. When did it happen ?

John of S. Near about Vesper time.

John of O. Methinks the news

Spread with the curfew knell over all England,

Even in a moment : 'twas miraculous !

I heard it scarce more late at London Tower ;

And deem'd it that strange mockery of sound

Which oft its echoing shell makes of our ear,

Or yet more strange intelligence presaged

By what we dread is true ;—but every face

Round me was pale-struck also, each foot stopt

Howe'er precipitate, hands were half raised,

Or placed to still the beatings of the heart,

As if some thunderous blare had rent the sky

And all drew breath to hear the Doom-word follow.

John of S. Most strange ! Both town and country are
afoot ;

You'd think an earthquake of the total Isle

Had roused them from their beds. See how they troop,

Jostling with fear, haste, and confusion.

John of O. The place will be a pilgrimage ere long,
So revered was this man.

John of S. And is the more

That Death enrolls him now among the Martyrs .

Some royalty has enter'd, to do honour,

Or mourn with us—alas ! alas !

John of O.

The Queen.

ELEANOR approaches hastily, and kneels at the foot of the bier.

John of S. How very white her Highness looks !

John of O.

Nay, haggard ;

She must be wayworn sadly. Hark ! she mutters :

Does she forget she's in a crowd and church?
Not at her *priedieu*?

Eleanor. O most holy Becket!
Pray for me, make my peace with ireful heaven,
Thou who hast now such influence o'er the Saints
As new amongst them, and above them all
Rank'd by thy bleeding crown of Martyrdom!—
Eleanor is uneasy in her soul:
Give me some sign of favour, and thy tomb
I'll circle with an orb of golden urns
Flaming perpetual incense! Tell me how
To quell this troublous spirit.

[*The Shade of Rosamond rises at the head of the Bier.*]

Shade. Pitiless Queen!
How canst thou hope repose unto thy spirit,
Denying it to my unhappy clay!
Eleanor. Help to the Queen of England!—Guards there!
—help!
Stand between her and me! Let her not gaze
So ghastly on me thus!

John of S. Who is it offends
Your grace!

Eleanor. She!—she!—that fixes on me there
Her marble eyes.

John of S. 'Tis but the statued form
Of a young Martyress.

Eleanor. I know it well,
Hate's martyress and mine!—Fair Rosamond!
Art thou not she?

Shade. Rosamond once called Fair!
Poor Rosamond who never wish'd thee harm!
Thy husband loved thee not, and 'twas 'gainst thee
Small crime, that faith, thou nor preserved nor prized,
Plighted itself to me.—My death was merciless
Beyond all need or measure: that fierce drink

Which rack'd me inwardly and warped my form
Unseemliest to behold, might have been spared,
For thy fierce words had slain me.

Eleanor.

'Twas not I

Prepared the drug—false Geber, the physician !

Shade. Is this pale presence dreadful as the fear
Of that grim fiend thou brought'st to torture me
Before my time in hell ?

Eleanor.

The fiend-like creature

Work'd me to work thy death—I was her slave !

John of S. List how to her own fearful Fantasy
She shrives herself !—'Tis a sad self-exposure.

Shade. I am fate's herald here : Thy name shall stand
A breviary of all abhorr'd in woman ;
Thy memory shall be made eterne on earth
By the immortal hatred of mankind.
Thou shalt be still the slavish tool of those
Who serve, to mock thee ; and thy wickedness
Shall be the womb of what shall breed thee woe.
Thy Eldest Son,—his nature weak, by thee
Distemper'd,—shall die ere his prime ; thy Second
In it, by death ignoble, after a flourish
Glorious though brief, and spirit gall'd with chains ;
Early and sadly shall thy Third Son perish,
Thy Grand-child too, earlier, sadder still,
Blasting the hopes of England in their flower.
Thy Fourth, thy other self in manlike form,
Thine idol, because thine own image true,
Shall live as miserable from his crimes,
His mean, low, lustful, jealous, coward heart,
As thou from thine ; and meet a similar death
To that thou wrought'st for me, but wretcheder still,
Unpitied his by all the world, as mine
By thee alone !

Eleanor.

I am relentful now !—

Thy corse shall virginly be deckt—be borne
 With richest care to Godstowe, and interr'd
 Like an apparent sovereign, as thou wert
 In thine own chapel—so thou wilt not haunt me !

Shade. Let decent rite and ceremonial due
 Be paid, even to the lowliest form of dust
 That Heaven's breath sanctified though sin defiled,
 As to the mightiest. 'Tis a solemn claim
 Humanity has upon humanity ;
 And thou wilt do no worse fulfilling it,
 Than offering base obeisance to this clay,
 A servile adoration and absurd,
 Dishonouring those who render and receive it.—
 Prosper as thou deserv'st. I leave thee now. [*Vanishes.*]

John of O. The Queen faints: bear her to the open
 cloister ! [*She is borne off.*]

John of S. My friend, and my heart's Daughter, in one
 day

Lost to me, both !—I have done some great wrong,
 And will repent for it, though I know it not.
 O what will say the King? He'll be the sufferer,
 First in himself, then through his people all ;
 His penance will be bitterest that e'er man
 Endured for weetless sin or wilful crime.

Scene Closes.

THE END.

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