

FRANZ VON SICKINGEN



TRANSLATED BY DANIEL DE LEON

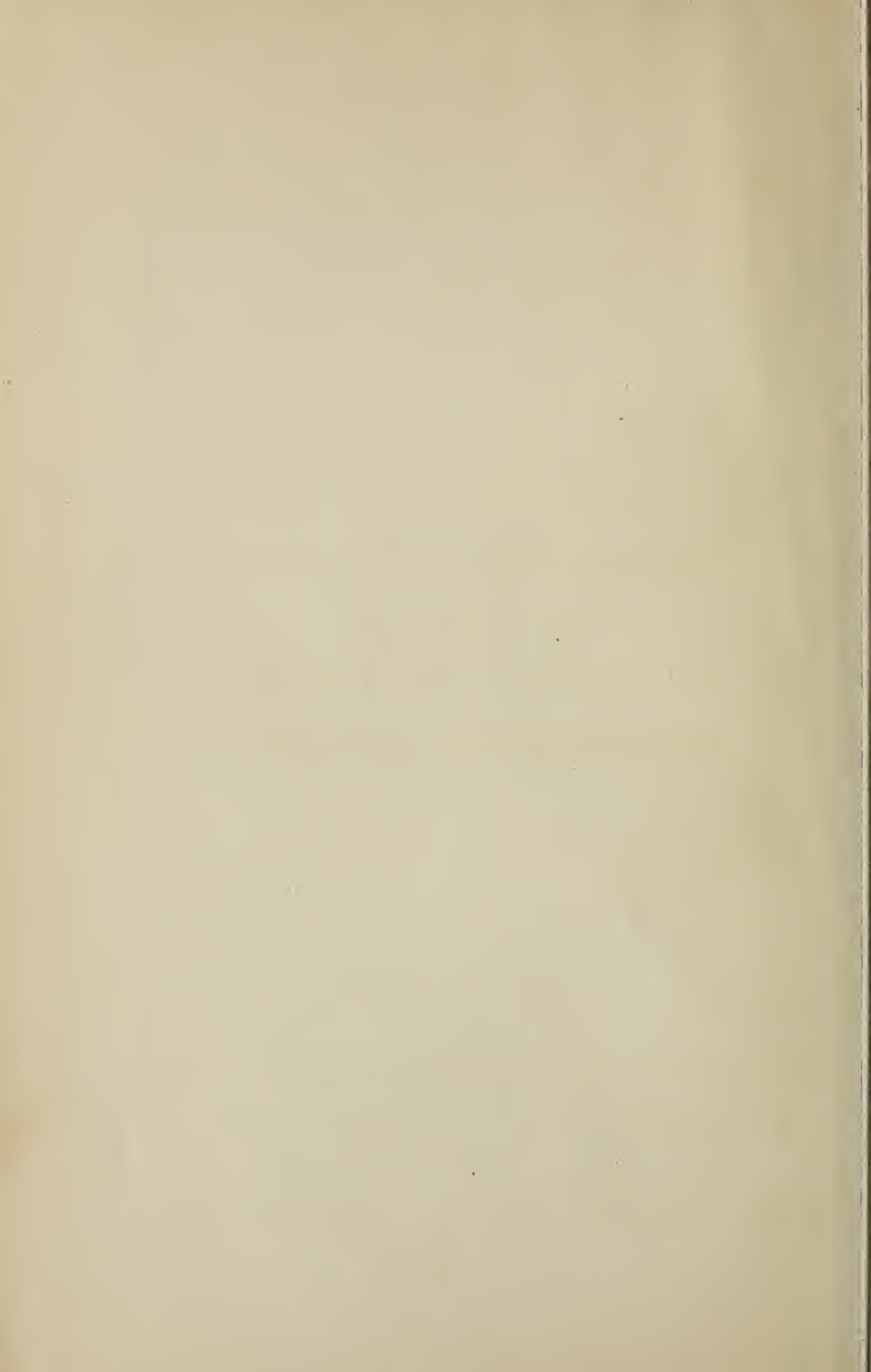


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FRANZ VON SICKINGEN

A Tragedy in Five Acts

Translated from the Ger-
man of Ferdinand Lassalle

By

DANIEL DE LEON

"The highest power for the favorable treatment of a subject still remains with poetry."—A. von Humboldt.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It is not the grandeur of its conception, nor its mechanical perfection, nor yet the sublimity of its diction, in short, it is not its literary merits that have driven me—for driven I was—to undertake the translation of Lassalle's "Franz von Sickingen." In all these features English literature is abundantly wealthy. Happy he who has the taste and time to drink at that rich fount. Translations into English, even the best, would be a wasteful taking of coal to Newcastle.

Franz von Sickingen was a distinguished German knight—distinguished in wealth, in character, in genius and in arms—on that borderland of the world's events when the scroll of the Middle Ages was being rolled up, and the scroll of Modern History began to unroll. Sickingen's stature is almost legendary. His mind and heart were fired by the rays of the rising sun. The aim he set to himself, and which he devised jointly with Ulrich von Hutten, had he succeeded, would have saved Germany the devastating Thirty Years' War, unified the nation along a direct and less thorny path than it was forced to travel, and materially changed the history of Europe for the better of mankind. He failed. He had a purpose firm, but the rock on which he suffered shipwreck was to fail to make his purpose known. Impossible as it was to conceal his purpose from the detection of the keen instinct of the usurpatory elements to whom his success meant destruction, nothing was easier than its concealment from the masses, to whom his success meant salvation. Assailed by the former, who penetrated his designs, and left in the lurch by the latter, to whom his designs remained a secret, Sickingen went down.

In these our own days of transition, when individuality—before taking the imminent leap that will enable it to bloom as never before in the history of man—is reduced to a minimum; when the modern machine-compelled interdependence of man upon man—that is the earnest of civilized manhood—has for its present effect the nipping of self-reliance; when the present vastness of wealth producible—that is the pledge of a social system where, untrammelled by the brute's requirement of arduous toil for physical existence, the intellect can freely spread its wings—now bears the ashen fruit of tongue-tying the intellectual lest the physical part of man pay the penalty;—in such days as these no tactical maxim of conduct has the value of that which this tragedy of Lassalle's preaches, whose observance it enjoins,

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and whose neglect it superbly warns against. With a majestic historic setting, draped in poetic elegance, and planted upon a pedestal of golden maxims that converge upwards, and illumine the principle itself, "Franz von Sickingen" raises in thrilling yet statuesque solemnity the principle—not merely to have a purpose firm, but also to dare to **MAKE IT KNOWN**.

So demoralizing on the will are the economic conditions that this generation is traversing, and so vital is the lesson in the tragedy of "Franz von Sickingen" to expedite the transition from the present to the better era that is beckoning our race, that I undertook the arduous task of rendering this work into English, undeterred even by the additional difficulty of preserving, as needs had to be preserved, the metrical garb—blank verse, or unrhymed meter, of standard lines of iambic pentameter—in which the original is decked. On this score my apprehensions were silenced by the thought that the best part of poetry is ever translatable, and will shine even through an imperfect rendition, while the substance remains in unimpaired lustre.

To "Franz von Sickingen" pre-eminently applies what, on the occasion of other translations I have said before regarding other works—this work deserves the broader field of the Socialist or Labor Movements of the English-speaking world, hereby afforded to it; and inversely, the Socialist or Labor Movements of the English-speaking world, entitled to the best, and none too good, that the Movement produces in other languages, can not but profit by the work, hereby rendered accessible to them.

New York, April 9, 1904.

DANIEL DE LEON.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

EMPEROR CHARLES V.

ELECTOR LUDWIG, *of the Palatinate, Palsgrave and Duke.*

RICHARD VON GREIFENKLAU, *Archbishop and Elector of Treves.*

PHILIP, *Landgrave of Hesse.*

The Papal Cardinal-Legate.

HANS RENNER, *Imperial Minister and Councilor.*

FRANZ VON SICKINGEN.

ULRICH VON HUTTEN.

COUNT WILLIAM VON FURSTENBERG.

COUNT EITELFRITZ VON ZOLLERN.

FROWIN VON HUTTEN, *Grandmaster and Chamberlain of Elector-Archbishop Albrecht of Mayence.*

KNIGHT PHILIP VON RUESHEIM.

KNIGHT HENRICH VON SCHWARZENBERG.

KNIGHT WILLIAM VON WALDECK.

KNIGHT HENRY VON DHAN.

KNIGHT PHILIP VON DALBERG.

KNIGHT WOLF VON TURCKHEIM.

KNIGHT VON BENNINGEN.

KNIGHT VON FALKENSTEIN.

KNIGHT HARMUTH VON KRONBERG.

KNIGHT FRITZ VON SOMBREFF.

KNIGHT HILCHEN LORCH.

OEKOLAMPADIUS, *Lutheran Chaplain in Sickingen's household.*

BALTHASAR SLOER, *Sickingen's private secretary and confidential man.*

CAPTAIN JOERG VON AUGSBURG, *Sickingen's master of ordnance.*

JOS FRITZ, *a peasant agitator.*

MARIE, *Sickingen's daughter.*

COUNT SOLMS.

KURT, *an attendant of Sickingen.*

The Private Secretary of the Palsgrave Ludwig.

A Knight of Treves.

A Captain of the Treves Lancers.

An Imperial Herald.

A Herald in the service of Sickingen.

An Inn-keeper.

An Armor-bearer.

A Physician.

Two Messengers.

Knights, lancers, monks, attendants, peasants, townsmen and women of Treves.

} Friends and followers
of Sickingen.

(The scene takes place during the years 1520 and 1523.)

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A room in the castle of Ebernburg.*

MARIE, folding away some needle-work, at which she was engaged.

BALTHASAR, a man about sixty years of age, completely grey, but still in full vigor, and of clear, strong voice.

Marie. I know not, Balthasar, my father is,
For some time since, not cheerful as before.
He, oft'ner than his wont, secludes himself.
And then, when letters come, I find
Most oft his brow with brooding clouds bedimmed.

Balth. The consequence it is—you'll pardon me,
My habit ever was to speak straight out—
The consequence it is of his—own folly.

Marie. How, Balthasar! Folly and my father?
And is it right to say so to his daughter?

Balth. My gracious maid, a full-fledged lass,
You may well stand a word plain said.
Besides, you know full well, though you his daughter be,
You love not Franz more warmly than myself.

Marie. (*Reaching out her hand to him with tenderness.*)
And that is true! You are a faithful servitor.

Balth. A faithful servitor! What wonder!
I could not to myself be true
Were I aught else to him. When I was persecuted;
When, lustful after power, the magistrate of Worms
High-handed drove me out; 'gainst law and right
Dispoiled me of all my goods, and into a beggar turned me;—
Who was it that my quarrel then took up?
In vain I cried to Emp'ror and to realm!
The mighty city balked me everywhere:
The Emp'ror needed it, and none dared venture
To break with it on my account.
Your father, then, I turned to in distress.
My faith! That was a counselor at law!
Another such the land does not contain!
He took me up, cross-questioned my behavior,

And when he saw that violence had been done me,
 He simply said these words: "Well, Balthasar,
 Sith not the pen may stead, be it then the sword!"
 And as Worms laughed at his petition,
 Refusing justice to my suit,
 And arrogantly threatened him
 With bans from Emp'ror and from realm,
 He took about ten thousand first-class reasons—
 Pikes, I mean, my gracious maid—and drew
 With them before the town of Worms, where he
 Began to "demonstrate" and to "distinguish."
 He knoweth how!

So well did he "distinguish" that the walls receded.
 Nor Kaiser's anger, nor the danger himself ran
 Could frighten him to drop my cause.

A scamp were he who such a favor could forget.

Marie. You are a trusty, faithful soul!

Balth. I thank you, gentle maid!—And yet, for all
 These reasons and so very many more,
 That to the knight bind fast my steady love,
 My love does not my old eyes blind
 To what I still must call—his folly.

Marie. [*Sportively.*] Oh, now, I see you come back to th' assault;
 There's something, master, sits upon your heart.
 My father must, again, have had his way. [*With comic pathos.*]
 Well, then, before our throne set forth your plea.
 We ready are to hear you, faithful subject!
 Right will be done to you!—On that
 Take our imperial word.

Balth. You badger,
 Wanton girl! Yet all the same,
 Old Balthasar is quite in earnest.—You know, my noble maid,
 That Francis, France's king, has on your father
 Bestowed the marshal's staff?

Marie. [*Continuing her assumed rôle of grandeur.*]
 We know as much.

Balth. And do you know the manner how?

Marie [*As above but somewhat embarrassed.*] No—Yes—partly!
 The cares of State have made us
 Almost forget the incident.

Balth. [*Aside.*] The charming monkey! Truly,
 My grey hairs notwithstanding, I could kiss her.

[*To Marie.*] Now, hearken unto me:
 It was, then, when your father Lorraine's duke
 —The same who since became our ally—
 O'ercome by arms;—when, thereupon,
 For reasons highly just he warred 'gainst Metz,
 And others there, like I myself in Worms,
 Having been wronged, and having turned to him,
 And he with twenty thousand men
 On foot and twenty thousand horse,
 Sat down before the place, and pressed it close,
 So close that the besieged patricians were
 Constrained to apologize and make redress—
 'Twas then that series of prowesses drew
 King Francis' eyes upon the knight, who, single-handed,
 Without ado, could muster up such armies
 As not himself the Emp'r^r could bring up
 Without a mighty effort, and oft failed
 To fetch a-field. He sought
 To win him o'er; invited to Sedan
 The knight; sent thither Count La Mark, also
 The Duke of Bouillon and the Marquis of Fleuranges
 To lead him through half France
 With honors great, in princely style.
 At last they took him to Amboise,
 Where then King Francis held his court.
 And, then, indeed, the wild carouse began!
 The King behaved as tho', without the knight,
 He could not live: and at full court,
 Himself a golden chain around his neck he placed,
 And to the knight the marshal's staff delivered
With his own hands! The grandees were constrained
 To act as if, for very love, they would devour him.
 Nor was their wonder slight
 At sight of Franz's cavalcade—
 Behind him rode for retinue,
 The choicest noblemen of Germany,
 The realm's most mighty Counts
 Far more illustrious than himself,
 Of houses far more ancient—him they follow'd,
 And built his noble guard.

Marie. Us seems Sir plaintiff, that as yet
 There is no cause for a complaint.

Balth. 'Tis but the introduction!

Marie. Please drop the introduction,

And to the subject! The process lasts too long.

Else from the court I must dismiss you!

[*Laughing.*] And I have yet to see to dinner.

Balth. To that our Bridget will attend. Young lady,

You would not hold such language, had you seen

The brilliant ladies at the French King's court.

Marie. [*Quickly.*] Indeed? They're handsome, do you think?

Balth. What houris, by my soul!

And talk they did that our mouths

Ran water. They all

Were wonderfully drilled, and constituted

The heavy ordnance wherewith King Francis

The steel-cased knight bombarded;—

For, sweet maid, our neighbors fashion 'tis

That women stand, no less than men,

At service of their King! But all that was,

As with me now, so also with King Francis,

The introduction only. Kaiser Max was old,

His tribute soon to Nature would be due,

That was the point objective. King Francis speculated

Upon our crown imperial. Aye, already

The Palatine and him of Treves he had,

But well he knew that Franz, your father,

Tho' not the peer of any of the sev'n, who,

At Frankfort, hold the privilege,

Yet when it comes t'elect, would cast a vote

As strong as all the seven put together.

Accordingly, when Kaiser Max his eyes did close,

King Francis sent a special envoy here

To Franz, the knight.—You surely could not

That ornate Frenchman from your mind have lost

Who then arrived at our Ebernburg?

Marie. [*Laughing.*] Oh! whether I recall him! Velvety

And silken, gold-brocaded was his jacket.

I would have feared the man to touch

For fear I spoiled his gear. Indeed,

He was, of men, the handsomest I ever saw,

If he but held his tongue! When that he wagged—

Then all was o'er! Such compliments he paid me—

More pointed far than were his pointed shoes,

So sugar-sweet, it was no easy thing
 For me to keep from laughing outright in his face.
 Poor man, to bring his whole supply
 Of monkey-tricks from Paris
 And waste them here! I gladly would
 Have packed up for him all his costly sweets,
 And kept him free from loss with us!

Balth. Although the man displeased you, miss,—
 He was of mighty lineage and distinguished house.
 What mattered what he *spoke*—
 To please you he'd have held his tongue.
 You two a stately couple would have made.

Marie. Oh, Balthasar! On that you're inexpert.
 With us, the women, so the saying goes,
 The soul sits in the eye. May be. I do not know
 And yet I know,—
 It sits upon the tongue of man.

Balth. Indeed?
 Have you your studies made in that?
 Perchance experience gathered on the head?

Marie. [*Blushing.*] Oh, Balthasar, how you run on!
 I know you understand me well enough,
 But force yourself to misinterpret me.
 The man, I mean, whom noble thoughts possess,
 Makes himself, by his own words known to us.
 The *how*, as well and more than *what* he says,
 Reveals to us the inner soul of man.

Balth. Hm! Hm!
 I see!—At Albrecht's, the Elector's Mayence court,
 Where you a while sojourned,
 Where arts and sciences bloom luxuriantly,
 Oh, there, I see, the thoughts of these new times
 Have made their lodgment in your head. But yesterday,
 A German knight knew but about stout blows:
 They now must also have stout *minds*.—Well, well,
 I blame, you not, young lady. Myself,
 Am heart'y pleased to see the change!
 And fitting 'tis that you,
 The daughter of Franz Sickingen—
 The but too ready shield of the new stream—
 Should think like that. Nor is it strange
 Your father's standard should inspirit you—

For thought and speech are equal great with him.
 The Marquis of Fleuranges, acquainted with
 The leading men of Germany as well as France,
 Where elegance of speech is sedulously nursed,
 Said once to me, that never, all his life,
 So powerful an orator he met.
 Indeed, the heat of inspiration on,
 There flows a stream of lava from his tongue,
 And carries all along with mighty rush.
 But, otherwise, he's rather taciturn,
 Keeps house, let's others do the talking.

Marie. So, Balthasar, I far prefer to see you
 When you my father praise, than when
 You scold at him.

Balth. Quite so, and thereby
 I am reminded to resume the thread of my
 Complaint. Well, then, the Frenchman, who
 Such sweet civilities bestowed on you—
 To Franz himself brought others still more sweet,
 From France's King, and much more solid ones withal.
 Full thirty thousand kronen-thalers cash,
 Besides, for life as yearly revenue,
 Eight thousand thalers more,
 Well patented on land and men, he proffered,
 If Franz but promised faithful to support
 Him at the Imperial vote then pending;—
 And should he still want more, he sent him word,
 He would not haggle on the difference.
 But Franz, misguided by his foolish
 Adherence to King Charles, as Max's kin,
 Rejected flatly ev'ry offer—
 And wrote upon the spot
 To Charles, the proffered trade to apprise him of!

Marie [*Impetuously.*] Fie!—Shame upon you, my old Sloer,—
 Oh, never from you, had I thought to hear
 My father blamed for his declining
 To sell the crown abroad, and then, at that,
 For dirty gold!

Balth. Do not bite me, noble girl—
 How Franz's blood wells up in this young child—
 It was not that that I would blame him for.
 Considered well, though of Max a grandson,

The young King Charles himself is none of ours.
 Per contra, did King Francis at the time
 Through learned men prove everywhere
 He was a German, tracing his descent
 From th' Emp'ror Charles the Great.—'Tis odd!
 No sooner is th' Imperial crown at stake,
 When "Germans" all proclaim themselves. But when
 The German realm is in distress—then
 The kinship none recalls!
 Now, then, admit yourself the diff'rence null
 There is between King Francis and King Charles—
 They're aliens both. The only diff'rence lies
 In ancestors a brace.
 That difference, meseems, the many thalers
 Could amply have planed down.
 Still—'tis not that I'm driving at.
 So slight a foolish act your father
 Soon I'd pardon for. Broad enough are his estates;
 Needs not King Francis' coin. And, in the end,
 'Twould be the same to him whether the German throne
 Was filled with Francis or with Charles. All one!
 No, young lady, no; a far more foolish act
 Is that I blame him for.—
 To slip by he allowed a juncture, that
 Perhaps, may never more return again.
 If he alert had been to his advantage,
 He would quite otherwise have done!

Marie. What was it then?

Balth. Young lady, this it was:
 Perchance I yet may see the hour for
 Amends—perchance it may not strike
 Until old Balthasar is dead!
 If so, I bind it now upon your soul
 To stir him up. Some day, perhaps, your lead
 He'll follow readier than Balthasar's to-day.
 Athwart the wrappage of your mirthful mind
 The heroine's soul I long have spied,
 That swift is seized by great designs,
 And steadily pursues them—will develop further!

Marie. [*With comic pathos.*]

Upon that heroine's soul, as yet to me
 Unknown, detected by yourself,

I swear—

What you demand, fulfilled shall be!

With all the easier conscience,

Seeing—that I grasp not your intent.

Balth. Now, listen!—When, at last, the time had come

For balloting at Frankfort, and

The choice for Emp'ror trembled in the scales,

Your father gathered—in the interest of Charles,

And pressure on the pious realm's Electors—

An army of more than twenty thousand men;

Marched with it upon Frankfort; and

He comfortably sat him down before

The walls. It was a pleasure to behold

How Franz the whip-hand seized and held.

E'en our Elector Palatine—the only Prince,

Besides th' Elector of Mayence, who loves the knight—

Protested, but in vain.

Now, see! Your father held the dice in hand.

All to his fiddle then were forced to dance.

They lay there at his will and mercy!

Both nation and nobility were with him—

Indeed, it had been for their best—and at

His own disposal stood an army ready

To be torn to pieces for his sake! Oh,

How I vainly argued then! Th' Electors,

Aye, all the seven, had he in a bunch—

[*Making the motion.*]

Flap—

Franz. [*Behind the scenes.*] Feed well the nag;

He earned his fodder, well to-day!

Marie. [*Jumping up.*] Keep still, my father!

SCENE II.

The former; FRANZ VON SICKINGEN.

Franz. [*Stepping in briskly.*] Good morning, child!

Marie. [*Running to him and falling on his neck.*] Beloved father!

Franz. [*Contemplating her.*] You charmer! Lovely child! Give me

A kiss, you sprightly thing!

Marie. [*Kissing him.*] And gladly, too! You seem

To-day in happy mood. How glad that makes me!

Franz. I had a brisk and early canter o'er the fields;—

The wind blew fresh upon me.
Good morning, Balthasar!

Balth. I thank your honor!

Franz. I heard you stiffly perorating.
No doubt you did yourself full justice, and
As usual, laid it hard upon me.

Marie. [*Roguishly.*] On that head, father, not this once
Could you with justice chide him. We
Were playing court, Sir. Balthasar
Accused you, and I—I was the Kaiser!

Franz. [*Laughing.*] My old man, Sloer, of that tribunal,
Before which you as my accuser stand,
'Twere hard that evil came to me.

Balth. You err, Sir! Oh! if the tribunal I but knew
That you to alter had the pow'r—full soon
You'd see me your accuser! I was just engaged
In strongest strokes to tax you
With all the seven mortal sins, that I
So oft, have vainly combated in you—
Misplacèd magnanimity; excessive
And idle abnegation, where, hand in hand,
Your own advantage and the common weal
Keep step; confiding, as though others, like you were;—
Besides, what all the sins may be, that, yet
Some time may be avenged upon you.

Franz. Do I interpret right? Why, Balthasar,
It looks to me, with yonder maid you have
Been chopping politics. Art not ashamed,
You grey-head?

Balth. Not at all! There's Margaret of Parma
Shè is a regent, truly as wise, Sir,
As any Prince in Europe, now alive.
Whence had she learned as much,
Had it not timely in her been drilled?

Franz. Yes, Balthasar, I see it clearly—with you
No man will ever be found right.
I know, a councilor imperial
Was lost in you.

Balth. [*With emphasis.*] Yours, Sir, the fault
If none as yet I am.

Franz. Oho! I see
You still are aiming high.

[*Sits down.*] To something else!
 The learned, worthy Reuchlin,
 Of science the restorer,
 Has written me a second letter.
 The parsons of Cologne, that pack in black,
 Those tonsured panters after burning pyres,
 They still are bent upon molesting him.
 They annoy and tantalize the man; refuse
 To indemnify him for the process' costs;
 Prefer to appeal to Rome; and contemplate
 To see him yet condemned a heretic!—
 Now, write to the provincial of Cologne:
 Franciscus humbly sends his greetings,
 Is at his patience's end—insists on *peace*.
 I also wish you write them clearly—
 Tell them I hope at last they hear,
 If not, I'll have to use my *speaking trumpets*,
 You know—

Balth. I understand you, Sir; I understand you fully!
 I know your speaking trumpets! Quite unique!
 That man were deaf who could not hear them!
 Could name them all to you. First, the Nightingale;
 The Rooster next, and then whatever names the rest may have—
 The matchless culverins, the mortars and the falconets,
 The carronades, that master Stephan
 Has elegantly cast for you in Frankfort. Heard
 You speak with them in front of Worms and Darmstadt—
 Philip of Hesse still feels at ev'ry limb
 The language that so plain you held to him
 That day!

Franz. Now, write that I demand, within a month,
 To see the matter settled, once for all;
 And if not promptly done to date,
 Before Cologne acquaintance will they make
 With Franz of Sickingen.

Balth. Sir, 'twere hard
 For you to give me a pleasanter commission—
 I only wish the tonsured pates gave it
 No heed. How soon would they
 Not to their patron Saint,
 The holy Dominicus, occasion have to pray!
 Yet—that's a pleasure that I must forego.

They know you but too well.

Franz. And now, I must

A word speak with this lassie.

[*While he turns to Marie a servant enters.*]

Serv. A knight is at the gate, and asks admission;

Ulrich von Hutten his name he gives.

Franz. [*With joy.*] What! Ulrich?

Marie. [*Blushing.*] Ulrich von Hutten!

Franz. A happy day! Ne'er rode

A better guest into the Ebernburg!

[*To Marie.*] The best man of all Germany

You're now about to see!

[*To the servant who has remained standing.*]

What, fellow, stand you there still?

Make haste, take wings,

And lead him quickly hither! [*Exit servant.*]

[*Again turning to Marie.*] My child,

When this our German land in deepest sleep still lay,

When still no breast to breathe did dare,

'Twas he who first the mighty impulse gave.

Ere Luther did, did he the word pronounce,

And bravely flung his gauntlet at the face

Of mighty Rome, and in the impulse of his heart

Declared war on usurpation. He

Alone!—And with his proud device, "I've dared it!"

Himself a freeman spoke. "Wake up, wake up

Thou noble freedom!" was the fervid cry

That bold he sounded through the land's confines

With might, throughout the fettered nation,

The hearts of men within their breasts inflaming,

Like none a wak'ner of the people!

Note well the man, my child, that you

May learn to know how great men look.

Marie. [*Embarrassed.*] Oh, Sir,

I know him—Met him at the court of Albrecht—

For four months there I dwelt.

[*Hesitating.*] When, at the tourney that th' Elector gave,

The knight my colors wore.

Franz. Indeed?

And did, perchance, he look you in the face?

Marie. I know not that. It almost seemed to me

'Twas rather, father, in honor of yourself—you see,

Nowise like th' other gentlemen was he,
 Forever at the heels of us the girls;
 And, on the whole, he spent but little time
 With us.

Franz. I dare say!

Quite other thoughts engage his mind!

Marie. [*Quickly.*] But when he was with us,
 He ever markedly distinguished me.

Franz. Indeed? You're an important personage!
 I fancy he has made you proud.

SCENE III.

The former; ULRICH VON HUTTEN.

Ulrich. [*Stepping in briskly and with outstretched arms towards Franz.*] Franz von Sickingen!

Franz. [*Likewise hastening towards him.*] Ulrich von Hutten!
They embrace warmly.

Ulrich. [*Noticing Marie, takes a step towards her and bows.*]

Accept, young lady, my respectful greeting,
 How happy it makes me once again to see you!

Marie. Sir knight, my thanks; in truth, I'm also glad.

Franz. I hear you know each other from Mayence.

Ulrich. Yes; at

The tourney I wore the lady's colors,
 Although with less of luck than pleasure.
 My own was holding well; already had my lance
 Unhorsed some three or four tall knights,
 When all along there came a cyclop—
 From Brandenburg, sent by th' Elector's brother—
 Square-built and like a bull in strength.
 He roughly brought me down.

Marie. Sir knight, believe me, it pained me to the heart
 To see you drop, and all on my account.
 I feared the heavy fall had done you hurt,
 Myself I could have pardoned nevermore!

Ulrich. [*Smiles and bows.*]

Not that it was that pained me, noble maid,
 The trifling fall was quickly shaken off;
 But that your colors, as they would deserve,
 To victory I failed to carry;—that
 Perchance, myself in poorer light might stand

In your esteem, than I would wish—
That pained me much.

Marie. [*With warmth though bashfully.*]

How can you hold such language!
Who's he who ne'er in arms has found his master?
And is the rough-rude sword the only weapon
That us with wonder fills us for man?
You wield still other far more mighty weapons,
And fame proclaims it that your pen of fire
In Christendom's broad field finds not its equal!
That brilliant falchion of the mind—
You wield it in humanity's great service,
For freedom and for light, for all that's noble;
For virtuous aims you wield it like a hero
With a triumphant power.

[*Deeply blushing, as if having allowed herself to be
carried too far, steps back.*]

Franz. [*Smiling to Balthasar.*] Now, list, Balthasar, to that,
What all the minx can say!

[*Stepping towards Marie and Ulrich.*]

A great word have you uttered, child of mine.

[*Laying his hand on Ulrich.*]

Upon this pen the nation's hope does rest;
None better, stronger, in all Christendom!
And yet is that not yet the best about him.
Mayhap some day as mighty pens may flourish,
Mayhap still mightier—but never
A more undaunted valor, or a nobler mind.

Balth. [*Stepping towards Ulrich.*]

Accept, Sir knight, my homage too.
From one it comes whose aged heart
You oft have set aglow.

Ulrich. [*Shaking his hand.*]

Your name is Sloer? Who should not know you!
Abroad your reputation reaches far,
The praises of your diplomatic skill.
'Tis said of Sickingen's arm'd forces
You are at least one half.

Franz. And rightly too. If but he did not ever
So high persist in soaring, an abler head
It were quite hard to find.—But, Sir knight,
You come, if I am right, from Brussels,

From the Emp'ror's brilliant court?

Ulrich. [*Sighing.*] I do!

Franz. Enlighten us! How did you find our Charles?

Ulrich. [*Turning his head away.*]

I trust no prince hereafter.

Balth. [*To Franz.*] There's your Charles!

As I foresaw—

Franz. [*Interrupting him.*] Oh, silence, Balthasar!

Pray, triumph not.—If so it be—

'Tis all the worse for me, as well as him.

[*To Ulrich.*] Report whate'er it be. I should be posted well.

Ulrich. Sir, short is my report. I moved to Brussels.

Intending with the newly chosen Emp'ror

For the new doctrine and the cause endear'd

Of German freedom diligent to labor.

In that young stripling's soul I hoped to kindle

Enthusiasm, that purest heritage of youth,

Into a mighty thirst for noble deeds,

Whose lusty breath and travail should give birth

To a rejuvenated, brighter world.—

You know what great hopes all of us,

All Germany, and most of all yourself,

Did pin upon that young man's head—

[*He stops short. Sickingen motions him to proceed.*]

Now watch!

[*With half concealed disgust.*]

Not e'en an audience could I gain

With the Emp'ror, or his brother,

The Archduke Ferdinand!

Franz. A sinister beginning!

Ulrich. By Romanists and courtesans,

The creatures of the Pope, found I

The Emp'ror's ears besieged. Uncanny

And as if moved with glee malicious, born

Of secret joy at my discomfiture,

Sir, scoffingly on me the en'my's eye

Regaled itself. But soon it all came out!

Our friends flocked anxiously to warn me

Pope Leo, thus it ran, had ordered I be seized

And, bound, delivered up to him in Rome.

The emp'ror's and the Princes' temp'ral arm

He all had summoned to fulfill his will.

Franz. [*Mechanically grasping his sword.*]

Is't possible! They mean to go so far!
 And do they think we would submit? And you,
 Sir knight, who bravely 'gainst oppression rose,
 And, for the sake of your own people's cause,
 A spokesman of the nation, you shall now
 Yourself be subjugated to such dire
 Such ignominious treatment!—Never!

