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MY LADY

POVERTY







MY LADY POVERTY

A Drama in Five Acts

BY

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SANTA BARBARA, CAL.

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MY LADY POVERTY.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

FRANCIS.

PIETRO BERNARDONE, his father.

GIOVANNI NEANDRINI, his friend
and confidant.

GUIDO, Bishop of Assisi.

ORLANDO, a nobleman of Assisi,

BERNARD DE VENTADOUR, a trou-
badour.

GIUSEPPE D'AMORE,

ALBERTO MADRE,

AMBROGIO RENIERI,

EDUARDO SCARPELLO,

LEONE SANDALI,

LEONE BELLINO,

LUIGI CAPRINI,

ANGELO CUNIETTI, a poor little boy.

Companions to Francis.

Servant to Pietro Bernardone.

A physician.

Nightwatchman of Assisi.

Attendants.

Scene: Assisi and Spoleto.

MY LADY POVERTY.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*Assisi. An open place before Francis' home. Enter Francis and Giovanni.*

FRANCIS.

O joy! out in the open once again.
Unfettered now, and freed from stubborn ills,
I'd fain, like merry warbling bird, hie far
Away into some shady forest glen,
And there amid bright nature's melodies
Pour out to God my sweetest song of praise.

GIOVANNI.

A joy it is even to hear you tell
Your joy. But listen, Francis, a kindly message:
The knot of your devoted friends did bid
Me come to greet you with their heart's best
wish,
And say, how all rejoice to know you well
In health again.

FRANCIS.

So constant and so kind!

GIOVANNI.

They hope ere long to see you in their midst.
To lead, as you were wont, their sports and
feasts.

FRANCIS.

My hope as well; may 't soon be realized.

GIOVANNI.

'All seems of late,' they say, 'so dull without

The smile of Francis' cheerful face; we miss
His gracious ways, his large resourceful mind
And noble heart forgetting self; we lack
Our troubadour's sweet songs of country, home,
Religion, love, and glorious chivalry.

FRANCIS.

To all my comrades, most to you, Giovanni,
Sincerest thanks. Oh never come the time
When I unworthy prove of worthy friends!

GIOVANNI.

It will not, Francis.

FRANCIS.

Heaven grant it!—Now.

I pray, go with me into yonder wood.

I yearn do drink in nature's freshness pure,
And sate my longing eyes with gazing rapt
Her witching charms. Oh! how 't will glad
my heart

To range on hill and plain, to breathe the
fields'

Rich perfume, taste the leaping mountain rill,
Roam through thick wilds and over sylvan
paths,

And linger as of old beneath the dome
Of gently swaying boughs, amid the lisp
Of rustling leaves, and scent of flowering herbs
And trees. There shall my fancy freely play,
My men'ry fill with tender recollections,
And overflow my soul with grateful joy
To view the riches God has poured
On Italy's pride, fair Umbria's land.

GIOVANNI.

Yes, Francis,

Of nature you were ever passionate fond;
And now, when to your large receptive sense
Her beauties she will new unfold, your blood
Will course with fresh and healthful life; and we
Again shall have what these drear days so sore
We lacked, the light and warmth diffusing air
Of your companionship.—Come, let us go.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—Assisi. A street. Enter Orlando and Giuseppe meeting.

GIUSEPPE.

Thy haste, my noble lord!

ORLANDO.

How canst thou ask?
Hast not yet heard there's war afoot? The south,
Apulia is the scene; the German nobles
Rise up in rebel arms against the Pope,
Our gracious Innocent.

GIUSEPPE.

That's news indeed.

ORLANDO.

I haste to enlist with Walter of Brienne,
Defender of the Holy Father's rights;
The 'Gentle Count' he's called, the bravest
knight,
They say, in Christendom.

GIUSEPPE.

Not one of ours,
I ween, of this knows aught.

ORLANDO.

Not strange: the gay

And gaudy troop that Bernardone's son
Doth lead are champions bold in banquet halls,
And paladins at routs; theirs are battles
With dainty dishes, feasts are all their deeds,
Carousals their contests.—Fie on such knights!
Knights of the table long, not 'Table Round.'

GIUSEPPE.

Mock us not, Lord Orlando. Young in years,
We still are young in knightly deeds. But wait,
And those whom now thou tauntst will startle
yet

The Christian world with wondrous feats for
God,

For Pope, and King, and country, truth and
faith.

ORLANDO.

Fair dream, Giuseppe; and still I would your
dream

Might be fulfilled.

GIUSEPPE.

It shall, I warrant you.

Have we not earnest of our future greatness?
Mark: walking with our captain not long since,
There met our crew a man of saintly fame,
Who stepped before us, doffed his mantle,
spread

It out for Francis' tread, and solemn spoke
In prophet guise and tone: 'My deep respect
To him who will in time great wonders work,
Whom all the world will yet extol and love.'—
But pardon, I detain you.

ORLANDO.

My blame 't is,

Not yours, that I delay; I'll leave at once.
Success to you and all your fellow knights.—
Farewell.

GIUSEPPE.

Farewell, noble sir. Prosper God
Your enterprise. *[Exit Orlando.]*

A hardy soldier this,
Adorned with every grace of knighthood. But—
A trifle too sedate for me and grave.
Give me the sprightly disposition of Francis,
Our jovial circle's gallant knight, Francis,
Whose worth we've learned of late by loss to
th' full

To prize. O fortunate we! he'll soon be ours
Again.—But who are these? My friends?

*Enter Alberto, Ambrogio, Eduardo, Leone
Sandali, Leone Bellino and Luigi.*

Well met,
Companions! You go to our captain's, do you
not?

ALBERTO.

We do. And your intent?

GIUSEPPE.

The same. Long live
Our leader Francis!

ALL.

Long live our leader Francis!

LEONE SANDALI.

Oh what a joy, that he's restored to us
Whose absence was for all so keen a trial!

LUIGI.

Life seemed a sickly thing without the spice

Of 's racy speech and animated song:
Darkened and chilled was our youth's day when
sank

The sun of Francis' glowing eye, and fled
The warmth of Francis' genial fellowship.

LEONE BELLINO.

The good old times return; anon we'll have
The full delights of former days to enjoy.

AMBROGIO.

Ha! how we'll make the streets resound with
song

And cheer, as we were wont, o' nights to crown
The festive day.

GIUSEPPE.

Come, comrades, come. Long live
Our leader Francis!

ALL.

Long live our leader Francis!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 3.—*A wood near Assisi. Enter Francis
and Giovanni.*

GIOVANNI.

Here will we sit and rest.—You seem fatigued.

FRANCIS.

And so indeed I am.

GIOVANNI.

I wonder much,
Your long desired converse with nature done,
You wear an anxious look.

FRANCIS.

So much you read
E'en from my face? Giovanni, could you look

Into my heart, you'd see and wonder more.

GIOVANNI.

What do you mean?

FRANCIS.

I know not whence, nor why,
But certain 't is, a change is come on me.

GIOVANNI.

A change?

FRANCIS.

My love for nature 's vanished quite.

GIOVANNI.

A foolish thought! Assuredly now 't is not
My Francis, but his sickness speaks. I know
Whence comes your troubled state: too much
you hoped

From your yet feeble health. You do forget
That where the body 's ill, the soul can not
Unmixed delight in life, and prize to th' worth
The bounteous Maker's gifts. Believe it not:
Not vanished is your former love; asleep
A while it is, and with returning health
'T will wake again refreshed.

FRANCIS.

No, no, 't is gone.

GIOVANNI.

Oh, say not so! See farther than the cloud
That hoods your wonted temper's unflecked sky;
When you shall lead again your jovial band,
This darkling mood will pass, and your delight
Of old in God's fair world will big revive.

FRANCIS.

Pray, call it not a passing mood that's now
Upon me. That vain comfort I too spoke

To my distracted mind; but now more clear
I see. No, not my spirit dulled by pain,
Nor yet my senses dimmed by long and close
Confinement caused the change which you re-
mark.

GIOVANNI.

Why then what was the cause?

FRANCIS.

Ah! as I speak,
E'en now, my vision seems revisited
By those faint glimpses of celestial things
Which ever and anon in painful hours,
Like fleeting rays, did steal into my soul.

GIOVANNI.

Your former self from slumber slow awaking.

FRANCIS.

Nay, dying rather to my former self,
And rising to a higher life. In truth,
I feel as I were born anew, and still
Travailed my spirit in the throes: Heaven draws
My strong reluctant will, and earth is loth
To leave my worldly mind.

GIOVANNI.

A strife it is
'Tween good and evil health.

FRANCIS.

'Tis more, 't is more.

GIOVANNI.

Your robust make the issue will decide,
And then, the struggle over, the battle won,
Your eye new-fired will keen again discern
The fair, and smile on all that God's bright sun
Doth smile upon.

FRANCIS.

