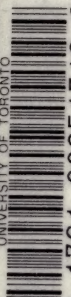


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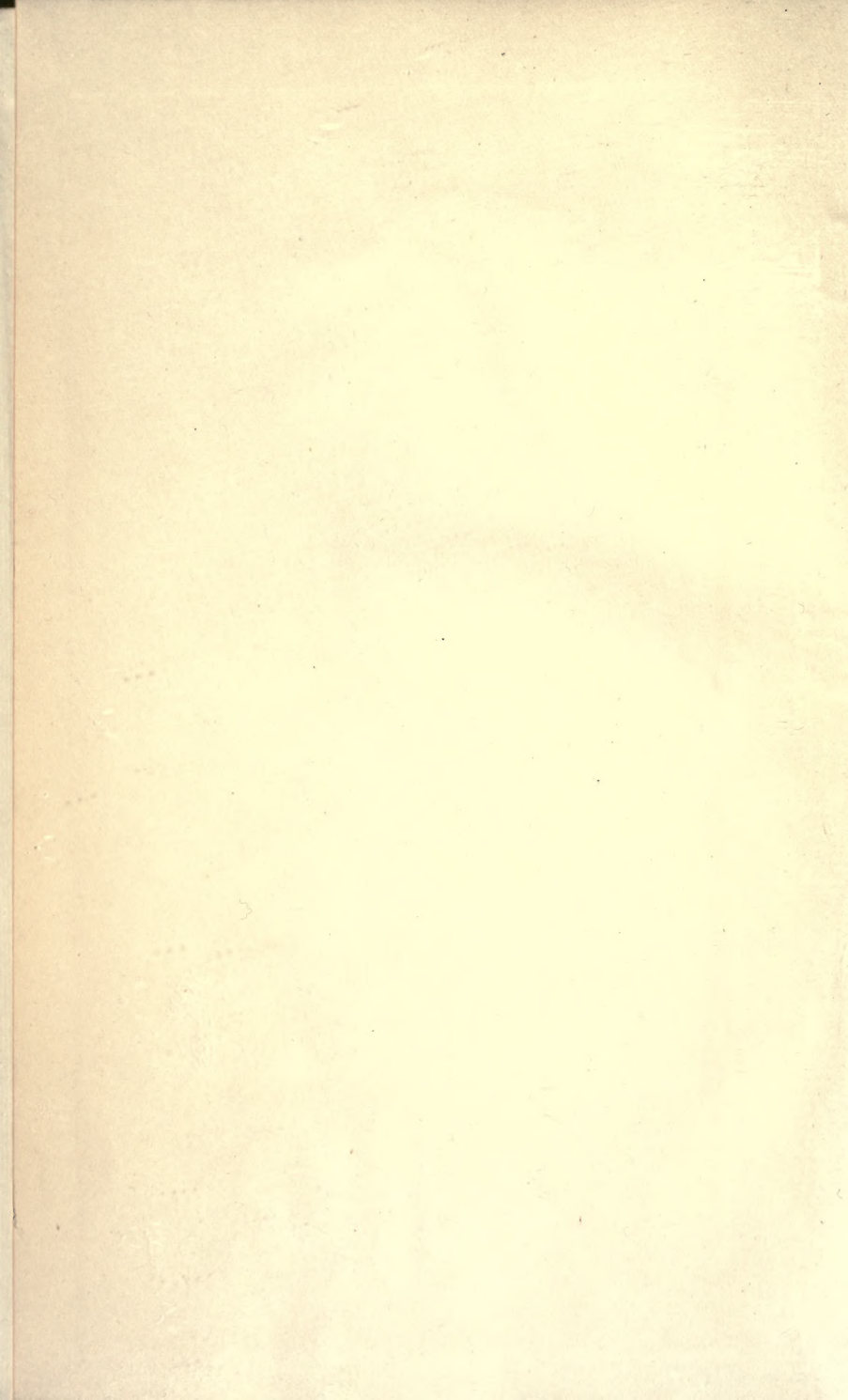


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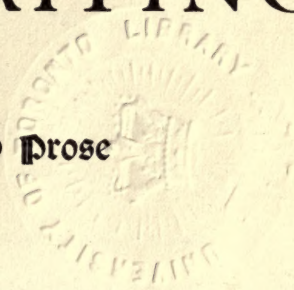
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EXPERIMENTS IN PLAY WRITING

In Verse and Prose

BY

JOHN LAWRENCE LAMBE



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EXPERIMENTS IN
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Where Mr. Lambe finds it necessary to crowd his canvas with figures, a reader is tempted to think of the better, if not the best, of Tolstoy's wide surveys of human types; when our author deals with one human heart tenderly or grimly, he shows much of the natural insight of Charles Reade, and some of the breathless calm of Thomas Hardy in *Desperate Remedies*. There is a distinctly Elizabethan power about Mr. Lambe's methods; and it may be conjectured that he has been no careless student of Ford or of Webster. The whole story of Anna Szimon reminds a critic of Ford's peculiar gifts; the noble-hearted, ill-fated woman, grander in rags and misery than any bridge-playing, cigarette-smoking *grande dame* can even hope to imagine herself becoming after a lifetime of repentance, might have stepped bodily out of one of Ford's plays so far as the faithfulness of her presentation goes. And we must not only praise Mr. Lambe's characters and his natural non-"mannered" landscapes. His book is full ("full" is a word to the fore in speaking of a novel containing 494 pages of rather solid matter) of excellent history, and thoroughly sound in its shrewd generalisations about race-matters and political prospects in the near East. We hope that public librarians, consulate-officials, and army men will pay special attention to a book peculiarly interesting to any judicious Imperialist."—*The Week's Survey*.

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"While there is material enough in the book for a big Tolstoyan drama, it is rather as a faithful, though somewhat expanded, report that the author would have us take his work. He makes no pretension to have written a perfect story, or a dashing romance; he has a piece of real life to present, in a country that has appealed much to our sympathies yet remains practically untravelled; a country full of dramatic possibilities. In the strange village-city, Sofia, in the ancient, piled up streets of Philippopolis, in the troubled little court first of Alexander of Battenberg, then of Ferdinand—we seem to see the writer of these pages collecting, quietly and patiently, from the gossip of all kinds of persons, the many details of a tragedy which is, as it were, in process of becoming a national folk-tale. . . They are such queer, sordid, unnatural, and yet real-like figures, and Anna's childlike changeful face grows out of her surroundings with so singular a look of life, that it is impossible not to believe implicitly in the whole

thing. . . Book V holds the reader fast, and shows that Mr. Lambe is endowed with the essential gift. His writing, too, is unaffected, clear and copious: too copious for the critic, but for others a fault on the right side. I fully expect to meet Mr. Lambe again in the hall of fiction, and crowded as it is shall not forget him. . . . The author has mental quality, and though he prefers to work chiefly with brief descriptions and ample dialogue, he drops by the way many terse criticisms and poetic pictures. The Maritza takes its place in the reader's memory with other rivers known to song or story; the wild winds of the Balkans blow across the scene; one sees the Djambaz Tépé towering over the minarets and red roofs of Philippopolis. One sees a people who as yet are in the bonds of the old world, children playing at being free. . . This is not a mere tale to run through and drop; it is a book."—Mr. DEAS CROMARTY. In the *Christian Leader*.

"As enthralling as one of the romances of Mr. Anthony Hope or Mr. Stanley Weyman. . . It is one thing to choose a good subject, and quite another matter to put it in an attractive form. Mr. Lambe has, however, proved quite equal to the task."—*Manchester Courier*.

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A perfect Judge will read each work of Wit
With the same spirit that its author writ,
Survey the WHOLE, nor seek slight faults to find . . .
Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.
In every work regard the writer's End,
Since none can compass more than they intend.

POPE. *Essay on Criticism.*

EXPERIMENTS IN PLAY WRITING

PREFATORY ESSAY

I

At the present moment there seems to be a strong tendency both with critics and public in the land of Shakespeare to regard the Poetic Drama, which in the past has been universally accounted the highest form of Art, as an outgrown garment, incapable of adaptation to the modern stage. For the future, according to them, we are never to have anything but prose. Yet the overwhelming testimony of the past twenty-four centuries acclaims verse, the form of utterance midway between speech and music, as the fitter medium for the expression of passionate thought and feeling. In Greece, Italy, Spain, England, France, Germany, from Æschylus to Rostand, practically without exception¹ the highest drama has always been in verse. "Poetry," says Herbert Spencer, "is a form of speech used for the better expression of emotional ideas." "Poetry," says Matthew Arnold, "is simply the most delightful and perfect form of utterance that human words can reach. Which of us doubts," he continues, speaking of dramatic poetry, "that imaginative production, uttering itself in such a form as this, is altogether another and a higher thing from imaginative production uttering itself in any of the forms of prose?" and yet again he insists on "the essential superiority of this form to all prose forms of utterance."

Assuming these words to be true, and I am certain that ninety-nine men of imagination and musical sensibility out of a hundred will joyfully echo them, why at this moment when the prose drama is taking to itself wings, should we be assured that the form

¹ Rare exceptions like Goethe's *Egmont* far more than prove the rule.

of expression which in all ages has reflected the highest in drama as the body reflects the soul, is incapable of adaptation to modern needs and interests?

Is it that during the last century—and making allowance for the ebb and flow inherent in all things we cannot in fairness take a shorter period—we have grown less artistic, less capable of appreciating the highest in art and literature? The very suggestion is ridiculous. In the nineteenth century the novel reached its high-water mark. Lyrical poetry blossomed from Wordsworth to Swinburne with a splendour and perfection only equalled by the Elizabethan tree on which this magnificent shoot was directly grafted. Painting made gigantic strides in popular estimation, and in music no works, from the Ninth Symphony and last Quartettes of Beethoven to the Nieblung's Ring, were prevented by length or difficulty from being received with rapturous enthusiasm. Never have the plays of Shakespeare been so widely popular, so much read or acted as at this present moment, and anyone who imagines that their popularity is due to splendour of scenery and accessories cannot do better than attend a few of the crowded readings of the Empire Shakespeare League which are held in every part of the Metropolis and elsewhere, month after month, year after year, with never failing success. No; we have certainly not grown less artistic.