Ulrich. Conscious of no guilt,

Upon my pure cause firmly resting,
 At first I laughed at all the warnings. But
 The signs came thick; our friends' anxiety
 Increased, their importunity apace.
 The Emp'ror, I was told, was being pressed!
 Till, finally, from certain sources, I
 Was told I had not e'en a day to lose!
 Nor was that all, Sir knight, I learned, aye, learned
 That if the Emp'ror seemed to waver
 'Twas all the surer sign of death to me.
 The hatred of the Romanists had fixed
 With poison or with sword I should be slain.
 Regardless of the means, I was to be
 Wiped off the earth in shortest order!
 I had to flee in haste! Not one more hour
 My life was thought to be in safety.

Marie. [*Who, like Balthasar, had followed Ulrich's narrative in
 wrapt attention.*] Good God!

Ulrich. Such was the source of all these tidings,
 So well confirmed from many sides.
 I dared no longer nurse my doubts. I fled!
 As then, through Germany I rode along
 The Rhine, I came across some trav'lers,
 Proceeding fresh from Rome. Their tidings was
 At Rome the people looked to have me soon:
 The Pope beside himself was in hot rage.
 Aye, ev'rywhere, in ev'ry town I heard
 Of my destruction open converse held—
 Some said I was imprisoned; others, dead.
 When, finally, in safety I rode into
 Mayence and Frankfort, there came
 To meet me, weeping, many friends,
 Who long for lost myself had given up,

Saluted me like one who dead was thought,
And sobbing hung upon my neck.

Marie. Poor man!

Franz. [*Significantly.*] Now are you, Ulrich, truly knighted!

Ulrich. [*Proceeding with a painful expression.*]

But many a friend I also met, who now,
Quite fearfully and timid drew himself
Away, affrighted by the papal ban.
Some openly, less frank some others,
Yet plain enough their meaning was to me
That I a burden now was deemed by them.
And yet, some others, who, in threatening days,
My voice had given aid and comfort,
And whom an anchor I had been
In many a storm—their language to me now
Was that they *secretly* remained my friends,
But that, as I would have to admit, could not
In *public* by me take their stand,
They could not wholly break with Rome, they thought!

[*After a moment's pause.*]

Sir knight, to meet such treatment from one's friends,
From men on whom, with ever ready heart,
One freely poured his warm, unstinted love,
Oh, that pains sore!

Franz. Sir Ulrich, be a man!

Be not cast down by th' ev'ry day occurrence—
How can it sadden your experienced mind
That you yourself must undergo a trial
At once so natural and obvious!
Them all does Rome hold fettered in her hands
Through terror—and their *interests* 'bove all!
Know this: Of them each one is after this or that;
Still oft'ner, anxious not to lose whate'er
He has! E'en he, who seeks naught for himself,
Has brothers, sisters, mayhap children,
Whose interests restrain him to break off
Too sharply with the powers that be. Thus e'en
The holy bonds of family—
That noble teacher of morality,
Us here below by Nature given
To tutor us upon the duty of man,
To learn to rise above his petty self—

Become a spur and lure to meanness,
 With th' aid of sentimental sophistry
 Our better selves into the mire dragging.
 Well did the Vatican its bus'ness know
 When, at the goal of universal power aiming,
 And the creation of a fighting army,
 That, free from all entangling hindrances,
 On one great aim its complete efforts bends,
 Upon the clergy imposed the sinful duty
 Of celibacy!—Yet you, Sir Ulrich,
 You may not by the painful lessons of
 Experience bitter let your strength be lamed.
 Whoe'er your mighty mission taketh up,
 Such vipers he should, undeterred, let free
 Around his breast coil and uncoil themselves,
 But buckle all the firmer on his mail
 Himself against their pois'nous sting to shield.
 Still firmer buckle on the matchless mail,
 On you bestowed by Nature as her gift!
 The brilliant inspiration, you 'twill ne'er
 Deny!—The truth of that that you proclaim
 That wavers ne'er, however, men may waver.

Ulrich. [*With animation.*] Oh, well I see before me standing
 The last of German heroes! Sickingen,
 With right does fame pronounce you great alike
 In word and deed. Oh, German virtue lives
 With renewed, mighty force in you!

Franz. May God forefend I be the last of all!
 Yourself have said that faithful many friends
 You met, who did not turn away.

Ulrich. Indeed I met them, yet themselves they urged
 Me with insistance from the towns away,
 Afraid the blows 'gainst me of secret or
 Of open foes they could not parry.
 Pope Leo, ev'rywhere 'tis said, has sworn
 To look upon and as a foe to treat
 Whoever shelters or befriendeth me.
 You know, the towns—where arts and science
 A mighty increment have won,
 And hence beget a noble love of freedom—
 Are friendly to the doctrine new proclaimed.
 And yet, you know the usual run of things:

The larger number of the burghers grave,
 Who rule in all the councils of the towns,
 Are rather circumspect and wary, avoid
 Entangled to become by overt acts,
 And fear with this or that Prince, who, perchance,
 Obedient to the Pope might requisition me,
 To come in open conflict.—

[*After a pause.*] Perhaps they still
 A silent shelter might have granted; but—
 You know that I myself can not lie low!
 I can not silent be; with silence can
 Not purchase sanctuary.—

[*With increasing fire and animation.*]
 The spirit moves me! I must its testimony give!

[*Pressing his heart.*]
 I can not still what clamors here so loud.
 The direr, wider spreads the gen'ral stress,
 That in despair, as frightened by a pest,
 Sends all to hide within their houses,
 In silence sliding past the one the other—
 Then all the more the spirit's impulse moves
 Me 'gainst the devastation stand to take;
 The more it threatens, all the more to fight!
 Oh, had I thousand tongues—just now
 With all the thousand I would wish to speak!
 I much prefer in poverty pursued
 To flee from place to place a hunted beast
 Than Truth renounce by silence! Mayhap
 That brute force may succeed to crush me down;
 The spirit's voice it nevermore can hush.

Franz. There speaks your heroism, Ulrich!
 It seems as if the whole strength of the Age
 Compressed has been in but two men alone.
 Yourself and Luther hold the torches up!
 What are the rest to these two giant forms!—
 Give me your hand. What now you just have said
 My mind with supreme wonder would have filled
 If I not long as much of you had known.

Ulrich. Not therefor praise me, Franz! Not few are those
 Who on that very score have blamed me hard;
 And yet, the matter well considered,
 Nor blame nor praise do I deserve.

By Nature so constructed that the ills
Of others hard upon my spirit weigh,
That more than others' heart the public stress
My own does wring—I can not change it, Sir,
It is an inborn impulse!

[*After a pause.*] All my friends
Knew that; 'tis why in fear and dread they drove me
From town to town, advice to take with you,
Franciscus.

Franz. Aye, no wiser counsel, truly,
Your friends in trouble could have hit upon.
Upon a strong wall you have leaned yourself,
Sir Ulrich; might may cause it to break down,
But there's no storm can make it quaver.

Balth. They doubly wise advised you, Sir. Indeed.
For *them* as wise as for *yourself*.

Ulrich. A proscribed man you thus before you see,
Franciscus!

[*Stepping towards Franz and taking his hand.*]

Oh, what weighs upon my soul
Is not the risk of life and limb I run;
Quite other thoughts, Sir knight, oppress me sore.
Why should such dangers dog my ev'ry step?
Why should exposure threaten warm desire
Devoted to the common weal? These ills
Pursue my love and homage unto Truth
And Fatherland. For these to shame must I
Be brought? For *all* one man has taken stand—
And should not *all* rejoice that one to shield?
Oh, where is honor, where is virtue gone!
Oh, where that German strength and valor
The theme of song and legendary prose?
Would they impassive him in bonds see thrust
Who strives the bonds of all to snap?
Such course the masses brands with dullness.

Franz. Be not deterred.—The masses are a child
That must be first drilled, educated
Before their better sense can have free play.
What else can we expect as the result
Of priestly oppression and besotment?
Indeed, if that were possible, you must
Admit, the reasons for complaint against

The system would not be so strong and grave—
 So far as you're concerned, I only wish
 The public stress as eas'y as your own
 Could be dispelled.—[*Walks up and down meditatively.*]

Yet what concerns
 Th' affairs of Fatherland and Emperor,
 We shall not yet lose hope and courage quite.
 I'll write to him; shall see him personally;
 An audience I shall have.—

Ulrich. The talk is general
 Of the great favor that with the Emp'rour you
 Enjoy. 'Tis stated how, at Aachen, at
 The coronation, he pronouncedly
 Distinguished you 'bove th' assembled Princes.
 And well, indeed, he may no less.—
 Throughout the land it is by all believed
 To you th' imperial crown he owes.

Franz. But, now, to you. I place my burgs, them all,
 At your disposal. In them rule at will,
 Like I myself. My word upon it, Sir—
 'Gainst realm and Emp'rour I will hold you free,
 As far as need may be.—Tho', it seems to me,
 From Sickingen there'll none be to demand you.
 Your refuge choose yourself; yet, would you please
 Me, stay you here with me; let this my home,
 The Ebernburg your shelter be.

[*During the last three lines, all three group themselves in a semicircle around Ulrich.*]

Ulrich. [*With exaltation.*]

Oh, Justice's Shelter I shall name it,
 For here alone the right of freedom dwells!
 In song remote posterity shall know it,
 And immortality reward its name.

Franz. Nor shall you idle lie, nor silent.
 Your batt'ries I will furnish unto you—
 The batt'ries that so deftly and opportune,
 Our words into a bullet can transmute
 That far and wide the furthest bull's eye hits,
 And Gutenberg, not yet a hundred years
 Ago, contrived. A press I'll have set up.
 Bombard the country; do it bold and brave;
 Forewarn, instruct, incite and propagate;

Enlighten, stir, inflame the nation!
 Show what the mind of man can do. Dispel
 The pitchy night like sun-rays do the mist!
 With willing heart I'll give a helping hand.
 And also, if you will, to Luther write,
 If his pen too the powers seek to bend,
 That here at the Ebernburg he'll find
 Asylum ready and of the *press full freedom*:
 No longer need he with Electors bother:
 And, at the worst, against these robust walls,
 Th' unconquerable ones of Ebernburg,
 Full many an army its head would have to run
 Before a hair upon his head was touched.

Balth. Then, also, at these burgs of ours, you
 Will find not few the heralders inspired
 Of the new doctrine, who, like you, have hither
 Fled. Oh, they will with warmth press you to heart!

Marie. And also I would offer what I may,
 However slight! Of music you are fond—
 When cares press you hard, I will their pall
 Dispel and chase away with sweetest song.

Franz. Now, come; inspect the new asylum
 That you are now to occupy—
 Besides, I wish to see you privately.

Ulrich. How in this circle of the loved
 My heart grows soft, and yet with strength is filled!
 How in my breast's deep depth the pure
 Impatience of the mind is soothed and stilled!
 As 'neath the warm and loving sun-rays
 The seed matures and ripens into fruit,
 So in this moment's tender pleasures
 Maturer strength pervades my structure.
 New springs of life course wildly through my veins—
 What once was dark to light is ripened now.
 Here first I felt the glow of human speech,
 And what I *am*—'tis *here* will unfold!

[*The curtain closes.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A castle in the neighborhood of Worms.*

The stage represents a knight's state room. To the left is a cabinet. At its half-open door, in the act of leaving the cabinet and closing the door after him, stands the Imperial Councilor HANS RENNEN bowing to a person within.

Emp. [*From within the cabinet.*]

These matters all with him arranged,
Apprise me. For all others I shall be
Engaged.

Ren. [*Bowing.*] It will be done, Imperial Majesty!

[*Closes the door of the cabinet and steps forward.*]

A wondrous youth this Charles! Upon his one
And twenty years' shoulders there sits
A head full fifty years old and wise,
So serious-keen, so penetrating-sage,
Unlike all else upon young age bestowed!
'Tis almost against Nature's course so ripe,
At such an age so consummate reserved
To be! Who could his purpose penetrate?
Or fathom what he means concealed to keep?
But one thing is quite clear. No common mind
Dwells in this young man's well controlled being.

[*Is for a moment lost in meditation.*]

And yet, not one trait has he of you, Max!
You were quite otherwise! An Emp'ror still
When back to you my thoughts revert—recall
You standing here in the bloom of youth—
The burden of my three score years and ten
Seems almost to roll off my stooping back!
In my eyes you have never aged.
I ever see you in your fullest youth—
When your blonde hair in rippling ringlets fell;
Your eyes, deep blue, broad-orbed, whose brilliant light
Like two stars shone; your free, clear voice,
That mild and truthful, music-like, its way
Found to the hearts of men; your brow—
A mirror on which all could read'y read
What on it written stood, and found to read
But only noblest thoughts of German stock.
Oh, Max, why did you die before myself!

To me it is as if you carried with you
 Whate'er there was that could my heart delight.
 The world that now surrounds me, changèd is,
 You were the last of German knights still left,
 The last man—

[*Perceives Franz von Sickingen approaching.*]

Yet not so! For what complain!
 There comes another like to him! A man
 As Max was, and by him beloved, held dear
 As much as me! God bless you, gallant Franz!

SCENE II.—RENNER; FRANZ.

Franz. God bless you, noble friend! It ever was
 You know, a feast to me to see your face.

Ren. Indeed our friendship is not of fresh date,
 And has not in the course of time grown grey.
 'Tis good that you are there! You're punctual, Franz,
 And yet impatiently the Emperor
 Awaits you.

Franz. Will you announce me to him?

Ren. Some business matters I was first to settle.

Franz. If Charles with me has business, he could
 No more agreeable agent have selected.
 I thank him for the choice.

Ren. And so 'twas meant
 By Charles. Yourself and me his purpose was
 To join. It is not business only,—no!
 High favor is to be bestowed on you
 And that is why the Emp'ror picked out me,
 The heirloom old, by Maximilian left,
 From all his council gathered there at Worms,
 Acquainted with the friendship that us binds.
 For, as he knew a joy to me 'twould be
 To be the messenger of your distinction,
 He also thinks that all the gladder you
 Would take it at mine own than other's hands.

Franz. Oh! lo, an expert in the knowledge
 Of human nature seems the younker!

Ren. Indeed; above all gracious unto you!
 Sir Franz, the Emp'ror wished with you and you with him
 To speak during this Reichstag held at Worms.
 But having heard about the olden feud

That once raged hot between yourself and Worms,
 The Emp'ror was of mind it might, perhaps,
 For many reasons inconvenience you
 Were he to invite you to your en'mies' town;
 And, therefore, did he, Franz, for your sake change
 His quarters to this burg for a few days,
 And gave you here his rendezvous. For no
 Elector, think I, he'd have done as much!

Franz. Such tender thoughtfulness does please me. Tho'
 The feud I've long forgotten, and, I hope,
 No less the Wormsers have their hatred,
 Yet must I thankfully th' intention note.
 Now, to the point! What does our Emp'ror wish
 From Sickingen?

Ren. Sir, to the point!
 As you well know, the loan has fallen due
 Of twenty thousand guilders gold, that you
 Advanced the Emperor. But in his purse
 The ebb as low is as is high the tide
 Within his heart for you. He cannot pay.
 The armament 'gainst Francis, the election—
 Have thus our bags exhausted
 That th' only *ground* we clearly see,
 And which affects th' Imperial Councilors,
 A *ground*, though bodiless, yet tangible,
 That, like a shadow is hollow and void, and yet
 Is hard unto the touch even if not
 Felt after—the *bottom of the bag!*
 And further armaments, and larger, will
 'Gainst Francis soon be imperative to us.
 The Emp'ror, therefore, prays you to extend
 The loan. A few years more and he will pay.

Franz. My worthy friend—

Ren. No, listen to the end;
 I well know what you have to say, Sir Franz.
 Believe me—Imperial Councilors are so
 Accustomed with impatient creditors
 To deal, that we are able, in advance,
 By heart, upon our fingers' ends, the grounds
 To enumerate that we quite patiently
 Must every creditor allow to dish
 Up ever and anew before us.
 It is now *forty* years I have borrowed!

Since I in Maximilian's service came,
 To borrow was my part. What could you, then,
 You inexperienced friend, say new to me?
 But jokes apart! The Emp'ror knoweth well
 That it must cost you sacrifices to
 Comply. The sum is large. And never yet
 Was gold so tight and scarce as now,
 Now everyone is in the bankers' hands,
 They are the true kings in these days!
 It looks as if a mammoth suction gear
 At Augsburg has been set at work, the which
 Its tentacles around the land has strung,
 And all the gold afloat pumps into its chests!
 Aye, if the bankers, at the time, had not
 Accepted Charles' note, and that of Francis
 Returned protested, and with scorn to boot—
 Who knows upon whose head th' imperial crown
 Would rest to-day.—Oh, never Charles forgets
 How you, the usurers to bend his way,
 Yourself did pawn yourself to them!

Franz. Oh, mention not the matter.

Ren. Allow me that I touch it.

And just because of you but only great
 Things are expected, pray lag not behind
 Yourself, this time refusing to comply.
 And Charles submits a double guarantee—
 He will the sum on land and upon men
 By letters patent formally secure
 To you upon such terms that, if default
 Is made, your profit will be great.
 And if you should prefer it, Margaret
 Of Parma all her jewels offers you
 In pawn, with promise—

Franz. No more, I pray you, Sir!

You offer *me* the noble lady's jewels
 The diadem of th' Emp'ror's cousin I
 Shall in my coffer take in pawn? How long,
 Hans Renner, can it be since we have met,
 And what report the good name of Franciscus
 Could to you so have slandered that to me
 You such an offer make? You misconstrued
 My meaning, Sir, when at the start
 You interrupted me. No, Sir, at your

First words my mind was firmly made up.
 The habits of your office, filled so long,
 With false presumptions have deceivèd you.
 So, then, you may your Charles in my name tell:
 When he with greedy traders, Jews, or with
 The *Princes* of our realm has dealings, then
 May he of pawning jewels and estates
 Hold parlance—but may God forfend a knight
 His duty to his Emperor and Lord
 Should so far misapprize, and himself hold
 So slight as from his own Imperial Lord,
 Who 'gainst the realm's foes seeks himself to arm,
 A pledge to take or negotiate for one,
 Expecting of his lands to cheat him.
 The loan is granted, and still more
 If you should need and I should able be to raise.
 Yourself the day of payment fix; but naught
 Of jewels or estates. Th' Imperial word
 Is quite enough for me.

Ren. [*To himself.*] A creditor unique! Upon my soul,
 Now, after forty years' experience, do
 I for the first time meet a novel case!
 [*To Franz.*] You are, as ever, knighthood's flower
 And mirror! Yes, admitted frankly,
 Ashamed am I, I followed the routine,
 And sought to handle you with such a standard.
 Upon the worn-out tracks of dull experience,
 One almost does forget that something else
 Exists which on life's broad highways
 Is not experiencèd! Hence the folly
 Of the wise yet childish errors in the brains
 Of those grey heads that dull have grown
 In cleverness.—I had some other things
 To deal about with you, but first, I must
 Th' Imperial horn of favor on your head,
 Franciscus, empty. Know, drawn up lies,
 Imprinted with th' Imperial great seal, ready,
 The bright diploma that yourself and stock
 For ever to the rank of Count does raise
 In our German realm.

[*Stepping back and bowing.*]

Imperial Count of Sickingen!

The *first* am I to greet you by the name;

And 'tis but only the first rung, the Emp'ror
Has ordered me to announce, which you now mount
Upon the ladder of his favor.

Franz. [*Smiling.*] Then, surely, dear friend, I mount not high,
For the "first rung," as you have called it,
Remains to me *unmountable*.

Ren. How? What?

I fail to grasp your meaning.

Franz. Yet 'tis plain!

I must the favor—

Ren. [*Anxiously.*] You mean not to—?

Franz. Decline, my friend.

[*Renner steps back stupefied.*]

I am a simple knight;

I'm *Franz*—now see—I mean the same to be!

Ren. [*In great excitement.*]

I pray you, do you joke? And why should you
So great a favor scornfully reject?

Franz. [*Seriously and deliberately.*]

I've told you why. If you with care reflect,
There lay, in short words, ample sense. My friend,
Myself my title have I framed together!

My title is my *name*, my dear Sir!

Throughout the realm, Franciscus am I called.

The name is common to good many more,

And yet but *one* is ever by it meant.

[*Slightly ironical.*]

Dull mankind learneth hard! Should we its mem'ry,

That organ so resistful, titles new

Inflict upon, that never in its ear

Can sound as well as th' old sounds known before?

Please tell your Charles I'm not inclined to turn

Men into school-boys, and compel them

To learn anew.

Ren. By heaven, no! You may

Not this time listen to your stubborn pride.

Consider his proud mind! So grave an insult!

Decline the gift? Reflect what you're about!

You *must* not, I insist—recall the word!

Franz. [*With dignity.*] As this our solid earth's gigantic pile,

Unshakable does stand Franciscus' word!

[*Milder.*] My friend, look not so imploringly at me!

It is not merely pride that makes me speak.

Why mention to you all my reasons? Look,
 When in the breeze my banner waves, a crowd
 Of Counts of our Empire fall in line—
 Not one more if I'm made a Count myself,
 But many less from knighthood's sturdy ranks.
 And also in other ways it hurtful would
 Affect me—a *runner after titles* folks
 Would dub me, bent on own promotion,
 Unneeded, bootless to the common weal.
 No, new distinctions I shall ne'er assume
 But such as may increase my aptitude
 To work out greater weal for this our realm!

Ren. I know you well—the North pole's mound of ice
 Is easier far to melt with one's own breath
 Than change your will!—But what am I to tell
 The Emp'ror is your reason for declining?

Franz. Tell him the offer I reject—and if
 He will, himself the reason I shall give.

Ren. Strange man! Be 't so! But now, I hope, at least
 More pliant to the Emp'ror's will you'll prove
 Upon the next, last head—the Emp'ror has
 Appointed you his marshal in the field,
 Also his chamberlain and councilor.
 A life-guard, two score strong of cuirassiers,
 At his expense is yours. Another man
 Than you the news would be imparted as
 High favor. Yet, with you, who, when he gives,
 Is soft as wax, but, when receiving hard
 As adamant another course must stand.
 I therefore, Franz, announce it straight to you—
 'Twill please the Emperor if you accept.
 He greatly needs your services, and counts
 Upon your military skill and strength.
 Accept, I pray, for when you take you give!

Franz. One thing is office, rank another thing.
 For office spelleth "duty;" contrary
 From rank, it flows not from and to oneself.
 The crown itself, that now the Emp'ror wears,
 An office 'tis! Whene'er the people speak
 Of th' office of a Prince or Emperor,
 In mind they have the mighty mission of
 The people's shepherd; other thoughts their minds
 Possess when princely rank is on their tongue,

The men, who steeped in vainglory, puff up
 Themselves forgetful of the aim and root
 Of their existence. Yes, a field-marshal
 When 'gainst his own foes and the realm's
 The Emperor would use me, yes—
 That office I accept.

But not, therefore, am I to all work bound—
 I, first of all, stand by the men who stood
 By us—our friends and allies whom I'm bound to.

Ren. What clauses, and as many as you please
 You're free to make! It is enough that you
 Accept! But now, I pray you, Franz—
 I now proceed to announce you to the Emp'ror—
 With a petition charge my errand!
 You granted have what of you was requested,
 And have rejected what was offered.
 Believe me, *that* he ill can bear. It is
 A thorn pressed in his proud Imperial soul.—
 It almost looks like an exchange—yet, Franz,
 I pray you, if but for my sake alone—
 To soften what is harsh in my report—
 Petition aught!

Franz. Well, then! The Emperor
 Is angered at th' Elector Palatine.
 If I not err, a thunder storm now threatens
 To break upon th' Elector's head. He is
 My liege-lord, and since olden days has been
 A friend and good to me, as I to him.
 You may, then, tell the Emperor, if on
 Franciscus grace he would confer, he please
 His anger, whether just it be or not,
 With pardon's tender hand to strangle.

Ren. You play with words, my friend! I gladly shall
 To th' Emperor your wishes carry. But
 That is not a request, as I had meant.
 Instead of for yourself, for others you
 Entreat, as though you wished thereby to prove
 Yourself naught needed, and too high you stood
 For Charles's grace to climb the stairs of
 The throne on which, in self-sufficient and
 Ecstatic majesty, you sit! Franz, wound
 Not th' Emp'ror! Could you, were you in his place,

Afford to use that subject, who for you
No use, himself can find?

Franz.

Perhaps you err.

Perhaps from th' Emperor himself so much—
So very much I have to ask, that 'tis
But wisdom if my credit's weight I will
Not weaken, since, may be, the simple pound
Of his Imperial favor, thrown at once
Into the scale, may not be heavy enough
To lift the weight of the petition that
I bring. So far, you questioned me. Now let
Me, changing our rôles, a question put
To you. What Charles with me did want—I now
Informed am on; what I with him—as yet
Not one word did you utter. Tell me, how
Did he the contents of my letters take?
How stand things with this Reichstag's great affair?

Ren.

Mean you Luther?

It may be many weeks before the schism
At all can come up for discussion.
Till then it will be in the pow'r of none
To learn what in his mind he harbors.
One time it seems like this, and then like that,
And ever it but *seems*. The grave is not
So locked as is his breast. You sooner could
Unlock in Nature's breast her thoughts most hidden
Than from him learn the deed before 'tis done.
But, now, allow that I announce you.—Look
Who's that approaching? Lo! th' Electors two
Of Treves and Palatine, besides the landgrave
Philip of Hessen!

[*The three named personages enter.*]

SCENE III.—*Former*; ELECTORS LUDWIG of the Palatinate and ARCH-
BISHOP RICHARD of Treves; the LANDGRAVE PHILIP of Hessen.

Ren [*Advancing towards them and bowing.*]

I welcome you, my noble Sirs!—At your
Command!—

Arch.

Our horses hither,

Sir Council, carried us from Worms, because
We matters of importance have to treat

With th' Emp'ror.

[*To Ludwig.*] Better than elsewhere,
Sir Palatine, we here can manage your
Affair. The Legate, warm friend of my youth,
The only one who yet has influence
With Charles, and here sojourns with him, himself
Advised this step to me, and promise gave
To second my endeavors.

Ren. Your graces!
My orders, true enough, are none to announce,
Seeing his Majesty on matters of
Importance rendezvoused the knight. And yet,
I may not, in the presence of such Princes,
Too close adhere unto the letter of
My orders.—

[*Bows and withdraws into the imperial cabinet.*]

SCENE IV.—*The same, without RENNER.*

Franz. [*Takes a step towards the Count Palatine and bows.*]

Franciscus greets your grace, and he rejoices
With a full heart to see you look so well.

Lud. [*Taking a step towards Franz and shaking his hand.*]

God with you, Franz! How goes it in your house?
How does your pretty daughter? Often
The promise made you and again to send her
To Heidelberg, to visit my wife's court.

[*While they continue to converse with each other.*]

Arch. [*To Landgrave Philip.*]

Behold! We meet here both the Kaisers—
Both Charles—and yonder Kaiser by the grace
Of popularity, of mass-applause—
The German intellectual Kaiser.
Who knows, of them two, which it is that will
The other turn to a man of straw. Behold
The favor that th' Elector stands in with him;
We almost might our trouble save with Charles,
Since he's so graciously receivèd here!
You saw't yourself—his greeting was alone
For him, while not a nod he deemed us worth.

Phil. Prefer it so. It would have gone against
My grain a greeting to return to him.

Arch. I readily believe you. Odd must be

The itching in your grace's skin as oft
 As you behold a knight, who, like him—
 So wholly has you in his pocket.

Phil. [*Angrily.*] His pocket? Me? What have you in *mind*?

Arch. The obligation is upon my mind,
 Which he—when at the gay and sportive hunt,
 That, meaning but his guns to keep in practice,
 Took place against your Darmstadt—won from you.

Phil. You're scoffing, Sir—

Arch. Who scoffs, Sir Philip, pray?

And if I scoff, God knows, I scoff as much
 At me as at your grace's self!—
 Quite serious;—has it e'er been seen before
 A simple knight a Prince to so toss on
 His horns as he did you? Of you what would
 Have been if, for the Baden's margrave's sake
 He had not been content to leave you but
 Half plucked? And have you calculated, Sir,
 How soon the moon and sunshine in your states
 Would constitute their only earthly wealth,
 Were he to call the promissory note
 With which you forcèd were to purchase peace?

Phil. Your purpose is to sting me;—as you're well
 Aware, the obligation was pronounced
 By Emp'ror Max invalid.

Arch. But I've heard
 That in advance the instrument provides
 That all objections you renounce, that rest
 Upon the Emp'ror, or the Reichstag's vote.
 Thus Max's fiat is of no avail
 If Franz, as lately I informed have been,
 Eventually means payment to demand.

Phil. All one! I stand upon the Emp'ror's verdict.
 My sword—

Arch. Is still the same as 'twas before;
 But otherwise it is with Franz's sword!
 Comparèd with to-day, his power then
 Could slight be called. Indeed, your grace, it shoots
 Gigantically up, a pois'nous tree,
 And soon its shadow will have swallowed all of us!

Phil. And be it so! But do you think it likely
 The Emp'ror could the debt of his ances—

Arch. Speak you of th' Emp'ror Charles? Go to, Sir Philip!

Have you, perchance, been able to scent out
 The plans of Charles? And do you think the proud
 Young man, the autocratic Lord of Spain,
 Delights so much at our power and
 Free hand? Therein the very danger lies
 That threatens us—Charles and Franciscus!
 Behold two cards that never should have been
 Found jointly in the game of the same Age!
 Each supplements the other, and can turn
 Its prop to mightiest acts! It all depends
 Upon the manner accident the two
 Together shuffles. Sir, we may expect—
 If profit-lured—to see, as yet may be,
 Instead of each the other trumping, each
 As high as heaven raise the other.

SCENE V.—RENNER *stepping in from the Imperial cabinet; the others.*

Ren. My noble Princes, please you pardon me!
 His Majesty Imperial can not hear you now;
 He to the castle summoned Franz, the knight.
 The Emperor expects in two more days
 To be at leisure and to listen
 To you at Worms. He is approaching.

[After making this announcement, at the first words of which Ludwig, breaking off his conversation with Franz, returns to the other Princes, Renner steps to the opposite side of stage towards Franz.]

Arch. *[With jeering and triumphant mien to the two Princes, who, visibly astonished at Renner's announcement, step back.]*

Pray, tell me, do you notice aught?

[He continues to converse with them in a low voice. The personages are now so grouped that, at one side of the stage, Franz and Renner, on the other, the three Princes are together.]

Ren. *[To Franz.]* Franciscus!

With greater grace than I had feared did Charles
 Receive our dialogue's report.

[Continues in a low voice.]

Phil. Indeed, it is unheard-of! Thus three Princes,
 Among them two Electors, to dismiss
 For but a knight!

- Lud.* It is an odd thing—
It cannot be denied.
- Arch.* Keep cool! This is
But the beginning! Mark my words, the knight
Eventually will ask us all the price
Of our Elect'ral hats.
- Lud.* You hate him for
He is not Romish, but of Luther a
Supporter.
- Arch.* [*Pointing to Philip.*]
This Prince also is friend
Of Luther, yet not therefore blind! Nor you,
Your grace, although on purpose you may choose
To shut your eyes. Have you forgotten how
At Aachen, at the coronation, Charles
The knight before th' assembled Princes placed
Upon his right?
[*They continue in a low voice.*]
- Ren.* [*To Franz.*] The Emp'ror graciously
Received your prayer for th' Elector,
And for your sake has he consented.
Shall I not now the Palatine inform
What he owes you?
- Franz.* Pray, do not so! It might
His self-esteem offend—a thing I would avoid.
[*Glancing at the group of Princes.*]
Besides, I see quite clearly Romish thorns
Now busy at work, to stir up petty sores.
- Arch.* Say what may please you! If your liege-lord yonder—
Excuse me, liege-man should I say. 'Tis thus
That words are readily misprised—almost
As readily as rôles, and who could tell
What time may bring!—Tho', then, I meant to say,
Your present liege-man with such grace just now
Received you, yet am I not, for that,
So fascinated by his graciousness
To fail to feel as insult done to me
The slap bestowed, for his sake, on my cheek.
- Lud.* [*Meditatively.*]
You're partly right in many a thing you say.
- Arch.* I mean also the other half to unfold
Quite fully to your eyes. But now we must
Withdraw. It ill would us befit to wait

Till Charles's archèd eye-brows bid us off
 The hall. You, noble Sirs, pray come. Perhaps
 I may be able to impart to you
 Some information that yourselves may judge
 Whether it does or not illuminate
 My words, and what yourselves have here seen.

