

DR
494
M3
M10
1360



PR
4984
M3M18
1860

Cornell University Library

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME
FROM THE

SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND

THE GIFT OF

Henry W. Sage

1891

A.269905

30/XII/12

The date shows when this volume was taken.

To renew this book copy the call No. and give to
the librarian.

HOME USE RULES.

All Books subject to Recall.

Books not in use for instruction or research are returnable within 4 weeks.

Volumes of periodicals and of pamphlets are held in the library as much as possible. For special purposes they are given out for a limited time.

Borrowers should not use their library privileges for the benefit of other persons.

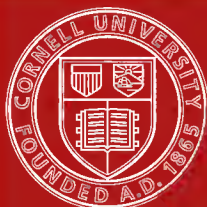
Students must return all books before leaving town. Officers should arrange for the return of books wanted during their absence from town.

Books needed by more than one person are held on the reserve list.

Books of special value and gift books, when the giver wishes it, are not allowed to circulate.

Readers are asked to report all cases of books marked or mutilated.

Do not deface books by marks and writing.



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

To

Dillon Proker Esq

From

Theodore Martin

MADONNA PIA:

A Tragedy.

26

He was justly accounted a skilful
poisoner who destroyed his victims by
bouquets of lovely and fragrant flowers.
The art has not been lost, nay it is
practised every day by — the world.

Bishop Latimer.

MADONNA PIA:

A Tragedy.

IN THREE ACTS.

by
[Theodore Martiny]

SECOND EDITION.

Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia;
Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma:
Salsi colui che innellata pria
Disposando m'avca con la sua gemma.

.Purgatorio, Canto v.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

1860,

L. L.

CP

PREFACE.

The tragic circumstances of Madonna Pia's marriage, which Dante has indicated with his usual suggestive power in the few lines quoted on the title-page, have been a favourite theme with poets. They seem not incapable of being made interesting on our stage, although the vindictive jealousy of her husband is more akin to Italian than to English nature. The date of the Lady Pia's story is uncertain, but the year 1260 has been selected for the opening of the following drama, as affording a background of interest in the strife of the Guelph and Ghibelline factions, which reached a decisive climax on the 4th of September in that year, in the defeat of the former at Monte Aperto, on the banks of the Arbia, about five miles from Sienna, by the combined forces of Sienna and Pisa, under the command of Farinata degli Uberti. In this memorable battle, of which Dante, in the *Inferno*, Canto x., speaks as —

Lo strazio, e il grande scempio,
Che fece l'Arbia colorata in rosso,

about ten thousand of the Guelphs are said to have fallen; and the rout was so complete, that, according

to Macchiavelli, those who escaped took refuge, not in Florence, which city they considered as lost to them, but in Lucca. The defeat was in some measure occasioned by the treachery of Bocca degli Abbati, who, during the engagement, cut off the hand of Giacopo del Vacca de' Pazzi, bearer of the great standard of Florence, which fell into the hands of the Siennese. The poles of this standard are still preserved in the Cathedral at Sienna. It is to this battle that the incidents of the first act are presumed to refer.

The third act of the present tragedy is an adaptation of a drama in one act, by the Marquis de Belloy, produced at the *Comédie Française*, in February 1853, under the name of *La Malaria*.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT AGOSTINO DEI TOLOMMEI, a noble Siennese.

GUIDO CHIARAMONTE, his Nephew.

COUNT NELLO DELLA PIETRA, a noble Siennese.

Prior of a Convent in the Maremma.

BERTOLDO,

JACOMO,

COSIMO,

} Retainers in the service of Count Agostino.

FLAVIO, a Gentleman-at-Arms in the service of COUNT NELLO.
Messenger.

PIA DEI TOLOMMEI, Daughter of COUNT AGOSTINO.

MARGHERITA, his Sister.

NINA, a Young Girl in the service of PIA.

The Scene during the first two Acts lies in the vicinity of Sienna, and during the third in the Tuscan Maremma. An interval of six months is supposed to elapse between each Act.

TIME A. D. 1260, 1261.

The words printed within brackets are to be omitted
in representation.

MADONNA PIA.

ACT FIRST.

A garden. To the left the entrance of a castellated mansion. In the background a picturesque mountainous country.

JACOMO and BERTOLDO enter severally.

JACOMO.

What tidings of the battle?

BERTOLDO.

Not a word.

Have you heard nothing either?

JACOMO.

No, not I.

For hours I have not seen a soul about.

BERTOLDO.

I have been watching up there on the tower,
Till I can watch no longer. Neither man
Nor horse is to be seen. Oh, what I 'd give,
To be right in the thick of it!

JACOMO.

'Tis like

To be a bloody day. The Florentines,
They say, are forty thousand strong, and we
Scarce half the number.

BERTOLDO.

'Tis a heavy odds.

We've not a man to spare, yet here they leave us
Like rusty armour nail'd against the wall.

JACOMO.

Ay, there's the grief on't, — fretting out our hearts
With fears and fancies, when our good swords might
Be doing yeoman's service in the field.

BERTOLDO.

Hush! Hark! A horse! There!

JACOMO.

No! 'Tis but the plash
Of the fountain in the court. Yet Jacopo
Should have been back ere this, and Beppo too.

BERTOLDO.

They'll not shew face, not they, till all is done.

JACOMO.

How! Cravens! Runagates!

BERTOLDO.

No, by the mass!

A pass of arms is meat and drink to them.
I know their mettle well. My life upon't,
They found the battle raging and struck in,
To have a breathing on their own account.

JACOMO.

They were sent out for news, and not to fight.
Why must they meddle? Brawling makebaits! Zounds,
As if there won't be broken heads enough,
But they must hunt for bloody cocks-combs too!

BERTOLDO.

Nay, you 're too hard upon the lads. Why, you
Had done the same yourself, had you been there.

Who was it, eh? — was ever first to join,
 And last to leave a fray in days of yore?
 "Whose blade was out, and flashing in the sun,
 "Ere other men were dreaming of a brawl?
 "Not Jacomo's, eh, the fiery Jacomo's?
 "Ha, do you take me, 'gossip?"

JACOMO.

"Well, go to!

"In sooth I was a mad hotheaded knave,
 "As ever fingered steel. Ah, many's the time
 "My blessed Marjory, heaven rest her soul!
 "Has begg'd and pray'd me on her knees, to sheathe
 "My whinger close, and hold my way in peace,
 "Let rail who might, or take the wall of me;
 "And I have vow'd to be a very lamb —
 "And meant to keep my word; but what of that?
 "Next hour, helike, some passing knave would flout
 "My lord or me his man, and presto, hey!
 "My promises forgot, out flew my sword,
 "And rang reveillè round the rascal's ears."

BERTOLDO.

Rare sport it was to see you! That back stroke
 Of yours was never match'd before or since.
 How the Pietri used to scud before it!

JACOMO.

Like skipjacks as they were!

BERTOLDO.

Ha! These were times!

My old heart leaps at the remembrance still.
 The saints forgive me! but I'd like a bout
 With the Pietri yet before I die.

JACOMO.

Cospetto! so would I. If fight we must,
 Let's settle up our ancient scores with them.
 I hate these wars of Guelf and Ghibelline;
 'Tis good blood thrown away. We of the herd
 Can scarcely fathom what they're all about.
 'To us what matter, which is uppermost?
 But these Pietri, overbearing dogs,
 We owe them grudge for years of scaith and scorn,
 They owe us blood for blood, and blow for blow.
 But get ye to the hill! And there perhaps
 You may see something of our men. You know
 The Eagle's Rock — it should command the field.

(They retire up conversing. Exit BERTOLDO. JACOMO occupies himself among the flowerbeds, gathering a nosegay. Enter MARGHERITA from the castle.)

MARGHERITA.

'Tis very strange! She is not in the house.
 I thought to find her here. — Ha, Jacomo,
 Has your young mistress pass'd this way?

JACOMO.

Yes, madam,

Some two hours gone, or so, I saw her cross
 The yew-tree walk, and through the lower gate,
 Then climb the hill that fronts the Arbia.
 Bless her sweet face! How pale she look'd! Not one
 Of her old smiles had she for Jacomo,
 Not one glance for her flowers! Out on these wars;
 That they should take the bloom from such a face!

MARGHERITA.

Ah, many's the fair cheek, good Jacomo,
 These cruel wars will blanch.

JACOMO.

Why look you, madam,
There was a time I liked the wars full well;
"When I could bear my part, and this good arm
"Has made the varlets of the Pietri skip,
"Or hewed its way through shrinking Florentines.
But out! these stirring times are gone for me,
And I must creep among my rose-beds here,
And see the women folks look pale and wan,
Thinking what grief these wars may soon bring home,
And, therefore say I, out upon these wars!

MARGHERITA.

Gently, good Jacomo, you'll crush the flowers.
They're not a sword, that you should grasp them so.

JACOMO.

No more they are; I'd nearly ruin'd them.
And then what would my dear young mistress say?
Of all my flowers they're what she likes the best.
Beshrew my heart! I wish she were come back.
These rambles out of bounds are scarcely safe.

MARGHERITA.

How! Scarcely safe! What mean you?

JACOMO.

Only this,
That there be knaves abroad — some too, that bear
No special good will to my master's house.
Rare prize were such a dove for hungry hawk.

MARGHERITA.

Explain yourself.

JACOMO.

I will, my lady. Well,
You know how fond the lady Pia is
Of wandering by herself for hours on hours,

Sometimes along the hills, or by the stream,
 But chiefly here among my garden plots.
 It was her way from childhood. Now as then
 My eye is on her, wheresoe'er she goes;
 For she is dear to me, if I may be
 So hold to say so, as she were my child,
 And it would kill me should she come to harm.
 Well then, of late, whene'er she stirr'd abroad,
 I saw that she was followed by a man,
 Who hover'd round her steps, yet kept aloof,
 Yea, would for hours sit gazing from yon cliff,
 Watching her movements in the garden here!
 As he watch'd her, so I set watch on him,
 And found he was —

MARGHERITA.

Yes — who?

JACOMO.

Your ladyship

Would never guess — Count Nello della Pietra.

MARGHERITA.

Count della Pietra?

JACOMO.

Ay, my haughty Count.

A lonely, silent, melancholy man,
 As he was once a proud and froward boy.
 Of all his stoek him do I like the least.
 Proud were they all, and hot as Lucifer:
 But then they spoke their rancour openly,
 And fought it fairly out, too, when they might;
 But this Count Nello smothers up his hate
 Behind that pale and handsome face of his.
 Yet for all this you read it in his eye,

That seems to watch, like tiger, for its spring,
Hoarding its hunger till the prey's secure.

MARGHERITA.

Old enmities, I fear, make you unjust.
He is reputed for a noble youth,
Accomplished, brave.

JACOMO.

Unjust or not unjust,
Why does he dog the lady Pia thus?
It cannot be for good. No. If I see
The kestrel wheeling o'er my dovecot, madam,
Full well I know the errand brings him there.

MARGHERITA.

You wrong him, Jacomo, be sure you do.
Though old ancestral feuds divide our houses,
No baseness stains the noble name he bears.
Besides, we need not fear him now; for he
Is, like my brother, with Uberti join'd,
Gone to do battle with the Florentines.

JACOMO.

Ay, there it is! Such leagues I like not. No!
The Tolommei and Pietri should
Be ranged not side by side, but face to face.
Heaven grant there come no ill of it, say I,
And send my master safely home again!

MARGHERITA.

Amen to that, good Jacomo! And see,
In happy omen, where your mistress comes.

(Enter PIA at the upper end of the garden.)

JACOMO.

The saints be praised! And with a step so light,
I could be sworn she brings some welcome news.

PIA (*advancing*).

The day is ours, dear aunt! The day is ours!

MARGHERITA.

Ours, Pia, ours? What fancy's this!

PIA.

No fancy!

I mean the battle has been fought and won,
Won gloriously, and the field remains with us.

MARGHERITA.

Great heavens, how came you by these tidings? How?

PIA.

With mine own eyes I look'd upon the fray,
And am myself our victory's messenger.

MARGHERITA.

It cannot be, rash girl, that you —

PIA.

It might

Be wrong, unmaidenly; perhaps it was;
But could I sit here listlessly, and still,
In dreamy dalliance with my broidery frame,
When our best blood, perchance, was flowing free,
And a great cause hung in the balance? No!
There was more terror in the hush of home,
Than in the din and ghastly shapes of war.
Fear throng'd on fear, until the very blood
Seem'd thickening at my heart. So I went forth —

JACOMO.

Right Tolommei blood in every vein!
No wonder, she had ne'er a word for me.

PIA.

Across the wood and up the mountain slope,
I took my way, scarce knowing where I went.

But the fresh breeze brought coolness to 'my brow,
And some o'ermastering impulse bore me on,
Till to the summit of the hill I came.
Then on my sight there burst a spectacle,
That fill'd my eyes with wonder, and my heart
With such wild tremors as shook all my frame.
Far o'er the plain beneath the rival ranks
Flash'd in the sun, a bright array of war,
Compact, unbroken. Even as I gazed,
The solid mass took motion; on it came,
And the hosts clash'd together in the midst.
Methinks I should have been a man — for I
Yearn'd to be struggling in that yeasty sea,
That sway'd in angry surges at my feet.
Not long the issue waver'd; soon I saw
The mighty standard of the Florentines,
That flung a proud defiance to our arms,
Sink, like a tall ship swallow'd by the deep.
Thicker and thicker grew the fray, and then
The tide of steel swept o'er their scatter'd ranks,
Their horsemen turn'd in flight, our banners crown'd
The slopes, where late the Florentines had stood.
The field was ours; with long triumphant swell
The trumpets rang the tidings through the hills,
And with a cry of joy I turn'd for home.