Is it then, that of all the forms of Art which have delighted and ennobled man in the past two thousand years, this, which by common consent of all men is the highest and noblest, is alone incapable of being adapted and brought up to date? To me such an idea has always appeared incredible and inconceivable. In my opinion no man, or body of men, could perform a higher service to pure literature than to endeavour, however humbly, however feebly, however crudely or faultily, to bring about this adaptation; for at no time in our history was there a moment when we had so great a need of the highest and noblest in drama as now, when the stage is rapidly assuming an importance, gaining an influence, and exciting an interest greater than at any period since Shakespeare died. As soon as men began to feel deeply about poetry at the end of the eighteenth century, the Elizabethan lyre, which had so long slumbered, thrilled anew with ecstatic life. So, I feel certain, will it be with the Elizabethan drama now that serious men in ever increasing numbers are turning their

attention to the stage ; for in the long run nothing is so interesting as truth, nothing so persistent as beauty, and never were truth and beauty so nobly blended since the world began as by our greatest dramatist. Does it not seem at least probable that this form of Art which has delighted and continues to delight all the main European races, must respond to some permanent instinct and craving which will continue to evoke it until the end of time ? " Human nature," says Lowell, " has a much greater genius for sameness than for originality, or the world would be at a sad pass shortly." In the lowest depths to which the English Theatre fell, and it fell probably the lowest of all, there was always an attempt, more or less successful, to produce verse plays ; the instinct never slumbered. There are moments like the present when music and painting seem to be extinguishing poetry altogether. Goldsmith, writing the year before the birth of Wordsworth, noticed with despair a similar phenomenon in the England of 1769. But he made the mistake of supposing that this attitude of the public was permanent, and not, as the future abundantly proved, a momentary phase caused by the artificiality and stagnation which characterised the greater part of the poetic output of his time.

I am convinced that the chief stumbling-block in the way of a revival of poetic drama is the habit we have got into of regarding it as dead and not living, as a copy of the past into which it is unseemly and illegitimate to introduce the thought and feeling of the present. Shakespeare's work, like all strong work, was purely contemporary—that is to say, all the characters of his tragedies and comedies, no matter what their ostensible period or clime, were Elizabethan Englishmen ; all his historical portraits were those of men whose nature and career were deeply interesting to his age (just as Napoleon and the Emperor Julian are interesting to ours), drawn as to their characters, actions and surroundings as accurately and truthfully as with the materials at his command it was possible to make them. Is there any reason why a similar licence to be contemporary and truthful should not be extended to the modern poetic dramatist ? If an historical character be interesting and his career dramatic, is it necessary that he should have been born three centuries ago in order to render him eligible for poetic treatment ? Conversely, if a set of modern characters obtain greater distinction, beauty and effectiveness from being incorporated in some ancient fable, is there any conclusive reason

why this liberty, which Shakespeare took with such magnificent success, should not be permissible now ?

If there seemed nothing incongruous to the men of Elizabeth's time, a learned and civilized age, in hearing Henry VIII speak blank verse ; if there seems nothing incongruous to the modern French, whose stage is popularly supposed to be not behind our own, in hearing the young king of Rome and innumerable eighteenth-century characters speak it ; is it not possible to assume that only a momentary fashion shuts us out from a vast field of enjoyment, like the fashion against music two generations ago, when it was held to show want of breeding in a man if he could distinguish one tune from another ? I once heard a great critic say that he could as well imagine Lord Rosebery speaking verse as Napoleon. The obvious reply is that if Lord Rosebery's career were to become as fateful, as dramatic, as epoch-making, and as picturesque as Napoleon's, a century hence he would be as fit a subject for poetic drama as the heart of dramatist could desire. It seems to me that it might as reasonably be said that one could not imagine Napoleon speaking English ! Not by a sordid literalness to commonplace details, but by transforming them in the interest of ideal truth and beauty has every school of Art become great since Art began. Put the famous speech of Mark Antony into prose. Would it in any essential be more like anything that Mark Antony said ? Do not rather the rhythm and passion of the verse make light and palatable what would else be intolerably long and tedious ?¹ The best dramatic verse is not a whit more involved or indirect, or 'high falutin' than prose. A very large proportion of the verse of Shakespeare's greatest plays would undoubtedly be stigmatised as "prose in lines" if it were published at the present moment.² Take this very speech of Mark Antony—

¹ For an example of how intolerable fine speeches are in prose, see *Pizarro*, by Sheridan—usually one of the most delightful of writers.

² Far from entertaining any belief in Shakespearean shortcomings, I agree with the great French critic, Henry Cochin :—"Shakespeare is not only the king of the realm of thought, he is also the king of poetic rhythm and style. Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse, which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks." What I mean is that, if the same standards which I see constantly applied to contemporary poetry were applied to Shakespeare, the result would undoubtedly be as I have said.

“ Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears ;
 I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them ;
 The good is oft interred with their bones ;
 So let it be with Cæsar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious :
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Cæsar answered it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,—
 For Brutus is an honourable man ;
 So are they all, all honourable men,—
 Come I to speak in Cæsar’s funeral.”

I quote at length these well-known lines because they convey what a study of Shakespeare from beginning to end will more and more confirm. Not a word is here which would be left out in a prose speech, yet the added dignity and beauty which the rhythm and alliteration give, must be obvious to anyone with the smallest imagination or musical sensibility.

Next, take absolutely at random, not a famous speech, but a few ordinary dramatic lines from *Othello*, such as must preponderate in every play—

“ Good morrow, good lieutenant : I am sorry
 For your displeasure : but all will sure be well.
 The general and his wife are talking of it,
 And she speaks for you stoutly : the Moor replies,
 That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus
 And great affinity, and that in wholesome wisdom
 He might not but refuse you ; but he protests he loves you,
 And needs no other suitor but his likings
 To take the safest occasion by the front
 To bring you in again.”

Shakespeare’s dramatic verse descends to earth in order that it may bear us to heaven. At one end it melts into prose, at the other it rises into epic and *very* rarely almost, but never quite, into lyrical poetry, *e.g.*, in lines like—

“ As he bestrides the leaden paced clouds
 And sails upon the bosom of the air.”

Verse with him is an elastic garment in which to clothe all statements from the most homely and commonplace to the deepest and most intense : not a study in word-painting, but a living and familiar language as near as possible to the speech of men.¹

¹ Shelley, when writing verse for the stage, says :—“ I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly

Must so simple a language necessarily seem incongruous in the mouth of a modern character like Napoleon?

On the other hand, is there any reason why a writer should be debarred from the old-fashioned privilege of taking a legend and filling it with modern phases of thought, feeling and character? If Shakespeare painted his legendary characters in every respect as moderns, men of his own time, and this resulted in a set of the greatest tragedies the world has ever seen, why should we not be free to do the same without any sense of incongruity? Obviously, it will be replied, because the historic sense developed by modern Science teaches us that a man like Hamlet could not possibly have existed in a remote age amid the

called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description. . . . I have written . . . without an over fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect, I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert, that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men; and that our great ancestors, the ancient English poets, are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs."

That so much of dramatic verse should be, so to speak, rooted in the earth, from which, like the skylark, it rises to wing the empyrean, is no accident or blemish, though it is constantly acclaimed as such. Unhappily, as Wordsworth in his immortal preface says—

"If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these 'prosaisms,' as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the reader will conclude he must utterly reject . . . and it would be a most easy task to prove to him, that not only the language of a large proportion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respects differ from that of good prose, but, likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings even of Milton himself."

If this be true, and it undoubtedly is, of epic poetry, how infinitely further does it reach in the case of the drama, where directness, conciseness and clearness are of supreme importance! For a further discussion of this subject, see later on.

environment of a half savage Court. It teaches us that every age has its own moral and intellectual colour, so that if we wish for scientific and historical correctness we must paint modern people in modern dress.

Is scientific and historic correctness, then, of so much importance that we must for the future leave to music all that glorious world of poetry, beauty and romance which of old found its highest expression in poetic tragedy and comedy; or if we ever do venture on poetic drama, must we hark back to remote ages, and depict only types of mind, character and morals as extinct as the Moa? Is it not just because so much of poetic drama has been divorced from contemporary interests and passions that the public finds it so intolerably dull—because so many writers have thought it necessary to choose the least interesting subjects, to develop them in the least interesting ways; with invertebrate plots, with characters who say and do not, with all dramatic colour and movement lost amid frigid streams of interminable rhetoric; rhetoric in the worst examples devoted to long passages on every subject in heaven and earth most remote from the direct question at issue, passages which lead to nowhere? Is it not just because Goethe, in the Gretchen scenes of the first part of *Faust*, did exactly what Shakespeare had previously done—selected an old fable and breathed into it the spirit of his own time—that these scenes are more interesting and profoundly touching than anything in all literature except the parable of the Prodigal Son?¹ His characters are tingling with eighteenth-century life. Emerson says of Mephistopheles—

“Goethe would have no word that does not cover a thing . . . so he flies at the throat of this imp. He shall be real; he shall be modern; he shall be European; he shall dress like a gentleman, and accept the manners, and walk in the streets, and be well initiated in the life of Vienna and of Heidelberg in 1820, or he shall not exist.”

Interest and life are absolutely essential to every form of Art and no mere copy of the past can survive unless it be tingling with a life in touch with the present.

Before proceeding further, let us take the opinion of two men of the highest intellect and character, the first as to the moral value

¹ In this centenary year of our greatest novelist I must add “and the last scenes in the life of Colonel Newcome.”

of that poetic drama which we are so lightly pronouncing impossible,¹ the second as to what effect the fettering with chains of exact science of "all that great and precious part of our nature that lies out of the immediate domain of the logical understanding"² is likely in the long run to have on Art.

