

The Canterbury Poets

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP

ROBERT BROWNING.

**FOR FULL LIST OF THE VOLUMES IN THIS SERIES,
SEE CATALOGUE AT END OF BOOK.**

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON,
AND OTHER POETIC
DRAMAS, BY ROBERT BROWNING.
WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE
BY FRANK RINDER.

(1843—1850)

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE work of some writers can with advantage be broken up into sections, each indicative of the mental or spiritual development of the author, or of a passing phase of that development. The poems of Robert Browning do not lend themselves to treatment of this kind. True, in certain circumstances, classification is useful, even necessary; yet it becomes misleading if the essential unity of his writings, from the "Pauline" of 1833 to the "Asolando" of 1889, is overlooked. It may be urged, however, that development is a condition of life to which Browning, in common with the least gifted among us, was subject. But development is accomplished in manifold ways. Its trend may be towards the gradual revealing of a nature which externally gives little suggestion of its inward form; it may mean the slow unveiling of a soul whose inmost secret is that of thoughts and convictions early expressed. Development involves radical change only when the thought and the arbitrary superstructure of the thought differ. This was not so in Browning's case. The man who in youth wrote—

"Suntreader, I believe in God, and truth,"

is the same in essentials as he who, in the evening of his life, sang—

“One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward.”

The life of Robert Browning was full of rich experiences. Comparatively unknown for long, he lived to have honours showered upon him; he won the love of England's greatest poetess, and their life together was one long poem. The thought of the age, of which at first he was prophet, flowed up to him and passed onward: withal Browning changed not; only he matured, became more indissolubly bound to that rock of hope whereto he clung from childhood. The present volume, comprising all his longer works published between 1843 and 1850, should be regarded, therefore, as a fragment only of a great whole.

It must not be understood that Browning's powers of rhythmical expression became more perfect with each poem he wrote, that his ear grew more sensitive to musical lines: an assertion which an examination of his poems would at once disprove. Indeed, the development of his genius was accompanied by a disposition to woo sense at the expense of sound; a too frequent inclination to speak rather than to sing. Rarely does Browning sacrifice a shade of meaning to however beautiful a combination of sound; and herein lies at once his weakness and his strength. A noble thought expressed in noble, rhythmic language is poetry; so, too, are lines in whose musical words melody rather than thought is

dominant ; but to this less worthy form of poetry Browning never committed himself.

Whether Browning's most enduring work is or is not to be found in his dramas, his place as a writer of dramatic poetry is unique. Despite the fact of his paramount concern with the world of thought, not with the world of action, his method of presentation is dramatic. In it we do not discern thought losing itself in thought, but thought tending ever to express itself in action. As a writer of poetic drama Browning is remarkable for his extended use of the dramatic monologue. That titanic structure, "The Ring and the Book," is, as we know, a series of dramatic monologues, a form of expression for which students of his earlier works were prepared, inasmuch as already he had employed the same method to a considerable extent. The distinction between soliloquy and dramatic monologue must not be overlooked. In the one case the character communes with himself ; in the other, the implied presence of a second person compels to greater sequence, variety, and vigour.

"The Return of the Druses," with which this volume opens, was published in 1843, ten years after the appearance of Browning's first poem, "Pauline." It formed the fourth part of the Bells and Pomegranates series, issued in cheap form by Moxon. The plot is imaginary ; but, in his presentment of the Druses, Browning is true to history. These people, in whose veins is supposed to flow the blood of several warlike Eastern tribes, inhabit a district on the southern range of Lebanon and the western slope of Anti-Lebanon. In their religion traces

are to be found of Judaism, Christianity, and Mahometanism. They hold that God, the essence of all things, Himself invisible and incomprehensible, has ever and again been made manifest in human form ; the tenth and last time in the person of Hakeem, whom they worship. Browning has assumed the possible recurrence of the miracle at a time of national distress, and upon this assumption the play turns. The tragedy is enacted on an island belonging to the Knights of Rhodes, which the Druses have colonised, and on which they are subject to the rule of a Prefect whose persistent cruelties have wrought them to an ecstasy of hate. Downtrodden and oppressed, they hail Djabal as a divine deliverer ; they worship him as the God Hakeem who comes at daybreak to free them.

In "The Return of the Druses" several of Browning's most marked characteristics as a dramatic writer may be studied. Unlike his contemporary, Tennyson, whose earlier impulse, at least, led him to treat of the remote and the picturesque, Browning was attracted towards humanity in its periods of tempest ; he loved best to depict men and women when, under the influence of mental or moral emotion, their utmost strength was put forth towards the attainment of some goal. Again, as Walter Pater pointed out, Browning is the poet of situations. In dramatic art, as in life, of which art is an essentialised reflection, the moment is everything. The magic lies not so much in the word or the act itself, but in its relation to the circumstances which, either by reason of their striking contrast or their harmony, add

to its significance. From "The Return of the Druses" two examples may be adduced to show how fully alive was the poet to the importance of this relationship. In one instance, the Prefect, who for long has been in constant terror of his life, feels at last that danger is over; and, drawing aside the arras of his chamber, where the assassin's knife awaits him, exclaims—

"This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb!

Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me."

A second example of Browning's power to seize the psychical moment is when Anael, torn between loyalty to her people and love of the self-convicted impostor Djabal, finally decides to unmask his wickedness. Twice she utters his human name, "Djabal," "My Djabal." But ere she falls dead, in an ecstasy of devotion she hails him, before the assembled people, as the divine being Hakeem. Of all the women in Browning's dramas, Anael, perhaps, is the most womanly, the most self-consistent. She throbs with passionate life, and in the moment of supreme crisis she, like many another woman, sacrifices everything to protect the man she loves, unworthy as he is. She is a fine creation, finely wrought.

Although in the opinion of some critics one of the dramas best suited to the stage, "The Return of the Druses" has never been performed. First issued as a pamphlet, it afterwards found a place in the collected editions of 1849, 1863, 1868, 1888, and 1896.

It is necessary only to recall a number of Browning's general titles to see how closely he clung to the dramatic principle. His next work was for the stage. As "Strafford" marks the period in which his friendship for Macready was growing, so "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon'" is associated with a serious misunderstanding which brought that friendship to a practical close. It was not until many years later, however, in 1891, that the circumstances were made public. At Macready's suggestion Browning wrote the play, and as an example of the rapidity with which he could work on certain occasions, it may be said that the three acts were completed within five days. Macready at this time seems to have fallen into financial difficulties; in consequence, though at first reading delighted with the work, he afterwards showed a disinclination to produce it, and professed his inability to play the leading character.

As, however, Browning did not understand the hints dropped with regard to non-production, Macready proposed to transfer the principal part to Phelps, then an unknown actor. Thus it was arranged, and, despite the manager's subsequent wish to impersonate Trésham himself, Phelps, at the author's desire, appeared in the rôle. The play was handicapped severely in other ways. Contrary to custom, it was first read to the actors, not by Macready, but by the prompter—a man incapable to understand, still less to interpret, the spirit of the lines; moreover, the drama was produced after only two rehearsals, and was staged with scenery of a most inadequate kind.

There is a general impression that success has never

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attended the performance of Browning's plays; but, notwithstanding the many and serious disadvantages incident upon the first night at Drury Lane Theatre, of which Macready had just become manager, "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon'" was greeted with hearty applause and a call made for the author, to which he did not respond. The tragedy held the stage for several nights, warmly received by crowded houses. Its performance, in 1885, by the Browning Society in London, and by Mr. Laurence Barrett in Washington, called forth some misleading statements as to its original reception. Before publishing these, Mr. Hills, the then editor of *The Daily News*, submitted them to the poet, who replied at length in a private letter, giving all the circumstances which had attended the first performance of the play. The facts, however, did not become generally known until the publication of this letter in Mrs. Sutherland Orr's "Life of Browning." When Mr. and Mrs. Browning were in Italy, in 1848, they heard with pleasure of the welcome accorded to the tragedy at Sadler's Wells Theatre, when Phelps again took the principal part.

As to the play itself, opinions differ widely. In a letter to Forster, Dickens gives it the highest possible praise: "I know nothing that is so affecting . . . as Mildred's recurrence to that 'I was so young—I had no mother!' . . . The tragedy I never shall forget, or less vividly remember, than I do now. And if you tell Browning that I have seen it, tell him that I believe from my soul there is no man living (and not many dead) who could produce such a work." Not for thirty years, how-

ever, did Browning learn of these generous words of appreciation. Mr. Skelton, too, refers to the drama as "one of the most perfectly conceived and perfectly executed tragedies in the language. Other critics, and with greater justification, regard it as a work of unequal merit, containing several fine situations, notably that to which Dickens alludes, but marked by unfortunate lapses, both dramatic and poetical. Mertoun's song to Mildred in the first act, in addition to its value as a characteristic Browning composition, possesses, as his biographer, Mr. William Sharp, points out, interest of another kind. The lines beginning—

"There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest,"

were written about two years before Robert Browning met Elizabeth Barrett. How greatly this song influenced her writings, readers of "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," for example, are aware. "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon," originally printed by Moxon in twenty-four hours, in order to ensure its performance as Browning wrote it, was issued as Part V. of the Bells and Pomegranates series, and has appeared in all the collected editions.

As we have seen, Browning could work rapidly when occasion required; when, moreover, the central idea had taken definite shape in his mind. The poet's contribution to the literature of his time, in point of quantity as well as distinction, is remarkable. But when it is remembered that for nearly sixty years Browning exercised his art, in circumstances far more favourable than those in which

many men have laboured, his output is the less surprising. During the year that followed the appearance of "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" the poet was engaged, doubtless, on some of the superb lyrics and romances published later. However this may be, the play in five acts entitled "Colombe's Birthday" was the only work printed in 1844.

The drama turns on Colombe, Duchess of Juliers' choice of a suitor. Shall she marry the mighty Prince—

"The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!"

who does not love her, union with whom would mean wealth, glory, power; or shall she follow the dictates of her heart and, renouncing her high position, wed the loyal commoner, Valence? At the dramatic moment, and with incisive brevity, she exclaims in the hearing of all—

"I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
This is my Birthday"

It does not appear that "Colombe's Birthday" was written for immediate stage representation, and as a matter of fact it remained unacted for ten years. In 1853, when Mr. and Mrs. Browning were in Italy, it was produced at the Haymarket Theatre, Miss Helen Faucit, afterwards Lady Martin, creating the title part, as she had created those of Lady Carlisle and Mildred Tresham. About the same time it was performed at Boston, U.S.A., and since then those privileged to attend the performances under the direction of the Browning

Society have had the opportunity to witness it in London. The text, first issued by Moxon as Part VI. of the Bells and Pomegranates series, is contained in each of the five collected editions.

The next contribution to this historic series, comprising some of the most idiosyncratic and beautiful of Browning's works, is the "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics," of which one only, "The Flight of the Duchess," appears in the present volume.

One Guy Fawkes' Day, when a boy, Browning heard a woman singing in the street. The refrain of her song, repeated over and over, haunted him, and years afterwards, in 1845, with the words, "Following the Queen of the Gipsies, O!" still in his mind, he wrote the romance entitled "The Flight of the Duchess." Here, as in everything born of the imagination, upon the reader's drift of thought, upon his capacity and desire to find hidden meanings, depends for him the significance of the poem. By some it is regarded as a poet's recital of an event, commonplace in itself, to which an element of the improbable has been added; others see in it a "mystic study of redeemed womanhood," the allegory of a soul shaking off its bondage to find its true freedom in others. Mayhap there is no inconsistency in the two readings; but without adopting the one or the other, the flight of the young Duchess from her solitary, homeless home to the land of the gipsies, where love, sympathy, and pleasant comradeship await her, has an interest of its own. There is deep beauty in the idea that sounds as of sweet music seemed to precede the old woman's words

of love, and that ere she ended, her voice changed as a bird's, and again it was as if a sweet melody filled the air. Love was a strange visitant in that place, and the Duchess for the first time was drinking of "life's pure fire." Browning leaves each one to his own interpretation. "The Flight of the Duchess" formed part of the seventh issue of the *Bells and Pomegranates* series, and appears in each edition of the collected works.

Next in chronological order come the two dramas "Luria" and "A Soul's Tragedy," the first for the stage, the second for the study. The character of Luria is perhaps the simplest and most noble of the creations of Browning; the modern Othello he has been aptly called. Long, introspective parleyings with himself do not find a place in the composition of this great general, this gallant fighter, this lover of Florence, and the picture is marred by few, if any, self-communings. The drama is enacted in the Italy of the fifteenth century, and treats of an episode in the great struggle between the republics of Florence and Pisa. As to the historical truth of the situation whercon the tragedy turns, it is possible that the following passage from Sapio Amminato's "Istoria Florentine," quoted by Professor Pancoast in "Poet Lore," suggested the *motif* to Browning. "And when all was ready, the expedition marched to the gates of Pisa, under the command of Conte Bartoldo Orsini, a Ventusian captain in the Florentine service, accompanied by Filippo di Megalotti, Rinaldo di Gian Figliuzzi, and Maso degli Albizzi, in the character of commissaries of the commonwealth. For, although we have every con-

fidence in the honour and fidelity of our general, you see it is always well to be on the safe side. And in the matter of receiving possession of a city . . . these nobles with the old feudal names! We know the ways of them! And Orsini might be as bad in Pisa as a Visconti, so we might as well send some of our own people to be on the spot. The three commissaries therefore accompanied the Florentine general to Pisa." If, indeed, as seems probable, Browning fashioned the tragedy of "Luria" out of this suggestive extract, the fact adds not only to its historical interest, but is an example of the way in which his imagination worked—another and more noteworthy example, of course, being the book picked up on an old stall in Florence, which furnished material for "The Ring and the Book." The figure of Luria lives in the memory. Suspected, watched, plotted against, this Moor, who with a half-regret apostrophises his native land as "My own East! How nearer God we were!" has room for one passion only in his heart—the love of Florence. To the end he is faithful to his mistress. Even his enemies are put to shame when, finally, rather than betray his loved city, whose people had sought to compass his death, he takes the phial of poison from his breast, murmuring—

"Strange! This is all I brought from my own Land
To help me."

"Luria," "this last attempt for the present at dramatic poetry," as Browning says, is dedicated to "the great dramatic poet"—Walter Savage Landor—whom Browning met at Ion "Talfourd's house one memorable

evening, when, with Wordsworth as well as Landor present, his name was coupled with the toast of the poets of England. Landor's beautiful acknowledgment of the dedication is stately as became his old age—

"Shakespeare is not our poet but the world's,
Therefore on him no speech I and brief for thee,
Browning I Since Chaucer was alive and hale
No man has walked along our roads with step
So active, so enquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse But warmer climes
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing the breeze
Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song."

Although a play written for the stage, "Luria" has never been performed.

The drama ironically entitled "A Soul's Tragedy" formed, with "Luria," the eighth and last number of the Bells and Pomegranates series. The two acts treat respectively of the poetry and the prose of Chiappino's life; in the second act Ogniben, the Papal Legate, if somewhat prolix, stands out as the most noteworthy character in the "tragedy." Both "Luria" and "A Soul's Tragedy" are to be found in the five editions of Browning's works.

On September 12, 1846, at the parish church of Saint Marylebone, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett were married. Immediately afterwards, because of the frail health of the poetess, they started for Italy, pausing first in Paris, and thence proceeding by easy stages to Avignon and, finally, to Pisa, where the winter was spent, Mrs. Browning's health improving rapidly day by

day. In spring they left "this perch of Pisa" for Florence, where their second place of abode will ever be associated with "Casa Guidi Windows." In June they moved to the little town of Ancona, on the Adriatic, the place where Browning wrote one of the most beautiful of his short poems, "The Guardian Angel," of which I quote the concluding lines of the fifth stanza :—

" All is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty
What further may be sought for or declared ? "

With the exception of revising all his works then in print—save "Pauline," "Strafford," the drama which he wrote for Macready, and "Sordello"—for the collected edition in two volumes, published by Chapman & Hall in 1849, and of writing some of the poems which in 1855 appeared under the general title, "Men and Women," Browning seems to have done little work during the early years of his married life.

There is a lapse of four years between "A Soul's Tragedy" and "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," written at Florence in 1850. It, or rather they—for "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day" are two distinct poems—belong to the poet's argumentative works. Although in these musings on religion Browning's own beliefs are ever and again visible, the conclusions cannot be taken as those to which he himself assented. His own religious attitude is more truly reflected, perhaps, in the shorter poem of "La Saisiaz" (Savoyard for the sun), published in 1873.

With "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," the present

volume concludes. During the seventeen years that preceded its publication Browning had produced about one-third of the work that bears his name ; in the succeeding thirty-nine years the remaining two-thirds was written.

Amongst the great achievements of the last forty years of his life one or two notable examples only can be mentioned : the monumental work, "The Ring and the Book," containing the haunting lines of tribute to his dead wife, "O lyric Love, half angel and half bird"; "Abt Vogler," which only a poet who was also a musician could have written ; "Prospice," wherein is concentrated the courageous philosophy of the man ; "Home Thoughts from Abroad," with its blithe song, born of his loving recollection of spring in England ; and that great soul-study, "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

In Venice, on the 12th of December, 1889, Browning died ; but for the dauntless poet death had no terror. It was but a moment of darkness—

"Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again
And with God be the rest "

FRANK RINDER.

The Return of the Druses.

A TRAGEDY.

The Return of the Druses.

A TRAGEDY.

PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect.	Initiated Druses—MAANI.
The Patriarch's Nuncio	" " KARSHOOK,
The Republic's Admiral	" RAGHIB, AYOOR, and
LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-	others.
Novice.	Uninitiated Druses.
Initiated Druses—DJABAL	Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's At-
" " KHALIL	tendants, Admiral's
" " ANAEL	Force.

TIME, 14—

PLACE—An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.

SCENE—A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOR, and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire :
Day breaks at last ! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function !

2 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Ragh —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea !

Ay. —Most joy be thine, O Mother mount ! Thy
brood

Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—! ut thus ! Behind, our Prefect's corse ;
Before, a presence like the morning—thine,
Absolute Djabal l'atc,—God Hakeem now
That day breaks !

Kar Off then, with disguise at last !
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Let every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture ! Cry,
Tis the Druse Nation, wardens on our mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians ure we, Prefect, we
Who rise

Is Who shout
Ka, h Who seize, a first fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler ! Brave !

[They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the Hall]

Kar Hold !
Ay. —Mine, I say ;

And mine shall it continue !

Kar Just this finge !
Take anything beside ! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
Of the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice ! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's Chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again (as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 3

Lost heart, to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in)—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frost-work charactery ;
And see yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble-stone :
Raze out the Rhodian's Cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe !

Ay. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox ? Help !
—Three handbreadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died !

Kar. Nay, hear the knave !
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—
How know I else ?—Hea me denied my right
By such a knave !

Ragh. [*interposing.*] Each ravage for himself !
Booty enough ! On, Druses ! Be there found
Blood and a heap behind us ; with us, Djabal
Turned Hakeem ; and before us, Lebanon !
Yields the porch ? Spare not ! There his minions
dragged
Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch !
Ayoob ! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there !
Onward in Djabal's name !

*As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. A pause
and silence.*

Kha. Was it for this,
Djabal hath summoned you ? Deserve you thus
A portion in to-day's event ? What, here—
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes

4 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
Dispute you for these gauds ?

Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil ?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee ! Take the fringe,
Old Karshook ! I supposed it was a day . . .

Kha. For pillage ?
Kar. Hearken, Khalil ! Never spoke
A boy so like a song-bird ; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
Except thy bright twin-sister—thou and Anael
Challenge his prime regard : but we may crave
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favor ; in him we believed,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so may claim
Reward : who grudges me my claim ?

Ay. To-day
Is not as yesterday !

Ragh. Stand off !
Kha. Rebel you ?

Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
His wrath on you, the day of our Return ?

Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe !
Hound ! must the earth
Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee ?—and thee ?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault !

Kha. Oh, shame !
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's Ridge
Its birth-place, hither ! Let the sea divide
These hunters from their prey, you said, and safe
In this dim islet's virgin solitude
Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time

Fan it to fire ; till Hakeem rise again,
 According to his word that, in the flesh
 Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
 He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
 And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
 Lead us himself to Lebanon once more.
 Was 't not thus you departed years ago,
 Ere I was born ?

Druses. 'Twas even thus, years ago.

Kha. And did you call—(according to old laws
 Which bid us, lest the Sacred grow Profane,
 Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
 With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
 As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
 Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
 Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage,
 (Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
 The remnant of your tribe) a race self-vowed
 To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
 The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle ?

Kar. And why else rend we down, wrench up, raze
 out ?

These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
 For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
 Than aught we fled—their Prefect ; who began
 His promised merc paternal governance,
 By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
 Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
 Of crushing, with our nationalities,
 Each chance of our return, and taming us
 Bond slaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
 To end by this day's treason.

Kha. Say I not ?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
 Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb proscribed,
 Must yet receive one degradation more ;

6 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

The Knights at last throw off the mask—transfer,
As tributary now, and appanage,
This islet they are but protectors of,
To their own ever-craving lord, the Church,
Which licenses all crimes that pay it thus—
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
Pursuant to I know not what vile pact,
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
His predecessor in all wickedness ;
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
Djabal, the man, in semblance, but our God
Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
Bird-like about his brow ?

Druses.

We saw—we heard !

Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies !

Kha. And as he said hath not our Khalif done,
And so disposed events (from land to land
Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
The pact of villany complete, there comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
Their treason to consummate,—each will face
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation ;
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses ;
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag ;
That Venice, which, the Hospitallers' foe,
Grants us from Candia escort home at price
Of our relinquished isle—Rhodes counts her own—
Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
Toward the harbour : is it now that you, and you,
And you, selected from the rest to bear
The hurthen of the Khalif's secret, further
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 7

That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!
Kar. True,

Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,
 Thou art the youngest of us?—tho' employed
 Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
 Transmitter of his mandates, even now:
 Much less, when'er beside him Anael graces
 The cedar throne, his Queen-bride, art thou like
 To occupy its lowest step that day!
 Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
 Forbidden such or such an honor,—say,
 Would silence serve so amply?

Kha. Karshook thinks
 I covet honors? Well, nor idly thinks!
 Honors? I have demanded of them all
 The greatest!

Kar. I supposed so.

Kha. Judge yourselves!
 Turn—thus 'tis in the alcove at the back
 Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
 The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state;
 Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
 The other lands from Syria; there they meet.
 Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

Kar. For what
 Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

Kha. That mine—
 Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs,
 —Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!
 Djabal reserves that office for himself. [*A silence.*]
 Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
 —Scarce more enlightened than yourselves: since, near
 As I approach him, nearer as I trust.
 Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
 Only the God's power, not the glory yet:
 Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as servant

8 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts ! Till noon
None sees him save myself and Anael—once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes !—Without
a sign
That he suspects aught since he left our Isle ;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence : so have we learned
From Loys . . .

Kar. Loys ? Is not Loys gone
For ever ?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned ?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire,—and leapt
Into the surf the foremost : since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward ; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal !

Kha. Peace !

Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed : see, all keep
The wonted shew of servitude : announce
His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
Of Djabal ! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
Worth sparing !)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first ! Say, I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South !

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 9

Saidst thou a Crossed-keys' Flag would flap the mast?
It nears apace! One galley and no more—
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!

Kha. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance!

Kha. Joy!
Summon our people, Raghil! Bid all forth!
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young!
Set free the captives, let the trampled raise
Their faces from the dust, because at length
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,
Ere night we steer for Syria! I hear you, Druses?
Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
Reward and punishment, because he bade
Who has the right; for me, what should I say
But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
Without a check from you!

Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter LOYS.—The Druses are silent.

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him, friends!
[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'Tis as our Isle broke out in song

10 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
 To-day, and I succeed him in his rule !
 But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune !
 [*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses ! I have tidings for you,
 But first for Djabal : where's your tall bewitcher,
 With that small Arab thin-lipped silver mouth ?

Kha. [*Aside .o KAR.*] Loys, in truth ! Yet Djabal
 cannot err !

Kar. [*to KHA.*] And who takes charge of Loys ? That's
 forgotten,

Despite thy wariness ! Will Loys stand
 And see his comrade slaughtered ?

Loys. [*Aside.*] How they shrink
 And whisper, with those rapid faces ! What ?

The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
 Strikes terror to the simple tribe ? God's shame
 On those that bring our Order ill repute !
 But all's at end now ; better days begin
 For these mild mountaineers from over-sea ;
 The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
 To cower at thus ! [*Aloud.*] I ask for Djabal—

Kar. [*Aside.*] Better
 One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
 The corridor ; 'twere easy to despatch
 A youngster. [*to LOYS.*] Djabal passed some minutes
 since

Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold ! What, him despatch ?

The only Christian of them all we charge
 No tyranny upon ? Who,—noblest Knight
 Of all that learned from time to time their trade
 Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
 To Europe's pomps, a truest child of pride,—
 Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
 From the beginning ? Loys, Djabal makes
 Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 11

For safety?—I take charge of him !

[To LOYS.] Sir Loys,—

Loys. There, cousins ! Does Sir Loys strike you dead ?

Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has intercourse with few or none

•Till noontide : but, your pleasure ?

Loys. “ Intercourse

“ With few or none ? ”—(Ah, Khalil, when you spoke I saw not your smooth face ! All health !—and health

To Anael ! How fares Anael ?)—“ Intercourse

“ With few or none ? ” Forget you, I’ve been friendly

With Djabal long ere you or any Druse ?

—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath

The Duke my father’s roof ! He ’d tell by the hour,

With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,

P’ausiblest stories . . .

Kha. Stories, say you ?—Ah,

The quaint attire !

Loys. My dress for the last time !

How sad I cannot make you understand,

This ermine, o’er a shield, betokens me

Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces

And noblest ; and, what’s best and oldest there,

See, Dreux’, our house’s blazon, which the Nuncio

Tacks to an Hospitallers’ vest to-day !

• *Kha.* The Nuncio we await ? What brings you back

From Rhodes, Sir Loys ?

Loys. How you island tribe

Forget, the world’s awake while here you drowse !

What brings me back ? What should not bring me, rather ?

Our Patriarch’s Nuncio visits you to-day—

Is not my year’s probation out ? I come

To take the knightly vows.

Kha. What’s that you wear ?

Loys. This Rhodian cross ? The cross your Prefect wore.

• You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter

12 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
 From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
 My secret will escape me !) In a word,
 My year's probation 's passed, and Knight ere eve
 Am I ; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
 To the common stock, to live in chastity,
 (We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
 —Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,
 And fight to death against the Infidel
 —Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
 Such partial difference only as befits
 The peacefullest of tribes ! But Khalil, prithee,
 Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day ?

Kha. Ah, the new sword !

Loys. See now ! You handle sword
 As 'twere a camel-staff ! Pull ! That's my motto,
 Annealed, "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

Kha. No curve in it ? Surely a blade should curve !

Loys. Straight from the wrist ! Loose—it should
 poise itself !

Kha. [*waving with irrepressible exultation the sword.*]

We are a nation, Loys, of old fame
 Among the mountains ! Rights have we to keep.
 With the sword too !

[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget—you bid me
 Seek Djabal ?

Loys. What ! A sword's sight scares you not ?
 (The People I will make of him and them !

Oh, let my Prefect-sway begin at once !)
 Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must !

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
 And find—[*Aside.*] Nay, 'tis thy cursed race's token,
 Frank pride, no special insolence of thine !

[*Aloud.*] Tarry and I will do your bidding, Loys.

[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you ! I proceed to Djabal
 straight.

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 13

Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says.
Oh, will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were true?

KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.

Loys. Tu Dieu! How happy I shall make these
Druses!

Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me
To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,
Then take the first pretence for stealing off
From these poor islanders, present myself
Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,
And (as best proof of ardour in its cause
Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)
Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,
This Prefect and his villanous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared request
Was his dismissal; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—
Myself may heal whate'er 's diseased!

And good

For them, they did so! Since I never felt
How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine—
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt
On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's story,
He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—
And me, too, since the story brought me here—
Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known
An hour hence, what if Anael turns on me
The great black eyes I must forget?

Why, fool,

14 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Recall them, then? My business is with Djabal,
Not Anael! Djabal carries: if I seek him?—
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day!

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should think himself a God!
I—Hakeem? To have wandered thro' the world,
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,
For my one chant with many a change, my tale
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nor less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys
To pass probation here; the getting access
By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Franks,—a few
Of Europe's secrets that subdue the flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem?

And I feel this first to-day!
Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed
Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?
Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
"Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,
"Returns from traversing the world, a man,
"Able to take revenge, lead back the march
"To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays?
But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all's changed!
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 15

“ True—but my jugglings wrought that ! ” Put I heart
Into our people where no heart loked?—“ Ah,
“ What cannot an impostor do ! ”

Not this !

Not do this which I do ! Not bid, avault
Falsehood ! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me !
—Nor even get a hold on me ! 'Tis now—
This day—hour—minute—'tis as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived !
And now what do I?—Hasten to the few
Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
As I professed, I did believe myself !
Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
If Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maani there
Must tell you how I saw my father sink ;
My mother's arms twine still about my neck ;
I hear my brother's shriek, here's yet the scar
Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
If you had woke like me, grown year by year
Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
Would it be wondrous such delusion grew ?
I walked the world, asked help at every hand ;
Came help or no ? Not this and this ? Which helps
When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
My mission aught but Hakeem's ? Promised Hakeem
More than performs the Djabal—you absolve ?
—Me, you will never shame before the crowd
Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs surround
The few deceived, the many unabused,
—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
The Prefect, lead to Lebanon ! No Khalif,
But Sheikh once more ! Mere Djabal—not. . . .

16 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Kha. —God Hakeem !
 'Tis told ! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
 As we ! and mothers lift on high their babes
 Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
 Thou hast not failed us ; ancient brows are proud !
 Our Elders could not earlier die, it seems,
 Than at thy coming ! The Druse heart is thine !
 Take it ! my Lord and theirs, be thou adored !

Dja. [Aside.] Adored !—but I renounce it utterly !

Kha. Already are they instituting choirs
 And dances to the Khalif, as of old
 'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.

Dja. [Aside.] I abjure it !
 'Tis not mine—not for me !

Kha. Why pour they wine
 Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain herbs ?
 Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit ?
 Oh—let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
 Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
 The last sun rise on the Isle—he can see now !
 The shamed Druse women never wept before :
 They can look up when we reach home, they say.
 Smell !—Sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—
 Sweet !—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
 Alone do nothing for thee ! 'Tis my office
 Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus
 Thou bidst me. At this selfsame moment tend
 The Prefect, Nuncio, and the Admiral
 Hither, by their three sea-paths—nor forget
 Who were the trusty watchers !—Thou forget ?
 Like me, who do forget that Anael bade. . . .

Dja. [Aside.] Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last ?
 Louder than all, that would be said, I knew !
 What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
 To the people ? Till that woman crossed my path,

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 17

On went I, solely for my people's sake :
I saw her, and I first saw too myself,
And slackened pace : "if I should prove indeed
Hakeem—with Anael by !"

Kha. [*Aside.*] Ah, he is rapt !
Dare I at such a moment break on him
To ven to do my sister's bidding ? Yes !
The eyes are Djabal's, and not Hakeem's yet !
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.

Dja. [*Aside.*] To yearn to tell her, and yet have
no one
Great heart's-word that will tell her ! I could gasp
Doubtless one such word out, and die !

[*Aloud.*] You said
That Anael . . .

Kha. . . . Fair would see thee, speak with thee,
Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know :
Something's to say that will not from her mind :
I know not what—"Let him but come !" she said.

Dja. [*Half-apart.*] My nation—all my Druses—how
fare they ?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
Hold they their posts ? Wait they their Khalif too ?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock around
That banner of a brow !

Dja. [*Aside.*] And when they flock,
Confess them this—and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance ?
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
Precede me there—forestall my story, there—
Tell it in mocks and jeers—

I lose myself !
Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now ?
I need the veriest child—why not this child ?

[*Turning abruptly to KHALIL.*

18 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

You are a Druse too, Khalil ; you were nourished
 Like Anael with our mysteries : if she
 Could vow, so nourished, to love only one .
 Who should revenge the Druses, whence proceeds
 Your silence ? Wherefore made you no essay,
 Who thus implicitly can execute
 My bidding ? What have I done, you could not ?
 Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
 Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
 Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,
 This Prefect ? All's in readiness ?

Kha. The sword,
 The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
 Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
 The Prefect's chamber.

Dja. —Why did you despair ?
Kha. I know our Nation's state ? Too surely know,
 As thou, who speak'st to prove me ! Wrong's like ours
 Should wake revenge : but when I sought the wronged
 And spoke,—“The Prefect stabbed your son—arise !
 “Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
 “In his pavilion—then, arise !”—my speech
 Fell idly—'twas, “Be silent, or worse fare !
 “Endure, till time's slow cycle prove complete !
 “Who may'st thou be that takest on thee to thrust
 “Into this peril—art thou Hakeem ?” No !
 Only a mission like thy mission renders
 All these obedient at a breath, subdues
 Their private passions, brings their wills to one !

Dja. You think so ?
Kha. Even now—when they have witnessed
 Thy miracles—had I not threatened them
 With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the whole,
 And lie ere this, each with his special prize,
 Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 19

To perish! No! When these have kissed thy feet
At Lebanon, the Past purged off, the Present
Clear,—for the Future, even Hakeem's mission
May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Can rule them thus renewed.—I talk to thee!

Dja. And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure
As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.

Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL goes.

Oh, not confess

To these—the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half authorize its means! Only to her
Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Thro' the earth's rift and take hid treasure up.
When should my first child's-carelessness have stopped
If not when I, whose lone youth hurried past
Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
At length recovered in one Druse all joys?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
Would I confess! On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy!

[Goes.

*Enter ANAEL, and MAANI, who is assisting to array her
• • in the ancient dress of the Druses.*

An. Those saffron-vestures of the tabret-girls!
Comes Djabal, think you?

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams?—Nay, all the tresses off
My forehead—look I lovely so? He says
That I am lovely.

Maa. Lovely † nay, that hangs
Awry.

20 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

An. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?
The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
The maiden of our class. Are you content
For Djabal as for me?

Maa. Content, my child.

An. Oh, mother, tell me more of him. He comes
Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him!

Maa. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you
all?

An. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maa. 'Tis writ,
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
Superbly.

An. Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
Yet that's no change; for a grave current lived
—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would discourse to me
In that enforced, still fashion, word on word!
'Tis the old current which must swell thro' that,
For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?
'Tis surely not his voice will change!

—It Hakeem

Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;
Possessed, but was not it!

He lived with you?

Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
And heard my vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day . . . proceed!

Maa. Once more, then: from the time of his return
In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 21

—Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—
 I knew not in the man that child ; the man
 Who spoke alone of hopes to save our tribe,
 How he had gone from land to land to save
 Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread ;
 And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused ;
 But never till that day when, pale and worn
 As by a persevering woe, he cried
 “ Is there not one Druse left me ? ”—And I showed
 The way to Khalil's and your hiding place
 From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
 So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
 Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
 To open and shut, the while, above us both !)
 —His mission was the mission promised us—
 The cycle had revolved—all things renewing,
 He was lost Hakkem clothed in flesh to lead
 His children home anon, now veiled to work
 Great purposes—the Druses now would change
An. And they have changed ! And obstacles did sink,
 And furtherances rose ! And round his form
 Played fire, and music beat her angel wings !
 My people, let me more rejoice, oh, more
 For you than for myself ! Did I but watch
 Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
 One of the throng, how proud were I—tho' ne'er
 Singled by Djabal's glance ! But to be chosen
 His own from all, the most his own of all,
 To be exalted with him, side by side
 Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how
 Worthily meet the maidens who await
 Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
 This honor, in their eyes ? So bright are they
 That saffron-vestured sound the tabrets there—
 The girls who throng there in my dreams ! One hour
 And all is over : how shall I do aught

22 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?—

[*Suddenly to MAANI.*

Mother, I am not worthy of him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
I am not, yet forbears! Why else revert
To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, that when he comes . . .

[*As DJABAL enters.*]

Oh, why is it

I cannot kneel to you?

Dja.

Rather, 'tis I

Should kneel to you, my Anael!

An.

Even so!

For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—
Never a God to me! 'Tis the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh, do you veil these to our people,
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!
You mean that I should never kneel to you
—So I will kneel!

Dja. [*preventing her.*] No—no!

[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*

Ha, have you chosen . . .

An. The khandjar with our ancient garb. But, Djabal,
Change not, be not exalted yet! give time
That I may plan more, perfect more My blood
Beats—beats!

[*Aside.*]

O must I then—since Loys leaves us
Never to come again, renew in me
Those doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—Own
That when I saw that stranger—heard his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
For proof of more than human attributes

In him, by me whose heart at his approach
 Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
 Whose soul at his departure died away,
 —That every such effect might have been wrought
 In others' frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
 Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
 Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?
 How can I be rewarded presently,
 With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?

Dja [*Aside*] Avow the truth? I cannot! In what
 words

Avow that all she loves in me is false?
 —Which yet has saved that flower like love of hers
 To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
 With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom
 Could I take down the prop work, in itself
 So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
 With painted cups and fruitage— might these still
 Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
 Of matted stalk and tendril had repiced
 The old support thus silently withdrawn!
 But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too
 'Tis not for my sake but for Aniel's sake
 I leave her soul this Hakkam where it learns!
 Oh, could I vanish from the n—quit the Isle!
 And yet—a thought comes here my work is done
 At every point; the Druses must return—
 Have convoy to their birth place back, who'er
 The leader be, myself or any Druse—
 Venice is pledged to that. 'tis for myself,
 For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
 I stay now, not for them—to slay or spare
 The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?
 He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;
 What would his death be but my own reward?
 Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone!

24 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Let him escape with all my House's blood !
 Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
 And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
 Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
 Above the world. She cannot touch that world
 By ever knowing what I truly am,
 Since Loys,—of man kind the only one
 Able to link my present with my past,
 My life in Europe with my Island life,
 Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed
 Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee !

Dja. Loys ? To drag me back ? It cannot be !

An. [Aside.] Loys ! Ah, doubt may not be stilled so !

Kha. Can I have erred that thou so gapest ? Yes,
 I told thee not, in the glad press of tidings
 Of higher import, Loys is returned
 Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
 Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
 On some inauguration he expects,
 To-day, the world's fate hung !

Dja. —And a ! — for me ?

Kha. Thou knowest all that ! Thee in chief he
 greets,

But every Druse of us is to be happy
 At his arrival, he declares : were Loys
 Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
 To take us in with. How I love that Loys !

Dja. [Aside.] Shame winds me with her tether round
 and round !

An. [Aside.] Loys ? I take the trial ! it is meet,
 The little I can do, be done : that faith,
 All I can offer, want no perfecting
 Which my own act may compass. Aye, this way

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES 25

All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
 Be chased by other aid than mine Advance
 Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
 The mortal s with the more than mortal's gifts '
Dja [*Aside*] Before, there were so few deceived ' and
 now

There s doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
 But (having learned my superhuman clams,
 And calling me his Khalil God) will clish
 The whole truth out from I oys at first word '
 While I oys, for his part, will hold me up,
 With a Frank s unimpeachable scorn
 Of such imposture, to my people s eyes '
 Could I but hold him longer yet while
 I am them amuse him here until I plan
 How he and I at once may leave th' Isle?
 Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
 My only help in this emergency
 There s Aniel '

In I lead you?

Dja (Aniel—none but she!)

[*To ANIEL*] I pass s ne minutes in the chamber there,
 Lie I see Loy you shall speak with him
 Until I join you Khalil follows me

An [*Aside*] As I divined he bids me save myself,
 Offers me a probation—I accept '

Let me see Loys '

I oys [*with ut*] Djabal '

An [*Aside*] 'Tis his voice

The smooth Frank trifer with our people s wrongs,
 The self complacent boy inquirer, loud
 On this and that inflicted tyranny,
 —Aught serving to parade an ignorance
 Of how wrong feels, inflicted ' Let me close
 With what I viewed at distance, let myself
 Probe this delusion to the core!

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Dja. He comes !
Khalil, along with me ! while Anael waits
Till I return once more—and but once more !

ACT III.

ANAEL and LOYS.

An. Here leave me ! Here I wait another. 'Twas
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love—how protest a love I dare not feel?
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me—you
Are here—I only feel you here !

An. No more !

Loys. But once again, whom could you love ? I dare,
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
Love we abjure : so speak on safely—speak,
Lest I speak, and betray my faith so ! Sure
To say your breathing passes thro' me, changes
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love ? You said
You could love one . . .