[While they withdraw, the cabinet opens and the Emperor enters. At the appearance of the Emperor, Renner also withdraws slowly. Franz bows low, and remains in that posture.]

SCENE VI.—CHARLES and FRANZ.

Emp. [At the age of 21; he is dressed in rigid black; his bearing and appearance dignified and measured. He contemplates Franz long and attentively.]

You're welcome to me, Franz!

Franz. [Retaining his posture.] Imperial Majesty!

Emp. Approach!

[Franz rises and takes a step towards Charles.]

I'm pleasèd with you Franz—

And also not. Indeed, I'm almost wroth!

Although I'll readily admit the fact

That none as yet has reason given me

For such a wrath.

Franz. Imperial Majesty!

Emp. Franciscus, tell me frankly why
 The proffered countship you decline?

Franz. Your Majesty—

Emp. I asked you, why?

Speak freely!

Franz. Well, few words will say it all—

A free man, independent, have I served

You; free and independent would I serve you still!

Emp. [To himself.] He's proud, by God!

[Aloud.] Aye, that was short and sharp.

Perhaps—too sharp, Franciscus!

Franz. Sire!

Of courtiers your supply is ample. When

Franciscus you interrogate, meseems

'Tis truth you wish to learn. Whenever you

Franciscus question, pray do not expect—

Emp. The siren voice of flattery? Be 't so!

In that you're right, and meet my wishes well.
 Not in the *same* way may be served by *all*
 He who well served would be.—But this your free
 And independent service, as you called
 It—

Franz. [*With warmth.*] Is but all the more devoted, Sire,
 It is but all the more unmeasurèd!
 The service that is paid for has its bounds,
 But boundless is disinterestedness!

Emp. [*Sympathetically looking upon Franz, and with emphasis.*]
 You're right—
 [*After a pause.*] And yet, Sir Sickingen,
 It ill becomes the Emperor that he
 Your debtor should remain—and such I still
 Am since th' election; I deny it not.

Franz. Imperial Lord! Th' Elector Palatine
 For my sake you have pardoned—richly with
 Such act the slight account now cancelled stands.

Emp. No, Franz! Feign not. You do not so believe.
 Too well you know your own acts' heavy worth;
 And neither I believe so! Keeping faith
 With friendship and with faithful service done,
 You have the occasion been for me my wrath
 To allay; thus have you in virtue's path—
 Which is, above all others, Princes' path—
 Confirmed me more—besides a new friend in
 The Palatine returned to me. You have
 Thus doubly and anew deservèd well
 Of me. Therefore petition aught, Sir knight,
 In order that your Emp'ror's debt may shine
 On you. Or do you deem me much too poor
 To give you aught?

Franz. [*With warmth.*] You poor, whose hand within
 Its hollow holds the world's, and this land's fate?
 May God forbid that I with you, my Emp'ror,
 Should play the proud!—If in his grace divine
 Th' Almighty left you a prayer free, would you
 On this or that the costly favor waste,
 On what at man's hand is received with thanks?
 You, sooner, striving for an instant's share
 Of His omnipotence, to that your hand
 Would stretch, that the Creator's full-might needs
 For its accomplishment! That is my case,

Exalted Sire! Th' election you have mentioned—
Fulfill the reasons why upon your youthful
 Head Germany the diadem of Christendom
 Did place—the richest man of all alive
 The poorest of your servants then you've turned.

Emp. It seemeth the conditions never end.

In this your land determining the choice
 For Emperor!—And yet from you I fain would learn
 Upon what grounds your choice upon me fell.

Franz. *Three* were the reasons, Sire, and yet but one—

The first, because you Max's grandson are,—
 This vouched to us your German mind. The second,
 Because you are the King of Spain,—a guarantee
 That you would never lack for strength
 Against the Princes' anarchism
 The realm's integrity to safeguard.

The third, 'tis this, because a youth you are,—

It was an earnest that you were not yet
 In musty custom's jog-trot hardened, that
 You were not fettered in the bonds of bigotry,
 That free, your young heart movèd by and open to
 The Spirit of the Age, the vassalage would spurn
 That Roman priestcraft would impose upon
 The masters of the world.

When I upon you look and con the signs
 That cluster thick around you—

So young and yet the world's throne called to fill;
 A peerless age, at which the highest aims
 To greater still the thirst for action drives;
 Three kingdoms holding in a single hand,
 And thus from birth's first instant armèd with
 A weapon such as heaven's rare grace
 Bestows on man but only once a thousand years—
 I have no doubt you are the chosen one,
 Like a Messiah to rejuvenate
 The fate of this our earth and realm's fair life,
 And start them both upon a new career.

[*He bows back.*]

This Reichstag, Sire, will expectation test—
 If you the instrument of heaven know
 To use, and also heaven's task fulfill!

Emp. You speak of Luther, Franz! 'Tis there that
 I stood awaiting you. You not conceal

The interest you take in this monk's cause.
 With letters oft you have besieged me,
 And calumny itself at work has been
 Your zealous heart before me to besmirch.
 I have been told—they thought to make me think—
 That out of love for Luther—fearing
 I might the pass break which I promised him
 To this Reichstag—you posted here in
 The neighborhood of Worms five hundred knights,
 And mounted men hold ready at friendly burgs,
 Intending him to free with force of arms,
 If need there be!—You see how little faith
 To the report I lend when now yourself
 I ask that you the lie may give to it—
 Your answer I'll consider proof enough.

Franz. And so you may, Sire! Never lie will cross
 Franciscus' lips. The sland'ers tongues—for that
 They are in spite of all—have this
 Once told you naught but what is true.

Emp. [*To himself.*] By God, quite bold!
 [*Aloud and with severity.*] How dare you, Sickingen.
 So open in my face rebellious acts
 Admit to me, and dreading not my wrath?

Franz. No, Sire! The undeserved I never dread.
 For your fame's sake, and for the nation's cause
 Would I have acted—if to act was need.
 One Constance is enough for Germany.
 Not wrath should be my due from you but thanks,
 If I from grave transgression kept you free.
 And though the rashness of your youthful wrath
 Struck me, 'twere better I with wrath were struck
 Than with compunction you! Your Emp'ror's word
 You Luther gave. Such is the majesty,
 That word's effect and force, that straight to law
 'Tis raised, a law that bindeth all, and all
 Are called to uphold, aye, e'en against *yourself*.
 Your word, that is at stake—but not its breach!

Emp. [*To himself.*] Of th' olden generation, now died out,
 Of German heroes that the legends tell,
 A last descendant stands before me.
 [*To Franz.*] Sith with such frankness you yourself admit
 The contemplation of the risky scheme
 Some more confessions you may have to make.

In Worms, at all the corners of the streets
 A bill was found, that, posted over night,
 Was fillèd with encouragement to Luther,
 And threats, if violence was done him. The
 Placards with fearful admonitions closed,
 Repeating thrice the word: "*Bundschuh! Bundschuh!*"
 The shocking symbol of the peasant riots!
 Is't possible my noblemen could so
 Forget themselves as e'en against the realm's
 Peace common cause with peasants vile to make?
 Did that from you proceed? I wish to know. Speak out!

Franz. Imperial Majesty!—

Emp. [*Abruptly interrupting.*] No, silence! Not a word, Sir knight!
 A dang'rous thing, I see, it is to question you.
 I more might learn than profitable 'tis to know.
 'Tis better, for myself and you I hear naught!
 I wish no more to know, Sir knight.—no more on that!

[*After a pause.*]

I see it, Franz, the common measure that
 We others measure with, is not for you.
 To you, what to none other, pardoned is.
 I am not wroth at what you just have said,
 Yet odd it is that you—a warrior bold,
 Whom else the wranglings of the priests concerns
 But slight, should so absorbed be in this monk.
 Your mind, I thought, for greatness only thirsts.

Franz. And for my country's greatness thirsteth he!

Emp. And is it with this monk identified?

Franz. So fully that whoever, through impluse and
 Through manly duty, as well as by profession serves
 The one, compellèd is the other too to serve.

Emp. And even if it were—you truly, think
 Against the Church's sacred ordinance,
 From God derived, my mind to turn away?

Franz. My Emperor!

With such an answer do I credit you
 As little as for mine you gave me credit.
 The truth I said to you—to me speak truly too.

[*Charles makes a motion of astonishment.*]

Exalted Sire!

Your sight is clear! The band of blindness can
 Before your eyes no priestly artifice
 Draw tight. If here in Europe livèd but

One foe unto the Pope, that deadly foe
 Is you. By office and by birth you are
 His foe. Hereditary is the feud
 Adown your lineage long descent
 Between the two. And when with glory and fame
 Your ancestors in office bore your staff,
 As heavy, heavier yet than kin or blood
 They weigh. Upon your young head loudly cries
 A heritage of vengeance—five hundred years old.
 Remember our Henry's fate, whose heart
 Broke at Canossa when the knee he bent;
 Remember Barbarossa's life heroic,
 To long protected struggles given o'er,
 In vain the foot-kiss shame to blot away;
 Recall that wonderfully brilliant form
 Of Frederick the Second, against whom
 His own sons Rome set up—thus *parricide*
 Approving, if but the Emperor was struck!
 So long as Popes there were and Emperors,
 Each in the other's red blood wrote, and with
 His sharpest weapons drew the record fell.
 Around you hover, palpitating,
 The spirits of your ancestors; to you
 Their hands imploringly they raise, and cry
Oh, happy one!

Emp. [*Interrupting and deeply moved.*]

I pray you stop! Your zeal is carrying you away!

Franz. [*Continues passionately.*]

You, chosen one, the bearer of our sword,
 In your hands heaven has the power placed
 From this land's flesh the galling thorn to draw,
 The martyr's stake, at which we all of us
 Have bled and with us, aye, our bleeding race,
 In vain and prolonged torture writhing!
You, you can now the deed accomplish! *You*
 The weapon swing, the mighty queller wield!
 Betray not our eyes, with sorrow broken—
 Oh, trample under foot the priest, against
 Whom all of us, all peoples' history,
 At your side stand as bleeding witnesses—
 Forsooth—if you could peace make with the Pope,
 Yourself you from the Imperial lineage strike,
 And consecrate your stock to our nation's curse!

Emp. [Interrupting as above.]

Again I pray you, moderate your zeal!
 You almost carry me away—yet may
 Not passion rule in such supreme affairs.
 You are aflame, your voice—

Franz.

Blares like the trumpet
 Which is to announce the judgment of all time.
 Its sound-wave surgeth, seetheth with the clash
 Of the future and the past, loudly beating
 Against the dull-deaf ear of the present.
 —And if it possible could be, if such
 A line of heroes could not move you,
 Think of your blood, of Max, your ancestor,
 Whose life having out-lived six Popes',
 The well-known cry of pain still rounded up:
And e'en the last one also cheated me!
 Think of yourself, whose very first step stumped
 Upon that heaped-up papal enmity,
 That, meddling, hell and heaven stirred to thwart
 Your candidacy, unable to believe
 You could for Rome's equerry have been born.

Emp. If e'er the Pope, presumptuous, stretch his hand
 After my crown's rights temporal—believe me,
 We shall not lack for either *shield* or *sword*.
 Another thing it is within the realm of faith
 Against the Church's rule an impious hand to raise.

Franz. Sire! Equal false are both these principles;
 And equal dangerous are both to you!
 Supremacy in human *conscience's* realm—
 Behold th' insidious, poisoned weapon which,
 Triumphant in their struggle 'against th' Empire,
 The Gregorys and Innocents have wielded.
 Can, truly, such partition satisfy you?
 In man's frame-work the body's subject to
 The soul: a *corpse* the soulless body turns.
 To you such portion gladly they award
 While confidently holding it with firm
 And sure grip by the fetters of the soul!
 So that, when you in struggle's stress rely
 Most confident upon your scepter's might,
 At one stroke magic, through a thousand threads
 To all the limbs communicated, lo!
 The re-awakened corpse against you's flung,

Your people they against your might array!
 A *phantom-king* upon your throne you sit,
 So long the curia of Rome in its hand holds
 The seal upon your people's conscience!

Emp. And all this is by Luther to be changed?

That Augustinian friar, obscure man,
 Whom you yourself in fear stand, I may
 With one stroke of my pen annihilate?

Franz. You err, my Emperor! Learn first this monk
 To know. On his tongue dwells the Nation's soul;
 From his eyes flash the burning sparks of Light;
 Upon his brow, broad as eternity,
 Thought's might and puissant lightning quiv'ring glows;
 And when he speaks the people's heart is stirred
 As when the lap of earth the Spring awakes,
 As birth the laden, pregnant woman's womb
 With new life's warm presentiment delights!
 Of *mind* the mighty ruler he stands forth,
 His mission's truthfulness attesting.
 Suppress—him, Sire? 'Tis likelier far the monk
 May write yourself from crown—and realm to boot!
 Ripe are my people, hanging from his lips,
 No Prince so mighty him to annihilate.

Emp. You mean—

Franz. Oh, yield not to the Princely illusion,
 The old, forever on its heels returning.
 You hasten may—to hinder you can not;
 To shape you can—but not to dissipate.
 You can not turn awry, delay th' inevitable,
 That with the throb of life strains to unfold
 Itself! The birth that's hard, before its time
 The wise physician's bold cut may set free—
Caesarian cut coincidence the section names.
 But when the hour strikes, the ninth month's peal,
 Not all the power of earth, in one hand lumped,
 Can close the mother's womb, or could prevent
 Her, on the point of birth, to be delivered!
 The pressure of the ripening, throbbing fruit
 Its palings bursts;—aye, *dead* leaps into light
 The life itself that we would backward thrust.

Emp. If so it be—what seek you, then, with me?

Why do you still in need stand of my aid?

Franz. To *shape*, I said, it lay with you. Whole worlds

Within the magic circle of that word
 Lie locked. Time runs its course; howe'er, its course
 Is otherwise *with* you—and otherwise
Against. Woe if against yourself it be!
 Till now I mentioned to you only Rome;
 But almost graver dangers are abroad:—
 —Would you have Luther in the Princes' hands
 To fall? Yourself the lever furnish them
 That from their forlorn tackle now redeems
 The Nation's unit and emp'rorship?
 In *your* hands Luther is an instrument
 Divine the greatness of the land to raise;
 In *theirs* to smite the land in ruins with!
 Oh, do not cast away the Papal rich
 Inheritance!—Dissolved, if hands you join
 With Luther, are the abbeys, bishoprics—
 To you, the realm, these livings all revert.
 With th' increased power in your hands, away
 Will melt to former insignificance
 The Princes' arrogant pretentiousness
 That now your throne o'ershadows. Of the base
 Abuse of power—by the dint of which
 The' Imperial mandate and their office they
 To *property* have changed, thus theft committing
 Upon the majesty of th' Emp'ror and
 The realm—the hour at last would have arrived
 When ancient Wrong is solvèd into Right,
 And once again to its rightful owner come
 The thievings done by the dishonest stewards.
 —Aloft borne by the people, who, rejoicing,
 Surround you as a God who spoke the word
 Creative—then *all-powerful* you are;
 A greater Charles the Great, you rear anew
 This realm's old splendor, one-time unity.
 Again over this land's domains would then
 The Emp'ror's hand sway free; to vassals back
 The rankly grown will reconverted be;
 Then only will you *be* what now you *seem*—
 An *Emperor*—and thanks to Luther's hand.

Emp. [*Abruptly breaking in with involuntary interest.*]

And why did he not go to th' Ebernberg,
 Whither at my request you invited him
 To meet with Glapio, my confessor, and

With him confer? Upon your letters, you
 To please, I fell in with the plan. To my
 Word true, I sent you Glapio—but in vain
 For Luther did he wait. Why came he not? Speak!

Franz. [*With fire.*] Oh, Sire! With Truth there's no compounding!

As well compound with th' overtopping fiery pillar
 That marched before the hosts of Israel;
 As well compound with th' arrowy mountain stream
 That, certain of its course, is dashing on!
 I wrote to him; invited him to come.
 But that ambassador of God recoils
 Before *one* fear only—

His enemies he fears not, he fears
 His friends alone, who, in love's timid cares,
 The weakness crouching in the hearts of all
 Might in his own awaken, and abate
 His zeal for that which in his soul his mind has writ.
 With slackened reins, he wrote, his impulse drives
 Him on his enemies to rush headlong.
 Before th' assembled realm and th' Emperor,
 He boldly would and frank the solemn Truth confess.

Emp. [*After taking a few steps up and down the room and then pausing, deliberately.*]

You see the man can not be treated with—
 And I shall *blindly* yield myself to him?
 Shall, as the tail a comet follows, this
 New doctrine follow on its trackless path?
 Are we a gambler that upon the *unknown*
 Stakes all for all?—No more, no more of that!
 And other reasons—for a minute's time
 Back-driven by your stormy, headlong speech—
 Regain once more—like unto a tree, that, once
 The storm that bent it's o'er, re-rears its head—
 Their proper mastery resume:
 —You spoke of *greatness*. Is there none but that
 Which you pursue? *Three* crowns you said this hand
 Combines—and a new world, beyond the seas,
 Is rising promiscuous beneath my scepter.
 The claim, of old made by th' Imperial crown,
 The throne of *Christendom*, it seems is near
 Reality. Yet, as throughout the Universe
 But *one* thought runs, the force invisible
 Of but *one* Church it is that holds the whole

Together and cements its sev'ral parts!
One faith the title is of that old claim.
One faith joins all the peoples of my realm,
 Whom language, customs, laws, keep far apart.
 The Universe's law can but the symbol be
 Of the *one* Church, that in its di'mond head,
 The high Vice-regency of Christ, is bound.
One Pope, *one* Emperor.—The two e'en when
 At war with one another, yet so mutually
 Dependent on each other as the soul and body!
 The Roman crown Imperial, what, without
 That, would it be? At one fell plunge it would
 Have sunk to a mere *territorial principedom*.
 —You say that Luther's doctrine is acclaimed
 By Germany; yet not of this land only
 Am th' Emp'ror I. And can you at all imagine
 Your bleak conceit—which the ideal of
 A living incarnation robs us of—
 Could also charm the Spanish people, or
 The people of Neapel? And shall I
 With my own hand the bond of unity
 Destroy that winds itself around my realms?
 Turn my priest-loving southern souls, my own
 Hereditary lands, in hate from me?
 Endanger what my own is now; and I
 Myself the proud traditions cast away
 Of universal rule that cluster 'round my crown?

Franz. [*With fire.*] Oh, seek not, at the price of liberty
 Or of the mind, the greatness that must slip
 Your hand. The architect who on the mind
 Of man would rear his dome, must from the mind
 Itself carve his material, lest like boys
 He acts, who in the sand for fitting hours
 Their figures draw! These fancy-lines are swept
 Away, dissolved by the first swell that springs
 Up from the masses, and that dashes on
 Your dreams. The Universal Empire draws
 You on? If, strong in unity, our land
 Inspirèd would acclaim you, then your dream
 Would crystallize. 'Tis not for Spain—'tis far
 Above her strength. Germania has this world
 Before now conquered with her sword, and with
 Her spirit captured bold. No Pope gave her

The fief. His own high rank the Pope owes to
 That Charles, not he unto the Pope. Where is
 The sward on this terrestrial globe not fed
 Upon Germania's blood? New life for it
 We conquered. *Ours*—if anyone's is this
 World by the right of sustenance. Through us
 Alone what through none other you can do!
 So far as Europe's strands extend, they are
 By our Germania's stock rejuvenated.
 It kept unsullied Europe's heart; and from
 That mother's heart the cry again goes up—
 The awakening! Stop not to its cry the ear
 Of Europe—and the echo will reverberate
 Within the peoples' pantheons. Liberty
 A seed is that, if wisely nursed in ev'ry land,
 Is eas'ly propagated; while the plant
 Of slav'ry, raised by artifice, the soil,
 That once rejected it, accepts no more!
 Oh, sacrifice not unto empty fears
 The spring whence flows your greatest strength;
 Oh, do not sacrifice your crown of crowns;
 Oh, sacrifice not Germany to Naples!

Emp. Enough! The matter has been weighed, decided.

I *can not* as you would! Were I a German,
 Were I the Emp'ror of but Germany,
 I might, perhaps, feel as you do, and act
 Accordingly. But who is free in this
 Tumultuous world? Who does alone decide,
 Instead of being dictated to imperiously
 By his position's iron law? The favor
 That I conferred on you you spurned;
 One favor, though, I showed to you that none
 Alive can boast! I spoke with you as if
 Communing with myself. I faithful shall
 The favor carry to the end.—Three reasons,
 Said you, decided my election;—three
 The reasons are preventing that I follow you:
 The first, because I am no German; next,
 Because of Spain I am the king; and lastly,
 Because the crown, that you my crown of crowns
 Have named, from stock to stock uncertain travels.
 Did I this scepter hold hereditary,
 Like that of Spain, and to my own stock could

Bequeathe the mighty German realm, Oh, then,
The matter would another aspect wear.

But any encroachment on the nomad right
Of that election—Franz, you might yourself—

[*Pauses and casts a scrutinizing look at Franz.*]

Franz. [*Deliberately.*] A thrust—against our German freedom deem.

Emp. [*Taking a step back and colder.*]

See you? And with the Princes' time-soaked rights,

With the tenacious force that latent lies

In all abuse, shall I on life and death

To wrestle undertake? To stake on such

A goal my whole life's full endeavors,

And after painful and uneasy nights,

In case I triumphed, such a might-begirted

Crown, such a priceless jewel, in whose splendor

The crowns combined of Europe all would pale,

Shall I to a stranger leave for heritage?

Perchance for a successor of the Saxon stock

Am I such work to achieve? No, Franz, you see,

I've thoroughly revolved it, not now alone,

Though now more carefully than yet before.

Unshaken stands the first resolve I took.

Impossible—by that we must abide.

My word rests on the best considered grounds.

Franz. You speak, I'd say, as one who ripely does reflect,

And then *full consciously*—the *worser* part selects!

Emp. [*Frowning with severity.*]

That word, Sir knight, I'll pardon, but upon

Condition that I hear it nevermore.

Franz. [*Bows silently.*]

Emp. [*After a pause, and kindly.*]

Your dashèd hopes embitter you; they make

You fail in justice. Yet I hope that time

To rosier thoughts will bring you back again.

Give up what 'tis impossible to reach.

There are still other aims to strive for than

Your own, and not less worthy of endeavor.

If you but *mine* unto your own wish would

Convert, then, Franz, then, through th' Imperial favor,

As high as none did mount before, could you.

[*Pauses and casts a long penetrating look at Franz, who remains motionless.*]

Till then—you are dismissed, Sir knight!

[*Franz bows low and departs in silence.*]
 The man is great—but 'tis not greatness that
 I seek, or that of use can be to me.

[*Returns into the cabinet. The scene changes.*]

SCENE VII.—*Cabinet of the Papal Cardinal-Legate, located at another wing in the castle.*

The CARDINAL-LEGATE and ELECTOR-ARCHBISHOP RICHARD enter from a side-room.

Arch. It happened just as I to you narrated.

Card. 'Tis serious, very serious!—And the issue
 Of their discourse, have you an inkling of?

Arch. I left as Charles appeared. But looking back,
 I saw Hans Renner also leave the hall.

Also the minister not wanted seemed,
 And all alone wished Charles with him to speak.

Card. Odd! Yet whate'er the subject they discussed,
 Whate'er the issue may have been—a thorn
 The man is us—of Rome a hater, friend
 Of Hutten, and protector of Reuchlin.

Arch. And Luther's best support; the soul of the
 Nobility, that rallies round his flag,
 In whom his hostile temper he instills,
 And 'gainst us all to bitter foes has turned.

Card. The thing to do is to extract this thorn.

Arch. Proceed to extract, Sir Cardinal. He will
 Quite rudely, bloody too, your fingers prick.

Card. What have you in mind? Pray, speak out plain to me.
 I know, when danger once you scented have,
 You forthwith plan the way it can be choked.

Arch. There is no lack of planning. Long I've planned.
 To-day, somewhat more kind, chance smiled on me.
 It is not much, but yet a germ of hope.
 But you I'd hear first. Could you not stir
 The Emp'ror against Franz?

Card. To attack decide
 Him 'gainst Franciscus? Quite impossible!
 Too deep he stands to Sickingen indebted;
 Is yet too young the favor to despise!
 And yet—if others could the knight trepan,
 Involve him in some wrongful act, I might,

Perhaps—I say *perhaps*, Sir Archbishop—
Induce him quietly to let him drop.

Arch. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*]

If you no further are advanced, then must
We long the threat'ning danger bear! So long,
Perhaps, that the hour may have slipped by
When we the danger might have overcome.

Card. Yourself to a chance's smile alluded but
Just now?

Arch. For what 'tis worth I'll use it free.
You know with what eyes of a just concern
And fear for long most of the Princes look
Upon Franciscus. Unto him, alone
Th' Elector Palatine clung fast. Indeed
Not few the reasons are why he should thankful be
To Franz. Now, then, it was in this that chance
Did favor me to-day. The task was hard;
But finally he yielded to the fear
I conjured up in him, his interest
As Prince as well. We, then, three Princes—I,
The Palatine and Hesse's Philip—made
To-day a compact—

Card. 'Gainst Franciscus?

Arch. 'Tis not so called, but is so meant. In all
Appearance have we an olden treaty but
Renewed, that formerly concluded was
'Twixt Hesse, Treves and the Palatinate;
A treaty of defence that binds us three
Not only to protect the one the other,
But also binds each one no peace to make
Till all the three agree.

Card. [*Significantly.*] I understand the plan.

Arch. Now, this is what I mean. Whatever Franz
May undertake, myself I throw across
His way—the forces of us three along
With mine. The danger thus we may reduce
Before it overtops and overwhelms us.

Card. The news is tall that you report, and big
The fruit may be that from its lap may leap.

Arch. In times as evil as the present, one
As great things trifles oft accepts, esteeming
As actual help what yet is but a ray of hope.

Card. You're right. The times are evil. Never yet

The Church has been so hard pressed, never yet
 Such dangers threatened even her palladium
 As now they do. That which these days will be
 Delivered of, the fruit whose seed's now sown
 At large, it threatens the downfall of the Church.

Arch. To whom speak you? To one whose hair the course
 Of these last years has painted white! That fruit
 No longer needs to grow or ripen. No.
 It ripened stands in fullest strength. If Luther
 Still further inroads should succeed to make;
 If swift destruction do not swiftly overtake him—
 The Vatican will sink, a heap of ruins!

Card. Is't Luther that such fears fills you with?

Arch. Who else? What other than this demon can
 You mean, who these four years with strokes that grow
 In boldness has assailèd us, the realm
 Disturbed, and makes recruits in our own ranks,
 In ev'ry class makes friends? Four years, and still
 Unpunished goes!

Card. Leave us alone for that!
 This Luther perish *shall*. He *shall* and *must*—
 But yet the real danger comes not from,
 Nor will it die with him.

Arch. Oh, underrate
 Him not! Do not yourself deceive. This is
 No heresy. This time the problem is
 Not a Savonarola or an Arnold
 To oppose! The German spirit is in arms
 Against us. Luther is its standard bearer
 And battles at its head!

Card. I hold him as you do. And yet the danger
 Looks not so near to me, as't does to you—
 And just for that, perhaps, but all the greater.
 Uneasy are you at the uncertainty
 Which side the Emperor will take. Also
 The leaning towards Luther of the nobles
 And many a Prince alarmeth you. The fact
 You overlook—our *strength* lies in the *masses'* heart.

Arch. Just there is where he threatens it!

Card. The task is greater than he could encompass.
 What took a thousand years to slowly spread,
 To entwine itself and one become with man's
 Acquirèd views, his feelings, habits, and

Unconscious does pervade his ev'ry thought—
 Think you all that could really succumb
 To this new and itself destroying doctrine,
 Which Faith on Sense, and Sense on Faith would bank?
 Which rests upon the witness of the *mind*,
 And yet would bind it to a word that's *dead*?
 Which takes a *book* as sent from God, and yet
 Will dare the same at will to interpret?
 Which *grace* and *scrutiny*, two opposites,
 Together jumbles seeking to combine?
 Ne'er from a doctrine that to *heaven* looks,
 Need her death-blow the Church to apprehend.
 So long as men *believe*, they will believe in *us*!

Arch. You trust, then, in the Church's immortality?
 Speak ever thus! A hallowed certainty
 Your words my mind, with worry worn, infuse.

Card. [*Thoughtfully.*] You used th' expression immortality?
 In that word's folds lurk grim Medusa-heads,
 That turn to stone whom in the folds would spy.

Arch.—I pray you speak. Express yourself in *full*,
 And do not palter in a double sense,
 Admitting danger, then denying it.

Card. Do I deny it? Yet's *Luther* not the name!
 Its source I spy in quite another spring.
 The foe at our very breast lies nestled,
 And we, th' Italian Princes of the Church,
 We nourish it with our very blood.
 Accursed be the Danite gift that us
 The Moslem gave! When with the city's fall,
 The city of Constantine, the fleeing Greeks
 Arrived, transplanting, 'mong us spreading
 The ruins of their Arts and Sciences—
 That was the evil's start! With baneful fascination seized,
 Upon its neck hung, God-intoxicated,
 The Bembos, Medicis, the flow'r of all Italy;
 The serpent young they suckled into strength;
 And from th' eternal laws, with beauty's lines
 Instinct, there flowed a sense of *Now* and *Here on Earth*. Of
 A nobler mankind vague forebodings streamed
 Into the breasts of the believers in *Hereafter*,
 At first our handmaid, all the surer us to trick.
 From Raphael's Madonnas there peers forth
 Old heathendom's superb-divine grimace;

And swellingly a dispensation new
 Is preached by Titian's flesh-tints! Out to all
 The peoples went the impulse by us given—
 In you its sanction finding. Reuchlin's struggles
 Revealed at last the impulse new that moved the world.
 Around you look! Say, who, of Luther, are the props?
 Was't among the friars' ranks this friar's quarrel
 Its first breath drew, or found its first support?
 The Huttens, Crotuses, Erasmus and Reuchlin—
 'Tis they who greet it with a clam'rous joy.
 The *Humanists* this great league styles itself,
 By its own name its secret letting out.
 A new *Evangel of Mankind*—behold
 The kernel hidden in this Proteus that
 Belligerent itself against us flings,
 With Luther but its first and quickly vanished slough!
 And just the pressure of our own resistance
 Promotes the sloughing process. Slough is cast off after slough;
 It waxes in the transformation; and it stands
 There in the fiery glow of its own light!
 Across the world it cries: "'Tis I!" The hearts of men it seizes;
 Writes *Here on Earth, Fruition* on its banner;
 Tears down the heavens; wildly roars through space
 And time, each newly spied-out law of Nature,
 Each find concealed in musty history,
 Into a bolt together welding, hurling
 Into the holiest of our creed, and raising
 An *Evangel of Man* with resoluteness
 Against that of the *Son of Man!*
 It then grows hot! Our pinions droop; from us
 The peoples then their faces turn away
 Towards the newly conquered bride—Reality,
 With ardor rushing in her luscious arms.
 Before *Fruition's* ruddy sun the dim
 Star of *Beyond* grows pale, it fades away, then
 Draws nigh the night of our theology!

[He utters the last lines as if pursuing a vision with his
 eyes, and then continues with upwards outstretched
 arms.]

But no! How wonderful your ways are, Lord!
 Athwart the darkness unto light you lead us;
 Turn into triumph that which bodes destruction.
 Like unto a slave must threat'ning storms themselves

The throne thus forge that safer carries us.

Arch. Your eyes irradiate, and over this
Earth's face your spirit, God-raised, takes its flight.
What lies at hand I clearly see, but to
Your eyes the Future's book lies open wide.
Unveil that which to you the spirit shows.
How can the threat'ning danger bring us victory,
Make safe that which our downfall does portend?