Lord Morley writes—

"Perhaps the crude and incessant application of a narrow moral standard, thoroughly misunderstood, is one of the intellectual dangers of our time. You may now and again hear a man of really masculine character confess that though he loves Shakespeare and takes habitual delight in his works, he cannot see that he was a particularly moral writer. That is to say, Shakespeare is never directly didactic; you can no more get a system of morals from his writings than you can get such a system out of the writings of the ever-searching Plato. But, if we must be quantitative, one great creative poet probably exerts a nobler, deeper, more permanent ethical influence than a dozen generations of professed moral teachers. It is a commonplace to the wise and an everlasting puzzle to the foolish, that direct inculcation of morals should invariably prove so powerless an instrument, so futile a method. The truth is that nothing can be more powerfully efficacious from the moral point of view than the exercise of an exalted creative art, stirring within the intelligence of the spectator active thought and curiosity about many types of character and many changeful issues of conduct and fortune, at once enlarging and elevating the range of his reflections on mankind, ever kindling his sympathies

¹ When I say impossible, I mean on the future stage, and am not thinking of so-called closet drama. I do not class as closet drama such plays as *The Cenci*, which, though unsuitable for the stage, was written with the definite idea of being acted. But drama written with the definite intention of *not* being acted; which by no conceivable exercise of patience on the part of a thoughtful and cultivated audience could possibly be listened to without inducing instant sleep—this in my meaning of the term is properly not drama at all. When the Maori hen ceased to think of flight it lost its wings and became something anomalous, neither bird nor beast. After the unhappy divorce between verse and the stage, closet drama went ever further in the direction of rhetoric at the expense of drama, the stage ever further in the direction of drama at the expense of everything else. A Southey epic seems to have been the ideal of the one, a shilling shocker of the other. But any play which contains sufficient dramatic kernel to be acted, even at the cost of being cut down; which would have a chance of being acted in France, where the higher drama flourishes, where verse drama is the most popular form of literature—this is what I mean by drama, and of the future of this I am certain.

² Lord Morley.

into the warm and continuous glow which purifies and strengthens nature, and fills men with that love of humanity which is the best inspirer of virtue. Is not this why music, too, is to be counted supreme among moral agents, soothing disorderly passion by diving down into the hidden depths of character where there is no disorder, and touching the diviner mind? Given a certain rectitude as well as vigour of intelligence, then whatever stimulates the fancy, expands the imagination, enlivens meditation upon the great human drama, is essentially moral. Shakespeare does all this, as if sent Iris-like from the immortal gods."

Now let us turn to Darwin for the effect which a too exclusive pursuit of science has on the emotional and æsthetic side of our nature—

"Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it," he writes, "poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took great delight in Shakespeare . . . but now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of a large collection of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

What man of imagination has not realised how painfully this tendency is at work in him and around him at the present time; how, in consequence, the instinct for beauty, warped and atrophied, is taking morbid forms of ugliness, frivolity, 'smartness,' cold and heartless as the smile on a mad face?

One more quotation, this time from the charming little sermon preached to the English-speaking world twelve years ago by that most golden hearted of humorists, Mark Twain. He chose for his text a verse drama by Wilbrandt, which, he tells us, takes over four hours to play, and which has been constantly given for twenty years in Berlin and Vienna. "Whenever it is put on the stage it packs the house and the free list is suspended."

He says in conclusion—

"You are trying to make yourself believe that life is a comedy, that its sole business is fun, that there is nothing serious in it. You are ignoring the skeleton in your closet. Send for *The Master of Palmyra*. You are neglecting a valuable side of your life;

presently it will be atrophied. You are eating too much mental sugar : you will bring on Bright's disease of the intellect. You need a tonic ; you need it very much. . . It is right and wholesome to have those light comedies and entertaining shows ; and I shouldn't wish to see them diminished. But none of us is *always* in the comedy spirit ; we have our graver moods ; they come to us all ; the lightest of us cannot escape them. These moods have their appetites—healthy and legitimate appetites—and there ought to be some way of satisfying them. . . America devotes more time, labour, money and attention to distributing literary and musical culture among the general public than does any other nation, perhaps ; yet here you find her neglecting what is possibly the most effective of all the breeders and nurses and disseminators of high literary taste and lofty emotion—the tragic stage. To leave that powerful agency out is to haul the culture-wagon with a crippled team. . . What *has* come over us English-speaking people ? . . . It is an astonishing thing when you come to consider it. Vienna remains upon the ancient basis : there has been no change. She sticks to the former proportions : a number of rollicking comedies, admirably played, every night ; and also every night at the Burg Theatre—that wonder of the world for grace and beauty and richness and splendour and costliness—a majestic drama of depth and seriousness, or a standard old tragedy. It is only within the last dozen years that men have learned to do miracles on the stage in the way of grand and enchanting scenic effects ; and it is at such a time as this that we have reduced our scenery mainly to different breeds of parlours and varying aspects of furniture and rugs. I think we must have a Burg in New York, and Burg scenery, and a great company like the Burg company. Then, with a tragedy-tonic once or twice a month, we shall enjoy the comedies all the better. Comedy keeps the heart sweet ; but we all know that there is wholesome refreshment for both mind and heart in an occasional climb among the solemn pomps of the intellectual snow-summits built by Shakespeare and those others. Do I seem to be preaching ? It is out of my line ; I only do it because the rest of the clergy seem to be on vacation."

If it be admitted that the exercise of an exalted creative art is of the highest moral importance, that the disproportionate pursuit of science is apt to prove antagonistic to its influence, and that the results of this antagonism are at the present moment deplorable, is there no compromise possible between Science and Art which may preserve for us the freedom and splendour of the poetic drama ?

It seems to me that there is a very simple one, which if it were accentuated and insisted on, would not only solve all difficulties, but open out a whole new world of beauty and delight. At present it is not an exaggeration to say that we insist on our legend being

historical and our history romance. When *King Lear* or *Macbeth* is acted, it is considered quite enough to damn the production if the dress and accessories are not strictly in keeping with what research conceives to be appropriate to the remote date of the legend on which the action is founded. We may, however, notice with amusement that *Hamlet* so far has escaped, and still struts it in Jacobean garments. Equally damning is it considered if any of the actors should be what is described as "modern." On the other hand, let any contemporary writer strive to do valuable work by introducing some real history into a play, and he is immediately greeted by a roar from every manager, "Leave it out! the public won't stand it." It is considered a matter of vital importance whether *Macbeth* be represented in trousers or a kilt, but carelessly or wilfully to misrepresent the spirit of a great man or great age—to make Napoleon a chivalrous gentleman, Robespierre a repentant father pursued by ghosts—is apparently a mere trifle so long as a "sympathetic" part is provided for the actor and the audience is satisfied.¹ In other words, we lay the greatest stress on historical accuracy of costume and accessories, far less than none on accurate psychology—the flesh which profiteth nothing is everything, the soul, the proper study of the dramatist, is nothing. Unless we can reverse this state of affairs, it seems to me that no poetic or real historical drama is possible.

Leaving the public out of the question for a moment, I am convinced that in the interests of the higher drama, what we require is to do consciously and completely what the people of Shakespeare's time did half-consciously and incompletely—to observe a clear distinction between legend and history.

(1) So long as we deal with history, let us be historical in spirit and in truth; let us be able to say, "Here in small compass is the inner spirit and significance of our action and epoch; we have taken infinite pains not to misrepresent history, but honestly and humbly to penetrate into the heart of its mystery: thanks to our art, which enables us to represent historic characters as

¹ A few years ago I heard in a play in which at least one historical character was represented, an entirely modern and aggressively up-to-date English drawing-room song sung to the accompaniment of a spinet in an eighteenth-century French drawing-room scene. The audience applauded rapturously for hundreds of nights, entirely blind to the ludicrous anachronism in music, thought, and feeling.

living people, and also to our privilege of selection, completion and compression, we are probably thus able to convey more historical and psychological information vividly and pleasantly in a couple of hours, than an average person would be able to obtain by weeks of hard reading." How many bulky historical tomes give us no more than a distorted picture of events, seen through the haze of the author's prejudices! Let the business of the historical dramatist be to saturate himself with the personality of his characters from original sources—letters, memoirs, speeches—and then re-create them in spirit as they lived.

(2) When we deal half with fable, half with history, as for example when one or two historical characters are introduced and the rest is half or entirely imaginary, let the fabulous part be strictly contemporary, both in psychology and atmosphere with the historical.

(3) But when we deal with legend, let us be allowed the fullest freedom that Shakespeare enjoyed; let us be able to say, "Here are characters developed with the greatest possible psychological truth; people such as live to-day, but in an absolutely fictitious environment; who, though a real time and place be given, are no more bound by contemporary history or psychology, than if the period were the Golden Age and the place Cloud Cuckoo Town." The enormous advantage of this concession is that the moment we are freed from what Schiller calls the tyranny of the actual, not only are we able to represent the whole of our character in words, his inside as well as his outside;¹ we may also represent him not as a man of a particular age but simply as a man. Take the stupendous speeches of Macbeth, which are enough to freeze with despair anyone who essays dramatic writing. Would a man in the act of committing a murder, stand about and talk like Macbeth? Could a Scottish chieftain in a remote age have used such language at all? What would he have known of Tarquin? Would he have stood in the courtyard with his hands red with crime and repeated a dissertation on sleep?² And

¹ This is the case also with historical verse drama, and is one great advantage of verse, which enables us to recede from 'realism' without sacrificing historic truth. By "inside" I mean all that, which though expressible in words, would not be expressed in real life.

² These criticisms are not mine. They were made a few years ago by a brilliant man of letters, since dead, as fatal objections to Shakespeare.

yet how magnificently true it all is, the more so because the everyday laws of commonplace probability are ignored. It is the eternal limitation of the drama that we cannot be told, as in a novel, what a character is thinking about. We must either find it out perfectly through his speech, or very imperfectly through his actions. By removing the scene from the sphere of actual life, the laws of everyday probability may be violated. What would pass like a flash through the brain of Macbeth he may tell us in twenty lines; what he could have expressed feebly, if at all, he may speak in the finest language of the greatest poet. We gain a supreme picture of the human soul; we lose the utterly worthless literal truth, to which the higher truth would have been sacrificed if a literal time and place had been insisted on. As with verse, we wander a little further from the actual and trivial, in order to achieve the beautiful and profound.