MARGHERITA.

That was no sight, my child, for maiden's eyes.

PIA.

So had I thought, had I not seen it. Now,
I would not give the memory of that sight,
That moment's fiery spasm, its throes of joy,
For all that's best in the remembered past.
All former hopes, cares, aims, seem'd trivial, mean;

My soul sprang up full-statured at a bound,
 Along each fibre ran the inspiring thrill,
 That nerves the arm with all a giant's force,
 And with that charging chivalry I swept
 O'er prostrate foes to death or victory.

(Retires up.)

MARGHERITA.

Methinks we should have tidings of our friends.
 Go, Giacomo, ascend the garden tower,
 And bring us news betimes of their approach.

JACOMO.

I will, my lady. All my pretty flowers
 Are pluck'd in vain. My mistress heeds them not.

PIA *(observing him for the first time)*.

Good-morrow, Giacomo!

(He bows, and presents her with the nosegay.)

Your flowers shall deck

The caps of our victorious cavaliers.

[Exit JACOMO.]

MARGHERITA.

So gay of mood, my child! And have you, then,
 No fears this victory may bring us grief?

PIA.

None! None! There's something whispers to my heart,
 A new life opens on me from this day.
 No shade shall overcast its dawn, and soon
 Shall my dear father fold me in his arms.

MARGHERITA.

Is there no other than your father, then,
 Whose not returning safe would cast a shade
 Upon a life that has been cloudless yet?
 Reflect! Of all our kinsmen is there not —
 Not one, a little dearer than the rest?

PIA.

I do not understand — I think not — No!

MARGHERITA.

Art very sure of that? Not Chiaramonte?

PIA.

Oh, my brave cousin Guido! Ah, dear aunt,
That were a loss indeed! My dear, kind cousin,
I was to blame, not to have singled him —
My heart's true brother!

MARGHERITA.

No more than brother, Pia?
Such title scarcely would content your cousin.

PIA.

Why should you think so? Why?

MARGHERITA.

Because the name
Of brother, be it spoken ne'er so soft,
Jars like a death-knell on a lover's ear.

PIA.

A lover's! Guido never thought of love.
He is no sighing cavalier, not he,
No more than I a lovelorn damoselle.

MARGHERITA.

He never made my ear his confessor,
Yet that he loves you I can see full well.

PIA.

That I am dear to him, as he to me,
It is most certain. How could I be less?
We grew together, Guido and myself,
From childhood's budding springtime: all my first
Remembrances are twined with him — 'twas he,
First fill'd my lap with flowers, dried my first tears,

Shared my first sports, first studies. As we grew,
 Still was the boy companion of my hours,
 Led my young fancies, play'd, sang, read with me;
 Was now my troubadour, — my knight, fast sworn
 To bring far kings in homage to my feet:
 And as we ripened into graver years,
 He was my friend, my dear familiar friend, —
 Next to my father valued — whom I'd trust
 In sorrow as in sunshine. As we were,
 When children we pluck'd cowslips by the stream,
 So are we now; a brave, kind brother he,
 And I his faithful sister. Trust me, aunt,
 You dream, to think that I am more to him.

[Retires up.]

MARGHERITA (*alone*).

Would I were sure of that! Yes, 'tis too plain,
 This is not, nor is aught akin to love.
 My gallant boy! It is not thus with you,
 These years of intimacy close and sweet
 Have rippled on in sunshine; they have left
 Far deeper prints upon your heart, I fear.

Enter JACOMO and COSIMO.

JACOMO.

This way, this way! There stands your mistress! Madam,
 A messenger, sent onwards by my lord.
 He's close at hand. I heard the bugles ring
 Among the pines between us and the town.

PIA.

I knew he must be safe.

MARGHERITA.

Your message, sir?

COSIMO.

My master sends his loving greetings home.
He comes unscathed and conquering from the war.
With him he brings a guest, a valued guest,
A stranger to his house, and bids prepare
Such tendance as befits his noble state.

MARGHERITA.

A stranger, said you?

COSIMO.

Yes, my lady. I
Was bid to say no more, and make despatch.
I've spurred my hardest, but their steeds are fresh,
And I have scarcely headed them a mile.

MARGHERITA.

No time is to be lost. Come with me, Pia,
And help prepare reception for our guest.

PIA.

A stranger, and his name not told to us?
I wonder who it can be!

[Exeunt MARGHERITA and PIA into the castle.]

COSIMO.

You are like
To wonder more than ever when you know.
To think, now, such a thing should come about!
The kite will fondle with the pigeon soon,
The sheep embrace the wolf, the weasel share
His rations with the rat. 'Tis out of all
Believing. What! A Tolommei sit
At board with the Pietri — pledge the cup
In wassail with his sworn ancestral foe?
'Tis monstrous, 'tis unnatural!

JACOMO.

How is this?

Out with your story, friend!

COSIMO.

Why, look you now,
 For what have we been squabbling all these years,
 Seoring each other madly o'er the sconce
 For generations baek, and handing down
 A sound, well-grown inheritance of hate,
 If we are now, like brothers, to shake hands,
 Mess in one dish, and quaff Chianti down
 In bumpers to this mongrel amity?

JACOMO.

Come to the point, man, who is coming?

COSIMO.

Point!

Fine point, indeed! Count Nello della Pietra.

JACOMO.

Count Nello! It can't be. It should not be.
 No! — What should make my master mate with him?
 Between them flows a sea of blood. — And he,
 What makes he with my master?

COSIMO.

There's the marvel.

They say, Count Nello, when my lord was down
 To-day, and struggling for his very life,
 Cut through a score of lances, bore him off,
 And placed him safely in the ranks again.
 Why should Count Nello, now, have done this, tell me?

JACOMO.

'Tis that which puzzles me.

MESSENGER.

Why should he care
To serve his enemy? There's more in this
Than meets the view, say I.

Enter TOLOMMEI and COUNT NELLO DELLA PIETRA.

TOLOMMEI (*to COSIMO*).

Ha, loitering, varlet?
Is this the way you bear my messages?
Begone, sir!

(*Exit COSIMO.*)

Ah, good Jacomo, great news!
It would have made you young again, to see
A field so stoutly fought. But hark ye, friend!
Our troops are hot and weary. Look to them,
Both horse and man; let them have best of cheer.

JACOMO.

I will, my lord.

TOLOMMEI.

Where is your mistress? She
Has had my message, eh?

JACOMO.

She has, my lord.

TOLOMMEI.

'Tis well. — Now go — and, Jacomo, a word!
See to my roan yourself — he has a wound.

[*Jacomo lingers.*]

So, so! You marvel at the guest we bring.
I thought we should surprise you. Good my lord,
This worthy fellow — never honest
Did master suit and service — looks upon you
With a scant loving eye. I dare he sworn

He's thinking now, how often he cross'd swords
 With the Pietri, in our brawls of yore,
 And feels his fingers itching for a fray.
 Confess now, Jacomo.

JACOMO.

To tell the truth,
 I had some sharp remembrances just then,
 But — but, my lord —

TOLOMMEI.

Nay, never falter, man.
 Count Nello will not think the worse of you,
 That you hate stoutly in your master's cause.
 Strong love, strong hate, right mettle for true hearts!
 And you shall love Count Nello yet — you shall —
 If you love me, as I am sure you do.
 Why, but for him, your house had lost its chief, —
 My Pia — but 'twere best not think of that —
 And home my good steed had come masterless,
 Whose wound, my friend, you should be tending now,
 Instead of listening to your master's prate.

JACOMO.

My lord, we owe Count Nello much. (*Aside*) But still,
 I doubt such friendliness at such a hand.

[*Exit.*]

NELLO.

That man, methinks, will never be my friend.

TOLOMMEI.

Not be your friend! He must, my lord, he shall.
 Old grudges rankle longer with the churl
 Than with the noble; and, in his youth, our feud
 Blazed at its hottest. But the man I love,
 My vassals shall regard with friendly eye,

Or they are none of mine. Now, by the mass,
 If we forget the past, if we forgive,
 Methinks the herd, that feed upon our hand,
 May chew the cud of ancient hates in peace.
 To you, my lord, I owe my life. Henceforth
 We and our house are friends.

NELLO.

We shall be so,
 If word and deed of mine, and best good will
 Can compass aught, my lord.

TOLOMMEI.

Well said! And I
 Shall bless the chance that placed my life in peril,
 That I might have to thank you for't! 'Fore heaven,
 You shall have better than an old man's thanks;
 Ay, fifty-fold, my lord. I have a child —

NELLO (*aside*).

Can he divine?

TOLOMMEI.

Ha, sir, I see the blood
 Mounts to your cheek already. Wait, till you
 Shall see her, sir —

NELLO (*aside*).

See her! Oh bursting heart!

TOLOMMEI.

And you are not the man I take you for,
 If only for one smile of such a maid —
 I will not say her thanks, her heart-warm thanks —
 You would not proudly barter life. Ha, ha!
 I see I touch you. Oh believe me, sir,
 'Tis not the old man's doting. You shall say,
 When you have made your eyes rich with her beauty,

All Tuscany shows not her peer. Kind heavens,
 Had this day left my Pia fatherless!
 Oh, dear my lord, bear with me. The great debt
 I owe you overwhelms me —

NELLO.

Speak not so.

Mine is the debt. (*Aside*) Heaven knows how deep!

(*Aloud*) For I

Do hold me overpaid, that my young sword
 Was worthy to be wielded for a life
 So precious to my country. But you add
 A double guerdon, granting me to see
 The joy that melts in your fair daughter's eyes,
 To hold her father safe within her arms.
 It needs, my lord, a heart as lone as mine,
 A life unsunn'd as mine, as dark, forlorn,
 To know what luxury it is to gaze
 On the deep transports of a love so pure.

TOLOMMEI.

A life unsunn'd! What's this? A lonely heart?
 Go to, my lord, we'll cure you of such thoughts.
 Young, brave, well born, you're of the stuff that earves
 Fortune and friends out, stand where'er it may,
 Your favour such as wins young maiden's hearts —

(NELLO *starts.*)

Nay, never start, I'm cunning in such lore —
 An eye, that tempts to fathom what it broods,
 A lip to break whose firmness into smiles,
 Beauty would give her heart up. Look you, sir,
 You wrong yourself, your nature, and your gifts,
 To tell me of a life unsunn'd, forlorn.
 Your crow sits blinking in the mist — the eagle
 Mounts o'er the clouds, and fronts the glorious sun.

NELLO.

True, but its wings have not been clipp'd like mine.
 I am, you know, the last shoot of a stem,
 That once soar'd high, and spread a hounteous shade,
 But now stands wither'd, bare, a blighted trunk.
 All those that might have loved me lost in youth,
 And prizing not the things the world calls friends,
 I've lived so long alone, a dreamer's life,
 I fear me much, I've lost the nerve to soar.

TOLOMMEI.

Come out into the sunshine. Look around you.
 Mix with our life. This mood will pass, and soon
 You'll find yourself careering on free wing.
 Lonely at least you shall not be. True friends
 You'll ever find in me and mine, and this
 Is but the first of many days, that yet
 Shall flood your life with sunshine. Get we in;
 I long to tell my Pia what she owes you.

(Enter JACOMO. TOLOMMEI retires up and addresses him.)

NELLO (*aside*).

Oh heaven! The one wild dream of many a month
 Is now made real, and I shrink before it.
 Should she look coldly on me! What am I,
 That she should heed me more than other men?
 Fool, fool! Or wherefore should I think her heart
 Folds not some other image in its core?
 Oh, that were madness!

TOLOMMEI.

Come, I wait for you.
 He hears me not. A dreamer, by my faith!

NELLO (*still in a reverie*).

One plunge, and I sink stifed in the ooze,
 Or rise triumphant with my priceless pearl.

TOLOMMEI.

Wilt go with me? They wait for us within.

NELLO (*to TOLOMMEI*).

Your pardon, some old thoughts —

TOLOMMEI.

Come on, my lord.

We'll show you that shall make you quit your dreams.

No talking more of lonely hearts! Come on!

[*They retire up and exeunt into the castle, as
GUIDO CHIARAMONTE enters from the
other side.*]

GUIDO.

Too late, too late! Oh most unlucky chance!
This comes now of distinction! What the plague,
Of all men else why should Uberti choose
Me, simple me, for offices of trust?
Why charge me with despatches for his friends
In Florence, just when I had set my heart
On stealing one sweet half hour with my cousin,
And finding out my fate for good or ill,
Before my uncle came? For all my spurring
He's here already. What a chance to lose!
Oh, had I come before her, with the flush
Of battle on my cheek, and its full pulse
Still throbbing in my breast, and laying down
My maiden laurels at her feet, had pour'd
All the full tide of year-long hoarded love,
I ne'er had dared in a more tranquil hour
To give free vent, how might I not have thriven!
But it is past, the happy moment's lost —
My dream dissolved. And now I scarcely care
To see her with a throng of gazers by —
With strangers, too, for such are here, I see —

To speak to her cold words which all may hear,
 And take a common greeting from her lips,
 When I had hoped — I will not see her so,
 But straight to horse, and bide a happier time.

[Is going out, when he is met by JACOMO.]

JACOMO.

Leave us again so soon, dear master Guido?
 Why, how is this? You have not been within!
 My master scarce will think this courteous,
 And, lord! what will the lady Pia say?

GUIDO.

Nay, Jacomo, they're busy — so am I.
 I should ere this have been a league tow'rds Florence.
 They need not know I have been here at all;
 And if they should, say that my charge was urgent.
 I halted but to bring your mistress news
 Of our success, and my dear uncle's safety;
 But he is here before me, as I learn,
 And every minute lost may cost me dear.