An. One only ! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love ;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him ; we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,
I love.—Forbear me ! Let my hand go !

Loys. Him
You could love only ? Where is Djabal ? Stay !
[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay ? Who does this but myself ?
Had I apprized her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge ? No !

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 27

She sees into my heart's core : what is it
 Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose ?
 Why turns she from me ? Ah fool, over-fond
 To dream I could call up . . .

. . . What never dream
 Yet feigned ! 'Tis love ! Oh Anael, speak to me !
 Djabal !

An. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber
 At noon ! *[She paces the room.]*

Loys. *[Aside.]* And am I not the Prefect now ?
 Is it my fate to be the only one
 Able to win her love, the only one
 Unable to accept her love ? The Past
 Breaks up beneath my footing : came I here
 This morn as to a slave, to set her free
 And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
 Content beside her in the Isle ? What works
 This knowledge in me now ! Her eye has broken
 The faint disguise away ; for Anael's sake
 I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
 Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
 To live without !

—As I must live ! To-day
 Ordains me Knight, forbids me—never shall
 Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
 Thy soldier !

An. Djabal you demanded, comes !

Loys. *[Aside.]* What wouldst thou, Loys ? See him ?
 Nought beside

Is wanting : I have felt his voice a spell
 From first to last. He brought me here, made known
 The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
 Redress for them ; and shall I meet him now,
 When nought is wanting but a word of his,
 To—what ?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
 Honor away,—to cast my lot among

28 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
 Breaking my high pact of companionship
 With those who graciously bestowed on me
 The very opportunities I turn
 Against them.

Let me not see Djabal now !

An. The Prefect also comes !

Loys. [*Aside.*] Him let me see,
 Not Djabal ! Him, degraded at a word,
 To please me,—to attest belief in me—
 And, after, Djabal ! Yes, ere I return
 To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
 This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
 For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
 Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly !

The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever ! [*Goes.*]

An. Yes, I am calm now ; just one way remains—
 One, to attest my faith in him : for, see,
 I were quite lost else : Loys, Djabal, stand
 On either side—two men ! I balance looks
 And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
 No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed !
 And for a love like this, the God who saves
 My race, selects me for his bride ' One way !

Enter DJABAL.

'*Dja.* [*to himself.*] No moment is to waste, then ; 'tis
 resolved !

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
 The Druses, and if Loys can be lured
 Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
 Or promise never to return at least,—
 All's over ! Even now my bark awaits—
 I reach the next wild islet and the next, *

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 29

And lose myself beneath the sun for ever !
And now, to Anael !

An Djabal, I am thine !

Dja Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had not been?

An Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thoughts?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thoughts?

Dja I do not, I have said a thousand times

An (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet !)

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first

Djabal, when first I saw you (by our porch

You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,

And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see !)

I knew you were not human, for I said

“ This dim secluded house where the sea beats

Is Heaven to me—my people's huts are Hell

To them, this august form will follow me,

Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him,

And they, the Prefect, Oh, my happiness

Rounds to the full whether I choose or no !

His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,

His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say

He let me love him in that moment's bliss

I shall forget my people pine for home—

They pass and they return with pallid eyes ! ”

I vowed at once a certain vow, this vow—

Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved

“ Embrace me !

Dja [*Apart*] And she loved me ! Nought remained

But that ! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead ?

An Ah, you reproach me ! True, his death crowns
all,

I know—or should know—and I would do much,

Believe ! but, death—Oh, you, who have known death,

Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful

As we report !

Death !—a fire curls within us

30 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh. perchance !

Death !—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil—for M. ni—what for thee ?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy of you !

Dja. [*avouing her.*] I come for that—to say
Such an occasion is at hand : 'tis like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever !

An. We part ? Just so ! I have succumbed,—
I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith !
Then, we part not ! Remains there no way short
Of that ? Oh, not that !

Death !—Yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands—its eyes filmed—“Nay it sleeps”
I said, “will wake to-morrow well”—'twas dead !

Dja. I stand here and time fleets. Anael—I come
To bid a last farewell to you : perhaps
We never meet again—but, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL breathlessly.

Kha. He's here ! The Prefect ! Twenty guards,
No more—no sign he dreams of danger—all
Awaits thee only—Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man !
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near
The fleet from Candia's steering !

Dja. [*Aside.*]

All is lost !

—Or won?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred robes,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place
Commanded—Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael,—hush then, past recal,
I slay—'tis forced on me! As I began
I must conclude—so be it!

Kha. For the rest
(Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword)
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee—tho' danger's none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect!

An. [*Aside.*] And 'tis now that Djabal
Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed to you,
Or any one; what peril there may be,
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on!
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else—
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!

Kha. Anael, and no part for us!
[*To Dja.*] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

Dja. [*to AN.*] Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile
Turns stranger—shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it—let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile, or some aëry thing—
What is there in his death?

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An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?

Dja. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here,
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within—once there
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me; this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, etc
We leave for ever this detested spot.
Go, Khalil, hurry all—no pause—no pause!
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Kha. What sign? and who the bearer?

Dja. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob—How she stands!
Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.
Anael! not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber!
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!
(It holds her safe amid the stir)—You will
Be faithful?

An. [*taking the ring.*] I would fain be worthy of you!
[*Trumpet without.*]

Kha. He comes!

Dja. And I too come!

An. One word, but one!

Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?

Then? On the instant?

Dja. I exalted? What?

He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged—our tribe

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 33

Set free—Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
♦ Exalted !

Kha. He is here !

Dja. Away—away ! [*They go.*

Enter the PREFECT with Guards and LOYS.

The Prefect. [*to Guards.*] Back, I say, to the galley
every guard !

That's my sole care now ; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers ; I embark
O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.
Alas me ! Could you have the heart, my Loys ?
[*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio
here forthwith ! [*The Guards go.*

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye ! So you are Prefect now ?
You depose me—you succeed me ? Ha, ha !

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less be-
comes

Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

Pref. . . . When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post ? —Ah, meek
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else !

And wish him the like meekness—for so staunch
A servant of the church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces !
You've my successor to condole with, Nuncio !
I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys !

Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
To leave your scene of . . .

Pref. Trade in the dear Druse
Blood and sweat traffic ? Spare what yesterday
We had enough of ! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game ? Learn wit, my son,

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- Which you'll need shortly ! Did it never breed
 Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
 When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth . . . was bent,
 On having a partaker in my rule ?
 Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
 If not that I might also shift . . . what on him ?
 Half of the peril, Loys !

Loys.

Peril ?

Pref.

Hark you !

I'd love you if you'd let me—this for reason,
 You save my life at price of . . . well, say risk
 At least, of yours. I came a long time since
 To the Isle ; our Hospitaliers bade me tame
 These savage wizards, and reward myself—

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime ?

Pref. Loys, the Knights ! we doubtless understood
 Each other ; as for trusting to reward
 From any friend beside myself . . . No, no !
 I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
 And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
 Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
 When I was on them : but with age comes caution :
 And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.
 Year by year, fear by fear ! The girls were brighter,
 Than ever ('faith, there's yet one Anael left,
 I set my heart upon—Oh, pithce, let
 That brave new sword lie still !)—These joy, looked
 brighter,

But sienter the town, too, as I passed.
 With this alcove's delicious memories
 Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
 Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
 Stealing to catch me : brief, when I began
 To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
 Solicited to let me leave, now all
 Worth staying for was gained and gone !)—I say,

Just when for the remainder of my life
 All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
 Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
 Talk very long and loud, in fine, compel
 The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
 Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
 Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
 To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
 By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
 Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
 Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
 Should fall to me, I hardly could expect !
 Therefore, I say, I'd love you !

Loys. Can it be ?
 I play into your hands then ? Oh, no, no !
 The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
 Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit ?
 But I will back—will yet unveil you !

Pref. Me ?
 To whom ?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
 Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
 My hand this morning shook, for value paid
 To that Italian Saint, Sir Cosimo ?—
 Indignant at my wringing you by year
 A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
 As you recounted ; felt he not aggrieved ?
 Well might he—I allowed for his half-shate
 Merely one hundred ! To Sir . . .

Loys. See ! you dare
 Inculcate the whole Order ; yet should I,
 A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
 Their evil way, had they been firm in it ?
 Answer me !

Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
 And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
 And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,

—The fear of losing or diverting these
 Into another channel, by gainsaying
 A novice too abruptly, could not influence
 The Order ! You might join, for aught they cared,
 Their red-cross rivals of the Temple ! Well,
 I thank you for my part, at all events !
 Stay here till they withdraw you ! You'll inhabit
 This palace—sleep, perchance, in this alcove,
 Where now I go to meet our holy friend :
 Good ! and now disbelieve me if you can .
 This is the first time for long years I enter
 Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
 The lid up of my tomb !

Loys. They share his crime !
 God's punishment will overtake you yet !
Pref. Thank you it does not ! Pardon this last flash :
 I bear a sober visage presently
 With the disinterested Nuncio here—
 His purchase-money safe at Murcia too !
 Let me repeat—for the first time, no doubt
 Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me,
 When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
 We'll hope—Ha, ha ! [*Goes thro' the arras.*]

Loys. Assure me but . . . he's gone !
 He could not lie ! Then what have I escaped !
 I, who have so nigh given up happiness
 For ever, to be linked with him and them !
 Oh, opportunist of discoveries ! I
 Their Knight ? I utterly renounce them all !
 Hark ! What, he meets by this the Nuncio ? yes
 The same hyæna groan-like laughter ! Quick—
 To Djabal ! I am one of them at last,
 Those simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe !
 Djabal ! She's mine at last—Djabal, I say !— [*Goes.*]

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 37

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. Let me but slay the Prefect --The end now !
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took : suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object. [*Seeing the robe, &c. dispose l.*

. . . Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment ! Thee, Djabal,
Far other moods befitted ! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awardee !

[*Taking the robe*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe ? I am at least
A Druse again, churl Europe's policy
Drops from me --I dare take the Robe. Why not
The Tiar ? I rule the Druses, and what more
Betokens it than rule ?-- yet--yet--

[*Lays down the Tiar.*
[*Footsteps in the above.*] He comes ! [*Taking the sword.*
If the sword serves, let the Tiar lie ! So, feet
Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
Thus lightly ! Round me, all ye ghosts ! He'll lift . . .
Which arm to push the arras wide ?--or both ?
Stab from the neck down to the heart--there stay !
Near he comes--nearer--the next footstep ! Now !

[*As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.*
Ha ! Anael ! Nay, my Anael, can it be ?
Heard you the trumpet ? I must slay him here,
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not ?
Anael, the Prefect comes ! [*ANAEL screams.*] So late
to feel

'Tis not a sight for you to look upon ?
A moment's work--but such work ! Till you go,
I must be idle--idle, I risk all !

[*Pointing to her hair.*

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Those locks are well, and you are beautiful thus,
But with the dagger 'tis, I have to do!

An. With mine!

Dja. Blood—Anael?

An. Djabal—'tis thy deed!

It must be—I had hoped to claim it mine—

Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess

'Twas not I, but myself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!

Speak to me!

Dja. Oh my punishment!

An. Speak to me!

While I can speak—touch me—despite the blood!

When the command passed from thy soul to mine,

I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,

And the approaching exaltation,—make

One sacrifice! I said,—and he sat there,

Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,

Thy fire with music burst into my brain—

'Twas but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance

It may have been so! well, it is thy deed!

Dja. It is my deed!

An. His blood, all this!—this! And . . .

And more—sustain me, Djabal—wait not—now

Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!

It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!

At least confirm me! Djabal—blood gushed forth—

He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall

Prone as asleep—why else is Death called sleep?

Sleep? He bent o'er his breast—'Tis sin, I know,

Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?

Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps

On his red breast—is here—'tis the small groan

Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!

Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!

[Following him up and down.

Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 39

Dja. [*sinks on his knees.*] Thus !
Behold my change ! You have done nobly ! I !—

An. Can Hakeem kneel ?

Dja. No Hakeem, but mere Djabal !
I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.

No—hear me ere scorn blasts me ! Once and ever,
The deed is mine . . . Oh think upon the Past !

An. [*to herself.*] Did I strike once, or twice, or many
times ?

Dja. . . . I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in
glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovato, sleep—
Anael, I saw my tribe—I said, “Without
A miracle this cannot be”—I said

“Be there a miracle !”—for I saw you !

An. His head lies south the portal !

Dja. —Weighed with this
The general good, how could I choose my own,
What matter was my purity of soul ?

Little by little I engaged myself—
Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
I hoped.—I said, Heaven had accepted me !

An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me ?— Who said
You were not Hakeem ? and your miracles—
The fire that plays innocuous round your form ?

● ● [*Again changing her whole manner.*
Ah, thou wouldst try me— thou art Hakeem still !

Dja. Woe—woe ! As if the Druses of the Mount
(Scarce Arabs even there—but here, in the Isle,
Beneath their former selves) should comprehend
The subtle lore of Europe ! A few secrets
That would not easily affect the meanest
Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate
The best of our poor tribe ! Again that eye ?

An. [*after a pause springs to his neck.*] Djabal,
in this there can be no deceit !

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Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
 Maani is but human, Khalil human,
 Loys is human even—did their words
 Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you
 So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me
 So to need trying—Could I, with the Prefect
 And the blood, there—could I see only you?
 —Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
 Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

*[As DJABAL slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her
 silently from him.]*

Hakeem would save me! Thou art Djabal! Crouch!
 Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
 The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—
 Full, midway, of our Fathers' trophied tombs,
 Based on the living rock, devoured not by
 The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone!
 Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
 A rum, obscene creatures will moan thro'!
 —Let us come, Djabal!

Dja.

Whither come?

An.

At once—

Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
 Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!
 So feel less pain! Let them deride—thy tribe
 Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride!
 Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

Dja.

Where come?

An. Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged!

Confess,

Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now)
 That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
 Better than ever!) Come, receive their doom
 Of infamy—(Oh, best of all I love thee!
 Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
 Be mine!) Come!

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Dja. Never ! more shame yet ? and why ?
 Why ? You have called this deed mine—it is mine !
 And with it I accept its circumstance.
 How can I longer strive with Fate ? The Past
 Is past—my false life shall henceforth show true—
 Hear me : the argosies touch land by this ;
 They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies ;
 What if we reign together ?—if we keep
 Our secret for the Druses' good ?—by means
 Of even their superstition, plant in them
 New life ? I learn from Europe . all who seek
 Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
 We two will be divine to them - -we are !
 All great works in this world spring from the ruins
 Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
 Men block out Babels, to build Babylons.
 I wrest the weapon from your hand ! I claim
 The deed ! Retire ! You have my ring— you bar
 All access to the Nuncio till the forces
 From Venice land !

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then ?

Dja. [*putting the Turb of Hakeem on his head*] And
 from this moment that I dare ope wide
 Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
 My true dominion ! for I I now myself
 And what I am to personate. No word ?

[*ANALL. goes.*]

'Tis come on me at last ! His blood on her—
 What memories will follow that ! Her eye,
 Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow—
 Ah, fool ! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
 The Syrian blood from out thee ? Thou, presume
 To work in this foul earth by means not foul ?
 Scheme, as for Heaven,—but, on the earth, be glad
 If a least ray like Heaven's be left thee !

Thus

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I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. [A noise without.]

This should be Khali and my Druses !
Venice is come then ! Thus I grasp thee, sword !
Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you ! In ! Behold
Your Prefect !

Enter LOYS. DJABAL *hides the khandjar in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal !—but no time for words.
You know who waits there ? [Pointing to the alcove.]

Well '—and that 'tis there
He meets the Nuncio ? Well ! Now, a surprise—
He there—

Dja. I know—

Loys. —is now no mortal's lord.
Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead —
He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect !
Oh, shrink not ! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe !
I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes ; I felt
What you were loath to speak—your need of help ;
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me ; have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule ; he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied ;
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you've urged
So oft to me—I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
In charge, am nominally Prefect,—but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect ! Ay, such faith had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man ?)

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 43

That we assume the Prefecture this hour !
 You gaze at me ! Hear greater wonders yet—
 I throw down all this fabric I have built !
 These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . but
 Of that, another time ; what's now to say,
 Is—I shall never be a Knight ! Oh, Djabal,
 Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
 And call you brother ! I am Druse like you !
 My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
 Your people's, which is now my people—for
 There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
 She loves me—Khalil's sister—

Dja.

Anael ?

Loys.

Start you ?

Seems what I say, unknighly ? Thus it chanced :
 When first I came, a novice, to the Isle . . .

Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards from the alcove.

Guard. Oh, horrible ! Sir Loys ! Here is Loys !
 And here— [*Others enter from the alcove.*
 [*Pointing to DJABAL.*] Secure him, bind him—this is he !
 [*They surround DJABAL.*

Loys. Madmen—what is't you do ? Stand from my
 friend,

And tell me !

Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
 Surely no part—but slay him not ! The Nuncio
 Commanded, Slay him not !

Loys.

Speak, or . . .

Guard. The Prefect,
 Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

Loys. By Djabal ? miserable fools ! How Djabal ?

[*A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe, DJABAL flings
 down the khandjar.*

Loys. [*after a pause.*] Thou hast received some insult
 worse than all —

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Some outrage not to be endured—

[*To the Guards*] Stand back !

He is my friend—more than my friend ! Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation !

Guard. No !

No provocation ! 'Tis a long devised
Conspiracy : the whole tribe is involved :
He is then Khalif—'tis on that pretence—
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now is come to life and light again—
All is just now revealed, I know not how,
By one of his confederates—who, struck
With horror at this murder, first apprized
The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this Djabal
Here where we take him.

Dja. [*Aside.*] Who broke faith with me ?

Loys. [*to DJABAL.*] Hea'st thou ? Speak ! Till thou
speak, I keep off these,

Or die with thee. Deny this story ! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor ? Thou, my friend,
Whose tale was of an inoffensive race,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged
My faith before the Chapter : what art thou ?

Dja. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true !
No more concealment ! As these tell thee, all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
To crush this handful · the Venetians' land
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part here !
Thou, serving much, would'st fain have served me more ;
It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
We are a separated tribe : farewell !

Loys. Oh, where will truth be found now ? Canst
thou so

Belie the Druses ? Do they share thy crime ?
Those thou professedst of our Breton stock,
Are partners with thee ? Why, I saw but now

Khalil, my friend--he spoke with me--no word
Of this! and Anael--whom I love, and who
Loves me--she spoke no word of this!

Dja. Poor Boy!

Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?
We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dieux?
No--older than the oldest--princelier
Than Europe's princeliest tribe are we.--Enough
For thee, that on our simple faith we found
A monarchy to shame your monarchies
At their own trick and secret of success.
The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
The palace-step of him whose life ere night
Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth
The kind interposition of a boy?
--Can only save ourselves when thou concedest?
--Khalil admire thee? He is my right hand,
My delegate!--Anael accept thy love?
She is my Bride!

Loys. Thy Bride? She one of them?

Dja. My Bride!

Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!

She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
Ah--who but she directed me to find
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil
Bade me seek Djabal there, too! All is true!
What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpenty
As these? Have I desired to shift my part,
Evade my share in her design? 'Tis well!

Dja. Loys, I have wronged thee--but unwittingly:
I never thought there was in thee a virtue
That could attach itself to what thou deemest
A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,

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But that is over : all is over now,
 Save the protection I ensure against
 My people's anger—by their Khalif's side,
 Thou art secure and may'st depart : so, come !
Loys. Thy side?—I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him ! fly, Sir Loys ! 'tis too true !
 And only by his side thou may'st escape !
 The whole tribe is in full revolt—they flock
 About the palace—will be here—on thee—
 And there are twenty of us, we, the Guards
 Of the Nuncio, to withstand them ! Even we
 Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
 But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
 Made known the horror to the Nuncio ! Fly !
 The Nuncio stands aghost. At least let us
 Escape their wrath, O Hakeem ! We are nought
 In thy tribe's persecution ! [*to LOYS.*] Keep by him !
 They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince, returned—
 He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
 Are life and death !

Loys. [*springing at the khandjar DJABAL had thrown
 down, seizes him by the throat*]

Thus by his side am I !

Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare !
 Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place :
 Thus art thou caught ! Without, thy dupes may cluster
 Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
 How say they?—God art thou ! but also here
 Is the least, meanest, youngest the Church calls
 Her servant, and his single arm avails
 To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
 Art crushed ! Hordes of thy Druses flock without ;
 Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
 Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahqund, and thee !

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Die! [DJABAL *remains calm.*] Implore my mercy,
 Hakeem, that my scorn
 May help me! Nay—I cannot ply thy trade—
 I am no Druse—no stabber—and thine eye,
 Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
 Had such! Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot!

[DJABAL *still silent.*

Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,
 So much! I cannot kill him so!

Thou art
 Strong in thy cause, then! Dost outbrave us, then!
 Heard'st thou that one of thine accomplices,
 Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet
 His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
 As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse—
 Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried
 By him, nor seek appeal—promise me this—
 Or I will do God's office! What, shalt thou
 Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet Truth
 Want even an executioner? Consent,
 Or I will strike—look in my face—I will!

Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest!

[LOYS *gives it.*

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
 This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!

[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me?

[*Shouts without.*

Hearst thou? I hear

No plainer now than years ago I heard
 That shout—but in no dream now! They Return!
 Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well!

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ACT V.

*The Uninitiated Druses, covering the stage tumultuously,
and speaking together*

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there—Come, old Nasif—hark thine aim in mine—we fight, if needs be—Come, what is a great fight-word? "Lebanon?" (My daughter—my daughter!)—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves—Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth—a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent—Is this he? Bismillah! Biamreh! HAKHEM!

Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.

Nuncio. [to his Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer
and this accomplice

Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!
Lo, this black disemboгуing of the Isle!
[To the Druses.] Ah, children, what a sight for these old
eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through
To smile their very last on you! I came
To gather one and all you wandering sheep
Into my fold, as tho' a father came . . .
As tho', in coming, a father should . . .

[To his Guards.] (Ten, twelve

—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?
 The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!
 [*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's house, I say,
 So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .
 Alas—alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout!
 Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slun!
 Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio. Even so!
 I find, (ye prompt aright) your Father slun;
 While most he plotted for your good, that father
 (Alas! how kind, ye never knew)—hes slun!
 [*Aside.*] (And Hell's worm gnaw the glosing knave— with
 me,

For being duped by his cajoleries!
 Are these the Christians? These the docile crew
 My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)
 [*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What say ye does this
 wizard style himself?

Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?
 What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif,
 Dead near three hundred yeas ago, come back
 In flesh and blood again?

Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?
 He is blaspheming Hakeem! The old man
 Is our dead Prefect's friend! Tear him!

Nuncio. Ye dare not!
 I stand here with my five-and-seventy yeas,
 The Patriarch's power behind, and God's above me!
 Those yeas have witnessed sin enough; ere now
 Misguided men arose against their lords,
 And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved
 By sorceries—cheats;—alas! the same tricks, tried
 On my poor children in this nook of the earth,

Could triumph,—that have been successively
 Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations thro'—
 “*Romans, Ioulians te kai proslutis,*
 “Cretes and Arabians”— you are duped the last !
 Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
 To ur me ! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
 That so much love was wasted—every gift
 Rejected, from his benson I brought,
 Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
 An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .
 That . . . never will I speak his hated name !
 [*To his Servants.*] What was the name his fellow slip-
 fetter
 Called their arch-wizard by? [*they whisper.*] Oh, Djabal
 was't ?

Druses. But how a scoundrel? false wherein?

Nunio (Ay, Djabal !)

How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .

Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .

What I sailed hither solely to divulge—

How by his spells the demons were allured

To seize you— not that these be aught save lies

And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,

By measures such as these, he would have bid you

Into a monstrous ruin : follow ye ?

Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

Druses, Hark ye !

Nunio. —Be of one privilege amerced?

No ! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies be !

No ! With the Patriarch's license, still I bid ye

Tear him to pieces who misled you ! Haste !

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are
 white fire ! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond
 what Karshook says ; he knows but what Khalil says ;
 who knows just what Djabal says himself—Now, the
 little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began

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by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHAIL and the Invited Druses.

Kha Venice and her deliv'rance are at hand !
Their fleet stands thro' the harbour ! Hath he slain
The Prefect yet ? Is Djabal's change come yet ?

Nuncio [to Attendants] What's this of Venice ?
Who's this boy ?

[Attendants *whisper*] One Khalil ?
Djabal's accomplice, Toys called, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear ?
[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears :
Is it so ? Ye would have my troops assist ?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries ?

Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid !

[*They spring at KHAIL as he beats them back.*
Stay—no more bloodshed—spare deluded youth !
Whom seek'st thou ? (I will teach him)—Whom, my
child ?

Thou knowest not what these know, have just told me.
I am an old man, as thou seest—have done
With earth, and what should move me but the truth ?
Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe ?
'Tis I interpret for thy tribe !—

K'ha. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio ! Druses, hear—
Endure ye this ? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you ! While I speak,
The ships touch land : who makes for Lebanon ?
They'll plant the winged lion in these halls !

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] If it be true ! Venice ?—Oh, never
true !

Yet, Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
And fain get footing here, so close by Rhodes !
Oh, to be duped this way !

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K'ha. Eie he appears

To lead you gloriously, repent, I say !

Nuncio. [*Aside*] Oh, any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark

Eie the Venetians come ! Were he cut off,
The rest were easily tamed. [*to the Druses*] He? Bring him forth !

Since so you needs will have it, I assent !
You'd judge him, say you, on the spot ? Confound
The sorcerer in his very circle ? Where's
Our short black-bearded fallow friend who said
He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab ?
Bring Djabal forth at once !

Drusev. Ay, bring him forth !

The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk—
And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we !
Where is the glory ? Show us all the glory !

K'ha. You dare not so insult him ! What, not see . . .

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are untrusted,
Untrusted—they know nothing of our Khalif !)
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise

'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return !

That all may say they would have trusted him

Without the all-convincing glory— ay,

And did ! Embrace the occasion, friends ! For, think—

What merit when his change takes place ? But now,

For your sakes, he should not reveal himself !

No—could I ask and have, I would not ask

The change yet !

Enter DJABAL and LOVS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself !

I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—

For our sakes pardon these besotted men—

Ay—for thine own—they hurt not thee ! Yet now

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One thought swells in me and keeps down all else !
 This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
 imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
 Has said—he is but an old fretful man !
 I Iakeem—nay, I must call thee I Iakeem now—
 Reveal thyself ! See ! Where is Anael ?—See !

Loys. [to DJA.] Here are thy people ! Keep thy word
 to me !

Dja. Who of my people hath accused me ?

Nuncio.

So

So, this is Djabal, I Iakeem, and what not ?
 A fit deed, *Loys*, for thy first Knight's day !
 May it be augury of thy after life !
 Ever be truncheon of the Church as now
 That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge
 Of the Isle here, I claim thee [turning to DJA.] as these
 bid me,

Forfeit for murder on thy lawful prince,
 Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest !
 Why should I hold thee from their hands ? (Spells,
 children ?

But hear how I dispose of all his spells !)
 Thou art a Prophet ?—would'st entice thy tribe
 Away ?—thou workest miracles ? (Attend !
 Let him but move me with his spells !) I, Nuncio . . .

Dja. . . . Which how thou cam'st to be, I say not
 now,

Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke !
 —Ply thee with spells, forsooth ! What need of spells ?
 If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
 To ratify thy compact with her foes,
 The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw
 Her warrant of the deed which reinstates
 My people in their freedom, tricked away
 By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us
 To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—

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--Then will be time to try what spells can do !
Dost thou dispute the Republic's power ?

Nuncio. Lo ye !

He tempts me, too the wily exorcist !
No ! The renowned Republic was and is
The Patriarch's friend : 'tis not for courting Venice
That I--that these implore thy blood of me !
Lo ye, the subtle miscreant ! Ha, so subtle ?
Ye, Druses, hear him ! Will ye be deceived ?
How he evades me ! Where's the miracle
He works ? I bid him to the proof--fish up
Your galley-full of bezants that he sunk !
That were a miracle ! One miracle !
Enough of trilling, for it chafes my age--
I am the Nuncio, Druses ! I stand forth
To save you from the good Republic's rage
When she shall find her fleet war, summoned here
To aid the mummeries of this crafty knave !

[As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper.

Ah, well suggested ! Why, we hold this while
One, who, his close confederate till now,
Confesses Djahel at the last a cheat,
And every miracle a cheat ! Who throws a c
His head ? I make three offers, once I offer,--
And twice . . .

Dja. Let who moves, crush at my foot !

Aha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks ! Oh, Anael, Maant,
Why tarry they ?

Druses [to each other.] He can ! He can ! Live fire--
[*To the NUNCIO.*] (I say he can, old man ! Thou know'st
him not--)

Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
Plays fawning round him--See ! The change begins !
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm !
Look not at me ! It was not I !

Dja.

What Druse

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Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
 (rumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
 Of my own people, as thou saidst, have raised
 A voice against me

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Venice to come! Death!

Dja. [*continuing.*] Confess and go unscathed, however
 false!

Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit
 To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!

How said I, Loys?

Nuncio [*to his Attendants, who whisper.*] Ah, ye
 counsel so?

[*Abul.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,

Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!

Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
 joint after joint—well then, one does speak! One,
 Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,

But who hath voluntarily proposed
 To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
 Of having trusted him.

[*They bring in a veiled Druse*

Loys. Now Djabal, now!

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts you! (Make a ring,
 sons!)—Speak!

Expose this Djabal; what he was, and how;
 The wiles he used, the aims he cherished; all,

Explicitly as late you spoke to these

My servants--I absolve and pardon you

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?

Dja. Speak,

Reccrant!

Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly

You shall see some huge serpent glide from under

The empty vest—or down will thunder crash!

Back, Khalil!

Kha. I go back? Thus go I back!

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[*To AN.*] Unveil ! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif ! Thus !
 [*He tears away ANAEL's veil : DJABAL folds his arms
 and bows 'is head · the Druses fall back · LOYS
 springs from the side of DJABAL and the NUNCIO.*

Loys. Then she was true—she only of them all !
 True to her eyes— may keep those glorious eyes,
 And now be mine, once again mine ! Oh, Anael !
 Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
 That blood could soil that hand ? nay, 'tis mine—Anael,
 —Not mine ?—Who offer thee before all these
 My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say
 That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
 Lies—say but that he lies !

Dja. Thou, Anael ?

Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for me—the last !
 Thou hast had every other—thou has spoken
 Days, nights, what falsehood lusted thee—let me
 Speak first, now ; I will speak, now !

Nuncio. *Loys, pause !*
 Thou art the Duke's son, Breton's choicest stock—
 Loys of Dreux—God's sepulchre's first sword—
 This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample
 To earth ?

Loys [to AN.] Ah, who had foreseen, 'one day, *Loys*
 "Will stake these gifts against some other good
 "In the whole world ?"—I give them thee ! I would
 My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
 That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
 Tread on their very neck ! 'Tis not by gifts
 I put aside this Djabal—we will stand—
 We do stand—see—two men ! Djabal, stand forth
 Who's worth her—I or thou ? I—who for Anael
 Kept, purely, uprightly my way, the long
 True way—left thee each by-path—boldly lived
 Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou ?
 I ! Love me, Anael ! Leave the blood and him !

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[To DJA.] Now speak—now, quick on this that I have
said,—

Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man !

Dja. [to AN.] And was it thou betrayedst me ? 'Tis
well !

I have deserved thus of thee, and submit :
Nor 'tis much evil thou inflictest : life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us—
For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate ! By thee I was seduced—by thee
I perish—yet do I, can I repent ?
I, with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and, within turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I lived
—Nothing ; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something ;—now, each has destroyed
The other—and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere Man's-nature ! And I yield to it—
I love thee—I—who did not love before !

An. Djabal—

Dja. It seemed love, but true love it was not—
How could I love while thou adoredst me ?
Now thou despisest, art above me so
Inmeasurably—thou, no other, doonest
My death now—this my steel shall execute
Thy judgment—I shall feel thy hand in it !
Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee !

An.

My Djabal !

Dja. Dost hesitate ? I force thee then ! Approach,
Druses ! for I am out of reach of fate ;
No further evil waits me—Speak the truth !
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys !

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* *An. HAKEEM!* *[She falls dead.*
[The Druses scream, grovelling before him.
 Ah, Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!

Biamallah, pardon—never doubted I!

Ah, dog, how sayest thou?

[They surround and seize the NUNCIO and his Guards.

LOV'S flings himself upon the body of ANAEL, on which DJABAL continues to gaze as stupefied.

Nuncio.

Captives! Have ye eyes?

Whips, racks, should teach you! What, his fools? his dupes?

Leave me! unhand me!

Kha. [approaching DJABAL timidly.] Save her for my sake!

She was already thine—she would have shared

To-day thine exaltation—think! this day

Her hair was plaited thus because of thee—

Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!

Nuncio [struggling with those who have seized him].

What, because

His leman dies for him? You think it hard

To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice

Of deaths should suit you!

Kha. [bending over ANAEL'S body.] Just restore her life!

So little does it—there—the eyelids tremble!

'Twas not my breath that made them.—and the lips

Move of themselves—I could restore her life!

Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed

On our free converse—we are better taught.

See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem

For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed

In mine—Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See

She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth

So, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!

Go not without her to the Cedars, Lord!

Or leave us both—I cannot go alone !
 I have obeyed thee, if I dare say so—
 Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew ?
 Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
 Upon thy hand—and yet thou speakest not !
 Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
 Exalt thyself, O Hakeem ! save her—save her !
Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
 And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
 Under their feet !

What way—not one way yet
 To foil them? None ? [*Observing DJABAL's face.*]

What ails the Khalif? Ah,
 That ghastly face—a way to foil them yet !
 [*To the Druses.*] Look to your Khalif, Druses ! Is that
 face

God Hakeem's? Where is triumph—where is . . . what
 Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
 So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself !
 Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
 In splendour ! Now, bear witness—here I stand—
 I challenge him exalt himself, and I
 become, for that, a Druse like all of you !

The Druses. Exalt thyself—exalt thyself—O Hakeem !

Dja. [*advances.*] I can confess now all from first to
 last.

There is no longer shame for me ! I am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds—the Druses shout—
 his eye catches the expression of those about him,
 and, as the old dream comes back, he is again con-
 fident and inspired.*]

. . . Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have crawled
 But yesterday within these impure courts
 Where now ye stand erect !—Not grand enough?
 —What more could be conceded to such beasts

60 THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
 But a mere man?—A man among such beasts
 Was miracle enough—yet him you doubt,
 Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—
 With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
 Thus—(see the *bad* lied hypocrite!) and best
 The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!
 Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away!
 Out of mere mortal ken—above the Cedars—
 But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
 Repeopling the old solitudes,—thro' thee,
 My Khalil! Thou art full of me—I fill,
 Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yester eve,
 —Nay, but this morn—I deemed thee ignorant
 Of all to do, requiring words of mine
 To teach it—now, thou hast all gifts in one,
 With truth and purity go other gifts!
 All gifts come clustering to that—go, lead
 My People home whate'er betide!

[*Turning to the Druses*] Ye talc
 This Khalil for my delegate? To him
 Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
 Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Dja. [*raises Loys.*] Then to thee, Loys! How I
 wronged thee, Loys!
 —Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
 Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus:
 Thou, loaded with these wrongs, the princely soul,
 The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
 Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
 Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,
 For those I leave!—to seeking this, devote

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. 61

Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life,
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
—One cedar-blossom in thy Ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart—perchance,
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
His last word to the living speaks! This done,
Resume thy course, and, first amid the first
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What can withstand thee then?

[*He bends over ANAEL.*] And last to thee!
Ah, did I dream I was to have this day
Exalted thee? A vain dream—hast thou not
Won greater exaltation? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself—as he falls, supported by KHALIL
and LOYS, the VENETIANS enter: the ADMIRAL
advances.*

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the
Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard the Druses shout,
and move tumultuously forward, LOYS drawing
his sword.*

Dja. [*leading them a few steps between KHALIL and
LOYS.*]

On to the Mountain. At the Mountain, Druses!

[*Dies.*

A List in the 'Scutcheon.

A TRAGEDY

PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM,
GULFDOLIN TRESHAM
THOROLD, Lord Tresham
AUSTIN TRESHAM
HENRY, Earl Melton
GERARD
Other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17

ACT I.

SCENE I — *The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flaggons, &c.*

1st Ret. Ay—do--push, friends and then you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot,
Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least pousuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2nd Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it !
 What makes you sullen, this of all the days
 I' the year ? To-day that, young, rich, bountiful,
 Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
 With our Lord Tresham thro' the country-side,
 Is coming here in utmost bravery
 To ask our Master's Sister's hand ?

Ger. What then ?

2nd Ret. What then ? Why, you she speaks to, if she
 meets,

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
 The boughs to let her thro' her forest walks,
 You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
 You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sics
 To lay his heart, and house, and broad lands too,
 At Lady Mildred's feet— and while we squeeze
 Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
 One congee of the least page in his train,
 You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl," say I—
 "What then," say you !

3rd Ret. I'll wager he has let
 Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swim
 Over the falls and gain the river '

Ger. Ralph,
 Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
 For you and for your hawks ?

4th Ret. Let Gerard be !
 He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow
 stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look !
 Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
 To purpose ?

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine—
 That's comfort ! Lord, how Richard holds himself
 With his white staff ! Will not a knave behind
 Prick him upright ?

64 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

4th Ret. He's only bowing, fool !
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Ret. That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade !

3rd Ret. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver v'rilets there, should find
Their perfumed scives so indispensable
On high days, holy-days ! Would it so disgrace
Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left ?—

Ger. —With Hugh

The logman for supporter—in his right
The bill-hook—in his left the brushwood-shears !

3rd Ret. Out on you, crab ! What next, what next ?

The Earl !

1st Ret. Oh, Walter, groom, our horses, do they
match

The Earl's ? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—Ah, Walter ! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel !

6th Ret. Ay—Ay !

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces—what's a horse to you ?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
So cunningly ?—then, Philip, mark this further ;
No leg has he to stand on !

1st Ret. No ! That's comfort.

2nd Ret. Peace, Cook ! The Earl descends.—Well,
Gerard, see

The Earl at least ! Come, there's a proper man,
I hope ! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye—

3rd Ret. His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone !

4th Ret. So young, and yet

So tall and shapely !

5th Ret. Here's Lord Tresham's self !
 There now—there's what a nobleman should be !
 He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
 A House's Head !

2nd Ret. But you'd not have a boy
 --And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
 That stateliness ?

1st Ret. Our Master takes his hand—
 Richard and his white staff are on the move—
 Back fall our people—(tsh !—there's Timothy
 Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—
 And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off !)
 —At last I see our Lord's back and his friend's—
 And the whole beautiful bright company
 Close round them—in they go ! [*Jumping down from the
 window-bench, and making for the table and its
 jugs, &c.*] Good health, long life,
 Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House !

6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,
 After his marriage-day —ay, did he !

2nd Ret. God bless
 Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl !
 Here, Gerard, reach your beaker !

Ger. Drink, my boys :
 Don't mind me—all's not right about me— drink !

2nd Ret. [*Aside.*] He's vexed, now, that he let the
 show escape !

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way

Ger. That way ?

2nd Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way's here. [*Goes.*

2nd Ret. Old Gerard

Will die soon—mind, I said it ! He was used
 To care about the pitifullest thing
 That touched the House's honour, not an eye
 But his could see wherein—and on a cause

Of scarce a quarter this impotence, Gerard
 Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
 In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
 Such a point decorous, and such by rule—
 (He knew such niceties, no herald more)
 And now—you see his humour . die he will !

2nd Ret. God help him ! Who's for the great servants'-
 hall

To hear what's going on inside ? They'd follow
 Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Ret. I !—

4th Ret. I !—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
 Some hint of how the parley goes inside !
 Prosperity to the great House once more—
 Here's the last drop !

1st Ret. Have at you ! Boys, hurrah !

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN ; AUSTIN, and
 GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
 To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
 —Noble among the noblest in itself,
 Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
 New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
 Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
 Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
 Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
 Would win you welcome !—

Mer. Thanks !

Tresh. —But add to that,
 The worthiness and grace and dignity

Of your proposal for uniting both
 Our Houses even closer than respect
 Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
 One favor more, nor that the least,—to think
 The welcome I should give ;—'tis given ! My lord,
 My only brother, Austin— he's the King's.
 Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
 To Austin : all are yours.

Mer. I thank you—less
 For the expressed commendings which your seal,
 And only that, authenticates—forbids
 My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
 Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
 Than the indulgent insight it implies
 Of what must needs be uppermost with one
 Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
 In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
 A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
 He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
 Despair within his soul :—that I dare ask
 Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
 That gift, I have to thank you.—Yes, Lord Tresham,
 I love your sister—as you'd have one love
 That lady . . . oh more, more I love her ! Wealth,
 Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours, you know
 To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
 My true self, *me* without a rood of land,
 A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
 Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life ?