If this distinction between history and legend could be accentuated and recognised by critics and public, of course subject to the ordinary laws of common sense, there would be an end to all the lies which are told in the name of history, and also to the necessity of choosing a prosaic modern background for modern phases of thought and feeling. It would restore order out of chaos, throw open the whole of modern thought and psychology to poetic drama, and at the same time clear the way for an historical drama, founded on the historical plays of Shakespeare, which might include the whole of modern history, with all its profound and illimitable interest and capacity for instruction, elevation, and delight. Then might be fulfilled Plato's noble conception of poetry, when he says that "By adorning ten thousand deeds of men long gone, she educates the men that are to be": and Aristotle's claim that poetry is truer than history.

To what did modern painting owe its rise? To the boldness of Cimabue and Giotto, who casting to the winds the Byzantine convention, which depicted the Holy Family and the Saints with "goggling eyes and rigid lips," painted them boldly as Italians of their own age. Similarly we must cast away the convention which makes our poetic drama a thing of three centuries ago, and at any cost make it living, human, and contemporary; and then I am convinced that an enormous outburst of creative activity will follow.

II

The plays in the present volume are an attempt to enshrine in a practical form the result of many years of thought and study of the poetic drama, romantic and historical. I publish them, after much heart-searching, as experiments in play writing ; contributory to an end which I am certain is attainable by someone if not by me ; and attainable, I am equally certain, along the lines which I have striven, however inadequately or unsuccessfully, to follow. Because a navigator may believe that he knows the way to the North Pole, it does not in the least follow that he will have the ability, skill, or good-luck to reach it. Many a life was lost, and many a fine ship lay buried in the ice-floes before Nansen achieved success. "It's a wise physician that follows his own teaching." Anyone who has enjoyed from his earliest childhood, as I have, the inestimable privilege of living surrounded by the masterpieces of poetry, music, painting and architecture, must entertain very modest ideas of his own performances, must be filled with a sense of profoundest and most unaffected humility. But, as Goethe says : "High aims are in themselves more valuable, even if unfulfilled, than lower ones quite attained"; and a man who really loves Art would, if the choice were his, rather carry a hod of bricks, such as might be used for the walls of its permanent temple, than endeavour to achieve ephemeral success or notoriety by giving a fireworks exhibition, however brilliant, on his own account. I have devoted infinite thought and time, the best years of my life, wisely or foolishly, to this subject, and during my period of incubation my previous ideas of dramatic writing have undergone incessant modification or transformation. Verse drama is so little acted or generally read at the moment, that it would be unreasonable to ask for a large amount of study or attention amid the stress of more immediate and pressing claims ; and on that account, it seems to me that I owe it both to those who may do me the honour of reading my work and to myself, to state clearly by what means and to what end I am striving. If I must be blamed, it will surely be more fruitful and profitable that it should be either for having attempted something wrong, or done badly what I have attempted, rather than for having failed to do what I have tried with all my might to avoid doing.¹ Far from seeking to forestall or evade criticism, it is my

¹ E.g., to write dramas in imitation of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. See below.

most ardent desire to invite it, and if possible to concentrate its searchlight where it will be most useful, as help or warning, both to myself and to others who may be groping towards the light. However small may be the mouse which my mountain in labour has brought forth, no one with average ability can expend years of thought on any object worthy of attainment, in which he takes passionate interest, without achieving something, even though it be of negative value. Yet once more, even if my principles are correct, it no more follows that my work is good than that a man with strong political convictions must be an orator.

III

I will therefore, in conclusion, sum up and amplify (even at the risk of repeating) what I have already said by laying stress on three points, a clear understanding of which seems to me to underlie all right appreciation of poetic drama. From long familiarity with the subject, I should consider all that I am about to say as obvious and therefore axiomatic, except that in practice I constantly hear one part or the other called in question. On the practical recognition of the distinctions between (1) lyrical and dramatic verse, (2) characterization in the novel and drama, (3) tragedy and history, I base all my hopes for the future of poetic drama.

1. *The difference between lyrical and dramatic verse.*

Some years ago a beautiful poetic drama by a distinguished author was produced in London. One of the leading literary journals published a criticism which is still vividly impressed on my mind. The work in question contained some descriptive passages of surpassing beauty. After a general *résumé* of the story, the critic seized on these passages, and dismissing all the weightier matters of psychology, construction, characterisation, passion, as if they were beneath his notice, he practically restricted his criticism to these purple patches, quoting the lines with an approval tempered in one case by the reflection that "Keats would hardly have passed that line."

Now in my judgment the lyrical perfection of Keats is as much out of place in a drama as the exquisite mouldings of Lichfield or Shoreham would be out of place in the arcades of Chartres or

Amiens.¹ Art, like nature, when it assumes larger proportions becomes craggy, and an over-elaboration of detail simply destroys its effect. As our sweetest lyrist, Coleridge, writes—

“That splendour of particular lines which would be worthy of admiration in an impassioned elegy, or a short indignant satire, would be a blemish and proof of vile taste in a tragedy or an epic poem. . . . We must not look to parts merely, but to the whole, and to the effect of that whole. In reading Milton, for instance, scarcely a line can be pointed out which, critically examined, could be called in itself good; the poet would not have attempted to produce merely what is in general understood by a good line.”

¹ The amazing infelicity of the remark about Keats will be the more apparent to any real student of the poet from the fact that when Keats turned his attention to drama, he “passed” lines by the hundred, which the gifted living poet alluded to would probably die sooner than acknowledge. Vide *Otho the Great*.

Matthew Arnold says that one short poem by Keats, *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, a perfect treasure-house of graceful and felicitous words and images, “contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story! The action in itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the poet, so loosely constructed that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is null! Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the *Decameron*; he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express. . . . What distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is *Architectonicè* in the highest sense; that power of execution which creates, forms and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration. . . . In the majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless. We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander meant, when he told a man who enquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages, not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. . . . But the expression (of the Greeks) is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys.”

In dramatic poetry the thoughts and emotions are the first thing, the forms of expression are secondary and subordinate. We may even go so far as to say that in proportion as a play becomes verse perfect it becomes dramatically imperfect. A careful study of Shakespeare reveals the fact that the greater his plays grew, the more unlyrical became his versification. No young person wishing to grasp the difference between the three styles, lyric, epic, and dramatic, could do better than read aloud *Lycidas* and the songs from *Comus*, then pass to *Paradise Lost*, and thence to *Samson Agonistes*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. He would see how the versification becomes secondary in proportion as the thought becomes more definite and direct.

The best lyrical poetry expresses a mood of joy or melancholy mingled with the beauties of nature. As a rule, the less definite the thought the more felicitous is its expression. The marriage day, echo, joy, melancholy, a cloud, a skylark, the west wind, a nightingale—these inspired the most beautiful lyrics in our language. In this species of poetry, music and form and colour are everything. We scarcely stop to think as we listen breathlessly to the

“Linkèd sweetness long drawn out,”

and revel in the exquisite pictures which are unfolded to our spiritual sight. Such poetry is the antidote to thought. We only desire to live and enjoy. It is more beautiful than a spring day, a joy and peace that passeth all understanding. But it is the antithesis of drama. Dramatic poetry as written by Sophocles¹ and Shakespeare, has the same relation to pure poetry that Bach's recitatives and Wagner's later music-dramas bear to what is known as “absolute” music. In both, the medium, whether of verse or music, is used in subordination to heighten and interpret the

¹ Sophocles, in his dramatic writing, was more simple and direct than Shakespeare. His may be regarded as the very model of dramatic verse, for it seems certain, owing to enhanced illusion on the modern stage and also to development of the sense of drama during the last three centuries both in the novel and theatre, that future dramatic verse, like the American's pill which attended strictly to business, will have to adopt the almost bald simplicity and directness of Greek Drama rather than the florid diffuseness of the Elizabethans. In addition to this, the great Victorian poets gave us such a plethora of fine lines and passages that we are, to use a current expression, fed up with them; so much so that a reaction has been produced against every species of poetry. Here also we are sadly in need of a tonic.

story or drama, not as an end in itself or to achieve perfection of form on its own account. It would be as reasonable to expect to find an air of Mozart or a nocturne of Chopin in the one as pure melody of verse in the other. The moment a dramatist aims *consciously* at melody or perfection in his verse, he becomes sentimental, and his lines, however beautiful they may look on the printed page, miss their effect, inasmuch as they are found to be a weariness when spoken. Take some of the standard tragedies of the world—the dramatic parts of the *Ædipus* trilogy, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*. In all these the poetry will be found, notwithstanding its surpassing power, to be lyrical only through passion and emotion, never from a conscious striving after lyrical perfection either of form or colour.