JACOMO.

Nay, Master Guido, you look worn! A cup
 Of old Chianti, ere you go, were worth
 A second pair of spurs. Go in —

GUIDO.

I cannot.

JACOMO.

I see, sir, how it is. You fancy not
 Our new guest, our new friend; and think, perchance,
 To see him at the Tolommei's board
 Would take the savour from the best of cheer!

GUIDO.

New guest! New friend! What mean you?

JACOMO.

How! Not know,

Count Nello della Pietra is within?
Home came my master with him, hand and glove,
Hot friends, each vying each in courtesies.
And this Count Nello — may the red plague seize him!
Sits in the halls, whose threshold ne'er till now
Was cross'd by one of his detested race.

GUIDO.

I'm glad of it. I'm very glad of it.
Nay, man, be calm! He never did us wrong,
And wherefore should we visit on his head
All the mad passions of a day gone by,
When our forefathers paid *his* wrong for wrong,
Insult for insult, and with usury too?

JACOMO.

And you say this? You, that I trained myself?
You, that I taught the manage of a sword,
I'll not believe that you can brook to owe
A debt to one of the Pietri? You!

GUIDO.

A debt? What debt?

JACOMO.

My master's life. To-day
When he was down, and stood at bay for life,
They say Count Nello rescued him.

GUIDO.

He did!

So it was true the rumour that I heard?
Why, then, I am his debtor too. 'Twas well,
'Twas nobly done! I would I might have stay'd,
To tender him my thanks among the rest.
Friend, I shall think the love you bear your lord
Is cold indeed, if you can hate this man.

JACOMO.

What call had he to strike in such a cause?
They never loved us, these Pietri, never —
Never had cause to love us.

GUIDO.

Noble hearts
Demand no better cause for noble deeds,
Than that a brave man — be he friend or foe,
The rather if a foe — is at a pinch,
That needs the succour of a valiant arm.
Now, as I live, he bears a noble heart,
This same Count Nello.

JACOMO.

Well, well! Time proves all.
But I have deep misgivings of some ill,
When such guests sit at Tolommei's hearth.

GUIDO.

Out, croaking owl! I know, when I come back,
I'll find you warm as any in his praise.
But it grows late. Bid them bring out my horse.

*[As they are going out, enter PIA from the
castle. She does not observe them.]*

JACOMO.

I'll look to him myself. But see, my lord,
The lady Pia! You will surely wait
To say a word with her before you go?

GUIDO.

I will. Go you and see my horse prepared.

*[Exit JACOMO. PIA advances to the front of the
stage in a reverie, GUIDO remaining behind.]*

PIA.

I breathe again! The air is sweet and cool,
And yet I felt a fever fan my cheek;

A stifling in my bosom, as I stood
And heard my father speak. What could it be?
All that he said is eddying in my brain
In wild confusion, and I seem to feel
Count Nello's gaze still rooted on my face,
As then I felt it, though I saw it not.
I ne'er have seen this stranger, ne'er before,
And yet he seem'd no stranger to my thoughts.
Is't fancy, or some half-forgotten dream?
What means this sudden tumult in my blood,
This vague disquietude? 'Tis nothing! Nothing?
Can I be sure of that? Some change there is:
What 'tis I know not; but I feel it. Yes,
My flowers are fair and fragrant as before,
The thrush is piping from his myrtle bush,
As yesterday he piped, the sun slopes on
Into the west, majestically calm;
They are the same, but do they wear to me
The self-same aspect yesterday they wore?
Or have my eyes beheld a fairer sight,
Than blossom'd flower, or the majestic sun,
Or has a richer music smote mine ear,
Than ever rang from throat of sweetest bird.
That still one form will rise before me — still
One voice thrill at my heart? If this should be?

GUIDO (*aside*).

So deeply wrapt! Oh might I only hope,
She miss'd one 'midst her friends, she fain had seen,
And I that happy one!

PIA.

It was not much
He said; but wherefore did it seem, as though
The tones spoke to me as of something heard

Long, long ago, and hoarded up till then
Next to my heart? 'Tis very, very strange.

GUIDO (*advancing*).

What's strange, fair Pia?

PIA.

Ah, dear cousin Guido!

Welcome, thrice welcome!

GUIDO.

Thanks, dear Pia, thanks!

But when did my sweet merry-hearted cousin
'Take to such musings deep, she lets her friend
Stand by some score of seconds — nay, you did —
Without a word to say she's glad to see him?

PIA.

Nay, did I so?

GUIDO.

Now would I give the half
Of my best lands, to be the happy theme
Of thoughts so close and earnest. Might I hope,
That in the hour which brought my uncle home
Victorious and unharm'd, my Pia had
One thought for cousin Guido?

PIA.

Can you doubt?

GUIDO.

You did not then forget me? Oh, dear Pia,
Make me assured of that, — let me but dream,
When I am gone, my image finds some niche
In the fair temple of your maiden thoughts,
Where it, perchance, may claim a stray regard,
And I am blest beyond all utterance.

PIA.

Does Pia need, then, to assure her cousin,
She is not so untrue to former days,
Or so ungrateful for his kindness past,
She had forgot him now, or ever shall?

GUIDO.

I did not think it — could not. But my heart
Yearn'd for some word — oh, Pia, pardon me —
Some word to say I was remember'd there,
Where it were death to think myself forgot.
You are not angry?

PIA.

Wherefore should I be?

I would not but be dear to you as ever,
And be remember'd ever in your thoughts.

GUIDO.

Remember'd! Is there any lightest act,
Word, look, of Pia's, I remember not?

PIA.

But wherefore talk we of remembrances?
You speak as though we had been parted years,
Not scarce a month.

GUIDO.

Pia, it seem'd like years.

That month seem'd longer than my whole life else.

PIA.

That's strange! Yet no. For in that little month
A world of new pursuits, ambitions, hopes,
The stir of great events, have throng'd your life.
So much to do, and done, you thought it long.

GUIDO.

It was not that. No, no, it was not that.

PIA.

Indeed! What then, dear Guido?

GUIDO.

(*Aside*) Where shall I
Find words to tell her? (*Aloud*) Pia, I am not
The same as when I parted from you here.
That little month has wrought such change in me,
I scarcely know myself for what I was.

PIA.

Such change?

GUIDO.

Ay, change! Shall I proceed?

PIA.

Go on.

GUIDO.

I left you, Pia, a mere giddy boy,
Whose life had fled like a summer day,
Nor knew he had a heart, nor cared to know.
I come, a man, who woke to find his heart
Gone from his keeping ere he knew his loss.
Shall I go on?

PIA.

Yes, yes!

GUIDO.

How shall I tell
The fever of the spirit, the unrest,
The longings infinite that woke within me,
When first I felt myself alone, my foot
Pressing the threshold of a stormy life!
"Then o'er me rush'd remembrance of the past,
"And flooded all my being with a strange

"Bewilder'd sense of mingled joy and pain.
 I plunged amid the tumult of the camp,
 Still went that feeling with me; — when I fled
 Into the silence of the hills, 'twas there.
 Where'er I went, one passion followed me,
 Made up an atmosphere of light around me,
 By one dear presence haunted, by one voice
 Made musical, till life seem'd bounded in
 By some enchanter's spell. Oh, words are poor,
 Weak, vain, to picture that tumultuous sea,
 Where joy, hope, fear, contended wave with wave.
 Your heart must picture it! Yet how should that,
 Which sleeps unruffled as an inland lake,
 Reflecting but the sunshine and the stars,
 Divine the turmoil of the storm-vest deep?

PIA.

I can divine it, Guido. — And this change
 You speak of —?

GUIDO.

Is a change from thoughtless ease
 To passionate aspiring — from the dreams
 Of unreflecting youth to the close aims
 Of manhood. Said I, aims? There is but one.

PIA.

And that one?

GUIDO.

Love! For love embraces all.
 Our every thought is his, our every deed;
 Wealth, honour, fame, we prize them but as means
 And ministrants to love.

PIA.

Does love so change?

GUIDO.

Yes, Pia, yes. It changes all within,
 Without us, too. The commonest things of earth
 Wear not the semblance to a lover's eyes,
 They wear to other men's. He hopes, and then
 A giant's spirit swells within his breast,
 His step is wing'd with lightness, and he strides
 The earth triumphant. Straight come fears, and lo!
 There droops no verier craven 'neath the moon.
 Canst thou divine this change — hast thou e'er felt
 One touch of it, dear Pia?

PIA.

I? I cannot tell —

And yet —

GUIDO.

Oh, say thou hast. Oh, say thy heart
 Can read my bosom's secret by its own!
 Speak to me, Pia! Answer me!

PIA.

I cannot!

This is so new, so sudden. A strange world
 Seems to dawn forth upon my soul to-day,
 And all's confusion still.

GUIDO (*aside*).

Shall I urge more,
 Or wait till time mature this budding hope?

PIA (*musingly*).

And this is love! Strange witchery, that wakes
 A soul within the soul, blots out the past,
 And makes the heart a wonder to itself!

GUIDO.

Then thou hast felt this witchery, too! Oh, joy!

And there's a voice within thy breast will plead
My suit with eloquence more rare than mine!

PIA.

Thy suit? I plead thy suit? When Guido woos,
What tongue so skill'd to urge it as his own?

GUIDO.

Think thou but so, and I am blest indeed!

PIA.

Nay, when thy mistress thinks so, then thou may'st be.

GUIDO.

But has she not --

(*enter JACOMO.*)

JACOMO.

Your horse, my lord, is ready at the gate.

GUIDO.

Plague on the fellow! Why
Should he come blundering here at such a time?

JACOMO.

(*Aside.*) I've half a mind, I'm one too many here.

[*Retires up.*]

PIA.

How! Going? Now, so soon? You have not seen
My father.

GUIDO.

Nay, I must set on to Florence.
My duty craves despatch. I am not weary,
And the strong joy that's here (*pressing his heart*) would
bear me on,
Were't twice as far, unflinchingly. But see,
My dear aunt Margherita!

[*Enter MARGHERITA, from the castle.*]

MARGHERITA.

Guido here!

Welcome, dear Guido, welcome! We have heard
How gallantly you bore yourself to-day.
My brother longs to see you. Come, niece, come,
Your father asks for you, and wonders why
You left his side so soon.

GUIDO.

The fault is mine,
Who have detained her by my prate so long.
But now, farewell, farewell!

MARGHERITA.

How, what is this?

(To PIA.) Pia, have you no word to keep him here?

(To GUIDO.) You must not leave us so.

GUIDO.

Nay, nay, I must.

I bear despatches from Uberti. They
Will be the signal for his friends to strike,
Ere Florence has recovered from the shock
Of this day's loss. I have outstay'd my time,
But the first hour my duty sets me free
Shall see me here again. "Such hope have I,
Would wing me back unbreathed from farthest Ind."
And so farewell! Dear Pia, till we meet,
I steer by one sole star. [Exit.]

PIA.

But, Guido — stay!

He heeds me not. Ah, me!

MARGHERITA (to PIA).

What means all this?

Pray heav'n, she may have found, within her heart
There vibrate deeper chords than she had dream'd!

[PIA stands as if lost in meditation, MARGHERITA looking at her with apparent surprise. TOLOMMEI and NELLO appear at the door of the castle.

TOLOMMEI.

Ho! We have found our runaway at last!
Is this the courtesy ye show our guest?
Come hither, girl! Young maids, when I was young,
Would not have shunn'd such gallant company.
And now to dine. Your hand, girl, to the Count!

[NELLO advances and leads off PIA, followed by MARGHERITA and TOLOMMEI.

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE FIRST.

A chamber in the chateau of COUNT TOLOMMEI.

Enter TOLOMMEI and MARGHERITA.

TOLOMMEI.

Deny me to my daughter! By the Gods,
'Tis not to be endured! Was it for this
I gave him up my darling, frankly gave her,
Unsun'd my home, that she might gladden his,
To have her now debarr'd from me? So, so,
It seems my wish is nothing — his is all.
He grants me speech with my own flesh and blood,
Just when his sovereign will and pleasure prompts;
Withholds it, when his surly fit is on.
I'll not endure it.

MARGHERITA.

What's the matter, brother?

TOLOMMEI.

Insult and wrong's the matter! Sister, sister,
Why did we give our Pia to this man?
Where were our eyes, our hearts, they told us not,
He was no mate for her?

MARGHERITA.

Why, how is this?

What has occurred?

TOLOMMEI.

Heavens! He shall answer it,
As I'm a Tolommei.

MARGHERITA.

Pray, be calm,
And tell me what's amiss.

TOLOMMEI.

Calm! Well, I will.
Hark you, I went to-day to see my child;
Oh that Count Nello ever called her his!
What greeting, think you, waited me? A gate
Half-open'd, and a lackey charged to say,
Count Nello had gone forth, and left command,
That no one should have entrance to his lady,
Until he should return.

MARGHERITA.

Nay, brother, nay,
Count Nello meant not such command for you.

TOLOMMEI.

How am I sure of that? The churl that gave
The message was right worthy of his charge.
He shut the gate ere scarce his speech was closed,
And well for him he did. Another second,
And I had cleft the rascal to the chine,
Fit guerdon for his scoundrel insolence.

MARGHERITA.

There must be some mistake?

TOLOMMEI.

Oh, no mistake!
I've felt some mischief brooding. Day by day,
I've marked a growing coolness to myself,
A kind of jealousy in Nello's eye,

As if he grudged my hold on Pia's love,
 I that so freely trusted him with her,
 I that in her gave up my all, am grudged
 Some few poor grains of the love was wholly mine.
 He never leaves her side when I am by,
 Watches her words, her looks. His presence flings
 A shadow of constraint upon us, freezes up
 Those streams of natural confidence should flow
 Between a father and his child, until
 I seem each day to know her less and less.

