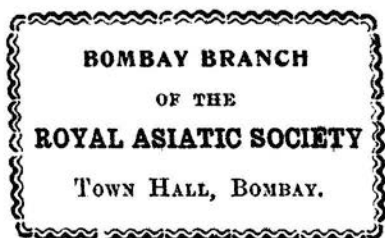




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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ROBERT BROWNING

61131

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VOL. II.

Tragedies and other Plays.

FOURTH EDITION.

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ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS,

Tragedies and other Plays.

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Tragedies and other Plays.

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Tragedies and other Plays.

PIPPA PASSES.

A DRAMA.

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF 'ION,'—
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD.

London, 1841.

R. B.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN. *A large, mean, airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

{DAY!

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and supprest it lay—
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be supprest,

VOL. II.

I

Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
 Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the
 world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
 A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
 The least of thy gazes or glances,
 (Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts above
 One of thy choices, or one of thy chances, measure)
 (Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks at thy
 pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure;
 Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
 Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
 Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
 As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
 All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
 As the prosperous are treated, those who live
 At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
 In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
 And free to let alone what thou refuseth;
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
 Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
 Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow—
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
 All other men and women that this earth
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,

Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
 Get more joy, one way, if another, less:
 Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
 What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
 Sole light that helps me though the year, thy sun's!
 Cry now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
 And let thy morning rain on that superb
 Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
 Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
 He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
 Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
 O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
 Care for their dear selves? 'Tis their marriage-day;
 And while they leave church, and go home their way,
 And clasping hand,—within each breast would be
 Unbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee!
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
 With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
 The Lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
 In her age, as Luigi in his youth,
 True content? The cheerful town, warm, close
 Safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
 Loves them! And yet once again, outbreak
 At night on Monsignor, they make
 Stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
 To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
 And say here masses proper to release

A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace
 Calm would he pray, *with his own thoughts to we*
 Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard!
 But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
 Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
 And here I let time slip for nought!
 Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam—caught
 With a single splash from my ewer!
 You that would mock the best pursuer,
 Was my basin over-deep?
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing—
 Now grow together on the ceiling!
 That will task your wits!
 Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily . . .
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
 Oh, is it sun-blown, my martagon?
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird?
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
 Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
 Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
 Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!

PIPPA PASSES.

I am queen of thee, floweret!
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the
names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the mornir
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes;
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,

TRAGEDIES AND OTHER PLAYS.

I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
 About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
 Too bold, too confident she'll still face down
 The spitefullest of talkers in our town :
 How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love—there's better love, I know !
 This foolish love was only day's first offer ;
 I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :
 For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
 Out of Possagno church at noon ?
 Their house looks over Orcana valley :
 Why should not I be the bride as soon
 As Ottima ? For I saw, beside,
 Arrive last night that little bride—
 Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
 Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
 Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;
 I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !
 —So strict was she, the veil
 Should cover close her pale
 Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
 Scarce touch, remember, Jules !—for are not such
 Used to be tended, flower-like, every-feature,
 As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature ?
 Soft and easy life these ladies lead :
 Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.

Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
 Keep that foot its lady primness,
 Let those ancles never swerve

PIPPA PASSES.

From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the son and mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our Turret; what prevents
My being Luigi? while that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!

TRAGEDIES AND OTHER PLAYS.

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
Of his dead brother; and God will bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
With love for all men: I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest!

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not "a small event!" Why "small?"
Costs it more pain than this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!*

¹ And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
I will pass by, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!

A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass-path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse! [She enters the street.

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCIA'S
Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.

Seb. [*sings.*] *Let the watching lids wink!
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!
Deep into the night, drink!*

Otti. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights
perhaps;

But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning's: let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be!

Ever your house was, I remember, shut
 Till mid-day—I observed that, as I strolled
 On mornings through the vale here; country girls
 Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
 Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:
 But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!
 And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
 Nature, another outside. I looked up—
 Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
 Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
 Oh I remember!—and the peasants laughed
 And said, “The old man sleeps with the young wife.”
 This house was his, this chair, this window—his!

Otti. Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark’s:
 That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
 Should lie . . . there’s Padua, plain enough, that blue!
 Look o’er my shoulder, follow my finger!

Seb. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added.
 Where’s dew? where’s freshness? That bruised plant,
 I bruised

In getting through the lattice yestereve,
 Droops as it did. See, here’s my elbow’s mark
 In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh shut the lattice, pray!

Seb. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
 Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!
 How do you feel now, *Ottima*? There, curse

The world and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out
With all of it!

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"
And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,
"His blood."

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent? who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?

Otti. No, I said the deed—

Seb. "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are—

Otti. Here is the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? white
then?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

Otti. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece

Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
 To let me pass—at first, I say, I used :
 Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
 I rather should account the plastered wall
 A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
 This, Sebald ?

Seb. No, the white wine—the white wine!
 Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
 Should rise on us the ancient shameful way,
 Nor does it rise : pour on ! To your black eyes !
 Do you remember last damned New Year's day ?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked
 at them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
 To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
 His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
 To hunt them out.

Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
 To fondle you before my face !

Otti. Do you
 Fondle me then ! who means to take your life
 For that, my Sebald ?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima !
 One thing's to guard against. We'll not make much
 One of the other—that is, not make more
 Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
 Than yesterday : as if, Sweet, I supposed
 Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
 To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you

In spite of Luca and what's come to him
 —Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
 White sneering old reproachful face and all!
 We'll even quarrel, Love, at times, as if
 We still could lose each other, were not tied
 By this—conceive you?

Otti. Love!

Seb. Not tied so sure!

Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
 His insolence back into him—am I
 So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
 Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
 For instance that May morning we two stole
 Under the green ascent of sycamores—
 If we had come upon a thing like that
 Suddenly . . .

Seb. “A thing”—there again—“a thing!”

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
 My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
 Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
 Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
 In poring now upon it? For 't is here
 As much as there in the deserted house:
 You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
 Now he is dead I hate him worse—I hate . . .
 Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
 His two dead hands, and say, I hate you worse,
 Luca, than . . .

Seb. Off, off—take your hands off mine!
'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?

Otti. There's one thing must be done; you know
what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.

Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing?—Kill the world
So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .

Otti. See!

Seb. No, I'll finish! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer—there's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:

What is one young for, else? In age we'll sigh
 O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown over;
 Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
 But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
 His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
 Do lovers in romances sin that way?
 Why, I was starving when I used to call
 And teach you music, starving while you plucked me
 These flowers to smell!

Otti. My poor lost friend!

Seb. He gave me

Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
 My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
 Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
 He sat by us at table quietly:
 Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
 Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
 'Tis not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes
 Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
 And you—O how feel you? feel you for me?

Otti. Well then, I love you better now than ever,
 And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
 Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
 This mask, this simulated ignorance,
 This affectation of simplicity,
 Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
 May not now be looked over: look it down then!
 Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
 Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!

Speak not! The Past, would you give up the Past
 Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
 The garden's silence! even the single bee
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt;
 And where he hid you only could surmise
 By some campanula chalice set a-swing:
 Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"

Seb.

And I drew

Back; put far back your face with both my hands
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
 Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb.

When

I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
 To a yellow haze?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
 Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
 Nipt by the first frost.

Seb.

You would always laugh

At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
 Over my ancles.

Otti.

Then our crowning night!

Seb. The July night?

Otti.

The day of it too, Sebald!
 When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
 Its black-blue canopy suffered descend.

Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
 And smother up all life except our life.
 So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
 Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
 And ever and anon some bright white shaft
 Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof, here burnt and there,
 As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
 The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes!

Otti.—While I stretched myself upon you, hands
 To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
 All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
 You, Sebald, the same you!

Seb. Slower, *Ottima!*

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently! Love me!
 Forgive me! take not words, mere words, to heart!
 Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak
 slow!

Do not lean on me!

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
 Rising and falling only with our pants,
 Who said, "Let death come now! 't is right to die!
 Right to be punished! nought completes such bliss
 But woe!" Who said that?

Seb. How did we ever rise?
Was't that we slept? Why did it end?

Otti. I felt you
Tapering into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Seb. I kiss you now, dear *Ottima*, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Seb. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice of *PIPPA*, singing—

*The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!*

[*PIPPA* passes.

Seb. God's in His heaven! Do you hear that? Who
spoke?
You, you spoke

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl!

She must have rested on the step: we give them
 But this one holiday the whole year round.
 Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?
 There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
 She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!
 She does not hear: call you out louder!

Seb. Leave me!

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!

Otti. Sebald?

Seb. Wipe off that paint. I hate you!

Otti. Miserable!

Seb. My God! and she is emptied of it now!

Outright now!—how miraculously gone
 All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?
 Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,
 No purpose holds the features up together,
 Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
 Stay in their places: and the very hair,
 That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
 Drops, a dead web!

Otti. Speak to me—not of me!

Seb.—That round great full-orbed face, where not
 an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!

Otti. To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!
 A coward too: but ingrate's worse than all!
 Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!
 Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!
 A lie that walks and eats and drinks!

Seb.

My God!

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath!

Otti. You hate me then? You hate me then?*Seb.*

To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, and show herself
Superior—Guilt from its excess superior
To Innocence! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate—curse you! God's in His heaven!

Otti.

—Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me
The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all
I feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters

Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
They they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!

Otti. Not to me, God—to him be merciful!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the house of JULES, a young French Statuary, at Possagno.

1st Student. Attention! my own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2d Stud. All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—“*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflylies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.

—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phæbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3d Stud. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2d Stud. Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules

a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombrity, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these being as much below, as those, above his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody.) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to

satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st *Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—“In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!” Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery

no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Stud. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Venice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the

herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his mistress: arrange us over these letters, two, three times a day, receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it—relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope.

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Stud. They go in: now, silence! You three,
not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegra-
te: just where the little girl, who a few minutes
ago passed us singing, is seated!

*II.—Noon. Over Orcana. The House of JULES, who crosses its
threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 't is their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way 'till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, Beloved!

You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak, you!

O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved, that's there in clay;
Let how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Let fairly into my old ways again,

Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
 My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
 Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
 The live truth, passing and repassing me,
 Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first,
 See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?
 Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
 Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?
 Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
 Into my world!

Again those eyes complete
 Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
 Of all my room holds; to return and rest
 On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
 As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
 And this were the one moment of surprise
 And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
 O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!
 What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;
 Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:
 This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
 Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
 Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the greek
 First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!
 This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
 With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
 To mark great places with due gratitude;

"He said, and on Antinous directed
 "A bitter shaft"... a flower blots out the rest!
 Again upon your search? My statues, then!
 —Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
 When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
 Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
 This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognised?
 I thought you would have seen that here you sit
 As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
 Naked upon her bright Numidian horse!
 Recall you this then? "Carve in bold relief"—
 So you commanded—"carve, against I come,
 "A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
 "Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
 "Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch:
 "'Praise those who slew Hipparchus,' cry the guests,
 "'While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
 "'As erst above our champion: stand up, all!"
 See, I have laboured to express your thought!
 Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
 (Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
 Only consenting at the branch's end
 They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
 The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes
 Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
 His brain where visionary forms throng up,
 Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
 Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
 From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
 Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—

Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well!"
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, Sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art.
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked;

Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
 Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
 When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips?
 —Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
 Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
 By the swift implement sent home at once,
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
 About its track?

Phene? what—why is this?
 That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!
 Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE begins, on his having long remained silent.

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must
 Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
 Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
 One half of it, beside; and do not care
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
 Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
 To say the words Natalia made me learn,
 To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
 Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
 Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
 Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
 The music's life, and me along with that—
 No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are:
 Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!
 If I could look for ever up to them,

As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
 All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
 Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
 Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay
 —Never to overtake the rest of me,
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
 Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
 Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
 Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
 Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you, love" . . .
 I could prevent it if I understood:
 More of your words to me: was't in the tone
 Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
 Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
 No more, and I shall find it presently
 Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
 Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
 Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
 But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
 Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
 And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
 Observing (what was very strange to see)
 On every face, so different in all else,
 The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,

That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
 Which seems to take possession of the world
 And make of God a tame confederate,
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!
 But no: Natalia said they were your friends,
 And they assented while they smiled the more,
 And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
 With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
 He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
 Ending some explanation to his friends—
 "Is something slow, involved and mystical,
 "To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
 "And lure him on until, at innermost
 "Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
 "—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
 "For insects on the rind are seen at once,
 "And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
 "Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
 And so he read what I have got by heart:
 I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am yours” . . .
 No—is not that, or like that, part of words
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
 What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,
 In my brain, as poor a creature too:
 No end to all I cannot do!
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man or hate a man*

*Supremely: thus my lore began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In the lovinest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)*
*And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
 In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
 Where the shadow threefold fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
 Not a painter's lip should tell!)*

“And here,” said he, “Jules probably will ask,
 “You have black eyes, Love,—you are; sure enough,
 “My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
 “What needs some explanation—what means this?”
 —And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
 From simple that I was of late.
 For once, when I loved, I would enlace
 Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
 Of her I loved, in one embrace—
 As if by mere love I could love immensely!
 And when I hated, I would plunge
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
 My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
 As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!*

*But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
 How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion :
 And if I see cause to love more, hate more
 That ever man loved, ever hated before—
 And seek in the Valley of Love,
 The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
 Where my soul may surely reach
 The essence, nought less, of each,
 The Hate of all Hates, the Love
 Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
 I find them the very warders
 Each of the other's borders.
 When I love most, Love is disguised
 In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised
 In Love, then I hate most : ask
 How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
 Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
 And how, having hated thee,
 I sought long and painfully
 To reach thy heart, nor prick
 The skin but pierce to the quick—
 Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
 By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!*

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche ! who else ? But all of them, no doubt,
 Hated me : they at Venice—presently
 Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :

If I dreamed, saying this would wake me!

Keep

What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
 Consider—and the money was but meant
 For two years' travel, which is over now,
 All chance or hope or care or need of it.
 This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
 And books and medals, except . . . let them go
 Together, so the produce keeps you safe,
 Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance
 (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang
 At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
 We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

Give her but a least excuse to love me!

When—where—

How—can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me?

(“Hist”—said Kate the queen;

But “Oh”—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

“’Tis only a page that carols unseen

“Crumbling your hounds their messes!”)

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
 My heart!*

*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?
 Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.*

But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!

("Nay list,"—bade Kate the queen;
 And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 "'Tis only a page that carols unseen
 "Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

[PIPPA passes.

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
 Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
 The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
 At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
 And peasants sing how once a certain page
 Pined for the grace of one so far above
 His power of doing good to, "She, the queen—
 "She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
 "Need him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing

To see our lady above all need of us;
 Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
 But the world looks so. If whoever loves
 Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
 The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
 Why should we always choose the page's part?
 Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
 I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,
 Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
 Alit, the visionary butterfly,
 Waiting my word to enter and make bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
 This body had no soul before, but slept
 Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
 From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
 Fastened their image on its passiveness :
 Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again !
 Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
 Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
 From form be nothing ? This new soul is mine !

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do ?—save
 A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
 Without me, from their laughter ! Oh, to hear
 God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
 They broke in with that laughter ! I heard them
 Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle !

I wanted silence only ; there is clay
 Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
 In Art : the only thing is, to make sure
 That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream !
 Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
 What the whole world except our love—my own,
 Own Phene ? But I told you, did I not,
 Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
 With the sea's silence on it ? Stand aside—
 I do but break these paltry models up
 To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—

And save him from my statue meeting him ?
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Like a god going through his world, there stands
 One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
 Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow :
 And you are ever by me while I gaze
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas !

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing ? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned :—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business ; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors : we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh ! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig !* In fact, I have abjured all religions ; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian : for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg,

* "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there,) you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 't was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stiek's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the Past, you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocust Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*” In no wise! “*Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods!*” So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a

burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2d Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2d Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3d Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2d Pol. Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain

him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom — "Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirit on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—" Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother; no doubt.

III.—*Evening. Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.*
LUIGI and his Mother entering.

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh,
 easing

The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,

Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.

How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!

Hark—" *Lucius Junius!*" The very ghost of a voice
 Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
 Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?
 They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
 That lean out of their topmost fortress—look
 And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
 Hand under chin of each grave earthy face:
 Up and show faces all of you!—" *All of you!*"
 That's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old
 Franz—

Come down and meet your fate! Hark—" *Meet your
 fate!*"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
 Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
 Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
 Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
 Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.'s and B.'s write for effect, I say.
 Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
 Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
 None of his virtues; he is old beside,
 Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
 Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
 Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
 Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,
 I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.
 Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother.

—You, Luigi?

Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
 You may assure yourself I say and say
 Ever to myself; at times—nay, even as now
 We sit, I think my mind is touched—suspect
 All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
 What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
 I know I am thus—so, all is right again!
 I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
 And see men merry as if no Italy
 Were suffering; then I ponder—“I am rich,
 “Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
 “More than it troubles these?” But it does trouble!
 No—trouble’s a bad word—for as I walk
 There’s springing and melody and giddiness,
 And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
 Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves—
 Return to me—whatever may amuse me,
 And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
 Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
 The very cicala laughs “There goes he, and there!
 “Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way
 “For the world’s sake: feast him this once, our friend!”
 And in return for all this, I can trip
 Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
 This evening, mother!

Mother.

But mistrust yourself—

Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him.

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means

To this wild enterprise: say, you are right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
What would require a cool head, a cold heart
And a calm hand? You never will escape:

Luigi. Escape? to even wish that, would spoil all!
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparerier feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves His world so much!
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is true,—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
 Environ my devotedness as quaintly
 As round about some antique altar wreath
 The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother. See now : you reach the city, you must cross
 His threshold—how ?

Luigi. Oh, that 's if we conspired !
 Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
 But guess not how the qualities most fit
 For such an office, qualities I have,
 Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
 Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
 Every one knows for what his excellence
 Will serve, but no one ever will consider
 For what his worst defect might serve ; and yet
 Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
 In search of a distorted ash ?—it happens
 The wry spoilt branch 's a natural perfect bow !
 Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
 Arriving at the palace on my errand !
 No, no ! I have a handsome dress packed up—
 White satin here, to set off my black hair.
 In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
 Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you ;
 More than onemanspoils everything. March straight—
 Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
 Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
 Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all
 Inside the Turret here a hundred times !

Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe !
 But where they cluster thickest is the door
 Of doors ; they 'll let you pass—they 'll never blab
 Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
 Whence he is bound and what 's his business now.
 Walk in—straight up to him ; you have no knife :
 Be prompt, how should he scream ? Then, out with you !
 Italy, Italy, my Italy !

You 're free, you 're free ! Oh mother, I could dream
 They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
 Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave !

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
 The easiest virtue for a selfish man
 To acquire ! He loves himself—and next, the world—
 If he must love beyond,—but nought between :
 As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
 His body and the sun above. But you
 Are my adored Luigi—ever obedient
 To my least wish, and running o'er with love—
 I could not call you cruel or unkind.

Once more, your ground for killing him ?—then go !

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me ?
 How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
 (If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon)
 —Never by conquest but by cunning, for
 That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well ?

Luigi. (Sure he 's arrived,
 The tell-tale cuckoo : spring 's his confidant,

And he lets out her April purposes !)
 Or . . better go at once to modern time.
 He has . . they have . . in fact, I understand
 But can't restate the matter ; that 's my boast :
 Others could reason it out to you, and prove
 Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night ?

Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now
 A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-star," God
 saith—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-star!"
 The gift of the morning-star—have I God's gift
 Of the morning-star ?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
 That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. . Well for those who live
 through June !

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
 Which triumph at the heels of June the god
 Leading his revel through our leafy world.
 Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June : remember,
 Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo ?

Mother. The night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
 As if life were one long and sweet surprise :
 In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now :
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born :
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The Gods so loved him while he dreamed,)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die!

*Among the rocks his city was :
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate-found
On the sea-sand left aground ;
And sometimes elung about his feet,*

*With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
 A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
 Of one with sullen, thickset brows :
 And sometimes from the prison-house
 The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
 Who through some chink had pushed and pressed,
 On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
 Worm-like into the temple,—caught
 He was by the very God,
 Who ever in the darkness strode
 Backward and forward, keeping watch
 O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch !
 These, all and every one,
 The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the
 sun !

*His councillors, on left and right,
 Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
 Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,
 Where the very blue had turned to white.
 'Tis said, a Python scared one day
 The breathless city, till he came,
 With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
 Where the old king sat to judge alway;
 But when he saw the sweepy hair
 Girt with a crown of berries rare
 Which the God will hardly give to wear
 To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare*

*In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun!*

[PIPPA passes.]

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the
world ends!

The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'T is God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret to the
Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria.
Poor Girls sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout
seafarer!

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you, wish first!

2d Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.

3d Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—

Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
 Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
 The while some folly about how well I fare,
 To be let eat my supper quietly :
 Since had he not himself been late this morning
 Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . .
 “ Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

2d Girl. How she can lie !

3d Girl. Look there—by the nails !

2d Girl. What makes your fingers red ?

3d Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words
 with

On the bright table : how he laughed !

1st Girl. My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear
 A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
 With plaits here, close about the throat, all day ;
 And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed ;
 And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
 Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats. . ah, I should say,
 This is away in the fields—miles !

3d Girl. Say at once
 You'd be at home : she'd always be at home !
 Now comes the story of the farm among
 The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
 White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
 They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you
 were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,

Made a dunghill of your garden!

1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and
through.

3d Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—
before

She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!
This is my way—I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, you love him—straight “he’ll not be gulled!”)
“He that seduced me when I was a girl”
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
Brown, red, white,”—as the case may be: that pleases!
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoilt at least!

1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed
one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

2d Girl. When you were young? Nor are you young, that's true!

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!

Why, I can span them! Cecco beats you still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair

Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,

Than black: the men say they are sick of black,

Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough!

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys

And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,

Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up

An ortolan.

2d Girl. Why, there! is not that Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—

Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No—or she would sing;
For the Intendant said . . .

3d Girl. Oh, you sing first—

Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I'll tell you,

Sing that song the young English noble made,

Who took you for the purest of the pure,

And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

2d Girl. [*Sings.*]

You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry

Your love's protracted growing:

June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,

From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now : some seed
 At least is sure to strike,
 And yield—what you 'll not pluck indeed,
 Not love, but, may be, like!

You 'll look at least on love's remains,
 A grave's one violet :

Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
 What's death? You 'll love me yet!

3d Girl. [*To PIPPA who approaches.*] Oh, you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with! I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—*Night. Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR,
dismissing his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks. I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 't was full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in pfocession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant*] Not you,

Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here 's his letter,—“He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-

day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your

smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from

another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? you are going to punish me?

Mon. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. “Forgive us our trespasses”?

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed,

as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Mon. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the

courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun!
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the Seven and One,
Like the fingers of my hand:*

*Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges ;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me!*

[PIPPA passes.

Mon. [*Springing up.*] My people—one and all—
all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand
and foot! He dares . . . I know not half he dares—but
remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* quick,
I say!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its tomb,
While winter away ;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they ?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
“ Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze ”—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they ?
No bidding me then to . . . what did she say ?

“ Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
“ More like . . . (what said she ?)—and less like canoes ”—
How pert that girl was !—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women ! it had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me :
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of English-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings !
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year !
Blaph . . . something ! I had caught the uncouth name
But for Monsignor’s people’s sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours : it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air ;
Best people are not angels quite :
While—not the worst of people’s doings scare
The devil ; so there’s that proud look to spare !
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind : for
I have just been the holy Monsignor !
And I was you too, Luigi’s gentle mother,

And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
 Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed
 On some good errand or another,
 For he pass'd just now in a traveller's trim,
 And the sullen company that prowled
 About his path, I noticed, scowled
 As if they had lost a prey in him.
 And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
 And I was Ottima beside,
 And now what am I?—tired of fooling!
 Day for folly, night for schooling!
 New year's day is over and spent,
 Ill or well, I must be content.
 Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
 Wake up—here's a friend I've pluckt you!
 Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
 Something rare, let me instruct you,
 Is this—with petals triply swollen,
 Three times spotted, thrice the pollen,
 While the leaves and parts that witness
 Old proportions and their fitness,
 Here remain unchanged, unmoved now—
 Call this pampered thing improved now!
 Suppose there's a king of the flowers
 And a girl-show held in his bowers—
 "Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
 Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
 I have made her gorge pcenta
 Till both cheeks are near as bouncing

As her . . . name there's no pronouncing!
 See this heightened colour too,
 For she swilled Breganze wine
 Till her nose turned deep carmine—
 'T was but white when wild she grew!
 And only by this Zanze's eyes
 Of which we could not change the size,
 The magnitude of all achieved
 Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
 How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
 Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
 Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
 Day's turn is over: now arrives the night's.
 Oh Lark, be day's apostle
 To mavis, merle and throstle,
 Bid them their betters jostle
 From day and its delights!
 But at night, brother Howlet, over the woods,
 Toll the world to thy chantry;
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with gallantry:
 Then, owls and bats, crows and twats,
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like to really know:
 How near I ever might approach all these

I only fancied being, this long day :
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.
 For instance, if I wind
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
 Ah me and my important part with them,
 This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!
 True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.
*All service ranks the same with God—
 With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
 Are we : there is no last nor first.*

[She sleeps.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

A TRAGEDY.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will, of Charles—the noble and right woman's-manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.—*R.B.*

LONDON, 1842.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia.
CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont.
POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.
D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE—The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left and another to the right of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1.

FIRST YEAR 1730.—KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.

Pol. My Beloved,

All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:

This cannot last for ever—oh, may change

To-day or any day!

Cha. —May change? Ah yes—

May change!

Pol. Endure it then.

Cha. "No doubt, a life
 Like this drags on, now better and now worse.
 My father may . . . may take to loving me ;
 And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
 To counsel him ;—may even cast off her
 —That bad Sebastian ; but he also may
 .. Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
 He may not force you from me ?

Pol. Now, force me
 From you !—me, close by you as if there gloomed
 No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—
 At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
 Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me !

Cha. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
 We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
 Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
 By the world's business that engrossed so much
 My father and my brother : if I peered
 From out my privacy,—amid the crash
 And blaze of nations, domineered those two.
 'T was war, peace—France our foe, now—England,
 friend—
 In love with Spain—at feud with Austria ! Well—
 I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride
 In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
 My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
 When . . .

Pol. You have told me, Charles.

Cha. Polyxena—

When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!
Just so much sunshine as the cottager's child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother . . . had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!

Pol. I know—

Cha. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round
My neck,—they bade me rise, “for I was heir
To the Duke,” they said, “the right hand of the Duke.”
Till then he was my father, not the Duke!
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate
World's-business their dead boy was born to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden must be: my faults, my follies,
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once,
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
And must put up with—me! 'T was sad enough
To learn my future portion and submit.
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
—For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look

As they discussed my insignificance,
 She and my father, and I sitting by,—
 I bore; I knew how brave a son they missed:
 Philip had gaily passed state-papers o'er,
 While Charles was spelling at them painfully!
 But Victor was my father spite of that.
 "Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,
 "Innumerable efforts to one end;
 "And on the point now of that end's success,
 "Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
 "Where 's time to be reminded 't is his child
 "He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely suffered,
 Since I had you at length!

Pol. —To serve in place
 Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles!

Cha. But, on that crown obtained, then was't not like
 Our lot would alter? "When he rests, takes breath,
 "Glances around, and sees who 's left to love—
 "Now that my mother 's dead, sees I am left—
 "Is it not like he 'll love me at the last?"
 Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke 's King:
 Could I—precisely then—could you expect
 His harshness to redouble? These few months
 Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you
 And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
 What would he have? What is't they want with me?
 Him with this mistress and this minister,
 —You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
 Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!

Pol. Endure, endure, Beloved! Say you not
That he's your Father? All's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
Or you'll acquire his kingcraft, or he'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there's so much to bear.

Cha. You bear it? don't I know that you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing
Piecemeal beside me? and how otherwise?
—When every creephole from the hideous Court
Is stopt; the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there.
And thus shall we grow old in such a life—
Not careless,—never estranged,—but old: to alter
Our life, there is so much to alter!

Pol. Come—
Is it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'T were wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What's now afoot
I wonder?—Not that any more's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment—but guess,
For me, why train so fast succeeded train
On the high-road, each gayer still than each!
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp
Bodes . . . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?

Cha.

Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment—

Cha. There 's our life!

Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?

Pol. Tush!

D'Ormea's contrivance!

Cha. Ay, how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?
—So that the simplest courtier may remark
'T were idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-stock.
Something, 't is like, about that weary business!

[*Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which POLYXENA examines.*]

—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,
After all last night's study.

Pol. The faint heart!

Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance . . . (that 's the folded speech I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)
—What would you have?—I fancied while you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.

Cha. Flattery!

Pol. I fancied so:—and here lurks, sure enough,
My note upon the Spanish Claims! You 've mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,

Best read it slowly over once to me ;
 Read—there's bare time ; you read it firmly—loud
 —Rather loud—looking in his face,—don't sink
 Your eye once—ay, thus ! “ If Spain claims . . . ” begin
 —Just as you look at me !

Cha. At you ! Oh truly,
 You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,
 Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,
 Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
 —Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
 Seemed possible again ! I can behold
 Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
 In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from
 Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
 Or worse, the clipt grey hair and dead white face
 And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
 D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the KING's apartment D'ORMEA.*

I said he would divert
 My kisses from your brow !
D'O. [*Aside.*] Here ! So, King Victor
 Spoke truth for once: and who's ordained, but I
 To make that memorable ? Both in call,
 As he declared ! Were't better gnash the teeth,
 Or laugh outright now ?

Cha. [*to POL.*] What's his visit for ?

D'O. [*Aside.*] I question if they even speak to me.

Pol. [*to CHA.*] Face the man ! he'll suppose you
 fear him, else.

[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Precisely!—If I threatened him, perhaps?

Well, this at least is punishment enough!
Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ah—
So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,
Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel!

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly!
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'O. What? you know
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,
In knowledge! So! ('T is in his eye, beside—
His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on flame
Already!) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?

Cha. Is the Prince used to know;
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel
Your presence—(smile not)—through the walls, and
take
Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?

D'O. [*Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it,* "Spain!"

Pol. [*Aside to Cha.*] Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.
The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass!
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [*to CHA.*] Surely you will listen
—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'O. [*who has approached them, overlooks the other paper*
CHARLES continues to hold.

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!

Cha. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You've made for me at Turin) your contempt?
—Your measure?—When was not any hateful task
D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?

D'O. Not I!

Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One who in . . shall I say a year, a month?
Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle
And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince ag-
grieved

That I excluded him our counsels? Here

[*Touching the paper in CHARLES'S hand.*]

Accept a method of extorting gold
 From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
 In silver first from tillers of the soil,
 Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
 To make up the amount—there's counsel, sir!
 My counsel, one year-old; and the fruit, this—
 Savoy's become a mass of misery
 And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King:
 You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
 Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
 Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
 Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
 Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
 Her offer follows; and he promises . . .

Cha. —Promises, sir, when he before agreed
 To Austria's offer?

D'O. That's a counsel, Prince!
 But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
 To make their quarrel up between themselves
 Without the intervention of a friend)
 Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

Cha. How?

D'O. Prince, a counsel!—And the fruit of that?
 Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
 Together on their friend, blot out his name,
 Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,
 Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight against,

And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You're not the King!

Cha. Polyxena, you said

All would clear up: all does clear up to me!

D'O. Clear up? 'Tis no such thing to envy, then?
You see the King's state in its length and breadth?
You blame me now for keeping you aloof
From counsels and the fruit of counsels?—Wait
Till I explain this morning's business!

Cha. [*Aside.*] No—

Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no;
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!
I will do something,—but at least retain
The credit of my deed! [*Aloud.*] Then it is this
You now expressly come to tell me?

D'O. This

To tell! You apprehend me?

Cha. Perfectly.

Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
For the first time these many weeks and months,
Disposed to do my bidding?

D'O. From the heart!

Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:
Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.

Acquaint the King!

D'O [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet!

First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—
Then, to avenge it! [*To CHA.*] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

Cha. God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
I needed e'en his intervention? No!
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

Pol. How decides?

Cha. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and
hers?

—Could fly the court with me and live content?
So, this it is for which the knights assemble!
The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this!

Pol. What mean you?

Cha. How? you fail to catch
Their clever plot? I missed it: but could you?
These last two months of care to inculcate
How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
Were I a King—as wretched as now dull—
You recognise in it no winding up
Of a long plot?

Pol. Why should there be a plot?

Cha. The crown's secure now; I should shame the
crown—

An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress the Sebastian's child.

Pol. In truth?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
But they may descant on my dulness till
They sting me into even praying them
For leave to hide my head, resign my state,
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
They'd have me tender them myself my rights
As one incapable:—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!
I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.

Pol. Pause! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.

Cha. Think no ill of him!

Pol.—Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer
His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet—you are the last of a great line;
There's a great heritage at stake; new days
Seemed to await this newest of the realms
Of Europe:—Charles, you must withstand this!

Cha. Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid court
For one whom all the world despises? Speak!

Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . . could? Oh what happiness it were—
To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!

Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!

By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,
 He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
 And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
 Demonstrating in council what I am.

I have not breathed, I think, these many years!

Pol. Why, it may be!—if he desire to wed
 That woman and legitimate her child.

Cha. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!

You'll not repent confiding in me, Love?

There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,

Than Rivoli. I'll seek him: or, suppose

You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?

—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!

I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can tell?

Once away, ever then away! I breathe.

Pol. And I too breathe.

Cha. Come, my Pölyxena!

KING VICTOR: PART II.

Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly.

D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus
 Among the obscure trains I have laid,—my knights,
 Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,

My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—

[Laying down the crown.]

This fireball to these mute black cold trains—then
 Outbreak enough!

[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!
 This, glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,
 Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,
 Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change
 The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
 My ancestry died wan with watching for,
 To lose it!—by a slip, a fault, a trick
 Learnt to advantage once and not unlearnt
 When past the use,—“just this once more” (I thought)
 “Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
 And then away with trick!” An oversight
 I'd have repaired thrice over, any time
 These fifty years, must happen now! There's peace
 At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
 Ventured my project on our people here,
 As needing not their help: which Europe knows,
 And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
 (Apart from plausibilities of war)
 To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
 Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
 And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword
 Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,
 This crown, herself conceded . . .

That's to try,
 Kind Europe! My career's not closed as yet!
 This boy was ever subject to my will,
 Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea, too—
 What if the sovereign also rid himself
 Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I delay!

D'Ormea! [*As D'ORMEA enters, the King seats himself.*]

My son, the Prince—attends he?

D'O.

Sir,

He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.

Vic.

Who's come?

The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?

D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my liege,
Your fortune had not tottered worse than now . . .

Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine—
My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince shall sign;
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
On which, I enter.

D'O.

Sir, this may be truth;

You, sir, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remain worth saving! Take
My counsel as I've counselled many times!
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?
There's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you?

Vic.

Aha! Come, D'Ormea,—“truth”

Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England
—As who knows if not you?

D'O.

But why with me

Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?

Vic. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—'t was
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's-clerk . . .

D'O. Therefore your soul's ally!—who brought you
through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
Who simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot therefore visit these
Affairs' ill fortune—whom you trust to guide
You safe (yes, on my soul) through these affairs!

Vic. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept
With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel stuffed
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight,—my naval armament
When I burnt Toulon. How the skiff exults
Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me, above me possibly;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?
You gave your soul to get it; you'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
Whereas it cants you to another crest;

I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!

D'O. Ah, you so much despise me?

Vic. You, D'Ormea?

Nowise: and I'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(. . . Or wait, did Pianezze? . . . ah, just the same!)
Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly
Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade you
Prepare the schedules! But you stopped in time,
You have not so assured me: how should I
Despise you then?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [*changing his tone.*] Are you instructed? Do
My order, point by point! About it, sir!

D'O. You so despise me! [*Aside*] One last stay
remains—
The boy's discretion there.

[*To CHARLES.*] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,
To save you from this fate!

Cha. [*Aside.*] Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?

Vic. [*to D'O.*] Apprise Del Borgo, Spava and the rest,

Our son attends them; then return.

D'O. One word!

Cha. [*Aside.*] A moment's pause and they would drive me hence,

I do believe!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Let but the boy be firm!

Vic. You disobey?

Cha. [*to D'O.*] You do not disobey

Me, at least? Did you promise that or no?

D'O. Sir, I am yours: what would you? Yours am I!

Cha. When I have said what I shall say, 't is like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.
And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself:
That's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!

D'O. As son, the father—father as, the son!

My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*]

Vic. [*Seated.*] And you, what meant you, pray,
Speaking thus to D'Ormea?

Cha. Let us not

Wear ourselves with D'Ormea! Those few words
Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Vic. One called to manage a kingdom, Charles, needs
To bear up under worse annoyances [*heart*
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.

Cha. [*Aside.*] Ah, good!
 He keeps me to the point! Then be it so. •
 [*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me certain papers—
 these—

To be reported on,—your way of late.
 Is it last night's result that you demand?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night brought forth?
 Pronounce

The . . what's your word?—result!

Cha. Sir, that had proved
 Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt:—a few
 Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
 Lame as they are, from brains like mine, believe!
 As 't is, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
 These are the papers.

Vic. Well sir? I suppose
 You hardly burned them. Now for your result!

Cha. I never should have done great things of course,
 But . . oh my father, had you loved me more!

Vic. Loved? [*Aside*] Has D'Ormea played me false,
 I wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why Charles, a king's love is diffused—
 yourself

May overlook, perchance, your part in it.
 Our monarchy is absolutest now
 In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away.
 I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
 May have the power of loving, all and each,
 Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons

To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long :
I have that crown, this chair and D'Ormea, Charles !

Cha. 'T is well I am a subject then, not you.

Vic. [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha !

I apprehend you : when all's said, you take
Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance ?

• *Cha.* —Do and ever did

So take it : 't is the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Vic. These words ! Let me express, my friend,
Your thought. You penetrate what I supposed
Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes !
I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Cha. To me ?

Vic. Now : in that chamber.

Cha. You resign
The crown to me ?

Vic. And time enough, Charles, sure ?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.

Cha. 'T is I will speak : you ever hated me,
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself ; and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What ! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—

Your whole sagacities, one after one,
 At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
 A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
 You'd prove . . . what would you prove me?

Vic. This to me?

I hardly know you!

Cha. Know me? Oh indeed
 You do not! Wait till I complain next time
 Of my simplicity!—for here's a sage
 Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,
 And his experience and his Macchiavels,
 D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I this while
 Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,
 I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk nor slept,
 For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
 Who knows what we might do or might not do?
 Go now, be politic, astound the world!
 That sentry in the antechamber—nay,
 The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[*Pointing to the crown.*]

That was to take me—ask them if they think
 Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!

Vic. But you know me, it seems; so, learn in brief
 My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head!
 You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
 My father!

Vic. Now observe me, sir! I jest
 Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,

The knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Cha.

Farewell!

'T were vain to hope to change this: I can end it.
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
Into obscurity: I'll die for you,
But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,
Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ha, sure he's changed again—
Means not to fall into the cunning trap!
Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

Vic. [*suddenly placing the crown upon the head of CHARLES.*]
D'Ormea, your King!