Card. What now gives pain and loads our mind with care
Is our Princes' hostile attitude,
Who, envious of our power and failing to
Perceive the demon, that they unsuspecting nurse,
Array themselves upon our en'mies' side.
And long still will this trying trial last.
But when of time the cycle is complete,
When that fell hour of danger has drawn nigh,
The *Kingdom of the Anti-Christ*, announced before,
When, wanton, on its own foundation,
The *Human Mind* itself has planted—then
The simultaneous hostile blow will merge
The Bishop's crosier and the Prince's scepter!
The turn-about will then set in—*anew*
The temp'ral sword the Church's willing arm
Will be; repentful to the mother's lap
It will return; and then, a *double chain*,
Inseparable in its iron embrace,
The temp'ral and spiritual power
Will strangling wind itself around the head
Of th' Anti-Christ, the self-poised Human Mind!
Then stand we safe in all the fullness of
New might, and in proud Reason's *corpse* new root
The Church's splendor strikes, from thence new sap inhales.

Arch. Amen! does shout my heart for evermore!

[*The curtain closes.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Ulrich's room at the Ebernberg, fitted out with books and arms.*

Ulrich. [*Holding in his hand an open letter that he is staring into in wild amazement.*]

And Luther is pronounced under the ban
At Worms! Along with him his followers,
And all who give him shelter. Oh, Charles, oh, German realm—
The worst that happen could has come to pass!

[*Pauses and again looks into the letter.*]

Th' Elector Frederick himself steps back
Afraid; has seized him secretly, and to
The Wartburg sent for safe concealment,
For fear in sight of th' Emp'ror's wrath he could
No longer free and openly protect him!

[*Throws himself into an arm-chair.*]

Oh, Germany! Oh, poor fatherland!
Our last hope thus is wrecked! Your star of freedom,
That o'er your firmament refulgent rose
Unto my eyes, sets pale, and once again
The dark night of before upon us closes.

[*Pauses looking blank before him.*]

Its raven plumage, flutt'ring jeeringly,
It shroud-like spreads its pinions o'er the land,
And silence once more reigns beneath the wing
Of death—the silence of the tomb!

[*Covers his face with his hands, and resumes after a pause with deeply moved voice.*]

Where can there hope be left when the Emp'ror
Himself, in Romish hands becomes of death
An instrument, the death-blow deals the people's
Heart? Where is hope when e'en the mighty Elector
Despairingly withdraws?

[*Is lost for a while in gloomy thoughts, then, jumping from his seat.*]

Where? In him,
The Nation! He will rally it around
Him. He it is who *can* and *must*. Aye, *must!*
'Tis he alone can yet a saviour be.
Up and away to him! To hurl in that
Heroic soul the torch that burns my own,

And set his German mind ablaze with rage!
 He will with mighty hand the fire-brand hurl
 Into the land, and kindle the wild flame
 Whence, Phoenix-like, shall Germany emerge!

[He utters the last lines with increasing animation and rushes towards the door, but stops reflecting.]

And have you well reflected what you contemplate?
 Your friend would you in such a danger thrust,
 To a risky struggle drive that ruin fetch;
 Perchance, his father's gloomy fate recall?

[Pauses, and then proceeds in a quandary.]

May your restless soul, entangling on
 Its own path what him lovingly approach,
 Expose the friend's head in th' uncertain game?

[Pauses again.]

But why with petty doubts, of him unworthy,
 To waver now and difficulties raise!

No choice we have when duty bids. With us
 The power lies to achieve; the measure
 Of what we achieve, the duty, none the less,
 Imperiously prescribed are to man.

He can achieve—his duty, hence, it is.

Had I ten lives, I'd stake them all the ten!

And dare I from my friend expect aught less?

And if we fail, the newly awakened life
 Of our land in blood being drowned, what worth
 Could life then have for me, or yet for him?

Before such choice, where's room for hesitation!

If we succeed, then Freedom's germ is saved,

Whence shoot on shoot shoots off; and e'en if

Achievement's highest notch be not attained,

The nation's ruin still he may avert.

[Uttering the last lines with increasing warmth, he rushes towards the door. Before reaching it, the door opens and Marie enters with a book in her hand.]

SCENE II.—ULRICH and MARIE.

Marie. It is, Sir knight, the hour now when you
 The ancient poets in our German tongue
 Have pleased to render me. Not with the songs
 That are your own you're satisfied to charm us—
 The noble thoughts, once culled by Rome's and Hellas' bards,

The home-bred girl you have disclosed, the blossoms of
 All olden days, all nations, into a garland weaving,
 Whose fragrance sweet our souls to a higher world
 Intoxicated raises.

Ulrich. [*Who at the sight of Marie had first stood stock-still, and then stepped back a few paces.*]

Oh, God, and yet another trial!

Marie.

You spoke?

[*She looks at him more attentively, and is frightened at his appearance.*]

Sir knight, what ails you? Speak! You seem disturbed,
 Unhinged; your eyes, aflame, roam wild about.

I never have thus seen you. For the love

Of God, what ails you, Sir? I pray you speak!

Ulrich. What torture! Oh, what horrid fate is mine!

Her sire, the father of the well-beloved,

Shall I expose to ruin and distress,

Herself, perchance, an orphan make?

Marie. [*Who has been regarding him with increasing attention and alarm.*]

You do

Not answer? Ails you aught? Art angry at me?

You still are silent, knight? What act of mine

Deserved such treatment at your hand?

Ulrich.

I pray—

Your pardon—noble maid—momentous matters—

Affliction dire engage my time to-day.

[*Aside.*] Oh, did she know the tortures of my soul!

Oh, could she read within my bleeding heart

The sentiments I feel for her—and what

To her undoing I design!

Marie.

Affliction,

Is't that you said? What can it be? I beg of you!

It cuts me to my very soul to see

You, suff'ring thus, before me standing there.

Ulrich. If she her tone but changed. Oh, did she know

How her mild voice my heart in pieces cuts!

I—*can* no more what still I *must*!

Marie. Has some affliction sudden smitten you,

Confide it unto me! That gives relief.

You surely know to you I friendly feel—

I, therefore, ask my share of what afflicts you.

Myself and father faithfully will help

You bear it!

Ulrich. [*Who has been visibly struggling with himself, now resolutely.*]

Your pinions free! Shake off with mighty stroke
The body's idleness, the natal sin
Hereditary with the race of man!

[*Rushes to the door, when it opens and Oecolampadius enters.*]

SCENE III.—*The former; OECOLAMPADIUS.*

Ulrich. [*Seizing Oecolampadius' hand and stepping back again.*]

Oh, pious Sir, Oh, reverend
Oecolampadius! It hits you as myself.
Have you the overpowering sad news heard?

Oec. [*Sorrowfully shaking his head.*]

I know it all. I come just now from Franz.
Who imparted it to me.

Ulrich. [*Hurriedly.*] And what says he?

Oec. He nothing said. Upon his forehead lay
The solemn earnestness of silence deep.
But to my chamber I betook myself,
My overrunning heart before our God
To empty, and in prayer to seek strength.
Oh, that this day's cup we should have to quaff!

Ulrich. [*With animation.*]

Despair not! There's nothing lost as yet.
No Emp'rour yet shall, with his fiat, violate
Our Nation's stronghold. German hearts still sit
In German breasts, and our arms still own
The cunning of their swords to swing! What now
Oppresses you will soon removed be.

[*Moves with long strides towards the door but is held back by Oecolampadius.*]

Oec. How, Sir, do I correctly understand?

You can not mean against th' Imperial Majesty
To aim at a revolt? The doctrine pure
Of th' Evangel with earthly force to stain?
Does't need of that? Do you believe what's holy,
The light of Truth and Reason, that to us
Has given been, could ever in the course
Of time succumb to Error, and could not
By its own force the upperhand retain?

Ulrich. [*Still held back by Oecolampadius, takes a few steps back, and passionately.*]

My worthy Sir! You ill acquainted are
 With history. You're right—'tis Reason that
 Its *contents* constitutes, its *form* is ever—*Force!*

[*Seeks again to escape, but is again prevented by Oecolampadius, who steps in his way.*]

Oec. Reflect, Sir knight, would you our faith of Love
 With bloody weapons desecrate? Would you—

Ulrich. [*Partly nettled and with increasing heat.*]

My worthy Sir! Think better of the sword!
 A sword, for freedom swung on high, that, Sir,
 The *Word Incarnate* is of which you preach;
 It is the *God*, born of *Reality*.

Christianity was by the *sword* extended—
 The *sword* was the baptismal waters, that
 The Charles we still with wonder name the Great,
 Baptized Germania with; the *sword* smote down
 Old heathendom; the *sword* the Saviour's tomb
 Redeemed! And further back, it was the *sword*
 That Tarquin drove from Rome, the *sword* that back
 From Hellas Xerxes whipped, and for our Arts
 And Sciences plowed up the ground. It was the *sword*
 That David, Samson, Gideon labored with.
 Thus, long ago, as well as since, the *sword*
 Achieved the glories told by history;
 And all that's great, as yet to be achieved,
 Owes, in the end, its triumph to the sword!

[*Forces his way out while Oecolampadius vainly seeks to restrain him.*]

SCENE IV.—OECOLAMPADIUS, MARIE.

Oec. He rushes off! Young lady, follow him;
 Oh, calm his turbulent designs, that, wrought
 Up by too just a pain, are blinding him.
 Bring back the knight to calmer thoughts and faith.

Marie. I fain will, rev'rent Sir! I'll follow him.
 I'll seek him in the garden, where 'tis his wont,
 When overpow'rd with brooding thoughts, to dwell. [*Exit.*]

Oec. [*Alone.*] Oh, darksome days! Much mischief I forsee,
 Much guiltless blood at ev'ry corner flowing!
 Oh, Lord, with just hands turn it on the heads
 Of those with whom the heavy guilt does lie.

SCENE V.—*Franz von Sickingen's cabinet.* FRANZ *steps in from a side room with two open letters in his hand, and lays them on a desk.*

Later VON HUTTEN.

Franz. Two letters contents-laden! Oh, how diff'rent
And yet upon the same point running out!
Strasburg and Charles—
Charles and Strasburg—both messages
So opposite—and yet the two
Like two threads, that, by spirits' unseen hands,
In one web magically absorb the one the other.—

[*Pauses.*]

Charles! Charles! You ill my trust have verified.
The ban 'gainst Luther! All hope now is dashed
From your side! Of this realm th' Emperor,
With th' Empire's foes you common cause have made!

[*Walks meditatively up and down.*]

And Strasburg—bravely have you wrought,
My old and sturdy Sloer! You send me here
The compact with the great Strasburgian. Of
Lorraine the duke is long since joined to me—
The duke of Bouillion too. With Strasburg now
The whole of th' Upper Rhine is not alone
Made certain to my side, a powerful
Example it will be; and Swabia's,
Bavaria's and Franconia's cities all
Will join me readily.

[*Pauses and cogitates.*]

Distress's pressure worst, resistance's
Best means—they both at one hour meet in my
Hands fatally, as if upon some demon's call!—

[*Takes again a few steps in the room, lost in thought.*]

In twain, Charles, by your act you've torn forever
Whatever bond—the Nation's Saviour
I meant of you to make, the realm's restorer;
With aching heart I saw you spurn the offer.
Not yet you satisfied would be with cold
Indulgence—th' *extreme* you dealt to us.
But just from the *extremest peril* can
The *extremest safety* unto us be born!

[*Pauses and then starts from the thoughts in which he was lost.*]

This way, or that!—Yourself the iron dice
Have cast to me and you. Firm and without

Uncertainty my will now rises, and
 Serene peace thrones within by breast, as only
 A purpose *clean* is able to engender.

[*Ulrich von Hutten enters.*]

There comes my Hutten! His pure soul shall be
 My compass to remove the last still ling'ring doubts.

[*Turns to Ulrich, who, with troubled mien and intently gazing at Franz, has remained standing before him, and proceeds, cheerfully.*]

My friend! The clouds of melancholy somber
 Are gathered on your brow. You seem disturbed!

Ulrich. You know the weighty news from Worms?—

Franz.

Indeed!

Unfortunately I know it but too well.
 A sad tale 'tis. But let it not depress you.
 Come, I will tell you an amusing thing,
 Your somber mien to cheer again with mirth.

Ulrich. Amusing?

Franz. Yes, indeed! There is a feud on, *Ulrich!*

Give me your ear. The Archbishop of Treves,
 Elector Richard, Luther's bitt'rest foe—
 The same, who, in exchange for French gold crowns,
 Th' Imperial crown to Francis would have sold,
 Had I not put a mighty spoke into
 His wheel—has given me the handle for
 A merry treat.—You listen not!

Ulrich. [*Starting up.*] I do!

Franz. You know that Hilchen Lorch has long at outs
 With Treves' Lord been, and gave him notice. Then
 He captured two of Treves' most noted men,
 And held them prisoners. Desiring both
 To be set free, their umpire me they chose,
 And I the matter settled so that they
 A ransom had to pay. They pledged themselves
 Upon the Bible. Lorch, then, on my bond,
 The two allowed to go. But now the priest,
 Th' Archbishop, exempts them from their oath,
 Inhibiting both payment and arrest.—
 The priest shall pay us through the nose. You will
 A chance have to shake off your melancholy.
 But, help me God, you listen not!

Ulrich. [*Seriously.*]

Excuse

Me if, just now, when shipwreck threatens the realm's

Great cause, and shelterless upon the waves
The Nation's tossed, such slight affairs affect me little.

[*Pauses, and continues with warmth.*]

And should not Sickingen so also affected be?
Could it be possible you should delight,
At these times' dire stress, your strength away
To fritter on a petty feud? How, Sickingen!
Could you contented rest within your burgs
To idle lie, occasionally a lamb from
The greedy wolf's devouring jaws to tear?
You shelter me, as Reuchlin once you did.
Whom does your shelter fail? Aquila, Hauschein, Bucer—
How could I number all the freedom-preachers,
Th' oppressed, who in your burgs, from priestly hate
And tyranny, from Romish violence,
A safe asylum found! But is that all
The public stress may look for from your giant strength?
Will you, intent upon the shelter of
The *individual* lose from sight the greater *whole*?
Is't that alone the stagg'ring weight, beneath
Which bends Germania's freedom, killing and
Debasing, gnawing at our people's marrow,
Consuming our people's patrimony,
With ban and papal bull its limbs benumbing,
The greatness of our realm browbeating, and
The Nation's upward flight towards the sense
Of Freedom, which we wakened up, in one
Death-dealing embrace body and soul at once
Garrotting,—is that all the Nation's dismal plight
May from her foremost hero dare expect?

[*Pauses and continues with warmth.*]

Look, Franz, 'tis only little souls that lag
Behind their powers; great men all expend
Their *fullest faculties* in a great cause.
And when, within the trembling scale, his strength—
Brought to the first touch, measured is with his
Great aims—the tremor feels of hesitance,
Then, confident does upward swing himself,
A demi-god; behind him leaves dust's doubts;
Burns up in holy inspiration's fire
His earthy part; and storms, a Titan-like,
Olympus e'en! Thus ancient legends tell
About the Titan battles, fought eternally

So long as there are *men*, and eke a *purpose great!*

Franz. Speak plainly, Ulrich. What's your speech's aim?

Ulrich. You *plainness* wish? And yet I spoke to you
Of our country's public stress, that but
Too plainly this broad realm in sorrow steeps,
So that each sense to sight is turned to see it!
I must declare, it is an odd mood that
To-day I find you in! Not thus erstwhile,
When of our common cause we used to speak,
You acted, Franz! My faith—you seem, to-day,
Quite frosty, Franz!

Franz.

You think so?

Ulrich.

Be it what it may,

That for the moment is yourself from you
Yourself depriving—quickly I shall call
You back unto yourself. That cold tone lay
Aside. Enkindle and inflame your will
By proudly contemplating your own strength.
Who stands like you, Franz, in the German lands?
On you their hopes the friends of the new doctrine pin;
On you the eyes are fastened of the Nation's ranks;
The whole nobility their leader in you see;
The towns seek your alliance, follow confident,
Encouraged, when you lead, by your great name;
On you alone the peasant places confidence,
For ever have you been a rock unto the weak,
And when oppression and fell violence
With wrath his heart at our station fills,
'Tis you he looks to in his hour of need.
At your call, pike in horny hand, from all
Around a peasant army bounds to life.
When in the open field the "five-balls" waves
From the far Danube, from Lorraine, from Belt,
From th' Alpine slopes, where he in martial songs
The fame of your prowess sings, comes forth
Th' enraptured lansquenet, and rallies to your flag.
The princes fear you. The hostile camp
Itself the *Counter-Emperor* have dubbed you,
Thus homage rend'ring to your power e'en
When they on insult are intent. Not so?

Franz. 'Tis as you say. 'Tis partly so. But while
The oak majestically its shadow spreads,
Shall I the axe apply to the strong trunk?

Ulrich. In power lies the greatest boon of heaven—
 If it be put for a great cause to use;
 A wretched toy when, used as tinsel merely,
 The arm it lames to which it is confided.
 How? Have you all your days your hard life vexed
 To make it great, and, for its reputation's sake,
 In hundred hard-fought battles hacked your limbs,
 In hundred feuds it painfully, increased,
 With high and low, with noble and plebeian,
 Your name's fame conquered inch by inch—and all
 In order now, when, full-blown, it your head
 A brilliant halo encircles, darts your fame's
 Rays far and wide in burg and hut, to give
 It up a hopeless prey unto despair?
 In vain vagaries fondly now yourself
 To fondle?—Cursèd be such power! Aye,
 The pow'r of God Himself were sinful vanity
 Had He not turned it to *creation!*

[*After a pause and with greater moderation.*]

And is it possible you otherwise
 Could think? Have not yourself with me the tracts
 Prepared that mightily the peasant's heart stir up,
 Intended to announce yourself the head
 And leader in the fray? Of Karsthans think—
 Of many a spark that we to flame have fanned!
 Can, at the moment critical, your mind
 Have changed? Your own *will*—that which I a word
 Of God have ever prized, unshakable,
 Unchangeable—could you't no longer will?
 No, Franz, *impossible!*— You're silent still?
Franz. I silence keep because one pleasure feels,
 Through lips as eloquent his own heart clear
 To see within.

Ulrich. You're now yourself again!

Franz. You err. Am now no nearer to you than
 I was at start; and at the start I was
 No further off. But speak. Show not the *goal*,
 But also show the *path*. So closely tangled
 On earth are path and goal, that each with th' other
 Their places ever change, and other *paths* forthwith
 Another *goal* set up.

Ulrich. The path is obvious; only one can stead!
 Your banner fly; an army raise; around

You call your allies; then, in arms, demand
 From th' Emperor the *freedom of religion!*
 The large towns all will gather 'round your standard;
 The Princes even, those inclinèd to
 The doctrine new, though envious of yourself,
 Are bound support to lend, at least could not oppose.

Franz. The Emp'ror's *abdication in religion*—

Is't that you mean that I should conquer?

It is just that that I will not!—Have care,
 Lest on such path the game's stake swallow up
 The gains.

Ulrich. And what price were too high to pay
 Where freedom of the mind at issue is?

Franz. [*Rising and deliberately.*]

Till now has Rome our realm but only *ruled*—
 Shall she also *partition* it?

[*After a short pause.*] You know
 How to the doctrine new I am attached,
 How with my whole soul Rome I hate; but yet
 Am I no creed's-doctor! And just for that,
 Especially for that, I hate her—she
 The greatness of our realm changed to decline;
 The Nation's one-time splendor to a puny,
 A wretched shadow dimmed; the pinions clipped
 With which the German mind sought on its own
 Track up itself to raise! From the fourth Henry
 Down to the second Frederick, where was there
 An Emp'ror, where a heart, that greatness sought
 To achieve for our realm, and found not at
 His heel that serpent? Through her bishops Rome
 Has ruled the realm; through her collections
 On palliums, annats, dispensations, she
 The land drained dry; her bans and priestly wiles
 The princes gave in hand the means, pretexts
 Our Emp'rors' hands to weaken, and themselves
 As autocrats above the realm to raise;
 She finally has so degraded us
 As to become our own strong neighbor's laughing-stock—
 No less than me, that ever has incensèd you,
 And *that* is what you wish to stop!

Ulrich. [*Impetuously.*] My blood,

Its ev'ry drop I'd gladly stake on that!

Franz. And is it stopped though we from th' Emperor

The freedom conquer for the doctrine new?
 Would, therefore, Rome less powerfully rule
 The realm through her priest-princes? Would the land
 Be drainèd less within the papist districts?
 Nay, worse: I clearly foresee what would
 Result. Could you rest satisfied to see
 The doctrine pure, the Word, for our salvation
 Announced to us, sunk to—a *Princes' privilege*;
 Its bound'ry finding at each dukedom's frontier;
 And, as of accident the whim would throw
 Unto the Pope *this* Prince, to Luther *that*,
 To win or to succumb? Would you the *common cause*
 Turn into a *rulers' cause*?

Ulrich. [*To himself.*] True! But too true!

Franz. Nor yet is all this yet the worst. The worst
 Still comes!

Ulrich. [*Desperately.*] What demon's raven eloquence
 Dwells on your tongue that e'en the hope of life
 You turn to death within me?

Franz. True, the right
 Word have you said! Have care lest we ourselves,
 In lieu of life, the death-blow deal the Nation!
 Such *abdication in religion* parts
 Our land in twain, not merely in two parts—
 A Romish and an Evangelic—'twould
 Be torn to pieces in a hundred shreds!
 Dissevered would the last bond be that still
 The Emp'rör and the realm together binds.
 A Kaiser then each Prince on his domain becomes!

[*Laughing bitterly.*]

And that's the reason of their friendship for the doctrine new!
 —You know in what esteem I hold the Princes;
 'Tis them, next to the Pope, whom most I hate,
 Abhor. 'Tis they who are the real foe
 Of our realm's and of the public freedom.
 Concupiscent, their boundless-selfish guild
 Its greedy claws distends at ev'ry rank's
 Respected rights across the Empire's broad domain.
 At heart they're equally the foe of nobles,
 Of townsmen and of peasants. If they now
 Hate most the nobles, seem the towns to favor,
 It is because for us they still have fear.
 The moment we cease dangerous to be,

How soon, the towns to oppress, on our side
 They'll lean! Ambition only dwells within
 Their hearts, dead to the common weal, and swells
 Them like a sponge, the public safety's life-sap
 Unto itself absorbing. How! Shall I
 Myself turn into a bridge for their malign
 Ambition? 'Gainst the Emp'ror's majesty
 My sword for such a purpose draw? This great
 Empire, that once did rule the world, and whose
 Crown still is thought the first in Christendom,
 Torn up into a hundred bits, at them
 For booty throw?—May God preserve us, Ulrich!
 Then would we stand at our Nation's grave,
 At Germany's and at the German *mind's*
 Funereal bier. The diggers of its grave
 Would we then be, and not its glad awak'ners!
 You wish the mind's development to mightily promote,
 And do you think that if the realm were torn
 Into a thousand strips, and nothing but
 A waste of large and small proprietors
 Became, there could—amidst such landlordships,
 Capriciously together thrown, and greedy
 Of rank, each its own aims pursuing—
 A great mind rise? 'Twere an illusion!
No longer strikes the draft of history
Across such small propri'torships. You might
 As well a storm seek to unchain within
 A cup of water. It the broad expanses loves,
 Where it may freely rage. Then would have dawned
 The heyday of the petty trader, who
 Knows naught above his petty truck!
 All intellectual rage would shrink and shrivel;
 The strictly selfish, nearest only hold;
 In wretchedness the souls would rust; and down
 Would sink that ancient heroism, that mighty
 From our country's history resounds,
 That once the breasts of heroes moved, that in
 Our ears a call to duty clings;—with it
 The spirit also dies away. Oh, never
 From pigmies' wombs could giant souls be strained.

Ulrich. Franz, do you of your people's future then
 Despair? And can your mouth the dark fate of destruction
 Thus o'er the Nation cast?

Franz. [*Deeply moved.*]

I sooner of my own salvation would
Despair than idly of the fatherland
Lose hope! Not that I meant! I would my own
Skin gladly take to market for the great
Cause, for the true weal of the land. What we
Desire is an integral, a great
And pow'rful Germany; the wreck of all
Priest-regiment; a complete rupture with
The Roman system; our country's church,
And only one, the doctrine pure; the old
Communal freedom of the Germans;
Destruction of the Princes' dwarf-régime,
And their usurpèd intermediation;
And, resting on the times' potential trend,
Deep casting in its soul our roots, to raise
One Evangelic head as Emp'ror of
Our mighty realm!—Behold, it is but *your*
Own soul I raise a mirror to your face.

Ulrich. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*]

True is the picture. But can you as much
From Charles hope? Never! Never will he start
On such a giant enterprise! Can you
Your mind amuse with sketching fancy-pictures,
Of whose reality there is no shadow?
From pious wishes no help comes to us.

Franz. [*Slowly and with emphasis.*]

On Charles to still hang hope—that were insanity.
No more of him! In his breast Prince and priest
The Emperor have killed.

Ulrich. [*Impatiently.*]

On what, on whom, then, do you still hang hope?
What Prince—

Franz. [*Interrupting.*] Forsooth, on no Prince either!

Ulrich. You, locked-up secret, break to me your seal!

Not on this rack, I pray you, keep me longer!
Your brow a prodigy announces, meditates!

Franz. [*After walking back and forth several times across the room,
remains standing pensively before Ulrich.*]

See how it haps that small things oft to great
Ones lead, and just through their trivial cover,
Like unto a magic hand-clasp, means become
Whereby man may the greatest ends work out,

And chance itself to fate's decree convert.
 —Recall you what I shortly said before,
 Anent a pending feud with th' Archbishop of Treves?
 The priest, I said, forbade his townmen both
 To pay or to return to prison.—Why,
 You listen not!

Ulrich. I do! I do! I heard it.

Franz. The matter now reverts to me, who, on
 Their prayers, became their bondsman. Now,
 Meseems, I thus have solid ground to act—
 Against th' Elector to declare war.

Ulrich. And what concerns this paltry affair our
 Great cause?

Franz. 'Tis just this matter's paltriness
 That by a Providential dispensation
 To the great cause the vict'ry gives! I draw
 With armèd force 'gainst Treves, and none will in
 The move suspect aught but an ev'ry day
 Occurrence—a reprisal for a sum.
 And none, except, perhaps, a prescript from
 The Reichstag—helpless slip of paper—will
 Th' Elector come to help. Is he *alone*,
 One half of my own forces will suffice
 To take the town. Then, once with Treves within
 My pow'r th' Elect'ral hat, torn from the priest's
 Head, I then boldly clap upon my own.
 Since long, the temporalization of
 Th' Elect'ral hats has been the deep-mouthed cry,
 Throughout the land, with all who dearly hold
 The new faith. Then, besides, Charles little loves
 Th' Elector. Has not yet th' intended trade
 With France forgot. And have I once bagged that
 Strategic place—and who is there to hinder me?—
 My whole strength then I can deploy; call all
 Our friends to arms around me; boldly, then,
 The dance I can sustain with th' Emperor
 And realm.

Ulrich. It would a hard blow be to Rome!
 'Withal, a breach for th' Evangelium! Still—

Franz. Allow me that I finish. Prologue but
 It was, the prelude only to still weightier acts.
 Once does th' Elect'ral hat this brow ornate—then—

Ulrich.. [*Intently following Franz.*]

Then?—

Franz. [*Drawing close to Ulrich and in a loud voice.*]

Am I of the wood that—Emperors are carved from!

[*Ulrich looks dumbfounded; after a short pause Franz proceeds.*]

I know, high treason are my words. And yet
 It is not idle vanity that lures me.
 May evil overtake me if I be
 By greed to greatness lashed! The Nation's rude
 And dire distress, th' imperious mandate of
 The times alone impel my thought. But one
 Of us two could this arduous task fulfill:
 Charles—or myself! I see no third who could.
 How would I not have wished that he in his
 Imperial hand the task had seized—myself
 A desp'rate effort made to enlist his heart.
 It was in vain! Deaf to his Age's call,
 To Germany's loud plaint for freedom dead,
 By priests and Spanish courtiers ruled, he scorned
 The proffer!—Thus I manfully myself
 Consign unto the irksome fate decreed
 To me. Not on myself, on it let fall
 The grave responsibility. Beyond
 My duty to the Emperor goes far
 The duty that the Nation's life, the cry
 Of woe that now goes up from German freedom,
 The threatened ruin of the fatherland
 Upon me lay! 'Twas I who him the crown
 Secured. In that a strange fate I perceive,
 A double warning readily reverse—
 What I on him have thrown away, away
 Again to take.—And now, my friend, I'm ended!
 If you *another* path to the same goal
 Know of, speak! Ready am I to strike it.—
 'Tis now my turn to ask: You're silent, Ulrich?

Ulrich. [*Solemnly.*]

I silence keep because my soul vibrates
 With th' hour's overpowering solemnity.
 How great, Oh, hero, stand you there unveiled!
 This hour unto your holy enterprise
 My clean heart and its ev'ry drop of blood
 I consecrate! And though recruits and troops
 I can not to your camp contribute, yet
 Good work I'm ready for. The pen shall drum

The long roll; shall the people fill with awe;
 Shall bring half Germany into your camp,
 The moment you are faced with the Emperor!
 A giant pinion will I spread, that, eager,
 Shall carry you to your triumphant goal!

[*They rush into each other's arms, and a while remain in close embrace.*]

And when will start the feud 'gainst Treves?

Franz. Equipped am I without delay the dance
 'Gainst Treves to start.—

A seemly force have my recruiters drummed
 Together; and they're gath'ring also
 Near Strasburg, that has just joined hands with me.
 From thence the field against the walls of Treves I'll take.
 But still, of Swabia, and Franconia, and
 The Rhine domains the whole nobility
 To Landau have I first convened, in order
 That firmly they unite with me, and stand
 Me powerfully by in bonds defensive as
 Offensive. Thither I depart upon the spot.

Ulrich. I follow you to Landau.

Franz.

No; I have

For you some other work. Yourself shall go
 To the Elector Albrecht, to Mayence.

You know, the Brandenburger is my friend of old;
 Has many a spin with me gone through, and loves you too.
 He is unto the better cause not lost.

Within his wavering breast, the Old and New
 Are wrestling fiercely. When the new faith
 As Archbishop he persecutes, 'tis done
 In seeming, 'gainst his wish. Go you to him.
 He is the neighbor of the Trevain priest.
 Must not assist him. Then also, I must
 On his domain cross o'er the Rhine. I wish
 The bridges free to find.—It were, indeed,
 The best thing he decide full openly,
 And on the field, with force of arms, to give
 Me aid. 'Twould help appearances, and would
 Some meddlers keep from mixing in th' affair.

Ulrich. You think he might so far himself adventure?

Franz. Impossible 'tis not! I long have seen
 Through him. He fain th' Elect'ral hat he wears
 Into a temp'ral would transform upon

His own head. Also thence to Luther's doctrine
 We see him drawn. But that might long hang fire.
 With him the bridge is long 'tween Wishing and
 Deciding. Tell him that Franciscus says
 'Tis now a *deed for deed*. He knows my word's
 As good as th' Emperor's or realm's And, now,
 Farewell. Your cousin tell that I expect him;—
 In camp before the walls of Treves you'll find me again.

[*Embraces Ulrich and departs.*]

Ulrich. [*Following him with his eyes.*]

Oh, what a hero! Not a virtue of all,
 That in the demi-gods of ancient days,
 That in the song-immortalized men
 Of Rome or Hellas we with wonderment
 Admire, but reproduced is in this
 One man enhanced in brilliancy!

[*In the act of leaving, Marie enters.*]

SCENE VI.—ULRICH; MARIE.

Marie. You here, Sir knight?

[*Observing him closer.*] And what a change has o'er
 You come in this short interval. Your sight
 Affrighted me, as shortly ago you left
 Me; now I find you again with cheerful mien!
 Your eyes beam joy; the soul's contentment laughs
 From every trait. With deep peace blending wonderfully,
 Warm inspiration's fires flame and light your brow.

Ulrich. The reason is I found the soul's physician,
 Who promptly has restored my peace of mind.

Marie. [*With animation.*]

How happy that makes me.

[*Embarrassed and more moderately.*]

I meant to say

It makes me very glad—for your sake—mine
 Also—no, for my father's sake.—You must
 Not listen to my words. The rapid change
 Of sentiments has quite confusèd me.
 Enough. I'm glad. The fine days come again,
 That I had thought had fled. The happy home,
 The Muses' lovely seat, that you this burg
 Have turned, remains unscathed, and once again
 I listen to your words, when Poetry's

Great flights, the songs of old antiquity,
To us you deign reveal.