Guen. [*apart to AUS.*] Why, this *is* loving, Austin !

Aus. He's so young !

Guen. Young ? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
 He never had obtained an entrance here,
 Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus.
 He reddens.

Hush !

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Guen. Mark him, Austin; that's true love!
Ours must begin again.

Tresh We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence,
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

Mer. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?

Tresh. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember,
touch—

I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game—the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours,—or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither . . . I have come upon
The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guen. [*aside to Aus.*] Note that mode
Of faulting out that when a lady passed
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—
“On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
“Observed a red, where red should not have been,
“Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
“Upon the whole.” Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!

Tresh. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known

A mother's care ; I stand for father too.
 Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
 You cannot know the good and tender heart,
 Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
 How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
 How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
 As light where friends are—how imbued with love
 The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
 The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
 We brothers talk !

Mer. I thank you.

Tresh. In a word,
 Control's not for this lady ; but her wish
 To please me outstrips in its subtlety
 My power of being pleased—herself creates
 The want she means to satisfy. My heart
 Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
 Can I say more ?

Mer. No more—thanks, thanks—no more !

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer. . . . We'll waste no breath

On aught less precious—I'm beneath the roof
 That holds her : while I thought of that, my speech
 To you would wander—as it must not do,
 Since, as you favor me I stand or fall.
 I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

Tresh. With less regret 'tis suffered, that again
 We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer. We ? again ?—

Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown
 Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
 When . . . if . . . the Lady will appoint a day
 For me to wait on you—and her.

Tresh. So soon
 As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
 On your proposal—howsoever they lean—

70 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON!

A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove!

Mer. You, Lady, you, Sir, take
My humble salutation!

Guen. & Aus. Thanks!

Tresh. Within there!

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts MERIOUN to the
door. *Meantime AUSTIN remarks,*

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—
"She'll not say, no"—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing,—
"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
"And if she smiles," and (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a
shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold—Tell him so!

Tresh. [*returning*]. Now, voices, voices! 'St! the
lady's first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud—up with faith! How seems the Earl?

A name ! a blazon ! if you knew their worth,
As you will never ! come—the Earl ?

Guen. He's young.

Fresh. What's she ? an infant save in heart and brawn
Young ! Mildred is fourteen, remark ! And you . . .
Austin, how old is she ?

Guen. There's tact for you !
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Fresh. Well ?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

Fresh. He lacked wit ? Where might he lack wit, so
please you ?

Guen. In standing stouter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangues,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, " Sweet lady,
" Your cousin there will do me detriment
" He little dreams of—he's absorbed, I see,
" In my old name and fame—he sure he'll leave
" My Mildred, when his best account of me
" Is ended, in full confidence I wear
" My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
" I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

Fresh. . . . " To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
" Of me and my demerits." You are right !
He should have said what now I say for him.
You golden creature, will you help us all ?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
—You are . . . what Austin only knows ! Come up,
All three of us—she's in the Library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede !

Guen. Austin, how we must— !

Fresh. Must what ? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue ! Detect one fault in him !
I challenge you !

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Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Fresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—
Next day at farthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me !

Fresh. Come !
—He's out of your good graces since, forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections ! You're for the composed,
Manly, assured, becoming confidence !
—Get her to say, " to-morrow," and I'll give you .
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you ? Come !

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S *Chamber.* *A painted window
overlooks the park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not
left

Our talkers in the Library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell—
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were gray instead of blue—
I think I brought him to contrition !—Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's-talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly !

Mil. Guendolen,
What have I done . . . what could suggest . . .

Guen.

There, there !

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
 To throw those testimonies in a heap,
 Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
 With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's
 Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—
 And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
 Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have !
 Demand, be answered ! Lack I ears and eyes ?
 Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
 The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
 Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
 The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great need ?
 Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes !

Mil.

My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him well ?

Guen. If I said only " well " I said not much—
 Oh, stay—which brother ?

Mil.

Thorold ! who—who else ?

Guen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—
 Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler
 Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
 The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
 Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk :
 And in the world, the court, if men would cite
 The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
 Rises of its clear nature to their lips .
 But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
 And care no more about what drew it down.
 He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;
 Is he content ?

Mil.

You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess ; so proud with brooding
 o'er
 The light of his interminable line,
 An ancestry with men all paladins,

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And women all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 'tis late !
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive . . .
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one. . . .

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun ?

Guen. Not your brother ; therefore,
Not the whole world.

Mil. I'm weary, Guendolen.—
Bear with me !

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh, no, kind—
But I would rest.

Guen. Good night and rest to you.
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair ?

Mil. Brown hair !

Guen. Brown ? why it is brown—how could you know
that ?

Mil. How ? did not you—Oh, Austin 'twas, declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head !—and, look,
The moon-beam purpling the dau'. chamber ! Sweet,
Good night !

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me !
[*Goes, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred !

Perdition ! all's discovered.—Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance ! [*Goes.*
* *Mil.* Is she—can she be really gone at last ?

My heart—I shall not reach the window! Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer!

*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before
the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by
the purple pane.* There!

[She returns to the seat in front.

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold,—Mertoun's bride!
Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon! | *A noise without.*
The voice! Oh! why, why glided sin the snake
Into the Paradise He even meant us both?

[The window opens softly - A low voice sings.

There's a woman like a dew drop, she's so pure th in the purest,
And her noble heart's the noblest yes, and her sure truth's the
suest
And her eyes are duk and humd, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-gaape
cluster
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bud's
wable!

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights
were moonless,
"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's out-
break tuneless,
"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of ill me!)
adore her!

Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—

[He enters—approaches her seat, and bends over her.

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes
me!

[The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved !

Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.

Mer.

'Tis mine .

The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.

Mil. What begins now ?

Mer.

Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mil.

That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses : we—do we
Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now ; this will not be !

Mer. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face,
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture ? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too ?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the east ?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be ?"

Mil. Sin has surprised us ; so will punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone !

Mil.

The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry ?

Mer. Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day with me—
Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil. Come what, come will,
You have been happy—take my hand!

Mer. [*after a pause.*] How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil. They told me all.
I know all.

Mer. It will soon be over.

Mil. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live thro'
And say, "'tis over?" Is out meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
Ah, God! some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating—
I shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace

That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever !

Mer. Mildred, my honor is your own. I'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word in favor of your brother I retract
This morning's offer ; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Merroun !

Mer. When ? to-morrow ?
Get done with it !

Mil. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow !
Next day ! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner !—How you must
Despise me !

Mer. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To Heaven ! but, Mildred, answer me,—first part
The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in ! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me !—but no—no, you'll not
Repeat that ?—will you, Mildred, repeat that ?

Mil. Dear Henry—

Mer. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more ? And you were infantine
When first I met you—why, your hair fell loose
On either side !—my fool's cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it bunned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew ?—I spoke—Oh, Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance

Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
 And weigh them in the diamond scales of Pride,
 Resolved the treasure of a first and last
 Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
 —That now I think upon your purity
 And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
 Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
 Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
 A silly language, but interpret, you !)
 If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
 Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
 If you had pity on my passion, pity
 On my protested sickness of the soul
 To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
 Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
 Accorded gifts and knew not they were gift,—
 If I grew mad at last with enterprise
 And must behold my beauty in her bower
 Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
 My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—
 Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
 My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
 Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
 Contempt were all of this!

Mil. Do you believe . . .

Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe
 That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
 The past! We'll love on—you will love me still!

Mer. Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,
 Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
 Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
 Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
 Bloom o'er my crest my fight-mark and device!
 Mildred, I love you and you love me!

Mil.

Go!

Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

Mer. This is not our last meeting?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then!

Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

Mer. How else should love's perfected noontide
follow?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be! but—

You are cautious, love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

Mer. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed?
To-morrow night?

Mil. Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough—the turf
Receives him—now the moonlight as he runs
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone—
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my love!
He's gone—Oh, I'll believe him every word!
I was so young—I loved him so—I had
No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.
There may be pardon yet—all's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is past!

ACT II.

SCENE — *The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.

This way—In, Gerard, quick!

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures the door.*
Now speak! or, wait—

I'll bid you speak directly. [Seats himself.]

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale
 You've just now told me ; it eludes me ; either
 I did not listen, or the half is gone
 Away from me—How long have you lived here ?
 Here in my house, your father kept our woods
 Before you ?

Ger. —As his father did, my lord.
 I have been eating sixty years, almost,
 Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes—You ever were of all
 The servants in my father's house, I know,
 The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Ger. I'll speak
 God's truth : night after night . . .

Tresh. Since when ?

Ger. At least
 A month—each midnight has some man access
 To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. Tush, "access"—
 No wide words like "access" to me !

Ger. He runs
 Along the woodside, crosses to the south,
 Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree ?

Ger. You might stand upon
 The main boughs like a platform . . . Then he . . .

Tresh. Quick !

Ger. . . . Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
 —I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
 I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
 That reaches to the Lady's casement—

Tresh. —Which
 He enters not ! Gerard—some wretched fool
 Dares pry into my sister's privacy !

82 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.'

When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not enter?
Gerard?

Ger. There is a lamp that's full in the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresh. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Ger. —Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane—he waits
For that among the boughs; at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresh. —And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet see t
No cross-bow shaft thro' the marauder?

Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no cause—
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?

Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net

Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I turned
 To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,
 If down I flung myself and strove to die.
 The lady could not have been seven years old
 When I was trusted to conduct her safe
 Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
 I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
 Within a month. She ever had a smile
 To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo
 What's done to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .
 All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
 I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
 For Heaven's compelling : but when I was fixed
 To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
 Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
 Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubt,
 What it behoved me do. Thus morn it seemed
 Either I must confess to you, or die :
 Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
 That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady !

Tresh. No—

No—Gerard !

Ger. Let me go !

*Tresh.** A man, you say—
 What man ? Young ? Not a vulgar hind ? What
 dress ?

Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
 Wraps his whole form : even his face is hid ;
 But I should judge him young ; no hind, be sure !

Tresh. Why ?

Ger. He is ever armed : his sword projects
 Beneath the cloak.

Tresh. Gerard,—I will not say
 No word, no breath of this !

Ger. Thanks, thanks, my lord !
 [*Goes.*]

84 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

[TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,
 Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
 That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
 Merciful God that made the sun and stars
 The waters and the green delights of earth,
 The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
 Yet know the Maker of all worlds is good,
 And yield my reason up, inadequate
 To reconcile what yet I do behold—
 Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside—
 This is my library—and this the chair
 My father used to sit in carelessly,
 After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
 Between his knees to question him—and here,
 Gerard, our gray retainer,—as he says,
 Fed with our food from sire to son an age,—
 Has told a story—I am to believe!
 That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
 Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound
 All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
 Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here
 Until thought settles and I see my course.
 Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

[As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,

GUENDOLEN'S voice is heard at the door.

Lord Tresham! [She knocks.] Is Lord Tresham there?

[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the first book
 above him and opens it.

Tresh.

Come in! [She enters.

Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

Guen.

Nothing more?

Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen.

Pleasant question! more?

This more! Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
 Last night till close on morning with "the Earl"—

"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!

Tresh. Who, I?
You laugh at me.

Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope
Arrived, then? Does that huge tome show some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's chamber?

Guen. Oh late enough, I told you! The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here!

Guen. Thorold?

Tresh. I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen, --
—But mildly!

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. Ah, you guess'd aright!

I am not well—there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the Library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say,—found—
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!

Guen. I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresh. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
In the adjoining gallery—There, go! [GUENDOLEN goes.
Another lesson to me! you might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point

With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
 The inquisitorial cleverness some praise !
 If you had told me yesterday, " There's one
 " You needs must circumvent and practise with,
 " Entrap by policies, if you would worm
 " The truth out— and that one is—Mildred ! " There—
 There—reasoning is thrown away on it !
 Prove she's unchaste . . . why you may after prove
 That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will !
 Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say,
 Or do, or think ! Force on me but the first
 Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
 And I shall ne'er make count of them !

Enter MILDRED.

Mil. What book
 Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
 Thought you were pale—you are not pale ! That book ?
 That's Latin surely !

Tresh. Mildred—here's a line—
 (Don't lean on me—I'll English it for you)
 " Love conquers all things." What love conquers them ?
 What love should you esteem—best love ?

Mil. True love.
Tresh. I mean, and should have said, who's love is
 best

Of all that love or that profess to love ?
Mil. The list's so long—there's father's, mother's,
 husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
 For a sole sister must exceed them all !
 For see now, only see ! there's no alloy
 Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
 Of other loves—no gratitude to claim ;
 You never gave her life—not even aught
 That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,

A. BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON:

Enriched her—so your love can claim no right
O'er hers save pure love's claim—that's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods,
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem,
—Much head these make against the new comer !
The startling apparition—the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about !) your soul
. . . *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul ! With her
'Twas winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
“ Arise and come away ! ” Come whither ?—far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights ! all which he knows before—
Has calculated on so long ago !
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the back-ground must be place for it,
I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's loves in its unworldliness.

Mel. What is this for ?

Tresh.

This, Mildred, is it for !

Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon !
That's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes

88 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours—
 So close you live and yet so far apart !
 And must I read this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery
 That makes her sacred ? You—for you I mean,
 Shall I speak—still I not speak ?

Mil

Speak !

Fresh.

I will

Is there a story men could—any man
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me ?
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip !
 Say, "There is no such story men could tell,"
 And I'll believe you, tho' I disbelieve
 The world . . . the world of better men than I,
 And women such as I suppose you—Speak !
 [*After a pause.*] Not speak ? Explain then ! clear it up,

then ! Move . . .

Some of the miserable weight away
 That presses lower than the grave ! Not speak ?
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred ! Ah, if I
 Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
 Against you ! Must I, Mildred ? Silent still ?
 [*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by night
 Admittance to your chamber ?

[*After a pause.*]

Then, his name !

Till now, I only had a thought for you—
 But now,—his name !

Mil.

Thorold, do you devise

Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
 There be ! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure
 And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
 Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire—
 But do not plunge me into other guilt !
 Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.

Fresh. Then judge yourself ! How should I act ?
 Pronounce !

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus !
 To die here in this chamber by that sword
 Would seem like punishment—so should I glide,
 Like an arch-cheat, into extreimest bliss !
 'Twere easily arranged for me ! but you—
 What would become of you ?

Tresh. And what will now
 Become of me ? I'll hide your shame and mine
 From every eye ; the dead must heave their hearts
 Under the marble of our chapel-floor ;
 They cannot rise and blast you ! You may wed
 Your paramour above our mother's tomb ;
 Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
 We two will somehow wear this one day out
 But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl !
 The youth without suspicion that faces come
 From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence proceed
 such hearts ?

I have despatched last night at your command
 A missive bidding him present himself
 To-morrow here—thus much is said—the rest
 Is understood as if 'twere written down—
 "His suit finds favour in your eyes,"—now dictate
 This morning's letter that shall countermand
 Last night's—do dictate that !

Mil. But, Thorold—
 I will receive him as I said ?

Tresh. *The Earl !*

Mil. I will receive him !

Tresh. [*Starting up.*] Ho there ! Guendolen !

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome too ! Look there !
 The woman there !

Aus. & Guen. How ? Mildred ?

Tresh. Mildred once !

90 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
 Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
 —I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
 Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which loid,
 You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
 A thousand Treshams-- never one like her !
 No lighter of the signal lamp her quick
 Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
 To mix with breath as foul ! no loosener
 Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
 The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go !
 Not one composer of the Bacchant's mien
 Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word !
 Know her !

Guen. Oh, Mildred look to me, at least !
 Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
 Rigid as stone and whiter !

Tresh. You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much ! you must proceed no further !

Mil. Yes

Proceed—All's truth ! Go from me !

Tresh. All is truth,
 She tells you ! Well, you know, or ought to know,
 All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
 Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
 Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
 I'd bind myself before them to exact
 The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
 The sight of her, the bare least memory
 Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
 Above all prides, my all in all so long,
 Had scattered every trace of my resolve !
 What were it silently to waste away
 And see her waste away from this day forth,
 Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
 And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,

Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
 It were not so impossible to bear!
 But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
 Of love with the successful gallant there,
 She'll calmly bid me help her to entice,
 Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
 Who thinks her all that's chaste, and good, and pure,
 —Invite me to betray him . . . who so fit
 As honor's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
 —That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—
 This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
 Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet have laughed,
 "Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray
 "No comrade I've pledged faith to!"—you have heard
 Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied
 By wild illicit ties to losels vile
 You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
 "Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I have
 "In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
 "Repute, or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
 Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
 As to so many friends; bad as you please,
 You've felt they were God's men and women still,
 So not to be disowned by you! but she,
 That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
 As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
 Their intercourse the surelier! and, for this,
 I curse her to her face before you all!
 Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
 To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

Guen.

We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? why, where's my place
 But by her side, and where's yours but by mine?
 Mildred—one word—only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen ! I echo Thorold's voice !
She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen. Us two ?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I
Approved your speech —if you (to put the thing
At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to make
The King's cause yours, and fight for it, and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong,
—If with a death-white woman you can help,
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who've said, or thought at least a thousand times,
"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round
And say, "Ah, that's to only signify
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself—
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours, to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—
"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
"The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed about
"With lives between you and detraction—lives
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
"Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
We said and so we did,—not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your race
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hootings and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you chose to die in ! *Austin,*

Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's
Your brother says he does not believe half—
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

Aus. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

Mil. I I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother—God forgot me—so I fell!

Guen. Mildred!

Mil. Require no further! Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All's true.
Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand!
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see—
I thought that Thorold told you.

Guen. What is this?
Whete start you to?

Mil. Oh Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were wise,
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!

Mil. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again!

Guen. Let go her hand now, Austin.
 Wait for me.—Pace the gallery and think
 On the world's seemings and realities
 Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.]

Mil. No.—I cannot weep !
 No more tears from t'is brain—no sleep—no tears !
 O Guendolen, I love you !

Guen. Yes : and "love"
 Is a short word that says so very much !
 It says that you confide in me.

Mil. Confide !
Guen. Your lover's name, then ! I've so much to
 learn,
 Ere I can work in your behalf !

Mil. My friend,
 You know I cannot tell his name.

Guen. At least
 He is your lover ? and you love him too ?

Mil. Ah, do you ask me that ?—but I am fallen
 So low !

Guen. You love him still, then ?
Mil. My sole prop
 Against the guilt that crushes me ! I say,
 Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young—
 "I had no mother—and I loved him so !"
 And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
 Trust him my soul in sleep.

Guen. How could you let us
 E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then ?

Mil. There is a cloud around me.

Guen. But you said
 You would receive his suit in spite of this ?

Mil. I say there is a cloud . . .

Guen. No cloud to me !
 Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same !

Mil. What maddest fancy . . .

Guen. [*calling aloud.*] Austin ! (Spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

Mil. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear !
I have I confided in you . . .

Guen. Just for this !
Austin !—Oh, not to guess it at the first !
But I *did* guess it—that is, I divined—
Felt by an instinct how it was—why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heat
Of sins which had been irredeemable ?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours ? The secret's wholly mine !

Mil. If you would see me die before his face . . .

Guen. I'd hold my peace ! And if the Earl returns
To-night ?

Mil. Ah, Heaven, he's lost !

Guen. I thought so ! Austin !

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding ?

Aus. Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone ? All thwarts us !

Mil. Thorold too ?

Guen. I have thought First lead this Mildred to her
room.

Go on the other side : and then we'll seek
Your brother ; and I'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clew to all. Remember, sweet,
He said there was a clew † I hold it. Come !

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.
 The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades
 And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
 Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
 My boy's adventurous step ; and now they tend
 Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade
 Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
 And the dim turret I have fled from fronts
 Again my step ; the very river put
 Its arm about me and conducted me
 To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
 Their will no longer—do your will with me !
 Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering scheme
 Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
 Were nothing : all men hope, and see their hopes
 Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew
 But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
 No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
 Were just as though I hoped that from these old
 Confederates against the sovereign day,
 Children of older and yet older sires
 (Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
 On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
 On many a beauty's wimple) would proceed
 No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its root,
 Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
 Why came I here ? What must I do ?—[*A bell strikes.*]—
 A bell ?

Midnight ! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you ! Hush ! This tree will serve !

*[He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause,
enter MERTOUN cloaked as before.]*

Mer. Not time ! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart ! I thought the clock
In the chapel struck as I was pushing thro'
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star ! Oh, no matter for the past !
So much the more delicious task to see
Mildred revive : to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to ! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed !
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past !

[The light is placed above in the purple pane.]
And see, my signal rises ! Mildred's star !
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time ! If it sets,
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn !

[As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue,

TRESHAM arrests his arm.]

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp ! Here's gold.
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there ! Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me !
—Out of the shadow !

Mer. I am armed, fool !

Tresh. Yes,

Or no ?—You'll come into the light, or no ?
My hand is on your throat—refuse !—

Mer. That voice !
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.

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I'll come with you ! [*They advance.*]

Tresh. You're armed—that's well.
Your name—who are you ?

Mer. (Tresham !—she is lost !)

Tresh. Oh, silent ? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has looked !
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man !
Your name ?

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name ! As Heaven's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !
I read your white inexorable face !
Know me, Lord Tresham ! [*He throws off his disguises.*]

Tresh. Mertoun !

[*After a pause.*]

Draw now !

Mer. Hear me
But speak first !

Tresh. Not one least word on your life !
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt 'twas you
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin !
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie !
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible ! Now draw !

Mer.

Not for my sake,

Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake !

Tresh. I ha, ha, what should I
Know of your ways ? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire ?—A blow ?—that's pride
No doubt, to him ! one spurns him, does one not ?
Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or spits
Into his face ! Come—which, or all of these ?

Mer. 'Twixt him, and me, and Mildred, Heaven be
judge !
Can I avoid this ? Have your will, my Lord !

[He draws, and, after a few passes, falls.]

Tresh. You are not hurt ?

Mer. You'll hear me now !

Tresh. But rise !

Mer. Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now !"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow-man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence ?

Tresh. Not hurt ? It cannot be !
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you ? Why not have returned
My thrusts ? Hurt where ?

Mer. My lord—

Tresh. How young he is !

Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak—and do believe my speech,
That when I die before you presently,—

Tresh. Can you stay here till I return with help ?

Mer. Oh, stay by me ! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong, and knew it not—
Upon my honor, knew it not ! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way

100 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

To right you than I took : my life—you feel
 How less than nothing had been giving you
 The life you've taken ! But I thought my way
 The better—only for your sake and hers.
 And as you have decided otherwise,
 Would I had an infinity of lives
 To offer you !—now say—instruct me—think !
 Can you from out the minutes I have left
 Eke out my reparation ? Oh—think—think !
 For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die ?

Tresh. I do
 Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great word !
 Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
 To speak to you of—Mildred !

Tresh. Mertoun,—haste
 And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
 Should tell me for a novelty you're young—
 Thoughtless—unable to recall the past !
 Be but your pardon ample as my own !

Mer. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
 Of blood or two, should bring all this about !
 Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my love
 Of you—(what passion's like a boy's for one
 Like you ?)—that ruined me ! I dreamed of you—
 You, all accomplished, courted every where,
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
 To knit myself to you—but I was young,
 And your surpassing reputation kept me
 So far aloof—oh, wherefore all that love ?
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday
 Of praise and gentle words and kindest looks,
 Had taken place perchance six months ago !
 Even now—how happy we had been ! And yet
 I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham !

Let me look up into your face—I feel
'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?

[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.]

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away!—I'll live—must live,
There! if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!
Had you but heard! What right have you to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
"All had gone otherwise." We've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham!—for you'll die,
And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied—
That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
Waiting for me. Now, say you this to her—
You—not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this—"I love her"—(you don't know
What those three small words mean) say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her—not you,
Who had no pity—will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you—heartless men to have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—Oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honorable world to them—for God

102 A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

We're good enough, tho' the world casts us out !

[*A whistle is heard.*]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard !

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

No one speak ! you see what's done !
I cannot bear another voice !

Mer. There's light—
Light all about me and I move to it.

Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred ?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now ?

Tresh. Now ! Lift you the body, Gerard, and leave me
The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*]

Mer. I knew they turned me—turn me not from
her !

There ! stay you ! there ! [Dies.]

Guen. [*after a pause*] Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard come, with help—
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter—did you hear him bid me give
His message ? Did you hear my promise ? I,
And only I, see Mildred !

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die ! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die ?
Why, Austin's with you !

Aus. Had we but arrived
Before you fought !

Tresh. There was no fight at all !
He let me slaughter him—the boy I'll trust

The body there to you and Gerard—thus !
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whuthei bear him ?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber. When we meet there
next,
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*
Will she die, Guendolen ?

Guen. Where are you taking me ?

Tresh. He fell just here !

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help ?
When you and Austin wander arm in arm
Thro' our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up !
But will you ever so forget his breast
As willingly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue ? That's well !
You turn your head ! and I then ?—

Guen. What is done
Is don't ! My care is for the living. Thordol,
Bear up against this burthen—more remains
To set the neck to !

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well !
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all ?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise !
Hers ye are now—not mine ! Farewell—Farewell !

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S Chamber. MILDRED alone.

He comes not ! I have heard of those who seemed
 Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
 Sorrow might slay them when she listed—yet
 Did they so gather up their diffused strength
 At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
 And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
 Oh, 'tis not so with me ! the first woe fell,
 And the rest fall upon it, not on me :
 Else should I bear that Henry comes not ?—fails
 Just this first night out of so many nights ?
 Loving is done with ! Were he sitting now,
 As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
 No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
 To hide love from the loveless, any more !
 I think I might have urged some little point
 In my defence, to Thorold ; he was breathless
 For the least hint of a defence ; but no !
 The first shame over, all that would might fall.
 No Henry ! Yet I merely sit and think
 The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
 Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
 Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
 Such woe ! I crouch away from it ! 'Tis she,
 Mildred, will break her heart, not ! ! The world
 Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—left ?
 When I have lost him, for he does not come,
 And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven, break up
 This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
 By any means or any messenger !

Tresh. [without.] Mildred !

Mil. Come in ! Heaven hears me !

[TRESHAM enters.]

You ? alone ?

Oh, no more cursing !

Tresh.

Mildred, I must sit

There—you sit !

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse—deliver all you come to say !
What must become of me? Oh speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheek so pale !

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it !

Tresh. How we waded—years ago—
After those water-lilies, till the splash,
I know not how, surprised us ; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back, so we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize !
How idle thoughts are—some men's—dying men's !
Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kinder by my name
Than even yesterday—what is in that ?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own !
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you—I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did more—
Will you forgive me ?

Mil. Thorold? do you mock? . . .
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word !

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred !—are you silent, sweet ?

Mil. [*starting up.*] Why does not Henry Mertoun
come to-night ?

Are you, too, silent ?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.* •

Ah, this speaks for you !
You've murdered Henry Mertoun ! now proceed !
What is it I must pardon ? This and all ?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
 Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresh. He bade me tell you. . . .

Mil. What I do forbid

Your utterance of ' so much that you may tell
 And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!
 You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
 Than bleeding out his life there—must I say
 "Indeed" to that? Enough! I pardon you!

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:
 Of this last deed Another's Judge—whose doom
 I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

Mil. Oh true! there's nought for me to pardon!
 True!

You loosed my soul of all its cares at once—
 Death makes me sure of him for ever! *You*
 Tell me his last words? *He* shall tell me them,
 And take my answer—not in words, but reading
 Himself the heart I had to read him late,
 Which death . . .

Tresh. Death? you are dying too? Well said
 Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die—
 But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen
 I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresh. . . . Him you loved—
 And me?

Mil. Ah, Thorold! wasn't not rashly done
 To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
 And love of me, whom you loved too, and yet
 Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
 While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
 You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
 —Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
 And respite me!—you let him try to give
 The story of our loves, and ignorance,

And the brief madness, and the long despair—
 You let him plead all this, because your code
 Of honor bids you hear before you strike :
 But at the end, as he looked up for life
 Into your eyes—you struck him down !

Tresh. No ! no !

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
 Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him,
 I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there,
 The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
 The story ere he told it ! I saw thro'
 The troubled surface of his crime and yours
 A depth of purity immovable !
 Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
 Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath !
 I would not glance—my punishment's at hand.
 There, Mildred, is the truth ! and you—say on—
 You curse me ?

Mil. As I dare approach that Heaven
 Which has not bade a living thing despair,
 Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
 But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
 Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
 But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls !

[*Falls on his neck.*]

There ! do not think too much upon the past !
 The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud.
 While it stood up between my friend and you !
 You hurt him 'neath its shadow—but is that
 So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you know—
 I may dispose of it—I give it you !
 It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm me, Henry !

[*Dies.*]

Tresh. I wish thee joy, beloved ! I am glad
 In thy full gladness !

Guen. [*without.*] Mildred ! Tresham !

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[*Entering with AUSTIN.*] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons !
That's well—

Tresh. Oh ! better far than that !

Guen. She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

Tresh. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died.
—You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !

Aus. Leave her
And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?

Guen. White
As she—and whiter ! Austin—quick --this side !

Aus. A froth is oozing thro' his clenched teeth—
Both lips, where they're not bitten thro', are black !
Speak, dearest Thorold !

Tresh. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight : thanks : I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe !—there, there—
'Twill pass away soon !—ah, —I had forgotten—
I am dying.

Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this ?

Tresh. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me !
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque de file
By the conspicuous portal :—I am through--
Just through :—

Guen. Don't leave him, Austin ! death is close.

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller !
I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my hand,
Put yours in it—You, Guendolen, yours too !
You're Lord and Lady now—You're Treshams—Name
And fame are yours—You hold our 'Scutchion up.

Austin, no Blot on it ! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away : the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again—no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn !

Aus. No blot shall come !

Tresh. I said that—yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's not man's. Remember me !

Guen. [*letting fall the pulseless arm.*] Ah, Thorold,
we can but—remember you !

[*Dies.*

Colombe's Birthday.

A PLAY

"Ivy and violet, what do ye here,

"With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,

"Hiding the arms of Monchelet and Vere?"

HANMER

Dedication.

--

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE
THAN ROBERT BROWNING DOES;

WHO, HAVING NOTHING BLIER THAN THIS PLAY
TO GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT,

MUST SAY SO.

Colombe's Birthday.

PERSONS

COLOMBE OF RAVESTFIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves
SABYNE } Her Attendants
ADOLF }
GUIBERT }
GALCELME } Courtiers.
MAUFROY }
CLUGNET }
VALENCY, Advocate of Cleves.
PRINCE BERTHOLD, Countant of the Duchy
MELCHIOR, his Confidant

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers*

TIME, 16—

ACT I.

Morning. SCENE—*A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY, and other Courtiers, round GUIBERT, who is silently reading a paper as he drops it at the end—

Gui. That this should be her birthday; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Court. Ay, indeed?

2nd Court. Well, Guibert?

3rd Court. But your news, my friend, your news!

The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,
The better for us all : how writes the Prince?
Give me—I'll read it for the common good—

Gui. In time, sir—but, till time comes, pardon me !
Our old Duke first disclosed his child's retreat,
Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died : this birthday was the day, last year,
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen
Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' Court
With joy and bustle : here again we stand ;
Sir Gancelme's buckle's constant to his cap—
To-day's much such another sunny day !

Gan. Come, Guibert—this outgrows a jest, I think !
You're hardly such a novice as to need
The lesson, you pretend.

Gui. What lesson, sir ?
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself ?
Why, no : and therefore, with your good example,
(—Ho, Master Adolf !)—to myself I'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Gui. The Prince's letter ; why, of all men else,
Comes it to me ?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert ! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough ! [*ADOLF retires.*]
Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,

To find me never in the mood to quit ?

—Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—

This to present our lady. Who'll accept ?

You,—you,—you ? There it lies, and may, for me !

Mau. [*a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.*]

“ Prince Berthold, proved by titles following

“ Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day

“ To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,

“ The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France” . . .

Gau. Sufficient “ titles following,” I judge !

Don't read another ! Well,—“ to claim his own ?”

Mau. “ And take possession of the Duchy held

“ Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,

“ By” . . . Colombe, Juliers' Mistress, so she thinks,

And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find !

Who wants the place and paper ? Guibert's right !

I hope to clumb a little in the world,—

I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,

Could tell her on this happy day of days,

That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,

There's nothing left to call her own ! Sir Clugnet,

You famish for promotion ; what say you ?

Clug. [*an old man.*] To give this letter were a sort, I
take at,

Of service : services ask recompence :

What kind of corner may be Ravestein ?

Gui. The castle ?—Oh, you'd share her fortunes ?

Good !

Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,

With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clug. Oh,—but the Town ?

Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts ;

A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis judged ;

And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clug. Still, there's some revenue ?

Gui. Else Heaven forefend !

You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase ;
 So when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
 Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
 Their grateful raftsmen fling a guilder in ;
 --That's if he means to pass your way next time.

Clug. If not ?

Gur. Hang guilders, then—he blesses you !

Clug. What man do you suppose me ? Keep your
 paper !

And let me say it shows no handsome spirit
 To dally with misfortune : keep your place !

Gau. Some one must tell her.

Gur. Some one may : you may !

Gau. Sir Guibert, 'tis no trifle turns me sick
 Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
 But this goes near it. Where's there news at all ?
 Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
 He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
 That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law ;
 That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
 And, she away, indisputable heu,
 Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
 Claimed Juliers ?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
 That first this, then another potentate,
 Inclined to its allowance ?—I, or you,
 Or any one except the lady's self ?
 Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
 To break the business to her ! Things might change—
 At all events, we'd see next masque at end,
 Next mummary over first : and so the edge
 Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
 Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she
 —Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
 With just the faintest notion possible
 That some such claimant earns a livelihood
 About the world, by feigning grievances

Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
 And fewer listen to, a second time.
 Your method proves a failure ; now try mine—
 And, since this must be carried . . .

Gui. [*snatching the paper from him.*] By your leave
 Your zeal transports you ! 'Twill not serve the Prince
 So much as you expect, this course you'd take ;
 If she leaves quietly her palace,— well :
 But if she died upon its threshold,— no :
 He'd have the trouble of removing her !
 Come, gentles, we're all—what the devil knows !
 You, Gauceime, won't lose character, beside—
 You broke your father's heart superiorly
 To gather his succession—never blush !
 You're from my province, and, be comforted,
 They tell of it with wonder to this day—
 You can afford to let your talent sleep !
 We'll take the very worst supposed, as true—
 There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
 Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
 With whom the right lay ! Call the Prince our Duke !
 There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything
 More than a young maid with the bluest eyes—
 And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart
 Coolly as Gauceime could and would ! No haste !
 His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud—
 We'll not advance to his perfection yet—
 Will we, Sir Maufroy ? See, I've ruined Maufroy
 For ever as a courtier !

Gau. Here's a coil—
 And, count us, will you ? Count its residue,
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd !
 A birthday, too—a gratulation-day !
 I'm dumb : bid *that* keep silence !

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Gubert ?
 He's right : that *does* say something : that's bare truth.

Ten—twelve, I make : a perilous dropping-off !

Gui. Pooh—is it audience-hour ? The vestibule
Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf ! ! *Re-enter ADOLF.*] Who's outside ?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice !
Nobody waiting ?

Mau. [*looking through the door-fold.*] Scarce our
number !

Gui. 'Sdeath !
Nothing to beg for, to complain about ?
It can't be ! All news spreads, but not so fast
As thus to frighten all the world !

Gau. The world
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
Wherever warmth's perpetual : outside's free
To every wind from every compass-point,
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
The Prince comes and the lady's People go ;
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Why should they wait for winter-tune ? 'Tis instinct ;
Don't you feel somewhat chilly ?

Gui. That's their craft ?
And last year's, crowders-round and criers-forth,
That strewed the garlands, overached the rocks,
Lit up the bonfires, sang the boys' songs !
Well, 'tis my comfort, you could never call me
The People's Friend ! The People keep their word—
I keep my place - don't doubt I'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People
Are talked of !—Then, their speeches—no one tongue
Found respite, not a pen had holiday
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves !
Now see : we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must

—We manage that,—so pay with a good grace
 They might as well, it costs so little more.
 But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next
 Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
 In public—there they have us if they will,
 We're at their mercy after that, you see—
 For one tax not ten devils could extort ;
 Over and above necessity, a grace ;
 This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit —
 Their vine-leaf-wrappage of our tribute-penny,
 And crowning attestation, all works well—
 Yet this precisely do they thrust on us !
 These cappings quick, and crook-and-crimps, low,
 Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
 With grin that shuts the eyes and opens the mouth—
 So tender they their love ; and tender made,
 Go home to curse you, the first do it you ask ;
 As if their souls were any longer theirs !
 As if they had not given ample warrant
 To who should clap a collar on their neck,
 Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
 And take them for the brute they boast themselves !
 —Stay—there's a bustle at the outer door—
 And somebody entreating . . . that's my name !
 Adolf,—I heard my name !

Adolf.

'Twas probably

The Suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one ?

Adolf.

With a suit

He'd fain enforce in person.

Gui.

The good heart

—And the great fool ! Just ope the mid-door's fold—
 Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see ?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous signs of travel . . . ay,

The very cloak my comrades tore !

Gui.

Why tore ?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim :
Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. Where's he now?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more.
They have ado en ough to thrust him back.

Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught?

Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What was it?—You had known him formerly,
And, he believed, would help him did you guess
He waited now—you promised him as much—
The old plea!—'Faith, he's back,—renews the charge!
[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys, peace
outside!

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,
A thin sour man not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
He glances when his checks flush and his brow
At each repulse—

Gau. I noticed he'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!
(*To GUIBERT.*)—Sir, he has seen you! Now toss hal-
berts! Ha—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too—
No passage! Whither would the madman press?
Close the doors quick on me!

Gui. Too late—he's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me?—Me, that come
Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,

To represent their heights and depths of woe
 Before our Duchess and obtain relief !
 Such errands barricade such doors, it seems :
 But not a common hindrance drives me back
 On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
 With hope for the first time, which sent me forth !
 Cleves, speak for me ! Cleves' men and women, speak—
 Who followed me— your strongest—many a mile
 That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
 —Who sit—your weakest—by the city-gates,
 To take me fuller of what news I bring
 As I return—for I must needs return !
 —Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,
 To turn them back upon the old despair—
 Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
 So I do—any way you please—implore !
 If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves ?
 Yet they of Cleves remember you so well !
 —Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
 Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
 Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
 Of the very levity and recklessness
 Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.
 Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
 Is Cleves forgotten?—Then remember me !
 You promised me that you would help me once
 For other purpose . . . will you keep your word ?
Gui. And who may you be, friend ?
Val. Valence of Cleves.
Gui. Valence of . . . not the Advocate of Cleves
 I owed my whole estate to, three years back ?
 Ay, well may you keep silence ! Why, my lords,
 You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
 I was so nearly ousted of my land
 By some knaves' pretext,—(eh ? when you refused me
 Your ugly daughter, Clugnet,)—and you've heard

How I recovered it by miracle

—(When I refused her)! Here's the very friend,

—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!

Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you—

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,

But politic am I I bear a brain,

Can cast about a little, might require

Your services a second time! I tried

• To tempt you with advancement here to court

—“No!”—well, for curiosity at least

To view our life here—“No!”—our Duchess, then,—

—A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,

Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown

Completes the forehead pale and tresses pure. . . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,

And I am come.

Gui. So much for taste! But “come,”—

So may you be, for anything I know,

To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,

And with an equal chance you get all three!

If it was ever worth your while to come,

Was not the proper way worth finding too?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—

Gui. —And said?—

Val. —That I had brought the miseries

Of a whole city to relieve.

Gui. —Which saying

Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,

And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,

My intervention, I shall not dispute,

Procures you audience; which, if I procure,

That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,

Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,

Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B, and C—

Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,

And launch these “miseries” from first to last?

Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside?

Gau. [to VALENCE.] My worthy sir, one question :
you've come straight

From Cleves, you tell us : heard you any talk
At Cleves about our lady?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what?

Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

Gau. That, you believed?

Val. You see me, sir!

Gau. —Nor stopped

Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any—rumours you might find afloat?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gau. This is the Lady's birthday, do you know?
—Her day of pleasure?

Val. I know that the Great,
For Pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude Pleasure when a Duty offers :
Even as, the Lowly too, for Duty born,
May ever snatch a Pleasure if in reach :
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir!

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, here's your
man! No scruples now—

You'll never find his like! Time presses hard.

I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,

But you can't keep the hour of audience back

Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.

[*Pointing to VALENCE.*] Entrust *him* with it—fool no
chance away!

Gui. —Him?

Gau. —With the missive! What's the man
to her?