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me! Charles,
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!
My reasons after; reason upon reason
After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!
By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
Why, the boy swoons! [*To D'O.*] Come this side!

D'O. [*as CHARLES turns from him to VICTOR.*] You
persist?

Vic. Yes—I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,
He almost seems to hate you: how is that?
Be re-assured, my Charles! Is't over now?
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,

Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

D'O. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Vic. Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—

And I'll so turn those minutes to account

That . . . Ay, you recollect me! [*Aside.*] Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading

That Act of Abdication!

[*As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles!

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed

Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,

This earnest tone: your truth, now, for effect!

It answers every purpose: with that look,

That voice,—I hear him: “I began no treaty,”

(He speaks to Spain,) “nor ever dreamed of this

“You show me; this I from my soul regret;

“But if my father signed it, bid not me

“Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside:”

And, “true,” says Spain, “’t were harsh to visit that

“Upon the Prince.” Then come the nobles trooping:

“I grieve at these exactions—I had cut

“This hand off ere impose them; but shall I

“Undo my father’s deed?”—And they confer:

“Doubtless he was no party, after all;

“Give the Prince time!”

Ay, give us time, but time!

Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,

Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
 We 'll have no child's play, no desponding-fits,
 No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor
 To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!

No—Charles's counsellor!

Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D'O. "King Charles!" What then may you be?

Vic. Anything!

A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,
 Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,
 Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk
 To drive your trade without him. I'm Count Remont—
 Count Tende—any little place's Count!

D'O. Then Victor, Captain against Catinat
 At Staffarde, where the French beat you; and Duke
 At Turin, where you beat the French; King late
 Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
 —Now, "any little place's Count"—

Vic. Proceed!

D'O. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first;
 Breaker of vows to Man, who kept you since;
 Most profligate to me who outraged God
 And Man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
 I was but privy to, by passing thus
 To your imbecile son—who, well you know,
 Must—(when the people here, and nations there,
 Clamour for you the main delinquent, slipt

From King to—Count of any little place)
 Must needs surrender me, all in his reach,—
 I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
 See you on your return—(you will return)—
 To him you trust thus for the moment . . .

Vic. Trust him? How?

My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
 Make me know where my trust errs!

D'O. In his fear,

His love, his—but discover for yourself
 What you are weakest, trusting in!

Vic. Aha

D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
 In your repertory? You know old Victor—
 Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've heard
 Talkers who little thought the King so close)
 Felicitous now, were 't not, to provoke him
 To clean forget, one minute afterward,
 His solemn act, and call the nobles back
 And pray them give again the very power
 He has abjured?—for the dear sake of what?
 Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such am I,
 Count Tende or Count anything you please,
 —Only, the same that did the things you say,
 And, among other things you say not, used
 Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
 I used, and now, since you will have it so,
 Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
 You and your works. Why, what on earth beside

Are you made for, you sort of ministers ?

D'O. —Not left, though, to my fate ! Your witless
son

Has more wit than to load himself with lumber :
He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Vic. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side !

D'O. Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy !

Vic. Prevent, beside,
My own return !

D'O. That's half prevented now !
'T will go hard but you find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk's a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus !

Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent !

D'O. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent ?

Vic. Whene'er
Sufficient time elapse for that, you judge !

[*Shouts inside* "KING CHARLES."]

D'O. Do you repent ?

Vic. [*after a slight pause.*] . . . I've kept them wait-
ing. ? Yes !

Come in, complete the Abdication, sir! [*They go out.*]

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol. A shout? The sycophants are free of Charles!
 Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
 Of his or my distempered fancy, this,
 But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
 Here they've set forms for such proceedings; Victor
 Imprisoned his own mother: he should know
 If any, how a son's to be deprived
 Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.
 Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
 And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
 Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
 Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
 Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you
 None guessed but I—strength which, untrammelled
 once,
 Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
 Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
 Simplicity and utter truthfulness
 —All which, they shout to lose!

So, now my work
 Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
 Regret?—the noble nature! He's not made
 Like these Italians: 't is a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone:—the Crown-
 prince? Gone—
 Where's Savoy? Gone:—Sardinia? Gone! But
 Charles

Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
 If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
 As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
 Because I praised him, then how will he look?
 Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees
 Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!
 Now I'll teach you my language: I'm not forced
 To speak Italian now, Charles?

[*She sees the crown.*] What is this?

Answer me—who has done this? Answer!

Cha.

He!

I am King now.

Pol. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!

Tell me! what, Victor? He has made you King?
 What's he then? What's to follow this? You, King?

Cha. Have I done wrong? Yes, for you were not
 by!

Pol. Tell me from first to last.

Cha. Hush—a new world

Brightens before me; he is moved away
 —The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
 Into a shape supporting me like you,
 And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
 Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.

Pol. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy
 At ten years old?

Cha. He was.

Pol. And the Duke spent
 Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil

To be—what?

Cha. King.

Pol. Then why unking himself?

Cha. Those years are cause enough.

Pol. The only cause?

Cha. Some new perplexities.

Pol. Which you can solve

Although he cannot?

Cha. He assures me so.

Pol. And this he means shall last—how long?

Cha. How long?

Think you I fear the perils I confront?

He's praising me before the people's face—

My people!

Pol. Then he's changed—grown kind, the King?

Where can the trap be?

Cha. Heart and soul I pledge!

My father, could I guard the crown you gained,

Transmit as I received it,—all good else

Would I surrender!

Pol. Ah, it opens then

Before you, all you dreaded formerly?

You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?

Cha. So much to dare? The better;—much to
dread?

The better. I'll adventure though alone.

Triumph or die, there's Victor still to witness

Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone!

Pol. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles

Or death.

Cha. But you are I! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven
A moment since. I will deserve the crown!

Pol. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious
thing

For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it, I would I saw the trap!

Enter VICTOR.

'Tis he must show me.

Vic. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last! Spare thanks:
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated? And my light-haired, blue-eyed child
Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to say
To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, sir!

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once in the point
Of sight. You are now the King: you'll comprehend,
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what's our post? Here's Savoy and here's
Piedmont,

Here 's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
 To o'er-sweep all these, what 's one weapon worth ?
 I often think of how they fought in Greece
 (Or Rome, which was it? You 're the scholar, Charles!)
 You made a front-thrust? But if your shield too
 Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave
 Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight if thong
 And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
 And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
 Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,
 And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
 If the gate opened unless breath enough
 Were left in you to make its lord a speech.
 Oh you will see!

Cha. No: straight on shall I go,
 Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

Vic. 'Faith, Charles, you 're not made Europe 's
 fighting-man!

The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch
 Hold and consolidate, with envious France
 This side, with Austria that, the territory
 I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold
 Despite the couple! But I 've surely earned
 Exemption from these weary politics,
 —The privilege to prattle with my son
 And daughter here, tho' Europe wait the while.

Pol. Nay, sir,—at Chambery, away for ever,
 As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid you:
 Turn these few fleeting moments to account!

'T is just as though it were a death.

Vic.

Indeed!

Pol. [*Aside.*] Is the trap there?

Cha.

Ay, call this parting—death!

The sacreder your memory becomes.

If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back

My father?

Vic. I mean . . .

Pol. [*who watches VICTOR narrowly this while.*]

Your father does not mean

You should be ruling for your father's sake :

It is your people must concern you wholly

Instead of him. . You mean this, sir? (He drops

My hand!)

Cha. That people is now part of me.

Vic. About the people! I took certain measures

Some short time since . . Oh I know well, you know

But little of my measures! these affect

The nobles; we've resumed some grants, imposed

A tax or two: prepare yourself, in short,

For clamour on that score. Mark me: you yield

No jot of aught entrusted you!

Pol.

No jot

You yield!

Cha. My father, when I took the oath,

Although my eye might stray in search of yours,

I heard it, understood it, promised God

What you require. Till from this eminence

He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede

The meanest of my rights.

Vic. [*Aside.*] The boy's a fool!

—Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong here?

To-day the sweets of reigning: let to-morrow

Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside

Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

Cha. Then why delay it for an instant, sir?

That Spanish claim perchance? And, now you speak,

—This morning, my opinion was mature,

Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing

To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!

My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

Vic. Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles! You
require

A host of papers on it.

D'O. [*coming forward.*] Here they are.

[*To CHA.*] I was the minister and much beside

Of the late monarch; to say little, him

I served: on you I have, to say e'en less,

No claim. This case contains those papers: with them

I tender you my office.

Vic. [*hastily.*] Keep him, Charles!

There's reason for it—many reasons: you

Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but

He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire

To quit you, for occasions known to me:

Do not accept those reasons : have him stay !

Pol. [*Aside.*] His minister thrust on us !

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Sir, believe,

In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending : howsoe'er might seem
My feelings toward you, as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall myself (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the Past forgotten
And serve me now !

D'O. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve you, sir !
As for the Spanish matter . . . :

Vic. But dispatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living ! Help to house me safe
Ere with D'Ormea you set the world a-gape !
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs ?
I get as far from you as possible :
Here 's what I reckon my expediture.

Cha. [*reading.*] A miserable fifty thousand crowns !

Vic. Oh quite enough for country gentlemen !
Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out
All that, yourself !

Cha. [*still reading.*] "Count Tende"—what means
this ?

Vic. Me: you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France.
Had only my allies kept true to me!
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .

D'O. —The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.

Cha. How, sir?

Vic. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To CHARLES.*] That anon!

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Explain what you have said, sir!

D'O. I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Pol. [*Aside.*] With us
The minister—with him the mistress!

Cha. [*to VICTOR.*] No—
Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall!

Vic. And where's the crime . . .

Pol. [*to CHARLES.*] True, sir, this is a matter past
recall

And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this—now
Why note it? The King saved his House from
shame:

What the Count did, is no concern of yours.

Cha. [*after a pause.*] The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!

Vic. Why my son,
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything: though I was over-reached,
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!

D'O. [*without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely.*]

Thus stands the case with Spain:
When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Vic. I tell you that stands over! Let that rest!
There is the policy!

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Thus much I know,
And more—too much: the remedy?

D'O. Of course!
No glimpse of one.

Vic. No remedy at all!
It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.

D'O. [*to CHARLES.*] But if . . .

Vic. [*still more hastily.*] In fine, I shall take care
of that:

And, with another project that I have . . .

D'O. [*turning on him.*] Oh, since Count Tende
means to take again
King Victor's crown!—

Pol. [*throwing herself at VICTOR's feet.*] E'en now
retake it, sir!

Oh, speak! We are your subjects both, once more!
Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,

Nor do mean now, to take it : but you must !
 'T is in you—in your nature—and the shame 's
 Not half the shame 't would grow to afterwards !

Cha. Polyxena !

Pol. A word recalls the knights—
 Say it !—What 's promising and what 's the Past ?
 Say you are still King Victor !

D'O. Better say
 The Count repents, in brief! [VICTOR rises.

Cha. With such a crime
 I have not charged you, sir !
Pol. Charles turns from me !

SECOND YEAR 1731.—KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'ORMEA.—*A pause.*

Pol. And now sir, what have you to say ?

D'O. Count Tende . .

Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you ; you resolve
 On uttering this strange intelligence
 —Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
 The capital, because you know King Charles
 Tarries a day or two at Evian baths
 Behind me :—but take warning,—here and thus
 [Seating herself in the royal seat.
 I listen, if I listen—not your friend.
 Explicitly the statement, if you still

Persist to urge it on me, must proceed :

I am not made for aught else.

D'O. Good! Count Tende . . .

Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King
Charles

Who even more mistrusts you.

D'O. Does he so?

Pol. Why should he not?

D'O. Ay, why not? Motives, seek
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve
God at the devil's bidding—will that do?
I'm proud: our people have been pacified,
Really I know not how—

Pol. By truthfulness.

D'O. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do
With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay: but here
'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count Tende
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.*

Pol. When?

D'O. Let's think.

Home-matters settled—Victor's coming now;
Let foreign matters settle—Victor's here
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

Pol. [*reading the papers he presents.*] If this should
prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?

You seek annoyances to give pretext
For what you say you fear!

D'O. Oh, possibly!

I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please.

Pol. Half of your tale is true; most like, the Count
Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.

D'O. Keep safe.

Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof
I thus have counselled: when the Count returns,
And the King abdicates, 't will stead me little
To have thus counselled.

Pol. The King abdicate!

D'O. He's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—

Firm, let us hope:—but I'd have gone to work
With him away. Well!

[*CHARLES without.*] In the Council Chamber?

D'O. All's lost!

Pol. Oh, surely not King Charles! He's
changed—

That's not this year's care-burthened voice and step:
'T is last year's step, the Prince's voice!

D'O. I know!

Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA retiring a little.

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me

The old way!

[*She embraces him.*]

There was too much cause for that!

But I have found myself again. What news
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load
I'm free of—free! I said this year would end
Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God!

Pol. How, Charles?

Cha. You do not guess? The day I found
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
And how my father was involved in it,—
Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no more
Until I cleared his name from obloquy.
We did the people right—'t was much to gain
That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—
But that took place here, was no crying shame:
All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold
The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'O. [*Aside.*] I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Cha. Not a soul
Is compromised: the blotted Past's a blank:
Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!
It reached me from Vienna; I remained,
At Evian to dispatch the Count his news;

'Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—
 And here am I: do I deserve to feel
 Your warm white arms around me?

D'O. [*Coming forward.*] He knows that?

Cha. What, in Heaven's name, means this?

D'O. He knows that matters

Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!
 Plainly, unless you post this very hour
 Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery
 And take precautions I acquaint you with,
 Your father will return here.

Cha. Are you crazed,
 D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return
 To take his crown!

D'O. He will return for that.

Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] You have not listened to this
 man?

Pol. He spoke
 About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] What
 Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

D'O. Me?

His heart, sir; you may not be used to read
 Such evidence however; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA'S papers.*]
 My evidence.

Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] Oh, worthy this of you!
 And of your speech I never have forgotten,

Though I professed forgetfulness; which haunts me
 As if I did not know how false it was;
 Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
 That there might be no least occasion left
 For aught of its prediction coming true!
 And now, when there is left no least occasion
 To instigate my father to such crime—
 When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
 That speech and recognise Polyxena—
 Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
 That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders
 Still in your hand! Silent?

Pol. As the wronged are.

Cha. And you, D'Ormea, since when have you presumed

To spy upon my father? I conceive
 What that wise paper shows, and easily.
 Since when?

D'O. The when and where and how belong
 To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.
 You oft times serve yourself; I'd serve you here:
 Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,
 Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
 Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Cha. You hate my father?

D'O. Oh, just as you will!

[Looking at POLYXENA.]

A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!
 What matter?—If you ponder just one thing:

Has he that Treaty?—He is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here?

Cha. Well for you
They are not! [*To POL.*] Him I knew of old, but you—
To hear that pickthank, further his designs! [*To D'O.*
Guards?—werethey herē, I'd bid them, for your trouble,
Arrest you.

D'O. Guards you shall not want. I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your need.
You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge—its duty
Would bid me press you read those documents.
Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*

Cha. [*taking it*] The papers also! Do you think
I dare not read them?

Pol. Read them, sir!

Cha. They prove,
My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,
Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O. Even say, Chamberly!
'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.

Cha. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!
Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,
You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!

Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
False charges—my heart's love of other times!

Pol. Ah, Charles!

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Precede me, sir!

D'O. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[As they go out, enter—by the middle door, at which he
pauses—VICTOR.]

Vic. Sure I heard voices? No! Well, I do best
To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.
The old room! Nothing changed! So near my seat,
D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the*
KING'S chair.]

I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea, slow
To hearten me, the supple knave? That burst
Of spite so eased him! He'll inform me...

What?

Why come I hither? All's in rough: let all
Remain rough. There's full time to draw back—nay,
There's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never. Faith,
This kind of step is pitiful, not due

To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because
 He's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!
 But thus it is. The age of crafty men
 Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
 Dissimulation; we may intersperse
 Extenuating passages of strength,
 Ardour, vivacity and wit—may turn
 E'en guile into a voluntary grace:
 But one's old age, when graces drop away
 And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
 Ah, loathsome!

Not so—or why pause I? Turin
 Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
 The asking; all the army's mine—I've witnessed
 Each private fight beneath me; all the Court's
 Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea's still
 D'Ormea and mine. There's some grace clinging y
 Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
 I'd take the crown.

No! Just this step to rise
 Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest
 Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
 And let things right themselves, the masque unmasq
 Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and hot blood,
 The young King, crowned, but calm before his tim
 They say,—the eager mistress with her taunts,—
 And the sad earnest wife who motions me
 Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet
 I can return and sleep at Chambery

A dream out. Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin—yes, or no?
'T is this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. There the change must strike.
No silence last year! some one flung doors wide
(Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)
And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit;
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:
That makes the misery of this return.
Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
When the spent monster went upon its knees
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France, beat down
By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,
There's no more Victor when the world wakes up!
Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days
After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,

That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,
 Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
 Begging a pittance that may help him find
 His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow
 The coin you fling into his cap! and last,
 Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
 Of the market-place, where takes the old king breath
 Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
 Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no—or no?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Cha. Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood
 Of hirehings discontented with their pay
 And longing for enfranchisement! A few
 Testy expressions of old age that thinks
 To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
 By means that suit their natures!

[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
 My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*

Vic. [*after a pause.*] Not at Evian, Charles?
 What's this? Why do you run to close the doors?
 No welcome for your father?

Cha. [*Aside.*] Not his voice!
 What would I give for one imperious tone
 Of the old sort! That's gone for ever.

Vic. Must
 I ask once more...

Cha. No—I concede it, sir!
 You are returned for . . . true, your health declines;
 True, Chambéry's a bleak unkindly spot;
 You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
 Veneria, or Moncaglièr—ay, that's close,
 And I concede it.

Vic. I received advices
 Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
 Dated from Evian baths . . .

Cha. And you forbore
 To visit me at Evian, satisfied
 The work I had to do would fully task
 The little wit I have, and that your presence
 Would only disconcert me—

Vic. Charles?

Cha. —Me, set
 For ever in a foreign course to yours,
 And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,
 But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!
 Though I sink under it! What brings you here?

Vic. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
 From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode
 Of speech, did I return to bring about
 Some awfulest calamity!

Cha. —You mean,
 Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,
 I should speak otherwise! But turn not that
 To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?

Is aught deficient in your equipage?
 Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
 And foil the malice of the world which laughs
 At petty discontents; but I shall care
 That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!

Vic. [*Aside.*] Here is the grateful, much-professing
 son

Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake
 I think to waive my plans of public good!
 [*Aloud.*] Nay Charles, if I did seek to take once more
 My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,
 What would be warrant for this bitterness?
 I gave it—grant I would resume it—well?

Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why
 And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:
 And as you then intended . . .

Vic. Fool! What way
 Could I intend or not intend? As man,
 With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"
 I can intend up to a certain point,
 No further. I intended to preserve
 The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
 And if events arise demonstrating
 The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like
 To lose it . . .

Cha. Keep within your sphere and mine!
 It is God's province we usurp on, else.
 Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk
 By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;

All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there's my truth.

Vic. Truth, boy, is here, within my breast; and in
Your recognition of it, truth is, too;
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,
Truth for the world! But you are right: these themes
Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,
What I must bring about. I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—
To hold what he is nearly letting go,
Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.
There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since: till I give
That island with the rest, my work's half done.
For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Cha. Our sakes are one; and that, you could not say,
Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith:—a year has wrought an age's change.
This people's not the people now, you once
Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.

Vic. [*with an outburst.*] I know it! You undo
All I have done—my life of toil and care!
I left you this the absolutest rule
In Europe: do you think I will sit still

And see you throw all power to the populace—
 See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,
 Join in the mad and democratic whirl
 Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide?
 England casts off her kings; France mimics England:
 This realm I hoped was safe! Yet here I talk,
 When I can save it, not by force alone,
 But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
 Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
 I could say this—if minded so—my son?

Cha. You could not! Bitterer curses than your curse
 Have I long since denounced upon myself
 If I misused my power. In fear of these
 I entered on those measures—will abide
 By them: so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

Vic. No!
 But no! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
 Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
 And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
 That he forgot his promise, found his strength
 Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery:
 Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
 And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
 Pined for the pleasant places he had built
 When he was fortunate and young—

Cha. My father!

Vic. Stay yet—and if he said he could not die
 Deprived of baubles he had put aside,

He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
 Your brain up, whole sound, and impregnable,
 Creating kingliness—the Sceptre, too,
 Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
 Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
 As if you grasped the palpitating heart
 Indeed o' the realm, to mould as you may choose!
 —If I must totter up and down the streets
 My sires built, where myself have introduced
 And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
 The civil and the military arts!
 Stay, Charles—I see you letting me pretend
 To live my former self once more—King Victor,
 The venturous yet politic: they style me
 Again, the Father of the Prince: friends wink
 Good-humouredly at the delusion you
 So sedulously guard from all rough truths
 That else would break upon my dotage!—You—
 Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
 I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
 For is 't not in your breast my brow is hid?
 Is not your hand extended? Say you not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.

Pol. [*advancing and withdrawing CHARLES—to*
VICTOR.]

In this conjuncture even, he would say
 (Though with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
 The suppliant is my father. I must save

A great man from himself, nor see him fling
 His well-earned fame away: there must not follow
 Rain so utter, a break-down of worth
 So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
 He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
 And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
 Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles
 —Body, that's much,—and soul, that's more—and
 realm,

That's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

D'O. Do you repent, sir?

Vic. [*resuming himself.*] D'Ormea? This is well!

Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!

Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear

The little your importunate father thrusts

Himself on you to say!—Ah, they'll correct

The amiable blind facility

You showed in answering his peevish suit.

What can he need to sue for? Bravely, D'Ormea,

Have you fulfilled your office: but for you,

The old Count might have drawn some few more livres

To swell his income! Had you, lady, missed

The moment, a permission would be granted

To buttress up my ruinous old pile!

But you remembered properly the list

Of wise precautions I took when I gave

Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits

I might have looked for!

Cha.

Thanks, sir: degrade me,

So you remain yourself. Adieu!

Vic. I'll not

Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay—
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might secure a chamber in Moncaglièr
—Who knows?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. You bid me this adieu

With the old spirit?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. Charles—Charles!

Cha. Adieu!

[VICTOR goes.]

Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear!
'T was for another purpose the Count came.

The Count desires Moncaglièr. Give the order!

D'O. [*leisurely.*] Your minister has lost your confi-
Asserting late, for his own purposes, [dence,
Count Tende would . . .

Cha. [*flinging his badge back.*] Be still the minister!
And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:
Loose it!

D'O. There's none to loose, alas!—I see
I never am to die a martyr.

Pol. Charles!

Cha. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise!

KING CHARLES: PART II.

D'ORMEA seated, folding papers he has been examining.

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles
 Or else King Victor—that's a balance: but now,
 D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
 O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point to solve,
 My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!
 When you discover why I push myself
 Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,
 Impart to me among the rest! No matter.
 Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
 To us the wrongful—lesson them this once!
 For safe among the wicked are you set,
 D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,
 Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,
 Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
 D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;
 A tree so long was stunted; afterward,
 What if it grew, continued growing, till
 No fellow of the forest equalled it?
 'T was a shrub then; a shrub it still must be:
 While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
 In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
 Amid the forest's green fraternity.
 Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
 And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with Attendants.

D'O. [*rises*] Sir, in the due discharge of this my office—

This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Cha. Well, sir?

D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.

Cha. What would you utter?

D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for . . .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk!
My kingdom is in imminent danger?

D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies:
What forces can I muster presently?

[*D'ORMEA delivers papers which CHARLES inspects.*]

Cha. Good—very good. Montorio . . . how is this?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?

D'O. Since his land has been relieved
From double impost, this he manages:

But under the late monarch . . .

Cha. Peace! I know.

Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'O. Count Spava means to head his troops himself.
Something to fight for now; "whereas," says he,
"Under the Sovereign's father" . . .

Cha. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'O. Yes.

[*To POLYXENA while CHARLES continues to inspect the papers.*

A temper

Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;
He terrifies men and they fall not off;
Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.
But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway: our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought them peace:
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
They love you, sir!

Cha. [*to Attendants.*] Bring the regalia forth.
Quit the room. And now, Marquis, answer me!
Why should the King of France invade my realm?

D'O. Why? Did I not acquaint your Majesty
An hour ago?

Cha. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'O. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him."

Cha. And your reason
For saying this ?

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ay, just his father's way !
[*To CH.*] The Count wrote yesterday to your forces'
Chief,

Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Cha. To try
Rhebinder—he's of alien blood : aught else ?

D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some hours after,
The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication : he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—

Cha. What ensued ?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,
He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to the Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.

Cha. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then ?

D'O. They told it me :
And I—

Cha. Most faithful—

D'O. Tell it you—with this
Moreover of my own : if, an hour hence,

You have not interposed, the Count will be
On his road to France for succour.

Cha. Very good!
You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt?

D'O. I give my counsel,—and the only one.
A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang:
But now the harsher course must be pursued.
These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list
Of those suspected merely—men to watch;
This—of the few of the Count's very household.
You must, however reluctantly, arrest;
While here's a method of remonstrance—sure
Not stronger than the case demands—to take
With the Count's self.

Cha. Deliver those three papers.

Pol. [*while CHARLES inspects them—to D'ORMEA.*]
Your measures are not over-harsh, sir: France
Will hardly be deterred from her intents
By these.

D'O. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he'll say at my presenting.

Cha. [*who has signed them.*] There!
About the warrants! You've my signature.
What turns you pale? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [*reading them separately.*] Arrest the people
I suspected merely ?

Cha. Did you suspect them ?

D'O. Doubtless : but—but—sir,

This Forquieri's governor of Turin ;
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital.—Rabella, too ?

Why, sir—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me !

D'O. [*still reading.*] You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list ?

Sir—

Cha. But you never bade arrest those men,
So close related to my father too,
On trifling grounds ?

D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,
Is hatching treason ! still—

[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife ! What's here ?
Arrest the wife herself ?

Cha. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well ?

D'O. [*who has read the last paper.*] Wherefore am I
thus ruined ? Why not take
My life at once ? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you ! Prevent it
You, madam ! I have served you, am prepared
For all disgraces : only, let disgrace

Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
 To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
 Take back your warrant, I will none of it!

Cha. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!
 He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
 I bid him . . .

D'O. Not you! Were he trebly false,
 You do not bid me . . .

Cha. Is 't not written there?
 I thought so: give—I'll set it right.

D'O. Is it there?
 Oh yes, and plain—arrest him now—drag here
 Your father! And were all six times as plain,
 Do you suppose I trust it?

Cha. Just one word!
 You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
 Or else your life is forfeit.

D'O. Ay, to Turin
 I bring him, and to-morrow?

Cha. Here and now!
 The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
 As I believed and as my father said.
 I knew it from the first, but was compelled
 To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,
 That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
 The miserable sower of such discord
 'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last!
 Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,
 Weak as it is, torments sufficiently

A sick old peevish man,—wings hasty speech,
 An ill-considered threat from him; that's noted;
 Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
 In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
 The day-by-day report of your paid spies—
 And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,
 And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,
 But you were in bare time! Only, 't were best
 I never saw my father—these old men
 Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
 D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without!

Pol. Charles—

Cha. Ah, no question! You for D'Ormea too!
 You'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die
 With this lie coiled about me, choking me!
 No, no: he's caught! [*to D'ORMEA.*] You venture life,
 you say,

Upon my father's perfidy; and I
 Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
 The chains of testimony you thus wind
 About me; though I do—do from my soul
 Discredit them: still I must authorize
 These measures—and I will. Perugia!

[*Many Officers enter.*] *Count*—

You and Solar, with all the force you have,
 Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,
 Implicitly perform! You are to bring
 A traitor here; the man that's likest one
 At present, fronts me; you are at his beck

For a full hour; he undertakes to show
 A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
 Return with him, and, as my father lives,
 He dies this night! The clemency you blame
 So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,
 Too long abjured.

[*To D'ORMEA.*] Now sir, about the work!
 To save your king and country! Take the warrant!

D'O. You hear the Sovereign's mandate, Count
 Perugia?

Obey me! As your diligence, expect
 Reward! All follow to Montcagliar!

Cha. [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormea! [*D'ORMEA goes.*]
 He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!

[*To POLYXENA after a pause.*]

At least you understand all this?

Pol. These means
 Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way: I should have
 Withered beneath his scorp.

Pol. What would you say?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,
 Polyxena?

Pol. You then believe the story
 In spite of all—that Victor's coming?

Cha. Believe it?

I know that he is coming—feel the strength
 That has upheld me, leave me at his coming!
 'T was mine, and now he takes his own again.

Some kinds of strength are well enough to have ;
 But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!
 I meant to keep it; but I cannot—cannot!
 Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first . . .
 See if he would not be the first to taunt me
 With having left his kingdom at a word,
 With letting it be conquered without stroke,
 With . . . no—no—'t is no worse than when he left,
 I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
 We'll fly away—fly, for I loathe this Turin,
 This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.
 We'd best go to your country—unless God
 Send I die now!

Pol. Charles, hear me!

Cha. —And again

Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me
 Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking!
 I would not let you speak just now, for fear
 You'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,
 As we two used to talk in blessed times:
 Bid me endure all his caprices; take me
 From this mad-post above him!

Pol. I believe

We are undone, but from a different cause.
 All your resources, down to the least guard,
 Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,
 He act in concert with your father? We
 Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
 Where find a better place for them?

Cha. [*pacing the room.*] And why
Does Victor come? To undo all that's done,
Restore the Past, prevent the Future! Seat
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
... Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that's
false—

False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole,
false!

The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,
Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
I saw—

Pol. But if your measures take effect,
D'Ormea true to you?

Cha. Then worst of all!
I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!
Well may the woman taunt him with his child—
I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
Seated upon his-seat, let D'Ormea slip
To outrage him! We talk—perchance he tears
My father from his bed; the old hands feel
For one who is not, but who should be there,
He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!
The crowded chamber when the lights go out—

Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
The accursed prompting of the minute! My guards!
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!

Pol. [*seizing his hand.*] King Charles! Pause here
upon this strip of time .

Allotted you out of eternity!

Crowns are from God: in His name you hold yours.
Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life
Should be abjured along with rule; but now,
Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule—
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—
Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli
Would be illumined! while, as 't is, no doubt,
Something of stain will ever rest on you;
No one will rightly know why you refused
To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you could
Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect
Future achievement will blot out the Past,
Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Live happy any more. 'T will be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty's seen
As palpably as now—the months, the years
Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-rooms
Pregnant with memories of the Past: your eye
May turn to mine and find no comfort there,
Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
Of other courses, with far other issues,

We might have taken this great night: such bear,
 As I will bear! What matters happiness?
 Duty! There's man's one moment—this is yours!

*[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand,
 she places him on his seat: a long pause and silence.]*

Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR.

Vic. At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!
 'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry,
 Who's King of us?

Cha. *[from his seat.]* Count Tende . .

Vic. What your spies

Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—
 Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose
 To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—
 For still its potency surrounds the weak
 White locks their felon hands have discomposed.
 Or I'll not ask who's King, but simply, who
 Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!
 I have no friend in the wide world: nor France
 Nor England cares for me: you see the sum
 Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

Cha. Take it, my father!

And now say in turn,

Was it done well, my father—sure not well,
 To try me thus! I might have seen much cause
 For keeping it—too easily seen cause!
 But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
 My life had pined away, than pine it will.
 Already you have much to answer for.

My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
 Were happy once! No doubt, my people think
 I am their King still . . . but I cannot strive!
 Take it!

Vic. [*one hand on the crown CHARLES offers, the
 other on his neck.*] So few years give it quietly,
 My son! It will drop from me. See you not?
 A crown's unlike a sword to give away—
 That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!
 But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
 Young as this head: yet mine is weak enough,
 E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
 To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!
 All is alike gone by with me—who beat
 Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines!
 To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis' rival,
 And now . . .

Cha. [*putting the crown on him, to the rest.*] The
 King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

Vic. I am then King! As I became a King
 Despite the nations, kept myself a King,
 So I die King, with Kingship dying too
 Around me! I have lasted Europe's time!
 What wants my story of completion? Where
 Must needs the damning break show! Who mistrusts
 My children here—tell they of any break
 'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
 And who were by me when I died but they?
 D'Ormea there!

Cha. What means he ?

Vic. Ever there !

Charles—how to save your story ? Mine must go !

Say—say that you refused the crown to me !

Charles, yours shall be my story ! You immured

Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year

I spend without a sight of you, then die—

That will serve every purpose—tell that tale

The world !

Cha. Mistrust me ? Help !

Vic. Past help, past reach !

'T is in the heart—you cannot reach the heart :

This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,

Would have denied and so disgraced me.

Pol. Charles

Has never ceased to be your subject, sir !

He reigned at first through setting up yourself

As pattern : if he e'er seemed harsh to you,

'T was from a too intense appreciation

Of your own character : he acted you—

Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,

Nor look for any other than this end.

I hold him worlds the worse on that account ;

But so it was.

Cha. [to POLYX] I love you now indeed !

[To VICTOR.] You never knew me !

Vic. Hardly till this moment,

When I seem learning many other things

Because the time for using them is past.

If 't were to do again! That 's idly wished.
Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes—
I've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly—I've ploughed the deep lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off!
No matter. Guile has made me King again.
*Louis—'t was in King Victor's time—long since,
When Louis reigned—and, also, Victor reigned—*
How the world talks already of us two!
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then?

Ha! Where lurks he?

D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now stand!

[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA approaches.]

You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent.

[Dies.]

THE
RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

PERSONS.

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

TIME, 14—

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

SCENE, A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

ACT I.

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

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,

On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
 Now ready to resume its pristine shape
 Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
 In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
 On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
 As he resumes our Founder's function!

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

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

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

Kar. Off then, with disguise at last!
 As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
 Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
 Discard each limb the ignoble gesture! Cry,
 'T is the Druse Nation, warders on our mount
 Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
 —No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
 No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
 Who rise . . .

Ay. Who shout . . .

Ragh. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
 Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*]

Kar. Hold!

Ay. —Mine, I say;

And mine shall it continue!

Kar. Just this fringe!

Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,
 Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
 Of the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
 Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
 Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend
 Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
 Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
 The scented air, took heart now, and anon
 Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
 Above the gloom they droop in—all the porch
 Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charactery;
 And see yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
 Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble-stone:
 Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou leav'st me
 This single fringe!

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

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

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

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

Kha. Was it for this,
 Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
 A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
 When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
 Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
 Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
 Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
 Dispute you for these gauds?

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

Kha. For pillage?

Kar. Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke
 A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
 Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
 Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and Anael

Challenge his prime regard : but we may crave
 (Such nothings as we be) a portion too
 Of Djabal's favour ; in him we believed,
 His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
 Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may claim
 Reward : who grudges me my claim ?

Ay.

To-day

Is not as yesterday !

Ragh.

Stand off !

Kha.

Rebel you ?

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

Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe !

Hound ! must the earth

Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee ?—and thee ?
 Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault !

Kha.

Oh, shame !

Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
 Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
 Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge
 Its birthplace, hither ! Let the sea divide
 These hunters from their prey, you said ; and safe
 In this dim islet's virgin solitude
 Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
 Fan it to fire ; till Hakeem rise again,
 According to his word that, in the flesh
 Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
 He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
 And, reinstating all in power and bliss,

Lead us himself to Lebanon once more.

Was't not thus you departed years ago,

Ere I was born ?

Druses. 'T was even thus, years ago.

Kha. And did you call—(according to old laws

Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,

Assimilate ourselves in outward rites

With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live

As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,

Druse only with the Druses)—did you call

Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage,

(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea

The remnant of our tribe) a race self-vowed

To endless warfare with his hordes and him,

The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle ?

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

These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited

For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest

Than aught we fled—their Prefect ; who began

His promised mere paternal governance,

By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs

Able to thwart the Order in its scheme

Of crushing, with our nation's memory

Each chance of our return, and taming us

Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks

To end by this day's treason.

Kha. Say I not ?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,

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

Druses.

We saw—we heard !

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

Kha. And as he said hath not our Khalif done,
 And so disposed events (from land to land
 Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
 The pact of villany complete, there comes
 This Patriarch's Nuncio with his Master's Prefect
 Their treason to consummate,—each will face
 For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation ;
 For simulated Christians, confessed Druses ;
 And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
 Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag ;

That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
 Grants us from Candia escort home at price
 Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts her own—
 Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
 Toward the harbour: is it now that you, and you,
 And you, selected from the rest to bear
 The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
 To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
 And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
 That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!

Kar.

True,

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

Kha.

Karshook thinks

I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks!
 Honours? I have demanded of them all
 The greatest!

Kar.

I supposed so.

Kha.

Judge yourselves!

Turn, thus: 't is in the alcove at the back .
 Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now

The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
 Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
 The other lands from Syria ; there they meet.
 Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

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

Kha. That mine—
 Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
 —Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there !
 Djabal reserves that office for himself. [*A silence.*]
 Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
 —Scarce more enlightened than yourselves ; since,
 near

As I approach him, nearer as I trust
 Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
 Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
 Therefore I reasoned with you : now, as servant
 To Djabal, bearing his authority,
 Hear me appoint your several posts ! Till noon
 None see him save myself and Anael : once
 The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
 The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
 The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
 His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes !—
 without a sign
 That he suspects aught since he left our Isle ;

Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence! so have we learned
From Loys.

Kar. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading
prow

Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

Kha. Peace!

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

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South!
Saidst thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap the mast?
It nears apace! One galley and no more.
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!

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

Enter a third Druse.

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

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

Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter LOYS.—The Druses are silent.

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him,
friends!

[Aside.] Tu Dieu! 'Tis as our Isle broke out in song
For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune!
[Aloud.] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for
you,

But first for Djabal: where's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-mouth?

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

Kar. *[to KHA.]* And who takes charge of Loys?
That's forgotten,
Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand
And see his comrade slaughtered?

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

Kar. *[Aside.]* Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside

The corridor ; 't were easy to dispatch
A youngster. [*To Loys.*] Djabal passed some minutes
since

Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold ! What, him dispatch ?
The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon ? Who,—noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of pride,—
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning ? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety ?—I take charge of him !

[*To Loys.*] Sir Loys,—

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

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

Till noontide : but, your pleasure ?

Loys.

“ Intercourse

“ With few or none ? ”—(Ah Khalil, when you spoke
I saw not your smooth face ! All health !—and health
To Anael ! How fares Anael ?)—“ Intercourse
“ With few or none ? ” Forget you, I 've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse ?
—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof ! He 'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblist stories . . .

Kha. Stories, say you?—Ah,
The quaint attire!

Loys. My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!

Kha. The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget the world awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me,
rather?

Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Kha. What's that you wear?

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

You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)

—Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed
 And fight to death against the Infidel [gown,
 —Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
 Such partial difference only as befits
 The peacefullest of tribes! But Khalil, prithee,
 Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?