Ulrich. My noble maid!
The day's alarms now the Muses' song
Must hush. And yet not so. I falsely did
Myself express. Unto *reality*
Wills poetry to raise itself. Its rhyme
Recasting, strikes out in the world. I hence
Must go; young lady, a flying farewell must
I bid you.

Marie. [*Alarmed.*] How? You mean to leave this burg ?

Ulrich. This very hour.

Marie. [*With increasing anxiety.*]

And whither? Why? Do you

To us again come soon?

Ulrich. I hope not long!

I draw to field, young lady.

Marie. [*Deeply anxious.*] To field?

You, Ulrich? An uprising—My presentiment, Oh, God!

Ulrich. You *Ulrich* said? And in that tone? *Marie!*

Marie. [*Falls into his arms semi-conscious.*]

Ulrich!

Ulrich. No! No illusion this can be!

Marie, you love me as yourself I love!

Marie. [*Returning to herself, tears herself from Ulrich's arms and flees distracted to the other end of the cabinet, but looks back towards Ulrich, who, with hands outstretched towards her, remains where he stood.*]

Oh, God, did I aught say? I nothing said.

No, nothing said I! Do you hear?—and yet—

[*Transported by her affection.*]

Yes—yes—I did say! Take wings,

My girlish prudery, unworthy simulation!

Is he a man like others? Why should that

Ashame me that with *pride* my breast does fill?

What can on earth a woman greater do

Than him to love?—Is't not as though my own

All that in you is great and noble, all

You have achieved and are, I made? in your soul's high

Flight took a share? and shared your mighty deeds,

If I love you?—

When love ennobles and upraises us—

Why not with gladness, like

To a *devotion* freely yield to it?
 Yet who am I to dare to you my eyes
 To lift? The pow'r is given us, is't fair,
 Before our eyes the model,
 The luminous, to see, and should we not
 In our hearts' recesses burn for it?
 Yes, Ulrich—I confess it—yes, I love you,
 Love you with all the strength of a pure breast, to which
 You stand for the ideal in mankind!
 I love you—and watch, that which, while these words flow,
 My brow inflames is but the blush of inspiration,
 And not of shame! I early felt my heart
 Incline to you, when at the court of Albrecht
 I learned to know you. There, the mirthful child
 Resistless your earnest mind drew to it!
 Around your head fame spread a halo, Ulrich,
 That partly frightened, partly fascinated me.
 At mention of your name the best men's blood
 Was stirred; and when you spoke it sounded in
 My childish mind a voice from upper spheres.
 I knew not that I loved you—this alone
 I knew, all other men beside you seemed
 So small, so very small to me! But since
 With us you've been; since all the treasures, that
 Within your heart you carry, you've unlocked
 To me; since you to new life and new thought
 The child's soul nursed to maturity—
 I then became aware I lovèd you!
 If, Ulrich, you as much can give me, then
 Am I the happiest woman e'er on earth—
 And can you *not*—it ne'er will sadden me
 That I the greatest could and had to love!

Ulrich. Angelic soul!

Long in my heart, in silence, have I loved you;
 But ne'er from me the secret had you learned,
 Had you not now yourself my tongue set free.

Marie. Then will I prize the fright that overcame
 Me, first—and then the courage gave! But, Oh!
 Recalling it, the shadow falls upon
 My heart again, as if the hand of fate
 The clear notes of my joy was stifling.
 To field you draw. Said you not so? To field,
 Perhaps to something far more serious than

A simple feud?—Against whom, tell me!

Ulrich. Against th' Elector Richard, Archbishop of Treves.

Marie. Against him only? Mighty man he is,
And yet I'm glad it is against him only.
I feared worse! But no more fear for me!
Since from my lips my secret fled, meseems
A ton-weight from my heart I've rollèd off.
It seems fresh courage thrills my frame since then;
It seems I only now have found myself!
The sun now shines around me joyfully;
I laugh into the world; and lovingly
The world responds into my heart. No! No!
It can not be—I can not at *one* time
Have found, and then have lost you! Tell me, do
You, Ulrich, not believe, like me, in destiny?

Ulrich. The Universe's scheme may rest on it;
In its own wisdom planfully itself
O'erthrowing, it to its own goal leads itself,
Its own track never losing, despite all
Its windings—just as with the choral dance
That only seems to go apart and in
Disorder to dissolve, yet, centrally
To order e'er obedient, uninterrupted
Its sinuous course pursues. Aye, e'en what to
The dull sight of a day as *hindrances*
Appears, is but the means to this world's destiny,
To whose completion it its own plans lays.

[*Pauses.*]

The *individual* stands on chance's powder-magazine;
Exploding, in the air it hurls him far,

Marie. No; wrong you are! Because you men for naught
But for the lump have heart, you'll grant nor love
Nor order but to that. I certain am
I'll see you again. My heart says so! In laurel wreathed
You will return from this affray. Before
My father then you'll step, applying for
His daughter's hand—and then we'll happy be.

Ulrich. [*Struggling with himself.*]

I marry you? Oh, never!

Marie. Heard I right?

You will not marry me? Perhaps you fear
My father may my hand to you refuse?
Believe it not! I know he loves you so,

Aye, almost as myself! He'll not refuse.

Ulrich. [*Gloomily.*]

It is not that!—I cannot marry you!

Marie. [*Steps back covering her face with her hands.*]

Ulrich!

Ulrich. [*Deeply distressed.*]

What you, Marie, have told me has

Undying happiness afforded me—

Yet, like the phantom of a dream, it must

Dissolve. Let ev'ry word be wipèd out.

[*Turning his face away.*]

Yourself take back! I can not, may not bind

You to me!

[*Passionately.*]

Shall I also this sweet child

Entangle in my life's erratic whirl?

To daily, trembling, see her head upon

The wild volcano of my own existence?

Shall I her also carry down with me

If, on my erring path, I clash with this

Terrestrial ball, in hundred pieces dashed,

And cast away? Oh, never may that be!

Marie. [*During the last lines her hands from her face removing.*]

You seem to rave! I hardly understand you—

I hardly heard you. When you—spurned me away,

I felt as if the roaring billows

Had broken over me.

Ulrich. Mistake me not, Marie! I may *not* weave

Your life into this life to struggle used!

As far as back my eyes can reach, they fall

On all the wretchednesses men eschew.

Oh, knew you but one half of my sad fate,

You would then understand me—and yourself

Would shrink from the mishap, a wedded bride,

This tempest-tossèd being's fate to share.

Marie. How grossly unjust towards yourself you are!

You, Ulrich, on whom bountifully

Her gifts by Nature was bestowed, call you—

Ulrich. [*Passionately interrupting her.*]

My heels a demon dogs, the germs themselves

Of happiness to unhappiness converting.

But barely eleven years, the gifts perceived

In me condemned me to a living grave.

Within the cloister-walls of Fulda was
I, by my father's will, a monk condemned
My sunny life to mourn away. Five years
Did I endure. Then, by the spirit seized,
A lad then of sixteen, the cloister's gloom
I fled. To Erfurt went, in its high school,
Renowned wide, with greedy draughts to quench
My thirst for learning. Violently incensed.
At such a step, my sire his hand from me
Withdrew—from strangers' charity thenceforth
My meager sustenance I had to beg!
But what cared I! The golden treasures of
Antiquity had shortly been unlocked!
With ardor at its breast I lay, its milk
Of freedom, that imperishable, fresh
Flows forth, my mind intoxicating;
In long draughts from its poets' lustrous thoughts
The breath of a majestic, freer mankind
In my distracted soul absorbing!
But as the comet draws its train along,
Misfortune followed at my ev'ry step.
I was at Erfurt not a year—the pest
Came and the school broke up! Pursuing, smiting,
Away the demon of the scourge drove with
His flaming sword the teachers and the taught!
I then went to Cologne, the University.
In undisturbèd bloom reigned there, as still
They do, the hostile crew to knowledge, the
Dark-browed and black-robed dastard screech-owl breed,
That vampire-like the blood of mankind drain.
There densest Ignorance holds supreme sway—
The flame-spewing monster that to death consigned
Arnold von Tungern, Gratius, many more!
Whate'er you say—it knows *one* answer only:
The *flames* it ever conjures down on you!
Not that flame that enlightens and gives warmth—
Oh, no! It knows none other than the stake's
And pyre's stupid glow. Be't true or false
What you may say, its fiat is but—*Fire!*
If right—*fire!* Wrong—*fire!* Fire is its substance.
From its throat ever tongues of flame shoot up!
There, having to other youths, devoted,
The charms of ancient poetry unveiled,

The thunderbolt was swiftly hurled at me.
 For *that* offence with shame I was expelled
 As a seducer of the youth, and a
 Contemner of religion.—The staff again I took.
 In Frankfort-on-the-Oder, distant far away,
 A new asylum of enlightenment
 Was founded, Science's new seat. Among
 The lib'ral arts' instructors here I lived
 With kindred minds in loving circle.
 But here a shocking illness seized my limbs,
 With frightful fangs upon my marrow gnawing,
 Of which I never have been wholly healed.
 Then, hardly cured, my ever restless spirit
 Again possessed my mind. I felt impelled
 To join, with science, life. I grope after
Reality. I craved to see the peoples,
 The nations, cities of the world. I took
 Ship at an East Sea port. Alas! the ship
 Could not *support me*, broke down under me!—

Marie. Distressful!

Ulrich. Stripped of all, half famished reached

I Griesenwald. But thence unworthy men's
 O'erbearing pride drove me away. I went—
 But yet could not their hate escape. I fell
 The prey to foot-pads, and was left half naked
 The road with my own blood to warm, alone,
 In helpless misery amid the winter's frosts.
 The full way's length my trail red-painting,
 I dragged myself a dying waif to Rostock.

Marie. Oh, poor man! And not one ray of light
 In that long night?

Ulrich. Call it not *night*, but agony!

The ray did fall. To my eyes it revealed
 In clear light the purpose of my life—
 An endless chain of agonies the spring.
 It was not long after that time, when fresh
 The hatred of the priesthood flared up,
 Anew against the sciences' great strides.
 They felt that at the breath of th' ancients' thoughts
 The monks' creed-tyranny, flagitious web,
 Would melt away, and on the mind's bright wings
 The love of freedom penetrate the masses' heart.
 The *germ* of freedom in its germ was to be nipped!

The Nestor of Germanic science, Reuchlin,
 As the first victim was selected; on
 His venerable head the deadly blow
 Was aimed. The conflict with Cologne broke out.
 On Reuchlin's works th' anathema of the Church
 Was cast. From Erfurt, Paris, Mayence and Louvain
 The faculties pronounced his book heretical;
 And in Cologne, the German hot-bed of
 The priests' malignity, it was in a
 Procession solemnly consigned to flames.
 All Germany was in intense commotion;
 The champions of the intellect around
 Reuchlin disposed themselves, on th' other side
 The friar-mendicants' and scholiasts'
 Close ranks. Like *Guelph!* and *Ghibelline!* the cry
 Of battle rung, the land in sides dividing.
 My life's aim all at once before my soul
 Unveilèd stood, that first was but surmise.
 The impulse towards science, the impulse to reality,
 That until then my breast in twain had torn,
 To a common and a satisfièd end
 Now blended were. I now *knew* why I lived,
 And to what end on th' anvil of adversity
 I had so fiercely been beaten hard!
 As on the seas the tumbling billow topples down,
 As on the beach the surf is dashèd back again,
 So I, with eyes aflame, with quiv'ring zeal,
 Seized with voluptuous rage, rushed headlong in
 The formidable fray. Of wrath the axe,
 Of irony the spikèd club I swung
 With crushing force upon the en'my's head;
 Amid all Europe's loud applause and her
 Uproarous laughter's ring, I pilloried
 His wretched being on the stage of parody.
 But thus a mob of enemies I raised
 Unto myself, who with me wrestle and
 Whom I, opposing, wrestle with incessantly
 For life and death, breast pressing against breast.

[*Pauses.*]

To Italy I felt myself drawn irresistibly—
 I ached upon my en'mies fest'ring sores
 To place my fingers, and the full abysmal
 Depth of decay to probe. Again I took

The staff. In garments soiled and torn, by th' alms
Of kindly hearts a beggar's life living,
I wandered through Bohemia, Austria and Tyrol.

[*Marie makes a mute gesture of horror.*]

Oh, maid, shall I narrate to you how, at
Pavia, once, in my own lodging, I
By th' enemy beseigèd was, myself
Thought lost, and deeming that my suff'rings' end
Had come, my own death dirge in verse had sung?
How I was captured and escaped, and then,
By fever's frost and, worse yet, poverty
And want—that, viper-like, in wild delight
Fed on my worn-out frame—was broken on
Their rack. Or how by *hunger*, that no choice
Allowed me, a common lansquenet in Italy
In th' Emperor Maximilian's army I listed!
And how—

Marie. [*In an agony of despair interrupting.*]

Oh, Ulrich, stop! I can no longer
The awful story hear! I meant you long
Ago to interrupt, but fear seemed
My tongue to lame, to rob me of speech—now, screwed
To a higher pitch, returns it back to me.
Distressful is your long-drawn agony!
Is't possible for suff'ring thus to heap
Itself upon *one* head, and that, your own,
Oh, Ulrich! Is it possible that one
Man could endure so much?—I only knew
The sunshine of enjoyment, and no thought
Had I of its dark shadows. 'Tis to me
As though your dreadful tale upon the buds,
That in my heart toward the joy of light
To breathe have striven, now, like a simoon
Falls parching, blighting, 'neath its deadly breath
One after th' other with'ring! Like a sense
Of ill presentiment it thrills my frame.
Oh, stop! To *hear* also is to experience!
A moment pause—

Ulrich. [*Interrupting.*] No longer may I pause
Than did my chain of sorrows make a halt.
If, maid, it pleased you me to love, you must,
Before all else, the curse know that pursues me.

Marie. On *you* a curse? You misinterpret me!

You will not *frighten* me. From love for you
 My soul is harrowed by the shocking tale.
 And yet the very sorrow's long-drawn chain
 But all the more unto my woman's heart
 Endears you. The mother loves the child of pain—

[*Stops suddenly.*]

L

No, Ulrich, no! On your head rests no *curse!*

Ulrich. No *curse* say you? You err, Marie! It is
 The mightiest, most relentless one of all,
 That in the fury of his love, God on
 A mortal's head hurls down! Oh, ever true
 Remains the fable told of old!—
 When once upon a time, in ancient Rome,
 A pit's mouth yawned, the city threat'ning with
 Destruction, then the Oracles said this:
The dearest only thrown into th' abyss
The gods can pacify. And, lo, unto
 His horse the spurs applying, clad in war's
 Full panoply, down Curtius leaped, himself
 Unto the subterranean god devoting.
 The *best* must leap into the *rift of time*;
 O'er *their* bodies only does it close,
Their bodies only are the seldom seed,
 From whence the people's freedom, tree luxuriant,
 Sprouts up the world to bless—and that the *curse*
 Is that upon the *best* is laid, and which,
 A demon like, themselves, and all whom they approach,
 To ruin doom!

Marie. Well, then, that *curse* will I—

How gladly!—share with you. The blow that smites
 You, Ulrich, let it also smite myself.

Ulrich. Brave girl! It well befits you so to think;
 But would it equally befit myself
 To such a dreary sacrifice give my consent?
 He solitary must the world's path tread,
 Who to the pow'rs of death himself has consecrated.
 Marie! I would no longer with my sorrows'
 Minute recital rend your tender heart.
 The veil let's draw upon the sep'rate lines
 Of the great tragedy that I have lived.
 But one thing you must know. For many a year
 I bore in stillness mean, disgraceful poverty,
 Until my father died. Now fell to me,

The first born, all my fam'ly's large estate.
 Was I, whose plans to daily turmoil drove,
 My brothers, aye, my mother's head to bind,
 To entangle with my fate? I would not that!
 My whole inheritance I now renounced;
 Renounced all joys of life that kindly wealth,
 Reclining on possession's certainty,
 With bounteous hands upon our head bestows.
 A *beggar* I remained, now as before—
 And nothing, nothing but my sword and pen
 I call my own. For brothers and my mother
 I took that course—and should I less do for
 Yourself?

[*Marie seeks to interrupt him.*]

No; interrupt me not, Marie!

And if you should succeed my doubts to still,
 Have you the consequences to myself
 Reflected?—Until now, when mishap's whirl
 Against life's ragged edges smote me pitiless,
 I *still* was happy: I had preserved my mind's
 Serenity. But if the surf would toss
 Me henceforth on the crags; if, arm in arm
 With me, I saw you, dear girl, against
 The sharp rocks beaten, saw you suffer what
 Myself have suffered—saw imprisonment,
 And flight, and exile, all the earthly
 Ills known to man, in one crown woven, and
 That crown of thorns forced on *your* guiltless head,
Your head, where only joy, so far, did dwell;
 If I your brave, angelic countenance
 Beheld, your pain concealing, doubly thereby
 Racked; saw you *smiling*, my load thus to ease—
 Think you, Marie, that I could bear *that*?
 What I have so far borne was but misfortune's show.
 What were my sufferings then?
 I then was *one*, at *one* with my own self!
 My serene soul, my steeled, goal-conscious heart,
 My inner happiness—no power strong
 Enough to rob me of! The untamed force
 That e'er my soul with pleasure filled, and e'er
 The blows of fortune with renewèd pride
 Repelled—that force you would forever crack;
 Division introduce into my breast;

The shield of adamant, that 'gainst a world
 Of enemies protected me, untie;
 The armor from me strip, so that, at last,
 The en'mies sword the long and vainly looked-for
 Aperture to the red life of my heart
 Could find! Internal discord, only source
 Of real unhappiness, you would within
 My breast enkindle. Were I to behold
 You suffering, Marie, would not each grief
 A barb be, tearing at the promptings of
 My heart; imparting an opposing fever to
 My soul; in horrid, desp'rate conflict
 The structure of my fortitude dissolve?
 Shall I the bitt'rest dregs of sorrow taste?
 To cause you torture shall I call you mine?
 The blow that strips me of my only boon,
 What from me, *alone*, no evil fate can take—
 That strength of joy, the soul's serenity—
 Shall that blow smite me from the hand of love?
 In front, Death and intensest Hate my life assail;
 And in the rear, Love threatens with despair's flail!

Marie. [*Slowly and as if to herself.*]

The maid in one night ripens into woman;
 'Tis said one single day of deep affliction
 The glossy hair upon the skull can whiten.
 And so, within the period of this hour,
 I ripened feel—might almost say have *aged!*

[*Pauses.*]

The gamut broad of all sensations, from
 The topmost pitch of rapture, down to pain's
 Most melancholic depth, within the space
 Of this brief hour have I traversed swift;—
 And heavier far it weighs than years have weighed to me.
Be it as you say. I much have learned. I've seen
 The world. Of it a vague sense now I taste.
 As all creation in the sunshine basks,
 As in the bonny face of Nature kind
 The smallest moth in harmless play cavorts,
 Thus did I think of happiness. I took
 It for a right, a universal one for all.
 I see, I erred. Quite otherwise as with
 Kind Nature, that with even hand herself
 To all gives up, man's hate of man has forged

The heavy burden of a troubled life
 As this world's law. I see it, happiness—
 That may not be. Though late, yet all the harsher
 The lesson comes to me. My share I will
 Not shirk in the hard fate decreed for all
 The mortals. I will not at the expense
 Of your strength my bosom's joy to reach,
 Or purchase it with mis'ry and despair
 To you. Be it, Ulrich, as you said. But see!
 I still am young; I can thus suddenly
 Not bid adieu to all the hopes of life;
 Not yet, as you, have I been hammered firm
 In this severe school of abnegation.
 My soul to hope still stretches out its hands,
 It still strains upwards to the light of life.
 The *hope*, Oh, Ulrich, leave to me, Oh, rob
 Me not of it—when you from this feud are
 Returned—

Ulrich. A greater feud will then be on.

Marie. [*Knowingly.*]

I *know* it now.—But see, also *that* feud
 An end must have. The dreams of life, the sad
 As well as pleasant, all do sometimes end;
 There's naught but has its end. As now I learn,
 E'en happiness does end; and why not also
Unhappiness? Why should, of all things, that
 Alone equippèd be with the atrocious
 Privilege of *eternity?* When, finally,
 From that feud you return, then, Ulrich—

Ulrich. [*Passionately.*] Then,

When of that fray the tumult shall have ceased,
 Life's urging aim been reached, then may I press
 You to my breast, to god-like bliss exalted.
 Alone I would the world have drained, its cup
 Of bliss, as well as that of sorrow!
 A whole world in the compass of *one* man,
 I would the full fate of mankind in me unite!
 But yet, I fear. Envious is the hidden, fateful Power;
 He grants not man upon his own head godly crowns to shower!

[*Departs precipitately.*]

Marie. [*Long looking after him.*]

Oh, Heaven, him protect!—In all thy wide domains,
 No jewel, like to him, thy starry vault contains!

SCENE VII.—*A knight's reception room in the Town Hall of Landau, The room is ornamented with flags and shields. In the rear, a dais, on either side of which closely crowded rows of knights are grouped, and fill the space up to the foreground. Conspicuous among them is COUNT WILLIAM VON FURSTENBERG, PHILIP VON DALBERG, PHILIP VON RUDESHEIM, HENRY VON DAHN, HENRY VON SCHWARZENBERG, WILLIAM VON WALDECK, HILCHEN LORCH, VON BENNINGEN, VON FALKENSTEIN, WOLF VON TURKHEIM, and others. Between the two rows, SICKINGEN.*

Franz. It's this, ye noble and free men, that I
 With faithful and a truthful heart and mind
 Have long been wishing on your hearts to lay.
 These are the means to meet th' emergency.
 Through this strong compact, the united strength
 Of priests and Princes will be broken up,
 The arbitrary rule, whose shackles press
 Upon all stations, finally abolished.
Above all others, you the free men are
 Of Germany!—Above all others, you—
 Unless to cringing flunkeys to descend
 You're willing—recking not what dangers threat,
 Must lead the way to conquer for the land
 Its old, now trampled-on franchise!—
 E'en danger flees if we are joined in one.
 Now, then, will you, as I have just announced,
 The compact make—

Dahn. We will!

Dalb. We all of us!

All. The compact! Compact!

Rud. It has been long signed in our hearts; our lips
 Alone now need the binding oath to take.

Franz. Good! Sith you will it, let its first clause be—
 We henceforth shall no law obey that is
 Not grounded in strict right, and of the land's
 Acknowledged freedom flieth in the face.

Schw. A traitor to us all let treated be
 Whoever hold a diff'rent view from that.

Franz. War shall be jointly waged by all of us
 'Gainst him who dares our statutes to oppose.

All. So shall it be! We all of us say so!

Franz. When any member of our federation is
 By whomsoever warred against, we all

Are in that feud concerned—with all our pow'r,
 Our property and kin to the last drop
 Of blood. We all for each, and each for all
 Stand pledged, and common is our joy or woe.

Turk. That be the law! Our oaths we'll take to that.

All. We all for each, and each of us for all!

A perjurer, shall from the roll of men
 He blotted be, who keeps not that!

Franz. So be it.

A Bible bring that fealty we swear
 Unto the compact, and obedience glad
 To him we now our federation's head shall choose.
 The right our chief shall vested be withal,
 For war the federation's full force to
 Engage. In war and peace, his is the leadership.

Dalb. So be't! We shall his call obey, glad and
 Observant of the duty freely assumed.

All. It is the will of all, unanimous!

Franz. [*To whom a large Bible has been brought.*]

Well, then, your heads now bare, draw the sword,
 And after me repeat the oath, that I,
 Not with my lips, no, with my heart, shall now
 Pronounce! Ye German nobles, swear with me:—

[*He uncovers his head and places two fingers on the Bible.*

All the others uncover and draw their swords.]

By that exalted Freedom, that alone
 In man's eyes worth and splendor lends to life;
 By that exalted Freedom, that from this
 Book fifteen hundred years ago leaped forth,
 And now still richer blessings has for us—

All. [*Rapturously raising their swords.*]

Swear we!

Franz. By our love for country, by that star
 Of man—our *honor*—that, in shipwreck e'en,
 When as a wreck the hope of life would sink,
 Lights cheerily upon his eyes, and guides
 Them to Posterity's respect—

All. [*As above.*] *We swear!*

Franz. By the presentiments of the All-High—
 Revealed to us in Nature and our mind,
 The heart of man to great achievements urge,
 Life's anchor in the storms of life—
 By the warm blood of all the *best*, who ever

For mankind's sake have suffered—

All. [*As above.*] *Swear we all!*

Franz. Firm troth unto this pact, to our chief obedience,
And *cursed* be the man who this oath breaks!

All. [*As above.*]

Accused! Cursed! All have sworn! The gods
Have heard, have witness been to our oath!

[*The knights mutually embrace.*]

Franz. Upon the pinions of our oaths, the land's
Beloved Freedom takes a mighty flight!
Concluded is the pact. Now choose your chief.

Dalb. No need of lengthy choice. But you alone—
But you alone can our chieftain be.

Schw. But you.

Dahn and Falk. And you alone! There is none other!

Rud. Since long the eye of all of us you've been,
You are our arm, you are our shield, our sword!
'Tis only you can be our federation's head!

All. [*Raising their swords.*]

Unanimous, Franciscus, you we choose
For our head, and swear to follow you!
Upon us call; you'll ready find us all.

Franz. As you to me, to you I pledge my troth.
So help me God, a true head will I be
To you, a Ziska to all Germany.
You soon will further hear from me. Meantime,
Yourselves hold ready. Increase your armaments
With wise and timely means. Above all things,
I this enjoin to you:—Let none of us
Himself in feuds with any town entangle!
Too much have we in former, unripe days,
On this score sinned. The times are changed, with them
Their laws. The towns it is, whose mighty impulse
To right and freedom clearly designates as
Our allies in the mighty strife. The love
For freedom that the townsmen and the artisans
Impels, that lurks behind their walls, and moved
Is by the brilliant Spirit of the Age,
Makes them the staunchest piers of our structure.
Them cultivate. The *peasant* spare! He's ready
The papal yoke, that, heavier yet than on
Ourselves, oppresses him, from off his back
To shake. Not us; the *Princess* does he hate.

He gladly will with us join hands, if we
 Resort to justice in our dealings with
 His class. The *peasant* once before did take
 The *lead* from us against the Princes' tyranny.
 Remember poor Koontz! He was o'ercome;
 Yet few years later, we ourselves were forced
 Against Duke Ulrich, Wurtemberg's lord-autocrat,
 Who recked our rights as little as he did
 The toilers' of the soil, the lance to place
 In rest. If ever through the land the God
 Of War, man-killing, stalk, the realm in two
 Opposing camps up-breaking, then it will
 The *peasant* be, whose strong fist, timely freed,
 Will arbitrate the iron game, decide
 The final fate of our great realm! Consider that!
 —And now, my friends, come to my burg. My scribes
 An instrument will there submit for your
 Approving signature and seal, that I
 Have caused to be preparèd, to the end
 In seeming-slight attire our federation's great
 Compact to veil, and the alert suspicions of
 The Princess lull, when wind they get of it.
 Not earlier than the ripest moment may
 Be known what here has founded been this day.

Schw. Well, then, we go! Franciscus, hail to you!
 Hail to our chieftain! Hail!

All. All hail to you, Franciscus!
 The fortune that before, will henceforth too
 Accompany thy colors!

[*Exeunt all, except Furstenberg, Dalberg, Lorch and Rudsheim, who group themselves near Franz.*]

Furs. [*Hastily approaching Franz.*]

Again I warn you, Franz, you make a grave
 Mistake to fail to summon all the nobles
 With their full forces before Treves. It would
 Be quite a large increase of men; besides,
 It will go hard to soon find them again
 In such a ready mood.—

Franz. I tell you, no! No good, but harm 'twould do
 Your counsel to adopt. Did I with all
 The members of our Landau gathering,
 With all the knighthood of the realm, on Treves
 Now march, I would myself the Princes' eyes

Unclose, *compelling* them a *common cause*
 To see. That were too soon. It would more harm
 Do than the increased forces profit, which,
 Moreover, against Treves I do not need.
 No, Furstenberg, I wish you still th' affair
 A private feud of mine to look upon—
 Such feuds, as oft before, have headed been by me.
 'Tis *measure* rules the world—too *much* may do
 As much harm as too *little*.

Furs. Well, as you please! I would not with your eyes,
 Expert in triumph, enter in debate,

Franz. Now, Lorch, an errand that you'll gladly run.
 The herald call. He ready, waits outside.

Lorch. Indeed, I'll gladly run it. Miles I'd leap,
 To quicker such an errand execute. [*Exit.*]

Dalb. But I will take my men along.

Rud. And I!

Franz. Nor you, nor he. Your wild impatience curb.
 The next years will enough work give you both.

[*Lorch enters with herald.*]

But Lorch shall go with me; he, anyhow,
 Concerned was in this matter from the start.

[*To the herald.*]

Step forward, herald; take this letter, ride
 Full speed with it to Treves; and there announce
 To the Right Reverend, the Prince and Lord
 Ricardus, Archbishop in Treves and of
 The Holy Roman Empire in Gaul;
 Archchancellor of Arles; Elector; and so forth—
 That I, *Franciscus Sickingen*, herewith
 Declare war to him, and mean his sworn
 Foe to remain. The rest he'll in the letter find.
 Tell him to hie him, for I'm close behind. [*Exit herald.*]

Furs. Complete was never yet a joy in life.

Lorch. How mean you that?

Furs. I grieve that I may not
 Be there the face to see that the Right Reverend
 Will make when he the news receives.

Franz. You may
 Believe me, it will be no surprise to him.

SCENE VIII.—BALTHASAR; *the former.*

Balt. [*Enters travel-stained and in haste.*] Sir!

From Strasburg, post-haste I have hither traveled.
 The news is Rumor with a thousand tongues
 Abroad proclaiming that you mean to lead
 'Gainst Treves the army that is there collecting.
 E'en women, children, too, about it talk;
 And vagabonds' and beggars' lungs across
 The land the flame of the alarming news
 Like bellows chase.

Franz. This time, my Balthasar,
 Does Rumor tell the truth. I knew it well,
 Impossible it is to long concealed
 The purpose keep of such an armèd force.

Balt. Then, that the purpose was of this outfit?
 Your mind is made up finally? Reflect—

Franz. My friend, there's nothing left now to reflect!
 With slackened reins the herald hastes to Treves,
 The letter carrying that war proclaims.

Balt. [*Meditatively.*]
 In that case—then, there's nothing more to change.
 'Tis clear to me! Long I've absent been
 From you, at Strasburg and elsewhere engaged
 In troops to gather. Had I with you been,
 I might quite diff'rent counsel have advanced
 To you—less wise, and yet, perhaps, much wiser.
 But that is gone. So let it be. But one
 Thing, Sir, I wish you promise me.

Franz. And what?

Balt. As now, from Strasburg I was speeding post,
 I rode first into camp, the army to
 Inspect. I there met Dietrich Spaeth, your kin.
 He said to me you meant in a few days
 'Gainst Treves the field to take.

Franz. You disapprove.

Balt. Not half the army, Sir, is yet assembled;
 The reinforcements that from Cleves the knight
 Of Renneberg, from Brunswick Minkwitz are
 To furnish you; those that from Luxemburg,
 The Netherlands, Westphalia and the district of
 Cologne are now for you recruiting—they
 All fail. Wait till they all together are;
 Then with your whole force march on Treves.
 You know, on th' Elector's shoulders sits
 A wise and vig'rous, withal a stubborn head,

And strong is he in own and allied troops.

Franz. And, therefore, should I give him time that both
He gather at their best? Speak, Balthasar,
How large is now the army at my command
Near Strasburg?

Balt. Full five thousand horse, also
Ten thousand foot, and then the tenders of
Th' artillery. Besides, with their men rode in
The Counts of Geroldseck, of Eberstein
And Eitelfritz von Zollern—

[*To Furstenberg.*] Your men, sir,
Are likewise there.

Franz. That tallies with my officers'
Report. Old man, you are a first-class head!
A general you're not! The codex of
All generals has *swiftness* as the first
Of all the ten commandments. Swift I'll break,
With rapid moves, into the prelate's lands;
Take from him burgs and towns; as surplusage,
And not required, will join me before Treves
All further reinforcements. The lansquenet
Fresh courage feels, and feels relieved if new
Troops ever, to the lusty sound of trumpets,
Are seen in camp to arrive. Or do you think
I should from all the provinces the men
To Strasburg drag, and then to Treves should tramp
Then back? Would you a *crab* in Franz's flag
Insert? I rather imitate the hounds,
That on the game from all sides throw themselves.
Of all the rendezvous, the *best* I know
Of is the *enemy's entrails!* Up, then,
Ye merry hunters! High game now's your prize!
In freedom's bugle blow. It is the *mort*
Of all the hated despots of the realm!