Gui. No bad thought!—Yet, 'tis yours—who ever
played

The tempting serpent—else, 'twere no bad thought!

I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

Enter an Official who communicates with ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the Court!

Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,
I'll help you: we of the service, you're to mark,
Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks
Outside, get access through our help alone
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be—your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.

Val. I grieve that I must ask,
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,
To what the price of such a favour mounts?

Gui. Just so! You're not without a courtier's tact!
Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.

Val. Yours is?—

Gui. A trifle. Here's a document . . .
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
I have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it?—Just say, "I am bidden lay
"This paper at the Duchess' feet."

Val. No more?
I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the Court!

Gui. [*Aside.*] Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-
priest! Do—
Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone . . .

These pushings to and fro, and pullings back ;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely ! Let me live quite his, or yours !

[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and move towards the door.*]

After me, Valence ! So our famous Cleves
Lacks bread ? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace ?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly !
This, Valence, is our Great State I all you cross :
You grey urn's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift ; and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence !

Val. I shall speak.

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT*] Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do !
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
"Yield strangers our allegiance ? First I'll perish
"Beside your Grace" !—and so give me the cue
To . . .

Gau. Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Pounce with ? I conceive !
[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half
suspect

You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
I' the Lady's favour : is 't the grand harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you ?
—Which of her virtues you'll apostrophise ?
Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair ?
—Or what else ponder you ?

Val. My townsmen's wrongs !

ACT II.

Noon. SENE.—*The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS and SABYNE.

The D. Announce that I am ready for the Court !

Sab. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I think—your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd ; but few can have arrived . . .

The D. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away !
'Twas *me*, this day, last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate ?

Sab. Forgive me !

The D. Stay, Sabyne ; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker : here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege !
It is my birth's event they celebrate—
You need not wish me more such happy days,
But—ask some favour ! Have you none to ask ?
Has Adolf none, then ? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself ! It seemed so natural .
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself .
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf ?
The rest is my concern.

Sab. Your Grace is ever
Our Lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf . . .

The D. "But" ? You have not, sure, changed in
your regard
And purpose towards him ?

Sab. We change !

The D. Well, then? Well?

Sab. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when . . . when . . . but 'tis audience-
time!

The D. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed"—
Would you subjoin that?—Bid the Court approach!
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng
Scarce one half comes now!

Sab. [*Aside*] One half? No, alas!

The D. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes strike each loyal heart.
They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Each foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love!
Admit them!

Sab [*Aside*] How much has she really learned?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
And fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!

[SABYNE goes out.]

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too;
Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again
. . . It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice, in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task *was* just—to live,—to live,

And, answering ends there was no need explain,
 To render Juliers happy—so they said.
 All could not have been falsehood! Some was love,
 And wonder and obedience—I did all
 They looked for! Why then cease to do it now?
 Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
 And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
 Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
 It cannot nor it shall not be! His right?
 Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
 —But who bade all of you surround my life
 And close its growth up with your Ducal crown
 Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
 I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
 Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
 Would take that life away and give me this,
 And I will keep this! I will face you—Come!

Enter the Courtiers and VAIENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your
 Grace!

The D. [*Aside, as they pay their devoir.*] The same
 words, - the same faces,—the same love!
 I have been over- fearful. There are few—
 But these, at least, stand firmly—these are mine!
 As many come as may, and if no more,
 'Tis that, these few suffice—they do suffice!
 What succour may not next year bring me! Plainly
 I feared too soon! [*to the Court.*] I thank you, sirs: all
 thanks!

Val. [*Aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group to
 another, conversing.*]

'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,
 When for a golden moment at our Cleves
 She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
 Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke

—Not that she could have noted the recluse
 —Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed—
 . . . Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
 Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own !
 She was above it—but so would not sink
 My gaze to earth ! The People caught it, hers—
 Thenceforward, mine ; but thus entirely mine,
 Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
 Ere she retired and left me—them ?—She turns—
 There's all her wondrous face at once ! The ground
 Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his*
paper.] These wrongs of theus I have to plead !
The D. [*to the Court.*] Nay, compliment enough ! And
 kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.
 'Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
 I tasted life's pure pleasure— one such, pure,
 Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for pleasure :
 Mine is received ; let my age pay for it.

Gau. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your
 Grace,
 Should never go together ?

Gui. How, Sir Gaucelme ?
 Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
 At the snatched breathing-intervals of work ?
 As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
 When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone !
 Eat first, then work upon the strength of it !

The D. True : you enable me to risk my Future,
 By giving me a Past beyond recall.
 I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year :
 Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now !
 And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of ?

[*As they advance a little, and GUIBERT speaks—*
 —That gentleman ?

Val. [*Aside.*] I feel her eyes on me !

Gui. [to VALENCE.] The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear
your suit!

Advance! He is from Cleves.

Val. [coming forward.] [*Aside.*] Their wrongs—their
wrongs!

The D. And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh in
mind,

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!
She entertained me bravely, but the best
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by,
With insuppressive joy on every face!
What says my ancient, famous, happy Cleves?

Val. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth!
So think my friends—nor do they less deserve
The having you to take it, you shall think,
When you know all—nay, when you only know
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart
Into unnoticed corners, that the few
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
With joyous faces fit to bear away
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,
That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,
And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them
To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
Ebb'd, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest
“Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!”—
And as one man they cried “He speaks the truth—

“Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths
 “Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!”
 —This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now
 and thus?

I thank you—in that paper?—Give it me!

Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise,
 Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced
 Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon—I forget
 I buy the privilege of this approach,
 And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
 This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet!

[*Presenting GUIBERT's paper.*]

Gue. Stay—for the present . . .

The D. Stay, sir? I take aught
 That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
 Than this your Ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily; then, turning to the
 Courtiers—*]

What have I done to you? Your deed or mine . . .
 Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
 No more a title to your homage, no,
 Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
 In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
 For such a flower, you plucked me—well, you erred—
 Well, 'twas a weed—remove the eye-sore quick!
 But should you not remember it has lain
 Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
 Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
 —That it be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath—
 That the one day it boasted was God's day?
 Still, I do thank you—had you used respect
 Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
 Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
 May yield some wandering insect rest and food:

So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all !

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke,
it seems—

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—
Be mine, too ! 'Take this people ! Tell not me

Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,

—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give !

Find out their love,—I could not ; find then fear,—

I would not ; find their like,—I never shall,

Among the flowers ! [*Taking off her coronet.*]

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here !

Val. [*advancing to GUIBERT*] Sir Guibert,—knight,
they call you—this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find ;

For that, so sure as you and I are men,

We reckon to the utmost presently :

But as you are a courtier and I none,

Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance

Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her

—I am degraded—you, let me address !

Out of her presence, all is plain enough

What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there's something proper to be done !

[*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—

May I not strike this man to earth ?

The Courtiers. [*as GUIBERT springs forward, with-
holding him.*] Let go !

—The Clothiers' spokesman, Guibert ? Grace a churl ?

The D. [*to VAIENCE.*] Oth, be acquainted with your
party, sir !

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts ;

A lion crests him for a cognisanceç

“Scorning to waver”—that’s his ’scutcheon’s word ;
 His office with the new Duke—probably
 The same in honor as with me ; or more,
 By so much as this gallant turn deserves ;
 He’s now, I dare say, of a thousand times
 The rank and influence that remain with her
 Whose part you take ! So, lest for taking it
 You suffer . . .

Val. I may strike him then to earth ?

Gui. [*falling on his knee.*] Great and dear lady, pardon me ! Hear once !

Believe me and be merciful—be just !
 I could not bring myself to give that paper
 Without a keener pang than I dared meet
 —And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
 —No one dared meet it. Protestation’s cheap,—
 But, if to die for you did any good,
 [*To GAUCHELM.*] Would not I die, sir ? Say your worst
 of me !

But it does no good, that’s the mournful truth.
 And since the hint of a resistance, even,
 Would just precipitate, on you the first,
 A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
 Saving myself indubitable pain,
 I thought to give you pleasure (who might say ?)
 By showing that your only subject found
 To carry the sad notice, was the man
 Precisely ignorant of its contents ;
 A nameless, mere provincial advocate ;
 One whom ’twas like you never saw before,
 Never would see again. All has gone wrong ;
 But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust !

The D. A nameless advocate, this gentleman ?—
 —(I pardon you, Sir Guibert !)

Gui. [*rising, to VALENCE.*]—Sir, and you ?—

Val. —Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with !

The D. One I have never seen, much less obliged ?—

Val. Dare I speak, lady ?

The D. Dare you ! Heard you not

I rule no longer ?

Val. Lady, if your rule

Were based alone on such a ground as these

[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*]

Could furnish you,—abjure it ! They have hidden

A source of true dominion from your sight.

The D. You hear them—no such source is left . . .

Val. Hear Cleves !

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,

Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,

Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure

Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,

Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.

What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour ?

What makes, instead of rising, all as one,

And teaching fingers, so expert to wield

Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,

—What makes that there 's an easier help, they think,

For you, whose name so few of them can spell,

Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,

You simply have to understand their wrongs,

And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are phid,

And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here ?

There is a vision in the heart of each

Of justice, mercy, wisdom ; tenderness

To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure—

And these, embodied in a woman's form

That best transmits them, pure as first received,

From God above her, to mankind below.

Will you derive your rule from such a ground,

Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,

Of this man—this—and this ?

The D. [after a pause.] You come from Cleves—
How many are at Cleves of such a mind?

Val. [from his paper.] "We, all the manufacturers of
Cleves"—

The D. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
Are you my subject? such as you describe
Am I to you—though to no other man?

Val. [from his paper.]—"Valence, ordained your Ad-
vocate at Cleves"—

The D. [replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves'
Duchess! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her lady till she waves me off!
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contempt!

[Casting it away.]

Guc. [picking it up.]—Which to the Prince I will
deliver, Lady,

[Note it down, Gaucelme]—with your message too!

The D. I think the office is a subject's, sir!
—Either . . . how style you him?—my special guarder
The Marshal's—for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery!—Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge
On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—
For I may violate established form!

[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half hour till this service
ends,

Will you become all these to me?

Val. [falling on his knee.] My Liege!

The D. Give me!

[The Courtiers present their badges of office.]

[Putting them by.]—Whatever was their virtue once,
They need new consecration! [raising VALENCE.] Are
you mine?

—I will be Duchess yet ! [*She retires.*]

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet !

A glorious lady ! Worthy love and dread !

I'll stand by her,—and I, whate'er betide !

Gau. [to VALENCE.] Well done, well done, sir ! I care not who knows,

You have done nobly, and I envy you—

Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think .

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

The pay and the preferment, make our prize—

Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,

We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist

Without these also ! Yet, let these be stopped,

Our wages discontinued,—then, indeed,

Our zeal and faith, we hear on every side,

Are not released—having been pledged away

I wonder with what zeal and faith in turn ?

Hard money purchased me my place ! No, no

I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,

If I had time and skill to argue it.

Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—

If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—

(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,

I never dreamed I did you any harm)—

Gau.—Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,

His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,

And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor,

And Chamberlain, and Heaven knows what beside !

Clug. [to VALENCE.] You stare, young sir, and threaten !

Let me say,

That at your age, when first I came to court,

I was not much above a gentleman ;

While now . . .

Val. —You are Head-Lackey ? With your office

I have not yet been graced, sir !

Other Courtiers to Clug. Let him talk !
 Fidelity—disinterestedness—
 Excuse so much ! Men claimed my worship ever
 Who, stanch and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives !
Courtiers. Ha ? How ?
Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
 At Aix, and enters almost by himself.
1st Court. The Prince ! This foolish business puts all
 out !
2nd Court. Let Gauceime speak first !
3rd Court. Better I began
 About the state of Juliers—should one say
 All's prosperous and inviting him ?
4th Court. —Or rather
 All's prostrate and imploring him !
5th Court. That's best !
 Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way ?
4th Court. [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—
 If you'll but give that paper—trust it me,
 I'll warrant . . .
5th Court. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty !
Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
 By virtue of his patent ?
Gau. Patents ?—Duties ?
 All that, my masters, must begin again !
 One word composes the whole controversy—
 We're simply now—the Prince's !
The Others. Ay—the Prince's !

Enter SABYNE.

Sab. Adolf ! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony !
 Where's whom our lady calls her only subject ?
 She needs him ! Who is here the Duchess's ?

Val. [*starting from his reverie.*] Most gratefully I follow
to her feet !

ACT III

Afternoon. SCENE — *The Vestibule.*

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Berth. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne :
Better try Aix, though !—

Mel. Please 't your Highness speak ?

Berth. [*as before.*] Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—Milan,
—Rome !—

Mel. —The Grave
—More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray
You must not look for next achievement : palm
So easy : this will hurt your conquering !

Berth. My next ? Ay—as you say my next . . . and next !
Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
This quiet entrance-morning ; h—en why !
Our little burgh, now, Juliers — tis indeed
One link, however insignificant,
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope—
—A link I must secure ; but otherwise,
You'd wonder I esteem'd it worth my grasp.
Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns !
It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once . . . but a short while since, neither—

When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
 Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
 Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
 A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
 Shone my ambition's object; to be Duke —
 Seemed then what to be Emperor seems now
 My rights were far from being judged as plain
 In those days as of late, I promise you—
 And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
 Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
 Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
 (I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,
 And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
 Here am I, Duke confessed, at Julius now!
 Hearken if ever I be Emperor,
 Remind me what I felt and said to-day!

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me!
 —And so will weariness cling to you! Wrong—
 Wrong! Had you sought the Lady's court yourself,—
 Faced the redoubtables composing it,
 Flattered this; threatened that man, bribed the other,—
 Pleadaded, by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
 Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—
 And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
 On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
 And justice done to divers faculties
 Shut in that brow. yourself were visible
 As you stood victor, then! whom now—(your pardon!)
 I am forced narrowly to search and see—
 So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—
 Your cousin, the other King! You are a Mind,—
 They, Body: too much of mere legs-and-arms
 Obstructs the mind so! Match these with their like—
 Match mind with mind!

Berth. And where's your mind to match?
 They w me legs-and-arms to cope withal!

I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind?

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*]

Mel. Got out of sight when you came troops and all!
And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood—
A smug oeconomy of both, this first!

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*]

Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?

Berth. Help me receive them!

Mel.

Oh, they just will say

What yesterday at Aix their fellows said,—
At Treves, the day before!—Sir Prince, my friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Mean time,
I have my little Juliers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist,
Your holy uncle disinters, Amelius—
Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!

Berth. And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?

Mel. To help me through your uncle's comment,
Prince!

[*Goes.*]

Berth. Ah? Well! he o'er-refines—the scholar's fault;
How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
I lead now, differs from the common life
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree—
Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—
Enough to care about and struggle for,
In this world: for this world, the Size of things;
The Sort of things, for that to come, no doubt!
A great is better than a little aim—
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
Was I more happy than I should be now
[*By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.*]
If failing of my Empire? Not a whit!
—Here comes the Mind, it once had talked me sore

To baffle, but for my advantages !
 All's best as 'tis—these scholars talk and talk !

[*Sits himself.*]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to
 his Heritage !

Our dutifullest service proffer we !

Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised
 The function of Grand Chamberlain at Court,
 With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen !
 The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
 On strictest justice ; if you concede it, therefore,
 I do not wonder—and the kings my friends
 Protesting they will see such claim enforced,
 You easily may offer to assist us.

But there's a slight discretionary power
 To serve me in the matter, you've had long,
 Though late you use it. This is well to say—
 But could you not have said it months ago ?
 I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
 'Tis flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
 Pick it, with all you placid standers-by—
 And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
 Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say !

Gut. (By Paul, the Advocate our doughty friend . . .
 Cuts the best figure !)

Gau. If our ignorance
 May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berth. Loyalty? Yours?—Oh—of yourselves you
 speak !

—I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope !
 And since I have been forced repeat my claims
 As if they never had been made before,
 As I began, so must I end, it seems.
 The formal answer to the grave demand—
 What says the lady?

Courtiers [one to another.] 1st Court. Marshal!
2nd Court. Orator!

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet?—that, he waits!

1st Court. Yo r place!

2nd Court. Just now it was your own!

Gui. The devil's!

Berth. [to GUIBERT.] Come forward, friend—you with the paper, there!

Is Julers the first city I've obtained?
By this time, I may boast proficiency
In each decorum of the circumstance!
Give it me as she gave it—the petition
(Demand, you style it)—what's required, in brief?
What title's reservation, appanage's
Allowance?—I heard all at Treves, last week!

Gau. [to GUIBERT.] "Give it him as she gave it!"

Gui. And why not?

[To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus
together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn
So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers.

Stop—

Idiot!—

Gui. —Inform you she denied your claim,
Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering Advocate!)

Berth. By heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

Gui. Did they at Treves, last week?

Berth. [starting up.] Why then, I look much bolder
than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought—
Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
For just so many dearest friends of mine,
Fled from the sinking to the rising power

—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised !
 Whereas I am alone here for the moment—
 With every s~~o~~ther left behind at Aix !
 Silence? That means the worst—I thought as much !
 What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince—he raves !

Gui. He asked the truth and why not get the truth ?

Berth. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?
 —But why stand paltering with imbeciles?

Let me see her, or . . .

Gui. Her, without her leave,
 Shall no one see—she's Duchess yet !

Courtiers. [*Footsteps without, as they are disputing.*]
 Good chance !

She's here—the Lady Colombe's self !

Berth. 'Tis well !

[*Aside.*] Aray a handful thus against my world?
 Not ill done, truly ! Were not this a mind
 To match one's mind with? Colombe !—Let us wait !
 I failed so, under that grey convent-wall !
 She comes !

Gui. The Duchess ! Strangers, range yourselves !
 [*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with*
 VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers
fall back a little.]

The D. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
 My heart—the right is Berthold's and not mine !

Val. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
 Your power to acquiesce so patiently
 As you believe, in such a dream-like change
 Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete ?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over now !
 Bitter I may have felt it to confront
 The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
 I had so counted on—that was a pang—
 But I did bear it, and the worst is over :
 Let the Prince take them !

Val. —And take Juliers too?
—Your People without crosses, wands, and chains—
Only with hearts?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir!
I cannot give up what I never had:
For these I ruled, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first: more news and more;
Closer and closer swam the thunder-cloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew!
At times, when to the casement I would turn,
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
Would interpose—I followed the bird's flight,
Or plucked the flower—some one would interpose!

Val. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves
there!

The D. So, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret:
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold!

Val. Then you acquiesce?

The D. Remember over whom it was I ruled!

Gut. [*stepping forward.*] Prince Berthold, yonder,
craves an audience, Lady!

The D. [*to VALENCE*] I only have to turn, and I shall
face

Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes,
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me
—What I shall call to mind I should have urged

When time's gone by—'twill all be mine, you urge !
 A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
 My rule down ! 'Tis too sudden—must not be !
 The world's to hear of it ! Once done— for ever !
 How will it read, sir ? How be sung about ?
 Prevent it !

Berth. [*approaching.*] Your frank indignation, Lady,
 Cannot escape me ! Overbold I seem—
 But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise,
 At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
 And if, for their and your sakes, I rejoice
 Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
 To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
 I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
 Your friends should force me to retrace my steps,
 Since I no longer am permitted speak
 After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
 No less by courtesy than relationship
 Which, if you once forgot, I still remember :
 But never must attack pass unrepelled.
 Suffer, that through you, I demand of these,
 Who controverts my claim to Juliers ?

The D. —Me,
 You say, you do not speak to—

Berth. Of your subjects
 I ask, then : whom do you accredit ? Where
 Stand those should answer ?

Val. [*advancing.*] The Lady is alone !

Berth. Alone, and thus ? So weak and yet so bold ?

Val. I said she was alone—

Berth. —And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he feels alone ?
 It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
 Created organs, such as those you seek,
 By which to give its varied purpose shape—
 And, naming the selected ministrants,

Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man !
 That strength performed its work and passed its way :
 You see our Lady : there, the old shapes stand !
 —A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
 “ Be helped their way, into their death put life
 “ And find advantage ! ”—so you counsel us :
 But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
 And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
 The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the waves,
 The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
 So turns our lady to her true resource,
 Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
 —So, I am first her instinct fastens on !
 And prompt I say, so clear as heart can speak,
 The People will not have you ; nor shall have !
 It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
 And fight you to the last,—though that does much,
 And men and children,—ay, and women too,
 Fighting 'for home, are rather to be feared
 Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—
 But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
 And, where this Julius laughed, you set your foot
 Upon a streaming bloody splash—what then ?
 Stand you the more our Lord that there you startle ?
 Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,
 A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—
 Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,
 A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—
 But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
 Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
 For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
 We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil !
 —Our conqueror ? Yes !—Our despot ? Yes !—Our Duke ?
 Know yourself, know us !
Berth. [*who has been in thought.*] Know your lady,
 also !

[*Very despondently.*]—To whom I needs must exculpate myself

From having made a rash demand, at least.
Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims, [*Giving papers.*
But, this step taken, take no further step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.
Here be our meeting-place ; at night, its time
Till when I humbly take the Lady's leave !

[*He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.*

1st Court. So, this was their device !

2nd Court. No bad device !

3rd Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess !

4th Court. —And moreover,

That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
Their loves !

5th Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do ?

Gui. [*advancing.*] I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—

Others. And I—and I—and I !

The D. I took them, sirs !

Gui. [*Apart to VALENCE.*] And now, sir, I am simple knight again—

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront : whate'er you hath,—
As things stand now, I recognise yourself
(If you'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
To fight you : will you be as generous
And now fight me ?

Val. Ask when my life is mine! !

Gau. ('Tis hers now!)

Clug. [*Apart to VALENCE, as Guibert turns from him.*] You, sir, have insulted me
Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You've granted him, just now, I make no question?

Val. I promise you, as him, sir!

Clug. Do you so?
Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir!
You'll get me reinstated in my office
As you will Guibert!

The D. I would be alone!

[*They begin to retire slowly as VALENCE is about to follow—*

Alone, sir—only with my heart,—you stay!

Gau. You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me!
Cleves—

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—
With great effect,—so those who listened said,
My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?
Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man!
Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!
The modest worth you mean to patronise!
He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
His sole contest is with the wrongs of Cleves!

What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?

Gai. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof!— I'd
back

And in her very face . . .

Gau. Apply the match
That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray?

Gai. With him!

Gau. Stand, rather, safe outside with me!
The mine's charged—shall I furnish you the match
And place you properly?—To the ante-chamber!

Gai. Can you?

Gau. Try me!—Your friend's in fortune!

Gui. Quick—

To the ante-chamber!—He is pale with bliss!

Gau. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Gui. To the ante-chamber!

[*The Courtiers retire.*]

The D. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
You were content! You spoke, and I am saved!

Val. Be not too sanguine, Lady! Ere you dream,
That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance! The man, beside, is gone,—
Whom we might bend; but see the papers here—
Inalterably his requirement stays,
And cold hard words have we to deal with now.
In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,
To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed
From such a grace—however, let us hope!
He is a noble spirit in noble form!
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject
Himself upon occasion to—himself!
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The D. You,—who have opened a new world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,
Or losing it—is that my sole world now?

Val. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise
Jehers; although the lowest, on true grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

The D. Nay, hear—
False, I will never—rash, I would not be!
This is indeed my Birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.

You hold the Requisition : ponder it !
 If I have right—my duty's plain : if I lie —
 Say so—nor ever change a tone of voice
 At night you meet the Prince—meet me at eve ;
 Till when, fare well ! This discomposes you ?
 Believe in your own nature, and its force
 Of renovating mine. I take my stand
 Only as under me the earth is firm—
 So, prove the first step stable, all will be !
 That first, I choose—[*laying her hand on his*]—the next
 to take, choose you ! [She withdraws.
Val. [*after a pause*] What drew down this on me !
 On me—dead once—

She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
 Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,
 Burst into life before her, as she bids
 Who needs them !—Whither will this reach, where end ?
 Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's above—
 So very far above me ! All's too plain —
 I served her when the others sank away,
 And she rewards me as such souls reward —
 The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
 The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand—
 -Reward, that's little, in her generous thought, •
 Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim
 Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is !
 She loves me !
 [*Looking at the Prince's papers.*]—Which love, these,
 perchance, forbid !
 Can I decide against myself—pronounce
 She is the Duchess and no mate for me ?
 —Cleves, help me ! Teach me,—every haggard face,—
 To sorrow and endure ! I will do right
 Whatever be the issue—help me, Cleves !

ACT IV.

Evening. SCENE — *In Ante-chamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now then, that we may speak—how spring this mine?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools!
Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!
“Stay, Valence—are not you my better self?”
And her cheek mantled—

Gui. Well, she loves him, sir—
And more, —since you will have it I grow cool,—
She’s right: he’s worth it.

Gau. For his deeds to-day?
Say so!

Gui. What should I say beside?

Gau. Not that,—
For friendship’s sake leave this for me to say—
That we’re the dupes of an egregious cheat!
This plain, unpractised suitor, who found way
To the Duchess thro’ the merest die’s turn-up—
A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved—

Gui. Impossible!

Gau. — Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which —taking not their stand on facts
Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But, worming in their way by craft, they choose
Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing off!
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
Not on the honest ground of preference,

Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
 But as we all had started equally,
 And at the close of a fair race he proved
 The only valiant, sage, and loyal man.
 And she, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
 The careless, winning, candid ignorance
 Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
 She had a hero in reserve ! What risk
 Ran she ? This defferential easy Prince
 Who brings his claims for her to ratify
 —He's just her puppet for the nonce ! You'll see,—
 Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
 Against him : off goes the confederate :
 As equitably, Valence takes her hand !

The Chancellor. You run too fast—her hand, no
 subject takes !

Do not our Archives hold her father's Will ?
 That will provides against such accident,
 And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
 Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gau. I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince ?
 Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,
 For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
 If crowned with the success which seems its due,
 In making him the very thing he plays,
 The actual Duke of Juliers ? All agree
 That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
 He is next heir.

The Chan. Incontrovertibly !

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to the train !

Gui. Enough !

I'm with you—selfishness is best again !
 I thought of turning honest—what a dream !
 Let's wake now !

Gau. Selfish, friend, you never were —
 T was but a series of revenges taken

On your unselfishness for prospering ill.

But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

Gui. — ~~Why~~, I suppose, till Valence weds our Lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince—

Gau. — The Prince, ere then dismissed
With thanks for playing his mock part so well?
Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night—
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Gui. — Our Lady wedding Valence all the same
As if the penalty were undisclosed!
Good! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up—I wonder you see that!

Gau. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!
Within her, the inclining heart—without,
A terrible array of witnesses—
With Valence by, to keep her to her word,
And Berthold's indignation or disgust—
We'll try it!—Not that we can venture much:
Her confidence we've lost for ever—Berthold's
Is all to gain!

Gui. To-night, then, venture we!
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed?

Gau. Never in noble natures! With the base ones,—
Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
And something grows and grows and gets to be
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will
Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:
But lop the Lion's foot—and

Gui. To the Prince!

Gau. [*Aside.*] And come what will to the lion's foot,
I pay you
My cat's-paw, a long I long have yearned to pay!

* [*Aloud.*] Footsteps . . . Himself ! 'Tis Valence breaks on us !

Exulting that their scheme succeeds !—We'll win—
And perfect ours ! Consult the Archives, first—
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall !

Clug. [*to GAUDELME as they retire.*] You have not smiled so since your father died !

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Val. So must it be ! I have examined these
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,
Keeping her image almost wholly off,
Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims,
And the result is . . . all men would pronounce
Am not I, only, the result to be—

Berthold is Heir ; she has no shade of right
To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first I know not why,
Her rule contrived at by those Kings and Popes,
To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis gained,
Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.

—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be ?
Eject it from your heart, her home !—It says !

Ah, the brave world that opens on us both !
. . . Do my poor townsmen so esteem it ? Clugel says,—

I need not your pale faces ! This, reward
For service done to you ? Too horrible !

I never served you—'twas myself I served !

Nay—served not—rather saved from punishment

Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now !

My life continues yours, and your life, mine—

But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—
Cleves !—if I breathe no prayer for it—if she,

[*Footsteps without.*

Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—

Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
I . . .

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

--Pardon, sir—I did not look for you
Till night, in the Hall; nor have as yet declared
My judgment to the Lady!

Berth. So I hoped.

Val. And yet I scarcely know why that should check
The frank disclosure of it first to you—
What her right seems, and what, in consequence,
She will decide on—

Berth. That I need not ask.

Val. You need not. I have proved the Lady's mind—
And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind!

Val. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture
Bear herself bravely; she no whit depends
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,
She had adorned . . .

Berth. . . . A cottage—in what book
Have I read that, of every queen that lived?
A throne? You have not been instructed, sure,
To forestall my request?

Val. 'Tis granted, sir—
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
Your claims . . .

Berth. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred!
I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest—
In favour of a new and stronger one.

Val. You shall not need a stronger: on the part
Of the lady, all you offer, I accept,
Since one clear right suffices: yours is clear.
Propose!

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and, at no far time,
Something here whispers me—the Emperor
The Lady's mind is noble ; which induced
The seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand !

Berth. (He will fall down and kiss it next !)
Sir, this astonishment's too flattering—
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap !
Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter ; I shall scarce gainsay !
Elsewhere or here, the Lady needs must rule :
Like the Imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap !

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !
Will the match influence many fortunes here ?
A natural solicitude enough !
Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you !
However high you take your present stand,
There's prospect of a higher still remove—
For Juliers will not be my resting place,
And, when I have to choose a substitute
To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.
You need not give your mates a character !
And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grey smooth Chamberlain—he'd hesitate
A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir !
I like your method better—feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Val. I am to say, you love her ?

Berth.

Say that too !

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,
 With a Duke's marriage—How go precedents
 In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukcs?
 I see you have them here in goodly row;
 Yon must be Luitpold,—ay, a stalwart sire !)
 —Say, I have been arrested suddenly
 In my ambition's course, its rocky course,
 By this sweet flower—I fain would gather it
 And then proceed—so say and speedily—
 —(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's braven self !)
 Enough, sir : you possess my mind, I think.
 This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,
 And to this, be it that, in the Hall to-night,
 Your Lady's answer comes ; till when, farewell !

[*He retires.*]

Val. [*after a pause.*] The heavens and earth stay as
 they were—my heart
 Beats as it beat—the truth remains the truth !
 What falls away, then, if not faith in her ?
 Was it my faith, that she could estimate
 Love's value,—and, such faith still guiding me,
 Dare I now test her ?—or grew faith so strong
 Solely because no power of test was mine ?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir ! Ah, you turn away—all's over !
 But you are sorry for me—be not so !
 What I might have become, and never was,
 Regret with me ; what I have merely been,
 Rejoice I am no longer ; what I seem
 Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
 Hope that I am,—for, once my rights proved void,
 This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
 For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth !

Val. And what a lot is Berthold's !

The D.

How of him ?

Val. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms,
 Standing, as man, now, stately, strong and wise,
 Marching to fortune, not surprised by her :
 One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
 Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
 His manhood to the height that takes the prize,
 A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
 He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
 So that he rests upon his path content
 But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
 And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
 He sees so much as, just evolving these,
 The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
 To due completion, will suffice this life,
 And lead him at its grandest to the grave.
 After this star, out of a night he springs ;
 A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
 He quits, so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
 Nor, as from each to each exultingly
 He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
 This, for his own good —with the world, each gift
 Of God and man, —Reality, Tradition,
 Fancy and Fact—so well environ him,
 That as a mystic panoply they serve—
 Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
 And work his purpose out with half the world,
 While he, their master, dexterously slipped
 From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
 With his own prowess on the other half
 Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
 Adding, to what is He, a solid strength—
 An airy might to what encircles him,
 Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
 That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
 His shadow shall be watched, his step or gait
 Become a comfort or a portent ; how

He traiks his ermine take significance,—
Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
Its typified invincibility.

So shall he go on, greatening, till he ends
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthy world !

The D. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise
Out of my own—that is, above my power
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

Val. For you ?

The D. It was not I moved there, I think :
But one I could,—though constantly beside,
And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
And so adore. 'Twas a man moved there !

Val. Who ?

The D. I felt the spirit, never saw the face !

Val. See it ! 'Tis Berthold's ! He enables you
To realise your vision !

The D. Berthold ?

Val. Duke—
Emperor to be : he proffers you his hand.

The D. Generous and princely !

Val. He is all of this.

The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake—no
hand
Degrades me !

Val. You accept the proffered hand ?

The D. That he should love me !

Val. "Loved" I did not say !
Had that been—love might so incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that's at his foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks !

The D. Not love me, sir?

Val. He scarce affirmed it.

The D. May not deeds affirm?

Val. What does he? . . . Yes—yes—very much he does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—
 Immittigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
 Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance!

The D. Is not this love?

Val. So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully—
 All doubts are banished, that the world might have,
 Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
 May call up of your heart's sincereness now:
 To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—
 "Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
 "Yet I abjured it!" This, he does for you:
 It is munificently much!

The D. Still "much!"

But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!

Val. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks
 Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
 To the beloved: because bold confidence,
 Open superiority, free pride—
 Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:
 Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
 Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

* *The D.* You reason, then, and doubt?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love?—How strange! I never cast a
 thought

On that! Just see our selfishness—you seemed
 So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,
 I never dreamed another might divide
 My power with you, much less exceed it!

Val. Lady,

I am yours wholly !

The D. Oh, no, no, not mine !
 'Tis not the same now, never more can be !
 —Your first love, doubtless ! Well, what's gone from
 me ?

What have I lost in you ?

Val. My heart replies—
 No loss there ! . . . So to Berthold back again !
 This offer of his hand, he bids me make—
 Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh !

The D. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you !

Val. I am a simple Advocate of Cleves.

The D. You ! With the heart and brain that so helped
 me,

I fancied them exclusively my own,
 Yet find are subject to a stronger sway !
 She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair ?

Val. Most fair, beyond conception or belief !

The D. Black eyes?—no matter ! Colombe, the world
 leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed
 The only woman—see how true they spoke !
 One lived this while, who never saw your face,
 Not heard your voice—unless . . . Is she from Cleves ?

Val. Cleves knows her well !

The D. Ah—just a fancy, now !

When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,
 —Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Val. You thought of me ?

The D. Of what else ? Only such great cause, I
 thought,

For such effect—see what true love can do !
 Cleves is his love !—I almost fear to ask
 . . . Nor will not ! This is idling—to our work !
 Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
 My claims misgrounded ; then may follow better

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,
Was she in your mind?

Val. All done was done for her —

-- To humble me!

The D. She will be proud at least!

Val. She?

The D. When you tell her!

Val. That will never be!

The D. How—are there sweeter things you hope to
tell?

No, sir! You counselled me,—I counsel you
In the one point I—any woman—can!
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come next—
Say what you did through her, and she through you—
The praises of her beauty after ward!
Will you?

Val. I dare not!

The D. Dare not?

Val. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The D. You jest!

Val. The lady is above me and away!

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low —
But all the world calls rank divides us.

The D. Rank!

Now grant me patience! Here's a man declares
Oraculantly in another's case—

Sees the true value and the false, for them—

Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see!

You called my court's love worthless—so it turned:

I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,

And here you stickle for a piece or two!

First—has she seen you?

Val. Yes!

The D. She loves you, then,

Val. One flash of hope burst—then succeeded night—
And all's at darkest now. Impossible!

The D. We'll try: you are—so to speak—my subject
yet?

Val. As ever—to the death!

The D. Obey me, then!

Val. I must!

The D. Approach her, and . . . No! First of all
Get more assurance; "my instructress," say,
"Was great, descended from a line of kings,
"And even fair"—(wait why I say this folly)—
"She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
"Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
"The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him
"Who saved her at her need—if she said this,
"What should not one I love, say?"

Val. Heaven—this hope—
Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire!

The D. Say this!—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all that awe and reverence!
Nay—make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own!
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,
. . . (Obey!)

Val. I cannot choose!

The D. Then, kneel to her!
[VALENCE sinks on his knee.]

I dream!

Val. Have mercy! Yours, unto the death, - -
I have obeyed. Despair, and let me die.

The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?
Even with you as with the world? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So takes the shelter of a nobler cause.

Your service named its true source,—loyalty !
The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
Rise, sir ! The Prince's words were in debate.

Val. [*rising*] Rise ! Truth, as ever, Lady, comes
from you !

I should rise—I that spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, that stood firm then !
I laughed—for 'twas past tears—that Cleves should starve
With all hearts beating loud the infamy,
And no tongue daring trust as much to air !
Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute ?
Oh lady, for your own sake look on me !
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts !
I was proud once—I saw you—and they sank,
So that each magnified a thousand times
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,
A treasure's speed, a laurel-wreath enhance ?
What is my own desert ? But should your love
Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled me,—
Then—Oh, that wild word “then !”—be just to love,
In generosity its attribute !
Love, since you pleased to love ! All's cleared—average
For trial of the question kept so long
For you—Is Love or Vanity the best ?
You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate
Our earth and be its angel ! All is said.
Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours,
But for the cause' sake, look on me and him
And speak !

The D. I have received the Prince's message :
Say, I prepare my answer !

Val.

Take me, Cleves !

[*He withdraws.*]

The D. Mournful—that nothing's what it calls itself!
 Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
 And, love is question, what may Berthold's be?
 I did ill to mistrust the world so soon—
 Already was this Berthold at my side!
 The valley-level has its hawks, no doubt:
 May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
 Yet Valence . . . let me see his Rival then!

ACT V.

Night. SCENE.—The Hall.

Enter BERTHOLD and MELIUS.

Mel. And here you wait the matter's issue?

Berth.

Here.

Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then!

But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
 Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?

Berth.

Oh,

Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
 Was dazzled not so very soon—that's all!
 For my part, this is scarce the hasty, showy,
 Chivalrous measure you give me credit of!
 Perhaps I had the fancy,—but 'tis gone—
 —Let her commence the unfriended innocent,
 And carry wrongs about from court to court?
 No, truly! The least shake of Fortune's sand,
 —My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing-fit,
 King Philip takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
 And wondrously her claims would brighten up!
 Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
 O'er-looked provisions, past o'er premises,

* Follow in plenty—No—'tis the safer step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost—
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine—

Mel. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure !

Berth. Not so—or, if so—
Why not confess at once, that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now
To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it—that may turn out hazardous !
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque : those favoured few
Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late ; and I observe
A dun grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only lar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near ;
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We--
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
And sleep off headache on our frippery
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts !

Mel. Yes—you evade the adventure !—And, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you are.
—King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes ?
Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
With you too ?

Berth. Yes—no : I am past that now !
Gone 'tis—I cannot shut my eyes to fact.

Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone!
And something better's come instead, no doubt.

Mel. So be it! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,
Though to your end; so shall you prosper best.
The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,
Romantic way.

Berth. Won easier?

Mel. Will not she?

Berth. There I profess humility without bound!
Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor!

Mel. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
From your description of her mood and way!
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it!

Berth. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
So bold and voluble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change!
Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed the case!
. . . Oh, I read hearts! And for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth—see the event!
I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay!
Before my uncle could obtain the ear
Of his superior, help me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
I am past illusion on that score.

Mel. Here comes

The lady—

Berth. —And there you go! But do not! Give me
Another chance to please you. Hear me plead!

Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SABYNE, and, after an interval, by the Courtiers.

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting !

The D. May it prove !

--And you, sir, will be Emperor one day ?

Berth. (Ay—that's the point !) I may be Emperor.

The D. 'Tis not for my sake only, I am proud
Of this you offer : I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berth. (Generous—still that !) You underrate your-
self

You are, what I, to be complete, must have—

Find now, and may not find, another time.

While I career on all the world for stage,

There needs at home my representative—

The D. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman
be—

One dower'd with lands and gold, or rich in friends—

One like yourself !

Berth. Lady, I am myself,

And have all these : I want what's not myself,

Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords ?

Here's one already : be a friend's next gift

A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword !

The D. You love me, then ?

Berth. Your lineage I revere—

Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,

Do homage to your intellect, and bow

Before your peerless beauty.

The D. But, for love—

Berth. A further love I do not understand.

Our best course is to say these hideous truths,

And see them, once said, grow endurable.

Like waters shuddering from their central bed,

Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throes,
A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues
In sunshine, sleep in shadow,—and, at last,
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The D. You cannot love, then?

Berth. —Charlemagne, perhaps!

Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

The D. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?

Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither!
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit.
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide professions of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all—with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand
And none gainsays, the Earth's first woman!

The D. That—
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?

Berth. The matter's not in my arbitrement!
Now I have made my claims—which I regret—
Cede one, cede all!