Swinburne, Tennyson and Keats, when they turned their attention to drama, wrote verse in quality as unlyrical as their ordinary work was lyrical. This is particularly remarkable in the case of Swinburne, a far greater born lyrist than Tennyson. In all those of his dramas which are written in the Elizabethan form, amid a superabundance of rhetoric, there will not be found twenty consecutive lines (of course apart from songs) which could by any stretch of terms be properly described as having any lyrical quality beyond the metre and alliteration which are common to every form of poetry. It must not be supposed that I am advocating for stage drama a verse anything like that used by Swinburne in works which were not written for the stage. What I want to emphasize is, that the sharp distinction between dramatic and other poetry, which was observed by the old writers, was also adopted by these great lyrists of the Victorian epoch. I regard the looking for lyrical perfection in dramatic verse as absolutely fatal to a revival of real interest in poetic drama: for it encourages the writer to concentrate his attention on his verse at the cost of his psychological idea, construction, characterisation and drama, of which his verse should be the spontaneous expression; above all at the cost of simplicity and directness. It is only the ignoramus or the dullard who imagines that simplicity and directness are unpoetical. There is more dramatic poetry, pathos and beauty in Desdemona's line—

“It yet hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow,”

than in the entire works of many a loud-trumpeted dramatist. It is not so much in the line, but behind it and around it that the

beauty lies.¹ "You are more anxious about words than about ideas," said Pitt to Lord Wellesley. "Remember that if you are thinking of words, you will have no ideas; but if you have ideas, words will come of themselves." Drama is essentially the poetry of ideas as opposed to the poetry of what are commonly known as *poetic* ideas. The two works in the English language which are most brimful of strictly poetic ideas are probably Milton's *Comus* and Shelley's *Prometheus*. They are both written in dramatic form, and *Comus* might have a very lovely effect if it were acted. But it would not be a dramatic effect. The dramatic part is mere pasteboard; it is in the matchless lines that the beauty lies. And this kind of beauty is so absolutely opposed to drama that it is common knowledge that when any old play is being adapted to the modern stage, the merely beautiful lines are almost the first to be cut out. There are passages so lovely that they cannot be omitted, as for example the moonlight scene in *The Merchant of Venice*. But it will be observed that this scene is entirely undramatic except as an exquisite rest and contrast from drama, like a pause in music. It does not develop anything, and it is entirely out of the character of the chief speaker as we should conceive it from the earlier scenes—though no doubt in Shakespeare's time it was both honourable and romantic to steal an old Jew's money and jewellery as well as his only child. Yet even here the verse is in quality purely dramatic.

2. *Difference between characterization in the novel and the poetic drama.*

Poetic drama tends rather to the portrayal of an emotion, the novel rather to subtlety in the delineation of a character.

3. *Difference between historical drama and tragedy.*

Historical drama is founded on history, tragedy on legend.

Of Shakespeare's historic accuracy I have already spoken. Whole passages of Plutarch literally translated lie embedded

¹ The line itself is open, like everything else, to criticism; everything has its ridiculous side. If it were in a modern work someone would be sure to say: "Why should you feel age and know sorrow, rather than know age and feel sorrow?" Mark also the repetition of the vowel—"no age, nor known no sorrow"—yet how exquisitely plaintive is the sound.

in the verse of the Roman plays.¹ It is just this glorious thralldom to fact which causes so many, totally misunderstanding the magnificent aim of the mightiest of masters, to condemn *Coriolanus* as a bad and dull play.

The point is well put by Froude in the following passage—

“ Even literal facts, exactly as they were, a great poet will prefer whenever he can get them. Shakespeare in the historical plays is studious, whenever possible, to give the very words which he finds to have been used ; and it shows how wisely he was guided in this, that those magnificent speeches of Wolsey are taken exactly, with no more change than the metre makes necessary, from Cavendish’s life. Marlborough read Shakespeare for English history, and read nothing else. The poet only is not bound, when it is inconvenient, to what may be called the accidents of facts. . . . In this sense only is it that Poetry is truer than History, that it can make a picture more complete. It may take liberties with time and space, and give the action distinctness by throwing it into more manageable compass. But it may not alter the real conditions of things, or represent life as other than it is. The greatness of the poet depends on his being true to nature, without making her more just, more philosophical, more moral than reality.”

In tragedy, on the other hand, the definite trammels of historic fact are ignored. Any sort of liberty may be taken with the

¹ A single specimen may be given—

<p><i>North’s Plutarch, 1579.</i> I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thee particularly and to all the Volsces generally, great hurt and mischief which I cannot deny for my surname of Coriolanus that I bear For never had I the benefit of the true and painful service I have done in the extreme dan- gers I have been in, but this only surname ; a good memory and witness of the malice and displeasure</p>	<p><i>Coriolanus, Act IV, Scene 5.</i> My name is Caius Martius, who hath done To thee particularly and to all the Volsces Great hurt and mischief : thereto witness may My surname Coriolanus : the painful service, The extreme dangers and the drops of blood Shed for my thankless country and required But with that surname ; a good memory And witness of the malice and displeasure</p>
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legend,¹ and the characters need not be such as we may conceive to have been possible in an early stage of society.

Apart from this distinction, the construction and psychological aims of historical drama and tragedy are identical. The twin plays of *Hamlet* and *Julius Cæsar*, supposed from their similarity of construction to have been written about the same time, may be dwelt on for a moment as an illustration of this.

In *Hamlet* we get the contrast between what Coleridge might have termed the Subjective and Objective types of character. Hamlet talked on, doing nothing, while Fortinbras toiled on, saying nothing, until Hamlet's dynasty was ended and Fortinbras reigned on the throne of Denmark. This is the psychological key to the story—the contrast between the highly sensitive scholar, with his great inner world, thrust by irony of fate into circumstances

thou shouldst bear me. Indeed
the name only remaineth with me
for the rest the envy and cruelty
of the people of Rome *have*
taken from me,

by the sufferance of the dastardly
nobility and magistrates, who
have forsaken me,

and let me be banished by the
people

and so on for nearly forty lines.

Also a very short extract from Cavendish—

Cavendish.

Sir, I beseech you let me have
justice and right

take of me some pity and com-
passion ; for

I am a poor woman and a stranger

born out of your dominions

and so on.

Even these extracts give a very feeble idea of Shakespeare's fidelity to fact, for it is not only the words but the scenes and the whole scheme that are based upon it.

Which thou shouldst bear me ;
only that name remains ;

The cruelty and envy of the people,

Permitted by our dastard nobles,
who

Have all forsook me, *hath*
debarred the rest ;

And suffered me by the voice of
slaves to be

Whoop'd out of Rome.

Shakespeare (Queen Catherine).

Sir, I entreat you do me right and
justice

And bestow your pity on me ; for

I am a most poor woman, and a
stranger

Born out of your dominions.

¹ In the original story Desdemona was unfaithful to Othello, and Lear ended as happily as Garrick made him. Shakespeare sent Hamlet to a university centuries before universities were thought of.

demanding an action from which he was incapacitated by the very excess of his higher faculties; and the plain soldier,

“Of unimprovèd mettle hot and full,”

driven by the superfluous energy of his vacant mind to risk two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats for “a little patch of ground that had no profit in it but the name”; which, we are told, would not fetch at auction more than five ducats. Though the entrances of Fortinbras are so few that his personality has been as a rule entirely ignored on the modern stage, note how significant they are. In the first and second scenes of Act I, where the proposition is stated, fifty-five lines are devoted to the design of Fortinbras to attack Denmark, though it has not the smallest direct bearing on the subsequent action. Any influence that it might have had is carefully removed in Act II, Scene 2, where we are informed how the King of Norway has prevailed on Fortinbras to relinquish his intention, giving him permission as compensation for his disappointment to pick a quarrel with the Poles and employ against them his dangerous energy and recently-levied forces. The crisis comes in its proper place, in the middle of the play, when Hamlet will not kill the king. Up to that time everything has been in Hamlet’s favour; after that all goes against him. He is sent to England. On his way, before he has left Danish soil, he sees Fortinbras marching across Denmark, of which with one blow Hamlet might have made himself master—marching, inexorable as fate on his reckless and foolish mission. On this occasion Hamlet speaks thirty-six magnificent lines, and ending with

“O, from this time forth

My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth,”

he departs tamely for England. The conclusion of the play is that Fortinbras returns, having accomplished his object, and Hamlet spends his last dying breath in voting for his election to the throne of Denmark—

“He has my dying voice;

So tell him, with the occurrents, more or less

Which have solicited. The rest is silence.”

Julius Cæsar, on the other hand, gives the contrast between the characters of Brutus and Mark Antony, and the destiny which follows each. Brutus is drawn by Cassius (a shrewd man of the world without personal magnetism) into the conspiracy against

Cæsar ; and his noble nature, looking far over the heads of men, and his refusal to temporise or do any act of which his whole being cannot approve, or to tolerate the smallest evil that good may come, ruins the entire band of conspirators. Note throughout the play how Cassius always gives him the right advice, and how Brutus always refuses to be guided by him. Contrast the burst of eloquence with which Brutus refuses to kill his arch-opponent, Antony, and the levity with which Antony, the urbane and not too scrupulous man of the world, consents to the death of his own sister's child—

“ He shall not live ; look, with a spot I damn him.”
 Act IV, Scene 1.

Note the crisis, when Brutus, who is master of the situation, permits Antony to speak, confident that if he himself first give the mob “ reasons,” all will be well ; and Antony in return, knowing that a mob is ruled by something very different from reason, with a single speech drives him out of Rome. Note too how Brutus, at a time when everything depends on keeping the army of the Conspirators united, prefers to quarrel with Cassius rather than condone the taking of bribes by a subordinate.

A careful examination of the two plays will show that they have a similar psychological aim, and a similar construction, with seed, growth, crisis, consequences and catastrophe, the crisis in both turning on the crowning mistake or weakness of the hero.¹ The only difference is that in the historical drama the characters are portraits, and the details true to history.

Enough, it may be hoped, has now been said to refute the charge constantly brought against verse drama, even by men of high intelligence and distinction, that by contravening the literal it ceases to be true to life ; enough to suggest that the deeper we penetrate into the springs of thought, action and passion (and surely an overmastering necessity to do this is the moving force of the born dramatist) the further we are likely to recede from ‘ reality ’ into ideality ; that verse is the language in which the dramatic ideal naturally clothes itself ; that it is better for the ideal to lend reality wings with which to skim the ground, than for

¹Of course I mean mistake from the point of view of *success*. Characters are often more estimable by reason of their mistakes.

reality to clip the wings of the ideal ; finally, that, as Goethe said " Art is called Art because it is not Nature,"—because its essential truth is psychological not literal.

As for the public and its appreciation—*de l'audace, de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace!*¹

IV

Now comes the scornful exclamation—" Even if all that you have said be conceded, what has Shakespeare to do with a revival of poetic drama ? To write like Shakespeare one must have the genius of Shakespeare. To copy what you take to be his methods without his genius can only result in absurdity, and no prudent man will be so foolish as to place himself in competition with the greatest dramatic poet that the world has seen or is likely to see."