All. To hunt! To hunt! The trackers at their post,
The foe to quell with our victorious host!

[*Curtain closes.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE 1.—*A hall in the castle of Palsgrave Ludwig, the Elector Palatine, at Heidelberg. Enter the Elector's SECRETARY and a KNIGHT of the Archbishop of Treves. Later the ELECTOR himself.*

Sec. So closely pressed does your master feel?

Speak on; be not so chary of your words.

Knt. So closely pressed that to death I rode

Two horses, but a breath or two to gain

On time. The town may any moment fall.

Where is your master, and why do you not

Lead me to him?

Sec. He soon will here be.

Have patience, but, meanwhile, be kind enough

To satisfy my keen curiosity.

If such a goodly army had your lord,

Why did he not go out to meet the knight,

The town with his own breast thus shield, and thus

The dangers both avoid, of famine and

Of treason?

Knt. Surely, master Secretary,

Were you a general, you would without

A doubt in open battle Franz defeat!

Who questions that? But common mortals as

The rest of us, are not so bold. Where that

Knights leads, each common soldier grows to a hero,

And fights as if he crowns would win. But, lo,

Here comes your noble Lord. Hail, Sir, to you!

[*Enters the Palsgrave, and the Knight bows low.*]

Lud. Are you the knight from Treves?

Knt. Yes, Sir; I am,

Whom to your Grace, in his great stress my Lord

Has sent, you of the treaties to remind.

Lud. How stands your master's case? Speak on!

Knt. Your Grace,

The flood to overflowing swells. The grim

Knight holds our Treves in iron embrace fast,

And presses her so savage to his heart,

Her iron corsage cracks, crushed by his love's

Intensity. While now I speak, the blood

Of nobles flows, the walls under the blows

Of cannons shake. None knows what the next hour brings!

Lud. How could Franciscus, in so short a time,

Such inroads make? Upon your Lord's first notice,
 Agreeable to treaty, I sent to him
 A goodly troop of mounted men and foot,
 And equal reinforcements came to him
 From other friends. How comes it, at the head
 Of all his nobles, of his peasant-vassals,
 And strengthened with these aids, he failed a head
 To make against Franciscus in the field?

Knt. Oh, ask not, Sir; there was no head to make!
 The terror of his name before him flew,
 A Gorgon, palsying resistance. Like
 A second Holofernes, magistrates
 And commons, maidens robed in white went out
 To meet him with the beat of drum and trumpet bray.
 Whate'er resistance, down his savage sword
 Did mow. St. Wendel, Grimberg, Bliescastel
 He took by storm, and, forthwith, waxing like
 A speeding conflagration, rolled on Treves.
 The God of War himself, had he stepped down
 From high, could not *his* fury have withstood!
 In his mailed hand would Treves now be, had not
 An accident, or wonder savèd us.

Lud. What's that?

Knt. While, breaking into towns and burgs,
 Resistlessly Franciscus marched on Treves,
 Th' Elector into Eifel threw himself,
 His people to a levy in mass to call.
 This Franz perceived. Intending th' Archbishop's
 Retreat to intercept, of the Moselle
 The left bank with the bastard of Sombreff
 He occupies. The hot-head bastard, tho',
 Away being carried by the ardor of
 His zeal, his way to Eifel forces, hot
 Upon th' Elector's heels. With cleverly
 Disguisèd marches, he deceives the hound;
 Finds free the shore; and in two days runs in
 His town, ere Franz arrived before our gates.—
 Had Franz found Treves without her Lord, she would
 Have trembling fallen on his breast, and now,
 A fugitive upon the mountain, would
 Th' Elector be—afraid of every hunter's footfall.

Lud. No accident, it was the will of God,
 That such misfortune turned from his head!

But now, protected by the walls of Treves,
That many a month a siege could brave, how can
He fear so speedy a fall?

Knt. Oh, sir, how long
Could the supplies for such a garrison
Hold out in a besieged town? But 'tis
Not that alone. Part of the townsmen—this
Our master knows from intercepted letters—
Is grumbling for Franciscus. E'en the better
Ones hard grow to control, when day and night
They're frequent called to take their posts of danger.
As I was leaving, he was making ready
The town with burning shot to assail; nor could
It many storms with ease withstand.—But, Sir,
I also good news have. I tidings bring
From Philip, Hess's landgrave, visited
By me in Darmstadt, on the self-same errand.
The noble Prince's cheek glowed red with rage,
When he his ally's stress heard of. Before
The sixth sun in the sea has dipped, he swore
His army forth to lead. An equal force
From you he expects. The place you are to name
Where both the forces are to meet, thence jointly
To Treves' relief set forth.

Lud. [*Hesitating.*] Equip a force
Upon so short a notice—have you thought
Of that—it is impossible! Moreover—

Knt. Oh, do not hesitate, your Grace! Think of
The treaties! Mind that ev'ry hour may *that*
Bring on that nevermore could altered be.

Lud. I'll gladly do all that I can. I'll send
Another company to aid you.

Knt. Oh!
And do you hasten that it timely may
Arrive to join the feast of Treves' sad wake?

[*After a short pause—during which the Elector has walked
the room up and down, steeped in thought—with a bitter
tone.*]

With half-help nothing could be done; your whole
Force, Sir, alone can stand. The Hessian emulate!
An army call around you; jointly march
To Treves with Philip, else the town will fall
In ruins. You soon could not, what now you can!

Lud. [*Stopping still, and to himself in deep agitation.*]
 'Gainst Franz an army shall I lead?—That were
 A fight for life and death! He never that
 Would pardon—nor I him, if e'er I go so far!
 Let Philip do so—and not me—if with
 His Luth'ran conscience he can reconcile the act!
 Me other duties bind. Franz! Franz! So far
 Shall I the years-long love, the troth forget
 That you and your house—before my eyes
 The bloody specter rises of Schweickhardt,
 Your father, warning with his head—

Knt. [*Pressing.*] Decide,
 Sir! While we speak the leaden dice fall heavy,
 Cast by the God of War upon devoted Treves.

Lud. [*With positiveness.*]
It can not be! You ask th' impossible.
 The Hessian will suffice. I'll reinforcements send,
 And—*that is all* that I am able to.

Knt. It then is o'er, and great events will yet
 This year's sun look down upon. Inevitably.
 Is verified Franciscus' word.

[*Turns to go.*]

Lud. What word?

Knt. Within St. Wendel's walls the prime nobility
 Of Treves itself intrenchèd had. There were
 Bruno von Schmidtburg, Waldecker von Keimt,
 Otto von Ketting, and good many more—
 The pillars of th' archbishopric, pledged solemnly
 The place to hold, though they with it went down.
 In vain did twice the knight a storm essay;
 He's beaten back by their heroic stand.
 But hotter still, inflamed with furious rage,
 Franciscus rushes on, and, at the third
 Attack, like glass he breaks both wall and men.
 As, then, within th' Archbishop's burg he stood,
 Surrounded by his military chiefs,
 And the long train of captured nobles filed
 Before him, grief-bent casting down their eyes,
 The moment's bubbling arrogance forced to
 His lips his otherwise well-guarded heart.
Ye Sirs! he cried, *Look happier at th' event!*
A Prince you have, who, when it please him, has
Of wealth an ampleness to ransom you;

*Yet when—which, as you see, is on the way—
Decked with th' Electoral purple, himself then
Franciscus steps into the Seven's ranks,
And you his banner then will follow—then
The change will profit only bring to you!*

Lud. [*Greatly excited.*]

Franciscus in the Seven's rank? What? He
Said that?

Knt. He did on my salvation, Sir:—

Aye ev'ry lansquenet in Franz's camp
Swears loud his Lord will an Elector be—*or more!*

Lud. Farewell, irresolution! Banished is
Regard for all my other sentiments!
Franciscus! Does your bold ambition vault
So high as at th' Elect'ral purple aim?
Th' Elect'ral hat upon a head so turbulent?
My just suspicion rightly guided me.
Was *that* the purpose of the Landau gath'ring?
Oh, never, Franz! Now action is in time.
To Philip quickly fly; tell him from me
The treaties we concluded shall be observed;
Upon the spot my whole force shall I move;
Shall send him word where to connect with me.
He should remember ev'ry minute tells.
Speed! Speed away!

[*To his private Secretary.*]

A fresh horse furnish him.

Away, Sir Knight! Upon the storm's wings ride!

Knt. [*Bowing.*]

All hail to you, my Prince! Such gladsome news
Transforms me to an arrow. Place on that your trust!

[*Exit with the private secretary in great hurry.*]

Lud. The German *Brutus* people call you, Franz;

It now will ascertain'd be whether
You are *that* Brutus that victorious drove
Off Tarquin, or the one that, vainly manned,
Was in the end, his own life forced to take.

[*Exit precipitately.*]

SCENE II.—*Sickingen's camp before Treves.* COUNTS WILHELM VON
FURSTENBERG, EITELFRITZ VON ZOLLERN and HARTMUTH VON
KRONBERG enter. Later FROWIN VON HUTTEN.

Zol. I tell you we shall storm the town this day

For the last hours, Franz has riding been,
In semi-circle all along the walls.

Furs. It would too early be a repetition.

Zol. Perhaps it is to keep the priestly paunches
In perfect exercise. It never is
Too soon for me to start upon a storm.

Kron. To him who battles for his God, the heart
Is ne'er so light as when he ramparts scales.

[*Trumpets are heard from a distance.*]

Furs. Hark! Heard you that?

[*The trumpets repeat the signal louder.*]

It sounds like war's salute,

As if new squadrons marching came in camp.

Zol. Lo! Hither hastens towards us a knight.

Kron. It is Frowin!

[*Frowin von Hutten enters.*]

We greet you, friend in camp!

All. [*Drawing near.*]

God's greeting to you, Frowin von Hutten!

Frow. Thanks! Greeting to you. Sirs!

[*They shake hands.*]

Furs.

You come at last!

You soon had come too late; but yet in time.

Frow. How mean you that?

Furs.

In sev'ral ways. Had not

Sombreff his orders broke, you now had found

Us in possession of the town. It was

A stupid slip.

Zol.

That matters not. Howe'er

The sweetheart bar the door, she still believes.

Furs. I grant. But much blood had it saved us.

Kron. The blood that in God's honor flows, the lap

Of earth does fructify, and hallows our life.

Zol. And how would Frowin, not have grieved, had he

Too late arrived to dance!

Frow.

Not earlier could

I come. The company's equipment held

Me long. But how stand things? I crave to know.

Furs. Have you not yet Franciscus seen?

Frow.

I have

I met him on the hill over against

The town. His lancers' chiefs surrounded him.

He listened in great haste to my report,

To you referring me for news from him.

With him, behind, I left my cousin, and have hither hurried.

Zol. In few words the report I'll make. We've had
Two trial storms; and, if not much deceived,
You just in time are for the third attempt.

Frow. The bishop holds out well?

Zol. A full-fledged Mars.

Sticks in the priest. A pity of him! He swings
The sword as if it were a holy-water sprinkler.

Furs. And not less well does he the firebrand;
He burns down cloisters just as a Hussite.

Frow. Cloisters, the priest?

Zol. You know the abbey of

St. Maximin, the noble structure, that
Upon an eminence, near this town rose?
Not on th' archbishopric dependent, and
Placed under the protection of the realm,
It long had roused the bishop's envious longings.

Frow. I know it well. A prime strategic spot,
For siege artillery to be set up.

Protected by its walls and courts, the town
Could from its height be swept.

Zol. Exactly so!

Now, then, two days before our own arrival, by
Sombreff allowed to slip through, th' Archbishop
Reached Treves. The first thing that he does—behold
How nicely Hate and Wisdom joinèd hands
To suit the priest—is, mindless of the cry
Raised by the monks, the abbey to tear down.
'Twas plundered. My bald-crowns were left free to
Remove to Treves. In war's accoutrement,
The firebrand in his own hand, the priest
In person led the work of demolition.

Furs. One of his mounted men quite worshipful
The torch took from his hand—*Your Worship*, said
The man, *leave that to me, whom better, than
To such a pious man, becomes the work of arson!*
[*They laugh.*]

Zol. That happened so! And what the fire did
Not burn the pick demolished. Just as with
The vanguard we arrived, the priest withdrew.
We only ruins found.

Frow. By that I Richard recognize!

Furs. You've heard from us. 'Tis now your turn for news,
How does it stand with Albrecht? Let us know!
Will he with open forces Franz support?

Frow. Oh, quite impossible, just now! What secretly
He can, that will he gladly do, and will
Continue doing; openly, however—
For that it is too early. I myself,
The racking doubts beholding that his mind
Assailed, stepped up to him and said—*Sir, I
Return to you the seal I hold; I have
In all Franciscus' feuds participated,
And mean to do so now again, but not
As your Grandmaster and your Chamberlain.—*
With his large eyes he looked me kindly in
The face and said—*Frowin, you are quite right;
You know, I open keep your place, both at
My court and heart!*

Furs. Does Franz know that? 'Twill grieve him sore!

Frow. It did not so. *We need him not*, said he
With calm indifference.

Zol. And he is right!
I think so too. We do not stand in need of him.

Frow. Then, with his shrewd smile said—*Th' Elector of
Mayence will banquet but not cook with us!
For all that yet his place I'll honor at the feast.*

Kron. [*Stepping to the rear.*]
There's Franz approaching.

Zol. Yes, indeed, and weighty tidings
It seems he brings. He is accompanied
By all the captains of the army.

SCENE III.—FRANZ with ULRICH VON HUTTEN and captains of the
army, among them FRITZ SOMBREFF. *The former.*

Franz. I greet you, dear Sirs!

All. Franciscus, hail to you!

Franz. My noble Sirs, I come your views to take—
Shall we, to-day, a third time try a storm?

[*A single trumpet sounds without. All listen.*]

What was that?

Furs. On my soul, it sounded like
The signal for a parley.

Zol. Surely, not

The priest seeks to negotiate?

A Lansquenet. [*Entering.*] Sir, an
Imperial herald has arrived. He brings,
Says he, a mandate from the Emperor.

Franz. Then lead him hither!

[*Exit Lansquenet.*]

Once more shall I hear
The fiddle scratch of th' old régime—but then,
For the last time!

SCENE IV.—*HERALD preceded by the lansquenet. The former.*

Her. Whom, here, do I greet as Franz von Sickingen?

Franz. You stand before him.

Her. Franz von Sickingen

In th' Emperor's and Reichstag's name, I have
A double mandate to announce—to you,
As well as to your army.

Franz To the end
That you may see the answer you'll receive
Proceeds, not from my orders, but the breasts
Themselves of these free men—

[*To the lansquenet.*] The captains of
My army call together, that each one
Himself may hear what him concerns.

Zol. We're now assembled.

Her. Captains!

Franz Herald, hold!

You presently shall have the floor.

[*Steps towards the group of captains standing opposite.*]

Where is

My Joerg von Augsburg?

Augs. [*Stepping forward.*] Sir!

Franz. Draw nearer, Joerg!

[*Whispers to him; Joerg nods; then louder to Joerg.*]

And when you're ready, let the trumpets blow;

The martial music shall my signal be.

[*Joerg withdraws with rapid steps. Franz steps again to the
center where he had stood before.*]

Now, Herald, speak! Your message now commence.

Her. Ye Counts, ye Nobles, Knights and Captains, all

Of th' army that encamped is before Treves!

Thus speaks the Emp'ror Charles through me, this day:—

Revolt, and riot and a breach of peace

Is this war that Franciscus has involved
 You in; against the realm's decrees; against
 The Golden Bull and prescripts, issued by
 Imperial Majesty. Therefore commands
 The Emperor that forthwith to your homes
 You back shall march, and back into its scabbard
 Your wrath-inflamèd swords return. Then will
 He extend to you both grace and pardon. But
 If not, the Reichstag's ban will fall on you—
 Not merely heavy punishment in limb
 And goods—no! If still further Franz's flag
 You follow, then your heads will fall!—Thus swears
 The Emperor.

[*Commotion among the knights and captains.*]

Franz. You've heard the threat of Charles.

Zol. We heard it, and to you shall faithful bide.

All. We follow Franz. His banner we will follow.

Zol. [*To Herald.*]

Go back and say that in Franciscus' camp
Men and not *milksops* you have found.

All. Hail, Franz, to you! We'll follow you till death!

Her. I now, Franciscus, turn my face to you!

The Emperor reminds you of his old
 Affection; he reminds you of the grace
 That he has e'er extended unto you.

You shall forthwith withdraw the army that
 Assails his nephew and this sacred place.

If not, upon you too the ban will fall,
 And forfeiture of his Imperial grace.

And if against th' Elector you have just
 Cause of complaint, the realm's courts shall forthwith—

Himself Charles vouches therefor—to you

Full justice do. Thus runs my message. Weigh
 It well. I anxiously your answer wait.

Franz. Go, herald, and unto your Lord announce:—

Gone by is now the time for words! Upon
 The Gate of Time, with iron knuckles loud,
 And big with fate, the hour decisive strikes.
 This realm lies prostrate in convulsions. No
 Nice flourishes of law can now the strife allay,
 That shakes its frame!—Look yonder, herald! Do
 You see yon pile of muskets and of cartridges?
 From *their* throats such times as these their law

Tempestuous draw. In *my own* camp stands raised
 The realm's high judgment seat. Myself I'll found
 A powerful *new* order, and will dare
 A deed to do——

Ne'er yet by Roman Emperor attempted!

[*The herald turns to go; at that moment martial music sounds without.*]

Hold, herald, take your answer to the end!
 Hear you the bugles blow and trumpets bray?
 They summon us—you, Sirs—to storm the walls!
 Th' arrival of the herald served, in lieu
 Of martial council, quick the time to wink away.
 Few hours more, and, herald, back to Charles
 You'll take the greeting that *from* Treves Franz sends to him.

[*Draws his sword.*]

And now, Sirs, to the storm!

All. [*Drawing their swords.*] Aye to the storm!

Franz. Let *Luther* and *Franciscus* be the cry;
 Myself will the first ladder place against the wall.

Somb. [*Stepping forward.*]

No, Sir! Allow that I the heavy debt
 Now pay that weighs upon my breast. Mine be
 The boon of the first ladder, Sir. Let me
 Atone this day for what I did amiss.
 If *not*, believe me, *alive* I'll not return.

Franz. [*Somberly.*]

I grant it, *Sombreff*. Many brothers' blood
 Lies heavy upon your life; 'tis thine no more;
 Go dash it 'gainst the walls of Treves. That which
 Both sides now lose is gain—to you and us.
 And now, Sirs, to the storm! The sun goes down
 In blood. Oh, may her morning rays find us in Treves!

All. On, to the storm! On! *Luther* and *Franciscus*!

[*Exeunt all.*]

SCENE V.—*Market-place in Treves. It is night. The town burns in several places. The scene is lighted by the distant conflagrations. The bells are ringing. From time to time, the roar of cannon and crush of balls is heard. Women flee wringing their hands, and dragging their children after them, or carrying them in their arms.*

1st Woman. Oh, heaven! Ruined am I!

2nd Woman. [*Rushing in with a child in her arms.*]

Save yourselves!

The en'my's forcing in the Koritz gate!

3rd Woman. [*Rushing in with a little girl and distractedly looking round.*]

Fritz! Fritz! Where are you, Fritz! Oh, Jesus, Maria!
My child! My child!

[*Rushes back in the direction whence she came. From several sides crowds of townsmen enter tumultuously and grumbling, and armed with pikes, swords and battle-axes.*]

1st Town. We can hold out no longer.

One half the town is burning.

2nd Town. One hour more,

The foe will take the Simeon church. Depend on that.

3rd Town. The foe? What priestly cant is that you talk!

Is, then, Franciscus your foe, or mine?

His proclamation solemnly declares

He none fights but the priest. No townsman shall
In body suffer or in limb.

4th Town. Indeed, it is the doings of the priest

That we with blood and wealth are paying for.

3rd Town. Meseems, a stupid trade we ply to fight.

Against our interests, and to uphold

The priest's oppression.

Several Voices. Yes 'tis so! 'Tis true!

Other Voices. No! No! No!

4th Town. Silence! No dissensions here!

This much is sure. What Franz's 'gainst Richard has

Does not concern the town. Why, then, does not

His Worship with his nobles go outside,

And settle in the open field his feud

With Franz? Why does he, instead, defend himself

With our houses, that in flames go up?

Make *us* the scape-goats of his private quarrel?

Who of you is so priest-daft that he'd gladly,

In the bald-crown's quarrel, house and home, and wife

And child, and his own life to boot, fling in

The flames?

All. No! None!

Several Voices. We'll to the Bishop go!

SCENE VI.—*Enters the ELECTOR-ARCHBISHOP RICHARD with COUNT Solms, followed by a guard of lansquenets. The Archbishop is in*

full armor, his bare sword in his hand and helmet on head; over his armor the episcopal pallium.

Arch. I tell you, Solms, beset am I with traitors;
At my own table sit these men—

[Notices the crowd of townsmen, and steps towards them, who at his approach, draw back timid and grumbling.]

What do you here? Why not upon the walls?
Is this a time to rest, your wide mouths fetch
Together? Off, with you! And quickly go!

[Hollow murmur from the crowd of townsmen.]

Several Voices. The town no longer can hold out!

Arch. Who grumbles?

4th Town. Worshipful Sir! Our property in vain
Goes up in flames. We think, if with the knights
Your worship would betake himself outside
The gates, and there offer to give battle,
That would preserve from total demolition
Your Worship's faithful town. The victory
Could surely not choose but fall upon
Your sanctified arms.

All. Yes, leave the town!

Arch. Ye pack of traitors! Lashes shall you have,
To take away your taste for mutiny.

SCENE VII.—*At the moment when the Archbishop rushes at the crowd of receding townsmen, a captain enters with a squad of soldiers dragging in a Sickingen lansquenet. The former.*

Capt. *[To Archbishop.]*

Sir Archbishop! This lansquenet we took.
With our slings we pulled him off the wall.
He might disclose the en'my's plans and strength.

Arch. *[To the lansquenet.]*

You've heard what's wanted. If your life you love
The information give. Step in my ranks.

Lans. I rather die in Franz's grace, than live
In Treves a priest's puppet.

A Soldier. Then die, you dog!

[Stabs the lansquenet. A pause.]

Arch. Remove that corpse!

[The captain and soldiers withdraw with the corpse of the lansquenet and the Archbishop proceeds addressing the townsmen.]

To you I say: that corpse
 A warning be to you. A corpse I'll make
 Whome'er suspicious acts. Now, to the walls!

3rd Town. [*Whispering to the 4th townsman.*]

Be careful; anger him not now—I'll tell
 You more. We'll in the end enforce our plan.

Arch. At your gates, the best nobility
 Is freely shedding from its princely veins
 The ruddy stream of life, and *you* would save
 Your low, plebeian blood? Would spare your mean
 Existence when the fight is raging for
 The holy things of earth? The pious monk
 Himself, in sword-craft inexpert, his hands,
 To prayer only usèd, puts to work,
 Himself, self-sacrificing, in the jaws
 Of death he throws, fights for his faith and God—
 And you will think but of your earthly goods?

[*Approaching from a distance is heard a choral song of monks singing the first strophe of a hymn.*]

CHORAL. FIRST STROPHE.

*Spe mercedis et coronae
 Stetis martyr in agone
 Ad mortem obediens
 Morte Christum imitatus
 Fide firmus et firmatus
 Firmo greffu gradiens.*

Arch. [*When the strophe ends, turning again to the townsmen.*]

Behold, the pious soldiers are approaching,
 Decided, cheerful, a second wall
 To raise around the town with their brave hearts.

[*The procession of monks enters and marches across the place carrying banners and other church insignia, and singing the second strophe of the choral.*]

CHORAL. SECOND STROPHE.

*Furit furor militaris
 Ut vir sacer sacris aris
 Immoletur hostia
 Quem occidunt saevientes
 Introducunt nescientes
 Ad aeterna gaudia.*

[*At the appearance of the procession, the Archbishop and all those present fall upon their knees; singing the second strophe of the choral, the procession passes slowly over the*

place, halting now and then. After the procession has passed, the Archbishop and all the others rise.]

Arch. [Stretching out his arms in benediction.]

Rise, strengthened by the blessing from on high!

The Lord of Hosts himself fights on our side,

And parries from your head the en'my's sword;

The Holy Virgin marches on before,

She looks at you with her celestial eyes.

Blessèd who *this* day sheds his blood! Such death,

Like our Lord's own blood, the sinner's sins

And errors wipes away. The Gates of Glory

The paradise of joy, are opened wide to him

The angels meet him singing songs of praise,

And lead him to the right hand of God's throne,

Illumined by th' eternal splendor of His light!

Up, then, and to the walls! I'll lead you on.

For battle cry, invoke the Holy Virgin!

All. On to the walls! Treves and the Holy Virgin!

SCENE VIII.—*The camp before Treves.. Morning is slowly dawning.*

Lansquenets enter carrying the deadly wounded SOMBREFF; later

ULRICH VON HUTTEN.

Somb. Lay me down here. 'Tis one where I shall die.

1st Lans. 'Twill not be quite so bad, Sir Knight; I'll bring you help.

Somb. I am past hope. Return and fight your best.

[Ulrich enters with armed men.]

2nd Lans. Who comes! The pass-word—

Ulrich. Luther and Franciscus!

Somb. [Painfully raising himself on his elbow.]

You, Hutten, here?

Ulrich. Fritz Sombreff! Wounded sore?

Somb. To death!

Ulrich. Poor friend! Your promise well you've kept!

Somb. How stands the fight? Oh, let me know!

Ulrich. Still undecided

The scales are trembling! Hither from

The Mosel gate I come, where we the foe's

Terrific sally bloodily repelled.

Before his men th' Archbishop himself fought;

At him dashed Franz, whose lightning sword, the priest

Pursuing, and whom Mars snatched off, mowed down

Relentlessly the thick-set ranks of the

Resisting foe! But, now, farewell! I hasten

Towards the Simeon gate, where Franz, the town
 There closely pressing, has upon his hands
 The en'my's heaviest force. Farewell, and do
 Not take it ill if now I leave you alone,
 Obedient to war's barbarous behest.

Somb. Oh, but one moment more, with a few words
 Be pleased to soothe my life's last breath! How stood
 Thinks at the Koritz gate? A rumor flew
 Across the ranks that it had taken been!

Ulrich. There, Death's own image, black von Zollern,
 The club swings that in his hands fully out-does
 The scythes of two of th' en'my's most deadly reapers.
 As he his men against the wall was leading,
 Upon th' assailants' heads fell such a stream
 Of boiling oil and melted lead, that loud
 The men yelled, dropped the ladder, and fled back.
 Yet he, with not a call their flight rewarding,
 As if alone he meant to take the town,
 The heavy ladder lifts, and up its rungs
 With rapid strides he climbs. At such a sight,
 The men are seized with shame, that hotter burned
 Than melted fire; they turn about and dash
 After their leader. Wounded in the right,
 In his left hand he takes the sword and fights
 On as before. The ladder breaks beneath
 His closely following men, that forward pressed
 To second him—but all the while I speak
 The minutes flee.—Hark! Signals— Heard you that?

[*A long drawn signal sounds from afar.*]

Somb. They're sounding a retreat! The storm is stopped—
 Let with it end the remnant of this life.
 [*Falls back and dies.*]

SCENE IX.—FRANZ and suite, later FURSTENBURG, ZOLLERN, FROWIN,
 AUGSBURG and other captains and knights.

Franz. The generals call hither! Rest we of
 The storm, that breathless all night long has raged.

[*Exit several men; he notices Ulrich.*]

You, Ulrich, here!

[*Embraces him.*] I felt concerned for you,
 When from each other, driven by the wave
 Of rushing men, you tumbled were upon
 Their bloody arms. You see, the grim priest will

Not cheaply part with his Elect'ral hat.

[*Enters the generals sent for.*]

I greet you, Sirs! A circle make around me.
 The morning's pale light breaks, and rest require
 The wholly exhausted troops, who, without let,
 Have eight long hours through pools of blood been wading,
 And 'gainst the town's walls dashed themselves. I, hence,
 Have torn you from your mowing labors, here
 To council take, whether forthwith, upon
 A short rest's respite, we the battle shall
 Resume, or shall defer till our cannons
 A wider path have broke. Ye captains and
 Ye nobles of this army, speak your minds
 As freely as becomes a chief to speak.

Zol. [*With his right hand in a sling, his sword in his left.*]

I am for storming!—'Twere a shame if we
 This night should fail to rest and sleep in Treves

Furs. Sir, softly! Anger carries you away.

'Tis coolness that befits a gen'ral's council.
 The storm was ordered much too soon; too firm—
 We've found it out—are still the stubborn walls;
 We vainly sacrifice our men; the town
 Can now no more escape our hands; but yet
 The cannons' fiery pounding needed is
 To soften her, and in her heart the way
 To clear for our storm's successful issue.

Frow. And so think I. The town is lost. But only if
 The way we break for our assault, obedient to
 The settled rules of siege.

Zol. The sword breaks ways
 To him that knows to wield it.

Augs. Sirs, allow
 That now I venture in this council of
 The army's chiefs the word to take. You know
 Me, Sir! I fought the battles of the realm,
 With th' Emp'ror Max I camped in Welschland,
 I stood—

Franz. We all know you, my sturdy Joerg,
 You are the army's chief of ordnance, and
 Since wars I've waged, none better do I know.

Augs. Well, then, now listen—
 So long as we no breach into the walls
 Have shot, you vainly dash your army's head

Against the bulwark. It is much too strong,
 Its garrison too large, and it is too
 Well generalled! Of these *three*, two we might
 O'ercome, not all the three *combined*. Impossible!
 And now, Sir knight, if my advice you'll take,
 I pledge myself, before eight days have run
 Their course, and simply by my ordnance now
 Upon but few points centering, to ope
 Two breaches in the town—the North gate and
 The West—Give then the order for the storm!
 The town will helpless at you mercy fall
 Into your warm victorious arms.

A Lansquenet.

My general!

This minute, while myself and others three
 Stood sentinel along the bastion, from
 Within the walls an arrow flew and fell
 At our feet. We found a note attached
 To th' arrow, and this inscription did it bear:—
To the most puissant knight, Franciscus.

Franz. [To Joerg.]

From th' arrow cut and read the note to us.

Aug. [Reading.]

“Worshipful Sir Knight! It is a friend who writes to you, and if he is not your friend, he would be your enemy, which, may God stand by me, is like saying an enemy of himself and of every honorable Christian, and a friend of these thick-skinned, money-greedy, man-skinning priests, whom he loves as much as your bullets love them when, out of sympathy, your bullets walk into their bodies in front, and, out of antipathy, walk out again at their backs, a magnificent spectacle, that he will never forget it was you, may God reward you therefor, who to-day furnished him several times. If you take the town, and your Grace deigns him the favor, he requests that you may carry it out upon the bald-crowns whom you have sentenced to be hanged, and to execute it upon those whom, perhaps, you mean to let go. Now, to the point. You have friends in the town, and people who are favorable. But it is still too early. You must curb your impatience, and be nicely quiet for a while. Because the garrison is still too numerous, and the papists are still making too much of an outcry. But the burghers have not yet the necessary courage. But if you shoot down their houses eight days longer, you will bring it to a favorable issue. Therefore, have patience, Sir Knight, because every ball that falls in here carries away one of

your enemies, and makes you one more friend. You will hear further from me, and I am negotiating about a little gate. When a week is over, you will become personally acquainted with me, and do not then forget my favor!"

[General laughter among all present.]

An eloquent epistle!

Zol. Quite an assiduous knave!

Franz. You're all agreed to a postponement?

All. Yes, we are!

Franz. Thus, with or without letter—this a ruse
Of th' enemy may be—'tis my view also.
Return the army to its old positions;
With increased force the murd'rous cannonade
We shall renew.

Aug. Aye, Sir; but 'tis the third
Time, now, I warn you that we powder lack.
You promised sev'ral days ago th' arrival
Of fresh kegs, ordered by you from Landstuhl.
'Tis pressing, the supply can last but few days more.

Franz. Joerg, worry not! I know not how it happens
The transport is so long in coming. But
To-day it surely will arrive. Meantime,
No powder spare!