Oh never more my eye
Shall look on things of earth as it was used!
An inner light, Giovanni, now to me
Discovers what before I never saw:
This world we see, and think so great and fair,
The thin and fragile shell it is, no more,
Of a far greater, fairer world; this orb
Of ours, so seeming large and firm, is yet
In truth as frail and small as th' wondering orb
That full takes in the universe; it waits
But for the Almighty's touch to burst ablaze
Into immortal life and robe itself
In endless glory. All nature 's but a glass
Which dim reflects the light of a divine
Kingdom, that everlasting realm above,
Whose sun the Sun of Justice is, whose light
The Brightness of Eternal Light.—O woe!
That I so long this light have shunned, alas!
Have been so utter blind as not to look
Beyond the passing pageant, and to pierce
The veil that hides from view what lies behind.
Fool that I was, my hungry soul so long
To feed with such unsound, yea baneful food.
The straw and husks of this world's fleeting
goods!

GIOVANNI.

O Francis! leave these sad depressing thoughts.
If much you suffer them to hold the mind
You will renew your illness, not regain
Your former health.

FRANCIS.

In sorrow, not in gloom

I speak 't: I fear I have not known myself
Till now. My youth is gone, a sad record
Of wasted time.—To've spent life's golden days
In empty pleasures, idle dreams!

GIOVANNI.

No cause
Have you to pine: never from virtue's path
You've strayed, no deed of shame your honor
smirched,

Nay, not a word that e'en to holy ears
Might give offense has ever 'scaped your lips.
Your hand was always open to the poor,
Your heart to the distressed, your hand and
heart

Belonged to all that called you friend or foe.

FRANCIS.

Your friendly eye more goodness in me sees
Than I'm possessor of, and your kind love
Keeps from discernment faults my own self-love
Has long kept undescried. At last less dark
Within my soul it grows, and I begin
To see, another way I must pursue
Than I have hither walked. I seem to hear
A sweet voice whispering soft: 'Come, follow
me.'

Oh would that He who draws with mighty cords
Made me as generous now in following Him,
As I was given long to chase and serve
This failing world!

Enter Angelo.

ANGELO.

Oh there is Francis, good master Francis!
Good morning, master Francis.

FRANCIS.

God's blessing on you, boy.

ANGELO.

O Francis! are you well again? I am so glad to see you. And how glad father will be, when I tell him that I saw you! But Francis, kind master Francis, are you really well? Tell me.

FRANCIS.

As well, my boy, as I can well expect. And how does my little friend Angelo?

ANGELO.

I am always well. But oh, how much I missed you! Every day I waited and waited, but you would not come.

FRANCIS.

Your good old father, and your neighbors, how do they all?

ANGELO.

They are all so sad that you are sick.—This morning, before I left to fetch wild berries in these woods, my father said how hard it was that good master Francis stayed away so long. But now you'll come again to visit us, won't you, dear Francis? Tell me that you will.

FRANCIS.

I will, my boy, I will.

ANGELO.

Oh, thank you, thank you! I will run at once to bring the joyful news to father. Goodbye, master Francis.

[Exit.]

FRANCIS.

A lovely flower, Giovanni, out of God's

Own garden, sent into this desert world
To spread the perfume of a guileless life,
And shame the greed of a luxurious race.
Content in humble means, this winsome child
Thanks God's kind Providence e'en for a cold
And lowly hearth.

GIOVANNI.

A bright and charming lad
This boy indeed.

FRANCIS.

A kingly lot is his,
Nor his alone, but too the lot of all
Who meekly, smilingly bear up the yoke
Of pressing poverty. For all our ease
And merriment, doth not a secret pain
And weariness rankle our inmost heart?
Not so with those who must forever strive
With want: the heavy weight of life on them
Doth lighter lie than us who never need.
In sooth, the peace and rest which all our lives
We mortals toil to find, more oft in hut
Than palace dwells.—There must be something
then

In poverty that's hid away within
A rugged shell, entreaured far too deep
For this wise melancholy world to see,
Yet sweetness has and power to spell and bless.

GIOVANNI.

Your words ring true; you reason well. But yet,
I fear, you overleap the Master's word:
'More blessed 't is to give than to receive.'
Are you not blessed to have given alms
So oft and so profusely to Christ's poor?

FRANCIS.

'More blessed 't is to give than to receive'—
There is some comfort in the thought: 't is true,
I've given to the poor, nay never heard
A cry of need but I was inly touched,
And moved to lavish richest gifts; but much,
Alas! too much, I've also given to self,
And little, oh how little! to my God.
Have I not humored my fastidious tastes
With every blandishment, apparelled rich
In flowing robes, spending whole nights in wild
And wanton revelries? In fine, Giovanni,
I've loved the poor, but loved not to be poor
Myself.

GIOVANNI.

You are too strict a judge. Though free
In mirth, and liberal to your friends, no less,
Yea more, you've been munificent to God,
Ministering so largely to His poor.
Is not this praise enough? Who does as much?
Oh why not, Francis, be content to keep
The godly path you have so nobly trod?

FRANCIS.

God calls to loftier heights: no longer may
I tarry here in listlessness and play
Away my life.

GIOVANNI.

Do you recall those words
You spoke when in Perugia we did pine
A dreary year's captivity, and sad
We let our spirits droop, the while you laughed
And kept up cheer? 'You look amazed at me,'
You said, 'and wonder that so brave I bear

Our fortune; some day you will marvel more,
When all the world will worship me.' Francis,
Now verify your words, lead on the band
Of your admiring friends, and win renown
That never dies. Lead on! they'll follow you
To any enterprise that's worth the name
Of chivalry.

FRANCIS.

A dream of long ago
You reawaken, one of many visions
That filled my youthful fantasy; of knights
And talismans and famed chivalric deeds,
All that the songs of troubadours and tales
Of bards so fascinating celebrate,
And in my childhood days my mother would
So often sing and tell to me. But these
Are fairy sights fit for romantic youth,
Itself so fairy-like. 'Tis time I left
The shadowy realm of romance to go forth
And wrestle with life's grim realities.
'Tis time to do, to live: dreams are but dreams,
And songs but songs, and words and fancies air
Without the deeds. Some great thing I must do
For God;—and soon I will. What it shall be
I know not yet, but this I know: A knight
Of Heaven's King I'll be, a soldier of Christ,
And champion of His Holy Cross. To Him
I swear eternal fealty.

GIOVANNI.

Not words
Of sick or petulant moodiness are these,
I know it now, but God inspired thoughts.
Too bold and worldly wise if I have spoken,

Your pardon, dearest Francis. Heaven forbid,
I should make bold to step between your soul
And God! Only I pray: whate'er may chance,
May you be spared to us, and most to me,
Who love you as my very soul.

FRANCIS.

Place we,
Giovanni, ourselves, our destiny entire
In God's paternal care. His Providence
Will guide all safe, and bring to happy end
Whate'er His unsearched Wisdom has ordained.
Come now, my father will be seeking me,
And mother will grow anxious for her son.
'I've said, now I begin; the Most High God
Hath wrought this change.' [Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—Outskirts of Assisi. Enter Giuseppe, Alberto, Ambrogio, Eduardo, Leone Sandali, Leone Bellino, Luigi; last of all Bernard de Ventadour between Giovanni and Francis.

GIOVANNI.

Here then we've come to our city's utmost bounds,

And here, alack! the sad word must be spoken:
Our noble guest from fair Provence, esteemed
Signor Bernard de Ventadour, mid grief
We now bid you a kind farewell, and wish
You godspeed on the way.

BERNARD.

Most hearty thanks,
My gracious hosts. Rejoicing in the thought
Of home, regret still steals into my heart
That I must leave your sunny land, and lose
The excellent friends who know to prize and
love

The singer's art. On all my tours, I vouch,
Such ardent patrons I've not found as you
Of high and sacred minstrelsy.

GIOVANNI.

Accept,
Sweet bard, as keepsake of your sojourn here
Our parting tokens of regard and love:
May God's protecting hand bring you unharmed

To lovely France. And may that Prince of th'
court

Of heaven, who tracks the pious traveller's
ways,

In future years again direct your thoughts
And steps to azure Italy, with harp
And song to cheer the feasts of your attached
And deeply grateful friends.

BERNARD.

May Angel hands take up your eager hope,
And carry aloft your fervent prayer e'en up
To heaven's throne.—Ah, heaven! the home of
song

And harmony, where not the faltering tones
Of mortal bards are heard, but constant strains
Of Angel choirs, the immortal minstrel hosts
Chanting for aye in rapturous hymns of praise
The unveiled glory of their deathless King.

Heaven! where mingle with the angelic lays
The paeans of triumphant Martyr bands,
And psalms and canticles and jubilant songs
Of Saints, accompanied still by sweetest notes
Of hundred thousand thousand harps of gold:
Till all the wide celestial realm resounds
With ever growing, never waning swells
Of infinite music, whose echoes roll out
Into the boundless round of space, and thence
Reverberating gather all before
The Almighty's crystal throne, and wondrous
blend

To one concordant voice of praise, and one
Sublime harmonic of created sound
And music of the Eternal Years.—

O gentle friends, kind hearts, oh may we there,
If not again on earth, meet all to sing
That endless song in endless joy! Ah me!
The thought of that supernal home my heart
Doth melt; my tears begin to flow, and more
I'm drawn to look upon its sweet, though faint
And distant type, my stay and rest below,
My earthly home. Then let me haste to part.
So Heaven will, I'll come to you again.
Adieu, my friends, adieu!