MARGHERITA.

Nay, brother, this is fancy. You have been
 So used to have our darling all your own,
 Art sure *you* are not jealous, and not he?

TOLOMMEI.

I jealous, I? Of what should I be jealous?
 Of the love that is to fill the place of mine,
 When I am gone — the love, which had I questioned,
 Count Nello never should have had my child?

MARGHERITA.

But lovers are exacting — will not brook
 Division of affection; and Count Nello,
 Like the fond miser, keeps his treasure close,
 To feed his eyes alone.

TOLOMMEI.

And if he does,
 I tell you, sister, that a young girl's heart
 Is not a thing to brook a miser's gripe,
 To feed the selfish hunger of his eyes,
 And then be mew'd up close from sky and sun,
 Till his caprice shall give it air again.
 Clog the heart so, 'twill stifle, break. "True love

"Is generous, unsuspecting, proudly wears
 "Its prize before the world, made doubly proud,
 "Reading the homage of admiring eyes."
 Where love is, there is trust: and, sister, that
 I find not in Count Nello. Oh fool, fool!
 I might have known a nature so austere,
 So moody, was no mate for a frank heart
 Like Pia's. But I only thought, to him
 I owed my life — with him I closed the feud,
 Had been the curse of both our houses! Then,
 His love appear'd so absolute, so deep,
 That I consented — nay, I back'd his suit,
 And sacrificed my daughter.

MARGHERITA.

'Tis not so.

She loved Count Nello. Her whole heart had gone
 Into his keeping, ere your wishes spoke.

TOLOMMEI.

I'll not believe it! No. I fear me much,
 'Twas not her heart she followed, but my wish.

MARGHERITA.

Brother, it was her heart, her heart alone.
 She might have given't elsewhere — oh, would she had!
 But she chose him.

TOLOMMEI.

Elsewhere? Elsewhere? What mean you?

MARGHERITA.

Her cousin Guido —

TOLOMMEI.

What of him?

MARGHERITA.

Loved, woo'd her.

Dear as he was, and well we know, how dear,
 What hold he had on Pia's heart she found
 Full soon was nothing, set against the sway,
 The sovereign sway, it yielded to Count Nello.

TOLOMMEI.

Guido loved Pia — sought her? Oh, ye gods,
 And I ne'er thought of this! Forgot him, when
 I most should have remember'd! He away,
 I let another take his place beside her,
 Woo her, and win her, and this other now —
 It makes me mad! And Guido loved my girl?
 How could he else? And had the foremost claim
 On my regard; yet I forgot him, gave her
 To a stranger, who now shuts her from my heart,
 And in that act made wreck of Guido's peace!

MARGHERITA.

Guido returns to-day.

TOLOMMEI.

To-day?

MARGHERITA.

This very day.

Here is his letter, writ from Florence, where
 He only tarries to report the issue
 Of his late mission to the Emperor,
 Then hastens to Sienna.

TOLOMMEI.

Oh, ye Gods,

How shall I meet him?

MARGHERITA.

Worse is yet to tell.

He does not know of Pia's marriage.

TOLOMMEI.

How!

Not know of that? The letter that I wrote?

MARGHERITA.

'Tis plain he ne'er received.

TOLOMMEI.

True. Now I think,

He sent no answer. Oh, I see it all,

And now he is to learn from my lips — mine —

The heaviest news shall ever load his heart.

"He left us, sister, full of promise, hope,

"He comes back, charged with honours, trust, renown,

"To seek her for whose sake he won them all,

"And finds her gone!"

(A trumpet sounds without.)

MARGHERITA.

Hark, hark!

TOLOMMEI.

'Tis he! 'Tis he!

I'd know his bugle 'mongst a thousand, sister.

Its ring was ever gallant. I can hear

The flutter of his heart upon its tones,

Half trembling, half triumphant. Sister, I

Dare not be first to shiver into dust

The fabric of his hopes. Best that he learn

The truth from you! Poor boy, from you he'll take

The balsam with the wound. Men shrink from men,

When the heart's pierced, and stife with the grief

Would find a vent, were gentler woman near.

'Tis kinder for us both! You'll tell him, sister?

MARGHERITA.

I will.

TOLOMMEI.

Thanks, thanks! Heaven comfort my poor boy!
[Exit.]

MARGHERITA.

And comfort thee, old man! My heart forebodes
Thou'lt need its aid. Not Guido's peace alone,
But Pia's too is blighted by this marriage.
She wed a dream, an image she had clothed
With her own spirit's radiance. This Count Nello,
She deem'd the pattern of all nobleness,
Is close, suspicious, cruel; what's worse, jealous.
His fetters even now begin to gall;
He'll link the rivets closer, till they bite
Into his young bride's soul — and then 'twill rend
Its shackles, or he rent — each way, despair!
He loves her, yet he doubts her, doubts himself,
And he will find some cue for his distrust,
Or, finding not, will make one. When did such
As he lack cause for jealousy? Great heavens,
Should he e'er come to know of Guido's love,
'Twere fatal. He must never learn it, never.
Should he but see him, his suspicious eye
Would read confession in his rival's looks,
And his dark thoughts piece out a tale to make
Revenge a duty. Meet they must not. Hark,
'Tis Guido's step!

GUIDO (*enters rapidly through door in centre*).

I'll find them here, you say?
Ah, my kind aunt, your welcome still the first!

MARGHERITA.

Dear Guido, welcome to us all!

GUIDO.

The dear

Old place! What joy to look on it again!
 Time has been busy with me since we parted,
 But it has left me all unaltered here.

(Touching his heart.)

Cities most fair I've seen, but none look'd half
 So fair as our Sienna, — crested peaks
 I've crossed, that dwarf our hills to pigmies, yet
 They seem'd not half so near to heaven as these;
 Kind words, kind looks have hail'd me, none so sweet
 As I bore with me in my memory;
 Fair faces, too, have smiled on me, but none
 So fair as one I hoarded in my heart,
 That was my talisman by day and night,
 Through weariness and danger. Happy hour,
 That sees me hack with all I love again!

MARGHERITA *(aside, and turning away)*.

Happy? Alas! Alas!

GUIDO.

Why, what's the matter?

You do not seem so glad to see me. Speak,
 There's no mischance? My uncle?

MARGHERITA.

He is well.

GUIDO.

And Pia?

MARGHERITA.

Well.

GUIDO.

Thank heaven for that! And yet
 Your looks belie your words. All is not well.
 Why come they not to greet me? Where's my uncle?

MARGHERITA.

He left me even now.

GUIDO.

What! He heard my step,
Yet waited not to welcome me? Speak, speak,
There is some mystery here. Torture me not.
It is not Pia — no, no, look at me,
No words, no words, but tell me with thine eyes,
That she is safe! Then come what misery else,
And I can hear it.

MARGHERITA.

She is safe.

GUIDO.

Hast thou
No ampler words to still my fears than these?
If she be safe and well, why comes she not?

MARGHERITA.

She — she is not here.

GUIDO.

Not here? Why, how is this?
When was it that my uncle learn'd to spare
His Pia from her home?

MARGHERITA.

Her home no more.

GUIDO.

Where should her home be? Wherefore do you strain me
Thus piecemeal on the rack? Out with your tale!
My heart is at your feet. In mercy, speak.
Tell me of Pia, of my love!

MARGHERITA.

She is

Another's bride.

GUIDO.

She? She another's? She?

MARGHERITA.

Yes, dearest Guido, yes! Some three months since
She wedded the Count Nello della Pietra.

GUIDO.

Wedded Count Nello — she, my Pia, mine,
My own vow'd love, whose latest words to me
Were words of sweet assurance — she to wed
Another! She! Oh, false one, false! Yet no,
She has been forced to this. Yes! I remember,
He saved my uncle's life — she his reward,
Her heart the sacrifice.

MARGHERITA.

No, Guido, no!

There was no force, no sacrifice.

GUIDO.

I'll not

Believe it. She was mine: What need'd vow,
When all my life was but one vow of love,
And all her looks, words, acts, acceptance of it?
Why, why was I not here? 'This ne'er had been.
Oh cruel! Where my trust were fullest, there
To be most deeply stung!

MARGHERITA.

Nay, wrong us not!

Wrong not your cousin! With her hand her heart
Went freely.

GUIDO.

She shall tell me so, and then,
Belike, I shall believe it. I will see her,
And have assurance from her lips of all.

I deem'd my travel ended; there is yet
A point beyond.

MARGHERITA.

(Aside.) This must not be. Yet how
Shall I prevent him? *(Aloud.)* Guido, you know well,
That I have loved you ever, — have I not?
Some claim I have upon your trust, and now
I urge it. You shall see her, but not now.

GUIDO.

Why should I pause?

MARGHERITA.

For her sake. Think, she is
Another's bride. You would not have her lord
Make question of the love he deems his own?

GUIDO.

Was I considered?

MARGHERITA.

(Aside.) I must tell him all.
(Aloud.) Count Nello keeps close watch upon his bride.
You marvel, yet 'tis so. Already we
Are fearful for her happiness; a creature
So frank, so noble, mated to a lord,
Whose love is strangely mingled with distrust.
He knows not how you grew up, side by side,
Nor dreams love's homage ever reach'd her ears,
From other tongue than his. I fear me much,
Came he to learn the story of your youth,
His jealous doubts would grow to certainties,
Then farewell peace for ever! Think of this.
Be patient. Leave to me to find the means
To bring you to your cousin. Hush, my brother!
No word of this to him!

[Enter TOLOMMEI.]

TOLOMMEI (*embracing GUIDO*).

My gallant boy!

How shall I look on you! Indeed, I knew not,
How 'twas 'twixt you and Pia! Yet I ought —
Oh purblind fool! Ah, Guido! —

GUIDO.

Not a word!

The past is past, and I will learn to bear.

TOLOMMEI.

Rail on me, spurn me! Call me dotard, ass,
Ingrate, unnatural! All these I am,
And only fit for scorn.

GUIDO.

Nay, uncle, nay!

TOLOMMEI.

I am, I am! You wrong'd, and Pia wreck'd,
Yes, Guido, wreck'd! And all through me. I see
My folly now, but all too late, too late!

GUIDO.

Think not so sadly. Wherefore should she not
Be happy? Nobly wedded — a kind lord —

TOLOMMEI.

Kind! He is hard, cold, selfish; sets even now
A barrier 'twixt my child and me, and holds her
Enmew'd and prison'd, like a bird he fears
Is yearning for her eyrie far away.
And yearn she will, if now she yearneth not,
That where she gave her trust there in return
No trust is given, and then —

GUIDO.

She still is ours

To guard from wrong. Though lost to me, my life
Was hers, and shall be to the last.

TOLOMMEI.

My own

True-hearted Guido! You shall be my son.
You're all that's left to cheer the old man now.
Oh, but to think what we have lost, how all
Might well have been so different, had you,
My son indeed, and my dear Pia, crowned
With summer buds the winter of my years!

MARGHERITA.

Give not the rein to thoughts like these! (*To GUIDO.*)
Come in.

You're weary, need repose.

GUIDO (*to her*).

Ah, not so weary,

As sick at heart. (*Aside.*) Let come what may, I'll see
her,

And know the truth. If she be happy, well!
There's comfort still. If not, then let him look to't,
This tyrant lord!

TOLOMMEI.

Our sorrows make us selfish.

You've ridden far, and at your journey's end
Found cheerless welcome. But you *are* come, Guido,
And these old walls look brighter even now.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE SECOND.

A Garden.

JACOMO and FLAVIO enter.

FLAVIO.

I tell you, fellow, 'tis Count Nello's orders.

JACOMO.

And, fellow! I tell you, I do not care,
Though 'twere ten times his orders. Fellow! Zounds,
If you don't mend your manners, by the mass,
I'll cudgel you into civility.

A pickthank, sneaking knave!

FLAVIO.

(Half draws his sword, then puts it back.)

Pshaw! Let him rail!

Who heeds the harking of a toothless cur?

JACOMO.

Oh, you do well to put your rapier up.
The sight of steel might give your valour qualms.
Fellow! Go to! Many's the bloody crown
I've given your betters for a less affront.

FLAVIO.

Most valiant ancientry, the time may come,
And welcome, too, to put your threats to proof,
When, if I don't avenge these bloody crowns,
I'll give you leave to call me jackanapes.
But meanwhile you have heard my lord's commands, —
My lord's and yours — and look they be obeyed!

[Exit FLAVIO.]

JACOMO.

My lord, indeed! I serve Count Nello? I?
 'Tis not to do his bidding I am here.
 On such condition doomsday should have come,
 Ere I had set a foot within his gates.
 The Lady Pia, at her wish I came,
 And her and only her will I obey.
 His orders, quotha? Save with his consent
 I must not seek my lady's presence, eh?
 And so 'tis come to this! But they shall find
 I have an eye upon them. His commands!
 I'll seek her when I will and where I may,
 And never ask his leave. I fear him not.
 Although he be her lord, — woe worth the hour!
 He is no lord of mine. Till she forbid,
 I'll come and go as freely as before,
 And see who shall prevent me. Sunset, hey,
 And not a flower cut yet! Whom have we here?

[Enter COSIMO.]

Now, as I live, 'tis Cosimo! Why, man,
 I scarcely knew you in this brave attire.
 Who ever would have thought to see you here?

COSIMO.

'Faith, friend, I've risen somewhat in the world,
 Since last we met. I've travelled, Jacomo;
 The rolling stone for once has gathered moss,
 A comfortable moss, the bounteous growth
 Of right good living and of right good wages.
 Service is no inheritance, they say;
 But I protest, to serve Count Guido is.