SCENE X.—*A lansquenet followed by two messengers; the former.*

Lans. Two messengers have, Sir,
Just now arrived, with hurried news for you.

First Mes. [Stepping forward.]
Sir, blame me not if now I bring to you
Unwelcome news. The knight of Renneberg,
Who in Cleves and Julich men for you recruited,
Has sent me here. An edict of the duke,
That threatens loss of fief and life to him
Who joins your forces, quickly checked the flood
That poured into the knight's encampment. Dashed
Against that dam, that broke their further increase,
The raw recruits lost courage and dispersed.

2nd Mess. The same thing I report to you from Limburg,
Westphalia and the district of Cologne,
In all of which, with equal threats, th' Archbishop
Prevents th' escape of riders to your camp.

[Indignation among the nobles.]

Franz. [Scornfully.]

Behold how expeditiously and harmonious
 Are all at once these Princes, otherwise
 So wrangling and deliberative! Why,
 It borders on a miracle! I barely
 This good sword from its sheath have drawn, to pound
 Them into one, and—not since stands the realm
 I such a case recall!—lo, smilingly
 My wishes granting, there they come and hop
 To meet me!—Such a willingness is half
 The victory; deserves to be recorded.
 My thanks for your *good tidings!*

[*Exit messengers, and Franz turns to the captains and knights.*]

Who of you
 Needs sharers in fame and booty? Who
 So poorly holds himself as to believe
 He's not enough?

All [*Enthusiastically.*]

Not one! Franz,, thrice enough

Are we so long your spirit guides our arms!

Franz. My thanks!

Frow. [*Almost simultaneously.*]

Who's that, with rapid steps approaching?

His roaming eyes denotes he looks for someone.

Horseman. [*Enters in haste.*]

You are Franciscus! Sir, I recognize you!
 I'm one of Michael Minckwitzk' riders, who
 From Brunswick marchèd with a company
 Of horse and fifteen hundred foot, whom he
 For you recruited. Unexpectedly
 We're fall'n upon, with overpowering force,
 By Philip, Hesse's landgrave; scatters us
 Apart; arrests the knight Minckwitz himself;
 And takes our chest.—I rode my horse to death
 To bring you timely notice.

Franz. [*Aside to Joerg.*]

Badly seem

The sentinels their duty to conceive,
 That they lead not these messengers aside
 Into my tent. It is not well that here,
 Before th' assembled captains of my army
 This chase of messengers of evil penetrates
 To me.—

[Exit Joerg and returns shortly; Franz proceeds addressing the horseman.]

I doubt not your great haste. Had you but stood
As firmly as you *ran*, you would have back
To Darmstadt whimp'ring sent the baby Philip.

Hors. The bringer of bad news must ever ready be
To have his hearer's anger fall upon
His head. And yet I must increase it still
With still worse news: with forcèd marches hither
Himself the landgrave Philip's hastening
To Treves' relief.

[Commotion among the nobles and captains.]

Franz. Ye, Sirs, victory!

[To the horseman.]

You are a cunning fellow, who the bad
Beginning of his tale knows good again
To make with its conclusion's golden words!
A horse and better weapons furnish him.

[To the nobles.]

In vain I studiously was seeking how
To entice th' Archbishop from the town. We now
May trust, does Philip come, he could no more
Contain himself within! To help the helper,
The priest will venture in the open field.
One blow will then destroy them *both*, provided
Our swords are still the same, and opes the town
To us.

Frow. *[Impetuously drawing his sword.]*

Hail, Franz, 'Gainst Philip lead us! Vict'ry

Is by your banner us assured.

All. *[With swords up.]*

Hail, Franz!

Kurt. *[Outside.]*

Keep *me* back from my master? Me, who these
Four days have racing been with minutes swift
To find him so much sooner? Lumb'ring scamp!

[Enters dragging in two lansquenets who seek to keep him back, and whom he finally throws off; he drops at Franz's feet with all the signs of exhaustion.]

Oh, dear master!—Finally I have you!

Franz. How, Kurt? Is't you? What brings you here? I left you
At Landstuhl, charged with Balthasar the burg

To keep. What do you here? Come, Kurt, speak up!

Kurt. *[Gasping for breath.]*

Sir, right away—wait—can no more—I am
No longer the old Kurt—'tis now four days—
I have become a grey hound—

Franz. Bring a cup
Of wine to brace him up.

Kurt. A new lung, rather—
I wish they'd fetch me—Sir—the old one, much
I fear—I ran—to pieces—

[*A lansquenet fetches a goblet; Kurt seizes it with both
hands and drains it at one gulp.*]

Ah, e'en new lungs

Reside in bumpers!

Franz. Now! Will you now speak?

Kurt. Yes, Sir—at Landstuhl, as you said, you left me,
With Balthasar o'er me. He joined me to
The convoy that the powder kegs conveyed
To you.

Franz. And what delayed the transport? Speak!

Kurt. We had not gone a full day's march, when us,
In peace—and without warning of a feud—
The palsgrave fell upon, and all the kegs
As booty took—

Franz. [*Enraged.*] The palsgrave did you say?
Thou liest, man!

Kurt. I, lie, Sir? Hear me further!
He threw us down; made us his prisoners;
But that's not all, Sir! At the head of a
Strong army he is hast'ning hither 'gainst
You. Three days more, and he'll be where now
I stand. He dragged us bound behind him. But
I managed to escape. I ran myself to death,
To bring you timely warning. Wait you here—
You'll then see whether 'tis a lie.

Franz. [*Who listened with utter indignation and with consternation,
to Ulrich.*]

That, *that* went to my heart!—Of all the princes,
Him only did I love, to him alone
My heart beat trustingly. In *blood* the bonds
Of steel were tempered that united him
To me. A rebel for his sake against
Th' Imperial Majesty, and out of *loyalty*
To him, my father braved the scaffold: him
To shield, his noble head laid down upon

The block. The loyalty, baptizèd in
 My father's blood, I sacredly preserved:—
 And thus the son of Schweickhardt he rewards;
 Rewards *me* thus! Of all things but for *that*
 Was I prepared! Him only as a foe
 I ne'er believed to see.—

Now, shattered lie my plans! With one fell blow
 Both human kindness and the ingenuity
 Of man are crushèd by vile Princes' pride!

[*While Ulrich embraces him with deepest sympathy, he steps
 back into the ranks, where, since Kurt's report, murmurs
 and commotion had increased.*]

Furs. Meseems the game puts on an ugly face.

We're lost if here for them we longer wait.

Frow. No more so than if we retreat: if we

Retreat, th' Elector surely will pursue us.

Zol. You may depend, that he will surely do.

Frow. Pursued, surrounded by a triple army—

How would you your retreat effect? What say you

Zol. I? I say not a word! Escape I see

As little as yourself.

Franz. [*Who has stood the while with his arms crossed, again steps
 forward.*]

Who says we're lost?

Aye, what's lost? Are you men or worshippers

At strumpet Fortune's shrine? Wilt woo her when

She smiles, and tremble at her fickle frown?

The strong man forces her, a slave unto

His will, her willing smile to give again.

Not at the *end*, we stand here at the *start*

Of our power and our purposes.

A triple army threatens us—aye, *worse*,

The want of powder. Yes, we must decamp.

I'll lead you through the mountain steeps, and bring

You safe behind the foe. Woe to him,

Who'd dare my retreat to bar! To save

His army is a general's first duty.

Your minds you may make free; encroach not on

Franciscus' cares and office. Once the foe

The slip we've given, I'll disband the bulk

Of th' army—

Furs. What! Disband the army while

Those three remain in arms against yourself?

Franz. How could I such an army winter in my burgs?
 Or should I quarter them upon my friends,
 And thus, before the struggle is begun,
 Consume their means? Besides, it does not press
 This year. Winter's breaking in. They'll ne'er
 At such a season, dare the Ebernburg
 To approach. Before, howe'er, the army I
 Disband, the pledge I'll take from all the captains
 That, with the first rays of the spring's warm sun,
 Equipped, and strengthened with new levies, all
 The squadrons they shall lead back in my camp.

Furs. But what propose you with the palsgrave to—

Franz. Twelve noble youths upon their swords' point shall
 To him from Sickingen the challenge bear—
 Renounce my further fealty to him.

[*To Ulrich*]

You, Ulrich, I will send to mighty Zurich,
 Whose brave confederates their help have long
 Been proffering to me, if ever needed.
 I need it now! There, where you loved and honored
 Are, press the proffered help. Lead to my burgs
 Strong files of yon axe-wielding, brave reserves.

[*To the knights.*]

With you I shall a day appoint at Schweinfurt;
 Assemble there with your kith and kin;
 The whole nobility I will convene
 To a conference. It is for you now true
 To prove that which at Landau you did swear.
 Our federation's members all must arm themselves;
 To arms I'll call the Nation's full knighthood!

All. Rely on us; as on yourself you would!

Franz. A trial only was this slight campaign.
 Next year we'll execute the final work!
 Exposed is now the hand of our foes.
 A clear line now parts enemy from friend.
 The vict'ry's ours, provided true to you
 Your former valor keeps. We *now* our full
 Strength will deploy, and did not so before.
 The winter for recruiting utilize—
 A signal unto all the new sun be.
 The first breath of returning spring shall both
 Of winter's ice and tyrants' chain emancipate
 Our country's soil.—The new year brings a Nation new.

All. The new year, hail! and hail your steady fortune!

[*The curtain closes.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A vaulted and strongly constructed tower-chamber in the burg of Landstuhl, which is closely besieged by the confederated Princes—the Palsgrave Ludwig, the Landgrave Philip and the Archbishop Richard. FRANZ is in an arm-chair, in full armor but without helmet. A few steps behind him, BALTHASAR engaged in reading letters and indicting messages in cipher. At the opposite end of the chamber, the knight of RUDESHEIM at a table with a bumper of wine before him. MARIE enters and leaves the chamber in the course of household duties. From time to time, the booming of cannon is heard.*

Rud. [*Rising and violently laying down the bumper of wine that he had carried to his lips.*]

Abominable! E'en the wine no longer tastes!
And justly so! When out the spark of manhood goes
Fidelity, the country's wine, may well to gall
Be turned, this craven generation's joys of life
Embitter.

Franz. Oh, Rudesheim! Slander not
Our friends until their fault is manifest.

Rud. How can it clearer be? Is not our plight
Sufficient proof? The crashing of the foe's
Besieging guns? And this last hole, that ill
Could long protect us from their murd'rous shot?

Franz. You know, much earlier did the foe appear
Than I myself expected him to see.
Our friends have no suspicion of our plight.

Rud. If th' enemy's hate could be beforehand, why
Should not the zeal of our friends? Besides,
Have you not letter upon letter plied,
In cipher neatly framed by Balthasar?

Balth. Not all the letters safely reach their destination,
And quicker does the foe's suspicious eye
A runner's cloak see through than he the foe's
Besieging army could run through.

Rud. Nonsense!
Since long has spring set in. Of their own

Accord they long ago should here have been.

Franz. Indeed, from day to day have I relief
Expected, both from them, and from the troops
I ordered to recruit.

Rud. 'Tis now a full
Eight days you've nursed these hopes; but this is clear
To me, no second week you'll have to wait:
We may before that time be buried 'neath
The ruins of this tower. Strong it is,
But still, not at the Ebernburg are we,
The indomitable fort! They there might long
Have shot; nor could they there ever thus
Have hemmed us in——

[*A frightful crash is heard over the roof of the tower; all
except Franz start up alarmed.*]

Hark! Hark!

[*Anxiously inspecting the roof.*]

How long think you——

Before these blocks of stone will roll upon
Us down, and nine-pins play upon our heads?

Franz. [*Rising and walking through the chamber with his arms
crossed, and muttering to himself.*]

'Tis true! In all my life I have not heard
Such frightful cannonade! Not even in
Th' imperial wars was anything like this.

Rud. And heaven only knows whence they have dragged
So many pieces of artillery.

Franz. Within so short a time, so closely pressed
To be in such a fortified place——

I never would have thought it! Much it looks,
Besides, as if some spirit in each ball
Did lodge—as though they accurately knew
Each secret of the burg. Its weakest spots
The cannons ever hit. This is remarkable!

[*Stops meditatively.*]

Balth. The devil fights for his own ministers.

Rud. [*Clenching his fist.*]

With rage I boil! To think we here must lie
A target for their shot, while in the field
We could ourselves the crew knock in a heap!

Franz. [*Resumes his seat.*]

Be still! And should the tower fall, we then

Shall in the rock-groove safety find.

Rud. So that
Like an entrappèd toad they drag you from
The heap of stone? Well may you free of blame
Our friends pronounce! The largest share *yourself*
Do bear. Upon yourself more hot alights
The rage that boils within my veins.

Franz. On me?

Rud. You understand me well! Is it myself
I care for? Upon *your* freedom, on
Your safety all depended. With you stands
Or falls our federation. Yours the blame
For our distress! I speak not now of your
Untimely magnanimity when all
The friends, that now have left you in the lurch,
With th' army you disbanded. No! But here,
In Landstuhl, lock yourself instead of in
Your strongest fort, the Ebernburg—

Franz. [*Almost angrily.*] You know,
The enemy surprised me here—

Rud. *Surprised?*
With still a half day in which to move, before
The en'my's cavalry appeared upon
The forest's skirts, three hundred men
Did you dismiss, lest space and rations failed
Ourselves. Oh, how I begged you to withdraw
With them! In fullest safety could you then
Have gone—but you—

Franz. [*With an effort.*] *Disgraceful* had it been
From such a strong place in the en'my's face
To flee, without the firing of a shot!
How would it have become my place, intent
Upon myself alone, the nobles and
My trusty men, who for protection threw
Themselves into this burg, here helpless to
Forsake!

Rud. So said you then, and that it is
That I can never pardon you! What of
Such men as them and me! The only prize
Are you. Our cause would brilliantly have stood
Had you but ridden off—the burg I could
Have held as well as you.

Franz. The presence of
The general gives courage to his men,
Their veins warms with determination's fire.

Rud. E'en so! The burg I would have held, have held
As long as e'er a stone remained upon
Another. And e'en if they took it, what
Was lost? With half an army had they paid
For but a dreary heap of ruins, while
At Ebernburg you would be laughing in
Their face. They would not have to such a pass
Brought us. If free, you could yourself the friends
Have spurred. That would the laggards have inspired.
Their forces heading, now upon his rear,
You could the enemy assail.

Franz. It is
The sluggish steed that needs the rider's spur.
What stronger spur is there than the *pledged word*?

Rud. You see yourself how standeth that. What all
Was promised you! As far as from Bohemia
Were men to come. Not one has come! When then
Imploringly I urged you thither march,
Your answer was you would, when proper time
Had come. *The time has come!* Now show me how,
Unless your wings can take, the feat you could
Accomplish.

Marie. [*Entering with a goblet of wine which she presents to
Rudesheim.*]

Now, Sir Knight, I other wine
Have here. It is of our best. It will
Taste surely good, and soften your displeasure.
Please take, and drink, and vex my father not
With these reproaches.

Rud. Charming maid! Your voice
Much better than the wine drives off whate'er
Displeasure I might feel. An angel are you!
I think to you alone we owe that still
The burg refuses o'er our heads to tumble down.
It is a touching sight how, not a word
Complaining, mild and smiling, you support
The trials of the siege.

Franz. [*Nodding his daughter to come to him; she leans over and
cuddles close to her father.*]

Marie! [*Fondling her.*]
Philip!

See, now, how wrong you are! You praise bestow
On her that she remained; yet did she not
Sin grievously her father to deceive?
The day that I the mounted troops sent off,
With them I ordered her to part. But she,
Conspiring with her maid, seemed leave to take,
While one of her attendants, in her velvets,
Herself impersonated. I could not
Descend below. My time was too engaged.
She kept herself concealed; and when the foe
Appeared— [*Fondling her.*]

The impostress turned up in the evening.

Rud. And right she was. Her place is next to you—

[*A crash, produced by the enemy's cannon, heavier than before, and followed by the rush of tumbling masonry, starts all except Franz, who looks around from his seat.*]

Franz. A hard knock that one was. It cost a good
Piece of the wall. Go, Philip, see what damage
That shot has done. The rip repair quick.

Rud. [*Putting on his helmet.*] I shall do so!

[*Exit Rudesheim in haste; also Marie, silently.*]

SCENE II.—FRANZ; BALTHASAR leans back from his desk. A short pause. Franz directs upon him a long and inquiring look. Balthasar looks blankly before him.

Franz. Now, Balthasar?

Balth. Sir?

Franz. Have not you also

Some cross reproach in readiness? Your cold,

Contracted mien denotes it clearly.

Speak up—the army I disbanded, have

Before the foe not wished to flee, and have,

Who knows, what other things done wrong! Speak openly!

Cut up among yourselves the drooping lion's skin—

Of all of these, what do you blame me on?

Balth. [*Solemnly.*]

I? Nothing!

Franz. [*Rises and walks the chamber.*]

Then, indeed, must matters badly,

Aye, very badly stand with me, if now
Not even a *reproach* has Balthasar for me!

Balth. You err! To youngish fools I leave the task
To carp at things that but the sequence are
Of the once treaded path. The *path* is what
Concerns us, not the sep'rate steps, that one
By one the path compels, and, closely linked,
Contrives.

Franz. What are you driving at?

Balth. Sir, have

You any faith in death's presentiments?

Franz. Old man, what is upon your mind?

Balth. That man

His hour of death fore-feels, believe I not.
But this he does—his *deadly enemy*,
There is no creature but fore-feels instinctively—
It seems a law to be that runs through Nature,
Itself in e'en the animals asserting.
The bird, its fate fore-feeling, trembles shy
In terror at the rattlesnake's regard;
Before the hot simoon is nigh, with eyes
Shut, down upon the earth the camel throws
Himself affrighted. Still more powerful
This instinct active is in man. Unto
Your friend you must yourself reveal, and oft
In vain the friendly assurance give. Alone
The *enemy*, howe'er yourself you may
Disguise, fore-feels you at once—his gauge is true.
His hatred far more rightly takes your measure
Than does the mass; more rightly than your friend.
Life's instinct quickly scents the danger that
Your being threatens his withal. Strong men
Are by the enemy detected long
Before their friends draw hopefully to them.
Thus Sulla of old did long before foretell
The then still stripling Cæsar would the old
Nobility of Rome cast down, when still
No Marius friend in him the queller saw
Of th' ancient optimates.

Franz. What has all that

With our present case to do?

Balth. What has

It with our present case to do? You knew

It not; and for you knew it not you now
 So dearly pay! The Princes did you think
 With the campaign 'gainst Treves to hoodwink? They,
 You thought, would take it for a mere feud,
 A simple issue 'tween yourself and Richard?
 The *Princes* you did not *deceive*. By an
 Unerring instinct led, in you their hate
 The deadly en'my of their station saw.
 In all the courts of Germany the word
 Resounded loud: *Not since there Princes were*
Did ever such a common danger rise?
 Your *friends* alone you carefully deceived—
 A *Nation* in this feud concernèd was—
 Hence stirs she not: The towns, the peasants—all
 Leave you with your own strength the private feud
 To end, while the initial failure drives
 The nobles timid from the open—

[*Raising his voice.*]

Yourself the arteries of your strength
 Have bound; the heart's own life blood back you drove
 That would have flowed to you—

Franz.

Oh, Balthasar!

Desist; oppress me not with your reproach.
 It could not otherwise be done—'twas still
 Too soon to openly declare myself.
 The town of Treves, strategic place, of all
 I needed first. The plan was good, and well
 Was ev'ry calculation made. Who can
 Control the whim of *accident*—who may
 Convert it cruelly into a *charge*?

Balth. Oh, call not *accident* what is *effect*!

Because on accident we can not count,
 'Tis folly on its slipp'ry head to place
 The fate of time. Was it too early still?
 You should then quietly have known to wait.
 But once you sallied forth, your part had been
 To openly 'gainst Charles the banner raise;
The reformation of the Church and realm
 With large strokes, plainly legible upon
 Your banner to inscribe; or better yet,
 By virtue of the title and the right,
 Boldly as Emperor yourself proclaim—

Unchain the Nation's flood, that painfully
 Its banks restrain. That had been wiser than
 To play with *friends* at blind-man's buff—a game
 That *blinded* not a single man among your *foes*.
 —Well calculated, said you? Aye! It was
 That very thing! You're thrown down by your *cleverness*.
 The greater deed you could have carried out;
 The smaller you can not!
 Oh, not the first are you, and will not be
 The last his neck to break at the attempt
 In great things *cleverness* to try. Disguise
 Will never stand upon the stage of history,
 Where, in the masses' turmoil, man is known
 But by his armor and device. Therefore,
 From head to foot yourself wrap bold
 Within the folds of *your true colors*. Then
 You draw in the gigantic struggle on
 The full resources of your actual aim,
 And stand or fall in fullest exercise
 Of all your powers. Not your fall is what
 Most shocks, but that you fall in fullest bloom
 Of your unconquered, unavailèd strength.
 —'Tis *that* that least a hero can endure.

Franz. [*Who has been pacing the chamber with increasing agitation, stops suddenly.*]

So, then, you take me really for lost?

Balth. Sir, did I so, such language never would
 I hold to you, and gall your great soul with
 Reproach's sting! No! Nothing yet is lost,
 That boldness could not doubly win again.
 How, Sir, is this mouse-hole the limit of
 Franciscus' power? Sir, in *you, your name*
 The *confidence* that in the people's heart
 In warm pulsation throbs for you—in *that*
 Your power lies. The thick walls of this burg
 But keep away the Nation and your own
 Strength from yourself. Ill bears the land the load
 Of the contemnèd temporal régime,
 Or clergy's tyranny; ere long it may
 Attempt the yoke to throw, aye, e'en without
 Your aid!—

[*Confidentially approaching Franz and in a lower tone.*]

Sir, when in Alsace and the upper lands
 I was for you recruiting, many an odd
 Thing did I learn, and many a secret spied.
 It seethes among the peasants! Something brews!
 It spreads afar through all the provinces.
 As under scanty coatings lies concealed
 The pregnant, devastating lap of the
 Volcano, now a conflagration gleams
 Below the surface—

[*With warmth.*] Speak the right word, and
 The fires, that now flicker in the dark,
 Will outward leap in lambent tongues of flame.
 The country call, and hundred thousand peasants
 Will rise—a ready army at your will.
 Pronounce the word, and utt'ring it bestow
 All Germany upon yourself for *army*,
 Yourself upon all Germany for *leader*!

Franz. [*Greatly moved and raising his hands to heaven.*]

I will—that is——

[*Dropping his arms.*]

I wish I could! but, oh!

You dream! Do you forget that in this burg
 An army holds me prisoner?

Balth. [*Approaching Franz with a scrutinizing look.*]

Therefore,

The problem is the means to find for free
 Egress. Suppose you purchased that by the
 Surrender of this burg?

Franz. Surrender it?—

And even if I willed can you believe
 That they would enter into such a pact?
 Of war the custom immemorial is,
 Before the investment of a burg, to summon its
 Surrender, granting the withdrawal of
 Its garrison, provided that, without
 The firing of a shot, the place it yield.

Balth. I know.

Franz. And also know that when they invested me—

Although they safely could have done so, free
 From fear of acceptance, as they knew
 Themselves—to me no summons issued they.
 They acted thus, when strong still was the burg,

When more than once I drove them back with sallies,
 Broke through their trenches, and was buoyed up with
 The daily expectation of relief.
 And *now*, now when I'm locked in tight, the burg
 Almost demolished—*now* you think they'd grant us that?
 Oh, that they'll never do. It is myself,
 And not the burg, they are striving to secure.

Balth. Nor did I mean it so. Now listen, Sir!
 In first rate trim, withal well-manned and officered,
 Your other burgs the en'my still defy.
 The Drachenfels, the Hohenburg, 'bove all,
 The Ebernburg, gives them concern. They will
 Approach them but with dread. E'en in
 Your absence could the en'my never hope,
 If ever they succeed, without a long
 Protracted siege to force them. Besides—
 They know not yet how closely pinched we here.
 Are now. Indeed, they otherwise would not
 Accept the proposition. Now, howe'er—
 How would it be if to their harm you could
 Succeed to bribe them? *All* your burgs surrender,
 In payment for your safe withdrawal hence.

Franz. [*With a start.*]

You rave! The Ebernburg! The bulwark of
 My power!—Shall——

Balth. [*With pathos.*] The Nation languishes
 Outside their walls; she's waiting for your orders.

Franz. [*Impatiently stamping on the floor.*]

Where are the men! Where are they all, I pray—
 Aremberg, Horn, Furstenberg! The Swiss,
 The men of Strasburg, those of Landau, where!
 Where are they now, the men who once so much,
 So much did promise—yet so little kept?

Balth. [*Deeply moved.*]

And if they came they now would come too late!
 Sir, grieve not thus. An easier struggle than
 The present conquers back whate'er you lost.
 What cares he, who would a whole world win,
 Some clods of land to cast away! But, Sir,
 Reflect, 'bove all the time cries haste. Should now
 Some accident reveal to them our stress,
 They'll never do it!

Franz. [After a violent internal struggle.]

Call the herald in!

[Exit Balthasar, and presently returns with herald.]

Herald! To th' enemy I send you forth.

I order you this charge to hurl at them:—

On me you have the laws of war infringed;

Ye have the burg not summoned. Now do I

My right demand, the right you failèd in.

In guarantee of safe withdrawal by

All living, now the burg I leave to them.

[Herald bows.]

Balth. And is that all you have to say to them?

Franz. Oh, Balthasar! I can not—can no further **gol!**

I can *myself* not offer what with shame,

Repugnance only I could grant. If they

Bade such condition—then, perhaps—but I—

Myself—no, never! Never, Balthasar!

Balth. I fully understand you, Sir! Myself

The herald will accompany. I will

The en'my seek, will lead his tongue that it

The prearrangèd place may reach, and down

Lay the conditions that we're ready to

Accept.

Franz. [Embracing him.]

Upon your tongue I leave my honor.

Balth. Rely on me.

[They embrace again; exit Balthasar with the herald through one door, Franz through another.]

SCENE III.—A tap-room in an isolated inn of the Upper Rhine. It is late in the evening. The room is dark. A strong rap is heard at the door.

Inn-keeper. [From a side room.]

Yes! Yes!

[The rapping continues.]

I'm coming.

[The rapping redoubles; inn-keeper enters with a lantern.]

Patience! Not so hard;

Who is it raps so heathenishly there?

[Reaches the door and opens.]

Well! Well!! For one who through such hellish storm

On foot foots it, you make a devilish noise!

Jos. Fritz. [Disguised with a large beard, and a big patch across his face.]

Hew! [Makes a secret sign to the inn-keeper.]

Innk. What? One of our brotherhood? Oh, then

Excuse me!

[*Jos Fritz steps forward and removes his false beard and plaster; his garb is a somewhat fantastical imitation of a knight's costume; around his waist he carries a belt in which several daggers and a sword are stuck. The inn-keeper, who carefully re-closed the door, returns to the new arrival.*]

What! Is't you, *Jos Fritz*? Welcome,

Most heartily! And have you just arrived?

Jos. [His speech is rapid and jerky.]

Arrived last night in this vicinity.

To-day I made the rounds of the surrounding farms.

Innk. Where come you from? Where were you? Have ye news For me?

Jos. Hoho! You fall upon me like

A gate-clerk, and no time to answer do

You give me with your string of questions. Long

I've been away. Have traveled far. And now

I bring you weighty tidings. Not a few.

The thing progresses well. Where'er I came

In all the German districts, ready is

The peasant for the plow. Th' extortions of

The priests, th' oppression of the Lords have reached

Their limit. Far and wide is ev'ry thing

In first-class readiness. But little now

We need and—th' hour strikes. The first event,

That fitting seems, will be the signal for

The start.—But this is not the time to chat.

You soon will hear more. I hither have

Convened the brothers of the commons. I

Expect them any moment. Hurry up.

Bring here some lights—

[A rap is heard at the door.]

Hoho! They're rapping now.

Shall myself open, and the pass-word take.

Meanwhile attend to your affairs, but place

The lights far back, that they may leave the door

As dark as possible.

[The inn-keeper steps into an adjoining room whence he fetches lights, chairs and bumpers, which he arranges at and on a long table at one corner of the room; Jos Fritz goes to the door and partly opens it.]

The pass-word! Speak! What kind of fellow's that?

1st Peasant. We can not heal of priests and noblemen.

Jos. That's right. Draw near.

[Shuts the door; to the peasant, who has proceeded to take off his mantle and slouch hat that had hidden his face.]

Oh, Hans of the Mats!

[Gives him his hand.]

1st P. Am I the first?

Jos. The first. But you'll not have

To wait a long time. Easy make yourself.

[A rap heard at the door.]

Hoho! Hallo! I told you so. They come.

[Hastens to the door to open it as before.]

The pass-word! Speak! What kind of fellow's that?

2nd P. We can not heal of priests and noblemen.

Jos. Good! Step in!

Innk. *[Who has in the meantime arranged the chairs and bumpers.]*

So, now I am ready, and can

Relieve you.

[Stations himself at the door while Jos Fritz steps forward again; in rapid succession enter several peasants whom the inn-keeper admits after a whispered exchange of words; some of the peasants sit down at the table, others surround Jos Fritz and converse in whispers.]

2nd P. Then you think we may upon

The towns depend?

Jos. Hm! As I told you, Jacklein,

The lower townsfolk everywhere are found

Inclined to us; in many places are

The artisans our friends. 'Tis otherwise

Among the councilmen and retainers. If

Alone we in the movement stand, they ne'er

Will join the peasant. But in case of need,

They'll be compelled.

2nd P. I think we're now complete.

You may begin, Jos.

Jos. Take your seats. You all.

[*They sit down; Jos Fritz takes the chairmanship at the head of the table.*]

We should be fifteen. Are we all together?

3rd P. The crooked Stephen is not here.

A Peas. I am!

3rd P. We're then complete.

4th P. Fifteen.

Jos. Fifteen. None fails.

Let's, then, begin. But first the door lock.

[*The inn-keeper steps to the door and turns the key, and returns to the table.*]

My brothers! You are now assembled for

The purpose of receiving my report.

And also instructions for your further conduct.

The hour now is near when—

[*Hard raps at the door; all listen with intent attention.*]

2nd P. Some one

Is rapping! who could that be?

Innk. I won't open.

Other Peasants. Indeed, not!

1st P. Yet it might attention call

If you refuse to open.

[*The raps are repeated.*]

3rd P. Think of it!

It might be spies!

Jos. Then all the more would it

Be necessary to admit the man.

[*Pointing significantly to his armed belt.*]

Dumbness—alone insures us against

A spy's mouth.

4th P. Yes, Jos Fritz! And if it such

A scamp is—

Jos. [*Angrily.*] Put your knife away, Hans Thoughtless!

You're always running over.

[*The raps continue; to the peasants.*]

All assume an

Unconcerned mien, as though you sat

Here comfortably drinking.

[*To the inn-keeper.*] Now, you open.

Innk. If so you will.

Jos. Hold! Give me time to put

On my disguise.

[*Re-assumes his plaster and false beard; the inn-keeper opens.*]

SCENE IV.—ULRICH VON HUTTEN; *the former.*

See to my horse.

[*Exit inn-keeper; Ulrich steps forward.*]

This is

A howling night! How much at one are both
The weather and my breast! The rain beats down
In torrents, and, torrential, rush sad thoughts
Across my soul, all manly fortitude
Unloos'ning. As the lightning's yellow sheen
With hurried, flick'ring flash the darkness lights,
Uncertainty shoots, painful, through my breast,
In fear's glaring light revealing the
Unknown condition of my friend.

[*While speaking, Ulrich has taken off his cap, mantle and gloves, and laid them on a table in the opposite corner where the peasants are seated; all the while these have affected to be engaged in general conversation, but carefully scrutinized Ulrich, Jos Fritz above all.*]

Jos. [*To himself.*]

This knight, I think, I know.

Ulrich. [*To the inn-keeper who just re-enters.*]

Are you the inn-keeper?

Innk. I am, if it please your worship.

Ulrich. Fetch me quick

Some wine.

Innk. Yes, Sir. [*Exit.*]

Jos. [*Risen from his seat to obtain a better view of Ulrich, and stealthily walking around him while he stands lost in thought.*]

By God, may I be hanged

If 'tis not he!

[*Draws nearer to Ulrich, and then steps back a few feet.*]

There is no doubt; 'tis he!