But the answer is very simple. Beethoven was the greatest writer of symphonies the world has ever seen ; yet every symphony written since his time has been founded directly on his works and developed from his ideas. Any composer, great or small, who should take any other foundation for what is one of the very highest forms of musical composition would be considered by musicians a lunatic. No architect invents a style for himself except through development or modification of an existing style.

Every sound school of art develops out of a previous school by uniting the passion and thought of the moment with as much as can be acquired or adapted of the form and skill of the past. Not by making frigid imitations of masterpieces but by marrying his mind to them and having children by them can any artist hope to be at once original and progressive. *Childe Harold* sprang from a marriage between Byron and Spenser, and *Adonais* from one between Shelley and Milton.

¹ The plea so constantly urged as an excuse for frivolity and vulgarity on the stage—that the pressure of modern life renders appreciation of serious drama impossible—will not bear a moment's examination. The public which crowds St. Paul's Cathedral to suffocation on a week day to hear the Matthew Passion and goes wild over Strauss' *Electra* is not too worn-out to listen to *Coriolanus* and *Cyrano*. In the one case the fashion is to appreciate, in the other not. The frightful cost of production of plays and the lack of dramatic culture are the real enemies. A good tragedy in its after effects is infinitely more exhilarating than the most amusing farce. It is the difference between Burgundy and Champagne.

A small man may develop the ideas of a giant. To develop, however humbly, is not to copy. If I may be instrumental, in however humble a fashion, in showing that this highest form of art is not necessarily dead ; that with very small concessions it might be revived, that its noble and serious aims are exactly what good and refined men of all classes would be glad to see once more realised ; then I shall have accomplished something, even though I may not be permitted myself to enter the promised land which I see so plainly stretched out before my eyes.

[As no writer who lacks the most intimate acquaintance with the *practical* business of the Stage can hope to write a play in a form exactly fit to be acted, I secured, more than eight years ago, the services of a well-known actor who had had many years' experience on the London stage, from the old Lyceum to His Majesty's. To him I have submitted all my dramatic work, never passing a scene or a line until guaranteed by him to be absolutely unassailable from the point of view of stage representation. And to him I should like to dedicate this book as a tribute to his criticism and unfailing sympathy ; but as I have never met two people, eminent or obscure, who were in agreement as to the practical possibilities of any unacted play (which they acknowledged to possess possibilities), I will pause before doing him what might prove to be an injury.]



COVERED FIRE

An Original Drama in Three Acts

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE SPANISH VICEROY

LORENZO	..	..	..	..	..	A Neapolitan nobleman, secretary to the Viceroy, uncle and guardian to Imelda.
ONOFRIO	..	..	..	..	..	Librarian and creature to Lorenzo, in love with Agatha.
PRINCE FERDINAND CARACCILO						A young Neapolitan in love with Imelda.
DOMENIC	..	..	..	..	..	A priest, kinsman to Lorenzo and Imelda.
PAOLO	..	..	..	..	..	A poet, in love with Agatha.
PIETRO	..	..	..	..	..	A cobbler, father to Agatha.
IMELDA	..	..	..	..	..	A young Neapolitan Countess, in love with Ferdinand.
CONSTANTIA	..	..	..	..	..	Sick-nurse to Ferdinand, mother to Domenic.
AGATHA	..	..	..	..	..	Maid to Imelda.

OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, CITIZENS, A FLOWER-GIRL, ETC., ETC.

The Scene is laid in Naples, during the time of the Spanish Viceroys.

ACT I.	SCENE 1.	The precincts of the Viceroy's Palace in Naples.
ACT II.	SCENE 1.	Domenic's Cell.
	SCENE 2.	A Room in the Viceroy's Palace.
	SCENE 3.	Another Room in the Palace.
ACT III.	SCENE 1.	Same as in Act I.
	SCENE 2.	Same as in Act II, Scene 1.
	SCENE 3.	Same as in Act I.

COVERED FIRE

ACT I

SCENE. *The precincts of the Viceroy's Palace in Naples. On the spectator's right the Chapel of a Nunnery. On the left the Palace, approached by a long flight of marble steps, with a deep window overlooking the steps. In the background a garden, and beyond a magnificent view of Naples and the sea, with Vesuvius smoking. It is late afternoon, and during the scene the sun sets, and it finally becomes quite dark. The time is one of public rejoicing, for the troops have just returned covered with glory from the Spanish wars, after an absence of three years. In the background a number of SOLDIERS and PEASANT GIRLS are seated at long tables drinking.*

(ENTER AGATHA, the waiting maid of Countess Imelda, and her father, PIETRO, an old cobbler of Salerno. PIETRO leaves AGATHA at the foot of the steps and ascending enters the Palace. AGATHA remains looking round in some timidity and uncertainty.)

- A SOLDIER. Here's to the viceroy! (*Drinks.*) After three years of exile it is good to be among pretty faces again.
- A FLOWER-GIRL. As if there were no pretty faces in Spain! O, you soldiers are sad flatterers!
- ANOTHER SOLDIER. Giovanni, if you sit any longer in the sun drinking—! (*He makes a motion with his hand.*)
- (AGATHA crosses over to them.)
- AGATHA. Excuse me, Sir, but has Prince Caracciolo returned with the troops?
- 2ND SOLDIER. Prince Ferdinand? No. He comes on with the wounded to-morrow night.

AGATHA. (*aside*) Too late!

1ST SOLDIER. You're wrong. You scholars don't know everything. He gave the doctors the slip and rode in just now looking as well as ever he did in his life. A health to Prince Ferdinand!

2ND SOLDIER. We don't want to see you down with the plague. That's the fifteenth health you have drunk in the last ten minutes.

1ST SOLDIER. And here's to the woman who gave him his health!

2ND SOLDIER. There I am with you—she's a woman, indeed. A health to Constantia, the soldiers' friend!

AGATHA. (*anxiously*) Is she his wife?

1ST SOLDIER. Whose wife? Prince Ferdinand's? (*He laughs.*) No. He was wounded to death and Sister Constantia nursed him back to life again. The prince has too much sense to saddle himself with a wife.

AGATHA. What! He's not married?

2ND SOLDIER. Of course not. (*AGATHA returns to her former place evidently much relieved.*) She seems pleased to hear that he's not married.

FLOWER-GIRL. And has good reason, I'll be bound.

1ST SOLDIER. Well, for my part I always mistrust these men of snow. Come—as long as I drink his excellency's liquor, I will drink his excellency's health. Here's to the viceroy!

(*ENTER PAOLO, a young poet of the people, in love with AGATHA. With surprise and joy he sees her.*)

PAOLO. (*seizing her hands*) Agatha! Why I thought that you were at Salerno with your father.

AGATHA. Count Lorenzo got me away there last Friday. Paolo, a wonderful thing has happened, and you must help me. All last night I seemed to hear my

poor mistress calling to me. This morning a dying man was bent on seeing her confessor and sent my father here with a message for him—and, would you believe it, with a packet for the viceroy. I came with him, and the blessed saints be praised, I have saved her !

PAOLO. Saved her ?

AGATHA. Now, Paolo, help me ! I must speak with Prince Ferdinand Caracciolo at once and alone.

PAOLO. If he has come back, he will be out in a moment. But, Agatha, what can a girl like you have to do with such as he ?

AGATHA. What have I to do with him ? Paolo, I despise you.

PAOLO. And I love you.

AGATHA. Can you care for someone who despises you ?

PAOLO. Our friends generally begin to like us when we despise them.

AGATHA. Well,—I may tell you now—my mistress was in love with him before he went to the wars.

PAOLO. Countess Imelda ! (*With mock stupidity.*) O—! Then, of course, that's why she means to enter a convent the day after his return.

AGATHA. Paolo, it was a deep secret ; but her guardian, Count Lorenzo, must have guessed it years ago, for the villain made her believe that the prince was married. That is why she means to enter a convent. And it was a lie, a lie ! I have found him out and I will save her. It was a lie, and the prince is here. O, Paolo, I feel as if I should faint !

PAOLO. If you must faint, for the love of heaven let it be in my arms. See, your father is coming !

(RE-ENTER PIETRO from the Palace. AGATHA breaks away from PAOLO and hastily conceals herself. PAOLO pretends to write.)

- PIETRO. Paolo! (PAOLO holds out a hand absently and continues writing.) What are you doing?
- PAOLO. Earning my living like an honest man. I am writing poetry.
- PIETRO. And what does it all mean?
- PAOLO. Pietro, I am a true poet. I write as the Muse dictates, and leave to my disciples to muddle out the meaning. In time I become plain to them, and they hold their noses high ever afterwards.
- PIETRO. But many must doubt your honesty, Signor Paolo.
- PAOLO. It is the part of fools to doubt what they cannot understand. To your leather, and leave me to my poetry.
- PIETRO. With a glad heart, Paolo; for men can live without poetry. What were life without boots?
- PAOLO. Very bootless. But listen, old man! Honour has overtaken you at last. You have slighted the Muses; they are pitiful and render you good for evil. They have sent you a son-in-law.
- PIETRO. A son-in-law! Who?
- PAOLO. (*kneeling*) He stands before you.
- PIETRO. Paolo, you are a good boy, but ever light-headed. Go, learn an honest trade, and know that my daughter is not for a butterfly like you.
(ENTER ONOFRIO, elderly and pompous. He is librarian to Imelda's guardian, and has been left in charge of her.)
- ONOFRIO. Good people, you may continue your revels. Signor Paolo, is my song finished yet?
- PAOLO. Begun, not finished.
- ONOFRIO. (*handing a paper*) Read this, and do not forget that you owe your good fortune to me.