JACOMO.

Count Guido? You went with him, so you did.
 And is the Count come back?

COSIMO.

Am I come back?

His page, his equerry, his man-at-arms,
Chief conservator of his lordship's person,
The very shadow of his presence, I.
You see me here. Then judge, if he's come back.

JACOMO.

And I not know it? Times are changed, when he
Could be so near, and yet not seek me out.
But I'm a fool! How should he seek me here?

COSIMO.

Why there it is, friend! Times are changed indeed.
To echo people's words is scarce polite —
Oh, trust me, we that travel know what's what —
But if I were to die for't, I must say,
Who ever would have thought to see you here?

JACOMO.

Ay, who indeed?

COSIMO.

How came it all about?

JACOMO.

That's more than I can tell, or any man.
The foul fiend had some hand in it, I think,
To turn the Lady Pia's thoughts away.
From her own kin to this Count Nello here!

COSIMO.

Who could have thought it, and so sudden too?

JACOMO.

Oh, ne'er sped wooing quicker. At the first
She shrunk before him like a fluttered dove,
But day by day he came, and day by day, —

There must have been some witchcraft in his eye —
She trembled closer to the falconer's lure,
Until he held her fast within his toils.

COSIMO.

And the Count Tolommei?

JACOMO.

Why, it seem'd
As though he'd set his heart upon the match.
It was to solder up old feuds, he said,
To join their lands in one broad seignory,
And Lord knows what beside. Enough, he gave
His frank consent, and there's the story told.

COSIMO.

Marry in haste, repent at leisure, eh?
The saw holds good, I fancy?

JACOMO.

Who says so?
Count Nello dotes on her, and she on him,
As fondly as the day they plighted hands.
Who dares to say, then, they repent the bond?

COSIMO.

Oh, nobody says so; but I can tell
As well as most folks, when the wind's at east.
Whate'er the lady and her lord may be,
Count Tolommei has grown cold, I'll swear.
Were all things as they should be, why should he
Be grown so choleric, so sharp and sour?

JACOMO.

An old man's failing! Nothing strange in that.

COSIMO.

Ay, but he visits not the Count, nor comes

The Count to visit him. That's strange, you'll own.
Not quite like new-made sire and son-in-law?

JACOMO.

A chance, a chance! (*Aside.*) Confound this curious fool!
(*Aloud.*) Count Nello has had business on his hands.

COSIMO.

Indeed! Well, well, it's no affair of mine.
(*Aside.*) A close old dog. I'll try another tack.
(*Aloud.*) This letter (*showing letter*), eh? Now what may
this portend?

JACOMO.

(*Coming close up to him, and looking anxiously round.*)
A letter, and for whom?

COSIMO.

Why, look and see.

JACOMO.

For whom, I say? Speak low!

COSIMO.

The Lady Pia.

JACOMO.

And from whom?

COSIMO.

From my master, the Count Guido.

JACOMO.

Count Guido? (*Snatches the letter, and hides it hastily in
his breast.*) Hush!

COSIMO.

Well, now, this is passing strange.
Count Guido gives me charge to find you out,
To give this letter to no hand but yours,
First making sure that nobody is by.

'Be wary, close, and secret!' was his charge.
 Well, I do find you, nobody is by.
 I show the letter, — up you smother it,
 As it would spread infection on the air,
 And whisper, and cry hush, as though each shrub
 Contained an eaves-dropper. 'Tis very odd.
 Some secret embassy, — so secret, zounds,
 They keep it from the ambassador himself!

JACOMO.

You had no other message?

COSIMO.

None.

JACOMO.

That's well.

Now, if you'll profit by a friend's advice,
 You'll quit this place as fast as you can post;
 For should they find you in his lordship's grounds,
 I will not answer for your squireship's ears.

COSIMO.

How?

JACOMO.

The order's strict to keep intruders out.
 'Tis growing dusk, and these Pictri churls
 Might fairly fail to recognise a friend
 In an old foe of such long standing — hey?
 So, friend, good even!

COSIMO.

But——

JACOMO.

You'd best be gone.

Yonder goes Messer Flavio. Let him see you,
 And he'll not leave a whole bone in your skin.

COSIMO.

Now, by my valour, I'll not stir a foot.
My rapier lacks an airing. Flavio!
Who's he, that I should strike my flag to him?

JACOMO.

(Aside.) Oh, I must humour this hot fool, I see.
(Aloud.) Suppose yours were a secret embassy, —
As 'tis no less — is this the way to do
Your master's will? He charged you to be close,
Wary, and secret. You would court a brawl —
Peril Count Guido's secret? Tush! Your brains
Will serve him better here, man, than your sword.
He's on the rack to know his letter's safe,
And will not stint his ducats for your news.
Away!

COSIMO.

Thou put'st the matter cogently.
I'll go — but not for fear of Flavio.
No, by my valour; no, nor fifty such! [Exit.

JACOMO.

Thank heaven, he's gone! A letter for my lady,
And from Count Guido! They that should have wed!
My dear young master! Better 'twere, perchance,
She saw it not. But can I say him nay?
No, she shall have it. Wherefore not? I was
To see her only by Count Nello's leave!
That was the word! The letter she shall have.
Jealous, my lord? You shall have reason, then.
It could not well have come at fitter time. [Exit.

SCENE THIRD.

A chamber in the castle of COUNT NELLO DELLA PIETRA. Window in centre, opening on a balcony. Lamp burning on a table, at which COUNT NELLO is discovered seated; FLAVIO standing near him. COUNT NELLO takes papers from table, and hands them to FLAVIO.

NELLO.

These for Visconti; for the Balbi these!
 Away to horse! Ride as for life and death,
 And meet me with their answers ere the dawn
 In Florence!

FLAVIO.

I am gone (*going*).

NELLO.

A word! You gave
 My orders, none should have admittance here?

FLAVIO.

I did, my lord; and can rely on all
 To obey them to the letter——

NELLO.

Good!

FLAVIO.

Save one —

An' I might be so bold?

NELLO.

Well, speak, man, speak!

FLAVIO.

That Giacomo — he grows rebellious.

NELLO.

He!

Nay, fear him not. A rough and gnarled bark,
But honest at the core. The very love
He bears the Lady Pia, she for him,
Is voucher for his loyalty and truth.
I'll trust him. Now, away!

*[Exit FLAVIO. COUNT NELLO
rises and comes forward.]*

No, Flavio, no!

If I do set this guard upon my house,
It is not that I doubt my lady's faith.
I know her love as pure and free from taint,
As the white vestments of a saint in bliss.
It is myself, not her, that I distrust.
Churl that I am, I cannot spare one glance
Of the endearing kindness of her eyes;
Forego one smile, or share the tones that come
Like a caress upon the wondering ear.
Oh, bane of love, that in its own excess
Is rack'd ev'n by the charms on which it doats,
And dreads to lose what most it knows its own!
My own! My own! Dear words! They haunt my lips,
Yet still hang doubt and tremor at my heart.
How have I won her? Are there no regrets,
No lookings back on happy days gone by,
No contrast of my harsh and wayward moods
With the smooth homage of some sprightlier tongue?
Who's he she spoke of once, but would not name?
Why does his shadow ever cross my thoughts?
Why do I pry and peer in every face,
That kindles — whose does not? — beneath her glance,

To find if there a smouldering passion burns?
 Who loved her once, loves ever! How, if she
 Should nurse some lingering tenderness for him?
 I will not think it. Like an open book
 She lays her heart before me. Mine it is,
 And I'll so fence and hedge it round with love,
 So interweave her being with my own,
 That, knowing thus my priceless gem secure,
 Covet who may, my heart shall be at peace.

[Goes up to window at back, and looks out.]

The moon already up! That's well! 'Twill lend
 Her light to speed me on my way to-night.
 There may be danger stirring. Well bethought!
 A score or so of spears were not amiss.
 Ho, Flavio! Tush, he must ere this be gone!
 Ottavio! No! I'll look to this myself.

[Exit.]

As he goes off, enter on the other side

JACOMO.

His moody lordship gone! That's quite as well.
 To greet him ever goes against my grain.
 Now, there's a chance I may have speech, beside,
 With my dear lady mistress. Here she comes!

[Enter PIA. She does not at first observe]

JACOMO. *Goes up to the table, and raises
 the papers on which COUNT NELLO has
 been engaged.*

PIA.

Not here? His message, too, so urgent! Strange!
 Some new disquietude! Ah, me! these wars
 Make cruel havoc of the life of home!
 These scrolls, in each I see fresh lines of care
 Upon my Nello's brow, — hours when his heart
 Is barred to me, and all that mine would speak.

Hard! When a world of things are yet to say,
 Would draw our spirits closer, lift the cloud
 Of dark distrust, that sometimes veils his mind,
 And bathe it in the sunshine of content!

[*Observes* JACOMO.

Ah, Jacomo, good even! Best of friends!
 I feared you had forgot me.

JACOMO (*presents her with flowers*).

I! Forget!

What has the old man to remember else,
 But how to pleasure you? 'Tis like old times,
 When I can see you smile.

PIA.

The dear old times.

JACOMO.

Ah, they were times indeed! Dear heart! I miss
 The old faces sometimes, the old hearty ways,
 The old kind voices!

PIA.

'Tis too hard a task

I've laid upon you, to attend me here,
 Where all are strangers round you. You must leave me.

JACOMO.

Strangers! the greater need for me to stay.
 Leave you! While life is left me, leave you — never!
 Heed not the old man's grumbling. I had news
 From the old house, that set me longing.

PIA.

News?

What news?

JACOMO.

The young Count Guido has come back.

PIA.

Guido! My cousin Guido!

JACOMO.

I so long

To see his bright and handsome face again,
His gallant air! To think I had some hand
In training him into the man he is!
She heeds me not. Dear lady?

PIA.

Guido returned?

JACOMO.

I have a message for you from him (*looking round*). Ay,
A letter! Here! (*Gives letter. She takes it, opens it hastily,
and reads it.*)

(*Aside.*) Heaven send, Count Nello comes not!
There's trouble in that letter! It was like!
How pale she grows! Fool that I was to give it!
(*Aloud.*) I trust this letter bears no evil news.

PIA.

Oh, nothing, nothing. (*Aside.*) Oh, disastrous chance!
(*Aloud.*) How came you by this?

JACOMO.

Scarce an hour ago,
'Twas given me by Count Guido's equerry.

PIA.

Sad! Sad!

JACOMO.

She is deeply troubled. It were best
I should be gone, before the Count returns.
Lady, good night!

PIA (*abstractedly*).

Good night, dear Jacomo!

JACOMO.

There's mischief brooding. If Count Nello should! —
 'Tis very like, he may, and then, Heaven knows,
 What might ensue. I'll be upon the watch. [Exit.

PIA.

He knew not of my marriage, then; and all
 The hopes whereon I had begun to build
 Were quicksands merely! (*Reads from letter.*)

'See you. From your lips,
 'Yours only, take the assurance of my doom,
 'And claim, — it is my right, — a last farewell!
 It must not be! I feel my every step
 Is marked and followed by no friendly eyes!
 And were Count Nello to encounter him,
 'Twould fire the slumbering jealousy, that waits
 But for a spark to kindle it in flame,
 How to be quench'd appals me even to think!
 No, if I've done my cousin Guido wrong, —
 And yet I know not how — not on his head,
 Nor yet on my dear lord's, that wronged him not,
 The penalty must fall! I hear his step.
 He must not find me thus. This too! Lie there!

(*Places the letter in her bosom.*)

So near my heart like treason seems to him,
 Who is its master; — yet what refuge else? [Enter NELLO.
 I came upon your bidding, dear my lord,
 But you were gone, ere I —

NELLO.

Your pardon, love!

I had to put some matters in despatch,
 Of sudden urgency.

PIA.

Is aught amiss?

Ah, I can read new trouble in your eyes!

NELLO.

No trouble, but my heart's impatience, sweet,
That I must leave you for some little space!
They summon me to conference at Florence.
I must away to-night.

PIA.

How! Go from me

Again so soon?

NELLO.

The sooner to return.

I will be hack ere you have time to miss me.

PIA.

Ah, Nello, no! 'Tis very lonely here,
When you're away.

NELLO.

Lonely? You'd flatter me!

PIA.

Why should you think I flatter? Did I flatter,
When Nello sued, and Pia heard his suit,
When Nello vowed his absence from her side
But for one little hour was wretchedness,
And she believed him, happy in her faith?
"Say, was it flattery then, or the heart's voice,
"That recognised its mate, and said, I come?
"Then, dearest, can you think I should be aught
"But lonely, reft of that society,
"Which is my soul's sole comfort, and its joy?"

NELLO.

"The subtlest flattery of all is that,
"Which makes the lover feel he is beloved,
"Yet not in words avows it." Oh, dear Pia,
You make even absence sweet to me, assured,

Your thoughts are with me still, as mine with you.
 Yet why should you be sad, when I am gone.
 Here be your flowers, your birds, your broidery,
 Your poets and romancers; what need more
 To make the hours run swiftly?

PIA.

And you think
 The heart demands no more?

NELLO.

What would it have?

PIA.

Freedom! Free air, free intercourse with those
 It loves!

NELLO.

It loves? A wife should have no love
 But for her husband.

PIA.

You would have me, then,
 Forget my father, my dear aunt — the years,
 When they were all in all to me?

NELLO.

Not all.

There was another. I have not forgot
 That pretty tale you told, yet told but half,
 Hiding its hero. Freedom? Yes! Free speech,
 Free intercourse with him?

PIA.