Kha. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
 As 't were a camel-staff! Pull! — That's my motto,
 Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

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

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

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

We are a nation, Loys, of old fame
 Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
 With the sword too!
 [*Remembering himself.*] But I forget—you bid me
 Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight scares you not?
 (The People I will make of him and them!
 Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
 Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must!

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
 And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 't is thy cursed race's token,
 Frank pride, no special insolence of thine!

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

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

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

[KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.

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

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

And well

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

Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

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

Why, fool,

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

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

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

And I feel this first to-day !

Does the day break, is the hour imminent
 When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed
 Must be accomplished ? Hakeem ? Why the God ?
 Shout, rather, " Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
 " With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
 " Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,
 " Returns from traversing the world, a man,
 " Able to take revenge, lead back the march
 " To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays ?
 But now, because delusion mixed itself
 Insensibly with this career, all's changed !
 Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy ?
 " True—but my jugglings wrought that ! " Put I heart
 Into our people where no heart lurked ?—" Ah,
 " What cannot an impostor do ! "

Not this !

Not do this which I do ! Not bid, avaunt
 Falsehood ! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me !
 —Nor even get a hold on me ! 'T is now—
 This day—hour—minute—'t is as here I stand
 On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
 That I am found deceiving and deceived !
 And now what do I ?—hasten to the few
 Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
 " As I professed, I did believe myself !
 " Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
 " If Ayooob, Karshook saw—Maani there
 " Must tell you how I saw my father sink ;

" My mother's arms twine still about my neck ;
 " I hear my brother's shriek, here 's yet the scar
 " Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
 " If you had woke like me, grown year by year
 " Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
 " Would it be wondrous such delusion grew ?
 " I walked the world, asked help at every hand ;
 " Came help or no ? Not this and this ? Which helps
 " When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
 " The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
 " The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
 " Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
 " My mission aught but Hakeem's ? Promised Hakeem
 " More than performs the Djabal—you absolve ?
 " —Me, you will never shame before the crowd
 " Yet happily ignorant ?—Me, both throngs surround
 " The few deceived, the many unabused,
 " —Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
 " The Prefect, lead to Lebanon ? No Khalif,
 " But Sheikh once more ! Mere Djabal—not " . . .

Enter KHALIL hastily.

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

Take it! my Lord and theirs, be thou adored!

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

Kha Already are they instituting choirs
And dances to the Khalif, as of old

'T is chronicled thou bad'st them.

Dja. [*Aside.*] I abjure it!

'T is not mine—not for me!

Kha. Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain-herbs,
Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?
Oh—let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun rise on the Isle: he can see now!
The shamed Druse women never wept before:
They can look up when we reach home, they say.
Smell!—sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—
Sweet!—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
Alone do nothing for thee! 'T is my office
Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus
Thou bidst me. At this selfsame moment tend
The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
Who were the trusty watchers!—thou forget?
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .
* *Dja.* [*Aside.*] Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
On went I, solely for my people's sake:

I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
Hakeem—with Anael by!"

Kha. [*Aside.*] Ah, he is rapt!

Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
The eyes are Djäbal's and not Hakeem's yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.

Dja. [*Aside.*] To yearn to tell her, and yet have no
one

Great heart's word that will tell her! I could gasp
Doubtless one such word out, and die.

[*Aloud.*] You said

That Anael . . .

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

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

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

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

Dja. [*Aside.*] And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance?
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,

Precede me there, forestal my story there,
Tell it in mocks and jeers!

I lose myself!

Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?

I need the veriest child—why not this child?

[Turning abruptly to KHALIL.

You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished

Like Anael with our mysteries; if she

Could vow, so nourished, to love only one

Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds

Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,

Who thus implicitly can execute

My bidding? What have I done, you could not?

Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration

Of our, once lofty tribe, the daily life

Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,

This Prefect? All 's in readiness?

Kha.

The sword,

The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,

Laid up so long, are all disposed beside

The Prefect's chamber.

Dja.

—Why did you despair?

Kha. I know our nation's state? Too surely know,

As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like ours

Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged

And spoke,—“The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!

“Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless

bread

"In his pavilion—then, arise!"—my speech
 Fell idly—'t was, "Be silent, or worse fare!
 "Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete!
 "Who may'st thou be that takest on thee to thrust
 "Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?" No!
 Only a mission like thy mission renders
 All these obedient at a breath, subdues
 Their private passions, brings their wills to one!

Dja. You think so?

Kha. Even now—when they have witnessed
 Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
 With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
 And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
 Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
 To perish! No! When these have kissed thy feet
 At Lebanon, the Past purged off, the Present
 Clear,—for the Future, even Hakeem's mission
 May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
 Shall rule them thus renewed.—I talk to thee!

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

Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL goes.

Oh, not confess

To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
 Before at least the fortune of my deed
 Half authorize its means! Only to her
 Let me confess my fault, who in my path
 Curled up like incense from a mage-king's tomb
 When he would have the wayfarer descend

Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth !
 When should my first child's-carelessness have stopped
 If not when I, whose lone youth hurried past
 Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
 At length recovered in one Druse all joy ?
 Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
 Would I confess ! On the gulf's verge I pause.
 How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus ?
 Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy ! [*Goes.*

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

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

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

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

Maa. Lovely : nay, that hangs
 Awry.

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

Maa. Content, my child.

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

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

An. What will be changed in Djabal when the
Change

Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maa.

'T is writ

Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
Superbly.

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

—If Hakeem

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

He lived with you?

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

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

I knew not in the man that child ; the man
 Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,
 How he had gone from land to land to save
 Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread ;
 And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused :
 But never till that day when, pale and worn
 As, by a persevering woe, he cried
 “ Is there not one Druse left me ? ”—and I showed
 The way to Khalil’s and your hiding-place
 From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
 So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
 Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
 To ope and shut, the while, above us both !)
 —His mission was the mission promised us ;
 The cycle had revolved ; all things renewing,
 He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
 His children home anon, now veiled to work
 Great purposes : the Druses now would change !

An. And they have changed ! And obstacles did sink,
 And furtherances rose ! And round his form
 Played fire, and music beat her angel wings !
 My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
 For you than for myself ! Did I but watch
 Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
 One of the throng, how proud were I—tho’ ne’er
 Singled by Djabal’s glance ! But to be chosen
 His own from all, the most his own of all,
 To be exalted with him, side by side.
 Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how

Worthily meet the maidens who await
 Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
 This honor, in their eyes? So bright are they
 Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there,
 The girls who throng there in my dream! One hour
 And all is over: how shall I do aught
 That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?—

[*Suddenly to MAANI.*

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

[*DJABAL enters.*]

Oh why is it

I cannot kneel to you?

Dja.

Rather, 't is I

Should kneel to you, my Anael!

An.

Even so!

For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—
 Never a God to me! 'T is the Man's hand,
 Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our people,
 Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
 And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!
 You mean that I should never kneel to you
 —So I will kneel!

Dja. [*preventing her.*] No—no!

[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*

Ha, have you chosen . . .

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

[*Aside.*] Oh must I then—since Loys leaves us
Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—own
That when I saw that stranger, heard his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have been wrought
In other frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?
How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?

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

Avow that all she love in me was false?
—Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers
To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.
Could I take down the prop-work, in itself

So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage—might these still
Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently withdrawn !
But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
'T is not for my sake but for Anael's sake
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans !
Oh could I vanish from her—quit the Isle !
And yet—a thought comes : here my work is done
At every point ; the Druses must return—
Have convoy to their birth-place back, who'er
The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that : 't is for myself,
For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
I stay now, not for them : to slay or spare
The Prefect, whom imports it save myself ?
He cannot bar their passage from the Isle ;
What would his death be but my own reward ?
Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone !
Let him escape with all my House's blood !
Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
Above the world. She cannot touch that world
By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
Able to link my Present with my Past,
My life in Europe with my Island life,

Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed
Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee!

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

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

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

Dja. —And asks for me?

Kha. Thou knowest all things! Thee in chief he
greete,

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

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

An. [*Aside.*] Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,
The little I can do, be done; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance

Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Before, there were so few deceived!
and now

There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
But, having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word!
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!
Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle!
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency:
There's Anael!

An. Please you?

Dja. Anael—none but she!

[*To ANAEL.*] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

An. [*Aside.*] As I divined: he bids me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept!
Let me see Loys!

Loys. [*Without.*] Djabal!

An. [*Aside.*] 'T is his voice.

The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud

On this and that inflicted tyranny,
 —Aught serving to parade an ignorance
 Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close
 With what I viewed at distance: let myself
 Probe this delusion to the core!

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

ACT III.

ANAEL and LOYS.

An. Here leave me! Here I wait another. 'T was
 For no mad protestation of a love
 Like this you say possesses you, I came.

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

An. No more!

Loys. But once again, whom could you love? I dare,
 Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
 A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
 Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,
 Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
 To say your breathing passes through me, changes
 My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
 As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—

This is not to protest my love! You said
You could love one . . .

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

Loys. Him
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!
[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but
myself?

Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No,
She sees into my heart's core! What is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond
To dream I could call up . . .

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

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

Loys. [*Aside.*] And am I not the Prefect now?
Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love? The Past
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day

Content beside her in the Isle? What works
 This knowledge in me now? Her eye has broken
 The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake
 I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
 Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
 To live without!

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

An. Djabal you demanded, comes!

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

Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell
 From first to last. He brought me here, made known
 The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
 Redress for them; and shall I meet him now,
 When nought is wanting but a word of his,
 To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
 Honour away,—to cast my lot among
 His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
 Breaking my high pact of companionship
 With those who graciously bestowed on me
 The very opportunities I turn
 Against them! Let me not see Djabal now!

An. The Prefect also comes!

Loys. [*Aside.*]

Him let me see,
 Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,
 To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—

And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.

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

Let me fly!

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

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

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. [to himself.] No moment is to waste then;
't is resolved!

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—
All's over! Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever!
And now, to Anael!

An. Djabal, I am thine!

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

Dha. Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had n
been?

An. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read n
thought?

Why need I speak, if you can read my thought?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

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

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:

Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch

You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)

. . . I knew you were not human, for I said

“This dim secluded house where the sea beats

“Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell

“To them; this august form will follow me,

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

“And they, the Prefect; Oh, my happiness

“Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!

“His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,

“His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say

“He let me love him: in that moment's bliss

“I shall forget my people pine for home—

They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!”

I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—

Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.

Embrace me!

Dja. [*Apart.*] And she loved me! Nought remain
But that! Nay Anael, is the Prefect dead?

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

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

Kha. Anael, and no part for us !

[*To DJA.*] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

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

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

Dja. For Khalit,—
 The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry
 Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
 In the Pavilion to receive him—here.
 I slay the Prefect ; meanwhile Ayoob leads
 The Nuncio with his guards within : once these
 Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
 egress till I give the sign

Which waits the landing of the argosies
 You will announce to me: this double sign
 That justice is performed and help arrived,
 When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
 Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
 The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
 We leave for ever this detested spot.

Go Khalil, hurry all! no pause, no pause!
 Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Kha. What sign? and who the bearer?

Dja. Who shall show

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

An. [*taking the ring.*] I would fain be worthy of you!

[*Trumpet without.*]

Kha. He comes!

Dja. And I too come!

An. One word, but one!

Y, shall you be exalted at the deed?

Men? On the instant?

Dja. I exalted? What?

Ye, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged, our tribe
 Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
 Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
 Exalted!

Kha. He is here!

Dja. Away—away! [*They go*]

Enter the PREFECT with Guards, and LOYS.

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

That's my sole care now; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers; I embark

O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.

Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys?

[*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio
here forthwith! [*The Guards go.*]

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see

The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,

With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect now?

You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less
becomes

Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

Pref. —When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys

For my dismissal from the post?—Ah, meek

With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!

And wish him the-like meekness: for so staunch

A servant of the church can scarce have bought

His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!

You've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!

I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!

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

Pref. Trade in the dear Druses?
 Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
 We had enough of! Drove I in the Isle
 A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
 Which you'll need shortly! Did it never breed
 Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
 When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth—was bent
 On having a partaker in my rule?
 Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
 If not that I might also shift—what on him?
 Half of the peril, Loys!

Loys. Peril?

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

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?

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

I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys looked
brighter,

But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
Stealing to catch me : brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)—I say,
Just when for the remainder of my life
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect!
Therefore I say, I'd love you!

Loys.

Can it be?

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

Pref.

Me?

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

Loys.

See! you dare

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

Pref.

Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events!
Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll inhabit
My palace—sleep, perchance, in the alcove,
Where now I go to meet our holy friend.
Good! and now disbelieve me if you can:
This is the first time for long years I enter

Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb!

Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet!

Pref. Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash:
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.

When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We'll hope—Ha, ha! [*Goes through the arras.*]

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

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

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

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

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

[Lays down the tiar.

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

[As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.

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

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

[*Pointing to her hair.*]

Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
 But with the dagger 't is, I have to do!

An. With mine!

Dja. Blood—Anael?

An. Djabal, 't is thy deed!

It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—
 Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess
 'T was not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!
 Speak to me!

Dja. Oh my punishment!

An. Speak to me

While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!
 When the command passed from thy soul to mine,
 I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
 And the approaching exaltation,—“make
 One sacrifice!” I said,—and he sat there,
 Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
 Thy fire with music burst into my brain:
 'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance
 It may have been so! well, it is thy deed!

Dja. It is my deed !

An. His blood, all this!—this! And . . .
 And more—sustain me, Djabal! wait not—now
 Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!
 It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
 At least confirm me! Djabal! blood gushed forth—
 He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall
 Prone as asleep—why else is death called sleep?
 Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'Tis sin, I know,—
 Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
 Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps
 On his red breast—is here! 't is the small groan
 Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!
 Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!

[*Following him up and down.*]

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

Dja. [*sinks on his knees.*] Thus!

Behold my change! You have done nobly! I!—

An. Can Hakeem kneel?

Dja. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!
 I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.
 No—hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and ever,
 The deed is mine! Oh think upon the Past!

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

Dja. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in
 glooms,
 Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
 Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, "Without

A miracle this cannot be"—I said
 "Be there a miracle!"—for I saw you!

An. His head lies south the portal!

Dja. —Weighed with this
 The general good, how could I choose my own?
 What matter was my purity of soul?
 Little by little I engaged myself—
 Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
 I hoped: I said, Heaven had accepted me!

An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me?—Who
 said

You were not Hakeem? and your miracles—
 The fire that plays innocuous round your form?

[*Again changing her whole manner.*]

Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!

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

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

Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
 Maani is but human, Khalil human,
 Loys is human even—did their words
 Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you
 So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me

So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect
 And the blood, there—could I see only you?
 —Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
 Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

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

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

Dja. Whither come?

An. At once—

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

Dja. Where come?

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

Confess,

Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now—)
 That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
 Better than ever!) Come, receive their doom
 Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!

Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
Be mine! Come!

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

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

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

[ANAEI goes.]

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

Thus

I shall be calm—in readiness—no way

Surprised.

[*A noise without.*]

This should be Khalil and my Druses!
 Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee, sword!
 Druses, 't is Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
 Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL hides the khandjar in his robe.

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal!—but no time for
 words.

You know who waits there? [*Pointing to the alcove.*]

Well!—and that 't is there

He meets the Nuncio? Well! Now, a surprise—
 He there—

Dja. I know—

Loys. —is now no mortal's lord,
 Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—
 He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!
 Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,
 Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!

I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes ; I felt .
What you were loath to speak—your need of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me ; have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule : he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you urged
Of old to me—I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord,—but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect ! Ay, such faith had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man ?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour !
You gaze at me ! Hear greater wonders yet—
I throw down all the fabric I have built !
These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . but
Of that, another time ; what 's now to say,
Is—I shall never be a Knight ! Oh, Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother ! I am Druse like you !
My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
Your People's, which is now my People : for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
She loves me—Khalil's sister—

Dja. Anael?

Loys. Start you?

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

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

Guard. Oh, horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!

And here— *[Others enter from the alcove.*

[Pointing to DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him—this is he!

[They surround DJABAL.

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

And tell me!

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

Loys. Speak, or . . .

Guard. The Prefect

Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

Loys. By Djabal? miserable fools! How Djabal?

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

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

Some outrage not to be endured—

[To the Guards.] Stand back!

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

Guard. No!

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

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

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

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

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

Loys. Oh, where will truth be found now? Canst
 thou so
 Belie the Druses? Do they share thy crime?

Those thou professedst of our Breton stock,
 Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now
 Khalil, my friend—he spoke with me—no word
 Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who
 Loves me—she spoke no word of this!

Dja.

Poor boy!

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

Lays.

Thy bride? She one of them?

Dja. My bride!

Lays.

And she retains her glorious eyes!
 She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
 Ah—who but she directed me to find
 Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil
 Bade me seek Djabal there, too! All is truth!

- What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
 Did the Church ill to institute long since
 Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?
 And I—have I desired to shift my part,
 Evade my share in her design? 'T is well!

Dja. Loys, I have wronged thee—but unwittingly:
 I never thought there was in thee a virtue
 That could attach itself to what thou deemest
 A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,
 But that is over: all is over now,
 Save the protection I ensure against
 My people's anger. By their K̄halif's side,
 Thou art secure and may'st depart: so, come!

Loys. Thy side?—I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! fly, Sir Loys! 't is too true!
 And only by his side thou may'st escape!
 The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock
 About the palace—will be here—on thee—
 And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
 Of the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we
 Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
 But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
 Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly!
 The Nuncio stands aghast. *At least let us
 Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are nought
 In thy tribe's persecution! [*To LOYS.*] Keep by him!
 They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince returned:

He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
Are life and death!

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

Thus by his side am I!

Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare!
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place!
Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes may cluster,
Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
How say they?—God art thou! but also here
Is the least, meanest, youngest the Church calls
Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed! Hordes of thy Druses flock without!
Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
‘Honour and Faith,’ gainst Hell, Mahound and thee!
Die! [DJABAL remains calm.] Implore my mercy,
Hakeem, that my scorn
May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade;
I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
Had such; Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot!

[DJABAL still silent.]

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

Thou art

Strong in thy cause, then! Dost outbrave us, then!
Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet

His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
 As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse!
 Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried
 By him, nor seek appeal! promise me this—
 Or I will do God's office! What, shalt thou
 Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet Truth
 Want even an executioner? Consent,
 Or I will strike—look in my face—I will!

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

[*Loys gives it.*]

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
 This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!
 [*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me? [*Shouts without.*
 Hearest thou? I hear
 No plainer than long years ago I heard
 That shout—but in no dream now! They Return!
 Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well!

ACT V.

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

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Haketem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be. Come, what

is a great fight-word?—"Lebanon?" (My daughter—my daughter!)—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.

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

Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell

Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:

Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!

Lo, this black disemboing of the Isle!

[*To the Druses.*] Ah children, what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through

To smile their very last on ye! I came

To gather one and all you wandering sheep

Into my fold, as though a father came . . .

As though, in coming, a father should . . .

[*To his Guards.*] (Ten, twelve, —Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None? The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)

[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's house, I say, So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .

Alas—alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man ?

Another.

Oh, ye are to shout !

Children, he styles you.

Druses.

Ay, the Prefect's slain !

Glorify to the Khalif, our Father !

Nuncio.

Even so !

I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain ;

While most he plotted for your good, that father

(Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain !

[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—
with me,

For being duped by his cajoleries !

Are these the Christians ? These the docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er ?)

[*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What say ye does
this wizard style himself ?

Hakeem ? Biamrallah ? The third Fatemite ?

What is this jargon ? He—the insane Khalif,

Dead near three hundred years ago, come back

In flesh and blood again ?

Druses.

He mutters ! Hear ye ?

He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man

Is our dead Prefect's friend ! Tear him !

Nuncio.

Ye dare not !

I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,

The Patriarch's power behind, and God's above me !

Those years have witnessed sin enough ; ere now

Misguided men arose against their lords,

And found excuse ; but ye, to be enslaved

By sorceries, cheats—alas! the same tricks, tried
 On my poor children in this nook of the earth,
 Could triumph, that have been successively
 Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through :
 “*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*
 “Cretes and Arabians”—you are duped the last!
 Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
 Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
 That so much love was wasted—every gift
 Rejected, from his benison I brought,
 Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
 An hour since at the harbour’s mouth, by that . . .
 That . . . never will I speak his hated name!

[*To his Servants.*] What *was* the name his fellow slip-
 fetter

Called their arch-wizard by? [*they whisper.*] Oh, Djabal
 was ’t?

Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?

Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)

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

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

What I sailed hither solely to divulge—

How by his spells the demons were allured

To seize you : not that these be aught save lies

And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,

By measures such as these, he would have led you

Into a monstrous ruin : follow ye?

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

Druses. Hark ye!

Nuncio. —Be of one privilege amerced?
 No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!
 No!. With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid ye
 Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes
 are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal
 beyond what Karshook says; he knows but what
 Khalil says, who knows just what Djabal says him-
 self. Now, the little Cophth Prophet, I saw at Cairo
 in my youth, began by promising each bystander three
 full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL and the Initiated Druses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kha.

Oh, this

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

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

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

Kha.

Ere he appear

And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Nor any way to stretch the arch-
 wizard stark

Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,
 The trunk were easily tamed. [*To the Druses.*] He?
 Bring him forth!

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

Druses. Ay, bring him forth!
 The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk:
 And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!
 Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!
Kha. You dare not so insult him! What, not see . .
 (I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
 Untrusted—they know nothing of our Khalif!)
 —Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
 'T is but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
 To have some influence in your own Return!
 That all may say they would have trusted him
 Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
 And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For, think—
 What merit when his change takes place? But now
 For your sakes, he should not reveal himself!
 No—could I ask and have, I would not ask
 The change yet!

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
 I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—
 For our sakes pardon these besotted men—
 Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet now
 One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.
 This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
 Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
 Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
 Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—
 Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael?—See!

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

Dja. Who of my People hath accused me?

Nuncio.

So!

So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?

A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!

May it be augury of thy after-life!

Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now

That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge

Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning to DJA.*] as these
bid me,

Forfeit for murder on thy lawful prince,

Thou conjurer that peepst and mutterest!

Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells,
children?)

But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)

Thou art a prophet?—wouldst entice thy tribe

Away?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!

Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . . .

Dja. . . Which how thou camest to be, I say not now,

Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!

—Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of spells?

If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop

To ratify thy compact with her foe,

The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw

Her warrant of the deed which reinstates

My People in their freedom, tricked away

By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us

To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—

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

Nuncio.

Lo ye!

He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!

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

[As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper.

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

Dja. • Let who moves perish at my foot!

Kha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael Maani,
Why tarry they?

Druses [to each other.] He can! He can! Live fire—

[*To the NUNCIO,*] I say he can, old man! Thou know'st
him not—

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

Dja. What Druse
Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
Of my own People, as thou saidst, have raised
A voice against me.

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

Dja. [*continuing.*] Confess and go unscathed, how-
ever false!

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

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

[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him.

[*They bring in a veiled Druse.*]

Loys. Now, Djabal, now!

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! ' Make a ring,
sons!—Speak!

Expose this Djabal—what he was, and how;
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished; all,
Explicitly as late 't was spoken to these
My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?

Djá. Speak,
Recreant!

Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
Back, Khalil!

Kha. I go back? Thus go I back!

[*To AN.*] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif!
Thus!

[*He tears away ANAEL'S veil: DJABAL folds his arms
and bows his head: the Druses fall back: LOYS
springs from the side of DJABAL and the NUNCIO.*]

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

Dja.

Thou, Anael?

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

Nuncio.

Loys, pause !

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

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

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

Dja. [*to AN.*] And was it thou betrayedst me ? 'T is
 well !

I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
 Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest : life

Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us :
 For there was crime, and must be punishment.
 See fate ! By thee I was seduced ; by thee
 I perish : yet do I—can I repent ?
 I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
 By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
 My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
 While these remained in equipoise, I lived
 —Nothing ; had either been predominant,
 As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
 I had been something ;—now, each has destroyed
 The other—and behold, from out their crash,
 A third and better nature rises up—
 My mere Man's-nature ! And I yield to it :
 I love thee, I who did not love before !

An. Djabal !

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

An.

My Djabal !

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

An. HAKEEM!

[*She falls dead.*

[*The Druses scream, grovelling before him.*

Ah Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!

Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!

Ah dog, how sayest thou?

[*They surround and seize the NUNCIO and his Guards.*

*LOYS flings himself upon the body of ANAEL, on which
DJABAL continues to gaze as stupefied.*

Nuncio.

Caitives! Have ye eyes?

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

Leave me! unhand me!

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

She was already thine; she would have shared

To-day thine exaltation: think, this day

Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!

Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!

Nuncio. [*struggling with those who have seized him.*]

What, because

His leman dies for him? You think it hard

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

Of deaths should suit you!

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

So little does it! there—the eyelids tremble!

'T was not my breath that made them: and the lips

Move of themselves. I could restore her life!

Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed

On our free converse : we are better taught.
 See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
 For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
 In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See,
 She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
 Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!
 Go not without her to the Cedars, Lord!
 Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!
 I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak :
 Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?
 Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
 Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?
 Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
 Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
 And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
 Under their feet!

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

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

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

Become, for that, a Druse like all of you !

The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thyself, O Hakeem!

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

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

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

—Am I *not* Hakeem? And ye would have crawled

But yesterday within these impure courts

Where now ye stand erect!—Not grand enough?

—What more could be conceded to such beasts

As all of you, so sunk and base as you,

Than a mere man?—A man among such beasts

Was miracle enough : yet him you doubt,

Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—

With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio

Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,

The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he
lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away!

Out of mere mortal ken—above the Cedars—

But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,

Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,

My Khalil! Thou art full of me—I fill

Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yestereve,
 —Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
 Of all to do, requiring word of mine
 To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
 With truth and purity go other gifts,
 All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
 My People home whate'er betide!

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

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Dja. [*raises LOYS.*] Then to thee, Loys! How I
 wronged thee, Loys!

—Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
 Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.
 Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul,
 The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
 Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
 Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,
 For those I leave!—to seeking this, devote
 Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life:
 And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
 My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
 Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
 —One cedar-blossom in thy Ducal cap,
 One thought of Anael in thy heart,—perchance,
 One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
 His last word to the living speaks! This done,

Resume thy course, and, first amid the first
 In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
 Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
 What shall withstand thee then?

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

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

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

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

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

On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses!

[*Dies.*

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, Earl Tresham.

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

GERARD, and other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S Park.*

*Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to com
a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener,
sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

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

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot,
Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's cry?

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
 But there's no breeding in a man of you
 Save Gerard yonder : here's a half-place yet,
 Old Gerard!

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

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

Ger. What then?

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

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

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

Ger.

Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks ?

4th Ret.

Let Gerard be!

He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow
stock.

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

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine—

That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff ! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright ?

4th Ret.

He's only bowing, fool !

The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

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

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

Ger.

—With Hugh

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

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

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

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

6th Ret.

Ay—Ay!

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

1st Ret.

No? That's comfort.

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

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

3rd Ret.

His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone!

4th Ret.

So young, and yet

So tall and shapely!

5th Ret.

Here's Lord Tresham's self!

There now—there's what a nobleman should be!
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's Head!

2nd Ret.

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

1st Ret.

Our master takes his hand—
Richard and his white staff are on the move—
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—
 And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)
 —At last I see our Lord's back and his friend's—
 And the whole beautiful bright company
 Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from
 the window-bench, and making for the table and
 its jugs, etc.*] Good health, long life,
 Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

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

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

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

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

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

Ger. That way?

2nd Ret. Just so.

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

2nd Ret. Old Gerard

Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used
 To care about the pitifullest thing
 That touched the House's honour, not an eye
 But his could see wherein: and on a cause
 Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
 Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
 In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,

Such a point decorous, and such square by rule—
 He knew such niceties, no herald more :
 And now—you see his humour : die he will !

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

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

3rd Ret. I!—

4th Ret. I!—

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

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

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

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

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

Mer.

Thanks !

Tresh. —But add to that,
 The worthiness and grace and dignity
 Of your proposal for uniting both
 Our Houses even closer than respect
 Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
 One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
 The welcome I should give ;—’t is given! My lord,
 My only brother, Austin—he’s the King’s.
 Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
 To Austin: all are yours.

Mer. I thank you—less
 For the expressed commendings which your seal,
 And only that, authenticates—forbids
 My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
 Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
 Than the indulgent insight it implies
 Of what must needs be uppermost with one
 Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
 In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
 A gift, which, if as calmly ’t is denied,
 He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
 Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
 Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
 That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
 I love your sister—as you’d have one love
 That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
 Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they’re yours, you know,
 To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
 My true self, *me* without a rood of land,

A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life ?

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

Aus. He's so young !

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

Aus. Hush !

He reddens.

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

Tresh. We'll sit, my lord.

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

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

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

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch ;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game : the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours,—or else

Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
 And lured me after her from tree to tree,
 I marked not whither. I have come upon
 The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
 And—and then . . . I have seen her.

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

Tresh. What's to say
 May be said briefly. She has never known
 A mother's care; I stand for father too.
 Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
 You cannot know the good and tender heart,
 Its girl's trust, and its woman's constancy,
 How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
 How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
 As light where friends are—how imbued with lore
 The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
 The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
 We brothers talk!

Mer. ⁴ I thank you.

Tresh. In a word,
 Control's not for this lady; but her wish
 To please me outstrips in its subtlety

My power of being pleased : herself creates
 The want she means to satisfy. My heart
 Prefers your suit to her as 't were its own.
 Can I say more ?

Mer. No more—thank, thanks—no more !

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer. —We'll waste no breath
 On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
 Which holds her : while I thought of that, my speech
 To you would wander—as it must not do,
 Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
 I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

Tresh. With less regret 't is suffered, that again
 We meet, I hope, so shortly.

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

Tresh. So soon
 As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
 On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
 A messenger shall bring you the result.

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

Tresh. So may it prove !

Mer. You, lady, you, sir, take
 My humble salutation !

Guen. & Aus.

Thanks!

Tresh.

Within there!

[*Servants enter. FRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the door. Meantime AUSTIN remarks,*

Well,

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

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

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

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. (returning.) Now, voices, voices! 'St! the
 lady's first!

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

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

Guen. He's young.

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

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

Tresh. Well?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

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

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

Tresh. .. "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
"Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you ..

--You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
 All three of us: she's in the library
 No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

Guen. Austin, how we must—!

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

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

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

Guen. Ne'er instruct me!

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

SCENE III. MILDRED'S Chamber. A painted window over-
 looks the park. MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

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

Our talkers in the library, and climbed
 The wearisome ascent to this your bower

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

Mil.

Guendolen,

What have I done? what could suggest . .

Guen.

There, there!

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

Mil.

My brother—

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

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

Mil. Thorold! who—who else?

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

Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding
o'er

The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 't is late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 't is midnight.

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

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?

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

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

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh no, kind—
But I would rest.

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

Mil. Brown hair.

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

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

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred!

Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance!

[*Goes.*

Mil. Is she—can she be really gone at last?
My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer!

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

There!

[*She returns to the seat in front.*]

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!
Too late! 'T is sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 't will sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon! [*A noise without.*]
The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly. A low voice sings.*]

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the
surest:

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape
cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's
warble!

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

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights
were moonless,

"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's out-
break tuneless,

"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!)
adore her,

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

[*He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.*]

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

[*The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*]

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!

Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.

Mer. 'Tis mine!

The meeting that appalled us both so much
 Is ended.

Mil. What begins now?

Mer. Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

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

Mer. Oh Mildred, have I met your brother's face,
 Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
 Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
 The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me
 Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
 Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
 And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
 Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
 On the strange unrest of our night, confused
 With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see

No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
 On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
 And no expressless glory in the East?
 When I am by you, to be ever by you,
 When I have won you and may worship you,
 Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?

Mil. Sin has surprised us; so will punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone!

Mil.

The night

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

Mer.

Of your life

I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
 A thought about when you are by me?—you
 It was, I said my folly called the storm
 And pulled the night upon. 'T was day with me—
 Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil.

Come what, come will,

You have been happy: take my hand!

Mer. [*after a pause.*]

How good

Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
 Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil.

They told me all.

I know all.

Mer.

It will soon be over.

Mil.

Over?

Oh, what is over? what must I live through
 And say, "'t is over"? Is our meeting over?
 Have I received in presence of them all

The partner of my guilty love,—with brow
 Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
 Which make believe that when they strive to form
 Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
 It is the nearest ever they approached
 A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—
 With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that *is* . . .
 Ah God! some prodigy of Thine will stop
 This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
 In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot
 Will mar the brow's dissimulating—I
 Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
 But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
 The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
 Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount
 That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
 . . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
 This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
 That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!

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

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

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mer. When? to-morrow!

Get done with it!

Mil. Oh Henry, not to-morrow!
 Next day! I never shall prepare my words

And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must
Despise me!

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

Mil. Dear Henry!

Mer. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,

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

Mil.

Do you believe . . .

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

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

Mildred, I love you and you love me!

Mil. Go!

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

Mer. This is not our last meeting?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then!

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

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

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be! but——

You are cautious, Love?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

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

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

ACT II.

SCENE. *The Library.**Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.*

This way! In, Gerard, quick!

[As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures the door.

Now speak! or, wait—

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

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale

You just now told me; it eludes me; either

I did not listen, or the half is gone

Away from me. How long have you lived here?

Here in my house, your father kept our woods

Before you?

Ger. —As his father did, my lord.

I have been eating, sixty years almost,

Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes. You ever were of all

The servants in my father's house, I know,

The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Ger. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .*Tresh.* Since when?*Ger.* At least

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

Tresh. Tush, "access"—

No wide words like "access" to me!

Ger. He runs

Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue...

Tresh. The last great yew-tree?

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

Tresh. Quick!

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

Tresh. —Which
He enters not! Gerard—some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not enter?
Gerard?

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

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

Ger. —Is moved at midnight higher up

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

Tresh. —And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw

Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you

Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left

My range so far, to track the stranger stag

That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent

No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

Ger. But

He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,

From Lady Mildred's chamber.

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

Ger. Oh my lord, only once—let me this once

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted

All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net

Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I turned

To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,

If down I flung myself and strove to die.

The lady could not have been seven years old

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

Tresh.

No—

No, Gerard !

Ger. Let me go !

Tresh. A man, you say :

What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress.

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

Tresh. Why ?

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

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

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

TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,

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

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

GUENDOLEN'S voice is heard at the door.

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

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

Tresh. Come in! [*She enters.*
Ah Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more?

Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen. Pleasant question! more?

This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!

Tresh. Who, I?

You laugh at me.

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

Tresh. When left you Mildred's chamber?

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

Tresh. Send her here!

Guen. Thorold?

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

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. Ah, you guessed aright!

I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—

That is, at once! here in the library!
 The passage in that old Italian book
 We hunted for so long is found, say,—found—
 And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
 That she must come—and instantly!

Guen.

I'll die

Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
 Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresh.

Go! or, Guendolen,

Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
 In the adjoining gallery! There, go! [*GUENDOLEN goes.*
 Another lesson to me! you might bid
 A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
 Some sly investigation point by point
 With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
 The inquisitorial cleverness some praise!
 If you had told me yesterday, "There 's one
 "You needs must circumvent and practise with
 "Entrap by policies, if you would worm
 "The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!"—here,
 There—reasoning is thrown away on it!
 Prove she 's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
 That she 's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
 Where I can comprehend nought, nought 's to say,
 Or do, or think! Force on me but the first
 Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
 And I shall ne'er make count of them!

Enter MILDRED.

Mil.

What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen.

Thought you were pale: you are not pale. That book?
That's Latin surely.

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

Mil. True love.

Tresh. I mean, and should have said, whose love
is best

Of all that love or that profess to love?

Mil. The list's so long: there's father's, mother's,
husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,
Enriched her—so your love can claim no right
O'er hers save pure love's claim: that's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem,

—Much head these make against the new-comer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
... *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
'T was winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
"Arise and come away!" Come whither?—far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! all which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,
—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.

Mil. What is this for?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for!

Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
That's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours—
So close you live and yet so far apart!

And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery
 That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

Mil. . . .

Speak!

Tresh.

I will.

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

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

[*After a pause.*]

Then, his name!

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

Mil. . . .

Thorold, do you devise

Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
 There be! 't is nought to say that I'll endure
 And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge

Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire :

But do not plunge me into other guilt!

Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

Tresh. Then judge yourself! How should I act?

Pronounce!

Mil. Oh Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!

To die here in this chamber by that sword

Would seem like punishment—so should I glide,

Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!

'T were easily arranged for me: but you—

What would become of you?

Tresh.

And what will now

Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine

From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts

Under the marble of our chapel-floor;

They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed

Your paramour above our mother's tomb;

Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.

We two will somehow wear this one day out:

But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!

The youth without suspicion that faces come

From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence proceed
such hearts?

I have dispatched last night at your command

A missive bidding him present himself

To-morrow here—thus much is said; the rest

Is understood as if 't were written down—

“His suit finds favour in your eyes:”—now dictate

This morning's letter that shall countermand

Last night's—do dictate that!

Mil. But Thorold—if

I will receive him as I said?

Tresh. *The Earl?*

Mil. I will receive him.

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

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

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

The woman there!

Aus. & Guen. How? Mildred?

Tresh. Mildred once!

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

Guen. Oh Mildred, look to me, at least!

Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
 Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresh. You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much! you must proceed no further.

Mil. Yes—

Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!

Tresh. All is truth,
 She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
 All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
 Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
 Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
 I'd bind myself before them to exact
 The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
 The sight of her, the bare least memory
 Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
 Above all prides, my all in all so long,
 Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
 What were it silently to waste away
 And see her waste away from this day forth,
 Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
 And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,
 Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
 It were not so impossible to bear.
 But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
 Of love with the successful gallant there,
 She calmly bids me help her to entice,
 Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
 Who thinks her all that's chaste and good and pure,
 —Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
 As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
 —That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—

This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
 Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
 "Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray
 "No comradé I've pledged faith to!"—you have heard
 Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied
 By wild-illicit ties to losels wife
 You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
 "Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
 "In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
 "Repute or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
 Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
 As to so many friends; bad as you please,
 You've felt they were God's men and women still,
 So, not to be disowned by you. But she,
 That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
 As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
 Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
 I curse her to her face before you all.
 Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
 To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.]

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

Guen.

We?

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

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

Guen.

Us two?

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

And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
 —Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
 Your side, go off with you and all your shame
 To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
 Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's
 Your brother: says he does not believe half—
 No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
 Look up and take his hand!

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

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

Guen. Mildred!

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

Guen. What is this?
 Where start you to?

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

Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will
 wait
 Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guen. You love him still, then?

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

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

Mil. There is a cloud around me.

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

Mil. I say there is a cloud..

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

Mil. What maddest fancy...

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

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

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

Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

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

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

Mil. Ah Heaven, he's lost!

Guen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Aus. Thorold's gone,

I know not how, across the meadow-land.

I watched him till I lost him in the skirts

Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone? All thwarts us.

Mil. Thorold too?

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

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek

Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,

The greatest comfort in the world. You said

There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,

He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come

ACT III.