The D. This claim then, you enforce?
Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide?

Berth. "When," Lady? Have I said thus much so
promptly
For nothing? Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth

Droplet by droplet in a life-time long,
 For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?
 All's fairly told now—who can teach you more?

The D. I do not see him!

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive!

This offer had been made befittingly
 Would time allow the better setting forth
 The good of it, with what is not so good,
 Advantage, and disparagement as well—
 But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
 I am already weary of this place—
 My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide!
 The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now!
 Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess!

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*

Courtiers. . . . "Farewell," Prince? when we break
 in at our risk—

Clug. (Almost upon Court-licence trespassing)—

Courtiers.—To point out how your claims are valid yet!
 You know not, by the Duke her Father's will,
 The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
 Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
 So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if
 It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed
 A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
 Succeed to Juliers.

*Berth.** What insanity? . . .

Gui. Sir, there's one Valence—the pale fiery man
 You saw and heard, this morning—thought, no doubt,
 Was of considerable standing here—
 I put it to your penetration, Prince,
 If aught save love, the truest love for her,
 Had made him serve the lady as he did!
 He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
 —Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place

With danger, gets in by a miracle,
 And for the first time meets the Lady's face—
 So runs the story—is that credible?
 For, first—no sooner in, than he's apprised
 Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
 The Lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!

The D. [*Aside.*] (And do such deeds spring up from
 love alone?)

Gui. But here occurs the question, does the Lady
 Love him again? I say, How else can she?
 Can she forget how he stood singly forth
 In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
 Insult yourself—for what save love's reward?

The D. (And is love then the sole reward of love?)

Gui. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,
 Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!
 Both, in their pride, point out the sole result—
 Nought less would he accept nor she propose!
 For each conjuncture was she great enough—
 —Will be, for this!

Clug. Though, now that this is known,
 Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The D. —What, sir, and wherefore?—since I am not
 sure

That all is any other than you say?
 You take this Valence, hold him close to me,
 Him with his actions: can I choose but look?
 I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
 Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,
 Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus:
 Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
 Ere I had dared,)—now that the look is dared—
 Sure that I do not love him!

Gui. I hear you, Prince?

Berth. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle
 mean?

—Unless to prove with what alacrity
 You give your Lady's secrets to the world —
 —How much indebted, for discovering
 That quality, you make me, will be found
 When next a keener for my own's to seek !

Courtiers. "Our Lady?"

Berth. —She assuredly remains !

The D. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous ?
 You could renounce your power, if this were so,
 And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
 Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed
 Him, even, in disinterestedness !

Berth. How, Lady, should all this affect my purpose ?
 Your will and choice are still as ever, fine !
 Say, you have known a worthier than myself
 In mind and heart, of happier form and face ;
 Others must have their birthright ! I have gifts,
 To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight !
 Against a hundred other qualities,
 I lay the price I offer. I am nothing—
 Wed you the Empire ?

The D. And my heart away ?

Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart ?
 I give none. I shall keep your honour safe—
 With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
 Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
 Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
 In graceful, slight, silent security.
 You will be proud of my world-wide career,
 And I content in you the fair and good.
 What were the use of planting a few seeds,
 The thankless climate never would mature—
 Affections all repelled by circumstance ?
 Enough : to these no credit I attach,—
 To what you own, find nothing to object.
 Write simply on my Requisition's face

What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravensstein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all's ended.

The D. Let all end !

Berth. The Requisition !

Courtiers. —Valence holds, of course !

Berth. Desire his presence ! [ADOLF goes out.]

Courtiers [to each other.] Out it all comes yet !

He'll have his word against the bargain still !

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce !

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,

Might turn the tide again ! Despair not yet !

[*They retire a little.*]

Berth. [to MELCHIOR.] The Empire has its old success,
my friend !

Mel. You've had your way : before the spokesman comes,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out

And ever more be dumb ! The Empire wins ?

To better purpose I have read my books !

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [to the Courtiers.] Apart, my masters !

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you !

I am a poor dependent of the Prince's—

Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence :

You are no higher, I find—in other words,

We two, as probably the wisest here,

Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools :

Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact

Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them—

Do you reply so, and what trouble's saved !

The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap or news

This moment reaches him—if true or false,

All dignity forbids he should enquire

In person, or by worthier deputy ;
 Yet somehow must enquire, lest slander come :
 And so 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard
 His offer to your Lady ?

Val. Yes.

Mel. —Conceive

Her joy thereat ?—

Val. I cannot.

Mel. No one can :

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [*Aside.*] So !

No after-judgment—no first thought revised—
 Her first and last decision !—me, she leaves—
 Takes him—a simple heart is flung aside,
 The ermine o'er a heartless breast embrac'd !
 Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft !
 Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends
 Recording, might be proud they chose not so—
 Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world
 All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
 Could have such chance yet fail so signally,
 —But ever—ever—this farewell to heaven,
 Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
 This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
 Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old !

Mel. Well, on this point—what but an absurd rumour
 Arises—these, its source—its subject, you !
 Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
 They say, your service claims the lady's hand !
 Of course, nor Prince nor Lady can respond—
 Yet something must be said—for, were it true
 You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Val. . . . Well, sir, would ?

Mel. —Not only probably withdraw his suit,
 But, very like, the lady might be forced,
 Accept your own.—Oh, there are reasons why !

But you'll excuse at present all save this,—
I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours : decide !

Val. [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she accounts it so !
[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose as
she ?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon ?

Mel. [*to the Prince.*] Now to him, you !

Berth. [*to VAUFNCE.*] My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .

Val. . . . Prince, how fortunate are you,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of it,
To show belief in love ! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard ! What else can be ?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay, sir :
But softly ! Where in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting ?

Val. Then, indeed,
What is it you can take ?

Mel. Nay—ask the world
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er mankind !

Val. When man perceives . . .
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself !

The D. Speak for yourself !

Val. May I ?—no, I have spoken,
And time's gone by !—Had I seen such an one—
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
So should my task be to evolve her love—
If for myself !—if for another—well !

Berth. Heroic truly ! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up your own ?

Val. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
Comes after—Oh what amplest recompence!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?
—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world,
And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
What would he have? He holds you—you, both form,
And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room
For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, in saving you
Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—

[*Offers the Requisition, which she takes.*]

Wishing your good!

The D. [*having subscribed it.*] And opportunely, sir—
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.
Ask of me!

Berth. He shall have what'er he asks,
For your sake and his own!

Val. [*Aside.*] If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,
One last touch of her hand, I never more
Shall see!

[*After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.*]

Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berth. I will, sir!

The D. [as VALENCE prepares to retire.]—Nay, do
out your duty, first!

You bore this paper : I have registered
My answer to it : read it and have done !

[VALENCE reads it.]
—I take him—give up Juliers and the world !
This is my Birth-day.

Mel. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings !

Berth. [after a pause] Lady, well rewarded ! Sir, as
well deserved !

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
I do admire you ! All is for the best !
Too costly a flower were you, I see it now,
To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither—any garish plume will do !
I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—
You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly off !
As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
Begins already—they're too occupied
To listen—and few words content me best !
[Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though !
Who obey me here ?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

Gui. [starting from the Courtiers.]—And I ?
Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you ?
Shall not I get some little duties up
At Ravestein and emulate the rest ?
God save you, Gaucelme ! 'Tis my Birth-day, too !

Berth. You happy handful that remain with me
. . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite

I shall leave over you—will earn your wages,
 Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade,
 Meantime, —go copy me the precedents
 Of every installation, proper styles,
 And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—
 While I prepare to go on my old way,
 And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The D. [with a light joyous laugh as she turns
 from them.] Come, Valence, to our friends—
 God's earth . . .

Val. [as she falls into his arms]—And thee!

The Flight of the Duchess.

I.

YOU'RE my friend :
I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

II

Ours is a great wild country :
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've passed the corn-field count
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched thro' and thro' with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,

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And forge and furnace mould and melt,
 And so on, more and ever more,
 Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
 Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea shore,
 — And the whole is our Duke's country !

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
 (And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
 In the castle where the other Duke was—
 (When I was hopeful and young, not old !)
 I in the Kennel, he in the Bower :
 We are of like age to an hour.
 My father was Huntsman in that day ;
 Who has not heard my father say
 That, when a boar was brought to bay,
 Three times, four times out of five,
 With his huntspear he'd contrive
 To get the killing-place transfixed,
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
 And that's why the old Duke had rather
 Have lost a salt-pit than my father,
 And loved to have him ever in cat' ;
 That's why my father stood in the hall
 When the old Duke brought his infant co
 To show the people, and while they passed
 The wondrous bantling round about,
 Was first to start at the outside blast
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
 Just a month after the babe was born.
 " And " quoth the Kaiser's courier, " since
 " The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
 " Needs the Duke's self at his side : "
 The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
 But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
 Castles a-fire, men on their march,

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The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
 And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
 The row of crests and shields and banners,
 Of all achievements after all manners,
 And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
 The more was his comfort when he died
 At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
 With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
 In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
 Petticoated like a herald,
 In a chamber next to an ante-room,
 Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
 What he called stink, and they, perfume .
 —They should have set him on red Berold,
 Mad with pride, like fire to manage !
 They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
 Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
 Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
 —Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game !
 Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
 To flap each broad wing like a banner,
 And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !
 Had they broached a cask of white beer from Beilun !
 —Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine—
 Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
 A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
 Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,
 And rosy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
 Was left with the infant in her clutches,
 She being the daughter of God knows who :
 And now was the time to revisit her tribe,
 So, abroad and afar they went, the two,
 And let our people rail and gibe

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At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V.

And he came back the peetest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ;
Full of his travel, struck at himself—
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways
—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it ;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-
out :
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;
—They should have set him on red Berold,
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spue !

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent, at the word,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 183

Came the Lady, in time of spring,
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of uroox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle :
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the Lady arrive .
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger ' !
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees .
In truth, she was not hard to please ' !
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the "scrfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she enquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,—
If the green and gray bird on the field was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke,
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;

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And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind su'llies,
The Lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey—
For such things must begin some one day !

VII.

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labour in vain !"
" This is all a jest against God, who meant
" I should ever be, as I am, content
" And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be !"
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she had given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day,)
—For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say,)
Never in all the world such an one !
And here was plenty to be done,
And she thought it could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the Hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule (but for after-sadness that came—

To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
 With which the young Duke and the old Dame
 Would let her advise, and criticise,
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
 And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
 They bore it all in complacent guise,
 As tho' an artificer, after contriving
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,
 Should find with delight it could motion to strike him .
 So found the Duke, and his mother like him,—
 The Lady hardly got a rebuff—
 That had not been contemptuous enough,
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
 As the way is with a hid chagrin ;
 And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
 And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,
 "But I shall find in my power to right me'"
 Don't swear, friend—the Old One, many a year,
 Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warming,
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
 And another and another, and faster and faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rilled :
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
 And found, since the ealendar bade him be hearty,

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He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it !
What meant old poets by their strictures ?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures ?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels,
And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions :
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated,
—To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-
hose ;
What signified hats if they had no runs on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,
And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on't !

XI.

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jackboots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses,
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
And, after much laying of heads together,

Somebody's cap got a notable feather
 By the announcement with proper unction
 That he had discovered the lady's function ;
 Since ancient authors held this tenet,
 " When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
 " Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,
 " And with water to wash the hands of her liege
 " In a clean ewer with a fair toweling.
 " Let her preside at the disemboweling "

Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
 As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
 And thrust her broad wings like a banner
 Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
 And if day by day, and week by week,
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
 Would it cause you any great surprise
 If when you decided to give her an airing
 You found she needed a little preparing ?
 —I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
 And much wrong now that used to be right,
 So, thanking him, declined the hunting.—
 Was conduct ever more affronting ?
 With all the ceremony settled—
 With the towel ready, and the sewer
 Polishing up his oldest ewer,

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And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
 Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
 And when she persisted nevertheless,—
 Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
 That there ran half round our Lady's chamber
 A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;
 And that Jacynth the true-woman, ready in waiting,
 Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
 Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant ;
 And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
 How could I keep at any vast distance ?
 And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,
 The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
 Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
 And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
 Turned her over to his yellow mother
 To learn what was decorous and lawful ;
 And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
 As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct—
 Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once !
 What meant she ?—Who was she ?—Her duty and station,
 The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
 Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
 In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
 And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,
 And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
 And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on !
 Well, somehow or other it ended at last
 And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;
 And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
 Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
 Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
 Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—
 From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn
 Unbending of the vertebral column !

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However, at sunrise our company mustered,
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the prickler blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log.
Like so much wool for colour and bulkness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen .
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march,
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground.
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on .
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,

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They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
 Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
 With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
 Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
 Or, if your colt's four-foot inclines to curve inwards,
 Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a swivel
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel ;
 Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,
 That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle .
 But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;
 Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters !
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
 As if in pure water you dropped and let die
 A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
 And that other sort, their crowning pride,
 With long white threads distinct inside,
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
 Loose such a length and never tangle,
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
 And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters
 Such are the works they put their hand to,
 And the uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
 And these made the troop which our Duke saw sally
 Towards his castle from out of the valley,
 Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
 Come out with the morning to greet our riders ;
 And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
 By her gait, directly, and her stoop,
 I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
 The oldest Gypsy then above ground ;
 And, so sure as the autumn season came round,
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,

And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
 And presently she was seen to sidle
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up
 As under its nose the old witch peered up
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
 Of no use now but to gather brime,
 And began a kind of level whine
 Such as they used to sing to their viols
 When their ditties they go grinding
 Up and down with nobody minding :
 And, then as of old, at the end of the humming
 Her usual presents were forthcoming
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
 (Just as a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
 Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
 A word in reply ; and in vain she felt
 With twitching fingers at her belt
 For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
 Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
 Or possibly with an after-intention,
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty
 To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
 No sooner had she named his Lady,
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
 And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—
 For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning ;
 If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
 She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow ;
 And who so fit a teacher of trouble
 As this sordid crone bent well nigh double ?
 So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
 (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute

That their own fleece serves for natural suit) '

He was constrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,

The life of the lily so flower-like and delicate

With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.

I, in brief, was th' man the Duke beckoned

From out of the throng, and while I drew near

He told the crone, as I since have reckon'd

By the way he bent and spoke into her ear

With circumspection and mystery,

The main of the Lady's history,

Her frowardness and ingratitude ;

And for all the crone's submissive attitude

I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,

As tho' she engaged with hearty good will

Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,

And promised the lady a thorough frightening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse

Of a purse, with the air of a man who naps

The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,

He bade me take the gypsy mother

And set her telling some story or other

Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,

To while away a weary hour

For the Lady left alone in her bower,

Whose mind and body craved excitation

And yet shrank from all better diversion

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curvettee,

Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo

Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,

And back I turned and bade the crone follow.

And what makes me confident what's to be told you

Had all along been of this crone's devising,

Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 193

There was a novelty quick as surprising :
 For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
 And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
 As if age had foregone its usurpature,
 And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
 And the face looked quite of another nature,
 And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
 Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,
 For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
 Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
 Like the band-roll strung with tomans
 Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :
 And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
 Come out as after the rain he paces,
 Two unmistakable eye-points duly
 Live and aware looked out of their places.
 So we went and found Jacynth at the entry
 Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;
 I told the command and produced my companion,
 And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
 For since last night, by the same token,
 Not a single word had the Lady spoken :
 So they went in both to the presence together,
 While I in the balcony watched the weather

xv.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
 I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :
 Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
 On that little head of hers and burn it,
 If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
 Asleep of a sudden and there continue
 The whole time sleeping as profoundly
 As one of the boars my father would pin you
 'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,
 — Jacynth forgive me the comparison !

194 THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

But where I begin my own narration
 Is a little after I took my station
 To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
 And, having in those days a falcon eye,
 To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
 From where the bushes thinner crested
 The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree ---
 When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
 By—was it singing, or was it saying,
 Or a strange musical instrument playing
 In the chamber?—and to be certain
 I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
 And there lay Jacynth asleep,
 Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
 In a rosy sleep along the floor
 With her head against the door ;
 While in the midst, on the seat of state,
 Like a queen the Gypsy woman sate,
 With head and face downbent
 On the Lady's head and face intent,
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
 The Lady sate between her knees
 And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,
 And on those hands her chin was set,
 And her upturned face met the face of the clone
 Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
 As if she could double and quadruple
 At pleasure the play of either pupil
 —Very like by her hands slow fanning,
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
 They moved to measure like bell clappers
 —I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
 Do they applaud you or huzlesque you ?
 Those hands and fingers with no flesh on ?
 When, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue
 At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression .

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 195

For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving—
Life, that filling her, past redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened,—
When all at once a hand detained me,
And the selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furl'd
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propp'd,
And left them midway in the world,
And word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gypsy said :—

“ And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey thro',
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other vein

196 THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

That meet on thy brow and part again,
 Making our rapid mystic mark ;
 And I bid my people prove and probe
 Each eye's profound and glorious globe
 Till they detect the kindred spark
 In those depths so dear and dark,
 Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee,
 Circling over the midnight sea.
 And on that young round cheek of thine
 I make them recognise the tinge,
 As when of the costly scarlet wine
 They drip so much as will impinge
 And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
 One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
 Over a silver plate whose sheen
 Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
 For, so I prove thee, to one and all,
 Fit, when my people ope their breast,
 To see the sign, and hear the call,
 And take the vow, and stand the test
 Which adds one more child to the rest—
 When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
 And the world is left outside.
 For there is probation to decree,
 And many and long must the trials be
 Thou shalt victoriously endure,
 If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;
 Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
 Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
 Let once the vindicating ray
 Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
 And steel and fire have done their part
 And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;
 So, trial after trial past,
 Wilt thou fall at the very last
 Breathless, half in trance

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 197

With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore ;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve !
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy ;
Not a power of life but we'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want ;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree --
Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done ;
Tho' each apart were never so weak,
Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right :
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend, — as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee,
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy girdle crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere ?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway ?
I foresee and I could foretell

198 THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

Thy future portion, sure and well—
 But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
 And let them say what thou shalt do!
 Only, be sure thy daily life,
 In its peace, or in its strife,
 Never shall be unobserved;
 We pursue thy whole career,
 And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
 Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
 We are beside thee, in all thy ways,
 With our blame, with our praise,
 Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 G'ad, sorry—but indifferent, no!
 Whether it is thy lot to go,
 For the good of us all, where the haters meet
 In the crowded city's horrible street;
 Or thou step alone thro' the morass
 Where never sound yet was
 Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
 For the air is still, and the water still,
 When the blue breast of the dipping coot
 Dives under, and all again is mute.
 So at the last shall come old age,
 Decrepit as befits that stage;
 How else wouldst thou retire apart
 With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
 And gather all to the very least
 Of the fragments of life's earliest feast,
 Let fall through eagerness to find
 The crowning dainties yet behind?
 Ponder on the entire past
 Laid together thus at last,
 When the twilight helps to fix
 The first fresh, with the faded hues,
 And the outline of the whole,
 As round eve's shades their framework roll,

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 199

Grandly fronts for once thy soul :
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—”

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen !
But what ? For here her voice changed like a bird's ;
There grew more of the music and less of the words ;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable,
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but untacks !
But to return from this excursion, —
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished !
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring made I,
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,
When the door opened, and more than mortal,
Stood, with a face whence to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess—~~P~~stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,

200 THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I felt at once that all was best,
 And that I had nothing to do, for the fact,
 But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
 Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
 --I saw the glory of her eye,
 And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
 And I was hers to live or to die.
 As for finding what she wanted,
 You know God Almighty granted
 Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
 To tell one another all their desires,
 So that each knows what its friend requires,
 And does its bidding without teachers.
 I preceded her ; the crone
 Followed silent and alone ;
 I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
 In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
 Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;
 In short, the soul in its body sunk
 Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
 We descended, I preceding ;
 Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;
 All the world was at the chase,
 The court-yard like a desert-place,
 The stable emptied of its small fry ;
 I saddled myself the very palfrey
 I remember patting while it carried her,
 The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
 And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
 The lady had not forgotten it either,
 And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
 Would have been only too glad for her service
 To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
 But unable to pay proper duty where owing it
 Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it :

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 201

For though the moment I began setting
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
 (Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,
 And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
 And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
 I say, although she never used me,
 Yet when she was mounted, the gypsy behind her,
 And I ventured to remind her,
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
 —Something to the effect that I was in readiness
 Whenever God should please she needed me,—
 Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
 With a look that placed a crown on me,
 And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
 Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse
 Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
 Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
 So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
 Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself !
 It was a little plat of hair
 Such as friends in a convent make
 To wear, each for the other's sake,—
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
 And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
 These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her !

XVI.

When the liquor's out, why clink the cannakin?
 I did think to describe you the panic in
 The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
 When she heard, what she called, the flight of the
 feloness—

But it seems such child's play
 What they said and did with the ludy away!
 And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
 As that sweet form disappeared thro' the postern,
 She that kept it in constant good humour,
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do
 more.

But the world thought otherwise and went on,
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
 Thirty years are fled since that morning,
 And with them all my head's adorning.
 Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
 As you expect, of suppressed spite,
 The natural end of every adder
 Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
 But she and her son agreed, I take it,
 That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
 For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
 So they made no search and small inquiry—
 And when fresh gypsies have paid us a visit, I've
 Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
 But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
 And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
 Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 203

And the old one was in the young one's stead,
 And took, in her place, the household's head,
 And a blessed time the household had of it !
 And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
 How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
 I could favour you with sundry touches
 Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
 Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
 (To get on faster) until at last her
 Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
 Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse
 Till in short she grew from scalp to udder
 Just the object to make you shudder !

XVII.

You're my friend—
 What a thing friendship is, world without end !
 How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,
 As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
 And poured out all lovely, sparkling, and sunlit,
 Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
 Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
 Friendship's as good as that monarch of fluids
 To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-outs,—
 Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand
 doubts
 Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
 Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease !
 I have seen my little Lady once more,
 Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
 For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;
 I always wanted to make a clean breast of it,
 And now it is made—why, my heart's-blood, that went
 trickle,
 Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,
 Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main ventricle,

And genially floats me about the gublets !
 I'll tell you what I intend to do :
 I must see this fellow his sad life thro'
 —He is our Duke after all,
 And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall ;
 My father was born here and I inherit
 His fame, a chain he bound his son with,—
 Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
 But there's no mine to blow up and get done with,
 So I must stay till the end of the chapter :
 For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
 Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
 One day or other, his head in a morion,
 And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up
 Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup.
 And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
 And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with a blue crust,
 Then, I shall scrape together my earnings ;
 For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth reposes,
 And our children all went the way of the roses—
 It's a long lane that knows no turnings,—
 One needs but little tackle to travel in,
 So, just one stout cloak shall I indue,
 And for a staff, what beats the javelin
 With which his boars my father pinned you ?
 And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
 Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,
 I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly ?
 Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
 What's a man's age ? He must hurry more, that's all ;
 Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold ;
 When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—
 What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?
 And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship secs,
 (Come all the way from the north-part with sperm oil)
 I shall get safely out of the turmoil

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS. 205

And arrive one day at the land of the gypsies
 And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
 From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
 His forehead chapletted green with wreathy hop,
 Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
 And when my Cotnar begins to operate
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
 And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
 I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
 “You never knew then, how it all ended,
 “What fortunes good or bad attended
 “The little lady your Queen befriended?”
 —And when that’s told me, what’s remaining?
 This world’s too hard for my explaining—
 The same wise judge of matters equine
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
 And for strong Cotnar drink French weak wine,
 He also must be such a Lady’s scorner!
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,
 Now up, now down, the world’s one see-saw!
 —So, I shall find out some snug corner
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet’s blowing
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
 To a world where’s to be no further throwing
 Pearls before swine that can’t value them. Amen!

Luria ;
4 FRAG+DY

I DEDICATE

THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC
POLITICS

To a Great Dramatic Poet;

“WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:”

—IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE
LEAST WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVI-
LEGE IS IN A GRAFIOUS ADMIRATION,

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

Luria.

PERSONS

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces
HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend
PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA'S Chief
Officer
BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence
JACOPO (LAPO) his Secretary
TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans
DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady

TIME, 14 -

SCENE LURIA'S Camp between Florence and Pisa

ACT. I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary* ; PUCCIO
standing by.

Brac. [to PUC.] Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puc.

Not I

Luria, the Captain.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "In an hour, the battle."

[To PUC.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose dige

And see if very much of your report

Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.

Does this instruct the Signory aught

How army stands with army?

Puc. [*taking the paper.*] All seems here :
 —That Luria, seizing with our City's force
 The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
 Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
 And baffling the Lucchese arriv'd too late,
 Must, in the battle he delivers now,
 Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac. So sure ?
 Tiburzio's a consummate captain too !

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand !"

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir :
 So, while my secretary ends his task,
 Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
 To post with it to Florence !

Puc. [*returning the paper.*] All seems here ;
 Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report !
 Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
 And Luria's hastening at the city's call
 To save her, as he only could, no doubt ;
 Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
 Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :
 Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
 Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
 No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;
 Therefore while Florence glori'd in her choice
 And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
 As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
 Had never met in any man before,
 I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
 But now, this last report and I have done—
 So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
 'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the trade
 Subscribed with, " True, for once a rich counsel's best ;
 " This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,

"This boy to whose untried sagacity,
 "Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
 "The charge to save her, justifies her choice ;
 "In no point has this stranger failed his friends ;
 "Now praise !" I say this, and it is not here.
Brac. [to the Sec] Write, "Puccio, superseded in the
 charge
 "By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
 "And no reward our Signory can give
 "Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully."
 Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers !

[PUCCIO goes.]

Brac. [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the
paper into shreds.]

I think . . . pray God, I hold in fit contempt
 This warfare's noble art and ordering,
 And,—once the brace of prizes fairly matched,
 Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,
 Spit properly at what men term their skill .
 Yet here I think our fighter has the odds ;
 With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
 Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
 With Lucca off the stage, too,—all's assured :
 Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
 That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Aye, Lapo?

Sec.

If you trip, I fall :

'Tis in self-interest I speak—

Brac.

Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay !

When did I say pure love's impossible?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,

Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Where all your old acquaintances may see :
 You'd die for me, I should not be surprised !
 Now then !

Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself !
 Step after step the Signory and you
 Tread gay till this tremendous point's to pass ;
 Which, pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,
 Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,
 Or too delicious may not prove the pride
 Of this long secret Trial you dared plan,
 Dare execute, you solitary here,
 With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
 Who think themselves your lords, they are such slaves ?
 If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
 Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
 And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
 On the best minute of his brightest day,
 From that adoring army at his back,
 Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
 Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac. Then—
 Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
 We of the other craft and mystery,
 May we not smile demure, the danger past ?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
 At watch and ward ? Where's danger on your part,
 With that thin fitting instantaneous steel,
 'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world ?
 If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
 Should have been really guiltless after all ?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that ?
Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
 And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;
 This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,
 Husain ; they talk—all that's feigned easily ;
 He speaks (I would not listen if I could),

Reads, orders, counsels ;—but he rests sometimes,—
 I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
 On the lynx-skins, yonder ; hold his bared black arms
 Into the sun from the tent opening ; laugh
 When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
 And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs,
 That man believes in Florence, as the Saint
 Tied to the wheel believes in God !

Brac.

How strange—

You too have thought that !

Sec.

Do but you think too,

And all is saved ! I only have to write,
 The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last ;
 Bury it . . . so I write to the Signory
 Bury this Trial in your breasts for ever,
 Blot it from things or done or dreamed about,
 So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
 With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
 As if no meteoric finger hushed
 The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip.
 Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.

Brac. [*looks to the wall of the tent.*] Did he draw that ?

Sec.

With charcoal, when the watch

Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia
 Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;
 That is his fancy how a Moorish front
 Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
 And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec.

She is sent the spy

Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :
 Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
 Is surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac.

I see—

A Moorish front, not of such ill design !
 Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive ;

Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
 What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
 And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
 Yet render up the charge when peace returned,
 Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
 Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
 If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
 Should sink its point before the statist's pen,
 And the calm head replace the violent hand,
 Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
 Before ambition with unvarying fate,
 Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
 Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
 And, sparing further to expose her sons
 To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
 Declare "The Foreigner, one not my child,
 "Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
 "The glory, then descend into the shame;
 "So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
 "And punishment the easier task for me"
 —If on the best of us this brand she set,
 Can I suppose an utter alien here,
 This Luria, our inevitable foe,
 Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
 Born free from any ties that bind the rest
 Of common faith in Heaven or hope on Earth.
 No Past with us, no Future,—such a Spirit
 Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
 Stand firm where every famed precursor fell?
 My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
 So duly noted of the man's intent,
 Are for the doting fools at home, not me;
 The charges here, they may be true or false,
 —What is set down? Errors and oversights,
 This dallying interchange of courtesies
 With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,

Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
 Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
 Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
 Even that he loves this Lady who believes
 She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
 By my procurement here, to spy on me,
 Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
 She who remembering her whole House's fall,
 That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
 Now labours to make Luria . . . poor device
 As plain . . . the instrument of her revenge !
 —That she is ever at his ear to prompt
 Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
 Exorbitant belief in its reward,
 And after, when sure disappointment follows,
 Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
 Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
 Weigh with me less than least ; as nothing weigh !
 Upon that broad Man's heart of his, I go !
 On what I know must be, yet while I live
 Will never be, because I live and know !
 Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect
 May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—
 But Intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
 And Intellect's tradition so kept up
 Till the good comes—'twas Intellect that ruled,
 Not Brute-force bringing from the battle-field
 The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
 We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
 All which it took for earnest and kept safe
 To show against us in our market-place,
 Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear
 (Fetched from the camp where at their foolish best
 When all was done they frightened nobody)
 Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
 With our own warrant and allowance. No !

The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
 In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
 To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
 Well then, to perish for a single fault,
 Let that be simple justice!—There, my Lapo!
 A Moorish front 't suits our Duomo's body—
 Blot it out—and bid LURIA's sentence come!

[LURIA *who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at
 the close of the last phrase, now advancing.*

And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Brac. Ah, you so close, Sir? Lady Domizia too?
 I said it needs must be a busy moment
 For one like you—that you were now 't the thick
 Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sate . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
 What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch!
 I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Lur. See your dispatch, your last, for the first time?
 Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
 He would be forced to set about another,
 In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
 To mention that important circumstance:
 So while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
 Do not send this!

Brac. And wherefore?

Lur. These Lucchese
 Are not arrived—they never will arrive!
 And I must fight to-day, arrived or not;
 And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure:
 And then will be arriving my Lucchese,
 But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
 To look upon my battle from the hills,
 Like a late moon, of use to nobody!
 And I must break my battle up, send forth,
 Surround on this side, hold in check on that—

Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
 You make me send for fresh instructions home,
 —Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Brac. Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
 The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
 As a most happy fortune ; both at once
 Were formidable—singly faced, each fall.

Lur. So no great battle for my Florentines !
 No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
 For all of them, the simple as the wise,
 Old, young, alike, that do not understand
 Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
 By which we prove retreat may be success,
 Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain .

They want results—as if it were their fault !
 And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
 Will not be able now to simply say

“ Your servant has performed his task—enough !

“ You ordered, he has executed : good !

“ Now walk the streets in holiday attire,

“ Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,

“ Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo's shade !”

• No ! you will have to argue and explain,

Persuade them all is not so ill in the end,

Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese !

Don. Well, you will triumph for the Past enough,
 Whatever be the Present's chance—no service
 Falls to the ground with Florence ; she awaits
 Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah, Braccio, you know Florence . . . will she,
 think you,

Receive one . . . what means “ fittingly receive ?”

—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :

And yet Domizia promises so much !

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.

I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,¹
 Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue—
 I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
 Our State gave Luria, when she made him chief
 Of her whole force, in her best Captain's place.

Lur. That my reward? Florence on my account
 Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!
 And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—
 Goes here and there, directs, may fight himself,
 While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee!
 That was my calling—there was my true place!
 I should have felt, in some one over me,
 Florence impersonate, my visible Head,
 As I am over Puccio,—taking life
 Directly from her eye!—They give me you!
 But do you cross me, set me half to work?
 I enjoy nothing—but I will, for once!
 Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Brac. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon;
 Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast!
 I wonder, do you guess why I delay
 Involuntarily the final blow
 As long as possible? Peace follows it!
 Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
 Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
 As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art
 You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile!
 'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
 The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
 The walls are peopled by the Painter's brush;
 The Statue to its niche ascends to dwell;
 The Present's noise and trouble have retired
 And left the eternal Past to rule once more.—
 You speak its speech and read its records plain,
 Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend,

—But Luria—where will then be Luria's place?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that Past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that were before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets
Leading the life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—
Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again?
For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness—still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
Not ever more!—Well, well, to-day is ours!

Dom. [to BRAC.] Should he not have been one of us?

Lur. Oh, no!

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, and changing thus,—
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart!
The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;
Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile;
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
In rapture of ascent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies!
Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever!
Your placid heads still find our hands new work;
Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of mine—
And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio!
You hold my strength; 'twere best dispose of it!
What you created, see that you find food for—
I shall be dangerous else!

Brac.

How dangerous, Sir?

* *Lur.* Oh, there are many ways, Domizia warns me,
 And one with half the power that I possess,
 Grows very formidable! Do you doubt?
 Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk
 Morn wears, we keep you from your proper place
 In the field!—

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more!
 My part is done, and Puccio's may begin!
 I cannot trench upon his province longer
 With any face.—You think yourselves so safe?
 Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
 One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet!

Lur. My Lucchese at last!
 Arrived, as sure as Florence stands! your leave!

[*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness charactered
 By such unconsciousness as Luria's here,
 And sharing least the secret of itself!
 Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
 Such save the world which none but they could save,
 Yet think whatever they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes: and how worthy note, that those same
 great ones
 In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
 And all its due entailed humility,
 Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
 From taking up whatever offices
 Involve the whole world's safety or mishap,
 Into their mild hands as a thing of course!
 The Statist finds it natural to lead
 The mob who might as easily lead him—
 The Soldier marshals men who know as much—
 Statist and Soldier verily believe!
 While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking, now,

That I shall in this very letter write
 What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo !

[DOMIZIA goes.]

This last, worst, all affected childish fit
 Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
 Convinces me : the Past was no child's play ;
 It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
 All's mere dissimulation—to remove
 The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
 The utmost danger was at hand. Is't written ?
 Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
 And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
 My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
 And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
 As the Mage Negro King to Christ the Babe. —
 I judge his childishness the true relapse
 To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
 And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
 Whence more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [after a pause.] The sword ! At best, the
 soldier, as he says,
 In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
 For Italy to boast her show of the age,
 Her man of men !—To Florence with each letter !

ACT II.

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy
 heart
 Thro' all its safeguards ? Hate is said to help—
 Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm,
 And this my hate, made up of many hates,

'Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
 And will thee dead :—yet do I trust it not.
 Nor Man's devices, nor Heaven's memory
 Of wickedness forgot on Earth so soon,
 But thy own nature,—Hell and thee I trust,
 To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
 Where my revenge may meet thee : turn aside
 A single step, for gratitude, or shame,—
 Grace but this Luria, this wild mass of rage
 That I prepare to launch against thee now,
 With other payment than thy noblest found,—
 Give his desert for once its due reward, —
 And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
 But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
 It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
 From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth ;
 Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
 And then—I reach thee ! Old and trained, my sire
 Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
 Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
 The strange blow came for the expected wreath ;
 And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
 To exile, never to return,—they say,
 Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
 As if some natural law had changed,—how else
 Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
 Judge Porzio's actions worthy such an end ?
 But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
 —Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
 In which no way of getting his fair fame
 From their inexplicable charges free,
 Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
 To show its colour whether false or no !
 My brothers never had a friend like me
 Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
 —Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,

Say, Florence was all falseness, so false here,—
 And show them what a simple task remained—
 To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
 The City wedded to its wickedness—
 None stood by them as I by Luria stand !
 So, when the stranger cheated of his due
 Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
 Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
 For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
 Yet mutely in foilorn obedience died !
 He comes . . . his friend . . . black faces in the camp
 Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old !

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope ?
 'Tis Lucca ?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely !
 Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive—

Dom. Whom I withdraw before ; yet if I lingered
 You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast ;
 The overtaking night brings such reward !—
 And where will then be room for me ? Yet still
 Remember who was first to promise it,
 And envies those who also can perform !

[*Goes.*

• *Lur.* This trumpet from the Pisans ?—

Hus. In the camp ;

A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
 On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good ;
 A man I seem as I had seen before—
 Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay !

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !
 Thou heard'st what the grave woman said but now :
 To-night rewards thee ! That is well to hear !
 But stop not therefore ; hear it, and go on !

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest

They round me in the ears with, all day long?
 All that, I never take for earnest, friend!
 Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
 Or storied pillar,—thee and me—the Moors!
 But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
 That, we shall get?

Hus. It is too cold an air—
 Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist—
 Where is he now? So I trust none of them!

Lur. Truly?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
 'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
 And those absorbing, concentrating men!
 They use thee!

Lur. And I feel it, Husam; yes,
 And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
 Is only called to play its part outside
 Their different nature; where its sole use seems
 To fight with and keep off an adverse force
 As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws;
 Inside, they know not what to do with me;
 So I have told them laughingly and oft,
 But long since I prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husam!
 And speak my destiny, they dare not speak—
 Banish myself before they find the heart!
 I will be first to say, "the work rewards!"
 "I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
 "So may it be!—meanwhile 'tis best I go,
 "And carry safe my memories of you all
 "To other scenes of action, newer lands,"—
 Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
 They would not easily have tired of me!
 You think this hard to say?

Hus.

Say it or not

So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
 This hating people, that hate each the other,
 And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
 Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
 Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
 And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm ;
 While any creature of a better blood,
 They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
 And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
 Withers away before their eyes and breath.
 See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
 Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
 As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
 Who hates him most !—But thou, the friend of all
 . . . Come out of them !

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now !

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend ! [*Goes.*

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
 Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes
 Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
 When change is in the elements at work,
 Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
 But here,—he takes the distant chariot-wheels
 For thunder, festal fire for lightning's flash,
 The finer traits of cultivated life
 For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message. I but wait your message
 To sound the charge. You bring not overtures
 For truce?—I would not, for your General's sake,
 You spoke of truce—a time to fight is come,
 And whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
 His honest soldier's name to beat me with,
 Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You? 'Tis—yes . . . Tiburzio!
 You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
 From Puccio, when I threw in succours there!
 Why, I was on the heights—thro' the defile
 Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost;
 You wore an open scull-cap with a twist
 Of water-reefs—the plume being hewn away;
 While I drove down my battle from the heights,
 —I saw with my own eyes!

Tib. And you are Luria
 Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
 In error of the battle-signal's sense,
 Back safely to me at the critical time—
 One of a hundred deeds— I know you! Therefore
 To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio!

Tib. Luria, you know the peril's imminent
 On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
 Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
 The ragt of her implacablest of foes
 From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
 Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.
 You have so plainly here the best of it,
 That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
 How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
 How truly formidable by despair.
 Still, probabilities should have their weight—
 The extremest chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
 You win this battle. Wherefore say I this?
 To be well apprehended when I add,
 This danger absolutely comes from you.
 Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
 I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
 Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib. Even so!

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
 With all your present nobleness of soul,
 No question, what I must communicate
 Would not detach you from her.

Lur. Me, detach?

Tib. Time urges : you will ruin presently
 Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
 You think you know. I have from time to time
 Made prize of certain secret missives sent
 From Braccio here, the Commissary, home—
 And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
 The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
 Your trial occupies the Signory ;
 They sit in judgment on your conduct now !
 When men at home enquire into the acts
 Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
 Brief, they are Florentines ! You, saving them,
 Will seek the sure destruction saviours find.

Lur. Tiburzio—

Tib. All the wonder is of course !

I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
 Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
 This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
 As it left here an hour ago. One way
 Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
 The duplicate is on its road : but this,—
 Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence !

Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
 This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
 Would be no reason you should fall away—
 The Mother city is the mother still,
 And recognition of the children's service
 Her own affair ; reward—there's no reward !
 But you are bound by quite another tie ;
 Nor Nature shows, nor Reason, why at first

A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
 Should give himself to any special State
 More than another, stand by Florence' side
 Rather than Pisa's—'tis as fair a city
 You war against, as that you fight for—famed
 As well as she in story, graced no less
 With noble heads and patriotic hearts,—
 Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
 Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
 Which take importance from familiar view,
 Stand as the Right, and Sole to be upheld.
 Therefore, should the preponderating gift
 Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
 Which made you hers not Pisa's, void the scale,
 Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
 And all begins again. Break seal and read !
 At least let Pisa offer for you now !
 And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
 Tho' for myself I lose, in gaining you,
 This last fight and its opportunity ;
 The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
 Or in the turn of battle dying so
 That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
 As I for Florence . . . say my chance were yours !
 You read this letter, and you find . . . no, 'o !
 Too mad !

Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose
 When I have crushed their foe, to crush me : well ?

Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do ?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike—
 Pisa will pay me much as Florence you ;
 I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
 As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
 Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
 Entailed on them indelible disgrace,

Both which defects ask proper punishment.
Another tenure of obedience, mine !

You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? What act were fit ?
If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, which to me stands for Mankind,
—If that breaks up and, disemprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !
You may be very sage, yet . . . all the world
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone
What would the world be worth ? Whose love be sure ?
The world remains—you are deceived !

Tib.

Your hand !

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,
The better—I am left to speak ! For me,
This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect :
And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in your breast !

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once
And test them ere I answer finally !
At your arrival let the trumpet sound
If mine returns not then the wonted cry,
It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tib.

Well !

[*Goes.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true ! My blood
Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stepped into my watch-tent, night
And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given the salt
Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
Oh, world, where all things pass and nought abides,
Oh, life the long mutation—is it so ?

Is it with life as with the body's change?
 —Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
 Nor manhood's strength can vate with boyhood's grace,
 Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
 But silently the first gift dies away,
 And tho' the new stays, never both at once!
 Life's time of savage instinct's o'er with me,
 It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
 As if to punish the ingratitude
 With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
 And learned to look with European eyes.
 Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
 Where Braccio's brow tells nothing,—Puccio's mouth,
 Domizia's eyes reject the searcher—yes—
 For on their calm sagacity I lean,
 Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
 Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
 Yes, that is better—that is best of all!
 Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go!
 Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
 Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
 Betrays its steps into the pathless drift—
 The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
 By the sole bearing of the visible star,
 Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subsides;
 The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
 The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
 Yes: I trust Florence—Pisa is deceived!

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end: no Lucca? You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
 I am no Florentine?

Dom It is yourself
 Who still are forcing us importunately,
 To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss!—For what I lose in being none!
 No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
 But would remind you of the stranger's loss
 In natural friends and advocates at home,
 Hereditary loves, even rivalships,
 With precedents for honor and reward.
 Still, there's a gain, too! If you take it so,
 The stranger's lot has special gain as well!
 Do you forget there was my own far East
 I might have given away myself to, once,
 As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
 Stood there like a descended Deity?
 There, worship greets us! what do I get here?

[Shows the letter.]

See! Chance has put into my hand the means
 Of knowing what I earn, before I work!
 Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
 With your crown palpably before me? see!
 Here lies my whole reward! Best know it now,
 Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
 For swordsman's pay alone,—break seal and read!
 In that case, you will find your full desert!

• *Lur.* Give me my one last happy moment, friends!
 You need me now, and all the gratitude
 This letter can contain will never balance
 The after-feeling that your need's at end!
 This moment . . . Oh, the East has use with you!
 Its sword still flashes—'s not flung aside
 With the past praise, in a dark corner yet!
 How say you? 'Tis not so with Florentines—
 Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
 Is but a first step to the peace begun
 —He who did well in war, just earns the right
 To begin doing well in peace, you know!
 And certain my precursors,—would not such

Look to themselves in such a chance as this,
 Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
 For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
 Of strange occurrences, ingratitude,
 Treachery even,—say that one of you
 Surmised this letter carried what might turn
 To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice—
 What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!
 Turn her own force against the city straight,
 And even at the moment when the foe
 Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO'S trumpet sounds in the distance.]

Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
 So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!
 My simple Moorish instinct bids me sink
 The obligation you relieve me from,
 Still deeper! [*to Puc.*] Sound our answer, I should say!
 And thus;—[*tearing the paper*].—The battle! That solves
 every doubt!

ACT III

AFTERNOON.

PUCCIO, as making a report to JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your Captain must report the rest;
 For, as I say, the main engagement over,
 And Luria's special part in it performed,
 How could subalterns like myself expect
 Leisure or leave to occupy the field
 And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?
 I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
 Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,

That Luria would detach me and prevent
 The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
 Friends in the rear, a point to rally by :
 But no—more honourable proved my post !
 I had the august captive to escort
 Safe to our camp—some other could pursue,
 Fight, and be famous ; gentler chance was mine—
 Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed !
 He's in the tent there.

Jac. Is the substance down ?
 I write—"The vanguard beaten, and both wings
 In full retreat—Tiburzio prisoner"—
 And now,—“That they fell back and formed again
 On Lucca's coming”—Why then, after all,
 'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault . . . not much !
 He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
 —There's commonly more prudence ; now, he seemed
 To hurry measures, otherwise well-judged ;
 By over concentrating strength, at first,
 Against the enemy's van, both sides escaped :
 That's reparable—yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
 With the advantage of a fault beside—
 What is it, Puccio ?—that by pressing forward
 With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon !
 Thanks, Sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.

[PUCCIO goes.]

There's nothing done but I would do again ;
 Yet, Lapo, it may be the Past proves nothing,
 And Luria has kept faithful to the end !

Jac. I was for waiting. ;

Brac. Yes : so was not I !
 He could not choose but tear that letter—true '
 Still, certain of his tones, I mind; and looks—
 You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
 So, Porzio seem'd an injured man, they say '
 Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [*to PUC.*] Say, at his pleasure I will see Tiburzio :
 All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [*to LUR.*] Were I not so sure
 You would reject, as you do constantly,
 Praise,—I might tell you what you have deserved
 Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
 But words are vain !

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now !
 I want instruction every hour, I find,
 On points where once I saw least need of it ;
 And praise, I have been used to do without,
 Seems not so easy to dispense with now,
 After a battle half one's strength is gone —
 And glorious passion in us once appeas'd,
 Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
 All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
 Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
 To me, the stranger ; you, no doubt, may know
 Why Pisa needs must give her rival place ;
 And I am growing nearer you, perhaps,
 For I, too, want to know and be assured,
 When a cause ceases to reward itself,
 Its friend needs fresh sustainments ; praise is one,
 And here stand you—you, Lady; praise me well !
 But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearn'd praise :
 To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
 Your quick sense looks ; you crown and call aight

The soul of the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as act,
 Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king ;
 But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,
 —Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier ; he's my judge !
 Was all well, Puccio ?

Puc. All was . . . must be well :
 If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
 —No, there's no doubt, we must—All was well done.

Lur. In truth ? But you are of the trade, my Puccio !
 You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy !
 There's none knows like a fellow of the craft,
 The all unestimated sum of pains
 That go to a success the world can see ;
 They praise then, but the best they never know :
 —But you know !—Oh, if envy mix with it,
 Hate even, still the bottom praise of all,
 Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold !
 —For nothing's like it ; nothing else records
 Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
 Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
 For ever . . . So, pure gold that praise must be !
 And I have yours, my soldier : yet the best
 Is still to come—there's one looks on apart
 Whom all refers to, failure or success ;
 What's done might be our best, our utmost work,
 And yet inadequate to serve his need :
 Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—
 Well done for us, is it well done for him ?
 His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
 Answers his end ?—Should he have chosen higher ?
 Do we help Florence, now our best is done ?
Brac. This battle with the foregone services,
 Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well !
 Here am I in the middle of my friends,
 Who know me and who love me, one and all !

And yet . . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak
 Is like the turning moment of a dream
 When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me !
 Well then, one always dreams of friends at home,
 And always comes, I say, the turning point
 When something changes in the friendly eyes
 That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .
 And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
 Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
 And all is mockery, and a maddening show !
 You, now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
 What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .
 Nobody spoke it . . . yet I know it well !—
 Come now—this battle saves you, all's at end,
 Your use of me is o'er, for good, for evil,—
 Come now, what's done against me, while I speak,
 In Florence? Come ! I feel it in my blood,
 My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ear
 That spite of all this smiling and kind speech
 You are betraying me ! What is it you do?
 I have it your way, and think my use is over ;
 That you are saved and may throw off the mask—
 I have it my way, and think more work remains
 Which I could do,—so show you fear me not !
 Or prudent be, or generous, as you choose,
 But tell me—tell what I refused to know
 At noon, lest heart should fail me ! Well? That letter?
 My fate is known at Florence ! What is it?
Brac. Sir, I shall not conceal what you divine :
 It is no novelty for innocence
 To be suspected, but a privilege :
 The after certain compensation comes.
 Charges, I say not whether false or true,
 Have been preferred against you some time since,
 Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
 And which are therefore undergoing now

The due investigation. That is all.
I doubt not but your innocence will shine
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening, when the trial ends

Lur. My trial?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee!

Puc. [to BRAC.] What is "Trial," Sir?
It was not for a trial—surely, no—
I furnished you those notes from time to time?
I hold myself aggrieved—I am a man—
And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
What should assist a—Trial, do you say?
You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is it?
The block? Wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
Nor shall I give my own opinion here
Of what it should be, or is like to be,
When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac. I assert,
Maintain, and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters—keep the mummery up!
Take all the experiences of the whole world,
Each knowledge that broke thro' a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to work out, cost a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with them—'tis very well!

Let friend trust friend, and love demand its like,
 And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
 There's grace in that—and when the fresh heart breaks,
 The new brain proves a martyr, what of it?
 Where is the matter of one moth the more
 Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?
 But Florence is no simple John or James
 To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit,
 That he's the one excepted man by fate,
 And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
 Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
 To Paul and George intent to try their chance:
 Florence exists because these pass away;
 She's a contrivance to supply a type
 Of Man, which men's deficiencies refuse;
 She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
 Stands steady o'er their numbers, tho' they change
 And pass away—there's always what upholds,
 Always enough to fashion the great show!
 As, see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
 Of shapely cloud substantially the same!
 A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
 Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
 Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air
 Under the sun's straight influence: that is well!
 That is worth Heaven to hold, and God to bless!
 And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
 Which draws and holds suspended all of us—
 Binds transient mists and vapours into one,
 Differing from each and better than they all.
 And shall she dare to stake this permanence
 On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,
 And its temptations many: let her prove
 Each servant to the very uttermost
 Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,

That are not destined to receive reward,
 Tho' they deserve it, did she only know !
 —What should she do for these ?

Brac.

What does she not ?

Say, that she gives them but herself to serve !
 Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,
 When half an hour of sober fancying
 Had shown him step by step the uselessness
 Of strength exerted for its proper sake ?
 But the truth is, she did create that strength,
 Drew to the end the corresponding means
 The world is wide—are we the only men ?
 Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
 Use words agreed on, handy epithets,
 Call any man, sole Great and Wise and Good !
 But shall we, therefore, standing by ourselves,
 Insult our souls and God with the same speech ?
 There, swarm the ignoble thousands under Him—
 What marks us from the hundreds and the tens ?
 Florence took up, turned all one way the soul,
 Of Luria with its fires, and here he stands !
 She takes me out of all the world as him,
 Fixing my coldness till like ice it stays
 The fire ! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best ?

• *Lur.* Ah, brave me ? And is this indeed the way
 To gain your good word and sincere esteem ?
 Am I the baited tiger that must turn
 And fight his baiters to deserve their praise ?
 Obedience has no fruit then ?—Be it so !
 Do you indeed remember I stand here
 The Captain of the conquering army,—mine—
 With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
 To show for what their names were when you gave,
 Not what you style them now you take away ?
 If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
 And in their first enthusiastic thrill

Of victory, tell them how you menace me—
 Commending to their plain instinctive sense,
 My story first, your comment afterwards,—
 Will they take, think you, part with you or me?
 When I say simply, I, the man they know,
 Ending my work, ask payment, and find Florence
 Has all this while provided silently
 Against the day of pay and proving words,
 By what you call my sentence that's to come
 Will they sit waiting it complacently?
 When I resist that sentence at their head
 What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
 That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
 And so was saved: "See, Italy," I'll say,
 "The need of our precautions—here's a man
 "Was far advanced, just touched on the reward
 "Less subtle cities had accorded him—
 "But we were wiser; at the end comes this!"
 And from that minute all your strength will go—
 The very stones of Florence cry against
 The all-exacting, unenduring Luria,
 Resenting her first slight probation thus,
 As if he, only, shone and cast no shade.
 He, only, walked the earth with privilege
 Against suspicion, free from causing fear—
 So, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
 He turned, and stood on his defence, forsooth!
 Reward? You will not be worth punishment!

Lur. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have
 lived,—
 And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
 Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,
 Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
 Reported me—how could you otherwise!
 Ay?—and what dropped from *you*, just now, moreover?

Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill
 And understanding sympathy approve
 Such a report of me? Was this the end?
 Or is even this the end? Can I stop here—
 You, Lady, with the woman's stand apart,
 The heart to see with, not those leamed eyes,
 . . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
 The unoffending man, you call your friend—
 So, looking at the good examples here
 Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask
 Had you a further end, in all you spoke,
 Than profit to me, in those instances
 Of perfidy from Florence to her chiefs—
 All I remember now for the first time?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Travertini,
 Sister of Pozzio and of Berto both.

I have foreseen all that has come to pass.
 I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
 Must needs mistrust a stranger's—holding back
 Reward from them, must hold back his reward.
 And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
 He would not bear, but live and fight against—
 Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them! All these against one Foreigner!
 •And all this while, where is in the whole world
 To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio [who has entered during the preceding
 dialogue.] Here!

Thus I bear witness to it, not in word
 But deed. I live for Pisa; she's not lost
 By many chances—much prevents from that!
 Her army has been beaten, I am here,
 But Lucca comes at last, one chance exists.
 I rather had see Pisa three times lost
 Than saved by any traitor, even by you.
 The example of a traitor's happy fortune

Would bring more evil in the end than good.
 Pisa rejects such : save yourself and her !
 I, in her name, resign forthwith, you
 My charge,—the highest of her offices.
 You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
 Her army, give her calumny that ground—
 Nor bring it with you. Be you all we gain,
 And all she'll lose, a head to deck some bridge,
 And save the crown's cost that should deck the head.
 Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
 A proverb and a by-word in all mouths !
 Go you to Pisa—Florence is my place—
 Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
 To Pisa !

Don. Ah, my Braccio, are you caught ?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and selected man,
 Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
 Ready, as fit, to serve in this event
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—
 Thro' me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, thro' me, from him who held it late !
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours.
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public good--
 Sights, scoons, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :
 And ever you did bear and bow the head !
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 * Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track
 Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !
 Trial is over, consummation shines ;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command !
Puc. No, no . . . I dare not . . . I am grateful—glad :
 But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—

And he's my Captain—this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !
 The sentence is not even passed, beside !
 I dare not . . . where's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence —
 Is it to be?—You will know all the strength
 Of the savage—to your neck the proof must go?
 You will prove the brute nature? Ah, I see!
 The savage plainly is impassible—
 He keeps his calm way thro' insulting words,
 Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures--one of which
 Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense :
 But if he steadily advances, still
 Without a mark upon his callous hide,
 Thro' the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
 And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
 —You have to learn that when the true bu come,
 The thick mid forest, the real obstacle,
 Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
 Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
 —He goes against it, like the brute he is !
 It falls before him, or he dies in his course !
 I kept my course thro' past ingratitude—
 I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
 Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
 --Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
 Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
 You grew so bold on, while you so despised
 The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
 Was saving you ; I bore and kept my course .
 Now real wrong fronts me--see if I succumb !
 Florence withstands me?--I will punish her !

At night my sentence will arrive, you say !
 Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel—
 —Unauthorised to lay my office down,

Retaining my full power to will and do :
 After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !
 Go—you are free—join Lucca. *ff*'s suspend
 All further operations till to-night.
 Thank you, and for the silence most of all !
 [*To Bnac.*] Let my complacent bland accuser go,
 And carry his self-approving head and heart
 Safe thro' the army which would trample him
 Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
 Go, Sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say—
 That while I wait their sentence, theirs waits them !
 [*To Dom.*] You, Lady, you have black Italian eyes !
 I would be generous if I might. . . . Oh, yes—
 For I remember how so oft you seemed
 Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
 Which Florence makes God build between us both.
 Alas, for generosity ! this hour
 Demands strict justice—bear it as you may !
 I must—the Moor,—the Savage,—pardon you !
 [*To Puc.*] Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth ! —

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria *will* do? Ah, 'tis yours, fair Sir,
 Your and-your subtle-witted master's part,
 To tell me that ; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station ! I observe
 The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there's your fault !
 You cannot push them, and, the first move made,
 Lean back to study what the next should be,

In confidence that when 'tis fixed upon,
 You'll find just where you left them, blacks and whites .
 Men go on moving when your hand's away.
 You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
 This whole time,—firmer than I choose to build,
 Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
 With Luria in his ordinary mind :
 But now, oppression makes the wise man mad—
 How do I know he will not turn and stand
 And hold his own against you, as he may ?
 Suppose that he withdraws to Pisa—well,—
 Then, even if all happens to your wish,
 Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'twas an oversight,
 Not waiting till the proper warrant came .
 You could not take what was not ours to give.
 But when at night the sentence really comes,
 And Florence authorizes past dispute
 Luria's removal and your own advance,
 You will perceive your duty and accept ?

Puc. Accept what ? muster-rolls of soldiers' names ?
 An army upon paper ?— I want men,
 Their hearts as well as hands—and where's a heart
 That's not with Luria, in the multitude
 I come from walking thro' by Luria's side ?
 You gave him to them, set him on to grow,
 Head-like, upon their trunk, one blood feeds both,
 They feel him there, and live, and well know why !
 —For they do know, if you are ignorant,
 Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
 Managed their case, yet never spared his own . . .
 All was your deed : another might have served—
 There's peradventure ~~no~~ such dearth of men—
 But you chose Luria—so they grew to him :
 And now, for nothing they can understand,
 Luria's removed, off is to roll the head—

The body's mine—much I shall do with it !

Jac. That's at the worst !

Puc.

No—at the best, it is !

Best, do you hear ? I saw them by his side ;

Only we two with Luria in the camp

Are left that know the secret ? You think that ?

I hear what I saw : from rear to van, no heart

But felt the quiet patient hero there

Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye

But glancing told its fellow the whole story

Of that convicted silent knot of spies

Who passed thro' them to Florence ; they might pass—

No breast but gladder beat when free of them !

Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,

Lead him to Florence as their natural lord,

Partake his fortunes, live or die with him !

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him

Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-despite

To still continue Second in Command !

Puc. No, Sir, no second nor so fortunate !

Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !

I am as you have made me, and shall die

A mere trained fighting hack to serve your end ;

With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,

For my life's rules and ordinance of God !

I have to do my duty, keep my faith,

And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,

As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,

And fight against one better than myself,

And my own heart's conviction of his worth—

That, you may count on !—just as hitherto

I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,

Slighted, and all the terms we learn by rote,—

All because Luria superseded me—

Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,

Mounted above me to its proper place !

What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
 And cordial brother's bearing? This was clear--
 I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
 And so must keep complaining like a fool !
 Go, take the curse of a lost man, I say !
 You neither play your puppets to the end,
 Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
 Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
 As might console them for their altered rank.
 Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
 For Luria, and here's all that he deserves !
 Of what account, then, are my services?
 One word for all : whatever Luria does,
 --If backed by his indignant troops he turns
 In self-defence and Florence goes to ground, --
 Or for a signal, everlasting shame,
 He pardons you, and simply seeks his friends
 And heads the Pisan and the Lacchese troops
 --And if I, for you ingrates past belief,
 Resolve to fight against a man called false,
 Who, inasmuch as he is true, fights there—
 Whichever way he wins, he wins for me,
 For every soldier, for the common good !
 Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSMIN

Hus. Saw'st thou?—For they are gone ! The world
 lies bare

Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
 Like what it is, now Florence goes away !
 Thou livest now, with men art man again !
 Those Florentines were eyes to thee of old ;
 But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each—
 There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes --
 Sawest thou ?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. Then, hold thy course, my King !

The years return. Let thy heart have its way !
 Ah, they would play with thee as with all else ?
 Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
 Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest ?
 Oh, watch but, listen only to these men
 Once at their occupation ! Ere ye know,
 The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
 Drops till it fits the very tingling hair—
 So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
 Our common earth is tethered up and down,
 Over and across—here shalt thou move, they say !

Lur. Ay, Husan ?

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside !

So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
 Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
 All in one tale, each singing the same song,
 How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
 Take pledge and give it, go thou every way,
 Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
 With theirs—or—all is nothing—thou art lost—
 A savage . . . how shouldst thou perceive as they ?
 Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand !
 Look up to it ! Why, down they pull thy neck,
 Lest it crush thee, who feelst it and wouldst kiss,
 Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
 Less peradventure it should wound thy lip !
 Love Woman ! Why, a very beast thou art !
 Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husan !

Hus. Ay, but, spoiling all.
 For all, else true, things substituting false,
 That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine !
 Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
 Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
 And class them and allow them place and play
 So far, no farther—unabashed the while !

Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
 Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
 But never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
 Oh, that is commendable, just and right!
 Come over, say they, have the honour due
 In living out thy nature! Fight thy best—
 It is to be for Florence not thyself!
 For thee, it were a horror and a plague—
 For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
 How all is changed—the fire that fed on earth
 Now towers to heaven!—

Lur. And what sealed up so long
 My Husain's mouth?

Hus. Oh, friend, oh, lord—for me,
 What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
 That am a part of thee—It is thy hand,
 Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
 Boils up, thou heart of me! Now live again!
 Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
 Turn to no Biaccios nor Domizias now,
 To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
 If Florence's welfare be concerned thereby!

Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me?

Hus. Both armies against Florence! Take revenge!
 Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
 And after, in remembrance, year by year—
 And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
 She lies now at thy pleasure—pleasure have!
 Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
 And blends with life, to show it better by,
 —How think'st thou?—I have turned that light on them!
 They called our thirst of war a transient thing;
 The battle-element must pass away
 From life, they said, and leave a tranquil world:
 —Master, I took their light and turned it full
 On that dull turgid vein they said would burst

And pass away ; and as I looked on Life,
 Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
 And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
 Changed out the hue yet ever was the same :
 Why, 'twas all fighting, all their nobler life !
 All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
 And every joy obtained—a victory !
 Be not their dupe !

—Their dupe ? That hour is past !

Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm !
 All is determined ! Silence for me now !

[HUSAIN goes.

Lur. Have I heard all ?

Dom. [*advancing from the background.*] No, Luria,
 I am here !

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
 Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
 And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
 As failing of sustainment from thyself,
 —Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
 Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
 Shalt thou abolish Florence ! I proclaim
 The angel in thee, and reject the spirits
 Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
 And mingle with his work and claim a share !
 —Unconsciously to the augustest end
 Thou hast arisen : second not in rank
 So much as time, to him who first ordained
 That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be—
 Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
 The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
 And made the eminences, each to each,
 Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
 Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their arms—
 So the few famous men of old combined,
 And let the multitude rise underneath,

And reach them; and unite—so Florence grew !
 Braccio speaks well, it was well worth the price.
 But when the sheltered Many grew in pride
 And grudged the station of the glorious ones,
 Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
 Only in voluntary servitude—
 Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
 Such plague possessed this Florence—who can tell
 The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
 Of those so noble pillars of the grove
 She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
 The light weak parasite born but to twine
 Round each of them and, measuring them, so live ?
 My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
 My slender life proves what has past away !
 I lived when they departed ; lived to cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou would'st rise
 And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew
 I have done nothing ; all was thy strong heart !
 But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
 Which after holds an aery in its arms,
 And 'twas my care that nought should warp thy spine
 From rising to the height ; the roof is reached —
 Break through and there is all the sky above !
 Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'Tis man's cause !
 Fail thou, and thine own fall is least to dread !
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more—
 And while the bloody past is justified,
 Thou all the surer dost work against
 The men to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
 Who, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
 That giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself was't reached !
 Man calls thee—God shall judge thee : all is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at last ! *

And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
Reserves speech ; it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.]

Lur. So at the last must figure Luria, then !
Doing the various work of all his friends,
And answering every purpose save his own.
No doubt, 'tis well for them to wish ; for him—
After the exploit what is left ? Peichance
A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms, —
Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit —
But after !—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her Domes and Towers and Palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage !) — low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to see,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor !
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world ?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so !
How grew this ? What withdrew her faith from me ?
Some cause ! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs a smile makes up again !
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for rash speech—
But what could it have been in word or deed
That injured me ? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps !
My fault, it must have been,—for what gain they ?
Why risk the danger ? See, what I could do !
And my fault, 'wherefore visit upon them,

My Florentines? The generous revenge,
 I meditate! To stay here passively,
 Go at their summons, as they dispose—
 Why, if my very soldiers keep their ranks,
 And if I pacify my chiefs, what then?
 I ruin Florence—teach her friends mistrust
 Confirm her enemies in harsh belief—
 And when she finds one day, as she must find,
 The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
 Shall it console me, that my Florentines
 Walk with a sadder step, a graver face,
 Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
 At the glad outset! Had they loved me less,
 They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
 And after all, who did the harm? Not they!
 How could they interpose with those old fools
 In the council? Suffer for those old fools' sakes—
 They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
 About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind,
 Out of our proper world where we can see!
 The sun that guides is closer to us! There—
 There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky!
 Why, there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
 My land, our Florence all about the hills,
 The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
 All have been blest—and yet we Florentines
 With minds intent upon our battle here,
 Found that he rose too soon, or else too late,
 Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa more—
 And so we wronged him! Does he turn in ire
 To burn the earth, that cannot understand?
 Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
 His task once ended? Night wipes blame away:
 Another morning from my East shall rise
 And find all eyes at leisure, more disposed
 To watch it and approve its work, no doubt.

So, praise the new sun, the successor praise !
 Praise the new Luria, and forget the old !

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*]

—Strange ! This is all I brought from my own Land
 To help me—Europe would supply the rest,
 All needs beside, all other helps save this !
 I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
 The natural upbraodings of the loser,
 And then this quiet remedy to seek
 At end of the disastrous day—

[*He drinks.*]

'Tis sought !

This was my happy triumph-morning : Florence
 Is saved : I drink this, and ere night,—die !—Strange !

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this : well !
 Such were my projects for the City's good,
 To save her from attack or by defence.
 Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
 Our foresight by surprise with chance and change ;
 But not a little we provide against
 —If you see clear on every point.

Puc.

Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if you count words,
 Yet for an understanding ear enough,
 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
 Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
 My elder in command, or threw a doubt
 Upon the very skill, it comforts me

To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
 That never failed me: yet, because it seemed
 A stranger's eye might haply note defect,
 Which skill, thro' use and custom, overlooks,
 I have gone into the old caes once more,
 As if I had to come and save again
 Florence—that May - that morning! 'Tis night now—
 Well—I broke off with? . . .

Puc. Of the past campaign
 You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
 For future use.

Lur. True, so . . . but, time—no time!
 As well end here: remember this, and me!
 Farewell now!

Puc. Dare I speak?

Lur. —The south o' the river—
 How is the second stream called . . . no,—the third?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's cast from the ford'ng place,
 To the East,—the little mount's name?

Puc. *Lupo.*

Lur. Ay!

Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe!
 With San Romano, west of Evola,
 San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
 Five towers in all,—forget not!

Puc. Fear not me!

Lur. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
 I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim
 On the other side, by Staggia on the hills,
 That kept the Siennese at check!

Puc. One word—
 Sir, I must speak! That you submit yourself
 To Florence' bidding, howsoe'er it prove,
 And give up the command to me—is much,
 Too much, perhaps: but what you tell me now,

Even will affect the other course you choose—
 Poor as it may be, peril even that!
 Refuge you seek at Pisa—yet they^{se} plans
 All militate for Florence, all conclude
 Your formidable work to make her queen
 Of the country,—which her rivals rose against
 When you began it,—which to interrupt,
 Pisa would buy you off at any price!
 You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
 With this made perfect and on record?

Lur.

I—

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puc. Where are you going, then? You must decide
 On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
 Alone, at night— you, stealing thro' our lines,
 Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
 To punfully begin the world once more,
 With such a Past, as it had never been!
 Where are you going?

Lur.

Not so far, my Puccio,
 But that I hope to hear, and know, and praise
 (If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
 Each happy blow you strike for Florence!

Puc.

—Ay,

But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
 For see—the^o nothing's surely known as yet,
 Still . . . truth must out . . . I apprehend the worst.
 If mere suspicion stood for certainty
 Before, there's nothing can arrest the steps
 Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
 Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
 And having disbelieved your innocence,
 How can she trust your magnanimity?
 You may do harm to her—why then, you will!
 And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
 Have you a friend to count on?

Lur. One sure friend.

Puc. Potent?

Lur. All potent.

Puc. And he is apprised?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So! —Then I, put in your place,
 Making my profit of all done by you,
 Calling your labours mine, reaping then fruit,
 To these, the State's gift, now add this of yours—
 That I may take to my peculiar store
 All your instructions to do Florence good;
 And if, by putting some few happily
 In practice, I should both advantage her
 And draw down honor on myself,—what then?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know and praise!

Puc. Though, so, men say, "mark what we gain by
 change

"—A Puccio for a Luria!"

Lur. Even so!

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
 Would I accept one office save my own,
 Fill any other than my rightful post
 I here at your feet, my Captain and my Lord!
 That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
 Ere a man settle soul and body down
 Into his true place and take rest for ever!
 Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right hand,
 And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
 And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
 No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
 All the jar stops, and there is peace at once!
 I am yours now,—a tool your right hand wields!
 God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
 On orders, warrants, patents and the like,
 As if there were no glowing eye in the world,
 To glance straight inspiration to my brain,

No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats !
 For, see—my doubt, where is it?—Fear? 'tis flown !
 And Florence and her anger are as pale
 To scare a child ! Why, half a dozen words
 Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
 Her error, my past folly—and all's right,
 And you are Luria, our great chief again !
 Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
 To exile or to death I follow you !

Lur. Thanks, Puccio ! Let me use the privilege
 You grant me : if I still command you,— stay !
 Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
 And not successor—let me, as of old,
 Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours ;
 Still triumph, one for both—There ! Leave me now !
 You cannot disobey my first command ?
 Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
 And what you promised to observe with him !
 Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell—
 You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO GOES.]

So, there's one Florentine returns again !
 Out of the genial mourning company,
 One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your commands, Sir.

Lur.

What, so soon ?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
 I used to notice you in early days
 As of the other species, so to speak,
 Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
 That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts ;
 So, I propound this to your faculty
 As you would tell me, were a town to take
 . . . That is, of old. I am departing hence

Under these imputations : that is nought—
 I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
 Hardly a name behind me in the land,
 Being a stranger ; all the more behoves
 That I regard how altered were the case
 With natives of the county, Florentines,
 On whom the like mischance should fall ; the roots
 O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk -
 No root of mine will thro'— you understand.
 But I had predecessors, Florentines,
 Accused as I am now, and punished so -
 The Traversari—you know more than I
 How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
 Now, Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
 Both served them and succeeded, in due time ;
 He knows the way, holds proper documents,
 And has the power to lay the simple truth
 Before an active spirit, as I know yours :
 And also there's Tibuzio, my new friend,
 Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
 He being the chivalric soul we know.
 I put it to your instinct—were't not well,
 —A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
 If you who witness, and have borne a share
 Involuntarily, in my mischance,
 Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
 To indicate . . . that is, investigate
 The reason or the wrong of what befel
 Those famous citizens, your countrymen ?
 Nay—you shall promise nothing—but reflect,
 And if your sense of justice prompt you—good !
Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
 To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
 Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
 For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
 My testimony goes for a straw's worth,

I used to hold by the instructed brain,
 And move with Braccio as the master-wind ;
 The heart leads surelier : I must move with you—
 As greatest now, who ever were the best
 So, let the last and humblest of your servants
 Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
 And offer homage, by obeying you ! [JACOPO goes.
Lur. Another !—Luria goes not poorly forth !
 If we could wait ! The only fault's with Time :
 All men become good creatures—but so slow !

Enter DOMIZIA

Lur. Ah, you once more ?
Dom. Domizia, that you knew,
 Performed her task, and died with it—'Tis I !
 Another woman, you have never known.
 Let the Past sleep now.
Lur. I have done with it.
Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
 One object, she seemed awhile born to reach
 With her whole energies and the content,
 So like a wall at the world's end it stood,
 With nought beyond to live for,—is it reached ?
 Already are new undreamed energies
 Outgrowing under, and extending further
 To a new object ;—there's another world !
 See ! I have told the purpose of my life,—
 'Tis gamed—you are decided, well or ill—
 You march on Florence, or submit to her—
 My work is done with you, your brow declares :
 But—leave you ? More of you seems yet to reach !
 I stay for what I just begin to see.
Lur. So that you turn not to the Past !
Dom. You trace
 Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
 Which sought its ends and disregarded yours ?

Lur. Speak not against your nature : best, each keep
 His own—you, yours—most, now, when I keep mine,
 —At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
 God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
 We would confound—the Lesser has its use,
 Which, when it apes the Greater, is foregone.
 I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;
 But, punished properly, can die a Moor.
 Beside, there is what makes me understand
 Your nature . . . I have seen it —

Dom. One like mine ?

Lur. In my own East . . . if you would stoop and
 help

My barbarous illustration . . . it sounds ill—
 Yet there's no wrong at bottom—rather, praise—

Dom. Well ?

Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw
 The first time, you would doubtless marvel at,
 For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
 And tho' it were a lively moment's shock
 Wherein you found the purpose of those tongues
 That seemed innocuous in their lambent play,
 Yet, once made know such grace required such guard,
 Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
 In the Wisdom which made all things for the best ;
 So take them, good with ill, contentedly—
 The prominent beauty with the secret sting.
 I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines,
 Yet . . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East !
 How nearer God we were ! He glows above
 With scarce an intervention, presses close
 And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours !
 We feel Him, nor by painful reason know !
 The everlasting minute of creation

Is felt there ; *Now* it is, as it was *Then* ;
 All changes at His instantaneous will,
 Not by the operation of a law
 Whose make is elsewhere at other work !
 His soul is still engaged upon his world—
 Man's praise can forward it, Man's prayer suspend,
 For is not God all-mighty?—To recast
 The world, erase old things and make them new,
 What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there !
 And inasmuch as Feeling, the East's gift,
 Is quick and transient comes, and lo, is gone—
 While Northern Thought is slow and durable,
 Oh, what a mission was reserved for me,
 Who, born with a perception of the power
 And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
 Should have stayed there and turned it to account
 Giving Thought's character and permanence
 To the top-transitory Feelings there—
 Writing God's messages in mortal words !
 Instead of which, I leave my fated field
 For this where such a task is needed least,
 Where all are born consummate in the art
 I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
 And then, deserting thus my early post,
 I wonder that the men I come among
 Mistake me ! There, how all had understood,
 Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
 Fresh instinct to translate them into law !
 Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
 More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
 New feelings fresh from God, which, could we know
 O' the instant, where had been our need of them ?
 —Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
 What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,

All, their revelation taught us so long since
 That, having mere tradition of the fact,
 Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
 The early traits all dropped away,—we said
 On sight of faith of yours, “so looks not faith
 “We understand, described and taught before.”
 But still, the truth was shown; and tho’ at first
 It suffer from our haste, yet trace by trace
 Old memories reappear, the likeness grows,
 Our slow Thought does its work, and all’s re-known.
 Oh, noble Luria! what you have decreed
 I see not, but no animal revenge,
 No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
 It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
 Traced for me by convention and mistake,
 Has gained that calm approving eye and brow
 Spare Florence after all! Let Luria trust
 To his own soul, and I will trust to him!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now—

And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step . . .

• *Lur.* I feel it, as you say!

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
 Southward—

Lur. . . . Toward Florence? Have out instantly. . .
 Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth!
 In—quick—’tis nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio?—not at Pisa?

Tib. I return
From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
By such procedure I have served her best.
A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one—
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this
That your sole fate concerns a nation more
Than its apparent welfare; and to prove
Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
Imports it far beyond the day's event,
Its battle's loss or gain—the mass remains,
Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
To study it, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's having lived
I might go try my fortune as you bade,
And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done;
But where were Luria for our sons to see?
No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Your full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity, as none else could: I spoke—
And it shone clearly!

Lur. Ah—till Braccio spoke!

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
His old great error, and return to knowledge—
Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,
I, whom shame rests with, yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon now I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly—so let midnight end!
Sunrise will come next! Still you answer not?
The shadow of the night is past away:

Our circling faces here 'mid which it rose
Are all that felt it,—they close round you now
To witness its completest vanishing.
Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career—
Look up to it !—All now is possible—
The glory and the grandeur of each dream—
And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one . . . (nay, now your word must come at last)
—That you would punish Florence !

Ilus. (*pointing to LURIA'S dead body.*) That is done !—

A Soul's Tragedy.

PART FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY
OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE. AND PART SECOND, ITS
PROSE

PART I.

*Inside LUITOLFO'S house at Fianza. CHIAPPINO,
EULALIA.*

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast falling,
And 'twas scarce sunset . . . had the Ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's House?
I think not : all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say !
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That's good !

Eu. You laugh?

Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
* In the whole world was left to call my own,
And, may be, felt a little pride thereat :
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke !
—Counting, you see, as "nothing" the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence : well, go silence with the rest

Of the world's good! What can I say, shall serve?

Eu. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit!

Ch. How a cloud?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say?

Ch. My God, were't not for thee!

Eu. Ay, God remains,
Even did Men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so!

Were't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with Man?
I, now—the homeless, friendless, penniless,
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship, and Luitolfo's courage,
And all our townsfolk's equanimity,—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the hars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee! it is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know—
But I do turn to thee! This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim Thou! Give me truth—truth, power to speak
—And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth!—or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, might approve?

Eu. Ah, well—

Keep silence, then, Chiappino!

Ch. You would hear,
And shall now,—why the thing we're pleased to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude

So much as yours was service—and no more.
 I was born here, so was Luitolfo,—Both
 At one time, much with the same circumstance
 Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
 Of parting company, have side by side
 Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow:
 “Why?” asks the world: “Because,” replies the world
 To its complacent self, “these playfellows,
 Who took at church the holy-water drop
 One from the other’s finger, and so forth, —
 Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
 Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
 Fit for the sunshine, so it followed him;
 A happy-tempered bringer of the best
 Out of the worst; who bears with what’s past cure,
 And puts so good a face on’t wisely passive
 Where action’s fruitless, while he remedies
 In silence what the foolish rail against;
 A man to smooth such natures as parade
 Of opposition must exasperate—
 No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
 Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
 At lucky junctures; one who won’t forego
 The after-battle work of binding wounds,
 Because, forsooth, he’d have to bring himself
 To side with their inflictors for their leave!”
 —Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
 What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
 About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?

Eu. Because, that friend’s sense is obscured . . .

Ch.

I thought

You would be reader with the other half
 Of the world’s story,—my half!—~~It~~ ’tis true.
 For all the world does say it! Say your worst!
 True, I thank God, I ever said “you sin,”
 When a man did sin · if I could not say it,

I glared it at him,—if I could not glare it,
I prayed against him—than my part seemed over ;
God's may begin yet—so it will, I trust !

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Ch.

What's "we" ?

That you use well or ill ? It's Man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !
Here's our Faenza birthplace—they send here
A Provost from Ravenna—how he rules,
You can at times be eloquent about—
"Then, end his rule !" ah yes, one stroke does that !
But patience under wrong works slow and sure
Must violence still bring peace forth ? He, he, he,
Returns so blandly one's obeisance—ah—
Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
Some human sympathy which, once excite,
And all the lump were leavened quietly—
So, no more talk of striking, for this time !
But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
These pretty takings-up and layings down
Our cause, just as you think occasion suits !
Enough of earnest, is there ? You'll play, will you ?
Diversify your tactics,—give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
While we die in our misery patient deaths ?
We all are outraged then, and I the first !
I, for Mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
I hate !

Eu. We share a common censure, then !

'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Or mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, Lady ?
Come, on your own ground, Lady,—from yourself,
(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine,)

What have I got to be so grateful for?
 These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
 Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino!

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most!
 Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
 Your prosperous smooth husband presently,
 Then, scarce your wooer,—now, your lover: well—
 I loved you!

Eu. Hold!

Ch. You knew it, years ago;
 When my voice faltered and my eyes grew dim
 Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
 My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
 The people's Provost to their heart's content,
 —My eyes, the Provost, who hears all men's eyes,
 Banishes now because he cannot bear!
 You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I!
 So be it! you flourish—I decay! All's well!

Eu. I hear this for the first time!

Ch. The fault's there

Then, my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
 Were voiceless? Then, the very heart may burst
 Yet all prove nought, because no muncing speech
 Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
Eulalia—truce with toying for this once—
 A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
 For the last time—Oh, what's to fear from me?
 You knew I loved you!

Eu. Not so, on my faith!