What favorable accident!—To let

The chance slip by, Jos Fritz, were stupid—aye,

Decidedly more stupid than befits

You!—How this meeting ripens suddenly

To fullest bloom the misty thoughts, the plans

I vaguely formulated, and the hopes

I nursed in silence! Come! If one there be

Who could on him prevail, 'tis *he*—and *he*
 The one who also has the *will*. If e'er
 The time was fit, 'tis now! Hew! Up, and at it!!
 [*Approaches Ulrich determinately.*]

Ulrich. [*To himself.*]

The first night back again on German soil!—
 I may of service be to them, and may,
 Though meager, tidings gather from them here.

[*Looks up and sees Jos Fritz, who, quite near, is intently gazing at him; seizes the handle of his sword.*]

What do you want? Back, if you please!

Jos. Sir knight,

You do not recognize me? Speak, I pray!

Ulrich. As little as, I hope, you do myself.

Jos. How now, Sir knight! I should not know you, Sir?

Not know the flower of your rank! The best

Man in all Germany! But no; I will

Not flatter you. There's one who lives, and who

Your peer is; and that one is also your

Best friend. With pride, and not with envy, is,

[*Drawing still closer, and in a voice low enough not to be heard by the peasants.*]

Franciscus' praise fulfilled by *Ulrich von Hutten*.

Ulrich. [*Steps back amazed.*]

And who are you?

Jos. Oh! I forgot you do

Not see me now in all the splendor of

My beauty. Excuse me. Soon I'll be myself.

[*Removes beard and plaster, which he throws upon the table of the peasants.*]

So, now, perhaps, your memory will serve

You better.

Ulrich. What! Is't you, Jos Fritz?

Jos. The same!

Ulrich. [*Looking round.*]

Then keep an eye upon the tip-staves of

The law. Not yet have they forgot your work

At Lehen, nor much less at Untergrunenbach.

Jos. Pshaw! Times have changed. Perhaps the time is nigh

When Jos Fritz needs the tip-staves fear no more.

Ulrich. At any rate, a better meeting I

Could not have prearranged. You are, Jos Fritz,

The trumpet of the realm, a veritable
 Guild-master of fresh news. Whatever, and
 Wherever, ever happed, oft e'en before
 It happed—you knew't. My soul's impatience
 You now can calm with tidings of Franciscus.

Jos. Indeed, none could report more fully, Sir.
 I just have come from that vicinity.
 But whence come you that naught about your friend
 You know?

Ulrich. I straight from Zurich come.

Jos. Then truth

Did Rumor spread, reporting thither you
 Had gone for help from the confederates
 For Franz? Did you succeed?

Ulrich. I would, had not
 Ulrich of Wurtenberg—who an exile lives
 In Zurich, and, though banished, still a curse
 Is on the German people—burning still
 With hatred 'gainst Franciscus and myself—
 Succeeded, through his followers and strong
 Connections that he there enjoys, to thwart
 Me in securing from the Swiss the aid
 They pledged their word to give us.

Jos. Better so!

Ulrich. What? Better so, say you?

Jos. Excuse me, Sir.

My tongue tripped. All the worse, I meant to say.

Ulrich. When I perceived that vain were my endeavors,
 I quitted Zurich to return to Franz,
 And to him lead my yearning steps.—But, now,
 Instead of yourself speaking, me you make
 To speak. Inform me how stand things with Franz?

Jos. Another thing; how late have you from him
 Had news?

Ulrich. The last reli'ble tidings that
 We had was that the palsgrave's lands he raided,
 And took by storm the strong place of Vorberg.
 Since then, no further message have we had.

Jos. Yes, that was in the winter. But since then
 The tables turned. Before he knew, and long
 Before his army had assembled, all
 The three confederated Princes drew

'Gainst Landstuhl, his own burg, in joint array.

Ulrich. [*Nervously.*]

And was he inside? Could he not retreat
To Ebernbürg?

Jos. He could! But did not do't.

I think he now regrets that he did not.
At first he held out well; he drove them back,
And captured Henry of Elz, together with
His whole brigade of mounted men. He then
A jeering trumpeter sent out to them:
*New cannons had they, he new walls; he now
Was curious to hear how that would sound
Together.*—Counting upon help and prompt
Relief from his allies—

Ulrich. [*With increasing impatience.*]

And what did they?

The knights, the federation of Landau?

Jos. But ever larger forces trooped into
The Princes' camp. They locked him in, and met
His wishes. His best batt'ries soon they shot
To pieces—

Ulrich. [*Beyond control.*]

But his friends, his allies, where

Were they?

Jos. Oh, Sir! With them it all has changed.

The larger number now are circumspect
And doubtful; others not quite ready with
Their armaments. The worst of all is that
The trouble came too quick. Franz is not yet
Supposed to be at such a frightful pass.
The Furstenbergs—

Ulrich. How? Also they have left
Franciscus in the lurch?

Jos. No. Listen, Sir!

Two messengers he sent to them his stress
Announcing, urging haste upon them.
From *them* he surely help had got. But both
Were caught—I happened then in camp to be,
When in the second one was brought.—Sir, ne'er
Have I such frantic joy beheld! By Franz
Himself confirmed, the letter said that he
Was lost, if quick, with th' others named therein,

They did not come to his relief.

Ulrich. Franz lost!

May sooner heaven's vault upon us crash!

[*To the inn-keeper.*]

Bring out my horse. The errand I myself
Will ride, and in their burgs the sleepers wake!
From burg to burg a dreadful cry I'll fling:—
Franciscus is in danger! Out—

Jos. Sir, control

Yourself! You could not travel far. You know—
The ban is over you! Besides, your help
Would come too late. E'en when I left, it stood
So bad—Franz himself wrote it—Landstuhl could
Not hold out two weeks longer. No, Sir! You
Are now too late. The burg is lost.

Ulrich. A curse

Upon your head, that you of him and lost
Can prate in one breath! Lost the burg, and Franz
Within? !—If so, I shall go down with him.
My horse!—[*Rushes to the door.*]

Jos. [*Rushing after him.*]

But listen, Sir!

[*Holds and leads him back by the arm.*]

Though he is lost,

There still is *help!* Take hold—and with one blow,
Is ev'ry thing from bottom up again
Changed for the better.

Ulrich. [*Dazed.*] *Help*, you say? Did I
Correctly understand you? *Help?*

Jos. Now, Sir;

Please listen, and attentively.

[*Takes Ulrich by the arm, and speaking to him in a low
voice leads him to the rear; at Jos Fritz's first whisp-
ered words Ulrich shows signs of deep interest.*]

2nd P. What can

Jos Fritz so much to say have to the knight?

1st P. It seems important. Watch how urgently
He talks into his ear. And the knight,
Just look, can hardly hold himself. Jos throws
Him into quite a splutter.

3rd P. Be it what

It may be, he will bring him over to his side.

Not in the council of the Emperor,
Is there a finer head than this Jos Fritz.

1st P. Aye, that is so. Jos knows how. And 'tis one
To him, a peasant or a knight. Where'er
His hook he hitches, quick he bites him fast,
And leads you at will, as th' angle does the fish
That has bitten in the bait.

[*Jos Fritz and Ulrich walk back to the front, speaking in a
low voice, but violently gesticulating.*]

Ulrich. Is it no trick my ears to mislead?
Most eighty thousand? Said you that?

Jos. At least
That many, that would forthwith rise.—I am
No learned scribe. I could not neatly count
Them down with ink and paper. But this much
I tell you, and my head upon it, Sir:—
As, when the powder lights, nothing remains
Behind within the hollow of the cannon,
But, rather, driven by the powder's vim,
The complete load like hail does outward fly,
So all the districts that I named are on
The watch, impatiently await the signal;—
In Allgau, Kraigau, Wasgau—all the districts
That I before have named, together with
Their teeming populations. Empty hollows,
That's what the villages become; the land
Is all alive, and like a wave it rolls.
What is not quite a child, or has not quite
Returned to childhood, grabs the halberd, and
With cheers joins the march. And as before,
When nations went in mass migrating, each
One pushing on the one ahead, so now,
One district th' other pushes, drags it 'long
Unto the great Crusade, our people to
Emancipate.

Ulrich. And what conditions?

Jos. One
Alone; the one I told you of. He shall
Be sworn our *leader*—he shall swear
The articles, the twelve, which, like unto
Jehovah in the fire-column, shall
A blazing manifesto march before

Us all! His standing, following and his
 Unrivalled military genius will
 Our power multiply. With such a head
 The issue of the game is certain to us.
 No better hour could we hope to see!
 Your Ziska tell, will he consent, his eye
 A fiery signal from the mountains will
 Descend unto the valleys, light the sky
 Of Germany, and burn our common foe
 To ashes.

Ulrich. [*Solemnly.*]

In so far as one man may
 Speak for another, with my hand I'll now
 That eye pledge from the bottom of the breast
 Of Franz.—

[*Gives Jos Fritz his hand which is warmly grasped.*]

But how to penetrate to him?

Jos. Leave that to me. I'll gain you admission to
 The burg in a disguise. Shall thither lead
 You, I myself, and at its foot await
 The answer you may bring.

Ulrich. Let us start
 Upon the spot!

Jos. This very night!

Ulrich. No, now!

Who can command the hour—who, but its
 Own master may dispose of it at will?

Jos. Well, as you will!—

[*To the peasants.*]

My friends, I hence must on the spot start with
 This knight. The hour of consultation is
 By the approaching act devoured. Great things
 Are on the stocks. Success's sun hangs o'er
 Our plan. Farewell! You'll soon hear more. But three
 Of you shall for a distance keep me company.
 I've many messages to expedite.

Several Peasants. We're ready. Those of us that you appoint
 Will follow on your steps. Good luck, Jos Fritz!

Others. Good luck!

[*Exit Jos Fritz and Ulrich, followed by all.*]

SCENE V.—*The previously described chamber in the burg of Landstuhl.* FRANZ entering from a side-room.

Franz. [*Lost in meditation.*]

Not yet returned! Why lingers he? Like
Lead the heavy minutes' paces drag along!—
It is three hours since he left; to me
Each one is lengthened to eternity,
And each an endless train leads in its wake
Of hopes and fears, to me bewild'ring maze.

[*Approaches a window in the tower, and stretches out his arm.*]

You yonder lie, my country, sunny and green;
The land of my affection and my efforts!
My spirit through this window's iron bar
Floats down to you upon my vision's rays.
He's right! These walls do not *protection give*,
They *part* me from the Nation! Yonder does
She wait, oppressed by heavy chains; she waits
In patience that her saviour may arrive.
Like arms the hills their lengths extend to me;
They beck to me, and draw me to their heart!
I *come*—my hand to it—I will, I *will*
Come out to you! No power shall prevent me!

SCENE VI.—BALTHASAR *enters with downcast looks*; FRANZ.

Franz. [*Stepping impatiently towards him.*]

At last you come!—but, friend, I plainly read
The answer in your face.

Balth. It is in vain!

Their boiling hate has leaped all dam, and bluff
They spurn the semblance e'en of moderation!
Their hatred makes them blind, it at the same
Time gives them sight, and wisdom's place assumes.
'Tis *you* they want—and only you—they're deaf
To aught that has not Franz for name.

Franz. And what
About the palsgrave?

Balth. He? The worst of all
The three! His conscience goads him into rage.
I plainly saw't. In short, they have but one
Word, this: *your unconditional surrender*.
They swore no other pact to make.

Franz. I shall
Surrender?—And yet you offered them

The Ebernburg and other forts?

Balth. No, Sir!

My old eyes borèd through their corselets thick
Into their hearts, still harder than their corselets.

It was in vain—and, hence, I nothing said.

Franz. I thank you, my old friend! Thus honor's saved!

An unconditional surrender? Do

Their Arrogancies think I've shrunk so far?

The fools! Still free does this arm feel itself.

Balth. But listen, Sir! In coming back from thence,

I learned the reason of their arrogance.

Blindfolded was I led, but when I reached

The bound'ry of the camp, and they removed

My band, I turned my head to gaze

Upon the field. I then saw, near a hedge,

One of the masons, who engaged had been

In this burg's fortifying. Quick he ducked

His head, but I did hail him—trembling he

Arose, and in the pallor of his face

Lay the confession of his Judas act!

Hence comes the spirit that each ball does lead;

The secrets knowing of the burg, drives them

Destructive to its weakest spots! When that

I saw my head I dropped. Is this the case,

How long can we hold out?

[Steps towards Franz, and takes his hand with a painful
expression.]

Whichever way

My eyes in scrutiny I turn, escape,

Sir, can I nowhere see—no—nowhere now!

Franz. Oh, treason! *That* the Princes' weapon is?

And *thereon* their Princes' pride is built!

Drop not your eyes; look up, oh, Balthasar!

A man's *full* force is in *extreme* emergencies

Deployed, and paling fall away the fears

That, earth-born, drag him down to earth.

Up from the shipwreck of his shattered **plans,**

Up from the ruins of his cunning, leaps

His spirit in its native greatness. To

The immensity of his own strength of will,

That latent lies in him, he, waxing, turns;

With closed eyes inhales new strength; draws in

New action from his own resources; and
 The total of his life upon *one* card
 He stakes. Unburdened thus, he leaps to deeds,
 That, lightning-like, in but a single instant
 The face of the inevitable change.
 You said by dint of *cleverness* I failed;
 Well, then, the deed, the bold one, shall redeem me!

Balth. What is, Sir, now your plan?

Franz. The morning sun
 Success announces smiling to my heart,
 And resolution's fire courses through
 My frame. I *come*, my country—

Balth. [*Anxiously.*] Speak! What do
 You contemplate?

[*Martial music is heard at a distance; both stop to listen.*]

Franz. Hear you? They approach! Themselves
 They give the signal unto me, and join
 In music with the feeling that within
 My breast is beating time.—

An Armor-bearer. [*Rushing in.*] Sir knight, Oh arm
 Yourself! Along the whole line draws the foe.
 They are about the burg to take by storm.

Franz. Thou iron! God of man! Thou magic wand,
 That turneth to reality his wishes!
 Thou last resource, that in despair's night
 Doest glisten on his eye, his freedom's highest
 Pledge! Now unto thy hand to I consign
 My fate. A hostile army's long array
 Its coils winds yonder round about me, and
 Still closer does reproach's coil constrict
 My breast. The *double knot* you are to cut;
 One of the two you'll cut assuredly!

SCENE VII.—*The knight of RUDESHEIM armed cap-a-pie and with sword drawn, followed by several armor-bearers and soldiers. Close after him MARIE, who anxiously questions BALTHASAR and the armor-bearers.*

Rud. [*Enters precipitately.*]

Have you been told? The en'my means to storm
 The burg. The ladder-carriers are approaching.

Franz. [*To his armor-bearer.*]

Bring me my helmet!

Marie. Father, I pray, do
Not this time rush into the thickest of
The fray.

Franz. Keep still, my child!
[*To Rudesheim.*] From which side are
They approaching?

Rud. The attack the main gate threatens,
And on the east strong observation squads
Are posted.

Franz. [*Has in the meantime donned his helmet.*]
Good! Let William of Waldeck
Lead the defence.—You, Rudesheim, with
One half of the garrison, the moment that
They hand to hand have come, a sally make
From the small gate, and take th' assailants in
The rear.—My horse and thirty trusty men
Keep at the garden-gate for me. When with
Your sally you have drawn upon yourself
The bulk of th' en'my's forces and his eye,
I forth will rush—escape!

Marie [*Screaming.*] Oh, father! Father!

Franz. I may, perhaps, the near woods gain without
Encount'ring opposition. Do I so,
You'll hear from me. Whatever bars my way
Must be broke through. For death must ev'ry man
Be ready who accomp'nies me. Now, Rudesheim,
My word I keep.—*I will go out!*

Rud. Your plan
Be blessed! You out, and I upon the foe!
My men, now follow me!

[*Rushes off with all the soldiers and armor-bearers, but two
who remain with Franz.*]

Marie. [*Falling on her father's neck.*]
Oh, father, I

Conjure you! Pray venture not without!
So few men—God—anxiety my blood
Does freeze! Regard my sad presentiments!
It will not turn out well—

Franz. [*Kindly.*] Be still, Marie.

Balth. No, hold him back! I also feel assailed
With ill forebodings. Yet—he'd better go!
Should it succeed—Oh, Germany, this day

A lustrous one would be!

[*The martial music draws nearer.*]

Marie. [*Clinging more and more passionately to Franz's neck, while he seeks to disengage himself.*]

I shall not let

You go! Oh, father, I beseech you!

Franz. [*Forcing himself from Marie's arms.*]

My child, be still! Me calls the fatherland,

And feverish my heart-beats answer, *Aye*.

Your fate to kindly Powers I confide;

They summon me who vengeance wreck on Wrong.

I come, my country! Ransom now my flesh

Of earthly fault, vainglorious feebleness!

If I the wall *drew* 'tween yourself and me,

'Tis now for me to dare to break it through!

[*Exit precipitately with drawn sword, followed by the two armor-bearers; Marie falls to the floor.*]

SCENE VIII.—BALTHASAR; MARIE.

Balth. [*Rushing to the aid of Marie.*]

For heaven's sake, young lady! Oh, collect
Yourself. The courage that you ever showed,
Preserve it now.

Marie. [*Slowly rising.*]

Oh, Balthasar! Ne'er yet

Was I a prey to such anxiety!

[*Takes a step forward with clasped hands, distracted.*]

How if I now have for the last time seen
My father!

Balth. No, young lady; no. You'll see
Your father surely again. Allow not that
Such phantoms should preoccupy your mind.

Marie. Oft has my father gone to battle, yet
Ne'er was my heart so full of sad forbodings.
One blow decides the fate of both.

Balth. Of both?

Whom else mean you?

Marie. [*Starting up and looking around.*]

Could I but outside fly

And hover over him; could but my eye

Lead him; my cry would give him warning.

Balth. Oh!

Young lady, do you rave? Collect yourself,
I pray you! Come—and take this seat.

[Leads her to a settee.] Myself

Shall climb to that entablature. The field
Is swept from th' upper windows. All I see
I'll let you know. My faithful eyes shall serve
You for a field-glass.

[Climbs up to a higher window.]

Ha! Already does

Our Rudesheim spread death in th' en'my's rear.
Ha! How he with his grim men hammers them
In bloody rout! He drives them to the wall!
There Waldeck mows them down in rows with his
Stone slingers. Frightful does the battle rage!

Marie. And of my father, see you aught?

Balth. Not yet.

The en'my's reinforced.

[In great excitement.]

And Rudesheim

Divides his forces. With one half he drives
Them to the ditch. Oh! Woe! No longer do
I see him. All are thrown together. At
The main gate thickest is the knot of men.
The ladders are by Waldeck beaten down.
Ha! There's Rudesheim! His sword a wide
Swath cuts. Oh! Bravo, sturdy fellow! Bravo!
That was a blow! He drops.

Marie. Who drops?

Balth. The knight

William von Zabern. Ah! the en'my's ranks
Are wav'ring.—Lo! lo! Yonder with his men
Your father turns the corner! *Victory!*
A hundred paces more, and safe the wood
They reach! The road is clear!

Marie. *[Leaping up.]* Oh, God!

Balth. *[In consternation.]* Woe! Woe!

What do I see! From out the woods a troop
Of riders forward rush! They've noticed him.
Upon him straight they ride.

Marie. Oh, God in heaven!

Balth. They're seventy or eighty! Swords are crossed.
Your father runs their leader through.

[*Stamping with his foot.*] Flee, Franz!

Oh, drop your magnanimity! 'Tis now
Too late. The ranks are at close quarters drawn.
Like lions do our men defend themselves,
Despite the en'my's greater numbers.

Marie. Do

You see him still?

Balth. Ha! Rudesheim has seen
His plight. At full tilt does he hasten with
A goodly squad to aid him. Could he fly!
The distance still is long! Woe! Franz's plumage
I see no more.

[*Marie utters a cry of anguish.*]

Yes! Yes! There! There he is,
I think. The wall's edge intercepts my view.
I'll to the roof where with one look the field
Of battle can be taken in.

[*Descends rapidly.*]

Marie. Wringing her hands. No! No!!
No, Balthasar!

Balth. I must unto the roof—my whole existence is
Compressed within my eyes. Young lady—pray! [*Exit.*]

Marie. [*Calling after him.*]

Stay, Balthasar! Oh, Balthasar!—He's gone!
Alone he leaves me in this agony
Of death! My limbs are trembling. Vainly I seek
My feet to raise. I'm paralysed. A load
Of hundred weights my body presses down.
Aye, pray! I'll pray! [*Falls on her knees.*]

If yonder 'hind the clouds
A Father thrones who feelingly looks down
Upon our woes; who pity takes upon
Our human sorrows—He will now reveal
Himself to me. Oh! If a kindly Providence
Our fates leads lovingly——*How did he say?*
The individual stands on chance's powder magazine;
Exploding—Woe, if now that powder magazine
Beneath my father should explode!

[*Her head drops on her breast, and she covers it with her hands; deep silence; presently, triumphal music resounds behind the scene; Marie raises her head.*]

Hark! Hark!!

What was that signal? *Victory* comes from
The trumpets of our side. Could it be possible?

[*Rises quickly and looks behind.*]

Balth. [*Entering.*]

Young lady, heaven's heart is obdurate.

Marie. What say you? Why like lead your face sinks down
Upon your breast? Our men have signaled victory!

Balth. Aye, victory! The attack has been repulsed;
And bleeding is the en'my driven back
To camp. But ten times sweeter were defeat
Than victory so dearly paid for—
They deadly wounded carry back your father.

SCENE IX.—*Funeral march behind the scene. While BALTHASAR hastens to the aid of MARIE, who at his last words is about to fall to the floor, and holds her up, the door opens and wrapt in a cloak the body of the deadly wounded SICKINGEN is carried in upon a cot. RUDESHEIM, WALDECK, the PHYSICIAN, knights, armor-bearers and soldiers follow. The cot is placed to the right of the scene.*

Franz. Marie!

Marie. My father!

[*She flies with outstretched arms to him, kneels down beside the cot and throws her arms around his neck.*]

Franz. Dear, sweetest child!

Forgive, if for one moment more I keep
Myself from you. I soon will yours be.
Is Rudesheim—

Rud. Franz!

Franz. Do you think the foe
Knows how it stands with me?

Rud. They could not that;

Not even if the knights had recognized
You. When we extricated you, you still
Sat fighting on your horse, and not until
They fled, did you of loss of blood drop from
Your horse. We carried you in our midst
While the en'my was sounding the retreat.
They hardly could so soon have learned it.

Franz. Good!

And where is the physician?

Phys. [*Stepping forward.*] Here I am!

Franz. I saw thee tremble when thou bandageth
My wounds. Now *freely* speak:—*can* I be saved?
And how much longer can I live?

Phys. [*Hesitating.*] Sir—I—

Franz. I want the *truth*. Upon thy conscience now
I lay it. Many nobles' freedom hangs
Upon thy word.

Phys. [*With an effort.*] You can—

Franz. I order thee
To speak!

Phys. You can not e'en this night survive.

[*A thrill of dismay runs through the ranks of those present;
Marie smothers her sobs in the cushion of the cot.*]

Franz. Well, then—

Once more, and for a last time, now I shall
Outwit them. Rudesheim, the herald send
To the enemy: I will the burg surrender,
Myself a prisoner will yield, upon
Condition they allow all those within,
Myself excepted, to withdraw. But forthwith
A decision they must give. Time to think
I shall refuse. If they accept, the gates
Throw open. Long I do not wish to be
Their prisoner. [*Exit Rudesheim.*]

Marie, I now belong

To you, my child! Oh, weep not! Grieve not o'er
My fate. We owe to life the purposes
To which the race is consecrated as
Mere artisans their task to fill. I've done
All that I could, and feel at ease and free,
As one who faithfully a great debt paid.
My mind falls back upon my life's career,
And speaks me clean of selfish sentiment.
My name will live in memory, and bards
Will some day join me to the hosts of those
Who battled for the noblest aims of man—
And thus I gladly die—and therefore—do not grieve.

Marie. [*Embracing him deliriously.*]

Oh, father, no! You shall not go! I can
The thought not bear of leaving you!

Franz. My child!

My outward fortune—that I leave in ruins.

But never on external things your mind
Was set. As heritance my *name* remains
To you. I bid you carry't worthily,
As, well I know, you will. Alone one thought
Oppresses me, and makes it hard to die—
Oh, could I see *him* once again, and peace
Draw from my Ulrich's noble face!

[*Marie sobs violently.*] On it

Whatever noble deed I contemplated
In brilliant incarnation met my eyes,
And as the mirror of my soul he stood
Before me! Much I fear—a heavy blow
Will this news be to him. Console him, child!
Tell him with blessings, with rich blessings, have
I in this life's last moments thought of him.
Tell him that no reproach must he on my
Account make to himself. I *thank* him for
This death, the handsome closing of my life;
I *thank* him for the better part of my
Existence.

Herald. [*Enters.*] Sir! The en'my have accepted
The offer that you made. The burg, that still
This day shall be your own, to-morrow they
Will occupy. But close upon my steps
The Princes follow. They're approaching.
[*Trumpets sound.*]

Franz. Rise,
Marie! Your tears dry. The en'my may
Not see Franciscus' daughter weep. Be brave,
My child!

SCENE X.—*Second blare of trumpets. Enter the three Princes—the
PALSGRAVE LUDWIG, PHILIP of Hesse and the ARCHBISHOP of
Treves—preceded by the Palsgrave.*

Lud. [*Precipitately.*]
Is Franz himself here?

Balth. [*Stepping briskly towards him.*]
Sir, respect before

The dying!

Lud. Dying!
[*His eyes fall upon Franz, and he staggers back; commotion
among the Princes.*]

Never have I thought,
Franciscus, that my eyes would thus behold
You!

Franz. No? No more did I! And would you now
Swear off, now that 'tis done, the consequence
Of your own acts? Repudiate the fruit
Of grasping treason? Go! I loathe your sight.
Upon the altars of your envious pride,
That swells your breast, you've immolated all
The duties gratitude commands, betrayed
Your house's most devoted friend. And thus
May on *your* house my fate eventually
Avengèd be. Before a hundred years
Have passed away, may in the strife, that I
A frightful heritage behind me leave,
Your scion, wretched and pursued by foes
Forsaken, like myself, from all his friends,
Flee through the land a beggar, fitly thus
Your house's real splendor seal. Begone!
—A Nemesis holds sway on earth; upon
Your heads, ye Princes, I conjure her wrath.

Phil. Your scores with Ludwig do not me concern;
I ever was your foe; you ever mine.

Franz. You can the voice of conscience not deceive,
Nor yet can you deceive th' avenging goddess.
Are *you* not Hesse's Philip, *Luther's* friend?
And yet yon Romanist you shield, and helped
To run me down, who Luther's strongest prop
Defiantly stood up? Unbridled, a
Corroding selfishness transported you;
Your own advantage weighed far more than did
With you the common weal. Hence may yourself
The penalty yet pay for your misdeed,
In deepest mis'ry mourn that him you felled,
Whom to replace you'll never have the strength.

Arch. Perhaps, also for me you have reserved
Some little text?

Franz. Archbishop!—Not with you my quarrel is.
Not words between us can decide. Besides,
With long and rapid strides—I feel it at
My heavy breathing—*death* is drawing nigh.
Yet triumph not.—Not *with you* victory

Remains. The seed in blood sprouts up—awaked
 Among the masses is the cry of conscience.
 Or soon or late—your *dirge* song it will be.

[*During the last lines Rudesheim enters and speaks privately
 and pressingly to Balthasar and Marie.*]

Marie [*Animatedly stepping forward.*]

Ye Princes! Almost providential does
 It seem that at this time a pious monk
 Has come into the burg. The favor grant
 That we my father leave with him; he might,
 Perhaps, my father to confession move.

Franz. [*With weaker voice.*]

Confess—I will not—have myself—

[*Balthasar makes covert signs to him.*]

Marie. Princes!

He may yet to his daughter's wishes yield,
 If of your presence he's relieved.

Franz. I will—

Not—do you hear—

Lud. The maiden's prayer's reasonable. Far
 From us the purpose be to stand between
 Himself and God. Ye Princes, let's withdraw.
 Let all with us retire who are not
 Of Franz's household.

[*Exeunt Princes and suites, simultaneously and by another
 door Balthasar.*]

SCENE XI.—*The former; soon after BALTHASAR with ULRICH VON
 HUTTEN. Ulrich is dressed as in the third scene, but now with
 a monk's cloak over him, which on entering he throws back
 upon his shoulders.*]

Ulrich. [*Behind the scenes.*]

Wounded did you say? [*Enters.*]

His iron sinews mock at wounds; and this
 Is not the time for wounds.

Franz. [*Has half risen at the first sound of Ulrich's voice, and
 quickly calls to him.*]

Oh, Ulrich, you!

Ulrich. I've come, Franz; and I bring a mass of news
 Most favorable! Notified by messengers,
 That I sent out, of your distress, our friends
 Are arming to assist you powerfully.

Franz. [*Sinking back upon his cot.*]

Too—late!

Ulrich [*Stops bewildered.*] Too late?

[*Looks inquiringly around at the circle surrounding Franz.*]

The burg has been surrendered?

A murmur told me so, as I in haste

Came up the stairs.—But even so! What care

We for the place! But you, have you yourself

A prisoner surrendered?

[*Gazes wildly at the surrounding group, who drop their heads.*] So it is!

I read the confirmation in their looks.

Well, then! Still better tidings do I bring.

Make ready, Franz, to learn from me great things.

The time has come. The peasant draws the sword!

He wants you for his leader, Franz! By him

Commissioned, stand I now before you. Say

The word—an army, hundred thousand strong,

He'll place at your command. The land will rise!

They will not long hold you a prisoner.

Allow that from this tower's height a sign

I give, and long before they to their burgs

Have taken you—before their camp they break,

The flood will swallow them; 'twill close o'er them,—

Their squadrons, both of horse and foot—as does

The raging sea close over drowning men!

[*Intently looking upon Franz, Ulrich pauses for an answer.*]

Franz. Too late—you speak, Oh Ulrich, to the—dead!

Ulrich. [*Staggers back; looks around as if searching for confirmation; all drop their heads in utter dejection; Ulrich staggers a few steps toward Franz, but before reaching him drops down with a piercing cry.*]

Dead!

Franz. [*Painfully and in a broken voice.*]

Ulrich—thanks—that once again I see

You—now my wish has been—fulfilled—but now—

No longer tarry—quit the burg—they might

Return—the Princes—go—they'd capture you—

Do not my death make hard—the effort lent

It wings—but few more minutes shall I live—

Go! Ulrich! Go!—inflict not on my mind,

My breaking eyes, the pain a prisoner

To see you—save yourself—for better days—
 For our cause—I beg you—go—my voice—
 I can—no more—tell him, Marie—move him—

Marie. [*Approaching Ulrich.*]

Ulrich! From you I comfort thought to draw;
 And I must strength and comfort give to you?

Ulrich. [*Rises slowly and speaks solemnly.*]

Be still, Marie!—and do not desecrate
 With petty comfort such a pond'rous pain.
 You lose a father—I the *soul's companion*.
 E'en so there might be comfort—were *naught else concerned!*
 With this man our fatherland breaks down.
 In death's throes lie the hopes that we lived for.
 —With his death, impotent the nobles will
 Draw back afraid, and bend before the Princes,
 Who masterful the realm in pieces tear;—
 To Princes flunkeys they will soon descend!
 —Deprived of his support, himself mistrusting,
 The *townsman* will be absorbed within the web
 Of his peculiar interests, and lost
 Is he to our Nation's broader sense.—
 —Alone the *peasant* true remains to our
 Great Cause; he takes up arms—but on his own
 Resources thrown, he to the slaughter-house,
 The bloody, only drags his body; and
 His quartered limbs the broad face of our land,
 With horror struck, from end to end will cover!
 On his own property the Right of Conquest
 High carnival will lead, will strip from him
 The last shreds that of freedom still he enjoys.—
 A long night falls upon our heads, the sad
 Fate of this country in its sable veil
 Concealing.—

[*Turning to Franz.*]

Thou diest, and thou carriest to thy grave
 Whatever worthy of living this life made.
 Me now, my errant feet to exile take;
 But not for long; a few weeks more, and then—
 My ashes joined will be unto your dust.
 To *future days* I our *revenge* bequeathe.

[*Staggers towards the door; the curtain closes.*]

THE END.



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