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

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

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

On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
 On many a beauty's wimple—would proceed
 No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its root,
 Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
 Why came I here? What must I do? [*a bell strikes.*]

A bell?

Midnight! and 't is at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
 —Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
 And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enters*

MERTOUN *cloaked as before.*

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

[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
 I never saw it lovelier than now.
 It rises for the last time. If it sets,
 'T is that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

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

TRESHAM *arrests his arm.*

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

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

Mer. I am armed, fool!

Tresh. Yes,

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

Mer. That voice!

Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.
 I'll come with you. [*They advance.*]

Tresh. You're armed: that's well!

Your name—who are you?

Mer. (Tresham!—she is lost!)

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

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
 Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
 That he for his own sake forbear to ask
 My name! As Heaven's above, his future weal

Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!

I read your white inexorable face.

Know me, Lord Tresham! [*He throws off his disguises.*]

Tresh.

Mertoun!

[*After a pause.*]

Draw now!

Mer.

Hear me

But speak first!

Tresh. Not one least word on your life!

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat

The least word that informs me how you live

And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 't was you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.

We should join hands in frantic sympathy

If you once taught me the unteachable,

Explained how you can live so, and so lie.

With God's help I retain, despite my sense,

The old belief—a life like yours is still

Impossible. Now draw!

Mer.

Not for my sake,

Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,

And most, for her sake!

Tresh.

Ha ha, what should I

Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,

How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that's pride

No doubt, to him! one spurns him, does one not?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits

Into his face! Come! which, or all of these?

Mer. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be
judge!

Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!

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

Tresh. You are not hurt?

Mer. You 'll hear me now,

Tresh. But rise!

Mer. Ah Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow-man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?

Tresh. Not hurt? It cannot be!

You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?

Mer. My lord—

Tresh. How young he is!

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

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

Mer. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong, and knew it not—
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life—you feel
How less than nothing had been giving you
The life you've taken! But I thought my way

The better—only for your sake and hers.
 And as you have decided otherwise,
 Would I had an infinity of lives
 To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think
 Can you from out the minutes I have left
 Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!
 For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresh.

I do

Forgive you.

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

Tresh.

Mertoun, haste

And anger have undone us. 'T is not you
 Should tell me for a novelty you 're young,
 Thoughtless, unable to recall the Past.
 Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mer. Ah Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
 Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
 Why, 't was my very fear of you, my love
 Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one
 Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—
 You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
 To knit myself to you: but I was young,
 And your surpassing reputation kept me
 So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday

Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
 Had taken place perchance six months ago!
 Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
 I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
 Let me look up into your face; I feel
 'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
 Where? where?!

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

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

Tresh. Yes; be satisfied!
 That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
 Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—
 You, not another—say, I saw him die
 As he breathed this, "I love her"—you don't know
 What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
 Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
 With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
 Who had no pity, will have no remorse,

Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
 Dear Mildred! 't is so easy, and you'll 'scape
 So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
 With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
 Done to you?—heartless men to have my heart,
 And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
 Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
 Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
 The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mildred! Leave
 Their honourable world to them! for God
 We're good enough, though the world casts us out.

[A whistle is heard.]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

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

Mer. There's light—

Light all about me, and I move to it.
 Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
 Just promise to deliver words of mine
 To Mildred?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now?

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

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

Mer. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!
 There! stay you! there!

[Dies.]

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

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

Guen. She will die.

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

Aus. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresh. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him?

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

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

Guen. Where are you taking me?

Tresh. He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have thought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,

Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
 When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
 Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
 Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
 Another kind of shade than when the night
 Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
 But will you ever so forget his breast,
 As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
 Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
 You turn your head: and *I* then?—

Guen. What is done
 Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
 Bear up against this burden: more remains
 To set the neck to.

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

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

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
 Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
 Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet

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

Tresh. [*without.*] Mildred!

Mil.

Come in! Heaven hears me

[*Enter TRESHAM.*]

You? alone

Oh, no more cursing !

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit !

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse ! deliver all you come to say !

What must become of me ? Oh speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheek so pale !

Tresh. My thought ?

Mil. All of it !

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are you, too, silent?

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

Ah, this speaks for you!

You've murdered Henry Mertoun! now proceed!

What is it I must pardon? This and all?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresh. He bade me tell you . . .

Mil. What I do forbid

Your utterance of! so much that you may tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more

Than bleeding out his life there: must I say

“Indeed,” to that? Enough! I pardon you!

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh word
yes:

Of this last deed Another's Judge; whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

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

You loose my soul of all its cares at once.

Death makes me sure of him for ever! You

Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,

And take my answer—not in words, but reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,

Which death . . .

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

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

Tresh. Him you loved:
And me?

Mil. Ah Thorold! was't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me!—you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honour bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down!

Tresh. No! no!
Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him,
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it! I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable

Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
 Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath!
 I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.
 There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—
 You curse me?

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

[Falls on his neck

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

[Dies

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

Guen. [without.] Mildred! Tresham!

[Entering with AUSTIN.] Thorold,

I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
 That's well.

Tresh. Oh, better far than that!

Guen. She's dead!

Let me unlock her arms!

Fresh. She threw them thus
 out my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
 'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

Fus. Leave her
 I look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

Fuen. White
 she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!

Fus. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
 his lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:
 ah, dearest Thorold!

Fresh. Something does weigh down
 my neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
 for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there,
 I will pass away soon!—ah,—I had forgotten:
 I am dying.

Fuen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this?

Fresh. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
 the earth would be no longer earth to me,
 and life out of all life was gone from me!
 There are blind ways provided, the foredone
 art-weary player in this pageant-world
 slips out by, letting the main masque defile
 the conspicuous portal: I am through—
 I am through!

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

Fresh. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.
 See you, Austin—feel you: here's my hand,
 take yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too!
 you're Lord and Lady now—you're Treshams; name

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

Aus. No blot shall come

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

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

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY.

A PLAY.

*"Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?"—HANNER.*

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

WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO
GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

London, 1844.

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.

SABYNE }
ADOLF } Her Attendants.

GUIBERT }
GAUCELME }
MAUFROY } Courtiers.
CLUGNET }

VALANCE, Advocate of Cleves.

PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.

MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

ACT I.

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

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

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

Oh, miserable lady!

1st Court. Ay, indeed?

2nd Court. Well, Guibert?

3rd Court. But your news, my friend, your news!
 The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,
 The better for us all: how writes the Prince?
 Give me—I'll read it for the common good.

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

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

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

Enter ADOLF.

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

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert! 'T was the Prince's express charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough! [*ADOLF retires.*]
Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
To find me never in the mood to quit?
—Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—
This to present our lady. Who'll accept?
You,—you,—you? There it lies, and may, for me!

Mau. [*a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.*]
“Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
“Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day

“To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,
“The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France”.

Gau. Sufficient “titles following,” I judge!

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

Man. “—And take possession of the Duchy held
“Since twelve months, to the true heir’s prejudice,
“By” . . . Colombe, Juliers’ mistress, so she thinks,
And Ravestein’s mere lady, as we find!

Who wants the place and paper? Guibert’s right!
I hope to climb a little in the world,—

I’d push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
Could tell her on this happy day of days,

That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
There’s nothing left to call her own! Sir Clugnet,
You famish for promotion; what say you?

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

Of service: services ask recompense:

What kind of corner may be Ravestein?

Gui. The castle?—Oh, you’d share her fortunes?
Good!

Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clug. Oh,—but the town?

Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts;

A church whereto was once a spire, ’t is judged;
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clug. Still, there’s some revenue?

Gui. Else Heaven forefend!

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

Clug. If not ?

Gui. Hang guilders, then—he blesses you !

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

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

Gau. Some one must tell her.

Gui. Some one may : you may !

Gau. Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me sick
 Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
 But this goes near it. Where's there news at all ?
 Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
 He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
 That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law ;
 That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
 And, she away, indisputable heir,
 Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
 Claimed Juliers ?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
 That first this, then another potentate,
 Inclined to its allowance ?—I, or you,
 Or any one except the lady's self ?
 Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
 To break the business to her ! Things might change :
 At all events, we'd see next masque at end,

Next mummerly over first: and so the edge
Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she
—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood
About the world, by feigning grievances—
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
And fewer listen to, a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try mine!
And, since this must be carried . . .

Gui. [*snatching the paper from him.*] By your leave!
Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not serve the Prince
So much as you expect, this course you'd take.
If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;
But if she died upon its threshold,—no:
He'd have the trouble of removing her.
Come, gentles, we're all—what the devil knows!
You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside—
You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession—never blush!
You're from my province, and, be comforted,
They tell of it with wonder to this day.
You can afford to let your talent sleep.
We'll take the very worst supposed, as true:
There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke!
There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything

More than a young maid with the bluest eyes :
 And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart
 Coolly as Gaucelme could and would ! No haste !
 His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud :
 We'll not advance to his perfection yet—
 Will we, Sir Maufroy ? See, I've ruined Maufroy
 For ever as a courtier !

Gau. Here's a coil !

And, count us, will you ? Count its residue,
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd !
 A birthday, too, a gratulation-day !
 I'm dumb : bid that keep silence !

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert ?

He's right : that does say something : that's bare
 truth.

Ten—twelve, I make : a perilous dropping off !

Gui. Pooh—is it audience hour ? The vestibule
 Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
 That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf ! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*] Who's outside ?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice !
 Nobody waiting ?

Mau. [*looking through the door-folds.*] Scarce our
 number !

Gui. 'Sdeath !

Nothing to beg for, to complain about ?
 It can't be ! Ill news spreads, but not so fast
 As thus to frighten all the world !

Gau. The world

Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
 By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
 Wherever warmth's perpetual : outside's free
 To every wind from every compass-point
 And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
 The Prince comes and the lady's People go ;
 The snow-geese settles down, the swallows flee—
 Why should they wait for winter-time ? 'T is instinct ;
 Don't you feel somewhat chilly ?

Gui.

That's their craft ?

And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth
 That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,
 Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs !
 Well, 't is my comfort, you could never call me
 The People's Friend ! The People keep their word—
 I keep my place : don't doubt I'll entertain
 The People when the Prince comes, and the People
 Are talked of ! Then, their speeches—no one tongue
 Found respite, not a pen had holiday
 —For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves !
 Now see : we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
 They wince and fret enough, but pay they must
 —We manage that,—so, pay with a good grace
 They might as well, it costs so little more.
 But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next
 Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
 In public—there they have us if they will,
 We're at their mercy after that, you see !
 For one tax not ten devils could extort—

Over and above necessity, a grace;
 This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
 Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute-penny,
 And crowning attestation, all works well.
 Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
 These cappings quick, and crook-and-cringings low,
 Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
 With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth—
 So tender they their love; and, tender made,
 Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.
 As if their souls were any longer theirs!
 As if they had not given ample warrant
 To who should clap a collar on their neck,
 Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
 And take them for the brute they boast themselves!
 Stay—there's a bustle at the outer door—
 And somebody entreating . . . that's my name!
 Adolf,—I heard my name!

Adolf. 'T was probably
 The suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one?

Adolf. With a suit
 He'd fain enforce in person.

Gui. The good heart
 —And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold!
 Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel . . . ay,
 The very cloak my comrades tore!

Gui. Why tore?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim:
Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. Where 's he now?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more:
They have ado enough to thrust him back.

Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught?

Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What was it?—You had known him formerly,
And, he believed, would help him did you guess
He waited now; you promised him as much:
The old plea! 'Faith, he 's back,—renews the charge!
[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys,
peace outside—

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,
A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
At each repulse—

Gau. I noticed he 'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!
(*To GUIBERT.*)—Sir, he has seen you! Now cross
halberts! Ha—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too!
No passage! Whither would the madman press?
Close the doors quick on me!

Gui.

Too late! he's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me?—Me, that come
 Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
 To represent their heights and depths of woe
 Before our Duchess and obtain relief!
 Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
 But not a common hindrance drives me back
 On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
 With hope for the first time, which sent me forth.
 Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women, speak!
 Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile
 That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
 —Who sit—your weakest—by the city gates,
 To take me fuller of what news I bring
 As I return—for I must needs return!
 —Can I? 'T were hard, no listener for their wrongs,
 To turn them back upon the old despair—
 Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
 No, I do—any way you please—implore!
 If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?
 Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!
 —Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
 Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
 Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
 Of the very levity and recklessness
 Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.
 Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
 Is Cleves forgotten?—Then, remember me!

You promised me that you would help me once
For other purpose: will you keep your word?

Gui. And who may you be, friend?

Val.

Valence of Cleves.

Gui. Valence of . . . not the Advocate of Cleves,
I owed my whole estate to, three years back?
Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,
You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
I was so nearly ousted of my land
By some knaves'-pretext,—(eh? when you refused me
Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!)—and you've heard
How I recovered it by miraele
—(When I refused her!) Here's the very friend,
—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!
Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you:
I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
But politic am I—I bear a brain,
Can cast about a little, might require
Your services a second time. I tried
To tempt you with advancement here to court
—“No!”—well, for curiosity at least
To view our life here—“No!”—our Duchess, then,—
A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,
Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
Complete the forehead pale and tresses pure . . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.

Gui. So much for taste! But “come,”—
So may you be, for anything I know,

To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
 And with an equal chance you get all three !
 If it was ever worth your while to come,
 Was not the proper way worth finding too ?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—

Gui. —And said ?—

Val. —That I had brought the miseries
 Of a whole city to relieve.

Gui. —Which saying
 Won your admittance ? You saw me, indeed,
 And here, no doubt, you stand : as certainly,
 My intervention, I shall not dispute,
 Procures you audience ; which, if I procure,—
 That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,
 Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
 Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C !
 Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
 And launch these " miseries " from first to last ?

Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside ?

Gau. [to VALENCE.] My worthy sir, one question :
 you've come straight

From Cleves, you tell us : heard you any talk
 At Cleves about our lady ?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what ?

Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

Gau. That, you believed ?

Val. You see me, sir !

Gau. —Not stopped

Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any—rumours you might find afloat ?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gau. This is the lady's birthday, do you know ?
—Her day of pleasure ?

Val. —I know that the great,
For pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude pleasure when a duty offers :
Even as, the lowly too, for duty born,
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach :
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir !

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, here's your
man ! No scruples now—
You'll never find his like ! Time presses hard.
I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.
[*Pointing to VALENCE.*] Entrust him with it—fool no
chance away !

Gui. —Him ?

Gau. —With the missive ! What's the
man to her ?

Gui. No bad thought !—Yet, 't is yours, who ever
played

The tempting serpent : else 't were no bad thought !
I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

Enter an Official who communicates with ADOLF.

*Adolf.** The Duchess will receive the Court !

Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,
I'll help you: we of the service, you're to mark,
Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks
Outside, get access through our help alone.
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady, with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.

Val. I grieve that I must ask,—
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,—
To what the price of such a favour mounts?

Gui. Just so! You're not without a courtier's
tact.

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.

Val. Yours is?—

Gui. A trifle: here's a document
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it? Just say, "I am bidden lay
"This paper at the Duchess' feet."

Val. No more?
I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the Court!

Gui. [*Aside.*] Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-priest! Do—

Whoever 's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back;
Peaceably let me bang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!

[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and move toward the door.*]

After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly!
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;
Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!

Val.

I shall speak.

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do!
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
“Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll perish
“Beside your Grace!”—and so give me the cue
To . . .

Gui. Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive!

[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half suspect

You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
 I' the lady's favour: is't the grand harangue
 You mean to make, that thus engrosses you?
 —Which of her virtues you'll apostrophize?
 Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
 Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair?
 Or what else ponder you?

Val.

My townsmen's wrongs!

ACT II.

Noon.—SCENE. *The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS and SABYNE.

The D. Announce that I am ready for the Court!

Sab. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I think; your
 Grace

May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
 And shun the crowd: but few can have arrived.

The D. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away!
 'Twas me, this day, last year at Ravestein,
 You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
 This half-hour. Do you hesitate?

Sab.

Forgive me!

The D. Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten to make sure
 Of one true thanker: here with you begins

• •

My audience, claim you first its privilege !
 It is my birth's event they celebrate :
 You need not wish me more such happy days,
 But—ask some favour ! Have you none to ask ?
 Has Adolf none, then ? this was far from least
 Of much I waited for impatiently,
 Assure yourself ! It seemed so natural
 Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
 Should be the power and leave of doing good
 To you, and greater pleasure to myself ;
 You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf ?
 The rest is my concern.

Sab. Your Grace is ever
 Our Lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf . . .

The D. “But” ? You have not, sure, changed in
 your regard
 And purpose towards him ?

Sab. *We change !*

The D. Well then ? Well ?

Sab. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
 Leave Juliers, when—when . . . but 't is audience-
 time !

The D. “When, if you left me, I were left indeed !”
 Would you subjoin that ?—Bid the Court approach !
 —Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne ?
 Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
 If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
 There is a cause ? Of last year's fervid throng
 Scarce one half comes now.

Sab. [*Aside.*] One half? No, alas!

The D. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart.
They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love.
Admit them!

Sab. [*Aside.*] How much has she really learned?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
The fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!

[SABYNE goes out.]

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too.
Next year 't is the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again.
—It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain
To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood! Some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all

They looked for: why then cease to do it now?
 Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
 And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
 Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
 It cannot nor it shall not be! His right?
 Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
 —But who bade all of you surround my life
 And close its growth up with your Ducal crown
 Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
 I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
 Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
 Would take that life away and give me this,
 And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your
 Grace!

The D. [*Aside, as they pay their devoir.*] The same
 words, the same faces,—the same love!

I have been over-fearful. These are few;
 But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.
 As many come as may; and if no more,
 'Tis that these few suffice—they do suffice!
 What succour may not next year bring me? Plainly,
 I feared too soon. [*To the Court.*] I thank you, sirs:
 all thanks!

. *Val.* [*Aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group
 to another, conversing.*]

'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,

When, for a golden moment at our Cleves,
 She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
 Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke
 —Not that she could have noted the recluse
 —Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed.
 Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
 Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!
 She was above it—but so would not sink
 My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers—
 Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,
 Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
 Ere she retired and left me—them? She turns—
 There's all her wondrous face at once! The ground
 Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his
 paper.*] These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!
The D. [*to the Court.*] Nay, compliment enough!
 and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.
 'T was fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
 I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
 Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for pleasure:
 Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

Gau. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your
 Should never go together? [Grace,

Gui. How, Sir Gaucelme?

Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
 At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?
 As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
 When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone!

Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!

The D. True: you enable me to risk my Future,
By giving me a Past beyond recall.

I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:

Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!

And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of?

[*As they advance a little, and GUIBERT speaks—*

—That gentleman?

Val. [*Aside.*] I feel her eyes on me!

Gui. [*to VALENCE.*] The Duchess, sir, inclines to
hear your suit.

Advance! He is from Cleves.

Val. [*coming forward.*] [*Aside.*] Their wrongs—
their wrongs!

The D. And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh
in mind,

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!

She entertained me bravely, but the best

Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by

With insuppressive joy on every face!

What says my ancient, famous, happy Cleves?

Val. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth!

So think my friends: nor do they less deserve

The having you to take it, you shall think,

When you know all—nay, when you only know

How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,

When the poor acquiescing multitude

Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart

Into unnoticed corners, that the few,

Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
 Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
 With joyous faces fit to bear away
 And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
 —How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
 Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
 Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,
 That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,
 And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them
 To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
 —How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
 Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
 Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
 —Then I, their friend, had only to suggest
 “Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!”—
 And as one man they cried “He speaks the truth:
 “Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths
 “Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!”
 —This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.
The D. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now
 and thus?

I thank you—in that paper? Give it me!

Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced
 Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget
 I buy the privilege of this approach,
 And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet!

[Presenting GUIBERT'S paper.]

Gui. Stay! for the present . . .

The D.

Stay, sir? I take aught

That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your Ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily; then, turning to the Courtiers—*
What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me; well, you erred—
Well, 't was a weed: remove the eye-sore quick!
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
—That if 't be faded 't is with prayer's sole breath—
That the one day it boasted was God's day?
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers'
Duke, it seems—

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—
Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!
Find out their love,—I could not; find their fear,—

I would not; find their like,—I never shall,
Among the flowers! *[Taking off her coronet.*

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

Val. [advancing to GUIBERT.] Sir Guibert,—knight,
they call you—this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find;

For that, so sure as you and I are men,

We reckon to the utmost presently:

But as you are a courtier and I none,

Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance

Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her:

—I am degraded—you, let me address!

Out of her presence, all is plain enough

What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there's something proper to be done.

[To the others.] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—
May I not strike this man to earth?

*The Courtiers. [as GUIBERT springs forward, with-
holding him.]* Let go!

—The Clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace a churl?

The D. [to VALENCE.] Oh, be acquainted with your
party, sir!

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;

A lion crests him for a cognisance

“Scorning to waver”—that's his 'scutcheon's word;

His office with the new Duke—probably
 The same in honour as with me ; or more,
 By so much as this gallant turn deserves :
 He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times
 The rank and influence that remain with her
 Whose part you take ! So, lest for taking it
 You suffer . . .

Val. I may strike him then to earth ?

Gui. [*falling on his knee.*] Great and dear lady
 pardon me ! Hear once !

Believe me and be merciful—be just !

I could not bring myself to give that paper

Without a keener pang than I dared meet

—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here

—No one dared meet it. Protestation's cheap,—

But, if to die for you did any good,

[*To GAUCELME.*] Would not I die, sir ? Say your worst
 of me !

But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.

And since the hint of a resistance, even,

Would just precipitate, on you the first,

A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,

Saving myself indubitable pain,

I thought to give you pleasure (who might say ?)

By showing that your only subject found

To carry the sad notice, was the man

Precisely ignorant of its contents ;

A nameless, mere provincial advocate ;

One whom 't was like you never saw before,

Never would see again. All has gone wrong ;
But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust !

The D. A nameless advocate, this gentleman ?—

(I pardon you, Sir Guibert !)

Gui. [*rising, to VALENCE.*]—Sir, and you ?—

Val.—Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with !

The D. One I have never seen, much less obliged ?—

Val. Dare I speak, lady ?

The D. Dare you ! Heard you not
I rule no longer ?

Val. Lady, if your rule

Were based alone on such a ground as these

[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*]

Could furnish you,—abjure it ! They have hidden
A source of true dominion from your sight.

The D. You hear them—no such source is left . . .

Val. Hear Cleves !

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour ?
What makes—instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,
—What makes that there's an easier help, they think,
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,

Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,—
 You simply have to understand their wrongs,
 And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,
 And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?
 There is a vision in the heart of each
 Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
 To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure :
 And these, embodied in a woman's form
 That best transmits them, pure as first received,
 From God above her, to mankind below:
 Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
 Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
 Of this man—this—and this ?

The D. [after a pause.] You come from Cleves.
 How many are at Cleves of such a mind ?

Val. [from his paper.] “ We, all the manufacturers
 of Cleves ”—

The D. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
 Are you my subject ? such as you describe
 Am I to you, though to no other man ?

Val. [from his paper.]—“ Valence, ordained your
 Advocate at Cleves ”—

The D. [replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves'
 Duchess ! Take you note,
 While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
 I stand her lady till she waves me off !
 For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold ;
 Laugh at each menace ; and, his power defying,
 Return his missive with its due contempt !

[Casting it away.]

Gui. [*picking it up.*]—Which to the Prince I will deliver, lady,

[*Note it down, Gaucelme*]—with your message too!

The D. I think the office is a subject's, sir!

—Either . . . , how style you him?—my special guarder

The Marshal's—for who knows but violence

May follow the delivery!—Or, perhaps,

My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge

On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—

For I may violate established form!

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,

Will you become all these to me?

Val. [*falling on his knee.*] My Liege!

The D. Give me!

[*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*

[*Putting them by.*]—Whatever was their virtue once,

They need new consecration. [*raising VALENCE.*]

Are you mine?

—I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires*

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!

A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!

I'll stand by her,—and I, whate'er betide!

Gui. [*to VALENCE.*] Well done, well done, sir! I care not who knows,

You have done nobly, and I envy you—

Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

The 'pay and the preferment, make our prize.
Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith sub-
sist

Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,
Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,
Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,
Are not released—having been pledged away
I wonder, with what zeal and faith in turn?
Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—
I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,
If I had time and skill to argue it.
Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—
If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—
(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

Gau.—Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,
His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor,
And Chamberlain, and Heaven knows what beside!

Clug. [to VALENCE.] You stare, young sir, and
threaten! Let me say,
That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman;
While now . . .

Val. —You are Head-Lackey? With your office
I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers to Clug. Let him talk!
Fidelity, disinterestedness,

Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever
Who, staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts
all out!

2nd Court. Let Gaucelme speak first!

3rd Court. Better I began
About the state of Juliers: should one say
All's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Court. —Or rather
All's prostrate and imploring him!

5th Court. That's best!
Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

4th Court. [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—
If you'll but give that paper—trust it me,
I'll warrant . . .

5th Court. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!

Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
By virtue of his patent?

Gau. Patents?—Duties?
All that, my masters, must begin again!

One word composes the whole controversy:

We're simply now—the Prince's!

The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SĄBYNE.

Sab. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?
She needs him! Who is here the Duchess's?

Val. [*starting from his reverie.*] Most gratefully I
follow to her feet!

ACT III.

Afternoon. SCENE.—The Vestibule.

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Berth. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept
Cologne:

Better try Aix, though!—

Mel. Please 't your Highness speak?

Berth. [*as before.*] Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—
Milan;—Rome!—

Mel. . . . —The Grave.

—More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock;
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
You must not look for next achievement's palm

So easily: this will hurt your conquering!

Berth. Mynext? Ay—as you say, my next and next!
 Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
 This quiet entrance-morning: listen why!
 Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'t is indeed
 One link, however insignificant,
 Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,
 —A link I must secure; but otherwise,
 You'd wonder I esteemed it worth my grasp.
 Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!
 It happens now—this very nook—to be
 A place that once . . . not a long while since, neither—
 When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
 Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
 Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
 A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
 Shone my ambition's object; to be Duke—
 Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.
 My rights were far from being judged as plain
 In those days as of late, I promise you:
 And 't was my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
 Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
 Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
 (I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,
 And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
 Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now
 Hearken: if ever I be Emperor,
 Remind me what I felt and said to-day!

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me.

—And so will weariness cling to you! Wrong,
 Wrong! Had you sought the lady's court yourself,—
 Faced the redoubtables composing it,
 Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other,—
 Pleaded, by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
 Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—
 And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
 On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
 And justice done to divers faculties
 Shūt in that brow. Yourself were visible
 As you stood victor, then; whom now—(your pardon!)
 I am forced narrowly to search and see—
 So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—
 Your cousin, the other King! You are a mind,—
 They, body: too much of mere legs-and-arms
 Obstructs the mind so! Match these with their like:
 Match mind with mind!

Berth. And where's your mind to match?
 They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal!
 I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind?

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*]

Mel. Got out of sight when you came troops and all!
 And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood—
 A smug œconomy of both, this first!

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*]

Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?

Berth. Help me receive them!

Mel. Oh, they just will say
 What yesterday at Aix their fellows said,—

At Treves, the day before!—Sir Prince, my friend,
 Why do you let your life slip thus?—Meantime,
 I have my little Juliers to achieve—
 The understanding this tough Platonist,
 Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius—
 Lend me a company of horse and foot,
 To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!

Berth. And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?

Mel. To help me through your uncle's comment,
 Prince! [*Goes.*

Berth. Ah? Well! he o'er-refines—the scholar's
 fault!

How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
 I lead now, differs from the common life
 Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
 Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree—
 Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—
 Enough to care about and struggle for,
 In this world: for this world, the size of things;
 The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt!
 A great is better than a little aim:
 And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
 And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
 Was I more happy than I should be now

[By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.]

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit!
 —Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me sore
 To baffle, but for my advantages!
 All's best as 't is: these scholars talk and talk.

[Seats himself.]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to
his Heritage!

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised
The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,
With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!
The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
On strictest justice; if you concede it, therefore,
I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
Protesting they will see such claim enforced,
You easily may offer to assist us.
But there's a slight discretionary power
To serve me in the matter, you've had long,
Though late you use it. This is well to say—
But could you not have said it months ago?
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
'T is flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
Pick it, with all you placid standers-by—
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

Gui. (By Paul, the Advocate our doughty friend
Cuts the best figure!)

Gau. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berth. Loyalty? Yours?—Oh—of yourselves you
speak!
—I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my claims

As if they never had been made before,
 As I began, so must I end, it seems.
 The formal answer to the grave demand!
 What says the lady?

Courtiers. [*one to another.*] 1st Court. Marshal!

2nd Court. Orator!

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!

Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!

1st Court. Your place!

2nd Court. Just now it was your own!

Gui. The devil's!

Berth. [*to GUIBERT.*] Come forward, friend—you
 with the paper, there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?

By this time, I may boast proficiency

In each decorum of the circumstance!

Give it me as she gave it—the petition

(Demand, you style it)—what's required, in brief?—

What title's reservation, appanage's

Allowance?—I heard all at Treves, last week!

Gau. [*to GUIBERT.*] “Give it him as she gave it!”

Gui. And why not?

[*To BERTHOLD.*] The lady crushed your summons thus
 together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn

So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers. Stop—

Idiot!

Gui. —Inform you she denied your claim,

Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering Advocate!)

Berth. By heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

Gui. Did they at Treves, last week?

Berth. [*starting up.*] Why then, I look much bolder
than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought—
Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
For just so many dearest friends of mine,
Fled from the sinking to the rising power
—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!
Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,
With every soldier left behind at Aix!
Silence? That means the worst? I thought as much!
What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince—he raves!

Gui. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?

Berth. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?
—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?
Let me see her, or...

Gui. Her, without her leave,
Shall no one see: she's Duchess yet!

Courtiers. [*Footsteps without, as they are disputing.*]

Good chance!

She's here—the Lady Colombe's self!

Berth. 'T is well!

[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world?
Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind

To match one's mind with ? Colombe !—Let us wait !
I failed so, under that grey convent-wall !

She comes !

Gui. The Duchess ! strangers, range yourselves !

[*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with VALENCE,
BERTHOLD and the Courtiers fall back a little.*]

The D. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
My heart : the right is Berthold's and not mine !

Val. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete ?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over now !
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on ; that was a pang :
But I did bear it, and the worst is over.
Let the Prince take them !

Val. —And take Juliers too ?
—Your people without crosses, wands and chains—
Only with hearts ?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir !
I cannot give up what I never had :
For these I ruled, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir ? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first ; more news and more :
Closer and closer swam the thunder-cloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew !
At times, when to the casement I would turn,

At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
 I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
 Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
 Would interpose: I followed the bird's flight,
 Or plucked the flower—some one would interpose!

Val. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves
 there!

The D. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
 Its shadow goes without so much regret:
 Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
 Answer Prince Berthold!

Val. Then you acquiesce?

The D. Remember over whom it was I ruled!

Gui. [stepping forward.] Prince Berthold, yonder,
 craves an audience, Lady!

The D. [to VALENCE.] I only have to turn, and I
 shall face

Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
 It is the daughter of a line of Dukes,
 This scornful insolent adventurer
 Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
 I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
 But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
 Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me
 —What I shall call to mind I should have urged
 When time's gone by—'t will all be mine, you urge!
 A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
 My rule down! 'T is too sudden—must not be!
 The world's to hear of it! Once done—for ever!

How will it read, sir? How be sung about?
Prevent it!

Berth. [*approaching.*] Your frank indignation, lady,
Cannot escape me! Overbold I seem;
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise,
At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sakes, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps,
Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
No less by courtesy than relationship
Which, if you once forgot, I still remember.
But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer, that through you, I demand of these,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?

The D.

—Me,

You say, you do not speak to—

Berth.

Of your subjects

I ask, then: whom do you accredit? Where
Stand those should answer?

Val. [*advancing.*] The lady is alone!

Berth. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so bold?

Val. I said she was alone—

Berth.

—And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he feels alone?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,

Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape—
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man!
That strength performed its work and passed its way:
You see our lady: there, the old shapes stand!
—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
“Be helped their way, into their death put life
“And find advantage!”—so you counsel us.
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
The sea’s breast out,—as, littered ’mid the waves
The desert-brute makes for the desert’s joy,
So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o’er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
—And I am first her instinct fastens on!
And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,
The People will not have you; nor shall have!
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though that does much,
And men and children,—ay, and women too,
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—
But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot
Upon a steaming bloody plash—what then?
Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?
Lord it o’er troops whose force you concentrate,
A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—

Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,
 A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—
 But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
 Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
 For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
 We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil!
 —Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!—
 Our Duke?

Know yourself, know us!

Berth. [*who has been in thought.*] Know your lady,
 also!

[*Very deferentially.*]—To whom I needs must exculpate
 myself

From having made a rash demand, at least.
 Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
 Her chief adviser, I submit my claims, [*Giving papers.*
 But, this step taken, take no further step,
 Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.
 Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:
 Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!

[*He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the
 Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.*

1st Court. So, this was their device!

2nd Court. No bad device!

3rd Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's
 friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

4th Court. —And moreover,
 That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
 Their loves!

5th Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?

Gui. [*advancing.*] I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—

Others. And I—and I—and I!

The D. I took them, sirs!

Gui. [*Apart to VALENCE.*] And now, sir, I am simple knight again—

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront; whate'er your birth,—
As things stand now, I recognize yourself
(If you'll accept experience of some date).
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
To fight you: will you be as generous
And now fight me?

Val. Ask when my life is mine!

Gui. ('Tis hers now!)

Clug. [*Apart to VALENCE, as Guibert turns from him.*]

You, sir, have insulted me

Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You've granted him, just now, I make no question?

Val. I promise you, as him, sir!

Clug. Do you so?

Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir!

You'll get me reinstated in my office

As you will Guibert!

The D. I would be alone!

[*They begin to retire slowly: as VALENCE is about to follow—*

Alone, sir—only with my heart,—you stay!

Gau. You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me!

Cleves—

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—
 With great effect,—so those who listened said,
 My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?
 Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man!
 Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!
 The modest worth you mean to patronize!
 He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
 His sole contest is with the wrongs of Cleves!
 What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?

Gui. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof!—
 I'd back

And in her very face . . .

Gau. Apply the match

That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray?

Gui. With him!

Gau. Stand, rather, safe outside with me!

The mine's charged—shall I furnish you the match
 And place you properly?—To the antechamber!

Gui. Can you?

Gau. Try me!—Your friend's in fortune!

Gui. Quick—

To the antechamber!—He is pale with bliss!

Gau. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Gui. To the antechamber!

[*The Courtiers retire.*]

The D. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
 You were content! You spoke, and I am saved!

Val. Be not too sanguine, Lady! Ere you dream,
 That transient flush of generosity
 Fades off, perchance! The man, beside, is gone,—
 Him we might bend; but see, the papers here—
 Inalterably his requirement stays,
 And cold hard words have we to deal with now.
 In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,
 To self-denial not incompetent,
 But very like to hold itself dispensed
 From such a grace: however, let us hope!
 He is a noble spirit in noble form.
 I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
 As with the fancy how he could subject
 Himself upon occasion to—himself!
 From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;
 But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The D. You,—who have opened a new world to me,
 Will never take the faded language up
 Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,
 Or losing it—is that my sole world now?

Val. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise
 Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,
 Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:
 Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

The D. Nay, hear—
 False, I will never—rash, I would not be!
 This is indeed my Birthday—soul and body,
 Its hours have done on me the work of years.
 You hold the requisition: ponder it!

If I have right, my duty 's plain : if he—
 Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice !
 At night you meet the Prince ; meet me at eve :
 Till when, farewell ! This discomposes you ?
 Believe in your own nature, and its force
 Of renovating mine. I take my stand
 Only as under me the earth is firm :
 So, prove the first step stable, all will prove !
 That first, I choose—[*laying her hand on his,*]—the
 next to take, choose you ! [*She withdraws.*
Val. [*after a pause.*] What drew down this on me ?
 On me, dead once,

She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
 Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,
 Burst into life before her, as she bids
 Who needs them ! Whither will this reach, where end ?
 Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's above—
 So very far above me ! All 's too plain :
 I served her when the others sank away, .
 And she rewards me as such souls reward—
 The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
 The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,
 —Reward, that's little, in her generous thought,
 Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim
 Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is !
 She loves me !
 [*Looking at the Prince's papers.*]—Which love, these
 perchance, forbid.

Can I decide against myself—pronounce
 She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
 —Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every haggard face,—
 To sorrow and endure! I will do right
 Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV.

Evening.—SCENE. *An Antechamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now then, that we may speak—how spring
 this mine?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools!
 Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!
 “Stay, Valence! are not you my better self?”
 And her cheek mantled—

Gui. Well, she loves him, sir:
 And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,—
 She’s right: he’s worth it.

Gau. For his deeds to-day?
 Say so!

Gui. What should I say beside?

Gau. Not this—
 For friendship’s sake leave this for me to say—
 That we’re the dupes of an egregious cheat!
 This plain, unpractised suitor, who found way
 To the Duchess through the merest die’s turn-up

A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved.

Gui. Impossible!

Gau. —Nor say,

How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which—taking not their stand on facts
Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But worming on their way by craft, they choose
Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing off!
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
Not on the honest ground of preference,
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage, and loyal man.
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
—He's just her puppet for the nonce! You'll see,—
Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him: off goes the confederate:
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast: her hand, no
subject takes.

Do not our archives hold her father's will?

That will provides against such accident,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gau. I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince?
Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,
For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
If crowned with the success which seems its due,
In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chan. Incontrovertibly.

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to the train!

Gwi. Enough!

I'm with you: selfishness is best again!
I thought of turning honest—what a dream!
Let's wake now!

Gau. Selfish, friend, you never were:
'T was but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

Gwi. → Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince.

Gau. —The Prince, ere then dismissed
With thanks for playing his mock part so well?
Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night—
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,

Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Gui.—Our lady wedding Valence all the same
As if the penalty were undisclosed!

Good! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

Gau. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!
Within her, the inclining heart—without,
A terrible array of witnesses—
And Valence by, to keep her to her word,
With Berthold's indignation or disgust!
We'll try it!—Not that we can venture much.
Her confidence we've lost for ever.—Berthold's
Is all to gain!

Gui. To-night, then, venture we!
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed?

Gau. Never in noble natures! With the base ones,—
Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
And something grows and grows and gets to be
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will
Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:
But lop the lion's foot—and...

Gui. To the Prince!

Gau. [*Aside.*] And come what will to the lion's
foot, I pay you,
My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay!
[*Aloud.*] Footsteps! Himself! 'Tis Valence breaks
on us,
Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We'll hence—

And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first—
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

Clug. [to GAUCELME as they retire.] You have not
smiled so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Val. So must it be! I have examined these
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,
Keeping her image almost wholly off,
Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims,
And the result is . . . all men would pronounce
And not I, only, the result to be—
Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right
To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,
Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,
To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 't is gained,
Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.
—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?
Eject it from your heart, her home!—It stays!
Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!
—Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Cleves,—
I need not your pale faces! This, reward
For service done to you? Too horrible!
I never served you: 't was myself I served!
Nay, served not—rather saved from punishment
Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now!
My life continues yours, and your life, mine.
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—

Cleves!—If I breathe no prayer for it—if she,
[Footsteps without.]
 Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—
 Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
 I...