ALL.

Adieu, Adieu!
[Exit Bernard.]

FRANCIS.

Attend bright Angel throngs the parting bard,
And lightsome music wing his wandering steps
Whose strains have oft revived the failing
strength,

And smoothed the weary pilgrim's rugged path.
How glowed his melting words as flushed he
told

Harmoniously our Home's enchanting music!
And how his face, like blushing setting sun,
Shed kindred rays upon our mien, when far,
Like seer, he looked beyond our earthly abode!
O loving hearts! if 't set our souls on fire
Merely to hear the singer tell of heaven,
The entrancing, endless music there, what then
Will 't be when we ourselves, changed, glori-
fied,

Shall be incorporate to that blessed choir
Of ceaseless singing Saints and Angel hosts!
That prize, my comrades, let us ever seek,

That treasure we must find.

GIOVANNI.

Yes, Francis, yes;

With God above to illumine our path, and you
Our valiant leader here, we'll seek and find.

GIUSEPPE

Well said, Giovanni. Comrades all, the bard
From France is gone, but look! have we not
here

Our own Assisi's tuneful bard? Is not
Our Francis ours again? and always ours?
His rich attire proclaims the blithesome youth
Of former days, his smiling face reveals
The joy of 's heart to be with us again.
All hail to our captain! Long live Francis!

ALL.

All hail to our captain! Long live Francis!

FRANCIS.

Companions, this show of loyal love
Affects my joyful heart with growing joy:
A pleasure, sure, it is to see my friends
Again, and know them constant as of old;
But I have still a further cause of joy
Which you yet know not of.

GIUSEPPE.

Then quickly tell 't.
That with you we may all rejoice.

ALBERTO.

Yes, do:

Imparted joy, you're 'ware, increases joy.

LUIGI.

Indeed, they say divided joy is twice
A joy.

AMBROGIO.

Give up the secret, Francis.

FRANCIS.

Then hear:

I have the assurance now that I'll become
A mighty prince.

ALBERTO. .

Why, that you are e'en now.

AMBROGIO.

Who would deny 't? Pray, are you not our
prince?

EDUARDO.

And prince of all Assisi's youth?

GIUSEPPE.

All hail

To our noble prince!

ALL.

All hail to our noble prince!

FRANCIS.

Nay listen! In yesternight's repose I had
A dream, a vision fair: I saw a palace
Spacious, exalted placed on pompous heights,
Encompassed round by nature's fullest wealth,
A great, majestic hall, whose vast spread rooms
And rich decked walls with flashing arms and
shields

Of glittering gold were all o'erhung.

LUIGI.

Ah! that's

The temple of glory, Francis, where you'll shine
Among the brightest stars of warrior fame.

FRANCIS.

On every shield there gleamed embossed a cross

Of brilliant hue, which blazoned seemed in sooth
By master hand of heraldry.

LUIGI.

The cross
Of Christian knighthood, the brave and virtuous knight's
Most gloried blazonry.

FRANCIS.

Now by your leave,—
Amid this sumptuous splendor then appeared
A still more charming beauteous sight, the
 pearl
And crown, methought, of all the castle's treasures:
A lady fair it was, transporting fair,
Her graceful form swathed round in dazzling
 light;
In bridal robes she was arrayed: her gown
Of silk was sapphire deep; a spotless white
Her veil and chaplet showed; of ruby stones
Her necklace strung. her ring and bracelets
 wrought
Of clearest gold. And so surpassing sweet
A smile inwreathed her lovely face, that
 thoughts
Of earthly loves fled all my spellbound mind,
And from my mem'ry dimmed and paled away
All forms of beauty else and loveliness.

GIUSEPPE.

A most auspicious sight! foretokening plain
Our prince's coming bliss.

LUIGI.

A dream of fair

Import indeed! The lady of your heart,
Francis, you saw, her whom in time you'll woo
And win and make your princess.

GIUSEPPE.

Hail to our noble prince and his fair princess!

ALL.

Hail to our noble prince and his fair princess!

FRANCIS.

As lost in wonderment I stood, and gazed
Upon these marvels, I heard a voice from heaven:
'Thine, Francis, are all these, they're destined all
For thee and for thy knights.'

GIUSEPPE.

Bravo! bravo!

LUIGI.

O most propitious words! My comrades, say,
Did you remark: 'for thee they're destined all,
For thee and for thy knights'? Who are these
knights

But Francis' group?

GIUSEPPE.

Yes, Francis shall be king,
His courtiers we. Our Arthur will he be,
And we his paladins, his loyal knights,
Knights of the Table Round.

ALL.

Bravo! bravo!

GIUSEPPE.

Long live our king! Long live his loyal knights!

ALL.

Long live our king! Long live his loyal knights!

FRANCIS.

Hold, friends! temper your fervor awhile. I fear,

When I have done, your zeal will cool, your
hope

Will sink; I've told you but the vision yet,
Not what did go before 't; still that it is
Which seals the call as truly from above.

LUIGI.

And what is that?

GIUSEPPE.

Speak further, Francis.

FRANCIS.

Hear:

'Twas yesterday that I, unwitnessed save
By one, most firmly did resolve to leave
My worldly course, and lead a godlier life;
And, so 't please God, to accomplish some
great deed

For my Creator. This purpose was still warm
Within my breast, when some good Angel sent
The noble Lord Orlando's squire to me, who in-
formed

That on the following day his master meant
To leave Assisi for a holy war.

The news came like a flash upon my soul;
'The finger of God!' stammered my beating
heart,

'The call to noble deeds!' Straightway I went
To enlist, and Heaven the step did quick and
plain

Approve by giving me that night the vision
To see on which I've just discoursed.—Com-
panions,

I've now delivered all; you know God's will,

You know too my resolve: I leave to-night.

ALL.

To-night!

FRANCIS.

It is decreed: to-night.

GIUSEPPE.

Impossible!

LEONE SANDALI.

To war again?

AMBROGIO.

A dream!

ALBERTO.

It cannot be!

GIUSEPPE.

It shall not be!

FRANCIS.

Heaven calls; I cannot choose.

GIOVANNI.

'T is time that I did speak. My comrades, know
So long I've held my peace, because to me
'Twas no surprise what so astonished you.
I was the witness of that wondrous change;
And I protest, not blind impulse it was
Led Francis on, but Heaven's kindly light;
His conscience, not a whim or shifty mood
Inspired his high resolve: contend not then
With God's designs. Rather, dear comrades,
cast

We a look beyond the present grief, and see
The future looming up with prosperous head:
Our leader knighted, glory-dight, returned,
To lead us up the heights which he himself

Has reached.

GIUSEPPE.

For all you say, I like it not.

AMBROGIO.

Nor I.

ALBERTO.

Nor I.

LUIGI.

Who could? Yet must we fear
To hinder Heaven's appointed course.

LEONE SANDALI.

Well urged;

'Tis not for us to rule or reason here,
Our part it is humbly to take what God
Decrees.

GIUSEPPE.

I'll say no more.—

GIOVANNI.

Companions,

Raise we our spirits; and, ere our Francis
parts,

Let's join to show him to the last our true
Undying devotion: We'll all escort him home.
And grace tonight his leave with kindest wishes.
Not long the night that clasps the drowsy day
Doth hold the eager morn in its embrace;
And through each night's dark pall bright peers
At length the sleepless eye of th' rising sun.

Come, friends.—

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—Assisi. Before Bernardone's house.

Enter Bernardone and a servant.

BERNARDONE.

You're sure in last night's din and haste my
son

Did nothing leave behind which he might lack?

SERVANT.

I've searched all his apartments, as you bade,
And have found nothing.

BERNARDONE.

'T was well done.

SERVANT.

You may,
Good master be at ease. Your son set forth
Not well provided only, but equipped
Most splendidly.

BERNARDONE.

I am assured.

Why, like
A practiced horseman on his mettled steed
He sat, a very knight your excellent son
Did seem. From Francis' resolute mien, I
thought,
The smile of thousand ancient victories shone.

BERNARDONE.

'Tis well; go now, and do what waits your service.

[Exit servant.]

Now, when he's gone, I feel regret that not
More strongly I opposed.—Strange, strange, how
quick

I was prevailed upon to give my loth
Consent. Well, wails are no avails, therefore

I will forbear to think what might have been,
And think alone on what will be, the health
Of Francis full restored, and that dark cloud
Removed of strained religious zeal, which late
Obscured his temper's cheerful sun.

Enter Giovanni.

GIOVANNI.

Good morrow, Bernardone!

BERNARDONE.

Good morrow, Giovanni!

About so early?

GIOVANNI.

Ah, refreshing sleep

And vexing thoughts are deadly foes. The
thought

Of Francis haunted me all night, and kept
Far off reposeful slumber; the morning hour
Came sluggish on and found me still awake;
So I arose betimes, and mean today
To leave all serious work and ease my mind
With light converse and listless sauntering.

BERNARDONE.

A prudent course.—To my rest, too, this thing
Disquiet brought. And now, as I review
The past night's scene, my pride is stung to
think

That I was overruled. A blank refusal
My answer should have been. Still, now 't is
done.—

The first warm blaze will soon have spent it-
self,

And Francis will return a cooler youth.