Oh, unworthy!
 This is your guerdon for my maiden trust!
 This your requital for the frankness, laid
 Its heart's sole secret open to your hand!

I deem'd you worthy of such confidence,
You teach me I was wrong.

NELLO.

Why do you hide

His name from me?

PIA.

My secret has been told:

You have no right to his.

NELLO.

You love him, Pia?

PIA.

If I had loved him, you had never own'd
The right to question me. Go, sir! You make
Your absence welcome

NELLO (*kneeling*).

Pardon, Pia, pardon!

Forget what I have said. My words were mad.
This once forgive. I live but on your love,
And grudge the very air, which fans your cheek,
The sweetness that it rifles. Mine, mine all,
I'd have you, heart, soul, sense. Your very dreams
Should all be mine. Your girlhood's memories
I would rase out, and all your life gone by,
That mingled not with mine. There should not live
The man could say, I knew this Pia once,
And from her smiles drew sunshine. Look on me!
Turn not in anger from me, or I die.

[*She turns towards him.*]

Oh, thanks! And when this frenzy mads my brain,
I'll think of thee, as I behold thee now,
And be at peace. I must away awhile,
To see my force prepared. You pardon me?

PIA.

I do. (*Exit NELLO.*) Ay, pardon, pity — you, myself,
 For this offence but preludes many more,
 To crave new pardon, putting to fresh strain
 The chords of love should bind us each to each,
 Till we shall wake some day and find them rent.
 And this is man's devotion! Yielding us
 Now homage as we were enshrined saints,
 Anon arraigning us as blurr'd and foul
 With falsehood most abhorr'd! And he could doubt me —
 Does doubt me now! Ay, though he stooped so low
 For my forgiveness, he distrusts me still.
 Yes, Pia, shrink not from the fatal truth.
 His faith is gone — and, nurse it how you may,
 That flower once snapp'd revives not evermore.

[GUIDO is seen to cross the balustrade of the
 balcony, and appears at the window.

GUIDO.

'Tis she! Alone!

PIA (*seating herself on a couch*).

How little dreamt the bride,
 Who entered here but three short months ago,
 How close the clouds were gathering on the verge
 Of her fair heaven of new-unkindled hopes!
 But this is girlish weakness! Nello loves me.
 And it may be his very love — perchance,
 Some doubt, too, of his worthiness — excites
 These jealous moods that change him to a thing
 His better self despises. Shall I, then,
 Not bear with them, till in my life he reads
 Such confutation of his fears, shall make
 His faith in me as absolute, as I
 Am well assured his love is?

GUIDO (*advancing*).

Pia!

PIA.

Ha,

Who spoke?

GUIDO (*kneels to her*).

One Guido whom you knew.

PIA.

Great Heavens!

How came you here? What madness prompted you?

GUIDO.

Ay, call it madness! I do think I'm mad.
Thought, reason, gone, oh, would that memory, too,
Were dead! — One burning impulse only left,
To find you, look upon your face once more,
And turn my heart to stone by gazing there!

PIA.

And thus you seek me? Oh, 'tis bravely done,
To steal thus on my privacy! Away!
If you must seek me, seek me openly.
Each word you speak is outrage to myself,
And treason to my lord.

GUIDO.

Treason to him!

If I have sought you thus, who made me? He!
This lord, that holds you prison'd from all eyes,
Sets spies upon your motions, makes these walls
The barrier 'twixt yourself and all mankind —

PIA.

Hold, Sir!

GUIDO.

Nay, thrusts your father from his gates —

PIA.

Oh, calumny most foul!

GUIDO.

Oh, truth most foul!

This very day he was denied admittance.

PIA.

Oh no, 'tis false!

GUIDO.

Then is your father false,
Whose cry of broken anguish echoes still
Upon mine ears, lamenting for his child,
Shut by a jealous tyrant from his arms.
His lordship's lackeys spurned him from your gates,
'Twas like, then, I should have his leave to come.
I tarried not to ask it. He was gone
From home, they said. I leapt the garden walls,
And found my way here.

PIA.

(Aside) Shut my father from me!
Is this his love for me? *(Aloud)* You must away
He left me even now — should he return —

GUIDO.

Let him return. I care not. He and I
Have a dread reckoning to make together;
It matters not how soon.

PIA.

You shall not stay.

GUIDO.

Who shall prevent me?

PIA.

I will. Are you a man,
Sworn by the sword you wear to do the right,

- To guard the weak from wrong, yet would compel
 • A helpless woman to endure your presence,
 Taint her with holding secret conference,
 Blast her repute with foul surmise, and bring
 Disgrace upon the Tolommei's name?
 You linger still?

GUIDO.

What message to your father?
 That you approve your lord's commands, content
 To sacrifice all other ties to him?

PIA.

My father needs no message to assure him,
 His daughter knows her duty, and will do it.
 Sir, you abuse his name to press me thus,
 And cloak the wilful madness brought you here!
 Must I again command?

GUIDO.

I will be gone.
 Thus meet we, and thus part. Thus is the star,
 I steer'd my course by, quench'd. I had a dream
 Of Paradise — I turn'd, and lo, the hand,
 That held love's sparkling chalice to my lips,
 Spurn'd me aside, and gave it to another.

PIA.

Is this my cousin Guido?

GUIDO.

Oh, well feigned, —
 Well as the love you cheated me withal,
 When last we stood together!

PIA.

Love! Well feign'd!

GUIDO.

Oh, tell me you were ignorant I loved you,
 Nor ever look'd approval of my love;
 Say that I never vow'd my heart to you,
 Say that you never took the offering,
 Say that our parting words, words burnt in flame
 Upon my heart, were but an idler's dream,
 Say anything to vindicate the wrong,
 Has laid my soul in ruins!

PIA.

Hear me, Guido.

I never loved you, save in such a sort
 As sister may the brother of her youth.
 So have I loved you ever. Never act
 Of mine gave warrant of a different faith;
 Or if it did, at least I knew it not.

GUIDO.

'Twas nothing, then, to listen to my suit,
 To send me forth, without one word to wake
 A doubt of its acceptance, fired with hopes,
 That were the very lifeblood of my heart!

PIA.

Alas, and was it thus, then, that you read
 My silence in that hurried parting hour?
 'Twas all so strange, so sudden!

GUIDO.

Sudden! Strange!

The voice of a life's devotion! A true heart
 Had found as sudden answer — truth for truth
 At least had given! A word had done't.

PIA.

Forgive me,

That I have wrong'd you thus unwittingly.

'Tis pain enough, that I have done you wrong;
 You must not hold me guilty of deceit.
 Let the plain truth be still between us, Guido,
 As it was ever in the olden days.
 You never spoke to me of love but then,
 And your words fill'd me with a strange surprise,
 For I had dreamt not of the love they told,
 Had you but stay'd, I should have told you this —

GUINO.

Oh cursèd hour, that took me from Sienna!

MADONNA.

When from that dream I woke, and found you gone,
 I fear'd, a false hope might have fill'd your heart;
 But your long silence lull'd my fears, and I
 Began to think, believe, that in the stir
 Of other scenes, the wound, if wound it were,
 Had found a balm, which left your heart unscarr'd.

GUINO.

Look on me now, and say, if love like mine
 Is like to find a balm for hopes betrayed.
 It was my life — fed every hope, thought, dream;
 The growth of years, its fibres in my heart,
 'Tis rooted there, and there it needs must live,
 Till that heart cease to beat. But you, so soon
 You could forget me!

PIA.

I did not forget.

Be just to me. You love, — know what love is,
 And to that love you bear I make appeal.
 Love comes, — how, when we know not, — does not lie
 Within our wills, will not be bought by love.
 The heart a wife should bring, I never could

Have brought to you. But what you ever were,
That you are now to me, and ever shall be, —
As dear to me, as may comport with due
Allegiance to my lord.

GUIDO.

You love him, then?

I would believe it from your lips alone.
All's said! So ends the story of my love,
The glory of my life.

PIA.

Oh, say not so!

Life is for other ends than but to love;
Nor always in fulfilment of its wish
Finds love content. Heav'n sends its lessonings
To one through triumph, through failure to another,
Trial to all. 'Tis by the blows of fate
The spirit's strength is welded; only hearts
Of vulgar temper shiver 'neath their shock.
Say you have lost your love, all is not lost.
Shall you for this forego the noble strife
For honour, and the power to compass good
And glory for our country? No! In that
Brave strife forget the past — at least, its pain.
And if at times, perchance, its shadows rest
Too darkly on your path, think there is one,
Whose eye is on your progress, — one, whose heart
Will triumph in your triumph, proud to know,
That for her sake you wrestled with your grief
And overthrew it.

GUIDO.

My best teacher ever!

I will approve me worthy to have loved
A being all so noble. When you hear

Of me hereafter, you shall know it is
 Your spirit lives within me. Life has lost
 Not all its sweetness, while it offers still
 An aim so fair, a memory so endeared.
 Forgive my hasty words! Forgive this rash
 Intrusion on your presence! Now, adieu!
 And Heaven rain all sweet blessings on your path,
 And comfort you with sunshine to its close!

PIA.

Adieu! My loving greeting to my father!
 Assure him I am well, and well at ease.
 You'll be a son to him?

GUIDO.

Be sure I will.
 He shall not lack an arm to help or guide,
 While Guido lives. Adieu!

PIA.

Heaven's peace go with you!
*[As GUIDO is retiring across the balcony, enter
 NELLO, who hears the last words. PIA turns,
 and observing NELLO starts, but immediately
 recovers her composure, while he rushes for-
 ward and seizing her by the wrist points to
 the window.]*

NELLO.

This is the freedom that you pine for! This
 Your heart's free intercourse with those it loves!

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT THIRD.

A hall in a château. Door in centre. An apartment opens out on left; on the right a window, harricaded with iron stanchions. A Gothic couch with a table.

COUNT NELLO (*discovered seated, with a book in his hand*).

I'll read no more. Some fascination draws

Me ever back to this accursed book.

What wretch was he who gave his nights and days

To wring from nature all her secret banes,

Compound and label them, like vulgar wares,

And make a ghastly merchandise of death?

What I would have this shows me how to gain:

But oh, not thus, not thus!

[*Rises. Looks restlessly towards the door on the left.*

What keeps this monk

So long within her chamber? Does she trust

Him with the secret she withholds from me,

And make to him confession of the love

Which bars me from the portals of her heart?

Oh, how I loved this woman! Loved? Love still!

To know her soul mine, as her hand is, were

Supremest bliss. But this can never be.

Yet, if not mine, no other man shall boast,

He won the prize I wrestled for in vain.

Death only shall dispute my bride with me,

And him will I encounter by her side,

And give him welcome, come how soon he may!

[*The PRIOR enters from the chamber of the COUNTESS.*

At last he comes. Good even, holy father!
 How fares it with my gentle lady, pray?
 Mon laud your cunning in the lceeh's craft,
 Not less than they extol your piety.
 I look that she may profit much by both.
 What of her malady? Not grave, I trust?
 How's this? You do not answer — and that look?

PRIOR.

You've sought my aid, sir, somewhat tardily.

NELLO.

How! Tardily? What means this freezing tone?
 Speak! Tell me all! What fear is in your thoughts?
 Within the last few days her eyes have gained
 All their old lustre, and her cheek its bloom;
 "Smiles sat upon her lips, her tones were glad,
 "And health seem'd living in her frame anew."
 What blight has come to change all in an hour?

PRIOR.

Trust not, my lord, this fleeting gleam. Our art
 Warns us to dread it as a fatal sign.
 Even death at times puts on a masking guise.

NELLO.

Death! And no remedy? .

PRIOR.

But one.

NELLO.

Say on —

What must be done?

PRIOR.

Remove her hence at once
 From the Maremma's pestilential air!

To-morrow — nay, to-night, this very hour,
If it be not even now, perchance, too late!

NELLO.

Nay, nay, you must mistake. It cannot be!
So soon to suffer —

PRIOR.

I do not mistake.

NELLO.

I am to blame. Intent upon the cares
Of patching up old flaws, adjusting feuds,
Stopping the breaches of ungainful waste,
Which long neglect and absence had engendered
In my domains in the Maremma here,
I had forgot the dangers of the climate.
We shall depart to-morrow. Yet, now I think —
Not that I would make question of your skill, —
You, father, though a stranger — from the north,
'Tis said — have sojourned here some twenty years,
Defying death, yet daily fronting it;
How comes it, then, this malady, I pray,
Is so capricious, working, as 'twould seem,
In six short months, more mischief on my wife,
Than on yourself in twenty years? Go to!
'Tis something else —

PRIOR.

'Tis nothing else! The air
Of the Maremma blights more certainly,
That she is pining with an untold grief;
The heart's home-sickness, — a consuming bane,
That fires the eye with an unnatural light,
Puts a wan wistfulness into the smile,
Brings old familiar haunts and faces back

In the brief radiance of a feverish dream,
 Straight to be quenched in tears — a bane, my lord,
 That o'er a sick mind throws a deadlier gloom.
 Such is the malady, my lord, that now
 Consumes the sources of your lady's life,
 But which may be arrested by a prompt
 Removal hence — by company — by change —

NELLO.

Nay, sir, proceed! And by a lover —

PRIOR.

Count!

NELLO.

Oh, holy father, you mistake my thought.
 Heaven knows, though bow'd ay, to the dust with grief,
 Tortured with jealousy, I hold my wife
 Worthy of boundless honour and regard.
 But did a husband's love suffice her heart,
 Would she so droop and fade for weariness?
 Some far-off image — memory, perchance, —
 We are not always masters of our dreams.
 Here you are in the dark as much as I.
 She is not like to trust her confessor
 With what she dares not whisper to herself.
 In such case silence is no sacrilege.