You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he;
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
 See how your words come from you in a crowd?
 Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself

In all that challenges respect and love—
 Yet you were silent then, who blame me now !
 I say all this by fascination, sure—
 I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen—
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
 Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. —You too pity? Do !
 But hear first what my wrongs are ; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk I say,
 Was't not enough that I must strive, I saw,
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As to contrive some way to win them—which
 To do, an age seemed far too little—for, see !
 We all aspire to Heaven—and there is Heaven
 Above us—go there ! Dare we go ? no, surely !
 How dare we go without a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for Heaven?— Even so,
 I dared not speak—the greater fool, it seems !
 Was't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 But I must have, beside, the very man
 Whose slight, free, loose and incapacious soul
 Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
 —Must have him load me with his benefits
 For fortune's fiercest stroke !

Eu. Justice to him
 That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
 Justice for you ! Did he once call those acts
 Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits ?

Ch. No—the straight course had been to call them so—
 Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
 Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
 We both sought—but “the gold was dross,” he said,
 “He loved me, and I loved him not—to spurn
 “A trifle out of superfluity :
 “He had forgotten he had done as much !”
 So had not I !—Henceforth, try as I could

To take him at his word, there stood by you
 My benefactor—who might speak and laugh
 And urge his nothings—even banter me
 Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream!
 Let's wake. Your husband . . . how you shake at that!
 Good—my revenge!

Eu. Why should I shake? What forced,
 Or forces me to be Luntolfo's bride?

Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing forces you!
 No gratitude, no liking of the eye,
 Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
 Of habit—here so many times he came,
 So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
 That pulls you from me! Well, he paid my fines,
 Nor nussed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table—
 —He spoke a good word to the Provost here—
 Held me up when my fortunes fell away
 —It had not looked so well to let me die—
 Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
 Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a fir
 But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
 Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
 Like me: I could not change—you know the rest.
 I've spoke my mind too fully out, for once,
 This morning to our Provost: so ere night
 I leave the city on pain of death—and now
 On my account there's gallant intercession
 Goes forward—that's so graceful!—and anon
 He'll noisily come back: the intercession
 Was made and fails—all's over for us both—
 'Tis vain contending—I had better go.
 And I do go—and so to you he turns
 Light of a load, and ease of that permits
 His visage to repair its natural bland
 Economy, sore broken late to suit
 My discontent: so, all are pleased—you, with him,

He with himself, and all of you with me
 —Who, say the citizens, had done far better
 In letting people sleep upon their woes,
 If not possessed with talent to relieve them
 When once they woke ;—but then I had, they'll say,
 Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
 In what I did—and as I seem content
 With ruining myself, why so should they be,
 And so they are, and so be with his prize
 The devil, when he gets them speedily !
 Why does not your Luitolfo come ? I long
 To don this cloak and take the Lago path.
 It seems you never loved me, then ?

Eu. (Chiappino !

Ch. Never ?

Eu. Never.

Ch. That's sad—say what I might,
 There was no helping being sure this while
 You loved me—love like mine must have return,
 I thought—no river starts but to some sea !
 And had you loved me, I could soon devise
 Some specious reason why you stifled love,
 Some fancied self-denial on your part,
 Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so, excepting
 From the wide condemnation of all here,
 One woman ! Well, the other dream may break !
 If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
 Loved me, tho' in the vilest breast 'twere lodged,
 I should, I think, be forced to love again —
 Else there's no right nor reason in the world !

Eu. “ If you knew,” say you,—but I did not know—
 That's where you're blind, Chiappino !—a disease
 Which if I may remove, I'll not repent
 The listening to : you cannot, will not, see
 How, place you but in every circumstance
 Of us, you are just now indignant at,

You'd be as we.

Ch. I should be? . . . that, again!
I, to my Friend, my Country and my Love,
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

Eu. As we.

Ch. Now, I'll say something to remember!
I trust in Natur. for the stable laws
Of Beauty and Utility—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time:
I trust in God—the Right shall be the Right
And other than the Wrong, while He endures—
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's—So—seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak:
I'll not curse . . . God bears with them—well may I—
But I—protest against their claiming me!
I simply say, if that's allowable,
I would not . . . broadly . . . do as they have done—
—God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse
Whoever loved, above his liberty,
House, land or life! and . . . [*A knocking without.*
. . . Bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eu. How he knocks!

Ch. The peril, Lady!
"Chiappino, I have run a risk! My God!
"How when I prayed the Provost—(he's my friend)—
"To grant you a week's respite of his sentence
"That confiscates your goods, and exiles you,
"He shrugged his shoulder . . . I say, shrugged it!
Yes,
"And fright of that drove all else from my head.
"Here's a good purse of *scudi*—off with you!
"Lest of that shrug come—what God only knows!

"The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I beg—
 "Take the North gate,—for San Vitale's suburb
 "Whose double taxes you appealed against,
 "In discomposure at your ill-success
 "Is apt to stone you : there, there—only go !
 "Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily—
 "Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist !"
 —Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous friend ?

[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments disordered.]

Eu. Luitolfo ! Blood ?

Luit. There's more—and more of it !
Eulalia—take the garment . . . no . . . you, friend !
 You take it and the blood from me—you dare !

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you ? where's the wound ?

Ch. "Who," say you ?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet !
 The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech
 And this comes of it. Miserable hound !
 This comes of temporising, as I said !
 Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and fair looks !
 Now see my way ! As God lives, I go straight
 To the palace and do justice, once for all !

• *Luit.* What says he ?

Ch. I'll do justice on him !

Luit. Him ?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I've just killed him !

Eu. Oh, my God !

Luit. My friend, they're on my trace—they'll have me
 —now !

They're round him, busy with him : soon they'll find
 He's past then help, and then they'll be on me !
 Chiappino ! save Eulalia . . . I forget . . .
 Were you not bound . . . for . . .

Ch. Lugo !

Luit. Ah—yes—yes—
That was the point I prayed of him to change.
Well—go—be happy . . . is Eulalia safe?
They're on me!

Ch. 'Tis through me they reach you, then!
Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms—that's right.
Now tell me what you've done; explain how you
That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino?
I tried peace—did that say that when peace failed
Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days
Were just the prelude to a day like this.
I cried, "You call me 'friend'—save my true friend!
"Save him, or lose me!"

Ch. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus!

Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. . . . Would so order it
You should not trouble him too soon again—
I saw a meaning in his eye and lip—
I poured my heart's store of indignant words
Out on him—then—I know not. —He retorted—
And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck—
. . . Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!
The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell—
Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
Much to yourself; believe not, all the world
Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Ch. And you?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!

This was my coarse disguise—this paper shows
 My path of flight and place of refuge—see—
 Lugo—Argenta—past San Nicolo—
 Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!
 Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch
 A compass round about—There's time enough
 Ere they can reach us—so you straightway make
 For Lugo . . . Nay, he hears not! On with it—
 The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
 He obeys he knows not how.—Then, if I must . . .
 Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge!

Luit.

I know!

Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened? All my route
 Is traced in that—at Venice you'll escape
 Their power! Eulalia—I am master here!

*[Shouts from without He pushes out LUITOLFO, who
 complies mechanically.]*

In time! nay, help me with him—So!—he's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance, all know
 The Provost's hated, will men's vengeance fall
 As our accomplice . . .

Ch.

Mere accomplice? See!

[Putting on LUITOLFO'S vest.]

Now, Lady, am I true to my profession,
 Or one of these?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

Ch. Die for him!

Eu. Well done! *[Shouts increase.]*

Ch. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent . . . I must speak . . . or sing—
 How natural to sing now!

Eu.

Hush and pray!

We are to die—but even I perceive
 'Tis not a very hard thing so to die—
 My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,

Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
 With the stern husband ; Tisbe's heart goes forth
 Each evening after that wild son of hers,
 To track his thoughtless footstep thro' the streets—
 How easy for them both to die like this !
 I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds ! They pass the gate ?
 Yes !—No !—

One torch is in the court-yard. Here flock all !

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped !—What cries !

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
 One might speak there !

Eu. List, list !

Ch. They mount the steps !

Enter the Popalace.

Ch. I killed the Provost !

[*The Popalace, speaking together.*] 'Twas Chiappino,
 friends !

Our saviour.—The best man at last as first !
 He who first made us see what chains we wore,
 He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
 He at last saves us—our best citizen !

—Oh, have you only courage to speak now ?

My eldest son was christened a year since
 "Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mine
 Cino, for shortness merely, you observe !

The City's in our hands.—The guards are fled—

Do you, the cause of all, come down—come down—

Come forth to counsel us, our chief, our king,
 What'er rewards you ! Choose your own reward !

The peril over, its reward begins !

Come and harangue us in the market-place !

Eu. Chiappino !

Ch. Yes . . . I understand your eyes !
 You think I should have promptlier disowned

This deed with its strange unforeseen success
 In favour of Luitolfo—but the peril,
 So far from ended, hardly seems begun !
 To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
 We easily shall make him full amends :
 And meantime . . . if we save them as they pray,
 And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once !

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured !
 All's well ! Precede us, fellow-citizens !

PART II.

*The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with
 the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.*

1st Bystander [To LUIT.] You, a friend of Luitolfo's !
 Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed
 on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was
 loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our
 illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new
 Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino !

Luit. He the new Provost ?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder
 pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from
 Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people,
 according to established usage—For which reason, there
 is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the old Provost's successor ? Im-
 possible ! But tell me of that presently—What I would
 know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily
 have been killed on that memorable night ?

3rd. You were Luitolfo's friend ? So was I—Never,
 if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a
 milk-sop ! He, with all the opportunities in the world,

furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: so when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately: he may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled thro' it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here . . . how, for instance, the Provost was not dead after all, only wounded . . . or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost . . . and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning—might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock.—I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *disco vobis*! Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin—but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence

enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha!

Luit. [*Aside.*] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me). Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude!

3rd. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry—I know Chiappino better!

1st. (Our friend has the bile! after all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities—.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable—up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children—out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant—we were to defy the world. but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say," began everybody—(you know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome). And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate—tiots briskly thro' the streets humming a "*Cur fremu'ère gentes,*" and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you—"One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolvers and good friends, what do you want?"

The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost—and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method; 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile,—I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves,—and now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government, at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a Justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him—and thus so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him so late that evening—I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next.” —And thus he ran on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of Law, Order and Paternal Government by somebody from rather a distance: all our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again . . .

Luit. Do you see?—I recognise him there!

3rd. Ay, but mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure Republic. “And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the

Legate—thereupon speaking, for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the Best and Wisest—and it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light—"Oh, are you there?" quoth Chiappino:—"In that, I agree," returns Chiappino, and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. Why, not altogether at once—for instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—whereas what right, asked he, has any man to wish to be superior to another?—whereat, "Ah Sir," answers the Legate, "this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand—yourself set about attacking yourself—for see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, that are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, on the road of Life,—and when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same,—you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose

to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while—but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under the tongue this sweeter morsel still, the feeling that, thro' immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!"—And so chatting, they glided off arm in arm.

Luit. And the result is . . .

1st. Why, that a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's goods,—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship—which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently!

Luit. [*withdrawing a little*] I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever—yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger,—wherefore, disregarding her injunctions to continue in my retreat and wait the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge—what could I else?—Yet if what they say be true . . . if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this, of them—and at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete!

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of what you may call the material instrumentality of Life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind thro' such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government—but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary lumps once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to the soul I am about to bestow on them . . . do you see? Why should one desire to invent, so long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organisation shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it will be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realise those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realise my conception of a Palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly; here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me . . . turn and see it . . . the old Provost's House to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now—but materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there, a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough; and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content—ought I not rather make the best of such an opportunity, than con-

tinue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? But you cannot understand this nor me: it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman,—finding all uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. I shall give the intellectual part of my love to Men, the mighty dead, or illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose!—and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does Friendship go too?—What of Luitolfo—the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation—and to which all my thoughts and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not. He would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

* *Enter* OGNIBEN. *EULALIA stands apart.*

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!

—By you. leave, Sir! Perform? What does the lady say of Performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust Profession, only Performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, Sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For tho' the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance—which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must with its accidents and circumstances,—the profession was purely the man's own! I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty: little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!"—for a favour done him: so when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him; gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you—and it is good: but had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs, and all the money, and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered! —To our business—did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathise with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Qui. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do!)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward: why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? So God serves us!

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Qui. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the Western Lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court—send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems—so shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a Paradise by her,—as these Western lands by Spun—tho' I warrant there is 'ilth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss—don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principle: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, if they will but go on and say, four and four make ten!

Ch. But these are my private affairs—what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, tho' you and I may thoroughly discern—and

easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged . . . and heretofore by myself . . . incompatible with its existence . . . when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogn. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—new truths, old truths! why, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world—we know all we shall ever know, and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we *do* know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others—and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time.—As for adding to the original stock of truths, --impossible!—So you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it—which now you confess to be imperfect—but what then? There is Truth in Falsehood, Falsehood in Truth.—No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones: and as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, thro' the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to

arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable!—"Contradictions?"—Of course there were, say you!

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I say in reply?

Ogni. Why look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the state, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good, and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances—to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spent their life in pushing it onward as those who gave theirs to the business of pulling it back—now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you—but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle; I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving"—even he seems graceful in his avowal. when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, and from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you must enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosities with age and experience—

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities—the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sate first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies—He of Gath,

it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other; but, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side—and when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathise with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, so I do—but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finer or wider I may extend its action. I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only,—but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already every body sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts . . . else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his Archangels and consorts with them—tho' he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak—I do justice to your own principles, that is all!

C. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics: what more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from.—Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there is a confederacy imme-

diately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you !

Genius. And a journey over the sea to you !—That is the generous way. Say—emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go ! The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way,”—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you, go away to everybody’s sorrow ! Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as “Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require.” Well—there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether—yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly—for, do you know what is to . . . all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you Men of Genius ? It is this—that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own Genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves.—That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe !

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse ; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank !

Ogni. Not I! (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully.—We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve you in undreamed-of ways.—Beauty, Strength, Intellect—men often have none of these and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor.—You know at least what it is you make up your mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in your power; wanting Beauty, you cultivate Good Humour, missing Wit, you get Riches; but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural Lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now! there indeed is a Virtue to be revered!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar—not by Messere Stiatto the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than any body.

Ogni. What else should Stiatto pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches—men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No—or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich—but just such another talent as Stiatto's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting. I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest

to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! you are nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of—who determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen,—heard too plainly “hiss, hiss, hiss,” increase every moment, till at last the man fell senseless—not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve!

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask? to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part—you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person—and I shall authorise no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself—the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Oh, the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Ha!

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend,

than I choose to receive: those which wait longest have best chance—has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend after all!—my good friends—(nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost?—his successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate? Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo. [*coming forward.*] I!

All. Luitolfo!

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility.—Having taken thought, I am grown stronger—I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still—I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seems at first. So, they fell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo!—Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign, however! And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand—it would be easy for you to

die of remorse here on the spot, and shock us all, but you will live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell every body; and you only do right to believe you will get better as you get older! All men do so, — they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its Beauty and Grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid, when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in, his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he has grown six feet high, black and bearded: but, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion,—and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder! And now—(Ay, good bye to you! He turns round the North-west gate—going to Lugo again? Good bye!)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's Palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home. I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts!—

Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day.

A POEM

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

I.

OUT of the little chapel I burst
Into the fresh night air again.
I had waited a good five minutes first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter :
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch,
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Four feet long by two feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside —
I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy ; the rain kept driving :
They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving,
Some of them by the mainroad, white
A long way past me into the night,

298 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Skirting the common, then diverging ;
 Not a few suddenly emerging
 From the common's self thro' the paling—gaps,—
 —They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
 Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
 Of lamps as tired of such disorder ;—
 But the most turned in yet more abruptly
 From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
 Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
 Which now the little chapel rallies
 And leads into day again,—its priestliness
 Lending itself to hide their beastliness
 So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
 Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
 That, where you cross the common as I did,
 And meet the party thus presided,
 " Mount Zion," with Love-lane at the back of it,
 They front you as little disconcerted,
 As, bound for the hills, her fate averted
 And her wicked people made to mind him,
 Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
 In came the flock : the fat weary woman,
 Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
 Her umbrella with a mighty report,
 Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
 A wreck of whalebones ; then, with a snort,
 Like a startled horse, at the interloper
 Who humbly knew himself improper,
 But could not shrink up small enough,
 Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
 Hinge's invariable scold
 Making your very blood run cold.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 299

Prompt in the walk of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced, peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place ;
She too must stop, wring the poor suds dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on ;
Then stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek ;

And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I had the same interrogation—
“ What, you, the alien, you have ventured
“ To take with us, elect, your station ?
“ A carer for none of it, a Gallio ? ”—
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance,
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho :
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,

300 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Made the flame of the single tallow candle
 In the cracked square lanthorn I stood under,
 Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting,
 As it were, the luckless cause of scandal :
 I verily thought the zealous light
 (In the chapel's secret, too !) for spite,
 Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
 With the airs of a St. John's Candlestick.
 There was no standing it much longer.

“ Good folks,” said I, as resolve grew stronger,
 “ This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,
 “ When the weather sends you a chance visitor ?
 “ You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
 “ And none of the old Seven Churches vic with you !
 “ But still, despite the pretty perfection
 “ To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
 “ And, taking God's word under wise protection,
 “ Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
 “ Bidding one reach it over hot ploughshares,—
 “ Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,
 “ If I should choose to cry—as now—‘ Shares ! ’—
 “ See if the best of you bars me my ration !
 “ Because I prefer for my expounder
 “ Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder :
 “ Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest, *
 “ Supposing I don the marriage-vestments ;
 “ So, shut your mouth, and open your Testament,
 “ And carve me my portion at your quickest ! ”
 Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
 With wizened face in want of soap,
 And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
 After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
 To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
 And so avoid disturbing the preacher,
 Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
 At the shutting door, and entered likewise,—

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 301

Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
Crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
And found myself in full conventicle,
—To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
Found them assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III.

I very soon had enough of it.
The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sybil
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling—
No sooner had our friend an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
(Whenever it was the thought first struck him
How Death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in Hell's grim drench),
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the Book of books to pieces :
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt
yours,—
So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt :
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours

02 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I had borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet ;
Or, who can tell ? had even mustered
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon :
But the block sate on, divinely flustered,
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief, untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking !
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it,
And saying, like Eve when she plucked the apple,
" I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,"
I flung out of the little chapel.

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
In the wind too ; the moon was risen,
And would have shone out pure and full,
But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
Block on block built up in the west,
For what purpose the wind knows best,
Who changes his mind continually.
And the empty other half of the sky
Seemed in its silence as if it knew
What, any moment, might look through
A chance-gap in that fortress massy :--

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 303

Through its fissures you got hints
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
 Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
 Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
 Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
 All a-simmer with intense strain
 To let her through,—then blank again,
 At the hope of her appearance failing.
 Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
 Shows a narrow path directly across ;
 'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss —
 Besides, you go gently all the way uphill
 I stooped under and soon felt better :
 My head grew light, my limbs more supple,
 As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter ;
 My mind was full of the scene I had left,
 That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
 —How this outside was pure and different !
 The sermon, now—what a mingled web
 Of good and ill ! were either less,
 Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly ;
 But alas for the excellent earnestness,
 And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
 But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
 • However to pastor and flock's contentment !
 Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
 With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
 Till how could you know them, grown double their size,
 In the natural fog of the good man's mind ?
 Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
 Haloed about with the common's damp.
 Truth remains true, the fault 's in the prover ;
 The zeal was good, and the aspiration ;
 And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
 Pharaoh received no demonstration
 By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,

04 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
Apparently his hearers relished it
With so unfeigned a gust—who knows it
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!
These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the Call of them;
And this is their method of bringing about,
By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving or reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell?—)
Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using;
And how it happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek
Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;
And when, next week, I take it back again,
My head will sing to the engine's clack again,
While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stii,
—Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
'Tis the taught already that profit by teaching;
He gets no more from the railway's preaching,
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I,
Whom therefore the flock casts a jealous eye on.
Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion,"
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

V.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
Does the selfsame weary thing take place?
The same endeavour to make you believe,
And much with the same effect, no more:

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 305

• Each method abundantly convincing,
 As I say, to those convinced before,
 But scarce to be swallowed without wincing,
 By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
 I have my own church equally.
 And in *this* church my faith sprang first !
 (I said, as I reached the rising ground,
 And the wind began again, with a burst
 Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
 From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
 I entered His church-door, Nature leading me)
 —In youth I looked to these very skies,
 And probing their immensities,
 I found God there, His visible power ;
 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
 Of that power, an equal evidence
 That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.
 For the loving worm with its clod,
 Were diviner than a loveless god
 Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
 You know what I mean : God's all, man's nought :
 But also, God, whose pleasure brought
 Man into being, stands away
 As it were, an handbreadth off, to give
 Room for the newly-made to live,
 And look at Him from a place apart,
 And use His gifts of brain and heart,
 Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
 Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
 Man's very elements from man,
 Saying, " But all is God's "—whose plan
 Was to create man and then leave him
 Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,
 But able to glorify Him too,
 As a mere machine could never do,
 That prayed or praised, all unaware

306 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,
 Made perfect as a thing of course.
 Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
 Of love and power as a pin-point rock,
 And looking to God who ordained divorce
 Of the rock from His boundless continent,
 Sees in His Power made evident,
 Only excess by a million fold
 O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
 For, see : Man's hand, first formed to carry
 A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry
 Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,
 —Advancing in power by one degree ;
 And why count steps through eternity ?
 But Love is the ever springing fountain :
 Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
 For the water's play, but the water head—
 How can he multiply or reduce it ?
 As easy create it, as cause it to cease :
 He may profit by it, or abuse it ;
 But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
 As power will : be love less or more
 In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
 Or opes it wide as he pleases, but
 Love's sum remains what it was before.
 So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
 As seen through power, ever above
 All modes which make it manifest,
 My soul brought all to a single test—
 That He, the Eternal First and Last,
 Who, in His power, had so surpassed
 All man conceives of what is might,—
 Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
 —Would prove as infinitely good ;
 Would never, my soul understood,
 With power to work all love desires,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 307

Bestow e'en less than man requires :
That He who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,
(So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)
Would never need that I, in turn,
Should point him out a defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
What the meanest human creature needed,—
—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
Tracking His way through doubts and fears,
While the stupid earth on which I stay
Suffers no change, but passive adds
Its myriad years to myriads,
Though I, He gave it to, decay,
Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me. •
No ! love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it !
And I shall behold Thee, face to face,
O God, and in Thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast Thou !
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
I shall find as able to satiate
The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
With this sky of Thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in Thee as thus I gaze,
—Thus, thus ! oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine—
Be this my way ! And this *is* mine !

VI. **L**

For lo, what think you? suddenly
 The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
 Received at once the full fruition
 Of the moon's consummate apparition.
 The black cloud-barricade was riven,
 Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
 Deep in the west; while, bare and breathless,
 North and south and east lay ready
 For a glorious Thing, that, dauntless, deathless,
 Sprang across them, and stood steady.
 'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
 From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
 As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
 It rose, distinctly at the base
 With its seven proper colours chorded,
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
 Until at last they coalesced,
 And supreme the spectral creature loided
 In a triumph of whitest white,—
 Above which intervened the night.
 But above night too, like the next,
 The second of a wondrous sequence,
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
 Till the heaven of heavens be circumspect,
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 Fainter, flushier, and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge!
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
WHOSE, from the straining topmost dark,
 On to the keystone of that arc?

VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then,—
 Me, one out of a world of men,

Singled forth, as the chance might hap
 To another, if in a thunderclap
 Where I heard noise, and you saw flame,
 Some one man knew God called his name.
 For me, I think I said, "Appear !
 " Good were it to be ever here.
 " If Thou wilt, let me build to Thee
 " Service-tabernacles Three,
 " Where, for ever in Thy presence,
 " In extatic acquiescence,
 " Far alike from thrifless learning
 " And ignorance's undiscerning,
 " I may worship and remain !"
 Thus, at the show above me, gazing
 With upturned eyes, I felt my braun
 Glutted with the glory, blazing
 Throughout its whole mass, over and under,
 Until at length it burst asunder,
 And out of it bodily there streamed
 The too-much glory, as it seemed,
 Passing from out me to the ground,
 Then palely serpentining round
 Into the dark with many error.

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
 He was there.
 He Himself with His human air,
 On the narrow pathway, just before :
 I saw the back of Him, no more -
 He had left the chapel, then, as I.
 I forgot all about the sky.
 No face : only the sight
 Of a sweepy Garment, vast and white,
 With a hem that I could recognise.
 I felt terror, no surprise :

310 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

My mind filled with the contract,
 At one bound, of the mighty fact.
 I remembered, He did say
 Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
 Where two or three should meet and pray,
 He would be in the midst, their Friend :
 Certainly He was there with them.
 And my pulses leaped for joy
 Of the golden thought without alloy,
 That I saw His very Vesture's hem.
 Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear
 With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear,
 And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
 To the salvation of the Vest,
 " But not so, Lord ! It cannot be
 " That Thou, indeed, art leaving me—
 " Me, that have despised Thy friends.
 " Did my heart make no amends ?
 " Thou art the Love of God—above
 " His Power, didst hear me place His Love,
 " And that was leaving the world for Thee !
 " Therefore Thou must not turn from me
 " As if I had chosen the other part.
 " Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
 " Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test ;
 " Still it should be our very be,
 " I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,
 " Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
 " And in beauty, as even we require it—
 " Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
 " I left but now, as scarcely fitted
 " For Thee : I knew not what I pitied :
 " But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
 " What is it to Thee, who curest sinning ?
 " Am I not weak as Thou art strong ?
 " I have looked to Thee from the beginning,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 311

“Straight up to Thee through all the world
“Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
“To nothingness on either side :
“And since the time Thou wast descried,
“Spite of the weak heart, so have I
“Lived ever, and so fain would die,
“Living and dying, Thee before !
“But if Thou leavest me—”

IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.
When,—have mercy, Lord, on us !
The whole Face turned upon me full.
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to sethe it
In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discoloured web—
So lay I, saturate with brightness.
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the Vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion :
What shall I say ?—as a path were hollowed
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals,—
“So He said, and so it befalls.
“God who registers the cup

312 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

"Of mere cold water, for His sake
 "To a disciple rendered up,
 "Disdains not His own thirst to slake
 "At the poorest love was ever offered :
 "And because it was my heart I proffered,
 "With true love trembling at the brim,
 "He suffers me to follow Him
 "For ever, my own way,—dispensed
 "From seeking to be influenced
 "By all the less immediate ways
 "That earth, in worships manifold,
 "Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
 "The Garment's hem, which, lo, I hold ! "

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
 For where am I, in city or plain,
 Since I am 'ware of the world again?
 And what is this that rises propped
 With pillars of prodigious girth?
 Is it really on the earth,
 This miraculous Dome of God?
 Has the angel's measuring-rod
 Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
 'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
 Meted it out,—and what he meted,
 Have the sons of men completed?
 —Binding, ever as he bade,
 Columns in this colonnade
 With arms wide open to embrace
 The entry of the human race
 To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
 Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
 With marble for brick, and stones of price
 For garniture of the edifice?
 Now I see : it is no dream :

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 313

It stands there and it does not seem ;
 For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
 And thus I have read of it in books,
 Often in England, leagues away,
 And wondered how those fountains play,
 Growing up eternally
 Each to a musical water-tree,
 Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
 Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
 To the granite layers underneath
 Liar and dreamer in your teeth !
 I, the sinner that speak to you,
 Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
 Both this and more ! For see, for see,
 The dark is rent, mine eye is free
 To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
 And I view inside, and all there, all,
 As the swarming hollow of a hive,
 The whole Basilica alive !
 Men in the chancel, body, and nave,
 Men on the pillars' architrave,
 Men on the statues, men on the tombs
 With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
 All famishing in expectation
 Of the main-altar's consummation.
 For see, for see, the rapturous moment
 Approaches, and earth's best endowment
 Blends with heaven's : the taper-fires
 Pant up, the wind in brazen spires
 Heave loftier yet the baldachin ;
 The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
 Suspire in clouds ; the organ bliant
 Holds his breath and grovels latent,
 As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
 (Like Behemoth when He praised him)
 At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,

314 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
 On the sudden pavement strewed
 With faces of the multitude.
 Earth breaks up, time drops away,
 In flows heaven, with its new day
 Of endless life, when He who trod,
 Very Man and very God,
 This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
 Dying the death whose signs remain
 Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
 Shall come again, no more to be
 Of captivity the thrall,
 But the one God, all in all,
 King of kings, and Lord of lords,
 As His servant John received the words,
 “ I died, and live for evermore ! ”

VI.

Yet I was left outside the door.
 Why sat I there on the threshold-stone,
 Left till He returns, alone
 Save for the Garment's extreme fold
 Abandoned still to bless my hold?—
 My reason, to my doubt, replied,
 As if a book were opened wide,
 And at a certain page I traced
 Every record undefaced,
 Added by successive years, —
 The harvestings of truth's stray ears
 Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
 Bound together for belief.
 Yes, I said—that He will go
 And sit with these in turn, I know.
 Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
 Too giddily to guide her limbs,
 Disabled by their palsy-stroke

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 315

From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke^e
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies :
And He, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a merc man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because Himself discerns all ways
Open to reach Him : I, a man
He gave to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the Founder's base :
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting His return outside.
—'Twas thus my reason straight replied,
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The Garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried, | what has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift ?
Do these men praise Him ? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise !
I see the error ; but above
The scope of error, see the love.—
Oh, love of those first Christian days !

316 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

—Fanned so soon into a blaze,
 From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
 That the antique sovereign Intellect
 Which then sate ruling in the world,
 Like a change in dreams, was hurled
 From the throne he reigned upon :
 —You looked up, and he was gone !
 Gone, his glory of the pen !
 —Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
 Bade her scribes abhor the trick
 Of poetry and rhetoric,
 And exult, with hearts set free,
 In blessed intellect
 Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet,
 Leaving *Livy* incomplete.
 Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter !
 —Love, while able to acquaint her
 With the thousand statues yet
 Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
 From brush, she saw on every side,
 Chose rather with an infant's pride
 To frame those portents which impart
 Such unction to true Christian Art.
 Gone, Music too ! The air was stirred
 By happy wings : *Terpander's* bird
 (That, when the cold came, fled away)
 Would tarry not the wintry day,—
 As more-enduring sculpture must,
 Till a filthy saint rebuked the gust
 With which he chanced to get a sight
 Of some dear naked *Aphrodite*
 He glanced a thought above the toes of;
 By breaking zealously her nose off.
 Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
 Might have filched her organ-fingering,
 Nor chose rather to set prayings

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 317

To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
 Love was the startling thing, the new ;
 Love was the all-sufficient too ;
 And seeing that, you see the rest.
 As a babe can find its mother's breast
 As well in darkness as in light,
 Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
 'True, the world's eyes are open now :
 —Less need for me to disallow
 Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
 Peevish as ever to be suckled,
 Lulled by the same old baby-rattle
 With intermixture of the rattle,
 When she would have them creep, stand steady
 Upon their feet, or walk already,
 Not to speak of trying to climb.
 I will be wise another time,
 And not desire a wall between us,
 When next I see a church-roof cover
 So many species of one genus,
 All with foreheads bearing *Lover*
 Written above the earnest eyes of them ;
 All with breasts that beat for beauty,
 Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
 In noble daring, steadfast duty,
 The heroic in passion, or in action,—
 Or, lowered for the senses' satisfaction,
 To the mere outside of human creatures,
 More perfect form and faultless features.
 What ! with all Rome here, whence to levy
 Such contributions to their appetite,
 With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
 They take, as it were, a padlock, and clap it tight
 On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
 On the glories of their ancient reading,
 On the beauties of their modern singing,

318 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
On the majesties of Art around them,—
And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
When faith has at last united and bound them,
They offer up to God for a present !
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—
And, only taking the act in reference
To the other recipients who might have allowed of it,
I will rejoice that God had the preference !

XII.

So I summed up my new resolves :
Too much love there can never be.
And where the intellect devolves
Its function on love exclusively,
I, as one who possesses both,
Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
—Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
That my intellect may find its share.
And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,
And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,
Who, examining the capabilities
Of the block of marble he has to fashion
Into a type of thought or passion,—
Not always, using obvious facilities,
Shapes it, as any artist can,
Into a perfect symmetrical man,
Complete from head to foot of the life-size,
Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—
But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate
A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,
And uses the whole of his block for the bust,
Leaving the minds of the public to finish it,
Since cut it ruefully short he must :
On the face alone he expends his devotion ;
He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 319

—Saying, “Applaud me for this grand notion
“Of what a ~~face~~ may be! As for completing it
“In breast and body and limbs, do *that*, you!”
All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,
A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,
Could man carve so as to answer volition.
And how much nobler than petty cavils,
A hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
Some artist of another ambition,
Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,
And believed to begin at the feet was best—
For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night!
And still as we swept through storm and night,
My heart beat lighter and more light.
And lo, as before, I was walking swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and dust
Of the Vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion,
—What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed,
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV.

Alone! I am left alone once more—
(Save for the Garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
—Like nothing I ever saw before

320 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

At home in England, to my knowledge.
 The tall, old, quaint, irregular town !
 It may be . . . though *which*, I can't affirm . . . any
 Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany ;
 And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
 Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, or Frankfort,
 Or Göttingen, that I have to thank for't ?
 It may be Göttingen,—most likely.
 Through the open door I catch obliquely
 Glimpses of a lecture-hall ;
 And not a bad assembly neither—
 Ranged decent and symmetrical
 On benches, waiting what's to see there ;
 Which, holding still by the Vesture's hem,
 I also resolve to see with them,
 Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
 The chance of joining in fellowship
 With any that call themselves His friends,
 As these folks do, I have a notion.
 But hush—a buzzing and emotion !
 All settle themselves, the while ascends
 By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
 Step by step, deliberate
 Because of his cranium's over-freight.
 Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
 If I have proved an accurate guesser,
 The hawk-nosed, high-check-boned Professor.
 I felt at once as if there ran
 A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
 That sallow, virgin-minded, studious
 Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
 As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
 That woke my sympathetic spasm,
 (Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
 And stood, surveying his auditory
 With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 321

—Those blue eyes had survived so much !
While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silence ;
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence, —
He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
And giving his head of hair—a hake
Of undressed tow, for color and quantity—
One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tic
When about to impart, on mature digestion,
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
—The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
Broke into his Christmas-Eve's discourse. •

XV.

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Commingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source :
To do which, aimed this Eve's discourse.
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime,
This Christianity, this lake,
This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst ?

So he proposed inquiring first,
 Into the various sources whence
 This Myth of Christ is derivable ;
 Demanding from the evidence,
 (Since plainly no such life was liveable)
 How these phenomena should class ?
 Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
 Or never was at all, or whether
 He was and was not, both together--
 It matters little for the name,
 So the Idea be left the same :
 Only, for practical purpose' sake,
 'Twas obviously as well to take
 The popular story,—understanding
 How the ineptitude of the time,
 And the penman's prejudice, expanding
 Fact into fable fit for the clime,
 Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
 Into this myth, this Individuum,—
 Which, when reason had strained and abated it
 Of foreign matter, gave, for residuum,
 A Man !—a right true man, however,
 Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour !
 Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
 To his disciples, for rather believing
 He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
 As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
 His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant
 Something entirely different
 From all that those who only heard it,
 In their simplicity thought and averred it,
 Had yet a meaning quite as respectable :
 For, among other doctrines delectable,
 Was he not surely the first to insist on,
 The natural sovereignty of our race ?—
 Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 323

And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
The Vesture still within my hand.

XVI.

I could interpret its command.
Thus time He would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
Impregnating its pristine clarity,
—One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
Its gust of broken meat and garlic ;
—One, by his soul's too-much presuming,
To turn the frankincense's fuming
And vapours of the candle starlike
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on :
And each, that sets the pure air seething,
Poisoning it for healthy breathing—
But the Critic leaves no air to poison ;
Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?
And what retain ? His intellect ?
What is it I must reverence duly ?
Poor intellect for worship, truly,
Which tells me simply what was told
(If mere morality, bereft
Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
Elsewhere by voices manifold ;
With this advantage, that the stater
Made nowise the important stumble
Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :

324 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

But how does shifting blame, evade it ?
 Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?
 The stumbling-block, His speech—who laid it ?
 How comes it that for one found able,
 To sift the truth of it from fable,
 Millions believe it to the letter ?
 Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better ?
 Strange goodness, which upon the score
 Of being goodness, the mere due
 Of man to fellow-man, much more
 To God,—should take another view
 Of its possessor's privilege,
 And bid him rule his race ! You pledge
 Your fealty to such rule ? What, all—
 From Heavenly John and Attic Paul,
 And that brave weather-battered Peter
 Whose stout faith only stood completer
 For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
 As the more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
 All, down to you, the man of men,
 Professing here at Gottingen,
 Compose Christ's flock ! So you and I
 Are sheep of a good man ! and why ?
 The goodness,—how did he acquire it ?
 Was it self-gained, did God inspire it ?
 Choose which ; then tell me, on what ground
 Should its possessor dare propound
 His claim to rise o'er us an inch ?
 Were goodness all some man's invention,
 Who arbitrarily made mention
 What we should follow, and where flinch,—
 What qualities might take the style
 Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing
 Met with as general acquiescing
 As graced the Alphabet awhile,
 When A got leave an Ox to be,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 325

No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,—
 For thus inventing thing and title
 Worship were that man's fit requital.
 But if the common conscience must
 Be ultimately judge, adjust
 Its apt name to each quality
 Already known,—I would decree
 Worship for such mere demonstration
 And simple work of nomenclature,
 Only the day I praised, not Nature,
 But Harvey, for the circulation.
 I would praise such a Christ, with pride
 And joy, that he, as none beside,
 Had taught us how to keep the mind
 God gave him, as God gave his kind,
 Freer than they from fleshly taint !
 I would call such a Christ our Saint,
 As I declare our Poet, him
 Whose insight makes all others dim : •
 A thousand poets pried at life,
 And only one amid the strife
 Rose to be Shakespeare ! Each shall take
 His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake—
 Though some objected—" Had we seen
 " The heart and head of each, what screen
 " Was broken there to give them light,
 " While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
 " We should no more admire, perchance,
 " That these found truth out at a glance,
 " Than marvel how the bat discerns
 " Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
 " Led by a finer tact, a gift
 " He boasts, which other birds must shift
 " Without, and grope as best they can."
 No, freely I would praise the man,—
 Nor one whit more, if he contended

326 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

That gift of his, from God, descended.
 Ah, friend, what gift of man's does not ?
 No nearer Something, by a jot,
 Rise an infinity of Nothings
 Than one : take Euclid for your teacher :
 Distinguish kinds : do crownings, clothings,
 Make that Creator which was creature ?
 Multiply gifts upon his head,
 And what, when all's done, shall be said
 But . . . the more gifted he, I ween !
 That one's made Christ, another, Pilate,
 And This might be all That has been,—
 So what is there to frown or smile at ?
 What is left for us, save, in growth,
 Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
 From the gift looking to the Giver,
 And from the cistern to the River,
 And from the finite to Infinity,
 And from man's dust to God's divinity ?

XVII.

Take all in a word : the Truth in God's breast
 Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed :
 Though He is so bright and we so dim,
 We are made in His image to witness Him ;
 And were no eye in us to tell,
 Instructed by no inner sense,
 The light of Heaven from the dark of Hell,
 That light would want its evidence,—
 Though Justice, Good and Truth were still
 Divine, if, by some demon's will,
 Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
 Law through the worlds, and Right misnamed.
 No mere exposition of morality
 Made or in part or in totality,
 Should win you to give it worship, therefore :

And, if no better proof you will care for,
 —Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
 Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
 Of what Right is, than arrives at birth
 In the best man's acts that we bow before:
 This last *knows* better—true; but my fact is,
 'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise;
 And thence I conclude that the real God-function
 Is to furnish a motive and injunction
 For practising what we know already.
 And such an injunction and such a motive
 As the God in Christ, do you waive, and “heady
 High minded,” hang your tablet-votive
 Outside the pane on a finger-post?
 Morality to the uttermost,
 Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
 Why need *we* prove would avail no jot
 To make Him God, if God He were not?
 What is the point where Himself lays stress?
 Does the precept run “Believe in Good,
 “In Justice, Truth, now understood
 “For the first time?”—or, “Believe in ME,
 “Who lived and died, yet essentially
 “Am Lord of Life?” Whoever can take
 The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
 Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
 A new truth; no conviction gains
 Of an old one only, made intense
 By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII.