A wiser man.

GIOVANNI.

I am not with you there;
Your son's is not a fickle nature blown
About by freaks and whimseys.

BERNARDONE.

Why, Giovanni,
What was it but a freakish impulse drove
Him hence?

GIOVANNI.

Nay, judge not rash; why may't not be
A higher impulse led him on, the motion
Of grace, the Spirit of God?

BERNARDONE.

Youth's giddiness
It was, so oft mistaking its own blind
Enthusiasm for God's inspiration.—
At all events I say: let him not foil
My plans with him, 'bove all let him not bring
Disgrace upon my house.

GIOVANNI.

That I will vouch
For him; he 's far too good to act ignobly.
Too well his duty Francis knows to fail
In aught he owes his family's unstained honor.

BERNARDONE.

His grieved mother's tender heart will claim
Many a sigh and tear, ere he comes back.

GIOVANNI.

The meek and gentle Pica, virtuous lady,
Full worthy mother of so good a son,
Knows too to reconcile her will to Heaven.

BERNARDONE.

You're more devout than wise, Giovanni.—

Come, rest awhile within. [Exeunt.

SCENE 3.—*Spoletto. A room in an inn.*

Enter Orlando and a physician.

ORLANDO.

Sad, doctor, sad; the fever none abated?

PHYSICIAN.

Not so as to warrant his leaving here today.

ORLANDO.

Unfortunate! only ten short leagues advanced,
And this mishap befalls. Howbeit, I may
Not tarry. I pray you, doctor, tend him well;
Here's that will pay for all. [Giving money.

And when his strength

Is far enough regained to leave this place,
Tell him he's free to follow me, or go
To Assisi back till better health attend
His eager and courageous soul.—Farewell.

PHYSICIAN.

Farewell, my noble lord. [Exeunt severally.

Enter Francis.

FRANCIS.

Who says that man is master of his fate?—
But yesterday it was I fancied fond
Myself, my firm unbending will to enter
Upon a life of Christian knighthood, shaped
In germ, and fixed forever a whole career
Of glorious deeds. But ah! how soon, how
soon

I'm undeceived! how soon, how soon my light

And airy castle, toppled, crumbled, vanished!
Today I've manifest, yea palpable proof,
Not man, but God it is that forms and moulds
And wields man's aims and ends.—

My hopes, but late so fresh with glistening dew
Of youthful life, within a few hours' space
Are withered waste; my plans, yet warm with
heat

Of first conception, are crossed and quenched
before

They've well begun to live. God's ways, in
truth,

Are not our ways; and do we what we will,
'Tis He that marks our paths and guides our
steps.—

O dread dismaying change! Behold me now:
Struck down with fever here; by strange hands
served;

Uncertain what good Heaven intends with me,
But certain soon to meet the staring looks,
The silent scorn, perhaps the loud reproach
Of those I left with tearless eye, and will
(As they did call 't) of iron stubbornness.
But God above doth know, not sinful pride
It was in me, or peevish wilfulness,
That I did leave what was so dear to me.

My worldly sense did worldly judge: that vision
Of castle, trophies, arms and shining shields,
I know it now, I wholly misconstrued.

The heavenly voice last night, the same I know.
That spoke before, how loving it did chide!
'Why, Francis, dost abandon God, the Rich
And Master, for the poor and servant, man?

'What is it, Lord, thou 'lt have me do?' I cried.
'Return,' the answer came, 'to Assisi, there
It shall be told thee, child! too human you
Interpret things divine: not man, but I
Your dream will in my own good time
accomplish.'—

Thus am I plainly bid retrace my steps,
But dark, uncertain left what will now be
My changed career. Yet I'll not flag, but sue
For light and strength, and meanwhile blind
obey.

No, not to war in far Apulia I'll go,
But home, to my own native city, taunts
And sneers though I must look to encounter.
What is the gain, my soul, of earthly fame?
Nay, what's the loss of name, however great,
So thou but win the sovereign boon: to obey
The call of Him whose eye unerring sees
The intrinsic worth of man, no jot too large
Nor yet too small, in spite of fame and name
Bestowed by fallible lips or taken again
By slanderous mouths?—

O God, O God, that I did know my course!
Yet patience, patience, fretful, chafing heart!
Better than peace is struggling righteousness:
With God in blackest gloom to walk is light
Enough. Yes, light of God, be thou a lamp
To my weak stumbling feet. Oh never, never,
Thou Shaper of my being and life, let me
Thy holy will forestall again, or thwart
In aught Thy wisdom, which from end to end
Doth mighty reach, and all things sweet ordain!

'My heart is ready, O God! my heart is ready.
Show me, O Lord! Thy ways, teach me Thy paths;
Direct me in Thy truth, instruct me, Lord!
My Saviour art Thou and my God. [*Exit.*]

ACT. III.

SCENE 1—*Assisi. A street.*

Enter Giuseppe, Alberto, Eduardo, Leone Sandali, Leone Bellino, and Luigi.

GIUSEPPE.

I do assure you more I feel than show.

But tell me, friends, how you do bear the loss.

LEONE SANDALI.

Ah, Giuseppe! 't is the third day now
He's gone from us, and the bereavement smarts
As 't were but one hour old.

EDUARDO.

I've hardly slept
Since that unlucky night.

ALBERTO.

Try how I will
To bend and fix my mind on other things,
My thoughts will stubborn still revert to him.

LUIGI.

It is but natural, though wise 't is not,
To give the mem'ry scope, and linger much
On what's past remedy.

ALBERTO.

Cold comfort this,
Be it ever so wise.

Enter Ambrogio.

AMBROGIO.

Good morrow, comrades. News!

GIUSEPPE.

What news, Ambrogio?

LEONE SANDALI.

Something, I hope,
Concerning Francis.

AMBROGIO.

A report is come
To Bernardone's ear, that ere ten leagues
From here advanced, his son fell grievous ill,
And at Spoleto lies detained.

GIUSEPPE.

Detained?
Just what I feared. Blind, senseless haste!

ALBERTO.

But the report is true, Ambrogio, is 't?

AMBROGIO.

I have it from Giovanni, who's as like
In this as anyone to know the truth.

LEONE BELLINO.

Relapse, I fear, our Francis has sustained.

LEONE SANDALI.

No wonder 't is; he was not whole restored
When he did leave.

GIUSEPPE.

If this be found confirmed,
The father will recall the son; and we
From a mischance will draw a greater good.

AMBROGIO.

My very thought, Giuseppe; Heaven smiles
E'en while it frowns; the cloudlet soon will pass.
And we will be the happier for the eclipse.
Away therefore with cares and gloomy thoughts!
Let me see, comrades, is 't not near the time

To hold our regular feast?

GIUSEPPE.

'Tis very near.

AMBROGIO.

Why, then let's straight arrange.

GIUSEPPE.

What say you all?

ALL.

Agreed.

GIUSEPPE.

Where shall it be?

AMBROGIO.

I'll take the honor;

At my house.

GIUSEPPE.

And the time?

AMBROGIO.

Tomorrow night.

GIUSEPPE.

Agreed?

ALL.

Agreed.

AMBROGIO.

Good; I'll expect you all.

Till then I'll leave you. I have a charge to fill
Which cries dispatch: that done, my time will
serve

The needful preparations for the feast. [*Exit.*

GIUSEPPE.

I burn to know if this report be true,
And if it be, what Pietro means to do
In this emergency. Come, friends, with me;
'T will humor Bernardone much to see,

We're thoughtful of his son in time of need
No less than days of health. [Exeunt.

2. (error in print)
SCENE 3.—*Assisi. Another street.*

Enter Leone Bellino and Angelo meeting.

ANGELO.

Good evening, master Leone; have you heard
The news? Oh, happy, happy news!

LEONE.

No, boy,

Not if they're so happy.

ANGELO.

They are, Leone,
And true. Just listen: as I was coming back
From rambling in the woods I met a man,
A good and honest man, who would not lie,
I'm sure he would not, he's my father's friend,
He said good master Francis is returned;
Right by his house, he said, did Francis pass.

LEONE.

Thank God! my torturing dread was but vain
fear.

ANGELO.

Now, is not this good news and true?

LEONE.

Indeed,

My boy, indeed. And will you, Angelo,
If you do meet my friends, tell them these
news?

ANGELO.

I will.— Oh, Francis back! I long to see
Kind master Francis; I will tell him never

Again to go away to horrid war,
Where men do fight and lose their lives; with
us,
Who love him, always shall our Francis stay.—
Good bye, master Leone.

LEONE.

Good bye. [*Exit Angelo.*]
How fortunate the illness is not grave!
Already he returns; and opportune
He comes in mirth to drown discomfiture.
Ambrogio I must quick of this inform,
And he'll give over the lead of our great feast
To Francis. Giovanni we will send
To urge our plea; his prayers will prevail.—
Oh, good is God! who visits us with trials
To give us after greater joy. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 3.—*Assisi. Francis' home.*

Enter Francis.

FRANCIS.

At home again! And now who knows but God
What lies before me? Who can say what time
'T will please good Heaven to remove the veil?
Oh! not the gibes of sharp-tongued men I fear,
Or jests of snickering friends; these are but
trifles.