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir—I did not look for you
 Till night, in the Hall; nor have as yet declared
 My judgment to the lady.

Berth. So I hoped.

Val. And yet I scarcely know why that should check
 The frank disclosure of it first to you—
 What her right seems, and what, in consequence,
 She will decide on—

Berth. That I need not ask.

Val. You need not: I have proved the lady's mind—
 And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

Val. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture
 Bear herself bravely! she no whit depends
 On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,
 She had adorned..

Berth. A cottage—in what book
 Have I read that, of every queen that lived?
 A throne! You have not been instructed, sure,
 To forestal my request?

Val. 'T is granted, sir—
 My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized.
 Your claims...

Berth. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred!
I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest,
In favour of a new and stronger one.

Val. You shall not need a stronger : on the part
Of the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices : yours is clear.
Propose !

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and, at no far time,
Something here whispers me—the Emperor's.
The lady's mind is noble ; which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand !

Berth. (He will fall down and kiss it next !)
Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap.
Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Mark-
graves,
Remains their daughter ; I shall scarce gainsay !
Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule :
Like the imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !

Will the match influence many fortunes here?

A natural solicitude enough!

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you!

However high you take your present stand,

There's prospect of a higher still remove—

For Juliers will not be my resting-place,

And, when I have to choose a substitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.

You need not give your mates a character!

And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant

The grey smooth Chamberlain: he'd hesitate

A doubt his lady could demean herself

So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!

I like your method better: feeling's play

Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Val. I am to say, you love her?

Berth.

Say that too!

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,

With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents

In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes?

I see you have them here in goodly row;

You must be Luitpold,—ay, a stalwart sire!

—Say, I have been arrested suddenly

In my ambition's course, its rocky course,

By this sweet flower: I fain would gather it

And then proceed—so say and speedily.

—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self!)

Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.

This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,

And to this be it that, in the Hall to-night,
Your lady's answer comes; till when, farewell!

[*He retires.*]

Val. [*after a pause.*] The heavens and earth stay as
they were; my heart
Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth!
What falls away, then, if not faith in her?
Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value,—and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I now test her?—or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away: all's over!
But you are sorry for me? be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me! what I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer! what I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am!—for, once my rights proved void
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth.

Val. And what a lot is Berthold's!

The D. How of him?

Val. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms,
Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,
Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize;

A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content :
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.
After this star, out of a night he springs ;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits ; so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good :—with the world, each gift
Of God and man,—reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact—so well environ him,
That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the world,
While he, their master, dexterously slipt
From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
With his own prowess on the other half.
Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
Adding, to what is he, a solid strength—
An æry might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk

Become a comfort or a portent, how
 He trails his ermine take significance,—
 Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
 And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
 Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
 typified invincibility.

Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends—
 The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
 The fiery centre of an earthy world!

The D. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise
 Out of my own—that is, above my power
 Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

Val. For you?

The D. It was not I moved there, I think :
 But one I could,—though constantly beside,
 And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
 And so adore. 'T was a man moved there!

Val. Who?

The D. I felt the spirit, never saw the face.

Val. See it! 'T is Berthold's! He enables you
 To realize your vision.

The D. Berthold?

Val. Duke—

Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

The D. Generous and princely!

Val. He is all of this.

The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake! no
 hand
 Degrades me!

Val. You accept the proffered hand?

The D. That he should love me!

Val. "Loved" I did not say!

Had that been—love might so incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that's at his foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks.

The D. Not love me, sir?

Val. He scarce affirmed it.

The D. May not deeds affirm?

Val. What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he
does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance!

The D. Is not this love?

Val. So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully:
All doubts are banished, that the world might have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
May call up of your heart's sincereness now.
To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
"Yet I abjured it!" This, he does for you:
It is munificently much!

The D. Still "much!"

But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!

Val. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks

Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
 To the beloved : because bold confidence,
 Open superiority, free pride—
 Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned :
 Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
 Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The D. You reason, then, and doubt ?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love ?—How strange ! I never cast a
 thought

On that ! Just see our selfishness ! you seemed
 So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,
 I never dreamed another might divide
 My power with you, much less exceed it.

Val. Lady,

I am yours wholly.

The D. Oh, no, no, not mine !

'T is not the same now, never more can be !

—Your first love, doubtless ! Well, what's gone from
 me ?

What have I lost in you ?

Val. My heart replies—

No loss there ! So, to Berthold back again !
 This offer of his hand, he bids me make—
 Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

The D. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you !

Val. I am a simple Advocate of Cleves.

The D. You ! With the heart and brain that so
 helped me,

I fancied them exclusively my own,
 Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!
 She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

Val. Most fair, beyond conception or belief!

The D. Black eyes?—no matter! Colombe, the world
 leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed
 The only woman—see how true they spoke!
 One lived this while, who never saw your face,
 Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she from Cleves?

Val. Cleves knows her well!

The D. Ah—just a fancy, now!
 When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,
 —Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Val. You thought of me?

The D. Of whom else? Only such great cause, I
 thought,

For such effect: see what true love can do!
 Cleves is his love!—I almost fear to ask
 . . . And will not. This is idling: to our work!
 Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
 My claims misgrounded; then may follow better
 . . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,
 Was she in your mind?

Val. All done was done for her
 —To humble me!

The D. She will be proud at least!

Val. She?

The D. When you tell her.

Val. That will never be .

The D. How—are there sweeter things you hope to tell ?

No, sir ! You counselled me,—I counsel you
 In the one point I—any woman—can !
 Your worth, the first thing ; let her own come next—
 Say what you did through her, and she through you—
 The praises of her beauty afterward !
 Will you ?

Val. I dare not.

The D. Dare not ?

Val. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The D. You jest !

Val. The lady is above me and away !

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
 And the great heart, combine to press me low—
 But all the world calls rank divides us.

The D. Rank ?

Now grant me patience ! Here 's a man declares
 Oracularly in another's case—
 Sees the true value and the false, for them—
 Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see !
 You called my court's love worthless—so it turned :
 I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
 And here you stickle for a piece or two !
 First—has she seen you ?

Val. Yes.

The D. She loves you, then.

Val. One flash of hope burst; then succeeded night :
And all's at darkest now. Impossible!

The D. We'll try : you are—so to speak—my sub-
ject yet ?

Val. As ever—to the death!

The D. ObeY me, then !

Val. I must.

The D. Approach her, and . . . no ! first of all
Get more assurance. " My instructress," say,
" Was great, descended from a line of kings,
" And even fair"—(wait why I say this folly)—
" She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
" Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
" The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him
" Who saved her at her need : if she said this,
" What should not one I love, say ?"

Val. Heaven—this hope—
Oh lady, you are filling me with fire !

The D. Say this!—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all the awe and reverence ;
Nay—make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own ;
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,
... (ObeY !)

Val. I cannot choose.

The D. Then, kneel to her

[*VALENCE sinks on his knee.*]

I dream!

Val. Have mercy ! Yours, unto the death,—

I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die.

The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?
Even with you as with the world? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.
Your service named its true source,—loyalty!
The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

Val. [*rising.*] Rise?—Truth, as ever, lady, comes
from you!

I should rise—I who spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, who stood firm then!
I laughed—for 't was past tears—that Cleves should
starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy,
And no tongue daring trust as much to air:
Yet here; where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?
Oh lady, for your own sake look on me!
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!
I was proud once—I saw you—and they sank,
So that each, magnified a thousand times,
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness,
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,
A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?
What is my own desert? But should your love
Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled me,—

Then—oh, that wild word “then!”—be just to love,
 In generosity its attribute!
 Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared—a stage
 For trial of the question kept so long:
 Judge you—Is love or vanity the best?
 You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
 What all will shout one day—you, vindicate
 Our earth and be its angel! All is said.
 Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours:
 But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him
 And speak!

The D. I have received the Prince's message:
 Say, I prepare my answer!

Val.

Take me, Cleves!

{He withdraws.

The D. Mournful—that nothing's what it calls
 itself!

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
 And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?
 I did ill to mistrust the world so soon:
 Already was this Berthold at my side.
 The valley-level has its hawks, no doubt:
 May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
 Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

ACT V.

*Night.—SCENE. The Hall.**Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.**Mel.* And here you wait the matter's issue?*Berth.*

Here.

Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.
But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?*Berth.*

Oh,

Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
Was dazzled not so very soon, that's all!
For my part, this is scarce the hasty, showy,
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.
Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 't is gone.
—Let her commence the unfriended innocent,
And carry wrongs about from court to court?
No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,
—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing-fit,
King Philip takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
And wondrously her claims would brighten up!
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
O'er-looked provisoes, past o'er premises,
Follow in plenty. No: 't is the safer step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost:
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Mel. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure !

Berth. Not so—or, if so—
Why not confess at once, that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now
To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it: that may turn out hazardous !
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque: those favoured few
Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late: and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near;
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
And sleep off headache on our frippery:
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.

Mel. Yes—you evade the adventure!—And, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you are.
—King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes ?

Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
With you too ?

Berth. Yes—no : I am past that now.
Gone 't is : I cannot shut my eyes to fact.
Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone !
And something better come instead, no doubt.

Mel. So be it ! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,
Though to your end ; so shall you prosper best.
The lady,— to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . call it,
Romantic way.

Berth. Won easier ?

Mel. Will not she ?

Berth. There I profess humility without bound :
Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor.

Mel. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
From your description of her mood and way.
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts ;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it.

Berth. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
So bold and voluble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change !
Make her an Empress ? Ah, that changed the case !
Oh, I read hearts ! And for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth : see the event !
I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay !

Before my uncle could obtain the ear
 Of his superior, help me from the dirt—
 Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke
 Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
 I am past illusion on that score:

Mel.

Here comes

The lady—

Berth. —And there you go! But do not! Give me
 Another chance to please you. Hear me plead!

Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

*Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SBYNE, and, after
 an interval, by the Courtiers.*

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting!

The D.

May it prove!

—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?

Berth. (Ay—that's the point!) I may be Emperor.

The D. 'Tis not for my sake only, I am proud

Of this you offer: I am prouder far

That from the highest state should duly spring

The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berth. (Generous—still that!) You underrate your-
 self:

You are, what I, to be complete; must have—

Find now, and may not find; another time.

While I career on all the world for stage,

There needs at home my representative:

The D. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman
 be—

One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—

One like yourself!

Berth. Lady, I am myself,
And have all these: I want what's not myself,
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?
Here's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword!

The D. You love me, then?

Berth. Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.

The D. But, for love—

Berth. A further love I do not understand.
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
And see them, once said, grow endurable:
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throes,
A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues
In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and, at last,
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The D. You cannot love, then?

Berth. —Charlemagne, perhaps!
Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

The D. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,

By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?

Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither!
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide professions of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all: with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand,
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman!

The D. That—

Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?

Berth. The matter's not in my arbitrement:
Now I have made my claims—which I regret—
Cede one, cede all.

The D. This claim then, you enforce?

Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide?

Berth. When, lady? Have I said thus much so
promptly

For nothing? Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long,
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?
All's fairly told now: who can teach you more?

The D. I do not see him.

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive.

This offer should be made befittingly.

Would time allow the better setting forth
 The good of it, with what is not so good,
 Advantage, and disparagement as well :
 But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
 I am already weary of this place ;
 My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide !
 The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now !
 Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess !

[The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.]

Courtiers.—"Farewell," Prince ? when we break
 in at our risk—

Clug. Almost upon court-licence trespassing—

Courtiers.—To point out how your claims are valid
 yet !

You know not, by the Duke her father's will,
 The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
 Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
 So 't is expressly stipulate. And if
 It can be shown 't is her intent to wed
 A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
 Succeed to Juliers:

Berth. What insanity ?

Gui. Sir, there 's one Valence, the pale fiery man
 You saw and heard, this morning—thought, no doubt,
 Was of considerable standing here :
 I put it to your penetration, Prince,
 If aught save love, the truest love for her,
 Could make him serve the lady as he did !

He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
 —Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
 With danger, gets in by a miracle,
 And for the first time meets the lady's face—
 So runs the story : is that credible ?
 For, first—no sooner in, than he's apprised
 Fortunes have changed ; you are all-powerful here,
 The lady as powerless : he stands fast by her !

The D. [*Aside.*] And do such deeds spring up from
 love alone ?

Gui. But here occurs the question, does the lady
 Love him again ? I say, how else can she ?
 Can she forget how he stood singly forth
 In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
 Insult yourself—for what, save love's reward ?

The D. [*Aside.*] And is love then the sole reward of
 love ?

Gui. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,
 Means she to wed him ? “ Yes,” both natures answer !
 Both, in their pride, point out the sole result ;
 Nought less would he accept nor she propose.
 For each conjecture was she great enough
 —Will be, for this.

Clug. Though, now that this is known,
 Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The D.—What, sir, and wherefore ?—since I am not
 sure

That all is any other than you say !
 You take this Valence, hold him close to me,

Him with his actions : can I choose but look ?
 I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
 Than in this man, you hate and would dégrade,
 Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.
 Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
 Ere I had dared)—now that the look is dared—
 Sure that I do not love him !

Gui. Hear you, Prince ?

Berth. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle
 mean

Unless to prove with what alacrity
 You give your lady's secrets to the world ?
 —How much indebted, for discovering
 That quality, you make me, will be found
 When next a keeper for my own's to seek !

Courtiers. " Our lady ? "

Berth. —She assuredly remains !

The D. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous ?
 You could renounce your power, if this were so,
 And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
 Yet keep my Duchy ? You perhaps exceed
 Him, even, in disinterestedness !

Berth. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose ?
 Your will and choice are still as ever, free !
 Say, you have known a worthier than myself
 In mind and heart, of happier form and face—
 Others must have their birthright : I have gifts,
 To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.
 Against a hundred other qualities,

I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing :

Wed you the Empire ?

The D. And my heart away ?

Berth. When have I made pretensions to your heart ?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe ;
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.

You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.

What were the use of planting a few seeds,
The thankless climate never would mature—
Affections all repelled by circumstance ?

Enough : to these no credit I attach,—
To what you own, find nothing to object.

Write simply on my requisition's face
What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all's ended.

The D. Let all end !

Berth. The requisition !

Courtiers. —Valence holds, of course !

Berth. Desire his presence ! [ADOLF goes out.]

Courtiers. [to each other.] Out it all comes yet ;
He'll have his word against the bargain still :
He's not the man to tamely acquiesce.

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,
Might turn the tide again. Despair not yet!

[*They retire a little.*]

Berth. [to MELCHIOR.] The Empire has its old success, my friend!

Mel. You've had your way: before the spokesman comes,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
And ever more be dumb. The Empire wins?
To better purpose have I read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [to the Courtiers.] Apart, my masters!

[To VALENCE.] Sir, one word with you!

I am a poor dependent of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence;
You are no higher, I find: in other words,
We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their fortuous phrases, fit for them?
Do you reply so, and what trouble saved!
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news
This moment reaches him—if true or false,
All dignity forbids he should inquire
In person, or by worthier deputy;
Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come:
And so, 't is I am pitched on. You have heard
His offer to your lady?

Val. Yes.

Mel. —Conceive

Her joy thereat ?

Val. I cannot.

Mel. No one can.

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [*Aside.*] So!

No after-judgment—no first thought revised—

Her first and last decision!—me, she leaves,

Takes him; a simple heart is flung aside;

The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced!

Oh heaven, this mockery has been played too oft!

Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends

Recording, might be proud they chose not so—

Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world

All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since

men

Could have such chance yet fail so signally,

—But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,

Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—

This spurning love and kneeling to the world—

Oh heaven, it is too often and too old!

Mel. Well, on this point, what but an absurd rumour

Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!

Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,

They say, your service claims the lady's hand!

Of course, nor Prince nor Lady can respond:

Yet something must be said—for, were it true

You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Val. Well sir, —would?

Mel. —Not only probably withdraw his suit,
But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own.—oh, there are reasons why!
But you'll excuse at present all save one,—
I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours: decide!

Val. [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she accounts it so!
[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose
as she?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon?

Mel. [*to the Prince.*] Now to him, you!

Berth. [*to VALENCE.*] My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .

Val. —Prince, how fortunate are you,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of it,
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard! What else can be?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay sir:
But softly! Where, in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting?

Val. Then indeed,
What is it you can take?

Mel. Nay—ask the world!
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,

An influence o'er mankind.

Val. When man perceives . . .

—Ah, I can only speak as for myself!

The D. Speak for yourself.

Val. May I?—no, I have spoken,
And time's gone by!—Had I seen such an one,
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
So should my task be to evolve her love:
If for myself!—if for another—well.

Berth. Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up your own?

Val. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
Comes after—oh what amplest recompense!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?
—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
What would he have? He holds you—you, both
form,

And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room
For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, in saving you
Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,

Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . put this charge which I return—

[*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*]

Wishing your good!

The D. [*having subscribed it.*] And opportunely, sir—
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.
Ask of me!

Berth. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For your sake and his own.

Val. [*Aside.*] If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,
One last touch of her hand; I never more
Shall see!

[*After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.*]

Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berth. I will, sir.

The D. [*as VALENCE prepares to retire.*]—Nay, do
out your duty, first!

You bore this paper; I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!

[*VALENCE reads it.*]

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

Mel. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—

Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!

Berth. [*after a pause.*] Lady, well rewarded! Sir, as well deserved!

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
 I do admire you! All is for the best!
 Too costly a flower were you, I see it now,
 To pluck and set upon my barren helm
 To wither—any garish plume will do!
 I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—
 You can so well afford to yield it me,
 And I were left, without it, sadly off!
 As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
 A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
 Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
 Begins already! they're too occupied
 To listen: and few words content me best!
 [*Abruptly to the Courtiers.*] I am your Duke, though!

Who obey me here?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

Gui. [*starting from the Courtiers.*]—And I?
 Do I not follow them, if I may n't you?
 Shall not I get some little duties up
 At Ravestein and emulate the rest?
 God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my Birthday, too!

Berth. You happy handful that remain with me
 . . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
 I shall leave over you—will earn your wages,
 Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!
 Meantime,—go copy me the precedents

Of every installation, proper styles,
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—
While I prepare to go on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The D. [*with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them.*] Come, Valence, to our friends—God's earth . . .

Val. [*as she falls into his arms.*]—And thee!

LURIA.

A TRAGEDY.

I DEDICATE

THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY

To a Great Dramatic Poet;

“WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:”

—IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST
WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN
A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

London, 1846.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.

HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.

Puccio, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA'S Chief Officer.

BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.

JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.

TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.

DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

TIME, 14—.

SCENE.—LURIA'S *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary*; Puccio *standing by.*

Brac. [to Puc.] Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puc. Not I;

Luria, the Captain.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "In an hour, the battle."

[To Puc.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,
And see if very much of your report
Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.
Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army?

Puc. [taking the paper.] All seems here:
—That Luria, seizing with our city's force
The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac. So sure?
Tiburzio's a consummate captain too!

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "The Signory hold Pisa in their
hand."

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir:
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,

To post with it to Florence!

Puc. [*returning the paper.*] All seems here;
 Unless . . . Ser' Braccio, 't is my last report!
 Since 'Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
 And Luria's hastening at the city's call
 To save her, as he only could, no doubt;
 Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
 Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you:
 Each day's note you; her Commissary, make
 Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
 No youngster am I longer, to my cost;
 Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
 And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
 As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
 Had never met in any man before,
 I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
 But now, this last report and I have done—
 So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
 'T were not amiss if some one old i' the trade
 Subscribed with, "True, for once rash counsel's best.
 "This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
 "This boy to whose untried sagacity,
 "Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
 "The charge to save her,—justifies her choice;
 "In no point has this stranger failed his friends:
 "Now praise!" I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] Write, "Puccio, superseded in
 the charge,

"By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,

“ And no reward our Signory can give
 “ Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully.”
 Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers!

[PUCCIO goes.

Brac. [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the
 paper into shreds.

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit contempt
 This warfare's noble art and ordering,
 And,—once the brace of prizes fairly matched,
 Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
 Spit properly at what men term their skill!—)
 Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.
 With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
 Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
 Lucca still off the stage, too,—all's assured:
 Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
 That Luria's trial end and sentence pass!

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Ay, Lapo?

Sec. If you trip, I fall;

'Tis in self-interest I speak—

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshot the mark, my Lapo! Nay!
 When did I say pure love's impossible?
 I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,
 Load your young brow with what concerns it least,
 And, when we visit Florence, let you pace
 The Piazza by my side as if we talked,
 Where all your old acquaintances may see:

You'd die for me, I should not be surprised!
Now then!

Sec. Sir; look about and love yourself!
Step after step, the Signory and you
Tread gay, till this tremendous point's to pass;
Which, pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,—
Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,
Or too delicious, may not prove the pride
Of this long secret Trial you dared plan,
Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, they are such slaves?
If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac. Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
At watch and ward? Where's danger on your part,
With that thin flitting instantaneous steel,
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world?
If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that ?

Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
 And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;
 This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,
 Husain ; they talk—all that's feigned easily ;
 He speaks (I would not listen if I could)
 Reads, orders, counsels :—but he rests sometimes,—
 I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
 On the lynx-skins, yonder ; hold his bared black arms
 Into the sun from the tent-opening ; laugh
 When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
 And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
 That man believes in Florence, as the saint
 Tied to the wheel believes in God !

Brac. How strange—
 You too have thought that !

Sec. Do but you think too,
 And all is saved ! I only have to write,
 “The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last ;
 Bury it” . . . so I write to the Signory . . .
 “Bury this Trial in your breasts for ever,
 Blot it from things or done or dreamed about :
 So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
 With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
 As if no meteoric finger hushed
 The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,
 Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.”

Brac. [*looks to the wall of the tent.*] Did he draw
 that ?

Sec. With charcoal, when the watch
 Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia
 Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;
 That is his fancy how a Moorish front
 Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
 And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec. She is sent the spy
 Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :
 Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
 Is surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac. I see—
 A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !
 Lapo, there 's one thing plain and positive ;
 Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
 What ? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
 And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
 Yet render up the charge when peace returned,
 Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
 Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
 If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
 Should sink its point before the statist's pen,
 And the calm head replace the violent hand,
 Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
 Before ambition with unvarying fate,
 Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
 Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
 And, sparing further to expose her sons
 To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,

Declare, "The Foreigner, one not my child,
" Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by
height
" The glory, then descend into the shame ;
" So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
" And punishment the easier task for me :"
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from any ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No Past with us, no Future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell ?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.
The charges here, they may be true or false,
—What is set down ? Errors and oversights,
A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—

She who remembering her whole House's fall,
 That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
 Now labours to make Luria . . . poor device
 As plain . . . the instrument of her revenge!
 —That she is ever at his ear to prompt
 Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
 Exorbitant belief in its reward,
 And after, when sure disappointment follows,
 Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
 Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
 Weigh with me less than least; as nothing weigh!
 Upon that broad Man's-heart of his, I go!
 On what I know must be, yet while I live
 Shall never be, because I live and know!
 Brute-force shall not rule Florence! Intellect
 May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—
 But Intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
 And Intellect's tradition so kept up
 Till the good comes—'t was Intellect that ruled,
 Not Brute-force bringing from the battle-field
 The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
 We lent it there to lure its grossness on;
 All which it took for earnest and kept safe
 To show against us in our market-place,
 Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear
 (Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
 When all was done they frightened nobody)
 Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
 With our own warrant and allowance. No!

The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
 In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
 To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
 Well then, to perish for a single fault,
 Let that be simple justice!—There, my Lapo!
 A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body—
 Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come!

[LURIA, who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at the
 close of the last phrase, now advancing.]

And Luria, Luria, what of Lurìa now?

Brac. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?
 I said it needs must be a busy moment
 For one like you—that you-were now i' the thick
 Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
 What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch!
 I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Lur. See your dispatch, your last, for the first time?
 Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
 He would be forced to set about another,
 In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
 To mention that important circumstance;
 So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
 Do not send this!

Brac. And wherefore?

Lur. These Lucchese
 Are not arrived—they never will arrive!
 And I must fight to-day, arrived or not;

And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure :
 And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
 But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
 To look upon my battle from the hills,
 Like a late moon, of use to nobody !
 And I must break my battle up, send forth,
 Surround on this side, hold in check on that—
 Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
 You make me send for fresh instructions home,
 —Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Brac.

Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
 The non-appearance of 'our foes' ally,
 As a most happy fortune ; both at once
 Were formidable—singly faced, each falls.

Lur. So, no great battle for my Florentines !
 No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
 For all of them, the simple as the wise,
 Old, young, alike, that do not understand
 Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
 By which we prove retreat may be success,
 Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain :
 They want results—as if it were their fault !
 And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
 Will not be able now to simply say
 “ Your servant has performed his task—enough !
 “ You ordered, he has executed : good !
 “ Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
 “ Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,

“Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo’s shade!”

No! you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese!

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the Past enough,
Whatever be the Present’s chance; no service
Falls to the ground with Florence: she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah Braccio, your know Florence! will she,
think you,
Receive one . . . what means “fittingly receive”?
—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none:
And yet Domizia promises so much!

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman’s prize.
I know not o’er which gate most boughs will arch,
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue:
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our State gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole forcé, in her best captain’s place.

Lur. That; my reward? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!
And Puccio’s having all the fight’s, true joy—
Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o’ersee!
That was my calling—there was my true place!
I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible Head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life

Directly from her eye! They give me you:
 But do you cross me, set me half to work?
 I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once!
 Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Brac. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon:
 Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast!
 I wonder, do you guess why I delay
 Involuntarily the final blow
 As long as possible? \ Peace follows it!
 Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
 Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
 As if a spell broke, all resumed, each art
 You boast, more vivid than it slept awhile.
 'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
 The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
 The walls are peopled by the painter's brush;
 The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.
 The Present's noise and trouble have retired
 And left the eternal Past to rule once more;—
 You speak its speech and read its records plain,
 Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your
 friend:

But Luria—where will then be Luria's place?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that Past's own sake,
 Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
 By saving all that went before from wreck,
 Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets

Leading the life my rough life helps no more,
 So different, so new, so beautiful—
 Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
 The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
 And shepherd-pipes come into use again?
 For very lone and silent seems my East
 In its drear vastness: still it spreads, and still
 No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
 Not ever more!—Well, well, to-day is ours!

Dom. [*to BRAC.*] Should he not have been one of us?

Lur.

Oh, no!

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
 Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
 Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
 The boundless unrest of the savage heart!
 The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
 Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;
 Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile:
 Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
 In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
 'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies!
 Well, 't is not sure the quiet lasts for ever!
 Your placid heads still find rough hands new work;
 Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of mine:
 And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
 Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio!
 You hold my strength; 't were best dispose of it:
 What you created, see that you find food for—
 I shall be dangerous else!

Brac. How dangerous, sir ?

Lur. There are so many ways, Domizia warns me,
And one with half the power that I possess,
Grows very formidable ! Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk,
Morn wears ; we keep you from your proper place
In the field.

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more :
My part is done, and Puccio's may begin.
I cannot trench upon his province longer
With any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?
Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet !

Lur. My Lucchese at last !
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands ! your leave !

[*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness charactered
By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself !
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes : and how worthy note, that these same
great ones
In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,

From taking up whatever tool there be
 Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
 Into their mild hands as a thing of course !
 The statist finds it natural to lead
 The mob who might as easily lead him—
 The captain marshals troops born skilled in war—
 Statist and captain verily believe !
 While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking, now,
 That I shall in this very letter write
 What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo !

[DOMIZIA goes.]

This last, worst, all-affected childish fit
 Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
 Convinces me ; the Past was no child's play :
 It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
 All's mere dissimulation—to remove
 The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
 The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written ?
 Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
 And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
 My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
 And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
 As the Mage Negro King to Christ the Babe.—
 I judge his childishness the mere relapse
 To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
 And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
 Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [after a pause.] The sword ! At best, the
 soldier, as he says,

In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men!—To Florence with each letter!

ACT II.

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy
heart

Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead:—yet do I trust it not.
Nor Man's devices, nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on Earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—Hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside
A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thy noblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor

From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth :
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such an end ?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its colour whether false or no !
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
Cry, Florence was all falseness, so, false here,—
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
The city wedded to its wickedness.
None stood by them as I by Luria stand !
So, when the stranger cheated of his due
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat

For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
 Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!
 He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp
 Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old!

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope?
 'Tis Lucca?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely!
 Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom. Whom I withdraw before; tho' if I lingered
 You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
 The overtaking night brings such reward!
 —And where will then be room for me? Yet still
 Remember who was first to promise it,
 And envied those who also can perform! [*Goes.*]

Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans?—

Hus. In the camp;
 A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
 On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good;
 A man I seem as I had seen before:
 Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him! This will prove the last delay.

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on!
 Thou heardst what the grave woman said but now:
 To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear;
 But stop not therefore: hear it, and go on!

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
 They round me in the ears with, all day long?

All that, I never take for earnest, friend!
 Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
 Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors!
 But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
 That, we shall get?

Hus. It is too cold an air.

Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist:
 Where is he now? So, I trust none of them!

Lur. Truly?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
 'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
 And those absorbing, concentrating men!
 They use thee!

Lur. And I feel it, Husain; yes,
 And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
 Is only called to play its part outside
 Their different nature; where its sole use seems
 To fight with and keep off an adverse force
 As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws:
 Inside, they know not what to do with me.
 Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
 But long since was prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst?

Lur. I will forestal them, Husain,
 And speak my destiny, they dare not speak—
 Banish myself before they find the heart.
 I will be first to say, "The work rewards!
 "I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
 "So may it prove!—meanwhile 't is best I go,

“ And carry safe my memories of you all
 “ To other scenes of action, newer lands.”—
 Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
 They would not easily have tired of me.
 You think this hard to say ?

Hus. Say it or not,

So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
 This hating people, that hate each the other,
 And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
 Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
 Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
 And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm ;
 While any creature of a better blood,
 They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
 And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
 Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
 See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
 Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
 As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
 Who hates him most !—But thou, the friend of all,
 . . Come out of them !

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now !

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend ! [*Goes.*]

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
 Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes
 Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
 When change is in the elements at work,
 Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
 But here,—he takes the distant chariot-wheel

For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
 The finer traits of cultivated life
 For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message ! I but wait your
 message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture
 For truce ?—I would not, for your General's sake,
 You spoke of truce : a time to fight is come,
 And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
 His honest soldier's name to beat me with,
 Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You ? 'Tis—yes . . . Tiburzio !
 You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
 From Puccio, when I threw in succours there !
 Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
 Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost !
 You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
 Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away ;
 While I drove down my battle from the heights,
 —I saw with my own eyes !

Tib. And you are Luria
 Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
 In error of the battle-signal's sense,
 Back safely to me at the critical time—
 One of a hundred deeds. I know you ! Therefore
 To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio!

Tib. Luria, you know the peril imminent

On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 't is too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it,
That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
How truly formidable by despair.
Still, probabilities should have their weight:
The extremest chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
You win this battle. Wherefore say I this?
To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine...

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib. Even so!

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Lur. Me, detach?

Tib. Time urges: you will ruin presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time

Made prize of certain secret missives sent
 From Braccio here, the Commissary, home—
 And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
 The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
 Your trial occupies the Signory ;
 They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
 When men at home inquire into the acts
 Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
 Brief, they are Florentines! You, saving them,
 Will seek the sure destruction saviours find.

Lur. Tiburzio—

Tib. All the wonder is of course.

I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
 Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
 This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
 As it left here an hour ago. One way
 Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
 The duplicate is on its road; but this,—
 Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence!

Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
 This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
 Would be no reason you should fall away.
 The mother city is the mother still,
 And recognition of the children's service
 Her own affair; reward—there's no reward!
 But you are bound by quite another tie;
 Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
 A foreigner, born friend to all alike,

Should give himself to any special State
 More than another, stand by Florence' side
 Rather than Pisa's; 't is as fair a city
 You war against, as that you fight for—famed
 As well as she in story, graced no less
 With noble heads and patriotic hearts:
 Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
 Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
 Which take importance from familiar view,
 Stand as the right, and sole to be upheld.
 Therefore, should the preponderating gift
 Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
 Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale,—
 Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
 And all begins again. Break seal and read!
 At least let Pisa offer for you now!
 And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
 Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
 This last fight and its opportunity;
 The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
 Or in the turn of battle dying so
 That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
 As I for Florence . . say my chance were yours!
 You read this letter, and you find . . no, no!
 Too mad!

Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose
 When I have crushed their foe, to crush me: well?

Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike ;
 As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
 I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
 As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
 Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
 Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
 Both which defects ask proper punishment.
 Another tenure of obedience, mine !
 You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? What act were fit ?
 If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
 In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
 —If that break up and, disimprisoning
 From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !
 You may be very sage, yet—all the world
 Having to fail, or your sagacity,
 You do not wish to find yourself alone !
 What would the world be worth ? Whose love be sure ?
 The world remains—you are deceived !

Tib. Your hand !
 I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,
 The better—I am left to speak ! For me,
 This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
 If I could help, it misses its effect ;
 And after all you will look gallantly
 Found dead here with that letter in your breast.

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once
 And test them ere I answer finally !
 At your arrival let the trumpet sound :

If mine return not then the wonted cry,
It means that I believe—am Pisa's!

Tib.

Well! [*Goes.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true! My blood
Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given the salt
Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
Oh life, the long mutation—is it so?
Is it with life as with the body's change?
—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's
 grace,
Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
But silently the first gift dies away,
And though the new stays, never both at once!
Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
As if to punish the ingratitude
With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
And learned to look with European eyes.
Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
Where Braccio's brow tells nothing,—Puccio's mouth,
Domizia's eyes reject the searcher—yes!
For on their calm sagacity I lean,

Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
 Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
 Yes, that is better—that is best of all!
 Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go!
 Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
 Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
 Betrays its step into the pathless drift—
 The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
 By the sole bearing of the visible star,
 Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,
 The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
 The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
 Yes: I trust Florence: Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end: no Lucca? You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
 I am no Florentine?

Dom. It is yourself

Who still are forcing us importunately,
 To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss!—For what I lose in being none!
 No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
 But would remind you of the stranger's loss
 In natural friends and advocates at home,
 Hereditary loves, even rivalships,
 With precedent for honour and reward.
 Still, there's a gain, too! If you take it so,
 The stranger's lot has special gain as well

Do you forget there was my own far East
 I might have given away myself to, once,
 As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
 Stood there like a descended deity?
 There, worship waits us! what is it waits here?

[Shows the letter.

See! Chance has put into my hand the means
 Of knowing what I earn, before I work!
 Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
 With payment palpably before me? see!
 Here lies my whole reward! Best learn it now
 Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
 For swordsman's-pay alone,—break seal and read!
 In that case, you will find your full desert!

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends!
 You need me now, and all the graciousness
 This letter can contain will hardly balance
 The after feeling that your need's at end!
 This moment . . . oh, the East has use with you!
 Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
 With the past praise, in a dark corner yet!
 How say you? 'Tis not so with Florentines—
 Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
 Is but a first step to the peace begun
 —He who did well in war, just earns the right
 To begin doing well in peace, you know!
 And certain my precursors,—would not such
 Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,

Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
 For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
 Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
 Treachery even,—say that one of you
 Surmised this letter carried what might turn
 To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice—
 What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!
 Hurl her own force against the city straight,
 And even at the moment when the foe
 Sounded defiance . . .

[*TIBURZIO's trumpet sounds in the distance.*]

Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
 So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!
 My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench
 The obligation you relieve me from,
 Still deeper! [*To Puc.*] Sound our answer, I should say!
 And thus:—[*tearing the paper*]—The battle! That
 solves every doubt!

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

Puccio, as making a report to JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your Captain must report the rest;
 For, as I say, the main engagement over,
 And Luria's special part in it performed,

How could subaltern like myself expect
 Leisure or leave to occupy the field
 And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?
 I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
 Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
 That Luria would detach me and prevent
 The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
 Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
 But no—more honourable proved my post!
 I had the august captive to escort
 Safe to our camp—some other could pursue,
 Fight, and be famous; gentler chance was mine—
 Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed!
 He's in the tent there.

Jac. Is the substance down?
 I write—"The vanguard beaten, and both wings
 In full retreat—Tiburzio prisoner"—
 And now,—“That they fell back and formed again
 On Lucca's coming.”—Why then, after all,
 'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault—not much!
 He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
 —There's commonly more prudence; now, he seemed
 To hurry measures, otherwise well-judged;
 By over-concentrating strength at first
 Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped:
 That's reparable—yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon!
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.
[PUCCIO goes.]

There's nothing done but I would do again;
Yet, Iapo, it may be the Past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac. Yes: so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter—true!
Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks:
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say!
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [to Puc.] Say, at his pleasure I will see
Tiburzio:

All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [to Lur.] Were I not forewarned
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you how you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat:
But words offend.

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now!

I want instruction every hour, I find,
 On points where once I saw least need of it ;
 And praise, I have been used to do without,
 Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now :
 After a battle half one's strength is gone—
 And glorious passion in us once appeased,
 Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
 All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
 Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
 To me, the stranger : you, no doubt, may know
 Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
 And peradventure I grow nearer you,
 For I, too, want to know and be assured.
 When a cause ceases to reward itself,
 Its friend seeks fresh sustainments ; praise is one,
 And here stand you—you, lady, praise me well.
 But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise :
 To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
 Your quick sense looks : you crown and call aright
 The soul of the purpose, ere 't is shaped as act,
 Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
 But when the act comes, stands for what 't is worth,
 —Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he's my judge !
 Was all well, Puccio ?

Puc. All was . . . must be well :
 If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
 —No, there's no doubt, we must—all was well done.

Lur. In truth ? Still, you are of the trade, my Puccio !
 You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.

There's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
 For the all-unestimated sum of pains
 That go to a success the world can see :
 They praise then, but the best they never know
 —While you know!—Oh, if envy mix with it,
 Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
 Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold !
 —For nothing's like it ; nothing else records
 Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
 Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
 For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be !
 And I have yours, my soldier ! yet the best
 Is still to come. There's one looks on apart
 Whom all refers to, failure or success ;
 What's done might be our best, our utmost work,
 And yet inadequate to serve his need :
 Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—
 Well done for us, seems it well done for him ?
 His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
 Answers his end ? Should he have chosen higher ?
 Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought ?
**Brac.* This battle, with the foregone services,
 Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well !
 Here am I in the middle of my friends,
 Who know me and who love me, one and all !
 And yet . . 't is like . . this instant while I speak
 Is like the turning-moment of a dream
 When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me !