PRIOR (*indignantly*).

My lord, my lord, you shall not snare me thus.

NELLO.

A most convenient weariness is this!

Who ever died of weariness? No, no!

[*Rises.*]

PRIOR (*aside*).

Great heaven, forgive me my suspicious thoughts!

[*To* COUNT NELLO.

My lord, 'tis fit that I be frank with you.

For some time past a rumour has been rife,
Which centres darkly on yourself. 'Tis said,
That goaded on by jealousy to seek
A vengeance dark, deliberate, and sure,
You wittingly expose your innocent wife
To this miasmal atmosphere of death.

NELLO.

What matters it to me what babblers say?
If there be danger, they must see I share it.
This atmosphere, that shrivels up the lips,
Has breathed on mine;—this fever of the blood,
This languor of the soul, I too partake.

PRIOR.

Think you I know it not? Have I not read
In your wild eye the traces of your pangs?
Seen that a kindred fire consumes you, too,
And that, if death shall bear your lady hence,
You will go down with her into the grave?
This is your purpose—your desire, your hope.

NELLO.

No more—no more! We shall depart to-night.

PRIOR.

Yes; save her, oh my son! She is most pure,
Loyal and loving,—such an one, as heav'n
Gives to a man, when it would bless him most,
But, if untreasured, swiftly takes away.
Sienna, when you wedded her, foretold
A happy issue to the feuds that long
Had ranged your sires in sanguinary strife.
Blight not this golden promise. Watch yourself;
Distrust the blood that courses in your veins.
'Tis there, and not in her the mischief lies;

No angel in yon heaven, where all is pure,
 Is freer from the taint of aught should wake
 The jealousy which gnaws you. Yes, my son,
 Doubt her no more, and all may yet be well. [Exit.

NELLO (*alone*).

How cheaply may an angel's name be bought!
 An air of meek contrition, folded hands,
 Some penitential words—the thing is done!
 Oh, this repentance may find grace above,
 But not with frail humanity like mine.
 I must have vengeance on this cruel girl,
 Whom they call angel. She can see me suffer,
 Can see me dying, yea, will die herself
 Far rather than divulge her lover's name.
 Ah, would I ne'er had known her—ne'er been born!
 Fain would I die alone, no crime but one
 Upon my soul; but some fiend urges me
 To drag her down with me into the grave.
 Still is the image present to my thoughts
 Of one that dries her hypocritic tears,
 Rich with my treasure, with my jewel blest—
 Oh cruel Pia! How I love her still!
 A word would save her. Why conceal this name?
 That mystery broke, I would forgive her all,
 Spare her, and die content, but to have seen
 My rival for one moment face to face.
 But yield her up to one, who now, perchance,
 Even now, stalks like a phantom round these walls,
 To pounce upon my wealth! Oh hell, to die
 Ere our good swords have cross'd! Bear witness, heaven,
 'Tis he that tortures her—'tis he that kills,
 'Tis he has roused this hell within my soul!

[A trumpet heard without.

A trumpet! [*Goes to window.*]

How! A horse, all white with foam!

The rider wears the Tolommei's garb.

He bears a letter. They have track'd us, then,

Ha! Giacomo! 'Tis he, has given the clue!

He foil'd me once, but shall not so again.

[*Enter FLAVIO with a letter, which he delivers to*
COUNT NELLO.

'Tis even as I surmised. Her father's hand!

[*Reads the letter, then turns to FLAVIO.*]

The messenger saw no one? Talk'd with none?

FLAVIO.

No one, my lord.

NELLO.

'Tis well. Give order straight,

Admittance to the castle be denied

These next two days to all who may appear.

Away!

[*Exit FLAVIO.*]

Her father to be here to-morrow!

Well! Let him come! To-morrow? Ay, to-day!

[*Sits down and resumes the book.*]

Come, trusty counsellor, advise me now.

Let me peruse the place again. Ha! Good!

'Tis here! (*Reads.*) 'The elixir of the Magian kings.

A subtle poison, of exceeding power,

Exhales a fragrance pleasant to the sense,

And works a gentle, easy, painless death.'

Good, I would have it so! 'If smelt to only,

Slowly it works, but still with certainty;'

Oh, excellent device of science, thus

To deaden pain, delighting while it kills!

Here is the poison, then, which freezes up

The blood, yet pains not,—leaves no trace behind.

Its action may be counteracted, too,
 Should she relent, or I repent me. Here
 I hold the antidote, in case of need.
 Once more I'll see her; and this time, belike,
 I may learn all, without these desperate means.
 Oh, may she speak that word, and from herself
 Avert the peril to my rival's head!
 "Grant, oh ye heavens! he fall into my hands,
 That she may live!" But let me forth awhile,
 To cool the fever of my brain, and still
 The raging pulses of my tortured heart,
 Before I seek this final interview.

[As he turns to go out, he is met by NINA, who enters with a bouquet in her hand and starts back, alarmed, on seeing him.]

Ha, Nina, still with the accustomed gift!

NINA (*with embarrassment*).

My Lord!

NELLO (*taking the bouquet*).

What brilliancy! what charming tints!
 They grow choice flowers in the Maremma, girl!

NINA.

Sir, my betrothed—

NELLO.

Ha, Beppo? A good youth.

NINA.

Oh no!

NELLO.

Luigi?

NINA.

No, sir.

NELLO.

How, another?

His name is—Ah, well, well, I see you blush.
But, Nina, have a care. Not yet sixteen,
And with a secret! (*Aside.*) Heavens! What fire is here!
(*Aloud.*) When girls are silent, 'tis because they love.

[*Aside, and crossing to the left.*]

This lily never bloomed in the Maremma,
These flowers were by no rustic's hand arranged.
Perhaps they hide some letter? No! Yet stay.
Have I not somewhere heard, that in the East
Flowers are disposed, by rules well understood,
To bear the secret messages of love?
I charge these flowers with mine.

[*Empties the contents of a phial on the bouquet.*]

NINA.

Heavens, what a look!

I pray you, let me have my flowers, my lord!

NELLO.

I never saw more beautiful.

NINA.

Indeed

I had to travel for them many a mile.
You are not angry, sir?

NELLO.

Angry? Oh no.

At such sweet thoughtfulness how could I be?
Take back your flowers.

NINA.

Oh thanks!

[*She is about to smell to them when COUNT NELLO
snatches them from her.*]

NELLO.

On second thoughts,
I will myself present them to the Countess.
Go, child, and say that I await her here.

NINA.

Oh, thanks, my lord, this is so kind of you! [Exit.

NELLO (*alone*).

They are all leagued against me. Yes, not one
Can I find open to assault, not one.
Why, even this girl, I've had her dogg'd in vain.
There is a general compact to betray me.
So near the goal, I feel my purpose fail.

[Looking at the bouquet.

Poor flowers! The tears lie heavy on your leaves.
Weep on, weep on, for ye are brimm'd with death.
No, let her live! I will destroy them. Yet
Perchance they are a present from his hand,
Perchance he cull'd them for her yesterday.
And though he did, what matter? Such a doom
Were much too cruel. Let me hence!

FLAVIO (*appearing at centre door*).

Are you

Alone, my lord?

NELLO.

Speak low!

FLAVIO (*advancing*).

One of our people
Has just come in, who tells me that he saw
Near Civitella, at the break of day,
A troop of cavaliers, all arm'd, upon
The march to this chateau.

NELLO (*aside*).

Ha, is it so?

Her father here already!

FLAVIO.

Striking off

By a cross path, he distanced them an hour -
Or more.

NELLO.

'Tis well! An hour? That will suffice.

FLAVIO.

One word, my lord! One of the party sent
A bunch of flowers by Nina, who, no doubt,
Expected them.

NELLO.

Ha, flowers? (*Aside.*) 'Tis he, 'tis he!
Father and lover both array'd against me.

[*To FLAVIO.*

Go find this man, and bid him wait for me.

[*Exit FLAVIO.*

And so, Count Tolommei, you would fain
Surprise us; but you'll find us on the watch.
Now to prepare to give you fitting welcome!

[*Places the bouquet on the table, and exit through
door in centre.*

Enter NINA and PIA.

NINA.

How! no one here? Gone! and my flowers? Oh shame!

PIA.

Nina, you must not blame my gracious lord.
Seeing me suffer, girl, he suffers too,
And he has much beside to task his thoughts.
This makes him wayward,—moody.

NINA.

For all that,
I can't see, why he should be so with you,

So good, so kind! 'Tis not for me to speak;
 But if he loved you truly, he would be
 More thoughtful for you, would not keep you here
 In this dull place, that's plainly killing you,
 And for no reason else, that I can see,
 Except to have you wholly to himself,
 To torture with his whims and moody fits.

MADONNA.

Hush, Nina, you forget yourself. I know,
 'Tis not without a cause, he is so changed;
 But while his love's unchanged, I am content.

NINA.

His love! Content! The peevish boy, whose bird,
 Caged from the sunshine and the rushing breeze,
 Droops plume by plume, and frets, until its song
 Dies down into a broken fitful wail,
 Will say he loves his bird, would break his heart
 To think of losing it, but not the less
 One day no flutter answers to his call,
 And on its withered turf the bird lies dead.

PIA.

Hush! Hush! My pain is somewhat less to-day;
 I do not seem to need your arm's support.
 My spirits are more cheerful, and I long
 To look upon the sky.

[Approaches the window.]

How beautiful!

Ye spreading pines, ye old primeval oaks,
 And thou, calm lake, the mirror of the sky,
 How fair ye are! What fragrance from the earth
 Exhales as from an altar heap'd with flowers!
 And yonder sea, that stretches far away,
 Its deep blue fading in a silver line!

I love and bless thee, thou fair Tuscan land.
 And yet, and yet, another place it is
 To which I fain had spoke my last farewell.
 Hear me, kind heaven, show it these eyes once more,
 That so my sunset may reflect my dawn;
 Though but a moment, grant me yet to see
 My own sweet native soil! My prayer is heard!
 Is this the murmur of my childhood's stream,
 Laving the long hair of the willows? Hush!
 My garden's balmy breath salutes my cheek!
 Yes, yes, it is no dream! What joy to tread
 This velvet sward again! Who spoke of dying?

NINA.

Oh, my poor mistress!

PIA.

Castle of my sires,
 Grand even in ruin! War has scathed thy front,
 And o'er the sears of thy proud battlements
 The ivy and the jasmine thickly creep.
 See, Nina, see the white swans in the fosse,
 The towers reflected in the trembling waves,
 And you old man! It is my father! Hark,
 He calls to me! I come. Who dares restrain me?
 Know you it is my father? Let me go!
 My father! Ah, these bars! Where am I, then?
 What dream was this? Ah me, death comes so slowly!

[NINA assists her to the couch.

What have I said? Nay, child, dry up your tears!

NINA (*observing the bouquet on the table*).

No, let me weep! But look, here are my flowers!

PIA (*taking the bouquet in her hand*).

See how unjust you were! 'Tis plain he left

Your gift for me, and will no doubt return.
 But tell me, child, how came you by these flowers?
 How's this! You hesitate?

NINA.

I was forbid—

But what of that? What is there to conceal?
 One day, as I was walking by myself
 Down by the river, on the opposite bank
 I spied a flower so lovely, I resolved
 To have it; so I hared my feet, and stepp'd
 Into the stream and having pluck'd the flower,
 Had reach'd the bank, when all at once a man
 Sprang from the thicket and stood full before me.

PIA.

A robber?

NINA.

No, a youth of noble air,
 Who bore a hooded falcon on his wrist.

PIA.

Proceed.

NINA.

For whom these flowers? he said. I answer'd,
 Sir, for my mistress! Do you serve, said he,
 The noble lady, whom her lord, they say—?
 But 'tis no matter what he said.

PIA.

He said?

NINA.

What we all see and know, alas! too well.
 He'd give his life, he said, could he but bring
 The flush of health into your cheek and make you
 The bright and happy thing you were of yore,—

That something must be done to set you free,
 That something should be done, and quickly, too,
 And ask'd a thousand questions with an air
 So tender!—

PIA.

You replied? You stay'd to hear?

NINA.

How could I else? He spoke to me of you,
 And my heart warmed to every word he said.
 Besides, he had my slippers in his hand,
 Which I had taken off to cross the stream.
 You smile—but could I go with feet all bare?
 Well, in a word he would not let me part,
 Till I had promised him to come again,
 To meet him there the Tuesday afterward.

PIA.

Ah, foolish girl! That is to-day.

NINA.

It is.

PIA.

You will not go?

NINA.

I have but just returned.
 He met me, — but to-day, arm'd head to foot.
 The hour approach'd for your release, he said,
 Again he press'd me close about your health,
 And gave this nosegay to me. How, my lady,
 Do you reject it?

PIA (*aside, and turning away*).

Oh! alas, alas!

NINA.

The very thing he dreaded. Should their beauty

Surprise your mistress, were his very words,
 And she suspects you, not a word of me,
 Nor what I've said to you, but tell her this,
 And then she scarcely will refuse the gift,
 These flowers, the present of no stranger's hand,
 Bloom'd in her father's gardens yester morn.

PIA.

My father's, do you say? Oh blessèd gift!
 I may then press them freely to my heart,
 Inhale, without a blush, their sweet perfume!
 My father's gardens! Oh, my soul revives!
 These lovely flowers! Remember, if I die,
 That I would have them near me in the tomb.
 Look at this golden broom, this dazzling rose!
 "Heaven has sown beauty wide through every land,
 "But underneath no other skies, methinks,
 "Shall one behold such gardens, flowers so fair,
 "As those that bloom around my father's halls."
 This smilax must have drunk my own dear stream.
 They used to praise its dark enamell'd tints
 Against my cheek, its coral tendrils twined
 Among my dusky tresses. Put it on.