To encounter human scorn I'm full prepared.
Yea, all the world I feel as I could meet
And bold defy; but oh the uncertainty
Of what's to come! this, this my spirit glooms.
Yet hold! did I not docile patience vow?
Did I not solemn pledge, e'en though my way
Through groping darkness lie, to follow Him

Whose palm records my very name, 'my Light,
My Safety, and Protector of my life'?—
Supporter of the weak, oh bear me up!
Director of the erring, lead me on!
O Thou that dwellest in unapproachable light,
Yet deignst with simple souls to hold commune,
And understanding givest to little ones,
Bend loving down to Thy poor faltering wight!
O sovereign Parent of my breath and life,
Make me a child in guileless simpleness,
A babe in humble lowliness! 'My heart,
O God! to Thy attested words incline;
My supplication come before Thy face,
Give knowledge, Lord! according to Thy word.'

[*Kneels.*

Enter Giovanni.

GIOVANNI.

Oh welcome, dearest Francis! welcome home!

FRANCIS. [*Rising.*

Giovanni! Blessings on thee, friend!

GIOVANNI.

How slow,

My Francis, oh how tedious slow these days
Did drag along! A void in this sad breast
Your absence made which nothing, so I felt,
In all this world could ever fill, and lo!
You come yourself to fill the void. O joy!
To enfold thee again with brother love.

FRANCIS.

I know

The loving and devoted heart that beats
In my Giovanni's breast; but tell me now,
Are you not much surprised to find me here?

GIOVANNI.

Not so surprised, good Francis, as o'erjoyed;
The rumor did at first astonish me,
And disinclined I was to credit it,
But when my comrades the report confirmed,
And urged me from them all to greet you well,
With hurried steps, which love and gladness
winged

More than surprise, I hither sped to bring
Our dues of love and friendship.

FRANCIS.

My best thanks

GIOVANNI.

Pardon me, Francis, indifferent if I seem
To your reverse: pity gives way to joy.

FRANCIS.

Be calm, Giovanni; and know I'm not so sad
As you would intimate. Deep in my heart,
In spite of balks and blows without, there bides
A soothing solace: Heaven's will is done.
You know to God's service I have myself
Surrendered whole, how then should I com-
plain?

He called me back, he too will trace my course.
If not as soldier, squire or gallant knight,
As servant of his favored children then,
The lepers and the poor, I'll serve my King.

GIOVANNI.

Full clear, I know, before the all-seeing Eye
You stand; and this your townsmen recognize.
Though your return is in the mouth of all,
No word is heard that breathes the faintest
reproach.

FRANCIS.

I've learned the praise and blame of men to
deem

As smoke. Can feeble words of human tongue
Conduce one tittle to my inner worth,
Or lessen one hair's breadth my real desert?
Sure, man is what he is in Heaven's sight.

GIOVANNI.

That none of your comrades aught finds in you
To chide, here have you proof: in their behalf
I'm come to offer you the leadership
In their great feast tomorrow at Ambrogio's.

FRANCIS.

It must not be. Have you forgotten, friend,
The break between the world and my changed
mind?

I've lost all taste for pomp and vain display,
No relish have I left for feasts and games;
I pray you ply not your petition.

GIOVANNI.

And yet

I must. Do bear with me, if harsh I seem
To press my entreaty so. Reflect, dear friend,
No wrong it is to share in harmless mirth,
Nay, virtue 't is to joy with the rejoicing.
Do not your comrades with full cause rejoice?
And will your kind heart now deny them that
Which it can blameless, nay, religious give?
Oh say you'll come!—for my sake, if not
theirs;—

This one time yet,—just once,—will you?—do
say,

Good Francis, you accept.

FRANCIS.

You have prevailed,
Giovanni; I accept: not to appear
Uncivil or unkind to your companions,
And for your sake I'll come.

GIOVANNI.

'Tis nobly spoken;
An echo from my Francis' magnanimous spirit.
Directly I must break this joyous news
To our expecting friends.—We'll meet again
Tomorrow at Ambrogio's; till then be you
In Heaven's loving care. Good night.

FRANCIS.

Good night.

[*Exit Giovanni.*]

Pardon, O Lord! this worm who dares to think
Thy spirit placed the yielding words upon
His lips. A clear presentiment lingers still
Within my mind, tomorrow's feast the end
Of all such empty amusements marks for me.
I feel I've made my last, my very last
Concession to this pleasure-seeking world.—
Myself the expenses of the feast will bear,
And labor former banquets all to outdo
In splendid dress and costly meats and wines,
And then—farewell, elaborate vanities!
Farewell, ye solemn trifles, golden toils,
All treacherous gloss of glory, fame, renown!
'Conduct me, Lord, upon Thy ways; I'll walk,
My Saviour, in Thy truth. Oh! let my heart
Rejoice that it may fear Thy name.' [*Exit.*]

SCENE 4.—Assisi. A street at night. Night-watchman walking to and fro.

NIGHTWATCHMAN.

An odd life this, nightly walking the streets, waking while others sleep, watching while others rest. And that these five and forty years. But I complain not; the work fits to the man: he's odd too.—

Some people think I'm as crazy as the moon, in whose light I have grown old; but these lunatics forget that with all their sunlight they're no whit wiser than I am. Many a man I saw in my days who, though he kept no company with Signora Luna, and composed no verses, went nevertheless to the madhouse, whilst the old reliable nightwatchman of Assisi, who has so often gazed upon Selene's silvery face, and sighed sonnettoes to her beautiful form, still faithful stands at his post, with clear head, ready arm, and— [Shouts heard. Past the midnight hour, and that noisy crew still carousing: Bernardone's son and his gay company at Renieri's.— There's wisdom bred in the sun!—'Twill shine full blaze anon; for this way soon 't will come.—Ha! an excellent rhyme: there's wisdom bred in the sun; 't will shine full blaze anon; for this way soon 't will come.

[Sings:—There's wisdom bred in the sun,

'T will shine full blaze anon,

For this way soon 't will come.

[Singing heard.] I hear them singing.—

This way the air wafts their bacchanalians.—

I see them now, coming down this street.—
Well, let foolery have its course, so I don't witness it.—I'll move, lest I imbibe some of that sunny wisdom which would make me play the fool.

[Exit.

Enter in procession Giuseppe, Eduardo, Leone Bellino, Leone Sandali, Luigi, Alberto, Ambrogio, Giovanni; last of all, as king of the feast, Francis, who is suddenly arrested by a heavenly light upon which he gazes intently.

AMBROGIO.

Halt!

ALBERTO.

Halt, comrades!

GIOVANNI.

Halt! Francis is not well.

GIUSEPPE.

Why, what has happened?

LEONE SANDALI and LUIGI.

What's amiss?

AMBROGIO.

Speak Francis!

GIOVANNI.

O Francis! speak.

LEONE BELLINO.

No fresh relapse, I hope.

EDUARDO.

He seems all rapt.

LUIGI.

Transported Francis is.

GIUSEPPE.

Transported? where? with what?

AMBROGIO.

I know: with love;
He's found the lady of his dream.

GIOVANNI.

Oh speak!

Good Francis, speak, explain.

AMBROGIO.

He's deep in love.—

FRANCIS.

Giovanni, comrades, I saw my love,
My love whom not the blinking pick of man,
But God's infallible choice to me's decreed.

ALBERTO.

Fast courtship; and upon whom fell the choice?

FRANCIS.

A lady, none such have you e'er admired,
So rich, so noble and so fair, the pride,
The crown, the paragon of womankind.

GIUSEPPE.

An enviable prospect, which may time approve.

FRANCIS.

The engagement's closed, the nuptials soon will
seal

The life-long bond that Heaven has tied.

AMBROGIO.

'Tis not

To-night, I hope.

FRANCIS.

Oh speed that day of days
The Father of lights!—Companions, you stand
aghast,

And stare as I a seething lover were
Who lost his reason; but assure yourselves

My mind is clear, I speak the sober truth;
You marvel now, you'll marvel more in time.
Pray, for this night, sweet friends, depart; the
hour
Is late, and sleep does call 's to rest.—Good
night.

Exeunt all but Francis and Giovanni.

GIOVANNI.

How is 't with you, Francis?

FRANCIS.

Be undisturbed,
My dear Giovanni, you will soon know all.
I beg you, sweetest friend, do you too part,
And leave me to my thoughts.

GIOVANNI.

Good night, Francis.

[Exit.]

FRANCIS.