Well then, one always dreams of friends at home ;
 And always comes, I say, the turning-point
 When something changes in the friendly eyes
 That love and look on you . . so slight, so slight . .
 And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
 Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
 And all is mockery and a maddening show.
 You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
 What is it in your eyes . . those lips, those brows . .
 Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well !—
 Come now—this battle saves you, all 's at end,
 Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
 Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,
 In Florence ? Come ! I feel it in my blood,
 My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
 That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
 You are betraying me ! What is it you do ?
 Have it your way, and think my use is over—
 Think you are saved and may throw off the mask—
 Have it my way, and think more work remains
 Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not !
 Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
 But tell me—tell what I refused to know
 At noon, lest heart should fail me ! Well ? that letter ?
 My fate is sealed at Florence ! What is it ?

Brac. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.

It is no novelty for innocence
 To be suspected, but a privilege :
 The after certain compensation comes.

Charges, I say not whether false or true,
 Have been preferred against you some time since,
 Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
 And which are therefore undergoing now
 The due investigation. That is all.
 I doubt not but your innocence will prove
 Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
 To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
 My whole heart thanks thee!

Puc. [to BRAC.] What is "trial," sir?
 It was not for a trial—surely, no—
 I furnished you those notes from time to time?
 I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—
 And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
 And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
 What should assist a—trial, do you say?
 You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
 His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is it?
 The block—wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
 Nor shall I give my own opinion now
 Of what it should be, or is like to be.
 When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
 Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac. I assert,

Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters, keep the mummery up !
Take all the experiences of all the world,
Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with these—'t is very well !
Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like,
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There's grace in that,—and when the fresh heart breaks,
The new brain proves a ruin, what of them ?
Where is the matter of one moth the more
Singed in the candle, at a summer's end ?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
That he's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance !
Florence exists because these pass away :
She's a contrivance to supply a type
Of Man, which men's deficiencies refuse ;
She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change
And pass away—there's always what upholds,

Always enough to fashion the great show.
 As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
 Of shapely cloud substantially the same!
 A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
 Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
 Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
 Under the sun's straight influence: that is well,
 That is worth heaven to hold, and God to bless!
 And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
 Which draws and holds suspended all of us,—
 Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
 Differing from each and better than they all.
 And shall she dare to stake this permanence
 On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,
 And its temptations many: let her prove
 Each servant to the very uttermost
 Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
 Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
 Though they deserve it, did she only know!
 —What should she do for these?

Brac. What does she not?
 Say, that she gives them but herself to serve!
 Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,
 When half an hour of sober fancying
 Had shown him step by step the uselessness
 Of strength exerted for its proper sake?
 But the truth is, she did create that strength,
 Drew to the end the corresponding means.

The world is wide—are we the only men?
 Oh for the time, the social purpose' sake,
 Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
 Call any man the sole great wise and good!
 But shall we therefore, standing by ourselves,
 Insult our souls and God with the same speech?
 There, swarm the ignoble thousands under Him—
 What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?
 Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
 Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows!
 She takes me out of all the world as him,
 Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
 The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?

Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way
 To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
 Am I the baited tiger that must turn
 And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
 Obedience has no fruit then?—Be it so!
 Do you indeed remember I stand here
 The captain of the conquering army,—mine—
 With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
 To show for what their names were when you gave,
 Not what you style them now you take away?
 If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
 And in their first enthusiastic thrill
 Of victory, tell them this you menace now—
 Commending to their plain instinctive sense,
 My story first, your comment afterward,—
 Will they take, think you, part with you or me?

When I say, I, the labourer they know,
 Ending my work, ask payment, and find Florence
 Has all this while provided silently
 Against the day of pay and proving words,
 By what you call my sentence that 's to come—
 Will they sit waiting it complacently ?
 When I resist that sentence at their head,
 What will you do, my mild antagonist ?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
 That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
 And so was saved. "See, Italy," I'll say,
 "The need of our precautions! here's a man
 "Was far advanced, just touched on the reward
 "Less subtle cities had accorded him ;
 "But we were wiser: at the end comes this!"
 And from that minute all your strength expires.
 The very stones of Florence cry against
 The all-exacting, unenduring fool,
 Resenting her first slight probation thus ;
 As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
 He, only, walked the earth with privilege
 Against suspicion, free from causing fear :
 So, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
 He turned, and stood on his defence, forsooth !
 Reward ? You will not be worth punishment !

Lur. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have
 lived,—
 And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
 Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,

Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
 Reported me—how could you otherwise!
 Ay?—and what dropped from *you*, just now, moreover?
 Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill
 And understanding sympathy approve
 Such a report of me? Was this the end?
 Or is even this the end? Can I stop here?
 You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,
 The heart to see with, not man's brain and eyes,
 . . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
 The unoffending one, you call your friend—
 So, looking at the good examples here
 Of friendship, 't is but natural I ask—
 Had you a further aim, in aught you spoke,
 Than profit to me,—all those instances
 Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—
 All I remember now for the first time?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
 Sister of Porzio and of Berto both:
 So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
 I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
 Must needs mistrust a stranger's—holding back
 Reward from them, must hold back his reward.
 And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
 He would not bear, but live and fight against—
 Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them! All these against one foreigner!
 And all this while, where is in the whole world
 To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio. [*who has entered during the preceding dialogue.*] Here!

Thus I bear witness to it, not in word
 But deed. I live for Pisa; she's not lost
 By many chances—much prevents from that!
 Her army has been beaten, I am here,
 But Lucca comes at last, one chance exists.
 I rather would see Pisa three times lost
 Than saved by any traitor, even by you;
 The example of a traitor's happy fortune
 Would bring more evil in the end than good;—
 Pisa rejects such: save yourself and her!
 I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
 My charge,—the highest of her offices.
 You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
 Her army, give her calumny that ground—
 Nor bring it with you: be you all we gain!
 And all she'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,
 And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.
 Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
 A proverb and a bye-word in all mouths!
 Go you to Pisa! Florence is my place—
 Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
 To Pisa!

Dom. Ah my Braccio, are you caught?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and selected man,
 Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,

Ready as fit, to serve in this event
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—
 Through me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, through me, from him who held it late!
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours :
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—
 Slights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :
 And ever you did bear and bow the head !
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track
 Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !
 Trial is over, consummation shines ;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puc. No, no . . I dare not ! I am grateful, glad ;
 But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—
 And he's my Captain—this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !
 The sentence is not even passed, beside !
 I dare not . . where's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence—
 Is it to be ?—You will know all the strength
 Of the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?
 You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !
 The savage plainly is impassible—
 He keeps his calm way through insulting words,
 Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which
 Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense :

But if he steadily advance, still march
Without a mark upon his callous hide,
Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The thick mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is!
It falls before him, or he dies in his course!
I kept my course through past ingratitude—
I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you: I bore and kept my course.
Now real wrong fronts me—see if I succumb!
Florence withstands me?—I will punish her!

At night my sentence will arrive, you say!
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do:
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks!
Go; you are free: join Lucca. I suspend
All further operations till to-night.
Thank you, and for the silence most of all!

[*To Brac.*] Let my complacent bland accuser go,
 Carry his self-approving head and heart
 Safe through the army which would trample him
 Dead in a moment at my word or sign!
 Go, sir, to Florence; tell friends what I say—
 That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them!
 [*To Dom.*] You, lady,—you have black Italian eyes!
 I would be generous if I might . . . oh, yes—
 For I remember how so oft you seemed
 Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
 Which Florence finds God built between us both,
 Alas, for generosity! this hour
 Asks retribution: bear it as you may!
 I must—the Moor—the savage,—pardon you.
 Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth!

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria *will* do? Ah, 't is yours, fair sir,
 You and your subtle-witted master's part,
 To tell me that; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station: I observe
 The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there's your fault!
 You cannot push them, and, the first move made,

Lean back and study what the next should be,
 In confidence that, when 't is fixed upon,
 You 'll find just where you left them, blacks and whites:
 Men go on moving when your hand's away.
 You build, I notice, firm' on Luria's faith
 This whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build,
 Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
 With Luria in his ordinary mind:
 But now, oppression makes the wise man mad.
 'How do I know he will not turn and stand
 And hold his own against you, as he may?
 Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa—well,—
 Then, even if all happen to your wish,
 Which is a chance . . .

Jab. Nay—'t was an oversight,
 Not waiting till the proper warrant came:
 You could not take what was not ours to give.
 But when at night the sentence really comes,
 And Florence authorizes past dispute
 Luria's removal and your own advance,
 You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puc. Accept what? muster-rolls of soldiers' names?
 An army upon paper?—I want men,
 Their hearts as well as hands—and where's a heart
 But beats with Luria, in the multitude
 I come from walking through by Luria's side?
 You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
 Head-like, upon their trunk, one heart feeds both,
 They feel him there, and live, and well know why!

—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
 Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
 Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
 All was your act: another might have served—
 There's peradventure no such dearth of men—
 But you choose Luria—so, they grew to him.
 And now, for nothing they can understand,
 Luria removed, off is to roll the head;
 The body's mine—much I shall do with it!

Jac. That's at the worst.

Puc. No—at the best, it is!
 Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side.
 Only we two with Luria in the camp
 Are left that know the secret? You think that?
 Hear what I saw: from rear to van, no heart
 But felt the quiet patient hero there
 Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
 But glancing told its fellow the whole story
 Of that convicted silent knot of spies
 Who passed thro' them to Florence; they might pass—
 No breast but gladlier beat when free of such!
 Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
 Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
 Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
 • Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-despite
 To still continue Second in Command!

Puc. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate!
 Your tricks succeed with me too well for that!

I am as you have made me, and shall die
A mere trained fighting-hack to serve your end ;
With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,
For my life's rule and ordinance of God !
I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
And fight against one better than myself,
Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth—
That, you may count on !—just as hitherto
I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
Slighted, and moody, terms we learn by rote,—
All because Luria superseded me—
Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place !
What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
The cordial brother's-bearing ? This was clear—
I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
And so must keep complaining like a fool !
Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say !
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you deposed
For Luria, and here 's all your pet deserves !
Of what account, then, are my services ?
One word for all : whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he turn

In self-defence and Florence go to ground,—
 Or for a signal, everlasting shame,
 He pardon you, simply seek better friends
 And head the Pisan and the Lucchese troops
 —And if I, for you ingrates past belief,
 Resolve to fight against a man called false,
 Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights there—
 Whichever way he win, he wins for me,
 For every soldier, for the true and good!
 Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this!

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou?—For they are gone! The world
 lies bare

Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
 Like what it is, now Florence goes away!
 Thou livest now, with men art man again!
 Those Florentines were eyes to thee of old;
 But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each:
 There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes.
 Saw'st thou?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. Then, hold thy course, my King!
 The years return. Let thy heart have its way!
 Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
 Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
 Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?
 Oh watch but, listen only to these men
 Once at their occupation! Ere ye know,

The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
 Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
 So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
 Our common earth is tethered up and down,
 Over and across—“here shalt thou move,” they cry!

Lur. Ay, Husain?

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside!
 So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
 Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
 All in one tale, all singing the same song,
 How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
 Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
 Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
 With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou art lost—
 A savage . . . how shouldst thou perceive as they?
 Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
 Look up to it! Why, down they pull thy neck,
 Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
 Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
 Lest peradventure it offend thy lip.
 Love woman! Why, a very beast thou art!
 Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain!

Hus. Ay but, spoiling all,
 For all, else true things, substituting false,
 That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!
 Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
 Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
 And class them and allow them place and play

So far, no farther—unabashed the while!
 Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
 Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
 And never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
 Oh, that is commendable, just and right!
 “Come over,” say they, “have the honour due
 In living out thy nature! Fight thy best:
 It is to be for Florence, not thyself!
 For thee, it were a horror and a plague;
 For us, when war is made for Florence, see;
 How all is changed: the fire that fed on earth
 Now towers to heaven!”—

Lur. And what sealed up so long
 My Husain's mouth?

Hus. Oh friend, oh lord—for me,
 What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
 Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
 Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
 Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live again!
 Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
 Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
 To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
 If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!

Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me?

Hus. Both armies against Florence! Take revenge!
 Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
 And after live, in memory, year by year—
 And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
 She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure have!

Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
 And blends with life, to show it better by,
 →How think'st thou?—I have turned that light on
 them!

They called our thirst of war a transient thing;
 "The battle-element must pass away
 From life," they said, "and leave a tranquil world."
 —Master, I took their light and turned it full
 On that dull turgid vein they said would burst
 And pass away; and as I looked on life,
 Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
 And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
 Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same.
 Why, 't was all fighting, all their nobler life!
 All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
 And every joy obtained—a victory!
 Be not their dupe!

—Their dupe? That hour is past!
 Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm!
 All is determined! Silence for me now!

[HUSAIN goes.]

Lur. Have I heard all?

Dom. [*advancing from the background.*] No, Luria,
 I remain!

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
 Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
 And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
 As failing of sustainment from thyself,
 —Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,

Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim
The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share!
Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen: second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops;
So the few famous men of old combined,
And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them, and unite—so Florence grew:
Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered many grew in pride
And grudged the station of the elected ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude—
Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence: who can tell
The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, live?

My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
 My slender life proves what has pass'd away.
 I lived when they departed ; lived to cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldst rise
 And burst the thraldom, and avenge, I knew.
 I have done nothing ; all was thy strong heart.
 But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
 Which after holds an aery in its arms,
 And 't was my care that nought should warp thy spire
 From rising to the height ; the roof is reached :
 Break through and see extend the sky above !
 Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'T is man's cause !
 Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread !
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more—
 And while the bloody Past is justified,
 Thou all the surelier dost the Future wrong,
 The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
 That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
 Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself was reached !
 Man calls thee, God requites thee, all is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at last :
 And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
 Reserves speech—it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.]

Lur. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then !
 Doing the various work of all his friends,
 And answering every purpose save his own.

No doubt, 't is well for them to wish; but him—
After the exploit what were left? Perchance
A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,—
Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit.
But after!—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage!)—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor!
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so!
Whence grew this? What withdrew her faith from me?
Some cause! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again!
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech:
But what could it have been in word or deed
Thus injured me? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps
My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they?
Why risk the danger? See, what I could do!

And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines? The notable revenge,
I meditate! To stay here passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose—
Why, if my very soldiers keep their ranks,
And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then?
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief;
And when she finds one day, as she must find,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset? Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm? Not they!
How could they interpose with those old fools
In the council? Suffer for those old fools' sakes
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world where we can see!
The sun that guides is closer to us! There—
There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky!
Why, there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest—and yet we Florentines
With souls intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,

Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa more—
 Therefore so we wronged him! Does he turn in ire
 To burn the earth that cannot understand?
 Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
 His task once ended? Night wipes blame away.
 Another morning from my East shall spring
 And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
 To watch and understand its work, no doubt:
 So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
 Praise the new Luria, and forget the old!

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*

—Strange! This is all I brought from my own land
 To help me: Europe would supply the rest,
 All needs beside, all other helps save one!
 I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
 The natural upbraiding of the loser,
 And then this quiet remedy to seek
 At end of the disastrous day—

[*He drinks.*

'T is sought!

This was my happy triumph-morning: Florence
 Is saved: I drink this, and ere night,—die!—Strange!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA and PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this: well,

Such were my projects for the city's good,
 To help her in attack or by defence.
 Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
 Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change ;
 But not a little we provide against
 —If you see clear on every point.

Puc.

Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if you count words,
 Yet to an understanding ear enough ;
 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
 Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
 My elder in command, or threw a doubt
 Upon the very skill, it comforts me
 To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
 Which never failed me : yet, because it seemed
 A stranger's eye might haply note defect
 That skill, through use and custom, overlooks,
 I have gone into the old cares once more,
 As if I had to come and save again
 Florence—that May—that morning ! 'T is night now.
 Well—I broke off with ? . . .

Puc.

Of the past campaign

You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
 For future use.

Lur.

True, so . . . but, time—no time !

As well end here : remember this, and me !
 Farewell now !

Puc.

Dare I speak ?

Lur.

—The South o' the river—

How is the second stream called . . . no,—the third ?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's-cast from the fording-place,
To the East,—the little mount's name ?

Puc.

Lupo.

Lur.

Ay!

Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe !
With San Romano, West of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not !

Puc.

Fear not me !

Lur. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,
On the other side by Staggia on the hills,
Who kept the Sienese at check !

Puc.

One word—

Sir, I must speak ! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding, howsoe'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now,
Even will affect the other course you choose—
Poor as it may be, peril even that !
Refuge you seek at Pisa : yet these plans
All militate for Florence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen
Of the country,—which her rivals rose against
When you began it,—which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price !
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,

With this made perfect and on record?

Lur.

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puc. Where are you going, then?—You must decide
On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines,
Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a Past, as it had never been!
Where are you going?

Lur.

Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence!

Puc.

—Ay,

But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
For see—though nothing's surely known as yet,
Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there's nothing can arrest the step
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity?
You may do harm to her—why then, you will!
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on?

Lur.

One sure friend.

Puc. Potent?

Lur. All-potent.

Puc. And he is apprised ?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So!—Then I, put in your place,
 Making my profit of all done by you,
 Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
 To these, the State's gift, now add this beside—
 That I may take as my peculiar store
 All your instructions to work Florence good.
 And if, by putting some few happily
 In practice, I should both advantage her
 And draw down honour on myself,—what then ?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio ! I shall know and praise !

Puc. Though so, men say, “ mark what we gain by
 change

“—A Puccio for a Luria !”

Lur. Even so !

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
 Would I accept one office save my own,
 Fill any other than my rightful post
 Here at your feet, my captain and my lord !
 That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
 Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
 Into his true place and take rest for ever !
 Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,
 And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
 And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
 No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
 All the jar stops, and there is peace at once !

I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields!
 God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
 On orders, warrants, patents and the like,
 As if there were no glowing eye i' the world,
 To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
 No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats!
 For, see—my doubt, where is it?—fear? 't is flown!
 And Florence and her anger are a tale
 To scare a child! Why, half-a-dozen words
 Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
 Her error, my past folly—and all 's right,
 And you are Luria, our great chief again!
 Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
 To exile or to death I follow you!

Lur. Thanks, Puccio! Let me use the privilege
 You grant me: if I still command you,—stay!
 Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
 And not successor: let me, as of old,
 Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—
 Still triumph, one for both. There! Leave me
 now!

You cannot disobey my first command?
 Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
 And what you promised to concert with him!
 Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell!
 You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO goes.]

So, there 's one Florentine returns again!
 Out of the genial morning-company,

One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your command, sir.

Lur. What, so soon?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
 I used to notice you in early days
 As of the other species, so to speak,
 Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
 That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.
 So, I propound this to your faculty
 As you would tell me, were a town to take
 . . . That is, of old. I am departing hence
 Under these imputations; that is nought—
 I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
 Hardly a name behind me in the land,
 Being a stranger: all the more behoves
 That I regard how altered were the case
 With natives of the country, Florentines
 On whom the like mischance should fall: the roots
 O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
 No root of mine will throb—you understand.
 But I had predecessors, Florentines,
 Accused as I am now, and punished so—
 The Traversari: you know more than I
 How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
 Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
 Both served them and succeeded, in due time;
 He knows the way, holds proper documents,

And has the power to lay the simple truth
 Before an active spirit, as I count yours :
 And also there's Tiburzio, my new friend,
 Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
 He being the great chivalric soul we know.
 I put it to your tact, sir—were't not well,
 —A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
 If you who witness, and have borne a share
 Involuntarily, in my mischance,
 Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
 To indicate—that is, investigate
 The right or wrong of what mischance befell
 Those famous citizens, your countrymen ?
 Nay, you shall promise nothing : but reflect,
 And if your sense of justice prompt you—good !

Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
 To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
 Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
 For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
 My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
 I used to hold by the instructed brain,
 And move with Braccio as my master-wind ;
 The heart leads surelier : I must move with you—
 As greatest now, who ever were the best.
 So, let the last and humblest of your servants
 Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
 And tender homage by obeying you ! [*JACOPO goes.*]

Lur. Another !—Luria goes not poorly forth !
 If we could wait ! The only fault's with time :

All men become good creatures—but so slow

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more ?

Dom. Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'Tis I,
Another woman, you have never known.
Let the Past sleep now !

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—
So like a wall at the world's end it stood,
With nought beyond to live for,—is that reached ?
Already are new undreamed energies,
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object ;—there's another world !
See ! I have told the purpose of my life ;
'T is gained : you are decided, well or ill—
You march on Florence, or submit to her—
My work is done with you, your brow declares.
But—leave you ? More of you seems yet to reach !
I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the Past !

Dom. You trace
Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
Which sought its end and disregarded yours ?

Lur. Speak not against your nature : best, each keep
His own—you, yours—most, now when I keep mine,

With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours !
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know !
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there ; Now it is, as it was Then ;
All changes at His instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work !
His hand is still engaged upon His world—
Man's praise can forward it, Man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty ?—To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it Him ? So, man breathes nobly there !
And inasmuch as Feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
While Northern Thought is slow and durable,
Surely a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power
And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
Should have remained and turned it to account,
Giving Thought's character and permanence
To the too-transitory Feeling there—
Writing God's message plain in mortal words !
Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed least,
Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
, And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among

Mistake me! There, how all had understood,
 Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
 Fresh instinct to translate them into law!
 Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
 More needful even: who have brought fresh stuff
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
 New feelings fresh from God, which, could we know
 O' the instant, where had been our need of them?
 —Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
 What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
 All, once revealed but taught us so long since
 That, having mere tradition of the fact,—
 Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
 The early traits all dropped away,—we said
 On sight of faith like yours, "So looks not faith
 "We understand, described and praised before."
 But still, the feat was dared; and though at first
 It suffer from our haste, yet trace by trace
 Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
 Our slow Thought does its work, and all's re-known.
 Oh noble Luria! what you have decreed
 I see not, but no animal revenge,
 No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
 It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
 Traced for me by convention and mistake,
 Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
 Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
 To his own soul, and I will trust to him!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now,
And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step.

Lur. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.
Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
Southward—

Lur. Toward Florence? Have out instantly...
Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth.
In—quick—'t is nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio?—not at Pisa?

Tib. I return
From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
By such procedure I have served her best.
A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this,
That your sole fate concerns a nation more

Than its apparent welfare ; and to prove
 Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
 Imports us far beyond the day's event,
 A battle's loss or gain : the mass remains,—
 Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
 To take its mould, and other days to prove
 How great a good was Luria's having lived.
 I might go try my fortune as you bade,
 And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
 Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done ;
 But where find Luria for our sons to see ?
 No, I look farther. I have testified
 (Declaring my submission to your arms)
 Her full success to Florence, making clear
 Your probity, as none else could : I spoke—
 And out it shone !

Lur. Ah—until Braccio spoke !

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
 His lapse to error, and return to knowledge :
 Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,
 I whom shame rests with ! yet I dare look up,
 Sure of your pardon when I sue for it,
 Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end !
 Morning approaches ! Still you answer not ?
 Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away ;
 Our faces which phantasmal grew and false,
 Are all that felt it : they close round you now
 Themselves in its completest vanishing.
 Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career :

Look up to it ! All now is possible,
The glory and the grandeur of each dream :
And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)
--That you would punish Florence !

Hus. (*pointing to LURIA's dead body.*) That is done.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY: .

1846.

PART FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF
CHIAPPINO'S LIFE: AND PART SECOND, ITS PROSE.

PERSONS—LUITOLFO and EULALIA, betrothed lovers: CHIAPPINO, their friend:
OGNIBEN, the Legate: CITIZENS of Faenza. Time, 15—. Place, FAENZA.

PART I.

Inside LUITOLFO'S house, CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast falling,
And 't was scarce sunset . . . had the Ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That's good!

Eu. You laugh?

Ch. Yes, I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own;

And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.
 Up to a single man's or woman's love,
 Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
 There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke!
 —Counting, you see, as “nothing” the permission
 To study this peculiar lot of mine
 In silence: well, go silence with the rest
 Of the world's good! What can I say, shall serve?

Eu. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
 Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for once,
 A cloud across your spirit!

Ch. How a cloud?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say?

Ch. My God, were't not for Thee!

Eu. Ay, God remains,
 Even did men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so!

Were't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
 Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man?
 I, now—the homeless, friendless, penniless,
 Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,—
 Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
 (The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
 About your friendship, and Luitolfo's courage,
 And all our townsfolk's equanimity,—
 Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
 Of the old miserable lying trick
 Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
 Did I not turn to Thee! It is Thy prompting

I dare to be ashamed of, and Thy counsel
 Would die along my coward lip, I know—
 But I do turn to Thee! This craven tongue,
 These features which refuse the soul its way,
 Reclaim Thou! Give me truth—truth, power to speak
 —And after be sole present to approve
 The spoken truth!—or, stay, that spoken truth,
 Who knows but you, too, might approve?

En.

Ah, well—

Keep silence then, Chiappino!

Ch.

You would hear,
 And shall now,—why the thing we're pleased to style
 My gratitude to you and all your friends
 For service done me, is just gratitude
 So much as yours was service—and no more.
 I was born here, so was Luitolfo,—both
 At one time, much with the same circumstance
 Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
 Of parting company, have side by side
 Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.
 "Why?" asks the world: "Because," replies the world
 To its complacent self, "these playfellows,
 Who took at church the holy-water drop
 Each from the other's finger, and so forth,—
 Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
 Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
 Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
 A happy-tempered bringer of the best
 Out of the worst; who bears with what's past cure,

And puts so good a face on 't—wisely passive
 Where action's fruitless, while he remedies
 In silence what the foolish rail against ;
 A man to smooth such natures as parade
 Of opposition must exasperate—
 No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
 Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
 At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego
 The after-battle work of binding wounds,
 Because, forsooth, he'd have to bring himself
 To side with wound-inflictors for their leave !"
 —Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
 What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
 About Luitolfo and his, so-styled friend ?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch.

I thought

You would be readier with the other half
 Of the world's story,—my half!—Yet, 't is true,
 For all the world does say it ! Say your worst !
 True, I thank God, I ever said "you sin,"
 When a man did sin : if I could not say it,
 I glared it at him,—if I could not glare it,
 I prayed against him,—then my part seemed over ;
 God's may begin yet : so it will, I trust !

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Ch.

What's "me"

That you use well or ill ? It's Man, in me,
 All your successes are an outrage to,
 You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !

Here's our Faenza birthplace ; they send here
 A Provost from Ravenna : how he rules,
 You can at times be eloquent about.

"Then, end his rule!"—"Ah yes, one stroke does that?
 But patience under wrong works slow and sure.
 Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,
 Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah—
 Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
 Some human sympathy which, once excite,
 And all the lump were leavened quietly :
 So, no more talk of striking, for this time!"
 But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
 These pretty takings-up and layings-down
 Our cause, just as you think occasion suits!
 Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, will you?
 Diversify your tactics,—give submission,
 Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
 While we die in our misery patient deaths?
 We all are outraged then, and I the first!
 I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
 Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
 I hate!

Eu. We share a common censure, then.
 'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
 Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?
 Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,
 (Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine,)
 What have I got to be so grateful for?

These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino!

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most!

—Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband: well—
I loved you.

Eu. Hold!

Ch. You knew it, years ago.

When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
The People's Provost to their heart's content,
—My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
Banishes now because he cannot bear,—
You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I:
So be it! you flourish, I decay. All's well!

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault's there?

Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst
Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?

* Eulalia! truce with toying for this once!

A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
For the last time—why, what's to fear from me?

* You knew I loved you!

Eu. . . . Not so, on my faith!
 You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
 See how your words come from you in a crowd!
 Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
 In all that challenges respect and love:
 Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
 I say all this by fascination, sure—
 I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen!
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
 Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. . . . —You too pity? Do!
 But hear first what my wrongs are; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
 Was't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As next contrive some way to win them—which
 To do, an age seemed far too little—for, see!
 We all aspire to Heaven; and there is Heaven
 Above us: go there! Dare we go? no, surely!
 How dare we go without a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for Heaven?—Even so,
 I dared not speak: the greater fool, it seems!
 Was't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 But I must have, beside, the very man
 Whose slight, free, loose and incapacious soul
 Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
 —Must have him load me with his benefits

For fortune's fiercest stroke ?

Eu. Justice to him
That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
Justice for you! Did he once call those acts
Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits ?

Ch. No—the straight course had been to call them
so ;

Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
We both sought : but “ the gold was dross,” he said,
“ He loved me, and I loved him not : why spurn
“ A trifle out of superfluity ?
“ He had forgotten he had done as much.”
So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
To take him at his word, there stood by you
My benefactor ; who might speak and laugh
And urge his nothings, even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream !
Let's wake : your husband . . . how you shake at that !
Good—my revenge !

Eu. Why should I shake ? What forced
Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride ?

Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing forces you !
No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit—here so many times he came,
So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table ;

He spoke a good word to the Provost here—
 Held me up when my fortunes fell away
 —It had not looked so well to let me drop—
 Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
 Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a
 friend.

But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
 Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
 Like me : I could not change—you know the rest.
 I've spoke my mind too fully out, for once,
 This morning to our Provost ; so, ere night
 I leave the city on pain of death : and now
 On my account there 's gallant intercession
 Goes forward—that 's so graceful !—and anon
 He 'll noisily come back : “ the intercession
 Was made and fails—all 's over for us both—
 'Tis vain contending—I would better go.”
 And I do go—and so, to you he turns
 Light of a load ; and ease of that permits
 His visage to repair its natural bland
 Economy, sore broken late to suit
 My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—you, with him
 He with himself, and all of you with me
 —“ Who,” say the citizens, “ had done far better
 In letting people sleep upon their woes,
 If not possessed with talent to relieve them
 When once they woke ;—but then I had,” they 'll say
 “ Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
 In what I did ; and as I seem content

With ruining myself, why, so should they be :"
 And so they are, and so be with his prize
 The devil, when he gets them speedily !
 Why does not your Luitolfo come ? I long
 To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
 It seems you never loved me, then ?

Eu. Chiappino !

Ch. Never ?

Eu. Never.

Ch. That 's sad : say what I might,
 There was no help from being sure this while
 You loved me ; love like mine must have return,
 I thought : no river starts but to some sea,
 And had you loved me, I could soon devise
 Some specious reason why you stifled love,
 Some fancied self-denial on your part,
 Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so, excepting
 From the wide condemnation of all here,
 One woman. Well, the other dream may break !
 If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
 Loved me, though in the vilest breast 't were lodged,
 I should, I think, be forced to love again :
 Else there 's no right nor reason in the world.

Eu. " If you knew," say you,—but I did not know :
 That 's where you 're blind, Chiappino !—a disease
 Which if I may remove, I 'll not repent
 The listening to. You cannot, will not, see
 How, place you but in every circumstance
 Of us, you are just now indignant at,

You 'd be as we.

Ch. I should be? . . . that, again!

I, to my Friend, my Country and my Love,
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

Eu. As we.

Ch. Now, I 'll say something to remember!

I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time:
I trust in God—the right shall be the right
And other than the wrong, while He endures:
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.—
I 'll not curse . . . God bears with them—well may I—
But I—protest against their claiming me.
I simply say, if that 's allowable,
I would not . . . broadly . . . do as they have done.
—God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse
Whoever loved, above his liberty,
House, land or life! and . . . [*A knocking without.*
—bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eu. How he knocks!

Ch. The peril, lady!

“Chiappino, I have run a risk! My God!

“How when I prayed the Provost—(he 's my friend)—

"To grant you a week's respite of his sentence
 "That confiscates your goods, and exiles you,
 "He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged it! Yes,
 "And fright of that drove all else from my head.
 "Here 's a good purse of *scudi*: off with you,
 "Lest of that shrug come what God only knows!
 "The *scudi*—friend, they 're trash—no thanks, I beg!
 "Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb
 "Whose double taxes you appealed against,
 "In discomposure at your ill-success
 "Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!
 "Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
 "Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist!"
 —Is it not thus you 'll speak, adventurous friend?

[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments
disordered.]

Eu. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luit. There 's more—and more of it!
 Eulalia—take the garment . . . no . . . you, friend!
 You take it and the blood from me—you dare!

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you? where 's the wound?

Ch. "Who," say you?
 The man with many a touch of virtue yet!
 The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,
 And this comes of it. Miserable hound!
 This comes of temporizing, as I said!
 Here 's fruit of your smooth speeches and fair looks!
 Now see my way! As God lives, I go straight
 To the palace and do justice, once for all!

Luit. What says he?

Ch. I 'll do justice on him.

Luit. Him?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I 've just killed him.

Eu. Oh, my God!

Luit. My friend, they 're on my trace—they 'll have me—now!

They 're round him, busy with him : soon they 'll find

He 's past their help, and then they 'll be on me!

Chiappino! save Eulalia . . I forgot . . .

Were you not bound . . for . . .

Ch. Lugo!

Luit. Ah—yes—yes—

That was the point I prayed of him to change,

Well—go—be happy . . is Eulalia safe?

They 're on me!

Ch. 'T is through me they reach you, then!
Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms—that 's
right!

Now tell me what you 've done ; explain how you
That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino?

I tried peace—did that promise, when peace failed,

Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days

Were just the prelude to a day like this.

I cried " You call me ' friend '—save my true friend!

" Save him, or lose me!"

Ch. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus!

Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. "Would so order it
You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;
I poured my heart's store of indignant words
Out on him: then—I know not! He retorted,
And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck . . .
Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!
The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell,
Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
Much to yourself; believe not, all the world
Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Ch. And you?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!
This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows
My path of flight and place of refuge—see—
Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,
Ferrara, then to Venice and all 's safe!
Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch
A compass round about. There 's time enough
Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make
For Lugo . . . nay, he hears not! On with it—

The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
 He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must . . .
 Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge!

Luit. I know!

Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened? all my
 route

Is traced in that: at Venice you 'll escape
 Their power. Eulalia, I am master here!

*[Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who
 complies mechanically.]*

In time! nay, help me with him—so! He's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance, all
 know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
 As our accomplice.

Ch. Mere accomplice? See!

[Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.]

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,
 Or one of these?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

Ch. Die for him.

Eu. Well done! *[Shouts increase.]*

Ch. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent . . . I must speak . . . or sing—
 How natural to sing now!

Eu. Hush and pray!

We are to die; but even I perceive
 'T is not a very hard thing so to die.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,
 Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
 With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth
 Each evening after that wild son of hers,
 To track his thoughtless footstep through the street:
 How easy for them both to die like this!
 I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds! They pass the gate?
 Yes!—No!—

One torch is in the court-yard. Here flock all.

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What cries!

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
 One might speak there!

Eu. List, list!

Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost!

[*The populace speaking together.*] 'T was Chiappino,
 friends!

Our saviour.—The best man at last as first!
 He who first made us see what chains we wore,
 He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
 He at last saves us—our best citizen!

—Oh, have you only courage to speak now?

My eldest son was christened a year since
 "Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!

The city's in our hands. The guards are fled.

Do you, the cause of all, come down—come down—
 Come forth to counsel us, our chief, our king,
 Whate'er rewards you! Choose your own reward!
 The peril over, its reward begins!
 Come and harangue us in the market-place!

Eu. Chiappino!

Ch. Yes . . . I understand your eyes!

You think I should have promptlier disowned
 This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
 In favour of Luitolfo—but the peril,
 So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
 To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
 We easily shall make him full amends:

And meantime . . . if we save them as they pray,
 And justify the deed by its effects?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Ch. ~~Eu.~~ I know my own intention, be assured!

All's well! Precede us, fellow-citizens!

PART II.

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

1st Bystander (To LUIT.) You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and

new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—
Chiappino!

Luit. He the new Provost?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established usage: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the old Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3rd. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop! He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure

friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning—might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that care of himself certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoe with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone. Ha, ha!

Luit. [*Aside.*] If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last Spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me. [*Aloud.*] Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry! I know Chiappino better.

1st. (Our friend has the bile! after all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable; up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children—out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant—we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody—(you know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome). And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate—trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes*," and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps

under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile,—I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves,—and now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him—and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next.”—And thus he ran on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government

by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see? I recognise him there!

3rd. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—“And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. “Oh, are you there?” quoth Chiappino:—“In that, I agree,” returns Chiappino, and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—“whereas what right,” asked he, “has any man to wish to be superior to another?”—whereat, “Ah sir,” answers the Legate, “this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so

ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself—for see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, that are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same,—you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that,

through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!" And so chatting, they glided off arm in arm.

Luit. And the result is . . .

1st. Why that, a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's goods,—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. (*withdrawing a little.*) I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge—what could I else? But if what they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call

the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me . . . turn and see it . . . the old Provost's house to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a

Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there, a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity-for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman,—manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead, or illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a

blind natural operation—yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!—By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!"—for a favour done him: so, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs, and all the money, and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered.—To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Oh. I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do!)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as

great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your Love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court—send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems—so shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a Paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain—though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Ch. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance

presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence,—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world—we know all we shall ever know, and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we *do* know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess

to be imperfect—but what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones: and as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable!—“Contradictions?”—Of course there were, say you?

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply!

Ogni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocators of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good, and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances—to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spent their life in pushing it onward as those who gave theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the

world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle; I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving"—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, and from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosities with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good

on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side. And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, so I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action. I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only, —but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power, of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has His archangels and consorts with them: though He made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes,

hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there is a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you!—That is the generous way. Cry—emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go! The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!”—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody’s sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as “Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require.” Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this—that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in His place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of

mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe!

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think; with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogni. Not I! (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power; wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our

town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now! there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No—or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting. I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents; and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of; who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen,—heard too plainly “hiss, hiss, hiss,” increase every moment: till at last the

man fell senseless—not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap? *

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Ha!

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See

the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps— which we may not have to ascend, after all ! My good friends—(nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost ?—his successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know ?

Luitolfo. [*coming forward.*] I !

All. Luitolfo !

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger : I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still : I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino ; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you ?—putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text—“ Let whoso thinketh

he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo! Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign, however. And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand—it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so,—they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he has grown six feet high, black and bearded: but, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion,—and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly

out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now—(Ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home. I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

IN A BALCONY.

A SCENE.

1855.

In a Balcony.

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

Nor. Now.

Con. Not now.

Nor. Give me them again, those hands—
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through.
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.
Some time or other this was to be asked;
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain:
Let me ask now, Love!

Con. Do, and ruin us:

Nor. Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,

Hold you and have you, and then die away
If God please, with completion in my soul.

Con. I am not yours then? how content this man?
I am not his, who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
Give all that was of me away to him
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here,
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognisant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
By saving what I cease to care about,
The courtly name and pride of circumstance—
The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;
Just that the world may slip from under you—
Just that the world may cry "So much for him—
The man predestined to the heap of crowns:
There goes his chance of winning one, at least!"

Nor. The world!

Con. You love it. Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain!

Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

Nor. You pray for—what, in vain?

Con. Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right!

But listen, or I take my hands away.

You say, "let it be now"—you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me—so you do, thank God!

Nor.

Thank God!

Con. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your
love,

And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,
Her house had only dreamed of anciently.
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. "Name your own
reward!"

With leave to clench the Past, chain the To-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,—
You choose the single thing she will not grant;
Nay, very declaration of which choice

Will turn the scale and neutralize your work.