- PAOLO. (*crossing to PIETRO*) Honest but material old man, merit may long remain hidden, but it will out at last. I have been appointed assistant librarian to the viceroy.
- PIETRO. You! Impossible.
- PAOLO. If you can read, read this.
(*PIETRO holds the paper upside down. PAOLO turns it to the proper position.*)
- PIETRO. Paolo, I always said there was good in you. Give me your hand! The viceroy is a wise man.
- PAOLO. Yes; for it takes a wise man to find merit, any fool can find fault.
- ONOFRIO. (*to PIETRO*) Old man, your face is familiar to me.
- PIETRO. May it please you, Sir, I am father to Agatha, the waiting maid of Countess Imelda.
- ONOFRIO. Agatha! Then you have set eyes upon that angel this very day.
- PIETRO. I don't know about angel, Sir—you know them! But it is not two minutes since I set eyes on her.
- ONOFRIO. What! She is here?
- PAOLO. (*to PIETRO*) Sh! (*to ONOFRIO*) Sir, I have just met her on her way to Count Lorenzo's.
- ONOFRIO. (*in great agitation*) She must not go there.
- PAOLO. She told me that she was in search of you.
- ONOFRIO. In search of me! The devil—no, angel—! This will be the death of me. I fly to her!
(*EXIT ONOFRIO hastily.*)
- PAOLO. I have got rid of one of them. Cheer up, father! would you believe it, she is safe here all the time?
(*He beckons to AGATHA, who comes forward.*) Now, give us your blessing.
- PIETRO. Why did you tell this lie, Paolo?

- PAOLO. Cobbler, have you no soul? Is it so wonderful to want to be left alone with a young woman when you have not seen her for three days? (*Waving him off.*) Alone, father,—alone.
- PIETRO. (*laughing*) Very well, my boy! (*To AGATHA.*) I have left the letter for his highness; now to find the priest.
(*EXIT PIETRO into the Chapel.*)
- PAOLO. I have got rid of both of them. Agatha, reward me! For your sake I have deceived my benefactor—he who has made it possible for me to marry you. (*He hands her the paper.*)
- AGATHA. He? Why it was my mistress who begged the place for you.
- PAOLO. Begged? Then it was not given to me on my merits as a poet?
- AGATHA. Paolo, I do not understand you.
- PAOLO. No, you do not. It is agony living with a woman to whom one's best hopes are unintelligible dreams.
- AGATHA. I never said that I would marry you, and I will not. You put all your affection into your poetry, and I hate it. And when Onofrio, who is a great critic, spoke so kindly of your songs—
- PAOLO. (*eagerly*) Did he? What did he say?
- AGATHA. He said they were very creditable.
- PAOLO. Enough! After all, I do not write for this age.
- AGATHA. See, the doors are opening! They are coming out of the Palace.
(*The Palace doors are thrown open and the BODY-GUARD file out and take their places on either side the steps. At the same time CONSTANTIA ENTERS on the right, looking sad and dejected. The SOLDIERS greet her with the greatest respect, and she sorrowfully acknowledges their salutes.*)

Then ENTER from the Palace, the VICEROY, accompanied by the victorious OFFICERS, FERDINAND among them. They all stand at the top of the steps while the VICEROY addresses the CROWD beneath.)

VICEROY. Proud Neapolitans, this glorious day
The king, my master, gives you back your sons ;
War-stained, and lacking somewhat of their youth,
But rich in honour's everlasting bloom.
Let the shrill trumpets' brazen throats proclaim,
And cannon, with reverberate thunder, peal
Their welcome to the skies. Long live our heroes !

(Acclamation ; after which the VICEROY and OFFICERS descend, move slowly across the stage and EXEUNT, followed by the SOLDIERS and CROWD ; as they do so, the OFFICERS are met and greeted by their relatives, all except FERDINAND, who looks anxiously round as if in search of some one. CONSTANTIA crosses over to him. As the VICEROY and suite pass through the gateway the CROWD outside are heard cheering them.)

FERDINAND. Sister Constantia ! Why, how came you here ?

CONSTANTIA. I followed you in haste ; your horse had wings.

FERDINAND. Love's wings, Constantia. None so swift as his.
For she I love, to-morrow comes of age,
And on her birthday I must claim my bride.

CONSTANTIA. Pray God this madness cost you not your life !
Ah ! was it wisdom, was it prudence ? You,
So late delivered from the jaws of death !
With what assurance can I leave you now,
Who care not for yourself ?

FERDINAND. You must not go.

(For the first time he notices her dejection.)
My dearest lady, let not that old grief
Disturb you on this day of happiness !

Forget your sorrow ; let me be your son
 In place of him you lost. I am your son,
 For you have given me life.

CONSTANTIA. It cannot be.
 'Twas but for your sake that I came so far.

FERDINAND. But having come thus far you will remain,
 And dwell in peace beside me till we die.

CONSTANTIA. *(sadly, shaking her head)*
 I dwelt in Naples years ere you were born.
*(AGATHA touches FERDINAND'S arm, and turning
 he sees her.)*

AGATHA. *(eagerly)*
 Do you not know me, Sir ?

FERDINAND. *(with great joy)* What, Agatha !
 You have greatly altered, girl, in three short years.
 Where is your mistress, and how is she ? Speak !

AGATHA. My master keeps her guarded night and day
 In close captivity. She does not know
 That you are back in Naples.

*(During the following CONSTANTIA sits overcome
 by grief. At the mention of LORENZO her interest
 awakens, and gradually grows more intense.)*

FERDINAND. I forgot !
 I come a day too soon.

AGATHA. *(with great earnestness which increases as she proceeds)*
Believe me, Sir,
 You come but just in time. To-morrow morning
 My mistress takes the veil. Her guardian means
 To shut her in a convent—to what end
 I know not.

FERDINAND. He's a villain, Agatha.
 Her fortune would be his, as next-of-kin,
 Should she become a nun ; for, since the death
 Of Count Fernando's only child, he stands
 The nearest in succession. Have no fear !

He cannot use her thus against her will.
To-morrow morning she will be of age
And free from his control.

AGATHA. To-morrow morning
By her own choice she will become a nun.
You'd scarcely know her now! That hateful priest
Has won her ear completely since he came.

FERDINAND. A priest—what priest?

AGATHA. Her kinsman, Domenic—
'Twas he persuaded her to be a nun.
My master, Count Lorenzo, brought him here.

CONSTANTIA. (*with a start*)
Lorenzo! Do you mean the Count of Capri?
Her guardian, say you?

AGATHA. Madam, he is both
Her uncle and her guardian.

FERDINAND. (*to CONSTANTIA*)
Am I forgotten? Are all our burning vows
Mere idle wind, breathed in the face of heaven?
Incredible caprice of woman's heart,
Which loves but what it fears!—

CONSTANTIA. Have patience!

FERDINAND. She is not false! (*Appealingly to CONSTANTIA.*)
Constantia, stay with me
Until this crooked matter is made straight!
O, let my love and gratitude outweigh
A world of dead and bitter memories!
You cannot leave me now.

CONSTANTIA. (*after a moment of hesitation, showing her affection*)
Until your course
Is clear and tranquil I will stay with you.

(FERDINAND *kisses* CONSTANTIA'S *hand* and then
turns impatiently to AGATHA.)

FERDINAND. Your mistress, girl!

AGATHA. The viceroy goes from hence,
 Thanksgivings ended, to the city gates,
 Where all the household officers of state
 Are drawn up to receive him. Count Lorenzo
 Was forced to leave my mistress in the charge
 Of Father Domenic while he joined them there.
 But if the news of your return to-day
 Had reached his ears, he rather would have died
 Than thus have left her.

FERDINAND. In his absence, then,
 We must besiege his citadel. Come, girl!

CONSTANTIA. Do nothing rash, I pray you! Bear in mind
 Your all too recent illness.

FERDINAND. Have no fear
 But love will work my cure! We shall prevail
 In spite of priests and wicked uncles.
 (To AGATHA.) Come!
 The fortunate moment flies.

CONSTANTIA. I will wait here,
 And rest 'neath yonder tree till you return.
 My hopes and prayers attend you on your way.

(EXEUNT FERDINAND and AGATHA. CONSTANTIA
*looks wistfully after them and then withdraws
 into the garden. A number of people cross the
 stage from left to right. RE-ENTER ONOFRIO
 out of breath, followed by PAOLO.*)

ONOFRIO. Tricked, tricked, monstrously tricked!

PAOLO. Yes, but you found Agatha.

ONOFRIO. I have no breath. Agatha does not signify now.

PAOLO. Oh!—

ONOFRIO. I, who had arranged so well, to be outwitted!
 Countess Imelda sends me to you—I go back and
 find that she and the priest have gone. It is as
 much as my life is worth if Count Lorenzo should
 return before they are found.

(IMELDA and DOMENIC are seen approaching.
PAOLO looks back and sees them.)

PAOLO. They have gone to the priest's cell. If we go at once we shall find them there.

ONOFRIO. You think so? O, it was a monstrous trick! What, the cell?

PAOLO. Of course—the cell. Come at once and we shall find them. (*He leads him off in the opposite direction.*)

(ENTER IMELDA and DOMENIC. *She is very young and is dressed in pure white. He is in early manhood, with an intellectual and artistic face, marked with lines indicating strongly controlled passions.*)

IMELDA. (*sinking wearily on the steps of the Chapel*)
I thank you, kinsman. Could you realise
My comfort and relief, no vain remorse
For having set aside my uncle's will
And brought me here need vex your conscience.

DOMENIC. Imelda, you compelled me thus to act.
Since you are burdened by some secret doubt
Which holds you still in thrall, no priest on earth
Dare keep you from confession—and, alas!
You will not trust me or confide in me.

IMELDA. Dear kinsman, you have taught me where to lay
All earthly burdens—at the church's feet.
Ah! think me not ungrateful or unkind
Because I cannot speak my inmost thoughts
Except with my confessor.