How changed I feel!—I feel as I had bathed
In light, which new informed my frame, and
deep
Invaded to my heart's darkest recess.
Methought a flash did straight from heaven
descend,
Endued me round, pierced me with cleaving
beam,
And burned with purging fire away the dross
As if some mighty invisible Power did lift
Of my alloyed soul. And then it was
Me out of my own fleshly self, and raised
The facile buoyant spirit far aloft
To a higher sphere, where it was given to see
Such lofty ecstatic sights, such secret things

Divine, as blind and baffle mortal sense
And human tongue defy.—

Immersed in this beatific stream, I felt
Uprising in my now disburdened soul
A deep dislike for all that men call great,
That all the world did seem to me a vile
And loathsome thing, a crawling, sickening
thing,

Not worth the worthless dust on which it lived.
That sight alone my being engrossed; naught
else,

I deemed, could ever again I see or hear,
Or love; on nothing fix my ravished mind.
Enough of bliss it seemed to feed for aye
On that one glimpse of paradise.—

O Thou, who in mercy hast shed upon my soul
The light of Thy benignant face, I know,
I know the purport of Thy illumining ray:
Thou'st knighted me, great King of heaven, to
fight

Not 'gainst battalions hostile, and not with arms
Of steel, but with Thy Spirit's two-edged sword,
Against my soul's dread foes, the siren world,
My mutinous flesh, and Satan's wily snares.
O Lord God! strong and mighty in battle,
equip

Thy weakling soldier with the armor of truth;
Put on his head the helmet of salvation,
That in this war he may the victory win.
To Thee alone, my God! my Leader! here
I swear eternal faith. 'My heart hath said:
My face hath sought Thee, Lord! Thy counten-
ance

I still will seek. Turn not away Thy face,
Decline not from Thy servant in Thy wrath.'
O Beauty Thou of ancient days, yet new
Forever, too late I've known Thee! oh, too late,
Too late. I've loved Thee! [Exit.

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.—*Assisi. A street.*

Enter Eduardo, Leone Sandali and Luigi.

LEONE.

I ll ending of a fair beginning 't was.

Full hundred times my fancy since rehearsed
In somber-dreamy pictures that night's scene.
With heavy, burning eyes at an early hour
Each morn I awake, my mind exhausted, dull,
As I with intricate algebraic sums
Had tortured all night long my weary brain.

EDUARDO.

What think you, Luigi? was 't Heaven marred
Our feast's finale, or Francis' turning mind?

LUIGI.

No easy thing to say; but slow I'd be
To think that Francis' mind 's affected. True,
He ever was an enthusiastic youth,
His heart athrob with warm and generous
blood,

But vigorous too, and calm in mind, as sober
With all his youthful fire as made of him
Assisi's boasted nonpareil.

LEONE.

Quite so;

I judge the thing as from above. To me
'T has always seemed there was a something
deeper

In Francis' soul, which needed but God's call
To bring it out.

EDUARDO.

I know not what to think;
Unlike 't is not that Francis is a bit
Religion-mad; his late behavior seemed
To point that way.

LUIGI.

Giuseppe's very word;
Yet not a trifle 't is to clear discern
Where wisdom goes and folly comes.

LEONE.

Come, friends,
Let us to Giovanni's, and hear his mind.

EDUARDO.

Yes, he knows more than we. He's doubtless
seen
And heard his strangely stricken friend. Come.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—Assisi. Before Bernardone's house.

Enter Bernardone and Giovanni.

BERNARDONE.

Why, no, not these three days he's been at
home;

My anger drove him hence; but 'twas too much.

GIOVANNI.

What was it that so much provoked you?

BARNARDONE.

A thousand things, Giovanni; ever since
That cursed night he has not been himself.

GIOVANNI.

What does he amiss?

BERNARDONE.

Not half his one time zest

He shows at work: he plies his hands indeed,
But lets his thoughts rove on far other things.
And then he prays so much, and runs so oft
To lazarets, to churches and to shrines.
He's growing mad, I fear.

GIOVANNI.

You see too dark.

Distinctive of his large and fervid soul
I find the conduct of your son; he does,
Whatever he does, intently; heart and soul
He lives for a proposed end; with zeal
Aflame, he heeds no obstacles, but strives
Steadfastly, undaunted pushing onward still,
Till he doth reach ideal altitudes.

BERNARDONE.

Bah! how you prattle! Ideal altitudes!
Confound ideals! What good ere comes of
dreams?

What is to me his hot pursuit of goods
That never will be real? What profit brings
His frenzied chase of visionary goals?
Give me results, results alone are test.

GIOVANNI.

You look at things with partial eye, Pietro,
The mercenary eye of Mammon zealots.
Other and broader points there are of vision,
Which, rayless to your practical view and bent,
Open wide tracks of light to a keener gaze
And larger sight. Remember, saintly souls
Desery and seek to climb far loftier heights,
Than this base world vaunting displays as
worthy
Alone of man's regard and upward toil:

Great name, high rank and affluent wealth.

BERNARDONE.

Wisdom for book worms and arm chair savants;
Those lofty heights are up in the clouds, the
abode

Of poets, dreamers, drones, not practical men.

GIOVANNI.

Yet know, superior claims religion has,
Which are not measured by the rule of gain;
A godly life, my practical friend, 's not gauged
By standard of this world.

BERNARDONE.

Religion?

A godly life? You mean not, sure, to call
My son's misconduct these revered names.
Religion? Fie! religion-mad he is,
And not religious. To grieve whom we should
comfort,
And anger those we are bound to love, are
these
The fruits that grow on th' heights?

GIOVANNI.

Most certain not.

Nor does your son think that religion's part.
He deeply mourns the unwilling grief he inflicts
On you; as sharp, I know, your sorrow affects
Your child as 't does your own paternal heart.

BERNARDONE.

Were 't so, he would remove the cause of grief;
He need but will to obey, and sorrow is
vanished,
But he is obstinate and intractable grown.

GIOVANNI.

I stake my honor, as security
My very life I'd give, that Francis' will
Is not perverse in disobeying you;
Convinced he is that he is called by God,
Whom more than men 't is meet to obey.—
Be patient, Bernardone.—

BERNARDONE.

Easily said;
But when his misdemeanors heap disgrace
Upon our heads, what patience have we left?—
Giovanni, would you for your life believe 't?
In tatters, sordid rags, a short time back
Our Francis home returned from what he called
A pilgrimage to Rome. He mingled there,
He said, with beggars, begged and ate with
them
Their scanty meal, and, in compassion,
With one, the neediest wretch, exchanged
attire,—
The fool!

Enter Angelo.

ANGELO.

Good morning, Signor Bernardone.
Good morning, Giovanni.— Is Francis in?

GIOVANNI.

No, boy.

ANGELO.

Will he be in when I come back?

BERNARDONE.

No! go your way, you only come to beg.

GIOVANNI.

Go, Angelo, some other time you'll see your friend.

ANGELO.

I will; excuse me if I broke
Into your talk.—Good bye. [Exit.

BERNARDONE.

Hear further, Giovanni, and then say
If my impatience is not justified.
'T is five days now, without my leave he takes
A deal of my most costly stuffs, rides then
To Foligno, sells goods and horse, and turns
The price entire to San Damiano's priest.
'Tis there that Francis spent much time of late,
And would have stayed, had I not come en-
raged

To drag him thence and close at home confine.
His mother found this lenient punishment
Severe; and, too indulgent, let escape
The prisoner in my absence; ever since
He's not been seen, but likely hides for fear
In some sequestered thicket-nook or cave.
I'll wait another day; if then no son
Appear, I'll have him hunted down and cast
Into the city prison, where he'll lie
Till from his madness he recuperate.

GIOVANNI.

Forbear, forbear, Pietro; do not you
Forget the father's touch, e'en though the child
Should filial duty disregard. Not spite,
I'm certain, apprehension of your rage

Made Francis fly. He'll soon take heart and
come

Before his father to explain. Meantime,
I beg you, be appeased. I'll search the woods
Myself, and find his hiding-place; I know
All his retreats and favorite haunts. And then,
I'm confident, he'll listen to the plea
Which in his father's name and mine I'll make.

BERNARDONE.

Do so; and tell him, too, my fixed design
If stubborn he refuse to be persuaded.

GIOVANNI.

This way 't is like he took.—If not today,
To morrow, Bernardone, here your son
And your son's friend together will appear.

BERNARDONE.

Be 't so.—Come, part of th' way I'll go with
you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 3.—*A wood near Assisi. A grotto in the distance. Enter Francis.*

FRANCIS.

O God of light eternal! who am I,
That Thou shouldst visit me, and shed upon
The vilest dust the lustre of Thy face,
And send into my inmost soul a beam
Of Thy effulgent, life-imparting Sun?
With infinite praise I'd fain proclaim Thy name,
Thy boundless mercies endless sing.
Oh sweetness 'bove all sweetness to converse

With Thee! From Thy pure stream these latter
days

What torrents of delight did flow upon
My thirsting soul!—Not till that night Thy flash
Did strike my worldly heart, had I, my God!
Remotest thought Thou wert so near to me.
Immeasurable space, I thought, impassable gulf,
Divided creature and Creator wide;
And yet one step, I see, the distance spans:
One step, and lo! beyond all barriers far
Of time and place the unencumbered spirit
Lightly soars to a clement clime serene
And winged move through fresh perennial
fields.