NINA.

No, place it on a brow more fit to wear it.

PIA (*while NINA is engaged in adjusting the flowers
 in her hair*).

Would you believe, my girl, that far, far hence,
 Hearts have been found,—thank heaven! not often
 found,—

Corrupted so by the polluting air,
 And dreary life of cities—men so vile,
 And sometimes women, too, alas!—who've mix'd
 Poison with the pure perfume of a flower!

NINA (*aside*).

Poison! Great heaven! This deadly paleness—

[*Snatches the nosegay from the hand of PIA.*

COUNT NELLO, *who has entered a short time before, advances and takes it from her.*

Ah!

NELLO.

What is the matter, Nina?

(*Smells to the bouquet*). I rejoice

To find you stirring, madam. (*To Nina.*) You may go.

I would be private with your mistress here. [*Exit NINA.*

[NELLO *restores the bouquet to PIA, who throws it hastily down upon the table.*

It is enough my hand has touch'd the flowers,
To make you cast them from you with disdain.
Your pardon.

PIA.

Ever this sarcastic tone?

You do me wrong, my lord, most heavy wrong.

What are the flowers to me, when you are by?

Your eyes with sorrow wan are all I see,

In them I read the pangs that rack your heart,

Seek in them, oh in vain! some glimpse of joy.

Ah, to rekindle that—one gleam, but one—

Chase with my words the trouble from your brow,

Calm for one day the fever of your brain,

I'd give my life—alas! I would, I would.

NELLO.

Madam, I doubt it not. Death is your hope.

'Twill rid you of a bondage you detest.

And so the tomb for you is but a bed,

Fragrant with flowers, and wooing, where you yearn

To sink into a long luxurious sleep.

PIA.

Ah no, my lord. Life, even when bitterest, is
 A tyrant whom we love, although he wounds.
 Oh, with what rapture would I cling to it,
 If in your eyes I saw the old fond smile,
 If trusted, loved, as once, my days roll'd on
 Betwixt my father and yourself in peace.
 Think you, for aught beyond the sphere of time
 I'd barter such dear certainty of bliss.
 Speak but the wish, I am ready to live on.

NELLO.

Oh say, resign'd to bear a life you loathe!
 No, Pia, no, you die without regret,
 Clasp your secret to your heart—cold, calm,
 Too proud to sully my name or your own,
 But all too full of his, for mine to find
 The sorriest corner there! What is the world,
 What sunshine or our weary life to you?
 You look to find a better world beyond,
 A world where souls that love shall meet once more,—
 Oh, I am jealous of the heavens themselves!—
 A world where I shall never meet you, for
 Within its limits I may never come!

PIA (*rising*).

You fright me, Nello. What wild words are these?

NELLO.

So death but part us, you will smile on death.

[*Sits down.*]PIA (*going up to him*).

Nello, this frenzy drives me to despair.
 Come forth from these black labyrinths of doubt,
 Rend from your eyes this curtain of thick night,

And recognise your wife for what she is.
 I am not what your tortured fancy paints:
 Living I suffer—suffer if I die.
 Death, as I see it through a mist of tears,
 Is blank to me as life, and as unlovely.
 Yet would you but forget that hour of pain,
 And be the Nello of our early love,
 Oh, how you might enamour me of life,
 By giving me an aim, a proud desire,
 A hope, howe'er remote, to win you back!
 Then, Nello, then, oh I should fear to die.
 How sweet a task it were for you and me,
 Bravely to tread this new path side by side,
 Each cheer'd by each, and bearing each our load,
 Which every day should lighten in the joy
 Of the returning dawn of golden hours.
 So cheer'd, the heart would falter not, nor fail,
 And we might find again—

NELLO.

No more, no more!

(Aside.) Oh, how her words confound me! Who, to
 hear,

To see her, but must deem her pure from guile?

(Aloud.) And so my cruelty, my fell designs,

Might in your pity be redeem'd at last?

Oh, could I hope for that!

PIA.

I see your thought.

That this should be, to you seems hopeless, wild;

'Tis hard, I own, yet not impossible.

For one who bears a noble knightly name

To hide him in a pestilential waste,

To kill a wife there, is an act abhorr'd,

And mark'd for infamy by all mankind:
 Yet on this victim of a jealous rage,
 His victim with a gentler eye can look.
 Passion so erring, such dark frenzied thoughts
 Deserve her pity, who hath caused them all;
 And when this man, blameless till then, and brave,
 Who, if he fell, fell by his love o'erthrown,
 Led back by love, regains his former self,
 Stoops for forgiveness, begs to be beloved,
 Then —

NELLO.

Then?

PIA.

Oh then, far, far from all can wake
 Remembrance of that dark unhappy time,
 For these twin hearts are blessings yet in store.

NELLO.

And in this pilgrimage you'd follow me?

PIA.

I would!

NELLO.

You could find courage for the task!
 But he, this lover—he, who mask'd in night
 Held parley with you at your balcony,
 He, whom your silence shields from my revenge,
 Shall he, I pray thee, hear us company?

*[PIA covers her face with her hands; the COUNT
 continues pacing up and down the chamber as
 he speaks.]*

This phantom who makes havoc of my sleep,
 This man, whose hand, perchance, I've clasp'd in mine,
 This mask, that vanish'd in the shapeless night,

But left a stinging whisper in mine ear,
Which murmurs evermore, 'She loves thee not!'

PIA.

Nello!

NELLO.

Who at this very hour, belike,
Boasts of his triumph 'mongst his wassail friends,
And pledging my dishonour in his cups,
Completes the revel with his mistress's name!

PIA.

Nello! *[Falls fainting at his feet.*

NELLO.

Good heavens! What have I done?
[Raises her, and places her on the couch.

PIA.

Fear not.

I am dying, Nello; this blow is the last.
Yet is there something I would say before
I die; heaven knows it is the very truth.
That fatal interview—

NELLO.

Ay, what of that?

PIA.

It was not of my seeking—with my will
Should ne'er have been, nor know I how he found
His way that night to me, upon whose heart
He dream'd,--why dreamed, it recks not now to think,—
He held some claim, which in his absence had
Been thrust aside too roughly.

NELLO.

Then it was—

PIA.

The object of that love of early years,
 Whose story I have told you. It was rash,
 Wilful, unjust to me, to seek me so;
 Yet, knowing all, I can forgive the mood,
 Which yearn'd to wrost assurance from myself,
 That with my hand I gave my heart to you,
 That though the act, which made me yours, had made
 Division of our paths for evermore,
 He still might live in my regard, might claim
 A sentence not ungentle from my lips,
 A farewell not unkind—the heart needs such!

NELLO.

Sentence? Farewell? What proof have I of that!

PIA.

The oath I swear in this my dying hour,
 These lonely walls, these iron bars, yourself!

NELLO.

What surety have I in these iron bars?
 Can love not force them in a thousand ways?
 Lacks he a messenger—a bird will serve,
 An arrow, or a nosegay waft his tale.

PIA.

I understand your meaning. Be it so!
 I'll not defend myself. Yet one word more!
 Look in my face; then say, if you read there
 'The traces of disloyalty and shame!

NELLO.

No, no, guilt never spoke in tones like these.
 I feel your words are true. That look, that voice,
 Suspicion cannot live within their sphere.
 Oh, Pia, to forget, and be once more

The same as in the days, when this wild heart
 Drew charmèd life from every word of thine;
 When all its golden dreams came rushing back
 At one sweet gleam of kindness in your eyes!
 Then at your feet I was content to live,
 Or die—I cared not, if 'twere pity, duty—
 You loved me, Pia—loved, and I was happy.
 My watchful tenderness had won your soul,
 When this man came—

PIA.

He could not alter me.

NELLO.

Then, wherefore do you countenance his suit?
 Emholdened by your silence, he hopes on,
 Believes you love him—

PIA.

As a sister might.

Did I not know he holds your honour dear,
 Dear as my own, I should abhor the man
 I now, perforce, must pity and respect.

NELLO.

By heavens, I long to see him more and more!
 But this true squire, this brother, this tame slave
 Of duty, has made shipwreck of my life,
 To black perdition hurl'd my soul, and I
 Will not believe you, madam, till your lips
 Reveal the caitiff's name. Your life and mine
 Depend upon that word. Do you consent?

PIA.

No!

NELLO.

If I vow'd I should forget this name,
 That undivulged thus tortures me, or, say

Oblivion were impossible, should swear
To crush all thoughts of vengeance in my heart?

PIA.

Still would I not. That name, my lord, my tongue
Shall never speak. Revenge, with all your race,
Is native in the blood, and, though you swore
By every holiest vow, a day would come,
When words, oaths, all would fail to curb your hand.

NELLO.

Ah, how you love this man!

PIA.

Love? Love? I would
Save both from crime.

NELLO.

And make a double victim.

PIA.

Would I might fall the only sacrifice,
And by my death redeem another's life!

NELLO.

And whose that other's? His alone, ay, his!
Mock me no more! I read it in your soul,
'Tis some base churl you shroud up from my wrath:
Shame, and not love, puts gyves upon your tongue;
Shame to have stoop'd to a debasing choice.
My rival's name—

PIA.

Is peer, sir, to your own,
And were my life now to begin anew,
I would desire no better, nobler name;
For he that bears it bears a soul as high
As his proud titles, and a heart as pure.
Brave, but the terror of his foes alone,
Respecting my position, sir, and yours,

Bearing his sorrow meekly, he would ne'er
 Like a foul spider, have enmesh'd his prey
 Within his coils in loathsome nook obscure,
 To gnaw it slowly, surely, noiselessly.
 Lover or spouse, if love had warped his brain
 To murderous thoughts against his mistress, he
 Had slain her by one open blow, not slunk
 Accomplice of the vaporous pestilence!

NELLO.

My wrath shall make thee tremble!

PIA.

Tremble? I,

A daughter of the Tolomei? Oft
 Our ancestors have met in battle gripe;
 When did they quail before each other's frown?
 Their sinews, sir, are yours—their heart is mine!
 Slay, but no outrage! Take such vengeance as
 Befits your lineage. My life is yours,
 To expiate my fault. Let that suffice!
 Urge me no more; I bear unto my grave
 That name, nor you, nor any one shall know.

NELLO.

Defend your lover, madam, to my shame!

PIA.

Count della Pietra, I defend your wife;
 Against yourself defend your honour—mine.
 But I am weak, ill, suffering, most unfit
 Longer to urge a parley, which but serves
 To quicken wounds that rankle. What, beside,
 Would it avail me? The disguise is dropped,
 And the conditions of the bargain clear:
 Die, or denounce the object of your hate!
 My choice is made. Death! Let him take his prey.

NELLO.

False to the last! I look'd for nothing less.
Madam, but one word more, and I have done.
Your father—

PIA.

My father!—

NELLO.

Instigated by
The slanders of that traitor Jacomo—

PIA.

Is coming?

NELLO.

Ay, to-day.

PIA.

My father! I

Shall see him—

NELLO.

See, I hold his letter here.

PIA.

Oh, thanks, kind heaven! Then all may yet be well.

NELLO.

Within an hour your father should be here.
But mark me, madam, but as my foe he comes.
You shall not see him.

PIA.

How! Not see him! Who
Shall step between the father and his child?

NELLO.

Death, that even now sits darkly in your eyes.

PIA.

Who told you what my sufferings are?

NELLO.

My heart,
That shares them—my blood, iced in my veins like yours,
By the same poison!

PIA.

Whose hand gave it?

NELLO.

Mine!

Mine, in these flowers my hate suspected.

PIA.

How!

These flowers? Just Heaven! And is it thus I die?
Alas! 'Tis death indeed. When hope had dawn'd—
My father—

NELLO.

Listen! You may see him still—
You still may live to nurse his failing years.

PIA.

Ah, you deceived me, then?

NELLO.

No, madam! But

The hand that dealt the wound can heal it too:
This perfume (*holding out a phial*)—

PIA.

Give it me!

NELLO.

(*Music heard without.*) Hark, hark! that air,
The Tolommei's March! Live for your father! Live!

PIA.

The air I loved.

O yes! I would live still! Give me!

[*Grasps the phial, and is about to smell to it.*

NELLO.

His name?

PIA (*pushes away the phial*).

Never!

[*Dies.*]

NELLO (*drawing his sword*).

Dead with her secret! Dead! My vengeance foil'd!
Ho, Flavio!

FLAVIO (*enters hastily*).

My lord, your people have thrown down their arms.
Count Tolommei—

NELLO.

Admit him! Let him come;
He'll find his daughter with her bridegroom here!

[*TOLOMMEI and GUIDO rush in.*]

TOLOMMEI.

Thou ravening hell-kite, give me back my child!

NELLO (*pointing to PIA.*)

Go, claim her for thy bidding! There she lies!

TOLOMMEI (*rushes forward, and raises her from the couch.*)

Oh, murderous hypocrite! Too late, too late!

GUIDO.

Pia! My love! My PIA!

NELLO.

Thine! Ha! then

At length I meet my rival front to front!
Look to thyself! She loved thee, and 'tis meet,
That with thy blood her hier should be baptized.

GUIDO.

Loved me? No, fiend, she loved but thee alone!

And thus thou hast repaid her! Oh, my soul's bride,
I live but to avenge thee.

(They fight. After a few passes, NELLO drops his sword.)

NELLO.

Hold! My brain
Is dizzy—my arm withers! See, see there!
Pia! She looks at me! No light, no smile!
All dark—dark!

(dies.)

TABLEAU. CURTAIN FALLS.