Can it be that He stays inside?
 Is the Vesture left me to commune with?
 Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
 Even at this lecture, if she tried?
 Oh, let me at lowest sympathise

328 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

With the lurking drop of blood that lies
 In the desiccated brain's white roof,
 Without a throb for Christ's attributes,
 As the Lecturer makes his special boast !
 If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.
 Admire we, how from heart to brain
 (Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
 One instinct rises and falls again,
 Restoring the equilibrium.
 And how when the Critic had done his best,
 And the Pearl of Price, at reason's test,
 Lay dust and ashes levigable
 On the Professor's lecture-table ;
 When we looked for the inference and monition
 That our faith, reduced to such a condition,
 Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,—
 He bids us, when we least expect it,
 Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,
 Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
 Which fact pays the damage done rewardingly,
 So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly !
 " Go home and venerate the Myth
 " I thus have experimented with,—
 " This Man, continue to adore him
 " Rather than all who went before him,
 " And all who ever followed after !"—
 Surely for this I may praise you, my brother !
 Will you take the praise in tears or laughter ?
 That's one point gained : can I compass another ?
 Unlearned love was safe from spurning—
 Can't we respect your loveless learning ?
 Let us at least give Learning honor !
 What laurels had we showered upon her,
 Girding her loins up to perturb
 Our theory of the Middle Verb ;
 Or Turklike brandishing a scimitar

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 329

O'er anapaests in comic-trimeter ;
 Or curing the halt and maimed Iketides,
 While we lounged on at our indebted ease ·
 Instead of which, a tricky demon
 Sets her at Titus or Philemon !
 When Ignorance wags his ears of leather
 And hates God's word, 'tis altogether ;
 Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
 To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
 —And you, the audience, who might ravage
 The world wide, enviably savage
 Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
 More than Herr Heme (before his fever),—
 I do not tell a lie so arrant
 As say my passion's wings are furled up,
 And, without the plainest Heavenly warrant,
 I were ready and glad to give this world up—
 But still, when you rub the brow meticulous,
 And ponder the profit of turning holy
 If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
 —God forbid I should find you ridiculous !
 Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
 Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
 "Christians,"—abhor the Deist's pravity,—
 Go on, you shall no more move my gravity,
 Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse
 I find it in my heart to embarrass them
 By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
 And they really carry what they say carries them.

XIV.

So sate I talking with my mind.
 I did not long to leave the door
 And find a new church, as before,
 But rather was quiet and inclined
 To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting

330 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

From further tracking and trying and testing.
 This tolerance is a genial mood !
 (Said I, and a little pause ensued).
 One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
 And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
 A value for religion's self,
 A carelessness about the sects of it.
 Let me enjoy my own conviction,
 Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,
 Still spying there some dereliction
 Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness !
 Better a mild indifferentism,
 To teach that all our faiths (though duller
 His shines through a dull spirit's prism)
 Originally had one colour—
 Sending me on a pilgrimage
 Through ancient and through modern times
 To many peoples, various climes,
 Where, I may see Saint, Savage, Sage
 Fuse their respective creeds in one
 Before the general Father's throne !

XX.

. . . 'Twas the horrible storm began afresh !
 The black night caught me in his mesh
 Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
 I was left on the college-step alone.
 I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
 Far, far away, the receding gesture,
 And looming of the lessening Vesture,
 Swept forward from my stupid hand,
 While I watched my foolish heart expand
 In the lazy glow of benevolence,
 O'er the various modes of man's belief.
 I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
 —Needs must there be one way, our chief

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 331

Best way of worship : let me strive
 To find it, and when found, contrive
 My fellows also take their share.
 This constitutes my carthy care :
 God's is above it and distinct !
 For I, a man, with men am linked,
 And not a brute with brutes ; no gain
 That I experience, must remain
 Unshared : but should my best endeavour
 To share it, fail —subsisteth ever
 God's care above, and I exult
 That God, by God's own ways occult,
 May—doth, I will believe—bring back
 All wanderers to a single track !
 Meantime, I can but testify
 God's care for me—no more, can I—
 It is but for myself I *know*.
 The world rolls witnessing around me
 Only to leave me as it found me ;
 Men cry there, but my ear is slow
 Their races flourish or decay
 —What boots it, while yon lucid way
 Loaded with stars, divides the vault ?
 How soon my soul repairs its fault
 When, sharpening senses hebetude,
 She turns on my own life ! So viewed,
 No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
 With witnessings of providence :
 And woe to me if when I look
 Upon that record, the sole book
 Unsealed to me, I take no heed
 Of any warning that I read !
 Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
 God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
 Whereby the truth from heaven slid
 Into my soul ?—I cannot bid

The world admit He stooped to heal
 My soul, as if in a thunder-peal⁴
 Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
 I only knew He named my name.
 And what is the world to me, for sorrow
 Or joy in its censures, when to-morrow
 It drops the remark, with just-turned head
 Then, on again—That man is dead?
 Yes,—but for me—my name called,—drawn
 As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
 He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:
 Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—
 Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,—
 With a rapid finger circled round,
 Fixed to the first poor inch of ground,
 To fight from, where his foot was found;
 Whose ear but a minute since lay free
 To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—
 Summoned, a solitary man,
 To end his life where his life began,
 From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van!
 Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
 By the hem of the Vesture . . .

XXI.

And I caught
 At the flying Robe, and unrepelled
 Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
 With warmth and wonder and delight,
 God's mercy being infinite.
 And scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
 When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
 Out of the wandering world of rain,
 Into the little chapel again.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 333

XXVII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright
 On my bench, as if I had never left it?
 —Never flung out on the common at night
 Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
 Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
 Or the laboratory of the Professor!
 For the Vision, *that* was true, I wist,
 True as that heaven and earth exist.
 There sate my friend, the yellow and tall,
 With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
 Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall,
 She had slid away a contemptuous space:
 And the old fat woman, late so placable,
 Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakeable,
 Of her milk of kindness turning rancid:
 In short a spectator might have fancied
 That I had nodded betrayed by a slumber,
 Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
 Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
 To wake up now at the tenth and lastly.
 But again, could such a disgrace have happened?
 Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;
 And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
 Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?
 Could I report as I do at the close,
 First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
 Second, his gesture is too emphatic:
 Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
 The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
 •Fourthly, the English is ungrammatical.
 Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
 Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
 Of making square to a finite eye
 The circle of infinity,

And find so all-but-just-succeeding !
 Great news ! the sermon proves no reading
 Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,
 Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy !
 And now that I know the very worst of him,
 What was it I thought to obtain at first of him ?
 Ha ! Is God mocked, as He asks ?
 Shall I take on me to change His tasks,
 And dare, despatched to a river-head
 For a simple draught of the element,
 Neglect the thing for which He sent,
 And return with another thing instead ?—
 Saying . . . " Because the water found
 " Welling up from underground,
 " Is mingled with the taints of earth,
 " While Thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
 " And couldest, at a word, convulse
 " The world with the leap of its river-pulse, —
 " Therefore I turned from the oozeings muddy,
 " And bring thee a chalice I found, instead :
 " See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy !
 " One would suppose that the marble bled.
 " What matters the water ? A hope I have nursed,
 " That the waterless cup will quench my thirst."
 — Better have knelt at the poorest stream
 That trickles in pain from the straitest rift !
 For the less or the more is all God's gift,
 Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
 And here, is there water or not, to drink ?
 I, then, in ignorance and weakness,
 Taking God's help, have attained to think
 My heart does best to receive in meekness
 This mode of worship, as most to His mind,
 Where earthly aids being cast behind,
 His All in All appears serene,
 With the thinnest human veil between,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 335

Letting the mystic Lamps, the Seven,
The many motions of His spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from Heaven.
For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?
Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—
Ask, else, these rums of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt,
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
May it be mine ! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
Turn'd sick at last of the day's buffoonery,
Of his posturings and his petticoatings,
Beside the Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !
Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Gottingen, presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,
Prophesied of by that horrible husk ;
And when, thicker and thicker, the darkness fills
The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth, or personification,
May Christ do for him, what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation !
Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,
Without my own made—I choose here !
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;
I have done !—And if any blames me,

336 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or, worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the Holy and the awful,
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him ;
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When the frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !
May the truth shine out, stand ever before us !
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn in Whitfield's Collection,
To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

1.

How very hard it is to be
A Christian ! Hard for you and me,
—Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul—
For that is always hard to do ;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realise it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.
“ This aim is greater,” you may say,
“ And so more arduous every way.”
—But the importance of the fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 337

Proportional encouragement.
“Then, what if it be God’s intent
“That labour to this one result
“Shall seem unduly difficult?”
—Ah, that’s a question in the dark—
And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this ;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race :
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for palms to fall,
We find the tug’s to come,—that’s all.

II.

At first you say, “The whole, or chief
“Of difficulties, is Belief.
“Could I believe once thoroughly,
“The rest were simple. What? Am I
“An idiot, do you think? A beast?
“Prove to me only that the least
“Command of God is God’s indeed,
“And what injunction shall I need .
“To pay obedience? Death so nigh
“When time must end, eternity
“Begin,—and cannot I compute?
“Weigh loss and gain together? suit
“My actions to the balance drawn,
“And give my body to be sawn
“Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied
“To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,
“Like any martyr of the list?
“How gladly,—if I made acquist,
“Through the brief minutes’ fierce annoy,
“Of God’s eternity of joy.”

III.

—And certainly you name the point
 Whereon all turns : for could you joint
 This flexile finite life once tight
 Into the fixed and infinite,
 You, safe inside, would spurn what's out,
 With carelessness enough, no doubt—
 Would spurn mere life : but where time brings
 To their next stage your reasonings,
 Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
 Nor see the path so well, I think.

You say, " Faith may be, one agrees,
 " A touchstone for God's purposes,
 " Even as ourselves conceive of them.
 " Could He acquit us or condemn
 " For holding what no hand can loose,
 " Rejecting when we can't but choose?
 " As well award the victor's wreath
 " To whosoever should take breath
 " Duly each minute while he lived—
 " Grant Heaven, because a man contrived
 " To see the sunlight every day
 " He walked forth on the public way.
 " You must mix some uncertainty
 " With faith, if you would have faith *be.*
 " Why, what but faith, do we abhor
 " And idolize each other for—
 " —Faith in our evil, or our good,
 " Which is or is not understood
 " Aright by those we love or those
 " We hate, thence called our friends or foes?
 " Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,
 " When, turning from the ugly face,

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 339

“ I found belief in it too hard ;
* And both of us have our reward.
“ —Yet here a doubt peeps : well for us
“ Weak beings, to go using thus
“ A touchstone for our little ends,
“ And try with faith the foes and friends ;
“ —But God, bethink you ! I would fain
“ Conceive of the Creator’s reign
“ As based upon exacter laws
“ Than creatures build by with applause.
“ In all God’s acts—(as Plato cries
“ He doth)—He *should* geometrize.
“ Whence, I desiderate .

I see !

You would grow smoothly as a tree,
Soar heavenward, straightly up like fire—
God bless you—there’s your world entire
Needing no faith, if you think fit ;
Go there, walk up and down in it !
The whole creation travails, groans—
Contrive your music from its moans,
Without or let or hindrance, friend !
That’s an old story, and its end
As old—you come back (be sincere)
With every question you put here
(Here where there once was, and is still,
We think, a living oracle,
Whose answers you stood carping at)
This time flung back unanswered flat,—
Besides, perhaps, as many more
As those that drove you out before,
Now added, where was little need !
Questions impossible, indeed,
To us who sate still, all and each

340 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Persuaded that our earth had speech
Of God's, writ down, no matter *if*
In cursive type or hieroglyph,—
Which one fact frees us from the yoke
Of guessing why He never spoke.
You come back in no better plight
Than when you left us,—am I right?

So the old process, I conclude,
Goes on, the reasoning's pursued
Further. You own, "Tis well averred,
" A scientific faith's absurd,
" —Frustrates the very end 'twas meant
" To serve : so I would rest content
" With a mere probability,
" But, probable ; the chance must lie
" Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,
" So long as there is just enough
" To pin my faith to, though it hap
" Only at points : from gap to gap
" One hangs up a huge curtain so,
" Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
" Foldless and flat along the wall :
" —What care I that some interval
" Of life less plainly might depend
" On God ? I'd hang there to the end ;
" And thus I should not find it hard
" To be a Christian and debarred
" From trailing on the earth, till furled
" Away by death !—Renounce the world ?
" Were that a mighty hardship ? Plan
" A pleasant life, and straight some man
" Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
" Abundant means to compass it,
" Shall turn deliberate aside

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 341

“ To try and live as, if you tried
“ You clearly might, yet most despise.
“ One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
“ Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
“ In patient hope that, ten years hence,
“ Somewhat completer, he may see
“ His list of *lepidoptera* :
“ While just the other who most laughs
“ At him, above all epitaphs
“ Aspires to have his tomb describe
“ Himself as Sole among the tribe
“ Of snuff-box-fanciers, who possessed
“ A Grignon with the Regent’s crest.
“ So that, subduing as you want,
“ Whatever stands predominant
“ Among my earthly appetites
“ For tastes, and smells, and sounds, and sights,
“ I shall be doing that alone,
“ To gain a palm-branch and a throne,
“ Which fifty people undertake
“ To do, and gladly, for the sake
“ Of giving a Semitic guess,
“ Or playing pawns at blindfold chess.”

VII.

Good ! and the next thing is,—look round
For evidence enough. ’Tis found,
No doubt : as is your sort of mind,
So is your sort of search—you’ll find
What you desire, and that’s to be
A Christian : what says History ?
How comforting a point it were
To find some mummy-scrap declare
There lived a Moses ! Better still,
Prove Jonah’s whale translatable
Into some quicksand of the seas,

342 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
 That Faith might clap her wings and crow
 From such an eminence ! Or, no—
 The Human Heart's best ; you prefer
 Making that prove the minister
 To truth , you probe its wants and needs
 And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
 Meet these most aptly,—resolute
 That Faith plucks such substantial fruit
 Wherever these two correspond,
 She little needs to look beyond,
 To puzzle out what Orpheus was,
 Or Dionysius Zagrias.
 You'll find sufficient, as I say,
 To satisfy you either way.
 You wanted to believe ; your pains
 Are crowned—you do : and what remains ?
 Renounce the world !—Ah, were it done
 By merely cutting one by one
 Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
 How easy were it !—how soon past,
 If once in the believing mood !
 Such is man's usual gratitude,
 Such thanks to God do we return,
 For not exacting that we spurn
 A single gift of life, forego
 One real gain,—only taste them so
 With gravity and temperance,
 That those mild virtues may enhance
 Such pleasures, rather than abstract—
 Last spice of which, will be the fact
 Of love discerned in every gift ;
 While, when the scene of life shall shift,
 And the gay heart be taught to ache,
 As sorrows and privations take
 The place of joy,—the thing that seems

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 343

Mere misery, under human schemes,
Becomes, regarded by the light
Of Love, as very near, or quite
As good a gift as joy before.
So plain is it that all the more
God's dispensation's merciful,
More pettishly we try and cull
Briars, thistles, from our private plot,
To mar God's ground where thorns are not !

Do you say this, or I?—Oh, you !
Then, what, my friend,—(so I pursue
Our parley)—you indeed opine
That the Eternal and Divine
Did, eighteen centuries ago,
In very truth . . . Enough ! you know
The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,
That Life, that Death ! And all, the Earth
Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew black
Rather than see ; all, Nature's rack
And throe at dissolution's brink
Attested,—it took place, you think,
Only to give our joys a zest,
And prove our sorrows for the best ?
We differ, then ! Were I, still pale
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
Waiting to hear God's voice declare
What horror followed for my share,
As implicated in the deed,
Apart from other sins,—concede
That if He blacked out in a blot
My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not
So very disproportionate !
Or there might be another fate—
I certainly could understand

344 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

(If fancies were the thing in hand)
 How God might save, at that Day's price,
 The impure in their impurities,
 Leave formal licence and complete
 To choose the fair, and pick the sweet.
 But there be certain words, broad, plain,
 Uttered again and yet again,
 Hard to mistake, to overgloss—
 Announcing this world's gain for loss,
 And bidding us reject the same :
 The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
 In wickedness,—come out of it !—
 Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
 But I who thrill through every nerve
 At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—
 How do you counsel in the case ?

'I'd take, by all means, in your place,
 " The safe side, since it so appears :
 " Deny myself, a few brief years,
 " The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
 " Or cut the plant up by the root.
 " Remember what a martyr said
 " On the rude tablet overhead—
 " I was born sickly, poor and mean,
 " A slave : no misery could screen
 " The holders of the pearl of price
 " From Cæsar's envy ; therefore twice
 " I fought with beasts, and thrice times saw
 " My children suffer by his law—
 " At last my own release was earned :
 " I was some time in being burned,
 " But at the close a Hand came through
 " The fire above my head, and drew
 " My soul to Christ, whom now I see.

"Sergius, a brother, writes for me
 "This testimony on the wall—
 "For me, I have forgot it all.'
 "You say right ; this were not so hard !
 "And since one nowise is debarred
 "From this, why not escape some sins
 "By such a method ?"

—Then begins

To the old point, revulsion new—
 (For 'tis just this, I bring you to)
 If after all we should mistake,
 And so renounce life for the sake
 Of death and nothing else? You hear
 Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer
 Back to ourselves with good effect—
 'There *were* my beetles to collect !'
 'My box—a trifle, I confess,
 'But here I hold it, ne'ertheless !'
 Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
 And answer) we, the better part
 I have chosen, though 'twere only hope,—
 Nor envy moles like you that grope
 Amid your veritable muck,
 More than the grasshoppers would truck,
 For yours, their passionate life away,
 That spends itself in leaps all day
 To reach the sun, you want the eyes
 To see, as they the wings to rise
 And match the noble hearts of them !
 So, the contemner we contemn,—
 And, when doubt strikes us, so, we ward
 Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
 —Not struck enough to overturn
 Our faith, but shake it—make us learn

346 CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

What I began with, and, I wis,
End, having proved,—how hard it is
To be a Christian !

XI.

“ Proved, or not,
“ How'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
“ You get of mine, for taking pains
“ To make it hard to me. Who gains
“ By that, I wonder ? Here I live
“ In trusting ease ; and do you drive
“ At causing me to lose what most
“ Yourself would mourn for when 'twas lost ? ”

XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
You leave St. Paul for Æschylus ?—
—Who made his Titan's arch-device
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo ! Death loured
Before them at the platter's edge !
If faith should be, as we allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavors with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
To take at need the victuals' place ?
If having dined you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . . .

XIII.

Now, you shall see
And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking ! I resolve

To utter . . . yes, it shall devolve
 On you to hear as solemn, strange
 And dread a thing as in the range
 On facts,—or fancies, if God will—
 E'er happened to our kind ! I still
 Stand in the cloud, and while it wraps
 My face, ought not to speak, perhaps ;
 Seeing that as I carry through
 My purpose, if my words in you
 Find veritable listeners,
 My story, reason's self avers
 Must needs be false—the happy chance !
 While, if each human countenance
 I meet in London streets all day,
 Be what I fear,—my warnings fray
 No one, and no one they convert,
 And no one helps me to assert
 How hard it is to really be
 A Christian, and in vacancy
 I pour this story !

XIV.

I commence
 By trying to inform you, whence
 It comes that every Easter-night
 As now, I sit up, watch, till light
 Shall break, those chimney-stacks and roofs
 Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs
 That Easter-day is breaking slow.
 On such a night, three years ago,
 It chanced that I had cause to cross
 The common, where the chapel was,
 Our friend spoke of, the other day—
 You've not forgotten, I dare say.
 I fell to musing of the time
 So close, the blessed matin-prime

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All hearts leap 'up at, in some guise— /
 One could not well do otherwise.
 Insensibly my thoughts were bent
 Toward the main point ; I overwent
 Much the same ground of reasoning
 As you and I just now : one thing
 Remained, however—one that tasked
 My soul to answer ; and I asked,
 Fairly and frankly, what might be
 That History, that Faith, to me—
 —Me there—not me, in some domain
 Built up and peopled by my brain,
 Weighing its merits as one weighs
 Mere theories for blame or praise,
 —The Kingcraft of the Lucumons,
 Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,—
 But as *my* faith, or none at all.
 ' How were my case, now, should I fall
 ' Dead here, this minute—do I lie
 ' Faithful or faithless ?'—Note that I
 Inclined thus ever !—little prone
 For instance, when I slept alone
 In childhood, to go calm to sleep
 And leave a closet where night keep
 His watch perdue some murderer
 Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,
 As good, authentic legends tell
 He might—' But how improbable !
 ' How little likely to deserve
 ' The pains and trial to the nerve
 ' Of thrusting head into the dark,'—
 Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
 Besides, that, should the dreadful scout
 Really he hid there, to leap out
 At first turn of the rusty key,
 It were small gain that she could see

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In being killed upon the floor
 And losing one night's sleep the more.
 I tell you, I would always burst
 The door ope, know my fate at first.—
 This time, indeed, the closet penned
 No such assassin : but a friend
 Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit
 For counsel, Common Sense, to-wit,
 Who said a good deal that might pass,—
 Heartening, impartial too, it was,
 Judge else : ' For, soberly now,—who
 ' Should be a Christian if not you ? '
 (Hear how he smoothed me down). ' One takes
 ' A whole life, sees what course it makes
 ' Mainly, and not by fits and starts—
 ' In spite of stoppage which imparts
 ' Fresh value to the general speed :
 ' A life, with none, would fly indeed :
 ' Your progressing is slower—right !
 ' We deal with progressing, not flight.
 ' Through battling senses passionate,
 ' Fancies as restless,—with a freight
 ' Of knowledge cumbersome enough
 ' To sink your ship when waves grow rough,
 ' Not serve as ballast in the hold,
 ' I find, 'mid dangers manifold,
 ' The good bark answers to the helm
 ' Where Faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm
 ' Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,
 ' Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
 ' Conceive a doubt, or understand
 ' How senses hornier than his hand
 ' Should 'tice the Christian off, his guard—
 ' More happy ! But shall we award
 ' Less honor to the hull, which, dogged
 ' By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,

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'Masts by the board, and bulwarks gone,
 'And stanchions going, yet bears on,—
 'Than to mere life-boats, built to save,
 'And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
 'Make perfect your good ship as these,
 'And what were her performances!'

I added—'Would the ship reached home!
 'I wish indeed "God's kingdom come—"
 'The day when I shall see appear
 'His bidding, as my duty, clear
 'From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day,
 'Some future season; Easter may
 'Prove, not impossibly, the time—
 'Yes, that were striking—fates would chime
 'So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
 'The Judgment!—deeper in the Spring
 'Than now, however, when there's snow
 'Capping the hills; for earth must show
 'All signs of meaning to pursue
 'Her tasks as she was wont to do—
 —The lark, as taken by surprise
 'As we ourselves, shall recognise
 'Sudden the end: for suddenly
 'It comes—the dreadfulness must be
 'In that—all warrants the belief—
 "'At night it cometh like a thief."
 I fancy why the trumpet blows;
 '—Plainly, to wake one. From repose
 'We shall start up, at last awake
 'From life, that insane dream we take
 'For waking now, because it seems.
 'And as, when now we wake from dreams,
 'We say, while we recall them, "Fool,
 "'To let the chance slip, linger cool
 "'When such adventure offered! Just
 "'A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust

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‘“Aside, a wicked mage to stab—
“And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab,”—
‘So shall we marvel why we grudged
‘Our labours here, and idly judged
‘Of Heaven, we might have gained, but lose !
‘Lose ? Talk of loss, and I refuse
‘To plead at all ! I speak no worse
‘Nor better than my ancient nurse
‘When she would tell me in my youth
‘I well deserved that shapes uncouth
‘Should fright and tease me in my sleep—
‘Why did I not in memory keep
‘Her precept for the evil’s cure ?
‘“Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
‘“You’ll wake forthwith !”’

XV.

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head ,
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of Heaven had stood
As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) ‘There—
‘Burn it !’ And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire

Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
 As if fanned to measure equable,—
 As when great conflagrations kill
 Night overhead, and rise and sink,
 Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
 And wither off the blasted face
 Of heaven, and I distinct could trace
 The sharp black ridgy outlines left
 Unburned like network—then, each cleft
 The fire had been sucked back into,
 Regorged, and out it surging flew
 Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
 Till, tolerating to be tamed
 No longer, certain rays world-wide
 Shot downwardly, on every side,
 Caught past escape; the earth was lit;
 As if a dragon's nostril split
 And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
 Then, as he winced at his Lord's goad,
 Back he inhaled: whereat I found
 The clouds into vast pillars bound,
 Based on the corners of the earth,
 Propping the skies at top: a dearth
 Of fire i' the violet intervals,
 Leaving exposed the utmost walls
 Of time, about to tumble in
 And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin
 The Judgment-Day: to retrocede
 Was too late now.—'In very deed,
 (I uttered to myself) 'that Day!'
 The intuition burned away
 All darkness from my spirit too—
 There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,

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Choosing the world. The choice was made—
 And naked and disguiseless stayed,
 And unevadeable, the fact.
 My brain held ne'ertheless compact
 Its senses, nor my heart declined
 Its office—rather, both combined
 To help me in this juncture—I
 Lost not a second,—agony
 Gave boldness : there, my life had end
 And my choice with it—best defend,
 Applaud them ! I resolved to say,
 ' So was I framed by Thee, this way
 ' I put to use Thy senses here !
 ' It was so beautiful, so near,
 ' Thy world, —what could I do but choose
 ' My part there ? Nor did I refuse
 ' To look above the transient boon
 ' In time—but it was hard so soon
 ' As in a short life, to give up
 ' Such beauty : I had put the cup
 ' Undrained of half its fulness, by ;
 ' But, to renounce it utterly,
 ' —That was too hard ! Nor did the Cry
 ' Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
 ' Authentically deep and plain
 ' Enough, to make my lips let go.
 ' But Thou, who knowest all, dost know
 ' Whether I was not, life's brief while,
 ' Endeavouring to reconcile
 ' Those lips—too tardily, alas !
 ' To letting the dear remnant pass,
 ' One day,—some drops of earthly good
 ' Untasted ! Is it for this mood,
 ' That Thou, whose earth delights so well,
 ' Hast made its complement a Hell ?'

XVII.

A final belch of fire like blood,
 Overbroke all, next, in one flood
 Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
 Was fire and both, one extasy,
 Then ashes. But I heard no noise
 (Whatever was) because a Voice
 Beside me spoke thus, "All is done,
 "Time ends, Eternity's begun,
 "And thou art judged for evermore!"

I looked up ; all was as before ;
 Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,
 No trace was left : I saw instead
 The common round me, and the sky
 Above, stretched drear and empty
 Of life : 'twas the last watch of night,
 Except what brings the morning quite,
 When the armed angel, conscience-clear
 His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear
 And gazes on the earth he guards,
 Safe one night more through all its wards,
 Till God relieve him at his post.
 'A dream—a waking dream at most'
 (I spoke out quick that I might shake
 The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
 'The world's gone, yet the world is here ?
 'Are not all things as they appear ?
 'Is Judgment past for me alone ?
 '—And where had place the Great White Throne ?
 'The rising of the Quick and Dead ?
 'Where stood they, small and great ? Who read
 'The sentence from the Opened Book ?'
 So, by degrees, the blood forsook

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My heart, and let it beat afresh :
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently—
When, lo, again, the Voice by me !

XIX.

I saw . . . Oh, brother, 'mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,—
Bright-white beneath, as Heaven, bright-blue,
Above it, while the years pursue
Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisaal laugh at fate :
One morn,—the Arab staggers blind
O'er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness,—
Striving, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow : what if, 'twixt skies
And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged Vapour, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt,
It vanish up again ?—So hapt
My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,—
I saw Him. One magnific pall
Mantled in massive fold and fall
His Dread, and coiled in snaky swathes
About His feet : night's black, that bathes
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within—
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,—
That intense meditation fixed
On His procedure,—pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,

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Who fell before His feet, a mass,
No man now.

“ All is come to pass.
“ Such shows are over for each soul
“ They had respect to. In the roll
“ Of Judgment which convinced mankind.
“ Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
“ Terror must burn the truth into :
“ Their fate for them !—thou had'st to do
“ With absolute omnipotence,
“ Able its judgments to dispense
“ To the whole race, as every one
“ Were its sole object : that is done :
“ God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled
“ To nothingness for thee. This world,
“ This finite life, thou hast preferred,
“ In disbelief of God's own word,
“ To Heaven and to Infinity.
“ Here, the probation was for thee,
“ To show thy soul the earthly mixed
“ With Heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
“ The earthly joys lay palpable, —
“ A taint, in each, distinct as well ;
“ The Heavenly fitted, faint and rare,
“ Above them, but as truly were
“ Taintless, so in their nature, best.
“ Thy choice was earth : thou didst attest
“ 'Twas fitter spirit should subserve
“ The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
“ Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
“ No claim to their inheritance
“ Who chose the spirit's fugitive
“ Brief gleams, and thought, ' This were to live
“ Indeed, if rays, completely pure

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“ From flesh that dulls them, should endure,—
“ Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
“ Our earth, to show how cold and swart
“ It lies beneath their fire, but stand
“ As stars should, destined to expand,
“ Prove veritable worlds, our home !’
“ Thou said’st,—‘ Let Spirit star the dome
“ Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
“ No nook of earth,—I shall not seek
“ Its service further !’ Thou art shut
“ Out of the Heaven of Spirit ; glut
“ Thy sense upon the world : ’tis thine
“ For ever—take it !”

XXI.

‘ How ? Is mine,
‘ The world ?’ (I cried, while my soul broke
Out in a transport.) ‘ Hast thou spoke
‘ Plainly in that ? Earth’s exquisite
‘ Treasures of wonder and delight,
‘ For me ?’

XXII.

The austere Voice returned, —
“ So soon made happy ? Hadst thou learned
“ What God accounteth happiness,
“ Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
“ What Hell may be His punishment
“ For those who doubt if God invent
“ Better than they. Let such men rest
“ Content with what they judged the best.
“ Let the Unjust usurp at will :
“ The Filthy shall be filthy still :
“ Miser, there waits the gold for thee !
“ Hater, indulge thine enmity !
“ And thou, whose heaven, self-ordained,

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" Was to enjoy earth unrestrained,
 " Do it ! Take all the ancient show !
 " The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
 " And men apparently pursue
 " Then works, as they were wont to do,
 " While living in probation yet :
 " I promise not thou shalt forget
 " The past, now gone to its account,
 " But leave thee with the old amount
 " Of faculties, nor less nor more,
 " Unvisited, as heretofore,
 " By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
 " So, once more, take thy world ; expend
 " Eternity upon its shows,—
 " Flung thee as freely as one rose
 " Out of a summer's opulence,
 " Over the Eden-barrier whence
 " Thou art excluded. Knock in vain !"

XXIII.

I sate up. All was still again.
 I breathed free : to my heart, back fled
 The warmth. ' But, all the world !' (I said)
 I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
 And recollected I might learn
 From books, how many myriad sorts
 Exist, if one may trust reports,
 Each as distinct and beautiful
 As this, the very first I cull.
 Think, from the first leaf to the last !
 Conceive, then, earth's resources ! Vast
 Exhaustless beauty, endless change
 Of wonder ! and this foot shall range
 Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour
 The bee-bird and the aloë-flower ?

XXIV.

And the Voice, "Welcome so to rate
 "The arras-folds that variegate
 "The earth, God's antechamber, well!
 "The wise, who waited there, could tell
 "By these, what royalties in store
 "Lay one step past the entrance-door.
 "For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
 "This life's munificence? For such
 "As thou,—a race, whereof not one
 "Was able, in a million,
 "To feel that any marvel lay
 "In objects round his feet all day;
 "Nor one, in many millions more,
 "Willing, if able, to explore
 "The secreter, minuter charm!
 "—Blave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
 "Of power to cope with God's intent,—
 "Or scared if the South Firmament
 "With North-fire did its wings reflexed!
 "All partial beauty was a pledge
 "Of beauty in its plenitude:
 "But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
 "Retain it—plenitude be theirs
 "Who looked above!"

XXV.

Though sharp despair-
 Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
 "What is it though my trust is gone
 "From natural things? Henceforth my part
 "Be less with Nature than with Art!
 "For Art supplants, gives mainly worth
 "To Nature; 'tis Man stamps the earth—
 "And I will seek his impress, seek

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' The statuary of the Greek,
' Italy's painting—there my choice
' Shall fix !'

XXVI.

“ Obtain it,” said the Voice.

“ The one form with its single act,
“ Which sculptors labored to abstract,
“ The one face, painters tried to draw,
“ With its one look, from throngs they saw !
“ And that perfection in their soul,
“ These only hinted at? The whole,
“ They were but parts of? What each laid
“ His claim to glory on?—afraid
“ His fellow-men should give him rank
“ By the poor tentatives he shrank
“ Smitten at heart from, all the more,
“ That gazers pressed in to adore !
“ ‘ Shall I be judged by only these ?’
“ If such his soul's capacities,
“ Even while he trod the earth,—think, now
“ What pomp in Buonarotti's brow,
“ With its new palace-brain where dwells
“ Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
“ That crumbled with the transient clay !
“ What visions will his right hand's sway
“ Still turn to form, as still they burst
“ Upon him? How will he quench thirst,
“ Titanically infantine,
“ Laid at the breast of the Divine ?
“ Does it confound thee,—this first page
“ Emblazoning man's heritage ?—
“ Can this alone absorb thy sight,
“ As if they were not infinite,—
“ Like the omnipotence which tasks
“ Itself, to furnish all that asks

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¶ The soul it means to satiate ?
“ What was the world, the s'arry state
“ Of the broad skies,—what, all displays
“ Of power and beauty intermixed,
“ Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,—
“ What, else, than needful furniture
“ For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,
“ No more spreads wasted, than falls scant :
“ He filled, did not exceed, Man's want
“ Of beauty in this life. And pass
“ Life's line,—and what has earth to do,
“ Its utmost beauty's appanage,
“ With the requirements of next stage ?
“ Did God pronounce earth 'very good' ?
“ Needs must it be, while understood
“ For man's preparatory state ;
“ Nothing to heighten nor abate :
“ But transfer the completeness here,
“ To serve a new state's use,— and drear,
“ Deficiency gapes every side !
“ The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
“ See the enwrapping rocky niche,
“ Sufficient for the sleep, in which
“ The lizard breathes for ages safe :
“ Split the mould—and as this would chafe
“ The creature's new world-widened sense,
“ One minute after you dispense
“ The thousand sounds and sights that broke
“ In, on him, at the chisel's stroke,—
“ So, in God's eyes, the earth's first stuff
“ Was, neither more nor less, enough
“ To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
“ You reckoned it immeasurable :
“ So thinks the lizard of his vault !
“ Could God be taken in default,
“ Short of contrivances, by you,—

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" Or reached, ere ready to pursue
 " His progress through eternity ?
 " That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
 " Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
 " To nothingness for ever ; so,
 " Has God abolished at a blow
 " This world, wherein his saints were pent,—
 " Who, though, found grateful and content,
 " With the provision there, as thou,
 " Yet knew He would not disallow
 " Their spirits' hunger, felt as well,—
 " Unsated,—not unsatable,
 " As Paradise gives proof. Deride
 " Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside ! "

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, ' Mind, the mind,
 ' So miserably cast behind,
 ' To gain what had been wisely lost !
 ' Oh, let me strive to make the most
 ' Of the poor stunted soul, I nipped
 ' Of budding wings, else well equipt
 ' For voyage from summer isle to isle !
 ' And though she needs must reconcile
 ' Ambition to the life on ground,
 ' Still, I can profit by late found
 ' But precious knowledge. Mind is best—
 ' I will seize mind, forego the rest
 ' And try how far my tethered strength
 ' May crawl in this poor breadth and length.
 ' —Let me, since I can fly no more,
 ' At least spin dervish-like about
 ' (Till giddy rapture almost doubt
 ' I fly) through circling sciences,
 ' Philosophies and histories !
 ' Should the whirl slacken there, then Verse,

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'Fining to music, shall asperse
 ' Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
 ' Intoxicate, half-break my chain !
 ' Not joyless, though more favoured feet
 ' Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
 ' The floor? At least earth's bond is broke !'

XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
 ' Let me alone ! No answer, pray,
 ' To this ! I know what Thou wilt say !
 ' All still is earth's,—to Know, as much
 ' As I feel its truths, which if we touch
 ' With sense or apprehend in soul,
 ' What matter ? I have reached the goal—
 ' " Whereto does Knowledge serve ! " will burn
 ' My eyes, too sure, at every turn !
 ' I cannot look back now, nor stake
 ' Bliss on the race, for running's sake.
 ' The goal's a ruin like the rest '—
 —" And so much worse thy latter quest,
 (Added the Voice) " that even on earth,
 " Whenever, in man's soul, had birth
 " Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
 " That pull the more into the less,
 " Making the finite comprehend
 " Infinity, the bard would spend
 " Such praise alone, upon his craft,
 " As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
 " Goes to the craftsman who arranged
 " The seven strings, changed them and rechanged—
 " Knowing it was the South that harped.
 " He felt his song, in singing, warped,
 " Distinguished his and God's part : whence
 " A world of spirit as of sense
 " Was plain to him, yet not too plain,

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" Which he could traverse, not remain
 " A guest in :—else were permanent
 " Heaven upon earth, its gleams were meant
 " To sting with hunger for the light,—
 " Made visible in Verse, despite
 " The veiling weakness,—truth by means
 " Of fable, showing while it screens,—
 " Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,
 " Was ever fable on outside.
 " Such gleams made bright the earth an age;
 " Now, the whole sun's his heritage!
 " Take up thy world, it is allowed,
 " Thou who hast entered in the cloud!

XXIX.

Then I—' Behold, my spirit bleeds,
 ' Catches no more at broken reeds,—
 ' But lilies flower those reeds above—
 ' I let the world go, and take love!
 ' Love survives in me, albeit those
 ' I loved are henceforth masks and shows,
 ' Not loving men and women: still
 ' I mind how love repaired all ill,
 ' Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amend
 ' With parents, brothers, children, friends!
 ' Some semblance of a woman yet
 ' With eyes to help me to forget,
 ' Shall live with me; and I will match
 ' Departed love with love, attach
 ' Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn
 ' The poorest of the grains of corn
 ' I save from shipwreck on this isle,
 ' Trusting its barrenness may smile
 ' With happy foodful green one day,
 ' More precious for the pains. I pray,
 ' For love, then, only!

XXX.

At the word,
 The Form, I looked to have been sturrd
 With pity and approval, rose
 O'er me, as when the headsman throws
 Axe over shoulder to make end—
 I fell prone, letting Him expend
 His wrath, while, thus, the inflicting Voice
 Smote me. "Is this thy final choice?"
 "Love is the best? 'Tis somewhat late!"
 "And all thou dost enumerate
 "Of power and beauty in the world,
 "The mightiness of love was curled
 "Inextricably round about.
 "Love lay within it and without,
 "To clasp thee,—but in van! Thy soul
 "Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,
 "Still set deliberate aside
 "His love!—Now take love! Well betide
 "Thy tardy conscience! Hasten to take
 "The show of love for the name's sake,
 "Remembering every moment Who
 "Beside creating thee unto
 "These ends, and these for thee, was said
 "To undergo death in thy stead
 "In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
 "What doubt in thee could countervail
 "Belief in it? Upon the ground
 "That in the story had been found
 "Too much love? How could God love so?"
 "He who in all his works below
 "Adapted to the needs of man,
 "Made love the basis of the plan,—
 "Did love, as was demonstrated:
 "While man, who was so fit instead,

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“To hate, as every day gave proof—
“You thought man, for his kind’s behoof,
“Both could and would invent that scheme
“Of perfect love—’twould well beseem
“Cain’s nature thou wast wont to praise,
“Not tally with God’s usual ways!”

XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly—
‘Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
‘Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost!
‘Let me not know that all is lost,
‘Though lost it be—leave me not tied
‘To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
‘Let that old life seem mine—no more—
‘With limitation as before,
‘With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
‘Be all the earth a wilderness!
‘Only let me go on, go on,
‘Still hoping ever and anon
‘To reach one eve the Better Land!’

XXXII.

Then did the Form expand, expand—
I knew Him through the dread disguise,
As the whole God within his eyes
Embraced me.

XXXIII.

When I lived again,
The day was breaking,—the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision? False or true?
Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream—be sure

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY. 367

A mere dream and distemperature—
The last day's watching: then the night,—
The shock of that strange Northern Light
Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows, the fiend in angel's shape!
Thank God no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said!
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear
Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
And think, 'How dreadful to be grudged
'No ease hencefoith, as one that's judged,
'Condemned to earth for ever, shut
'From Heaven' . . .

But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite,—and who can say?

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