O Prayer! thou heaven-born claim, thou God-
given right,
Primordial privilege of created mind;
O Prayer! whose priceless, worth and mighty
power

Ungrateful, ignorant man so underrates,
Thy fragrance 't is that wafts us to the heaven
Of heavens, thy gentle force transports us swift
Into God's awful sight, and presses us
To our Father's loving heart.—

The first faint streaklets of approaching dawn
Have now expanded into blazing day:
Those tender rays that on my swart horizon
Appeared when illness held my mortal frame
In sullen stubborn grasp, have widened now,
And clearer, warmer, fuller fall their light
Upon my groping laboring soul. And ah!
How much more, bright is now the sun of day

Than darksome was the gloom of night! Thank
God,
That night is past, that time of racking doubt,
Of wavering hopes, and agonizing fears.
The day has come, the season of certain light,
To illumine my path and point my journey's goal.
Come now what clouds and storms there will,
my course
Divinely traced distinct, unchanged remains,
The single aim of all my days: to live
With Him who had not where to lay His head,
A life of abject poverty.—
Come then, spare want, be thou my spacious fill,
Be thou my fruitful riches, poverty.
Oh come, sweet mistress, heaven-appointed
spouse!
Let me clasp thee whom all men shun. Be thou
My life-long love, My Lady Poverty.—
But soft! a noise.—Am I discovered?—
'Tis Angelo; I see his angel face
Shine through the leafy hanging boughs.—This
way
He comes.—

Enter Angelo.

ANGELO.

O Francis! dear, good master Francis!
Do I find you here?

FRANCIS.

That rather I should ask,
My Angelo; how came you to this place?

ANGELO.

My Guardian Angel must have led me here.

FRANCIS.

You're not afraid, my little lad, to stray
So far into this dense, unvisited woods?

ANGELO.

No, Francis, I am not afraid; I just
Walked on and on, and thought how much I
longed
To see you; and I wondered when again
You would come home, and take me in your
house,
And show me many things, and give me much
For father and myself.

FRANCIS.

I fear, my boy,
Those days are past.

ANGELO.

Oh why? you will not live
Here always in the forest, will you, Francis?
Oh do come back! I think your father is much
Impatient that you stay away so long.
He looked at me so angry when I asked
This morning if you were at home; he snapped
A surly 'No,' and sent me off.

FRANCIS.

Forget
The unkindness, Angelo. I will be kind
To you instead. Awhile be patient yet,
And then some day, when you become a man,
I'll take you as my constant friend, you'll be
My son, and always live with me.

ANGELO.

Thanks, Francis.

O happiness! Oh may that joyous day
Soon come!

FRANCIS.

Go now, my child, and be consoled.
God's blessing go with you, and keep your way;
His Blessed Mother Mary smile on you;
Your holy Angel hover over you,
And shield his little client from all harm.

ANGELO.

Farewell, good master Francis. Do come home
soon. [Exit.

FRANCIS.

My father angry? I can well believe 't,
Nay, I foresaw my flight would swell his rage.
Oh! why then did I flee? I fear, my God!
That I did play the coward in the trial:
Did I not know that e'en a parent's wrath
The soul must face intrepid for the God
Who calls to spiritual combat? Did I forget
That I must persecution from without
As boldly meet as battle bravely 'gainst
My inner sinful self? No right have I
To call myself God's soldier if I fly
The field. Heaven's King will not acknowledge
me
His true knight till in all I overcome.—
'Tis true, I have essayed my feeble might
In some small measure, and by strength of grace
Have several victories gained; but ah! how keen
I felt I was a tyro in the lists,
Unskilled in warfare with such crafty foes.
The strife within was long: luxurious tastes,

Indulged for years, would not leave unavenged,
But like a wanton, wilful troop of elves
Before my fancy wildly danced and danced,
And struck my memory sharp, my conscience
lashed

With many a blow of full deserved force.
The lower self in man will not be expelled
By violence; by hard, persistent fight, by long,
Continuous self-denial is sin destroyed,
And evil habits razed.—What strain it cost,
What shudder of abhorrence chilled my soul
When my nice arms the leprous form embraced,
And my fastidious lips did kiss the lazar hand!
But Thou who wast Thyself by prophet voice
A leper called, didst strong my weakness nerve,
And after poured upon me greater joy
Than I had great repugnance felt before.—
O God in battle powerful! oh steel
Each sinewy limb in this frail fabric! fix
The fickle, fluttering heart in this faint breast,
And steady, firm support and fortify
My skittish infant spirit, fearless now
That I may go to meet my father's wrath,
And calmly, boldly stand for my account.
'Judge me, O God! defend my cause, my
Strength!

Deliver me from unjust, cunning man.
Send forth Thy light and truth; unto Thy hill
They'll lead me, to Thy tabernacles sweet;
And I will go to the altar of God, to God
Who gladness gives unto my youth.'

[Retires to grotto.]

Enter Giovanni.

GIOVANNI.

At last, at last! there he kneels.—O Francis!
How long I searched, how much I sighed for
you!

FRANCIS.

Giovanni!—Welcome to my heart.—You're come
To fetch me home, say 't, friend.

GIOVANNI.

I am

FRANCIS.

'Tis well;

I am prepared.

GIOVANNI.

Well said, well said, my Francis.
Your father is indignant at your flight,
And madly threatens, if you return not prompt,
He'll have you hunted, seized, and strict im-
mured.

FRANCIS.

No need of violent means; I'll willing come,
Yet not because he threatens force; his threats
Are vain: no suffering, nay, not even chains,
Can sadden me, or fetter my free soul.
No longer am I tossed on doubtful waves;
Calmed is the writhing surge; the tempest's
roar

Is stilled; the murky clouds are blown away;
And from the cleared sky mildly descends
The light of God's unwavering ken, whose sheen
And warmth such flood of inner joy outpour
Upon my universal being, as naught

On earth can turbid stir or roll away.

GIOVANNI.

How strangely true! your 'maciated face
Mirrors your soul e'en through your tear-
stained eyes;

It seems to me that never did you wear
Upon your brow a look so light and bland,
A smile so heavenly suave.

FRANCIS.

Oh! think 't not strange;
Now first I 'gin to live; so far my life
Was all a dream.

GIOVANNI.

A dream?

FRANCIS.

My life began
That night.

GIOVANNI.

Oh yes! that night, that night!—O Francis!
How all your friends regret what chanced that
night!

They daily come, and ask me to explain;
Some are amazed, and angered some, and all
Most deeply grieved.

FRANCIS.

Let them not mourn for me,
But joy with me, for I have found a treasure.

GIOVANNI.

I understand you not.

FRANCIS.

I tell you true:
A treasure exceeding rich.

GIOVANNI.

A treasure?

FRANCIS.

I've found

The pearl of great price.

GIOVANNI.

You speak riddles, Francis.

FRANCIS.

Come, dear Giovanni, let me solve them now.

Here in this grotto is my treasure. Here 's

The scene of my profound delights; the place

Where I mid bitter-sweet emotions hold

Converse with my Beloved. Here I wail

Amidst unspeakable groanings my lost youth,

And revel in the contrite love of Him,

My Love, whom all too late I've known, too late,

Too late I've loved.—See, where my Treasure
hangs!

When I contemplate His bare, stripped form

My spirit burns with irrepressible flames

Of love which sweep aloft to His embrace,

And penetrate my soul with glowing love

For His unspotted fair, His faithful spouse,

The Lady Poverty. And when I hear

The voice of my Beloved, ineffable joy

My being o'erflows; hot, scalding tears suffuse

My eyes when I behold His pallid face,

My heart with infinite pity breaks, for—

My Love is Crucified.—

Francis enters grotto; Giovanni kneels without.

Amid soft, angelic music Francis is heard to pray.

Flow, tears! oh flow! fall freely, fast;
Bathe, bitter streams, my sordid past;
Weep, eyes! oh weep! weep to the last;
My Love, my Love is Crucified!

Burn, soul, oh burn with keen desire!
Melt in the flame thy God's just ire;
Warm thy chill being In His love's fire;
Thy Love, thy Love is Crucified!

Break heart! oh break! thy Love is dead;
Thy Love who for thy love has bled;
With pierced limbs and thorn-crowned head;
Thy Love, thy Love is Crucified!

O Love! O Saviour Crucified!
Oh take me in Thy wounded side!
There, sweetest Lord! let me abide,
And die for love, Love Crucified!

Re-enter Francis,
FRANCIS.

Arise, and let us go.—

O Father! 'as the apple of Thy eye
Keep me, and 'neath the shadow of Thy wings
Protect Thy child.']Exeunt.

ACT V.

SCENE 1.—Giuseppe's country seat in an outlying district of Assisi. Enter Giuseppe, Alberto, Ambrogio, Eduardo and Luigi.

GIUSEPPE.

Welcome, companions. What news from
th' city?

AMBROGIO.

Nothing but talk of Francis.

ALBERTO.

They say he 's mad.

AMBROGIO.

Some even whisper disinheritance.

GIUSEPPE.

It seems that both are mad, with rage the
father,

And with religion-craze the son.—Strange world!

ALBERTO.

A sad and sudden fall it is indeed:

A butt of ridicule he has become

To all who once by all was idolized.

LUIGI.

Inconstant as the sportive vane 's the applause
Of men, unstable as the river's flood;

No test it is of good or ill desert

To gain or lose the vulgar's grace.

GIUSEPPE.

And yet,

I think the popular voice in this correct.

And, to speak unreserved, I long have thought
The poet's frenzy lurked in him, which late
Or soon would burst its bonds and reckless
rave.