At best she will forgive you, if she can.

You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

Con. There, there!

So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,

Make it your own case. For example now,

I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—

Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—

The kiss, because you have a name at court,

This hand and this, that you may shut in each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such.

That's horrible! Apply it to the Queen—

Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak."

"I was a nameless man; you needed me:

Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood

A certain pretty cousin at your side.

Why did I make such common cause with you?

Access to her had not been easy else.

You give my labours here abundant praise?

'Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.

How shall your gratitude discharge itself?

Give me her hand!"

Nor. And still I urge the same.

Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

Con. Yes, just. You love a rose; no harm in that:

But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—
Then, mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself;
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures; there's a life
Better than life, and yet no life at all.
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognize its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all,
In better semblance than the things outside?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly?
—Say, "that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?"
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her:
How should it, with that life in these four walls,

That father and that mother, first to last
 No father and no mother—friends, a heap,
 Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
 And every one of them alike a lie!
 Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
 Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
 All better, all more grandiose than life,
 Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,
 You feel, while you admire. How should she feel?
 Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
 The sole spectator in that gallery,
 You think to bring this warm real struggling love
 In to her of a sudden, and suppose
 She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
 She'll apprehend its value at a glance,
 Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?
 You only have to say "so men are made,
 For this they act; the thing has many names,
 But this the right one: and now, Queen, be just!"
 And life slips back; you lose her at the word:
 You do not even for amends gain me.
 He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Norbert,
 Do you not understand?

Nor. The Queen's the Queen,
 I am myself—no picture, but alive
 In every nerve and every muscle, here
 At the palace-window o'er the people's street,
 As she in the gallery where the pictures glow:
 The good of life is precious to us both.

She cannot love; what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice—
“The woman yonder, there's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
And spurn them, as they help or help not this;
Only, obtain her!”—How was it to be?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause
In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;
I worked because I want you with my soul:
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!

Con. Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,

You might become impatient. What's conceived
 Of us without here, by the folks within?
 Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
 Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—
 We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
 What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours
 Which broke the council up?—to bring about
 One minute's meeting in the corridor!
 And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,
 Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
 Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
 "Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"
 A year of this compression's ecstasy
 All goes for nothing! you would give this up
 For the old way, the open way, the world's,
 His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!
 What tempts you?—their notorious happiness,
 That you are ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain
 Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,
 Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
 And me at once, and gives us ample leave
 To live like our five hundred happy friends. •
 The world will show us with officious hand
 Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
 Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!
 Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,
 And make it duty to be bold and swift,
 Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
 We never hawked by rights till flung from fist?

Oh, the man's thought!—no woman's such a fool.

Nor. Yes, the man's thought and my thought,
which is more—

One made to love you, let the world take note!
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!
Set free my love, and see what love can do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.
So, good: but let my low ground shame their high!
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to wear you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off.
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now it's all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result—
Then think of this revulsion! I resume

Life after death, (it is no less than life,
 After such long unlovely labouring days)
 And liberate to beauty life's great need
 Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
 Suppress itself erewhile. This eve's the time—
 This eve intense with yon first trembling star
 We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught between
 The earth that rises and the heaven that bends;
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
 And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;
 All under God, each measured by itself.
 These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,
 The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
 The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose:
 See God's approval on His universe!
 Let us do so—aspire to live as these
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being true!
 Take the first way, and let the second come!
 My first is to possess myself of you;
 The music sets the march-step—forward, then!
 And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!
Con. And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:
 You do not know her, were not born to it,

To feel what she can see or cannot see.
 Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,
 Generous as you are : for, in that thin frame
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with
 cares,

There lived a lavish soul until it starved
 Debarred all healthy food. *Look to the soul—*
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
 (The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,
 Exactions and acquittance of the Past !

Begin so—see what justice she will deal !

We women hate a debt as men a gift.

Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
 Whose business is to sit thro' summer months

And dole out children leave to go and play,
 Herself superior to such lightness—she
 In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp,
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside—

We wonder such a face looks black on us ?

I do not bid you wake her tenderness,

(That were vain truly—none is left to wake)

But, let her think her justice is engaged
 To take the shape of tenderness, and mark

If she'll not coldly pay its warmest need !

Does she love me, I ask you ? not a whit :

Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged

To help a kinswoman, she took me up—

Did more on that bare ground than other loves

Would do on greater argument. For me,

I have no equivalent of such cold kind
 To pay her with, but love alone to give
 If I give anything. I give her love :
 I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
 So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
 That women hate a debt as men a gift.
 If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
 Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
 Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
 Declaring my success was recompense ;
 It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?
 And then, once loose her generosity,—
 Oh, how I see it ! then, were I but you
 To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
 And make it offer what I really take,
 Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
 Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
 Since none loves Queens directly, none dares that,
 And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
 Suffices those who miss the name and thing !
 You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
 To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
 Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
 Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)
 You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,
 Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .
 —You'll see ! and when you have ruined both of us,
 Dissertaté on the Queen's ingratitude !
Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you consent ?

'T is not my way ; I have more hope in truth :
 Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
 Were scarcely false, as I 'd express the sense.
 Will you remain here ?

Con. O best heart of mine,
 How I have loved you ! then, you take my way ?
 Are mine as you have been her minister,
 Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
 Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve ?
 I owe that withered woman everything—
 Life, fortune, you, remember ! Take my part—
 Help me to pay her !. Stand upon your rights ?
 You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you ?
 Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

Nor. Remain here. How you know me !

Con. Ah, but still——

*[He breaks from her : she remains. Dance-music
 from within.]*

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance !—She is here as he said. Speak !
 quick !

Is it so ? is it true—or false ? One word !

Con. True.

Queen. Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee !

Con. Madam !

Queen. I love you, Constance, from my soul..

Now say once more, with any words you will,
 'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

Con. Why should you doubt it ?

Queen. Ah, why doubt? why doubt?

Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?
 None see themselves; another sees them best.
 You say "why doubt it?"—you see him and me.
 It is because the Mother has such grace
 That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—
 Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
 Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,
 Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,
 And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.
 Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
 And of being loved, as truly as you palm
 The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven!

Queen. But it was so, Constance, it was so!

Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
 "Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
 Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
 Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love!"
 One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
 Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
 "Oh love, true, never think of love again!
 I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed."
 So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
 Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
 Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

Con. I cannot understand——

Queen. The happier you! }

Constance, I know not how it is with men:
 For women, (I am a woman now like you)
 There is no good of life but love—but love!
 What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
 Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
 Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
 Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
 O Constance, how I love you!

Con. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come through you.
 I took you to my heart to keep it warm
 When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
 I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.
 Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
 Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

Con. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me
 And say "she's old, she's grown unlovely quite
 Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still."
 Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure.

Con. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the coming was not
 strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and go?
 I turned a half-look from my pedestal
 Where I grow marble—"one young man the more!
 He will love some one; that is nought to me:

What would he with my marble stateliness?
 Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
 The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
 And I still older, with less flesh to change—
 We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
 It seemed still harder, when he first began
 Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
 The old way for the old end—interest.
 Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
 Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
 Professing they 've no care but for your cause,
 Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,
 And you the marble statue all the time
 They praise and point at as preferred to life,
 Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,
 First dancer's, gipsy's, or street baladine's!
 Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech
 Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
 Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
 Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,
 Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
 While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,
 Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
 Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.
 There have been moments, if the sentinel
 Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
 Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
 I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.
Con. Who could have comprehended?

Queen. Ay, who—who?
 Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
 Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
 It comes too late—would you but tell the truth!

Con. I wait to tell it.

Queen. Well, you see, he came,
 Outfaced the others, did a work this year
 Exceeds in value all was ever done,
 You know—it is not I who say it—all
 Say it. And so (a second pang and worse),
 I grew aware not only of what he did,
 But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
 Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—
 It must have finer aims to lure it on!
 I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.
 And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
 I did believe this while 't was you he loved.

Con. Me, madam?

Queen. It did seem to me, your face
 Met him where'er he looked; and whom but you
 Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,
 You saw he loved you, and approved the love
 And so you both were in intelligence.
 You could not loiter in the garden, step
 Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
 And forced to understand. It seemed so true,
 So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
 That all this work should have been done by him
 Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,

But that at last—suppose, some night like this—
 Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
 He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."
 And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)
 I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
 "And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
 My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,
 My happiest woman's self that might have been!
 These two shall have their joy and leave me here."
 Yes—yes—

Con. Thanks!

Queen. And the word was on my lips
 When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
 A mere calm statement of his just desire
 For payment of his labour. When—O Heaven,
 How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes
 And thunder in my ears at that first word
 Which told 't was love of me, of me, did all—
 He loved me—from the first step to the last
 Loved me!

Con. You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke
 Of love? what if you should mistake?

Queen. No, no—
 No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!
 He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
 You were my reflex—(how I understood!)
 He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
 He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
 And love, love was the end of every phrase.

Love is begun; this much is come to pass:
 The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours—
 I will learn, I will place my life on you,
 But teach me how to keep what I have won.
 Am I so old? this hair was early grey;
 But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
 And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
 I could sing once too; that was in my youth.
 Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
 Beautiful—for the last French painter did!
 I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—
 I trust you. How I loved you from the first!
 Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
 And set her by their side to take the eye;
 I must have felt that good would come from you.
 I am not generous—like him—like you!
 But he is not your lover after all:
 It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?
 You have not been mistaking words or looks?
 He said you were the reflex of myself.
 And yet he is not such a paragon
 To you, to younger women who may choose
 Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!
 You know you never named his name to me—
 You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,
 Not up now, even to you!

Con.

Then calm yourself.

Queen. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,
 I will not play the fool, deceive myself;

'T is all gone—put your cheek beside my cheek—
Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!
But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am I not left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old; it is in all the tales:
Young beauties love old poets who can love—
Why should not he, the poems in my soul,
The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,
The constancy? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,
And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How I will love him! cannot men love love?
Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!
Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.
They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please;
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 't is not beauty makes the lasting love—
They spend a day with such and tire the next:
They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
Horrible though it be—that prejudice,
Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.
They will—they do. And will not, does not—he?

Con. How can he? You are wedded—'t is a name
 We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
 As you believe and I incline to think,
 Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

Queen. Hear her! there, there now—could she love
 like me?

What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?
 See all it does or could do! so, youth loves!
 Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
 What I will—you, it was not born in! I
 Will drive these difficulties far and fast
 As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
 I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
 My youth from its enforced calamity,
 Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
 His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

Con. You will do—dare do . . . pause on what you
 say!

Queen. Hear her! I thank you, Sweet, for that
 surprise.

You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!
 I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.
 I think I have borne enough and long enough,
 And patiently enough, the world remarks,
 To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
 It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
 This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.
 There's not a better way of settling claims

Than this ; God sends the accident express :
 And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
 'T were best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
 Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
 And bless God simply, or should almost fear
 To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
 Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !
 How strong I am ! could Norbert see me now !

Con. Let me consider. It is all too strange.

Queen. You, Constance, learn of me ; do you, like
 me !

You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,
 You will have many lovers, and love one—
 Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,
 And taller than he is, for yourself are tall.
 Love him, like me ! give all away to him ;
 Think never of yourself ; throw by your pride,
 Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,
 And love him simply for his very self.
 Remember, I (and what am I to you ?)
 Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
 Do all but just unlove him ! He loves me.

Con. He shall.

Queen. You, step inside my inmost heart.
 Give me your own heart : let us have one heart.
 I'll come to you for counsel ; " this he says,
 This he does ; what should this amount to, pray ?
 Beseech you, change it into current coin.
 Is that worth kisses ? shall I please him there ? "

And then we 'll speak in turn of you—what else?
 Your love, according to your beauty's worth,
 For you shall have some noble love, all gold:
 Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice
 —Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,
 I felt as I must die or be alone
 Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:
 Now, I would face the world with my new life,
 With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
 And then come back and tell you how it feels.
 How soon a smile of God can change the world!
 How we are made for happiness—how work
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
 True, I have lost so many years. What then?
 Many remain: God has been very good.
 You, stay here. 'T is as different from dreams,
 From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
 As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
 The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!
 [*She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE. Dance-music from within.*]

NORBERT enters.

Nor. Well! we have but one minute and one word.
Con. I am yours, Norbert!
Nor. Yes, mine.
Con. Not till now!
 You were mine: Now I give myself to you.
Nor. Constance!
Con. Your own! I know the thriftier way

Of giving—haply, 't is the wiser way.
 Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
 Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
 With a new largess still at each despair)
 And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve
 Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
 My giving and your taking ; both our joys
 Dying together. Is it the wiser way ?
 I choose the simpler ; I give all at once.
 Know what you have to trust to, trade upon !
 Use it, abuse it,—anything but think
 Hereafter, “ Had I known she loved me so,
 And what my means, I might have thriven with it.”
 This is your means. I give you all myself.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

Con. Look on through years !
 We cannot kiss, a second day like this ;
 Else were this earth, no earth.

Nor. With this day's heat
 We shall go on through years of cold.

Con. So, best !
 I try to see those years—I think I see.
 You walk quick and new warmth comes ; you look
 back

And lay all to the first glow—not sit down
 For ever brooding on a day like this
 While seeing the embers whiten and love die.
 Yes, love lives best in its effect ; and mine,
 Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

Nor. Just so. I take and know you all at once.
 Your soul is disengaged so easily,
 Your face is there, I know you ; give me time,
 Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
 My soul is slower : in a life I roll
 The minute out whereto you condense yours—
 The whole slow circle round you I must move,
 To be just you. I look to a long life
 To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
 'T is the sparks' long succession one by one
 Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed
 In that mere stone you struck : how could you know,
 If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
 As now my heart lies ? your own warmth would hide
 Its coldness, were it cold.

Con. But how prove, how ?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask ?

Con. Quick, Norbert—how ?

Nor. That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
 To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
 Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
 As with the body—he who hurls a lance
 Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,
 So I will seize and use all means to prove,
 And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,
 And justify us both.

Con. Could you write books,
 Paint pictures ! one sits down in poverty
 And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

Nor. And loves one's painting and one's writing,
then,

And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take your face
And write of it and paint it—to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you—I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there
Paint us.

Con So, best!

Nor. I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success. This way is straight;
And days were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one man,

Through ways of work appointed by themselves.
I am not bid create—they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began : to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned at length
The dawn of the next nature, the new man
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
And who, they trust, shall find them out new ways
To heights as new which yet he only sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!
My will be on this people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the success
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance all recognise:
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,

Ever begin . . .

Con. I ever helping ?

Nor. Thus !

[*As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.*]

Con. Hist, madam—so I have performed my part.

You see your gratitude's true decency,

Norbert ? a little slow in seeing it !

Begin, to end the sooner. What 's a kiss ?

Nor. Constance !

Con. Why, must I teach it you again ?

You want a witness to your dullness, sir ?

What was I saying these ten minutes long ?

Then I repeat—when some young handsome man

Like you has acted out a part like yours,

Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,

So very far beyond him, as he says—

So hopelessly in love, that but to speak

Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul,

Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant.

And very stalking-horse to cover him

In following after what he dares not face—

When his end 's gained—(sir, do you understand ?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,

—May I not say so, madam ?—tops his hope,

And overpasses so his wildest dream,

With glad consent of all, and most of her

The confidant who brought the same about—

Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,

I do hold that the merest gentleman
 Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
 Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"
 Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
 But like a liberal heart will rather turn
 And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours—
 Betwixt the fears and falterings—we two lived
 A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:
 The confidant, the Constance, served not ill;
 And though I shall forget her in due time,
 Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
 Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,
 Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
 The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
 And the first—which is the last—rewarding kiss."

Nor. Constance? it is a dream—ah see, you smile!

Con. So, now his part being properly performed,
 Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
 As duly; I do justice in my turn.
 Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well;
 He could not hope to tell you so—'t was I
 Who served to proved your soul accessible,
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place
 When else they had wandered out into despair,
 And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
 Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-way
 And meet us royally and spare our fears:
 'T is like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
 Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised

By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
 Yourself—the only one on earth who can—
 Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
 Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
 As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
 Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
 For him,—he knows his own part.

Nor. Have you done?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
 Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
 Or did you but accept it? Well—at least
 You lose by it.

Con. Nay, madam, 't is your turn!
 Restrain him still from speech a little more,
 And make him happier and more confident!
 Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!
 Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now! Here I yield
 My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
 With her go put in practice the great schemes
 You teem with, follow the career else closed—
 Be all you cannot be except by her!
 Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake
 Anything—frankly say you love him! Else
 He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
 His fear than you conceive: I know the man.

Nor. I know the woman somewhat, and confess
 I thought she had jested better: she begins
 To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
 Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise
 Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
 Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
 Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,
 Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
 —May still be right : I may do well to speak
 And make authentic what appears a dream
 To even myself. For, what she says, is true :
 Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now of love,
 Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
 But justified a warmth felt long before.
 Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say :
 Strange ! but I do grow stronger, now 't is said.
 Your courage helps mine : you did well to speak
 To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths'
 toil :

But still I had not waited to discern
 Your heart so long, believe me. From the first
 The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
 In absence even of your own words just now
 Which opened out the truth. 'T is very strange,
 But takes a happy ending—in your love
 Which mine meets : be it so : as you choose me,
 So I choose you.

Nor. And worthily you choose !
 I will not be unworthy your esteem,
 No, madam. I do love you ; I will meet
 Your nature, now I know it. This was well.
 I see,—you dare and you are justified :

But none had ventured such experiment,
 Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
 Less confident of finding such in me.
 I joy that thus you test me ere you grant
 The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best
 Of women to my arms : 't is like yourself.
 So—back again into my part's set words—
 Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
 But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
 Create in me the love our Constance does.
 Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—
 Not you magnolia-bell superb with scent
 Invites a certain insect—that's myself—
 But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.
 I take this lady.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap—
 Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all.
 He is too cunning, madam ! It was I,
 I, Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Constance ? Then,
 But for the grace of this divinest hour
 Which gives me you, I might not pardon here.
 I am the Queen's ; she only knows my brain :
 She may experiment therefore on my heart
 And I instruct her too by the result.
 But you, Sweet, you who know me, who so long
 Have told my heart-beats over, held my life
 In those white hands of yours,—it is not well !

Con. Tush ! I have said it, did I not say it all ?

The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

Nor. Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test?

There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did'sbe love me, did love prove itself,
I dared insult as you insult me now.

Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
"Take back the soul you offer—I keep mine"
But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some playful friend,
For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"

I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No! fearing God and standing 'neath His heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Con. Norbert!

Nor. I love once—as I live but once.

What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all
Should such a step as this kill love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for it.
But mine—could murdered love get up again,
And kneel to whom you please to designate,
And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now you know

That body and soul have each one life, but one :
And here 's my love, here, living, at your feet.

Con. See the Queen ! Norbert—this one more last
word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus
Loved me in earnest . . .

Nor. Ah, no jest holds here !
Where is the laughter in which jests break up,
And what this horror that grows palpable ?
Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony ?
Have I done ill ? Have I not spoken the truth ?
How could I other ? Was it not your test,
To try me, and what my love for Constance meant ?
Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus ! so one takes
A beggar—asks him what would buy his child,
And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
Returned as something noble from the rags.
Speak, Constance, I 'm the beggar ! Ha, what 's this ?
You two glare each at each like panthers now.
Constance, the world fades ; only you stand there !
You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of things,
Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price ?
No—no—'t is easy to believe in you.
Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice ? well, still—
Though I should curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change ; love's self is at your feet.

[*The QUEEN goes out.*]

Con. Feel my heart ; let it die against your own !

Nor. Against my own ! explain not ; let this be.
This is life's height.

Con. Yours ! Yours ! Yours !

Nor. You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are here
In the centre of the labyrinth ? men have died
Trying to find this place, which we have found.

Con. Found, found !

Nor. Sweet, never fear what she can do !
We are past harm now.

Con. On the breast of God.
I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown !

Nor. This must end here—
It is too perfect !

Con. There 's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread ? it is one blaze
About me and within me.

Nor. Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark
And sever us from the rest—

Con. And so do well.
Now the doors open—

Nor. 'T is the guard comes.

Con. Kiss !

STRAFFORD.

A TRAGEDY.

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY.

April 23, 1837.

PERSONS.

CHARLES I.

Earl of HOLLAND.

Lord SAVILE.

Sir HENRY VANE.

WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD.

JOHN PYM.

JOHN HAMPDEN.

The younger VANE.

DENZIL HOLLIS.

BENJAMIN RUDYARD.

NATHANIEL FIENNES.

Earl of LOUDON.

MAXWELL, Usher of the Black Rod.

BALFOUR, Constable of the Tower.

A Puritan.

Queen HENRIETTA.

LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's Children.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A House near Whitehall.*—HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, the younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES, and many of the Presbyterian Party: LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners.

Vane. I say, if he be here—

Rud. (And he is here!)

Hol. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!

Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still!
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence should suspend
England's combined endeavour: little need
To name him!

Rud. For you are his brother, Hollis!

Hamp. Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him
that,

When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rud. Do I forget her?

Hamp. You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?

A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he
went:

But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .

Rud. Be you as still as David !

Fien. Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us !

Rud. Let 's hope for news of them now he returns—
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought !
—But I 'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now, by Heaven #
They may be cool who can, silent who will—
Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful Past up in its place,—
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be—
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out !)—in aught he feared
To venture on before ; taught Tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death—
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villanies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure

—If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
 Why, one more trick is added to the rest
 Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
 England may learn to bear: how all this while
 That man has set himself to one dear task,
 The bringing Charles to relish more and more
 Power, power without law, power and blood too—
 —Can I be still?

Hamp. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh, Hampden, then and now! The year he
 left us,

The People in full Parliament could wrest
 The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;
 And now, he'll find in an obscure small room
 A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
 That take up England's cause: England is here!

Hamp. And who despairs of England?

Rud. That do I,

If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
 To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
 The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
 May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
 I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—
 Which all true men say after me, not loud
 But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer!
 This King, who treads our England underfoot,
 Has just so much—it may be fear or craft—
 As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,

He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
 Some voice to ask, "Why shrink?—am I not by?"
 Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
 Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
 The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
 Upon me when you trample." Witness, you!
 So Wentworth heartened Charles, and England fell.
 But inasmuch as life is hard to take
 From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'Tis well said, Vane!

Vane. —Who has not so forgotten Runnymede!—

Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane! Go on!

Vane. There are some little signs of late she knows
 The ground no place for her! She glances round,
 Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
 On other service: what if she arise?
 No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
 The same bad man once more, with the same smile
 And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
 Or catch at us and rise?

Voices. The Renegade!

Haman! Ahithophel!

Hamp. Gentlemen of the North,
 It was not thus, the night your claims were urged,
 And we pronounced the League and Covenant
 The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well!
 Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden!

Fien. Stay, Vane!

Lou. Be just and patient, Vane!

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, London! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it; you are free in Scotland still:
While we are brothers, hope's for England yet:
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench
This last of hopes? that he brings war with him?
Know you the man's self? what he dares?

Lou. We know,
All know—'t is nothing new.

Vane. And what's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym himself—
You must have heard—ere Wentworth dropped our
cause

He would see Pym first; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 't is said,
To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips; he'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out;
One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all:
"You leave us, Wentworth! while your head is on,
"I'll not leave you."

Hamp. Has he left Wentworth, then?
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?
Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.

Hamp. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!

Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!

Hamp. Then each keep silence, praying God to
spare
His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!

A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

Pym enters.
Even Gideon!

Pym. Wentworth's come: nor sickness, care,
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find him work enough.
Where's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament...

Lou. Holds firm:
We were about to read reports.

Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Low. and other Scots. Great God!
An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!

Pym. The King's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth's here;
But still some little form might be kept up.

Hamp. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!

Hol. The rumour's false, then . . .

Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'Tis the King calls him: Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there's talk enough, by this,—
Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
That, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it
down
At the sword's point."

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's—one blow!

Pym. A goodly thing—

We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
 To right that England! Heaven grows dark above:
 Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
 To say how well the English spirit comes out
 Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,
 From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
 To the least here: and who, the least one here,
 When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
 Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
 Who'd give at any price his hope away
 Of being named along with the Great Men?
 We would not—no, we would not give that up!

Hamp. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
 When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
 After their fathers',—taught what matchless man...

Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's
 should be still
 That name?

Rud. and others. We have just said it, Pym! His
 death
 Saves her! We said it—there's no way beside!
 I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
 And purged the land.

Vane. No villanous striking-down!

Rud. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
 And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard, no!
 England rejects all Feltons; most of all
 Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again

Of England in her servants—but I'll think
 You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
 Spite of the Past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!

Vane and others. Wentworth? apostate! Judas!
 double-dyed

A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed..

Pym. . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
 Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
 Along the streets to see the people pass
 And read in every island-countenance
 Fresh argument for God against the King,—
 Never sat down, say, in the very house
 Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
 (You've joined us, Hampden—Hollis, you as well,
 And then left talking over Gracchus' death. . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
 In the Petition of Rights: he framed such clause
 One month before he took at the King's hand
 His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
 Denounced.

Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
 Walked we together! Most alone I went.
 I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—
 But I shall never quite forget that friend.
 And yet it could not but be real in him!
 You, Vane,—you Rudyard, have no right to trust
 To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
 Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood

Like water ?

Hamp. Ireland is Aceldama.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground,
To please the King, now that he knows the King ?
The People or the King ? and that King, Charles !

Hamp. Pym, all here know you : you'll not set
your heart

On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . [*Shouting without.*

Vane. There ! he comes,
And they shout for him ! Wentworth's at Whitehall,
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is !
Hear you ?

Pym. And yet if't is a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the
King

To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after ;—that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls and close content
That violence, which something mars even right
Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream !

Hamp. We meet here to accomplish certain good
By obvious means, and keep tradition up

Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
 In this poor chamber: nor without effect
 Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
 As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
 We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
 By these her delegates. Remains alone
 That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall—
 But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
 Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
 Her engines of oppression to their use?
 Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here—
 Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
 In drawing out our formidablest foe,
 Let bickering and disunion take their place?
 Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
 And keep the old arms at their steady play?
 Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
 In every county, save the northern parts
 Where Wentworth's influence . . . (*shouting.*)

Vane. I, in England's name,
 Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
 Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
 We English had free leave to think; till now,
 We had a shadow of a Parliament
 In Scotland. But all's changed: they change the first,
 They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts
 with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no
act

Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Went. And the King?

Lady Car. Wentworth, lean on me! sit then,—
I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.

Went. No; or—Lucy, just your arm;
I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?

Lady Car. Confides in you.

Went. Why? or, why now?—They have kind
throats, the knaves!

Shout for me—they!

Lady Car. You come so strangely soon:
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you?

Went. Wherefore should they not?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say!

Lady Car. I said but few dared carp at you.

Went. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!
He's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!

Lady Car. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I
said,

To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Went. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me—what?
That he for once put these aside and say—
“Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!”

Lady Car. You professed
You would be calm.

Went. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King? time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—
Why does the King distrust me?

Lady Car. He does not
Distrust you.

Went. Lucy, you can help me; you
Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
Is it the Queen?

Lady Car. No, not the Queen: the party

That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland. .

Went. I know, I know; old Vane, too, he's one too?
Go on—and he's made Secretary. Well?
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge;
The charge!

Lady Car. Oh, there's no charge, no precise charge;
Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,
Nibble at what you do.

Went. I know! but Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first!—Go on!
—Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
To help her . . . what am I?

Lady Car. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth?

Went. But go on! The party here!

Lady Car. They do not think your Irish Government
Of that surpassing value . . .

Went. The one thing
Of value! The one service that the crown
May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes
In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that's left the King!

Lady Car. So the Archbishop says.

Went. Ah? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these
Saviles

Nibble? They nibble?—that's the very word!

Lady Car. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .

Went. Enough! 't is too unworthy,—I am not
So patient as I thought! What's Pym about?

Lady Car. Pym?

Went. Pym and the People.

Lady Car. Oh, the Faction!

Extinct—of no account: there'll never be
Another Parliament.

Went. Tell Savile that!

You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here
Never forget!) that in my earliest life
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King
May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be their tool
Who might be Pym's friend yet.

But there's the King!

Where is he?

Lady Car. Just apprised that you arrive.

Went. And why not here to meet me? I was told
He sent for me, nay, longed for me!

Lady Car. Because,—
He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now
About this Scots affair.

Went. A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course

Without me in the matter?

Lady Car. I should say . . .

Went. The war? They cannot have agreed to that? Not the Scots' war?—without consulting me—Me, that am here to show how rash it is, How easy to dispense with?—Ah, you too Against me! well,—the King may takè his time. —Forget it, Lucy! cares make peevish: mine Weigh me (but 't is a secret) to my grave.

Lady Car. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*]

Went. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,

Forsake the People!—I did not forsake
The People: they shall know it—when the King
Will trust me!—who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
And am not trusted: have but saved the Throne:
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he 'll see me now.
Weston is dead: the Queen's half English now—
More English: one decisive word will brush
These insects from . . . the step I know so well!
The King! But now, to tell him . . . no—to ask
What's in me he distrusts:—or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
And the flesh fails, now! and the time is come,
And one false step no way to be repaired!

You were avenged; Pym, could you look on me!

PYM enters.

Went. I little thought of you just then.

Pym. No? I

Think always of you, Wentworth.

Went. The old voice!

I wait the King, sir.

Pym. True—you look so pale!

A Council sits within; when that breaks up

He 'll see you.

Went. Sir, I thank you.

Pym. Oh, thank Laud!

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs

The case is desperate: he 'll not be long

To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,

We English all are mad to have a hand

In butchering the Scots for serving God

After their fathers' fashion: only that!

Went. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!

(Does *he* enjoy their confidence?) 'T is kind

To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge

That I should know it had resolved on war

Before you came? no need: you shall have all

The credit, trust me.

Went. Have the Council dared—

They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not.

Farewell, sir: times are changed.

Pym. — Since we two met
 At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,
 You cut a figure, makes some slight return
 For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
 Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
 Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
 Just to decide a question; have you, now,
 Felt your old self since you forsook us?

Went. Sir!

Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend!
 Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
 I was about to say that, for my part,
 I never quite held up my head since then,—
 Was quite myself since then: for first, you see,
 I lost all credit after that event
 With those who recollect how sure I was
 Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
 Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
 Eschew plain-speaking: 't is a trick I keep.

Went. How, when, where, Savile, Vane and Holland
 speak,
 Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
 All of my scorn, sir . . .

Pym. . . Did not my poor thoughts
 Claim somewhat?

Went. Keep your thoughts! believe the King
 Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
 And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love
 That I am discontented with the King!

Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.

Went. Like me?

Pym. I care not much
For titles: our friend Eliot died no Lord,
Hampden's no Lord, and Savile is a Lord;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces. . . I should say
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest!
Console yourself: I've born him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way: he'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.

Went. False, sir!—Who showed them you? suppose it so,

The King did very well. . . nay, I was glad
When it was shown me: I refused, the first!
John Pym, you were my friend—forebear me once!

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!

Went. Leave me!

Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?

Went. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this!

Pym. Whose faces once were bright
 At my approach—now sad with doubt and fear,
 Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth, you
 Who never mean to ruin England—you
 Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream
 In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
 Upon you first, and wake, yourself—your true
 And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
 And Hampden's friend!

This is the proudest day!
 Come Wentworth! Do not even see the King!
 The rough old room will seem itself again!
 We'll both go in together: you've not seen
 Hampden so long: come: and there's Fiennes: you'll
 have
 To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!

[*The KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.*]

Cha. Arrived, my Lord?—This gentleman, we
 know,
 Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed
 What we determine for their happiness.

[*PYM goes out.*]

You have made haste, my Lord.

Went. Sir, I am come . . .

Cha. To see an old familiar—nay, 't is well;
 Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
 And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
 That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,

Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.

Went. Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me, sir!

Cha. What can you mean?

Went. That you should trust me, sir!

Oh—not for my sake! but 't is sad, so sad
That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think
That I would die to serve you?

Cha. But rise, Wentworth!

Went. What shall convince you? What does
Savile do

To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart
And show it, how sincere a thing it is!

Cha. Have I not trusted you?

Went. Say aught but that!

There is my comfort, mark you: all will be
So different when you trust me—as you shall!
It has not been your fault,—I was away,
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?
I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—
All will go on so well!

Cha. Be sure I do—

I've heard that I should trust you: as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .

Went. No,—hear nothing—

Be told nothing about me!—you're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love
you!

Cha. You love me, Wentworth : rise !

Went. I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'T is I

—Can save you : only I. "Sir, what must be ?

Cha. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)
—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

Went. That is, he'll have a war : what's done is
done !

Cha. They have intrigued with France ; that's clear
to Laud.

Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expense ?

Cha. He'd not decide so far
Until you joined us.

Went. Most considerate !
He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?
The People would be with us.

Cha. Pym should know.

Went. The People for us—were the People for us !
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :
Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first,
Then, here.

Cha. In truth ?

Went. That saves us ! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances—
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, as
Laud styles it, tutors Scotland : all their plans
Suppose no Parliament : in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs

Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:
Even Pym will not refuse.

Cha. You would begin
With Ireland?

Went. Take no care for that: that's sure
To prosper.

Cha. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You're an Earl: my Friend
Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!

Went. Say it all o'er again—but once again:
The first was for the music—once again!

Cha. Strafford, my friend, there may have been re-
ports,
Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?

Went. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?

Cha. Ireland,
The Parliament,—

Went. I may go when I will?
—Now?

Cha. Are you tired so soon of us?

Went. My King!
But you will not so utterly abhor

A parliament? I'd serve you any way,

Cha. You said just now this was the only way.

Went. Sir, I will serve you!

As much.

Cha. This is too idle, Henriette!

I should know best. He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice

How sure he is of a long term of favour!
He'll see the next, and the next after that;
No end to Parliaments!

Cha. Well, it is done.

He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,
The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!

Cha. But Henriette . . .

Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?

Cha. But listen, Sweet!

Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide in him!

Cha. I do not, Love,—I do not so confide!
The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we'll
buy

The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it for ever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
Come, Dearest!—look! the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

*The same Party enters.**Rud.* Twelve subsidies!*Vane.* O Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!*Rud.* True: Strafford called the Parliament—
'T is he should laugh!*A Puritan.* Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.*Fiennes.* —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!A stinging one! but brother, where's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?*The Puritan.* His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.*Fiennes.* Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps
abroad.

Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now, Vane?

Rud. Peace, Fiennes!*Fiennes.* Ah?—But he was not more a dupe than I,
you, or any here, the day that Pym
returned with the good news. Look up, friend Vane!
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
in summoning the Parliament.*HAMPDEN enters.**Vane.* Now Hampden,

Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again;
 I'd look the People in the face again:
 Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
 Better of Strafford!

Hamp. You may grow one day
 A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane!

Rud. Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see
 Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
 War was but talked of; there's an army, now:
 Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ireland bears
 Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!)
 Why, speak of it in Parliament! and, lo,
 'Tis spoken! so console yourselves.

Fien. The jest!
 We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
 The privilege of laying on our backs
 A sorer burden than the King dares lay!

Rud. Mark now: we meet at length, complaints
 • pour in •

From every county, all the land cries out
 On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
 Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber; we lend
 An ear. "Ay, lend them all the ears you have!"
 Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you find,
 "Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.
 "Just listen to them, friends; you'll sanction me
 "The measures they most wince at, make them yours,
 "Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
 "They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight

“Twelve subsidies!”

Fien. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!

Hol. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with that?
How could he speak his mind? He left before
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .

Rud. Would I were sure we know ourselves!
What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe!

Hol. Do you count Parliaments no gain?

Rud. A gain?
While the King’s creatures overbalance us?
—There’s going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville’s gone.
I’ll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money!

Hol. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .

Rud. Will grant them! Hampden, do you near
Congratulate with me! the King’s the king,
And gains his point at last—our own assent
To that detested tax! all’s over, then!

There's no more taking refuge in this room,
 Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,
 "We, England, are no party to our shame:
 "Our day will come!" Congratulate with me!

Pym enters.

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,
 But we'll not have our Parliaments like those
 In Ireland, Pym!

Rud. Let him stand forth, your friend!
 One doubtful act hides far too many sins;
 It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
 Begins to drop from those it covered.

Other Voices. Good!
 Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
 We wait thus long for you.

Rud. Perhaps, too long!
 Since nothing but the madness of the Court,
 In thus unmasking its designs at once,
 Has sated us from betraying England. Stay—
 This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
 Our list of grievances too black by far
 To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,
 That ship-money's disposed of long ago
 By England: any vote that's broad enough:
 And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
 Support his Parliament!

Vane. And vote as well
 No war's to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?
 We'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it

For England!

Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop the new levies!
No Bishops' war! At once! When next we meet!

Pym. Much more when next we meet! Friends,
which of you

Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?

Vane. I sat apart, even now, under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.

Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand
And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. Sure? sure?

Pym. Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Par-
liament

While I speak here.

—And I must speak, friends, now!
Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,
Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
His ancient path: no Parliament for us,
No Strafford for the King!

Come, all of you,
To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive
Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
Indeed a Parliament!

Vane. Forgive me, Pym!

Voices. This looks like truth: Strafford can have,
indeed,

No choice.

Pym. Friends, follow me! He's with the King.
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane!
This is no sullen day for England, sirs!
Strafford shall tell you!

Voices. To Whitehall then! Come!

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES and STRAFFORD.

Cha. Strafford!

Straf. Is it a dream? my papers, here—
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
So happy—(look! the track you pressed my hand
For pointing out)—and in this very room,
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
That ruins them! How's this? What may this mean?
Sir, who has done this?

Cha. Strafford, who but I?
You bade me put the rest away: indeed
You are alone.

Straf. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme's grown ripe,

Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I'm alone.

Cha. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.

Straf. My liege,
Was this the way? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 't were best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole months
At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English... but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'T was a brave plan! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it...

Cha. Hear me, Strafford!

Straf. ... When, for some little thing, my whole
design
Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for
The Irish Parliament? or army, either?
Is this my plan?

Cha. So disrespectful, sir?

Straf. My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,

Yours ever : 't is too late to think about :
 To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step
 Shall pass for mine ; the world shall think it mine.
 But, here ! But, here ! I am so seldom here,
 Seldom with you, my King ! I, soon to rush
 Alone upon a giant in the dark !

Cha. My Strafford !

Straf. [*examines papers awhile.*] "Seize the passes
 of the Tyne" !

But, sir, you see—see all I say is true ?
 My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
 To ask the Parliament for help ; whereas
 We need them frightfully.

Cha. Need the Parliament ?

Straf. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more !
 We can afford no error ; we draw, now,
 Upon our last resource : the Parliament
 Must help us !

Cha. I've undone you, Strafford !

Straf. Nay—

Nay—why despond, sir, 't is not come to that !
 I have not hurt you ? Sir, what have I said
 To hurt you ? I unsay it ! Don't despond !
 Sir, do you turn from me ?

Cha. My friend of friends !

Straf. We'll make a shift ! Leave me the Parliament !
 Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
 Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.
 They're sitting, that's one great thing ; that half gives

Their sanction to us; that's much: don't despond!
 Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
 The reputation of the People's help
 Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!

Cha. Good Strafford!

Straf. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small
 They offer, we'll accept it: any sum—
 For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots
 The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
 Turned ours: that told, there's half the blow to strike!
 What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?

Cha. Alas!

Straf. My liege?

Cha. Strafford!

Straf. But answer me!

Have they... O surely not refused us half?
 Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
 For all of them! How many do they give?

Cha. You have not heard...

Straf. (What has he done?)—Heard what?
 But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!

[The King continuing silent.]

You have dissolved them!—I'll not leave this man.

Cha. 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

Straf. Old Vane?

Cha. He told them just about to vote the half,
 That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
 Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Straf. Vane!

Vane! Who, sir, promised me that very Vane . . .
 O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,
 The one last hope—I that despair, *my* hope—
 That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
 All bitterness one day, be proud again
 And young again, care for the sunshine too,
 And never think of Eliot any more,—
 God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
 Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
 And find Vane there!

*[Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with
 a forced calmness.]*

Northumberland is sick:

Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads
 The Horse, and he with Conway must secure
 The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies
 My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City:
 If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
 And seize the bullion! we've no other choice.
 Herbert . . .

And this while I am here! with you!
 And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,
 And, I once gone, they'll close around you, sir,
 When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
 To ruin me—and you along with me!
 Do you see that? And you along with me!
 —Sir, you'll not ever listen to these men,
 And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,
 If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—

Say you, "At any time when he returns
 "His head is mine!" Don't stop me there! You
 know

My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Cha. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the
 war,

And . . .

Straf. I! I! that was never spoken with
 Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!
 That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .
 Do you know, sir, I think, within my heart,
 That you would say I did advise the war;
 And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,
 These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,
 You will not step between the raging People
 And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first
 I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!
 Remember that I said it—that I never
 Believed you for a moment!

—And, you loved me?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
 Because I could not share the whisperings
 With Vane? With Savile? What, the face was
 masked?

I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,
 But heart of stone—of smooth, cold, frightful stone!
 Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots
 Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—

Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think
 I'll leave them in the dark about it all?
 They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* enter.

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favoured with your
 gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against
 Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
 So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
 The privilege of bidding me farewell.
 Who haste to save the People—that you style
 Your People—from the mercies of the Scots
 And France their friend?

[*To CHARLES.*] Pym's grave grey eyes are fix'd
 Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'t is the King we
 seek

And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. —Strafford, guilty too
 Of counselling the measure. [*To CHARLES.*] (Hush . . .
 you know—

You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)
 A heinous matter, truly! But the King
 Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
 Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!)—he
 blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:

I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty
binds me, by this fresh token of your trust...

[Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.]

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!
Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this
unworthy place

To our old room again! He's gone.

[STRAFFORD, just about to follow the King, looks back.]

Pym. Not gone!

[To STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old appointment's
made anew:

Forget not we shall meet again!

Straf. So be it!

And if an army follows me?

Vane. His friends

Will entertain your army!

Pym. I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford: time shows. Perish
body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess should achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Shall I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?

Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you !

[PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc.* go out]

Straf. Pym, we shall meet again !

Lady CARLISLE enters.

You here, child ?

Lady Car.

Hush—

I know it all : hush, Strafford !

Straf.

Ah ? you know ?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy !
 All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
 Under the best of auspices ; 't is morn,
 The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
 (He's always very young)—the trumpets sound,
 Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him—
 You need not turn a page of the romance
 To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed.
 We've the fair Lady here ; but she apart,—
 A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
 And rather old, weary, and far from sure
 His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All's one :
 Let us go forth !

Lady Car. Go forth ?

Straf.

What matters it ?

We shall die gloriously—as the book says.

Lady Car. To Scotland ? not to Scotland ?

Straf.

Am I, —

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland ?
 Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

—There; and the whisper, Lucy, “Be my friend
“Of friends!”—My King! I would have . . .

Lady Car. . . . Died for him?

Straf. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.

Lady Car. But go not, Strafford! But you must
renounce

This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.

Straf. And he never will.

He's not of those who care the more for men
That they're unfortunate.

Lady Car. Then wherefore die
For such a master?

Straf. You that told me first
How good he was—when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend!—that drew me here
From Ireland,—“I had but to show myself
“And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile and the
You, child, to ask me this? [rest”—

Lady Car. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)

Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more!

Straf. Yes, Lucy.
There's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Car. (The King!
What way to save him from the King?

My soul—
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise

That clothes the King—he shall behold my soul!)
 Strafford,—I shall speak best if you'll not gaze
 Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
 To speak, but you would perish too, so sure!
 Would you but know what 't is to bear, my friend,
 One image stamped within you, turning blank
 The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—
 A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw
 In the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet
 face

to create, and meanwhile treasured there
 Lest Nature lose her gracious thought for ever!

Straf. When could it be? no! Yet . . . was it the
 day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
 Should leave the presence-chamber?

Lady Car.

What?

Straf.

—That I

Described to you my love for Charles?

Lady Car.

(Ah, no—

One must not lure him from a love like that!
 Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past.
 shall not serve him worse for that one brief
 and passionate hope, silent for ever now!)
 and you are really bound for Scotland then?
 wish you well: you must be very sure
 of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
 Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!

Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Py...

Lady Car. What need, since there's your King to
take your part?

He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym—
Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Straf. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!

Lady Car. Is that to ask
A curl of me?

Straf. Scotland—the weary way!

Lady Car. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford

Straf. [*showing the George.*] He hung it there
twine yours around it, child!

Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so!
And there's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court
Is dull; do something to enliven us
In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.

Straf. I shall not fail in Scotland.

Lady Car. Prosper—if
You'll think of me sometimes!

Straf. How think of him
And not of you? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Car. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its
last streak
The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*]

Straf. That voice of hers—
You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.

Be Thou about his bed, about his path!

His path! Where 's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way
Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What, they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,
There 's—Pym to face!

Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last.
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here? Not in the market-place,
Dressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They 'll lie down
Hungry and smile "Why, it must end some day:
"Is he not watching for our sake?"

—Not there!

But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,
The . . .

Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They 'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose
fault?

Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them—supplant them so,
Until you love the man and not the king—
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth.

—To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me : with one star for guide.
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, LORD SAVILE, LORD HOLLAND, and others of
the Court.

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out?

Savile. And what kept you

From sharing their civility?

Sir H. Vane. Kept me?

Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last,

If that may be! All's up with Strafford there:

Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither

Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—

Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthall say

All we set down for him?

Hol. Not a word missed.

Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I

And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed

A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.

But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane

As glared at us!

Vane. So many?

Savile. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves ;
Your hopeful son among them : Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that !

Vane. I'd think
On Lenthall's speech, if I could get at it.
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove
For this unlooked-for summons from the King ?

Hol. Just as we drilled him.

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London ?

Hol. All, and made so much of it,
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well ?

Hol. 'T is a strange thing now !
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast, unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking ! Savile, help me out :
What was it all ?

Sav. Something about "a matter"—
No,—“a work for England.”

Hol. “England's great revenge”
He talked of.

Sav. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves ?

Hol. However that be,
'T was something with which we had nought to do,
For we were “strangers” and 'twas “England's work”—

(All this while looking us straight in the face)
 In other words, our presence might be spared.
 So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
 I settled to my mind what ugly brute
 Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
 Locked the doors after us, and here are we.

Vane. Eliot's old method . . .

Sav. Prithee, Vane, a truce
 To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
 And how to manage Parliaments! 'T was you
 Advised the Queen to summon this: why, Strafford
 (To do him justice) would not hear of it.

Vane. Say rather, you have done the best of turns
 To Strafford: he's at York, we all know why.
 I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
 Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!

Sav. Was it I altered Strafford's plans? did I . . .

A Messenger enters.

Mes. The Queen, my lords—she sends me: follow me
 At once; 't is very urgent! she requires
 Your counsel: something perilous and strange
 Occasions her command.

Sav. We follow, friend!
 Now, Vane;—your Parliament will plague us all!

Vane. No Strafford here beside!

Sav. If you dare hint
 I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

Hol. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
 Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,

The Queen !

Vane. Come on, then : understand, I loathe
Strafford as much as any—but his use !

To keep off Pym—to screen a friend or two
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II. *Whitehall.*

The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Car. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.

Lady Car. They met for that.

Queen. No, no !

Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ? 'T is a jest.

Lady Car. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider ! 'T is the House

We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing

But the disastrous issue of the war

Persuaded us to summon. They 'll wreak all

Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the old way

Is to begin by talk of grievances :

They have their grievances to busy them.

Lady Car. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where 's Vane ?—That is,

Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves

His Presidency; he's at York, we know,
 Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?

Lady Car. Because the King sent for him.

Queen.

Ah—but if

The King did send for him, he let him know
 We had been forced to call a Parliament—
 A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
 Was vehement against.

Lady Car.

The policy

Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
 To earth, then setting them upon their feet
 And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
 Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Lady Car.

What do? Fail, madam!

Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
 So it but stand on record that you made
 An effort, only one?

Queen.

The King's away

At Theobalds.

Lady Car. Send for him at once: he must
 Dissolve the House.

Queen.

Wait till Vane finds the truth

Of the report: then . . .

Lady Car.

—It will matter little

What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm,
 And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE enters.

Vane.

The Commons, madam,

Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
 No lack of noise ; but nothing, I should guess,
 Concerning Strafford : Pym has certainly
 Not spoken yet.

Queen [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] You hear ?

Lady Car. I do not hear

That the King's sent for !

Sir H. Vane. Savile will be able

To tell you more.

HOLLAND enters.

Queen. The last news, Holland ?

Hol. Pym

Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
 To follow him together to Whitehall
 And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford ?

Hol. If they content themselves with Strafford ! Laud
 Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too,
 Pym has not left out one of them—I would
 You heard Pym raging !

Queen. Vane, go find the King !

Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
 To brave us at Whitehall !

SAVILE enters.

Savile. Not to Whitehall—

'Tis to the Lords they go : they'll seek redress
 On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
 They call it.

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Sav. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save
Himself so readily : at York, remember,
In his own county, what has he to fear ?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.

Queen. Lucy, he will not come !

Lady Car. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

Vane. Oh, doubtless !
And bring destruction with him ; that 's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan ?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him ! What 's the result ?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help,—
What came of it ? * In my poor mind, a fright
• Is no prodigious punishment.

Lady Car. A fright ?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. [*To the QUEEN.*] You will not save
• him then ?

Sav. When something like a charge is made, the
King
Will best know how to save him : and 't is clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage : this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

Queen. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] If we dissolve them,

who will pay the army?
Protect us from the insolent Scots?

Lady Car. In truth
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—than he'll have
Against his old friend Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym!

Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.

Hol. He'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD enters.

Queen. You here!

Straf. The King sends for me, madam.

Queen. Sir,
The King . . .

Straf. ' An urgent matter that imports the King.
 [To Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation
 That all this muttering and shrugging, see, [now
 Begins at me? They do not speak!

Car. 'T is welcome!

For we are proud of you—happy and proud
 To have you with us, Strafford! you were staunch
 At Durham: you did well there! Had you not
 Been stayed, you might have . . . we said, even now,
 Our hope's in you!

Sir H. Vane. [To Lady CARLISLE.] The Queen would
 speak with you.

Straf. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
 To signify my presence to the King?

Sav. An urgent matter?

Straf. None that touches you,
 Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous,
 Sly, pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
 You would go free, at least! (They half divine
 My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
 The service I would render, much concerns
 His welfare.

Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
 May not be here, may . . .

Straf. Its importance, then,
 Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
 And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen. [who has been conversing with VANE and
 HOLLAND.] The King will see you, sir,

[*To Lady CARLISLE*]. Mark me : Pym's worst
 Is done by now : he has impeached the Earl,
 Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
 Let us not seem instructed! We should work
 No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
 With shame in the world's eye. [*To STRAFFORD*.] His
 Majesty
 Has much to say with you.

Straf. Time fleeting, too!
 [*To Lady CARLISLE*.] No means of getting them
 away? And She—
 What does she whisper? Does she know my pur-
 pose?

What does she think of it? Get them away!

Queen. [*To Lady CARLISLE*.] He comes to baffle
 Pym—he thinks the danger
 Far off: tell him no word of it! a time
 For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.
 Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed
 And calm! [*To STRAFFORD*.] To spare your Lord-
 ship some delay
 I will myself acquaint the King. [*To Lady CARLISLE*.]
 Beware!

[*The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, and SAVILE, go out.*]

Straf. She knows it?

Lady Car. Tell me, Strafford!

Straf. Afterward!

This moment's the great moment of all time.

She knows my purpose?

Lady Car. Thoroughly : just now
She bade me hide it from you.

Straf. Quick, dear child,
The whole o' the scheme ?

Lady Car. (Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure ! Could they but
Have once apprised the King ! But there's no time
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

Straf. Known and approved ?

Lady Car. Hardly discountenanced.

Straf. And the King—say, the King consents as
well ?

Lady Car. The King's not yet informed, but will
not dare

To interpose.

Straf. What need to wait him, then ?
He'll sanction it ! I stayed, child, tell him, long !
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.
You know him, there's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long !

Lady Car. (What can he mean ?
Rejoice at the King's hollowness ?)

Straf. I knew
They would be glad of it,—all over once,
I knew they would be glad : but he'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.

Lady Car. (Is he mad ?) Dear Strafford,
You were not wont to look so happy.

Straf. Sweet,
 I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
 The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
 My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
 The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
 And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
 Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
 God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
 For Charles, but never to obey him more!
 While he endured their insolence at Ripon
 I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell
 The King I waited? All the anteroom
 Is filled with my adherents.

Lady Car. Strafford—Strafford,
 What daring act is this you hint?

Straf. No, no!
 'Tis here, not daring if you knew! all here!

[Drawing papers from his breast.]

Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen know
 I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,
 Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?
 The simper that I spoilt?) Saye, Mandeville—
 Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!

Lady Car. Great heaven!

Straf. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
 And his losels, crushed!—Pym shall not ward the blow
 Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
 And the Cabal—I crush them!

Lady Car. And you go—

Strafford,—and now you go?—

Straf. —About no work

In the background, I promise you! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring!

Lady Car. Stay—stay, Strafford!

Straf. She'll return,
The Queen—some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.

Lady Car. Pym's strong, remember!

Straf. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head—with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard, and my loving Hollis: one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!

[*Many of his Adherents enter.*]

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war; my visit's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you'll proceed
To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
We want the army here—my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time! no matter,
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no—you!
You, friend, make haste to York: bear this, at once . . .
Or,—better stay for form's sake—see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,

Mainwaring! help to seize the lesser knaves;
 Take care there 's no escaping at backdoors:
 I'll not have one escape, mind me—not one!
 I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
 What these men dare!

Lady Car. It is so much they dare!

Straf. I proved that long ago; my turn is now
 Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens;
 Observe who harbours any of the brood
 That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
 Our coffers are but lean.

And you, child, too,
 Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
 Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
 "Thorough" he'll say!—Foolish, to be so glad!
 This life is gay and glowing, after all:
 'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
 Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
 Is worth the living for.

Lady Car. That reddening brow!
 You seem . . .

Straf. Well—do I not? I would be well—
 I could not but be well on such a day!
 And, this day ended, 't is of slight import
 How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
 In Strafford.

Lady Car. Noble Strafford!

Straf. No farewell!
 I'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.

—If She should come to stay me!

Lady Car. Go—'t is nothing—
Only my heart that swells : it has been thus
Ere now : go, Strafford!

Straf. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him : you, the next after Him.
I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
“ My friend of friends !”

[STRAFFORD and the rest go on

Lady Car. The King—ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him—one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!

Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III. *The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents of
STRAFFORD, etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians.—1. I tell you he struck
Maxwell: Maxwell sought

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL enters.

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's Maxwell—

Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

Max. Gentlemen,
Stand back! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*] The Earl Is at his work! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Speak out! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friend, I've a kindness for you! Friend,

I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness! Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague, Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Another. Nay, wait:
The jest will be to wait.

First. And who's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come!

[*A Puritan enters hastily and without observing STRAFFORD'S Followers.*]

The Puritan. How goes on the work?
Has Pym . . .

A Follower of Strafford. The secret's out at last.

Aha,

The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!

Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!

"King Pym has fallen!"

The Puritan. Pym?

A Strafford. Pym!

A Presbyterian. Only Pym?

Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not Pym
only; Vane as well,

Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!

A Presbyterian. My mind misgives; can it be true?

Another. Lost! Lost!

A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?

The Puritan. Pride before destruction,

A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now! The very
thing! A word in season!

A golden apple in a silver picture,

To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*]

Max. Stand back, all!

Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym! And I!

Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!

He comes! Quick!

The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased!

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!

The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote

The people in wrath with a continual stroke,

That ruled the nations in his anger—he
Is persecuted and none hindereth!

[*The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of "Void the House."*]

Straf. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me..
God!

Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart—which beats!
Which beats! Some one word—"Traitor," did he say,
Bending that eye, brimfull of bitter fire,
Upon me?

Max. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Straf. What did you say?

Max. The Commons bid me ask your Lordship's
sword.

Straf. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!
Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!

[*The PRESBYTERIANS prepare to dispute his passage.*]

Straf. I stay: the King himself shall see me here.
Your tablets, fellow!

[*To MAINWARING.*] Give that to the King!

Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!

Nay, you shall take my sword!

[*MAXWELL advances to take it.*]

. Or, no—not that!

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
 All up to that—not that! Why, friend, you see,
 When the King lays your head beneath my foot
 It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!

Max. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!

Straf. This gentle Maxwell!—Do not touch him,
 Bryan!

[*To the Presbyterians.*] Whichever cur of you will
 carry this

Escapes his fellows' fate. None saves his life?
 None?

[*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*]

Slingsby, I've loved you at least: make haste!

Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.

You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you then!

Is it because I spoke so hastily

At Allerton? The King had vexed me.

[*To the Presbyterians.*] You!

—Not even you? If I live over this,

The King is sure to have your heads, you know!

But what if I can't live this minute through?

Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!

[*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

The King! I troubled him, stood in the way

Of his negotiations, was the one

Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy

Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,

My safety guaranteed—having prepared

A Parliament—I see! And at Whitehall

The Queen was whispering with Vane—I see
The trap! [*Tearing off the George.*]

I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[*His own adherents disarm him. Renewed cries of*
"STRAFFORD."

England! I see Thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray you now!

[*STRAFFORD reaches the doors: they open wide. HAMPDEN
and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar, PYM standing
apart. As STRAFFORD kneels, the scene shuts.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

*The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOL-
LAND, SAVILE, in the background.)*

Lady Car. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake! One
word!

Cha. [To HOLLIS.] You stand, silent and cold, as
though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hol. Sir,

It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You'll quit me comforted, your mind made up

That, since you've talked thus much and grieved thus
much,

All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come, we grant you
leave,

Suppose)—

Hol. I may withdraw, sir?

Lady Car. Hear them out!

'Tis the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!

Hol. "If we kill Strafford"—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—"We!"

Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say!

Hol. Ah, true—sir, pardon me!

You witness our proceedings every day;

But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,

Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,

Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.

Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place

Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit

—That's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,

Their representatives; the Peers that judge

Are easily distinguished; one remarks

The People here and there: but the close curtain

Must hide so much!

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!

It served a purpose.

Hol. Think! This very day?

Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?

Cha. I will defend him, sir!—sanction the Past
This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
At me, not Strafford!

Lady Car. Nobly!—will he not
Do nobly?

Hol. Sir, you will do honestly;
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

Cha. Only, to do this now!—"deaf" (in your style)
"To subjects' prayers,"—I must oppose them now.
It seems their will the trial should proceed,—
So palpably their will!

Hol. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for that.
Strafford; your prime support, the sole roof-tree
That props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous
sand!)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you'd save Strafford.

Cha. And they mean
Calmly to consummate this wrong! No hope?
This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?

Hol. No plague in store for perfidy?—Farewell!
You called me, sir—[*To Lady CARLISLE,*] you, lady,
bade me come

To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go!
You, sir, concert with me on saving him

STRAFFORD.

Who have just ruined Strafford!

Cha. I?—and how?

Hol. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!
—He'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?
The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other mouse,
That looked on while the lion freed himself—
Fared he so well, does any fable say?

Cha. What can you mean?

Hol. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane—
Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.

Cha. Vane?

Hol. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Seal Strafford's fate?

Cha. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?
I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!
Ask Vane himself!

Hol. I will not speak to Vane
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.

Queen. Speak to Vane's master then! What gain
to him
Were Strafford's death?

Hol. Ha? Strafford cannot turn
as you, sir, sit there—bid you forth, demand

If every hateful act were not set down
 In his commission?—Whether you contrived
 Or no, that all the violence should seem
 His work, the gentle ways—your own, his part
 To counteract the King's kind impulses—
 While . . . but you know what he could say! And then
 He might produce,—mark, sir,—a certain charge
 To set the King's express command aside,
 If need were, and be blameless! He might add . . .

Cha. Enough!

Hol. —Who bade him break the Parliament,
 Find some pretext for setting up sword-law!

Queen. Retire!

Cha. Once more, whatever Vane dared do,
 I know not: he is rash, a fool—I know
 Nothing of Vane!

Hol. Well—I believe you. Sir,
 Believe me, in return, that . . .
 [*Turning to Lady CARLISLE.*] Gentle lady,
 The few words I would say, the stones might hear
 Sooner than these,—I rather speak to you,
 You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes
 Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
 Or England shall succumb,—but, who shall pay
 The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
 You loved me once: think on my warning now!

[*Goes out.*]

5 *Cha.* On you and on your warning both!—Carlisle!
 That paper!

Queen. But consider!

Cha. Give it me!

There, signed—will that content you? Do not speak!
 You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any day,
 According to the tenor of that paper,
 He bids your brother bring the army up,
 Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
 Seek Strafford! Let him have the same, before
 He rises to defend himself!

Queen. In truth?

That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a change
 Like this! You, late reluctant . . .

Cha. Say, Carlisle

Your brother Percy brings the army up,
 Falls on the Parliament—(I'll think of you,
 My Hollis!) say, we plotted long—'t is mine,
 The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I cursed
 Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
 Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
 With you, Carlisle!

Lady Car. Nay, fear not me! but still
 That's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.
 Tear down the veil and save him!

Queen. Go, Carlisle!

Lady Car. (I shall see Strafford—speak to him: my
 Must never beat so, then! And if I tell [heart
 The truth? What's gained by falsehood? There they
 stand

Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How vain

To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them!)

Queen. Trust to me! [*To CARLISLE.*] Carlisle,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Lady Car. Time presses, madam.

Queen. Yet—may it not be something premature?
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose!

Lady Car. Ay, Hollis hints as much.

Cha. Why linger then?
Haste with the scheme—my scheme: I shall be there
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look!

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you!

Lady Car. At your pleasure.

Cha. Say—

Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!

I shall be there, remember!

Lady Car. Doubt me not.

Cha. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here!

Lady Car. I'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.
(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be—
'T is the King's scheme!

My Strafford, I can save,

Nay, I have saved you, yet I am scarce content,
Because my poor name will not cross your mind.
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II.—*A passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

Many groups of Spectators of the Trial. Officers of the Court, etc.

1st Spec. More crowd than ever! Not know Hampden, man?

That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.
No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
Little enough of either!

2nd Spec. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.

3rd Spec. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.

4th Spec. I fear it: just a foolish word or two
About his children—and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

2nd Spec. What's that Pym's saying now
Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A hand
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!

5th Spec. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?

2nd Spec. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!

Many Spectators. There!
What ails him? no—he rallies, see—goes on
•And Strafford smiles. Strange!

An Officer. Haselrig!

Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?

The Officer. Lost, utterly lost! just when we looked
for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?
Pym's message is to him.

3rd Spec. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

1st Spec. Never believe it, man! These notes of
Ruin the Earl. [Vane's

5th Spec. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to speak again?

An Officer. Stand back, there!

5th Spec. Why, the Earl is coming hither!
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look,—
You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say!

2nd Spec. Who's the veiled woman that he talks
with?

Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl! the Earl!

[Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and other Secretaries, HOL-
LIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAF-
FORD converses with Lady CARLISLE.]

Hol. So near the end! Be patient—
Return!

Straf. [To his Secretaries.] Here—anywhere—or,
't is freshest here!

To spend one's April here, the blossom-month!
Set it down here!

[They arrange a table, papers, etc.]

So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more 's to do?
What 's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!
[To Lady CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his offer; what-
soe'er

It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!
'T is something, Hollis, I assure you that—
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days
Fighting for life and fame against a pack
Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin,
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say
"Strafford" if it would take my life!

Lady Car.

Be moved!

Glance at the paper!

Straf.

Already at my heels!

Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.
Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!

*[Messengers from LANE and other of STRAFFORD'S Counsel
within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.]*

Straf. *[setting himself to write and dictate.]* I shall
beat you, Hollis!

Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,
In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank from me!
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.

[To a Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, con-
tains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

Eliot would have disdained . . .

[*Calling after the Messenger.*] And Radcliffe, say,
The only person who could answer Pym,
Is safe in prison, just for that.

Well, well!

It had not been recorded in that case,
I baffled you.

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Nay, child, why look so grieved?
All's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?
What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,
But tranquilly resume my task as though
Nothing had intervened since I proposed
To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,
Trust me, shall not be played a second time,
Say, even against Laud, with his grey hair—
Your good work, Hollis! Peace! to make amends
You, Lucy, shall be there when I impeach
Pym and his fellows.

Hol. Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding, long ago?
Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently?

Straf. Child, I'll tell you—
You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—
Why I stood patient! I was fool enough,
To see the will of England in Pym's will,
To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait

Her judgment,—when, behold, in place of it . . .

[*To a Messenger who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer
no such question! Law,—

I grapple with their law! I'm here to try
My actions by their standard, not my own!
Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?

Lady Car. The King's so weak! Secure this chance!

'T was Vane,

Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Straf. Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the Past.
Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say
As much—to Pym, to England! Follow me!
I have a word to say! There! my defence
Is done!

Stay! why be proud? Why care to own
My gladness, my surprise?—Nay, not surprise!
Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,
One image was before me: could I fail?
Child, care not for the Past, so indistinct,
Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it
Tis so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, founded on a new belief

In Charles.

Hol. In Charles? Rather, believe in Pym!
And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!
Say how unfair . . .

Straf. To Pym? I would say nothing!
I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Car. Stay, let me have to think I pressed your
hand!

[STRAFFORD and his friends go out.

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save that great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
Against him: you had but to breathe—he turned
Those kind, calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter PYM, the Solicitor-General St. JOHN, the Managers
of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.*

Rud. Horrible!

Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw
For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man.

Fien. He talks

With St. John of it—see, how quietly!

[*To other PRESBYTERIANS.*] You'll join us? Strafford
may deserve the worst:

But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.

Vane. Consider, Pym !
 Confront your Bill, your own Bill : what is it ?
 You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—
 No man will say the law has hold of him
 On any charge ; and therefore you resolve
 To take the general sense on his desert,
 As though no law existed, and we met
 To found one. You refer to Parliament
 To speak its thought upon this hideous mass
 Of half-borne out assertions, dubious hints
 Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay,
 And wild inventions. Every man is saved
 The task of fixing any single charge
 On Strafford : he has but to see in him
 The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple !
 I have heard some called England's enemy
 With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me !
 Indeed you make me think I was your friend !
 I who have murdered Strafford, how remove
 That memory from me ?

Pym. I absolve you, Vane.
 Take you no care for aught that you have done !

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this
 Bill !

He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,
 Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !
 When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears !

Hamp. England speaks louder : who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill ?

Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fien. And England trusts you.

Hamp. Shame be his, who turns

The opportunity of serving her

She trusts him with, to his own mean account—

Who would look nobly frank at her expense !

Fien. I never thought it could have come to this.

Pym. But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,
With this one thought—have walked, and sat, and
slept,

This thought before me. I have done such things,

Being the chosen man that should destroy

The traitor. You have taken up this thought

To play with, for a gentle stimulant,

To give a dignity to idler life

By the dim prospect of emprise to come,

But ever with the softening, sure belief,

That all would end some strange way right at last.

Fien. Had we made out some weightier charge !

Pym. You sa

That these are petty charges : can we come

To the real charge at all ? There he is safe

In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy

Is not a crime, treachery not a crime :

The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak
 The words, but where 's the power to take revenge
 Upon them? We must make occasion serve,—
 The oversight here, pay for the main sin
 That mocks us.

Rud. But this unexampled course,
 This Bill!

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
 Of precedent and custom, and at once
 Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
 The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
 The guilt of Strafford: each shall lay his hand
 Upon his breast, and judge.

Vane. I only see
 Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!

Rud. and others. Forgive him! He would join us,
 now he finds
 What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,
 Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
 The pardon of the Commons.

Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
 Iave we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
 And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
 When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
 Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
 And left me, for a time . . . 'T is very sad!
 To-morrow we discuss the points of law
 With Lane—to-morrow?

Vane. Not before to-morrow—

So, time enough! I knew you would relent!

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III.—*Whitehall.*

The KING.

Cha. My loyal servant!—To defend himself
Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!

We have done

Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the Future
Must recompense the Past:

She tarries long.

I understand you, Strafford, now!

The schéme—

Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'Twas too précipitate:
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large: no matter.

Well, Carlisle?

Enter Pym.

Pym. Fear me not, sir:—my mission is to save,
This time.

Cha. To break thus on me! Unannounced!

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Cha. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People : will you hear
A word upon my own account ?

Cha. Of Strafford ?
(So, turns the tide already ? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler ?—Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.

Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take : the trial fails.

Cha. Yes—yes—
We are aware, sir : for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule ! I would learn from your own mouth
—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. That Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.

Cha. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill ?

Pym. I can.

Cha. He is my friend, sir : I have wronged him :
mark you,

Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think
 Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,
 We know you hate him)—no one else could love
 Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.
 Think of his pride! And, do you know one strange,
 One frightful thing? We all have used the man
 As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
 Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
 Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
 Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
 You are moved, even you, a solitary man
 Wed to your cause—to England if you will!

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to England! Draw
 not back!

Cha. Prevent that Bill, sir! All your course seems
 fair

Till now. Why, in the end, 't is I should sign
 The warrant for his death! You have said much
 I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
 Strafford should serve me any more. I take
 The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is yours—
 Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
 For that, however! I will quite forget
 You named it to me. You are satisfied?

Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his hand,
 Wasted and white, upon my forehead once;
 Wentworth—he's gone now!—has talked on, whole
 nights,
 And I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir,

How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well?

Cha. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir!

Pym. Let me speak!

—Who may not speak again; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day:

—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.

I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man—

I might say something, warn you, pray you, save—
Mark me, King Charles, save—you!

But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—

(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)

As you would have no deeper question moved
—"How long the Many must endure the One,"

Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!

Or—

Cha. God forsakes me. I am in a net.
And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter LADY CARLISLE.

Lady Car. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me! he would spare you all
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake.
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see

Your scheme returned ! That generous heart of his !
 He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
 A course that might endanger you—you, sir,
 Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

[*Seeing Pym.*] Well met !

No fear for Strafford ! all that 's true and brave
 On your own side shall help us : we are now
 Stronger than ever.

Ha—what, sir, is this ?

All is not well ! What parchment have you there ?

Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.

Lady Car. This Bill ! Your lip

Whitens—you could not read one line to me
 Your voice would falter so !

Pym. No recreant yet !

The great word went from England to my soul,
 And I arose. The end is very near.

Lady Car. I am to save him ! All have shrunk
 beside—

'T is only I am left ! Heaven will make strong
 The hand now as the heart. Then let both die !

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Whitchhall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

Hol. Tell the King then ! Come in with me !

Lady Car. Not so !

He must not hear till it succeeds.

Hol.

Succeed?

No dream was half so vain—you'd rescue Strafford
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . . lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.
To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the while
He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have
To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I'll not see Strafford!

Lady Car. Only, if I succeed, remember—Charles
Has saved him! He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait. Go in—
You must go in to Charles!

Hol.

And all beside

Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death: the Queen was sick
Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—
The trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young,
Amid rude mercenaries—you devise
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you?

Lady Car.

I may go, you think,

To France with him? And you reward me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,

And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,
I ought to make his youth my own as well.
Tell me,—when he is saved!

Hol. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but 't is vain!

Lady Car. Love? no—too late now! Let him love
the King!

'T is the King's scheme! I have your word, remember!
We'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!
Quick! Each of us has work to do, beside!
Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak
Think where he is! Now for my gallant friends!

Hol. Where he is? Calling wildly upon Charles,
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.
Let the King tell him! I'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his Children.* *They sing.*

*O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

William. The boat's in the broad moonlight all this
while—

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon

Into the shadowy distance; only still
Your hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all 's quite gone,
Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to
sleep.

Straf. I do sleep, Anne; or if not—you must know
There's such a thing as . . .

Wil. You're too tired to sleep?

Straf. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland?

Straf. No!

Too many dreams!—That song's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map—
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

Wil. You've been to Venice, father?

Straf. I was young, then.

Wil. A city with no King; that's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.

Straf. William!

Wil. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the
King?

But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Straf. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—
That way you'll love her best.

Wil. Why do men say

You sought to ruin her, then ?

Straf. Ah,—they say that.

Wil. Why ?

Straf. I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside :
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names !

Wil. Don't mind her, father !
They soon left off when I cried out to them.

Straf. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy !
'T is not worth while : who heeds a foolish song ?

Wil. Why, not the King.

Straf. Well : it has been the fate
Of better ; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure
That time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That time will do me right ?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William ?
He does not look thus when we sing.)

Straf. For Ireland,
Something is done : too little, but enough
To show what might have been.

Wil. (I have no heart
To sing now ! Annie, how very sad he looks !
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says !)

Straf. Forsook them ! What, the common songs
will run

That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
 Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,
 Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
 Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
 The curious glosses, subtle notices,
 Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
 Beside that plain inscription of The Name—
 The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

*[The children resume their song timidly, but break off.
 Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.]*

Straf. No,—Hollis? in good time!—Who is he?

Hol. One

That must be present.

Straf. Ah—I understand.

They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
 How politic! They'd use me by degrees
 To solitude: and just as you came in
 I was solicitous what life to lead
 When Strafford's "not so much as Constable
 "In the King's service." Is there any means
 To keep one's self awake? What would you do
 After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?

Hol. Strafford!

Straf. Observe, not but that Pym and you
 Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
 Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
 At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
 My newsman. Or, a better project now—
 What if when all's consummated, and the Saints

Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly,—
 What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
 To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
 Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
 Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,
 As, whether Strafford's name were John or James—
 And be myself appealed to—I, who shall
 Myself have near forgotten!

Hol. I would speak . . .

Straf. Then you shall speak,—not now I want
 just now,

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
 Is full of ghosts.

Hol. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!

Straf. Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more,—
 The minister! Who will advise the King,
 Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
 And yet have health—children, for aught I know—
 My patient pair of traitors! Ah,—but, William—
 Does not his cheek grow thin?

Wil. 'Tis you look thin,
 Father!

Straf. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
 Sets all to-rights.

Hol. You cannot sure forget
 A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

Straf. No,
 Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
 I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once,

The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobalds?

Hol. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.

Straf. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases,—
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.

Hol. The King—I bear
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!

Straf. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!

[*The children retire.*]

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping—bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I've heard, as well,
Of certain poor manœuvrings to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where's the
order?

Hol. Spare me!

Straf. Why, he'd not have me steal away
With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps
Hollis, 't is for my children! 'T was for them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie!
What's in that boy of mine that he should prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he'll stay with me. Charles should know as
much—

He too has children!

[*Turning to HOLLIS'S companion.*] Sir, you feel for
me!

No need to hide that face! Though it have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks.
For there is One who comes not.

Hol. Whom forgive,
As one to die!

Straf. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.

Hol. 'T is a world's wonder: Strafford, you must
die!

Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears in truth

We'll end this! See this paper, warm—feel—warm
 With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
 Whose promise? Read, and loud for God to hear!
 "Strafford shall take no hurt"—read it, I say!
 "In person, honour, nor estate"—

Hol. The King . . .

Straf. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
 Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
 The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
 If I'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
 On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

Hol. To sign

The warrant for your death.

Straf. "Put not your trust
 "In princes, neither in the sons of men,
 "In whom is no salvation!"

Hol. Trust in God.

The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
 He has consented. Cast the earth behind!

Cha. You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot!
 It was wrung from me! Only curse me not!

Hol. [*To STRAFFORD.*] As you hope grace and
 pardon in your need,
 Be merciful to this most wretched man!

[*Voices from within.*]

Verso la sera

Di Primavera.

Straf. You'll be good to those children, sir? I know
 You'll not believe her, even should the Queen

Think they take after one they rarely saw.
 I had intended that my son should live
 A stranger to these matters : but you are
 So utterly deprived of friends ! He too
 Must serve you—will you not be good to him ?
 Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear !
 You, Hollis—do the best you can for me !
 I've not a soul to trust to : Wandesford's dead,
 And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes
 next :

I've found small time of late for my affairs,
 But I trust any of you, Pym himself—
 No one could hurt them : there's an infant, too—
 These tedious cares ! Your Majesty could spare them !
 Nay—pardon me, my King ! I had forgotten
 Your education, trials, much temptation,
 Some weakness : there escaped a peevish word—
 'T is gone : I bless you at the last. You know
 All's between you and me : what has the world
 To do with it ? Farewell !

Cha. [*at the door.*] Balfour ! Balfour !

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament !—go to them : I grant all
 Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent :
 Tell them to keep their money if they will :
 I'll come to them for every coat I wear
 And every crust I eat : only I choose
 To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose !

You never heard the People howl for blood,
side!

Cal. Your Majesty may hear them now :
! walls can hardly keep their murmurs out :
lease you retire!

Cha. Take all the troops, Balfour!

Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Cha. Come with me, Strafford! You'll not fear, at
least!

Straf. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
I charge you as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry: 't is no shame in him:
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
Earth fades, Heaven breaks on me: I shall stand
next
Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand
When Man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent

My death! Lead on! ere he awake—best, now
 All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
 The crowd began to murmur? They'll be kept
 Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
 Now! but tread softly—children are at play:
 In the next room. Precede! I follow—

Enter Lady CARLISLE, with many Attendants.

Lady Car.

Me

Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King
 [To the KING.] Well—as you ordered, they are r
 without,

The convoy . . . [seeing the KING's state.]

[To STRAFFORD.] You know all, then!
 thought

It looked best that the King should s
 Charles -

Alone; 't is shame that you should owe me r
 Or no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not feel s
 At being saved by me?

Hol.

All true! Oh Straffo

She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
 And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,
 Are Billingsley, no doubt! Speak to her, Stra
 See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
 The world's to learn its bravest story yet!

Lady Car. Talk afterward! Long nights in
 enough,

To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.



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