LUIGI.

Why may 't not be, he 's but a fool for Christ?

GIUSEPPE.

More kind than true.

LUIGI.

Perhaps he sees too far
For our contracted view to comprehend.
Who knows but he is called by God great things
To execute.

ALBERTO.

The two Leones speak
Of seeking Francis out to associate
Themselves with him, convinced that not a mad
Caprice inspirits him, but God's behest.

EDUARDO.

Giovanni is gone to search, perhaps to join,
His hiding friend.

GIUSEPPE.

No hot enthusiast
But always finds a goodly following.

LUIGI.

The reason deeper lies: their loving natures
Do find it hard to untie the friendly knot.
And pardon me to say 't: we'd be inclined
As they, were we but candid to ourselves.

EDUARDO.

For me, I'm not repelled, albeit I disapprove;

Something in him magnetic draws and spells
The heart.

ALBERTO.

Francis has power to charm; some touch
He knows which strikes the sympathetic cord
That consonous to the music of his heart
Responds.

LUIGI.

He's born to lead and rule his fellows.

AMBROGIO.

I thought so once; and hoped he'd lead us all
To fame and glory.

GIUSEPPE.

My hopes in him are dead.

LUIGI.

Nay, why so pessimistic? The untoward day,
Remember, at last into the restful bosom
Of evening sinks, transformed on the morrow
With brighter sun to rise. Our little life's
Most happy hours are born of gentle Patience,
The laboring mother of a thousand joys.
More cheer, therefore, and hopeful thoughts,
Giuseppe.—

And friends, now let us off to Bernardone's.—
If aught, Giuseppe, ere night we learn of
Francis,

Directly we will send you word. Farewell.

GIUSEPPE.

Farewell, comrades.

ALL.

Farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—Assisi. A street.

Enter Leone Sandali and Leone Bellino.

LEONE SANDALI.

But will he, think you, Francis find?

LEONE BELLINO.

There's none

Knows better where to seek, and none whose
voice

So sure will win our loved fugitive.

LEONE SANDALI.

A noble youth, to 's friend unflinching true.

LEONE BELLINO.

Of all our number 't was Giovanni alone
Who not a moment palled mid Francis' change.

LEONE SANDALI.

A deep religious soul, a heart of gold.

LEONE BELLINO.

Look! Bernardone.

Enter Bernardone.

BERNARDONE.

Where 's that headstrong son
Of mine? Speak! have you heard of him?

LEONE BELLINO.

Not we,

Except that he is fled, and that to-night
He might return.

BERNARDONE.

I heard loud distant cheers;
You heard them not?

LEONE BELLINO.

We heard the far off cries

As of a flouting crowd, but heeded them
No further.

BERNARDONE.

Most like the herald-cry of Francis,
That boasted leader of your set, who's shamed
His house and drawn upon himself the scorn
Of all Assisi.

LEONE SANDALI.

Oh! here comes Francis.

BERNARDONE.

Where?

LEONE BELLINO.

With Giovanni.

BERNARDONE.

'Tis he.—Now bend or break.

Enter Francis and Giovanni.

LEONE S. and LEONE B.

Welcome home, Francis!

FRANCIS.

Thanks.—My greetings, father.

BERNARDONE.

Refractory son, come at last to obey?

[Exit Leone S. and Leone B.]

FRANCIS.

My father, in all that's right I will obey,
But never may I do what God offends.

BERNARDONE.

Do you not God offend breaking His law?
You'd fly to mawkish piety, the while
You've not yet learned the good child's primal
rule:

'Honor thy father and thy mother.'

FRANCIS.

My father,

Always I honor you, love and obey,
But when your precept contradicts the voice
Of God, my Heavenly Father, I invoke
That other word which binds no less and says:
'More meet it is God to obey than men'

BERNARDONE.

My son, in you I placed my hopes, with you
I shared my gains; your filial love, I thought,
Would comfort my declining years, your gifts,
So full of promise, honor bring to our house,
And its respected name perpetuate.
Oh! do shake off the silly pious fit
That so disfigures you, and so much grieves
Your father's heart! Come, live with me again,
And be your former self.

FRANCIS.

Good father, I know and feel with you your
grief,

But to console you stands not with me now.
May He who came to sunder the tenderest ties
Comfort my dearest father in this trial.
God calls; and Him I must, I will obey.

BERNARDONE.

A plague on such cold sympathy! Hear me,
Unnatural child: since you are obstinate,
And steel your heart against your father's
prayers,
He'll trample nature too, and let you feel

A parent's wrath. Here I reclaim from you
The money which by me was freely given,
Or which yourself did from my treasury take.

FRANCIS.

You shall have all; here's the untouched purse
Which at Foligno I procured and brought
To San Damiano's.

BERNARDONE.

Further, wilful son,
I disinherit you.

GIOVANNI.

What!—Bernardone!

BERNARDONE.

And do demand that you appear in court
To-morrow to renounce in legal form
Before the magistrate all right and claim
To be my heir.

FRANCIS.

I plead immunity:
The small remainder of my days I've vowed
To God's sole service in the Church; no more
Am I amenable to secular power.

BERNARDONE.

Miserable wretch! to th' Bishop then you'll
come,
Escape you shall not, that I warrant you.

[Exit.

FRANCIS.

Yes, father, before the Bishop I'll appear;
He is the Lord and father of souls. Whate'er
The holy Guido will decide I'll take

Full as from God.—Come, faithful friend.
Giovanni, pity me not, rejoice with me that I,
Unworthy sinner, am worthy held to suffer
For Christ, my Lord; the pupil's tardy mind
Opens at last to take the serious word
Which is the Master's test of scholarship:
'He who renounces not all he possess
Cannot be my disciple.' [Exeunt.]

SCENE 3.—Assisi. A room in the Bishop's house.

Guido seated on a throne, surrounded by attendants. A concourse of people, among them Giuseppe, Alberto, Ambrogio, Eduardo, Leone Sandali, Leone Bellino, Luigi, and Angelo; most conspicuous are Giovanni, Bernardone, and Francis.

GUIDO.

NOW Francis, Pietro Bernardone's son,
Step forth.

FRANCIS.

Thy humble servant, gracious lord.

GUIDO.

My son, thy father grievous is incensed
Against thee. For what cause thou knowst. If
then .

Thou purpose, as we hear, to consecrate
Thyself to God and give thy days to serve
His Church, this is our counsel, yea, our com-
mand:

Restore to Signor Bernardone all
He claims as his. It may well be, that part,

At least, of what thou hast, no claim can plead
Of absolute right; besides, it can not be
God's will thou use, e'en though for sacred ends,
Such money as your father occasion brings
Of sin.—Now then, my son, what hast to say?

FRANCIS.

Your lordship's voice to me 's the voice of God;
In this and all things humbly I obey.

GUIDO.

A noble and a dutiful reply.
Thy reverential and submissive spirit
Doth greatly in my eyes commend thy cause.
And for the rest fear not. If from above
Thy mission truly come, then He who inspired
The work will also happy issue give.
In naught, my son, God needs man's petty help:
No impotent hand Omnipotence requires
To finish marvellous deeds divine. If God
Calls thee to high things He wants not the
means

To bring thee to the loftiest heights. But know,
These only they safe climb and prosperous reach
Who start e'en at the lowest base, the deep
Of humbleness, and keep their constant view
On Him by whose sole grace they do ascend .
The Holy Mount.—Be thou then strong, my son;
God who exalts the humble, and the proud
Doth from their seat cast down, will lead thee
still,

And lead thee to the end, who hast so well
Begun to walk the footsteps of the meek
And humble Saviour.—

FRANCIS.

Most Reverend Pastor and Father of my soul,
How shall I, unlettered man, express my thanks?
Thy words, so full of saintly unction, I felt,
Like quickening dew, fall softly on my soul.
Each thing that I till now have called my own,
The very garments that do cover me,
With willing, yea, with joy-exulting heart
I now return to him who gave them me.
Never was I so eager to accept
As now I am desirous to renounce.—

GUIDO.

Well said, my son, well said.

FRANCIS.

Today, ah! yes today, O heavenly Father!
Thy hand doth loving set Thy erring child
On's way of life traced by Thy Providence:
From kin divided, of plush and scarlet stripped,
All worldly goods bereft, yet rich enough
Secure on Thy great Bounty thrown.
O blessed Saviour! Thy own fair spouse, who
ne'er.
From crib to cross did leave Thy side, today
Thou givest me as bride and portion here:
May I, my sweetest Lord! this sacred trust
Forever inviolate keep, may I ne'er prove
Unfaithful to my plighted love.
And Thou, O Holy Spirit! keep this bond
Forever tied: upon the espousals blest
Breathe life and ever fruitfulness.—
O fairest fair! my God's own fair: oh come!

And be my love, My Lady Poverty.

*Puts all he has at Bernardone's feet; doffs
his mantle, and appears in a hair shirt.*

Bernardone snatches all, and exit.

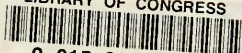
Now know ye all: up to this hour I called
Signor Pietro Bernardone father,
Henceforth most truly I will say and pray:
'Our Father who art in heaven.'



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