DOMENIC. Many doubts
Perplex the innocent. But God be praised!
To-morrow morning you will dedicate
To holy church in blessed sacrifice
Your life, with all its doubts and vain regrets,
And in the convent's heavenly gates find peace.
(*Blare of trumpets outside. Cannon are fired off.*)

- IMELDA. What sound is that ?
- DOMENIC. (*looking out*) The viceroy passes by.
To-day our generals have returned from Spain.
- IMELDA. (*in great agitation*)
So that is why Lorenzo left our house !
My guardian dares to treat me like a child,
To keep me thus in darkness.
- DOMENIC. He but feared
To fret your tranquil thoughts with earthly things,
Who stand so near to heaven.
- IMELDA. (*with an air of resignation*) The hour grows late.
Good kinsman, I beseech you, ascertain
If my confessor is awaiting me.
- (EXIT DOMENIC *into the Chapel. A sound of cheering. IMELDA rises, and after a moment of indecision runs quickly to the gateway and looks out anxiously. The procession is heard to pass. RE-ENTER CONSTANTIA from the garden. She moves over to the gateway.*)
- IMELDA. (*in intense disappointment*)
O God ! I cannot see him ! Ferdinand !
- CONSTANTIA. Whom seek you, Madam ?
- IMELDA. One who went to Spain—
Prince Ferdinand Caracciolo.
- CONSTANTIA. Gracious powers !
You have not heard—
- IMELDA. Alas ! then, he is dead !
- CONSTANTIA. Covered with glory, wounded, but not dead.
(*In the revulsion of feeling IMELDA swoons. At the same moment RE-ENTER DOMENIC from the Chapel.*)
- DOMENIC. O, she is dead !
(*With a great cry he rushes to IMELDA and kneels beside her.*)

CONSTANTIA.

She has but fainted, Sir.

(CONSTANTIA goes to the fountain, gets water and dashes it in IMELDA'S face. While she is doing so DOMENIC kneels beside IMELDA. During the following scenes CONSTANTIA slowly recognises DOMENIC.)

DOMENIC.

She is not dead! Ah, sister, look! The rose
Begins to flush those alabaster cheeks,
Like morning light on snow. Dear child, awake!

CONSTANTIA.

She is a child, and very beautiful.

DOMENIC.

Such beauty must the angels have in heaven;
And God has placed her in a sorrowing world
To spread belief in immortality.
I think my heart would break if she were dead.

CONSTANTIA.

You speak more like a lover than a priest.

DOMENIC.

Ah! you mistake; this love is holy. She
Is but a saint, whose beauty I may worship
As the expression of her own pure mind;
A child whom, like a father, I may cherish;
A water lily, with a heart of gold
And leaves as white as snow, growing far off
Out of my reach; for were I not a priest,
I would not soil such virgin purity
Even in thought.

CONSTANTIA.

(looking at him) They say our thought is free;
And yet when thwarted Nature stirs the blood
We oft appear the sport of destiny.
(To IMELDA, who has regained consciousness.)
Prince Ferdinand was wounded, he is well.
I nursed him back to life and happiness.

IMELDA.

(with a sigh of intense satisfaction)
In childhood we were friends.

CONSTANTIA.

Impossible
That you, his friend, can be in ignorance
Of how he rescued our good king from death
And rescuing him was wounded.

- IMELDA. I hear nothing
Save the wild wind singing about our house.
My guardian lets no breath of the outside world
Come near me in my solitude.
(*Resignedly.*) 'Tis well,
For he would wean my soul from earthly things.
(*Pause.*) I pray you, tell me all.
- DOMENIC. Is this a time
To speak of earth's achievements, when you come
To lay your conscience at the feet of heaven
And seek for ghostly counsel? Go within!
The priest will shortly join you.
- IMELDA. I forgot!
Yet earthly deeds weigh more than heavenly prayers
So love inspire them. Lady, with full heart
I thank you for your goodness, and farewell!
(*EXIT IMELDA into the Chapel. DOMENIC is following her when CONSTANTIA stays him.*)
- CONSTANTIA. Is her young choice unfettered? Was it she
Of her free will who chose a convent life?
You have not used coercion or entreaty
To win her from the world?
- DOMENIC. In her behalf,
To gain her everlasting heritage
Among the angels.
- CONSTANTIA. O, forbear, forbear!
She is but half awake from childhood's dream.
- DOMENIC. To dedicate our life to highest Heaven,
Awake or sleeping, is our dearest bliss,
Our noblest duty, loftiest privilege.
There is more comfort in religious life
With deep tranquillity, than in the height
Of this world's keenest pleasures.
- CONSTANTIA. Yes, for you.
You had your choice, and chose to be a priest.

DOMENIC. (*bitterly*) No choice. My father made me what I am.
A woman broke his heart. To keep me free
From earth's entanglements, he bred me up
In rigorous seclusion for a priest.

CONSTANTIA. A woman?

DOMENIC. (*emphatically, as he enlarges on the fixed idea*)
Yes. You cannot realise
What peril goes with beauty. Could you watch
The wistful glances men bestow on her
Whose loveliness should kindle thoughts of heaven!
Believe me, her one hope of innocence
And chance of safety is to be a nun.

CONSTANTIA. (*gazes at him with much interest, and during the following shows ever increasing agitation*)
What woman broke your father's heart?

DOMENIC. I tell you
Although it shames me. She was called my mother;
Lost, years ago, and dead. A child's affections
Are easily won. I worshipped her. One night
I woke to find her gone.

CONSTANTIA. O pity her!
You know not what temptation had assailed
Her ignorance.

DOMENIC. Temptation! Thus to leave
My father on the brink of age, her child
A prey to pitying kinsmen, who like birds
Pecked me, defenceless; with pretence of love
Finding each day new faults and weaknesses—
(How many mothers have the motherless!)
Until they won my father from me.

CONSTANTIA. (*anxiously*) Speak!
Who is your father? Tell me!

DOMENIC. He is dead.

CONSTANTIA. But in the end he loved you.

- DOMENIC. Love once lost
Is never found again.
- CONSTANTIA. Speak, I beseech you !
Are you Pietro Vanvitelli's child ?
- DOMENIC. I am.
- CONSTANTIA. (*wildly*) O let me look into your face
And feed my hungry soul ! Even in hell
The spirits in pain may gaze on Abraham.
(*complete change*)
My words are wild. I was your mother's friend
In girlhood, and we twain together grew
Like sisters. You resemble her so much,
It stung my heart.
- DOMENIC. May God in love, forbid !
- CONSTANTIA. (*pleadingly*)
Think of her gently. She is in her grave.
- DOMENIC. (*bitterly*)
God may forgive, not I.
- CONSTANTIA. What, you a priest
Who daily preach forgiveness cannot pardon
Your own dead mother ; she who in remorse
Died, though the flowers be growing o'er her grave ?
- DOMENIC. (*repeats himself with growing passion*)
Ah, no ! We may forgive the frightened snake,
The foe that slays our dearest in the fight ;
But he who dries the current of our blood,
Who leaves us crushed and lifeless though alive—
The lips may frame forgiveness, but the heart
Lacks absolution. Such a grievous wrong
No mortal, priest or layman, can forgive ;
I cannot, will not—
- CONSTANTIA. May you never fall
So low that you may long for sympathy
Even from the most despised of all the world !

(RE-ENTER IMELDA *from the Chapel*. CONSTANTIA turns away, after pausing to gaze wistfully at DOMENIC. She weeps, but the others do not observe her; and then EXIT.)

DOMENIC. Imelda! What has chanced?

IMELDA. Some cruel fate
Waylays my footsteps, ever thwarting me.

DOMENIC. What mean you?

IMELDA. My confessor has been called
In urgent haste away. A dying man
Who dwells beyond Amalfi summoned him
And he was forced to leave me. Night draws on.
I fear that I commit a deadly sin
In taking holy vows. What must I do
With this unhappy secret on my soul?

DOMENIC. Imelda, I implore you, speak to me,
And trust me, child—believe me that you may.

IMELDA. Because you are both near and dear to me
I find it hard to speak—
(DOMENIC starts.) yet speak I must,
And ease my conscience. O, how can a maid
Enslaved by earthly passion be the spouse
Of Christ, though love be hopeless; though she
strive
With prayers and tears to blot it from her soul?

DOMENIC. (*as if stunned*)
What fiend has dared this outrage? O my child,
You strike me dead with sorrow, with dismay!
What mean you?—Tell me all! In vain we sought
To spare you this pollution—Ah! no, no,
It cannot be! I will be told his name.
Where is this man, who is he?

IMELDA. Do not strive
To guess my secret!
A hopeless barrier shuts me from his love,
Which only death can break.

DOMENIC. (*with peremptory eagerness*) Upon your soul
I charge you, answer me—is he some friend,
Some trusted friend, to whom your heart is given ?

IMELDA. Dreaming of friendship I awoke to love.

DOMENIC. Imelda, tell me—does a sacrament
Of holy church divide you from him ?

IMELDA. Yes.
To love is deadly sin.

DOMENIC. (*with ineffable relief*) My dearest child,
I know your secret. Such untainted love
The ministering angels bear to man ;
Who flit around the altar's flame and bend
In adoration by the throne of God.
True love springs not from earth, nor are its roots
Fleshy, but spiritual. It grows aloft
In bright ambrosial splendour, and lets fall
Its glowing tendrils round the souls of men.
Of this pure passion, such as angels share,
All noble beauty is the sacrament,
And, like a holy image, joins our hearts
By visible links to that which dwells above.
Then do not sacrifice but sanctify
This passion ; cherish him within your soul
Purely and like a spirit.

IMELDA. That cannot be.
Affection is affection : love is love.
My heart is breaking. Could you realise
What sobs beneath the surface of my speech !
And how in honesty can I forswear
The world and all its passions, when I know
That hopeless love devours my inmost life ?
When what I truly long for day and night,
Madly and passionately, is to make him mine ;
To be enfolded in his arms and feel
His kisses on my cheek.

DOMENIC. (*as if stunned from the depths of his being*)
You hurt me !

IMELDA.

Alas !

I speak in vain. You cannot comprehend
The nature of this passion—you a priest.

DOMENIC.

Yet I have loved, even as a father loves
A favourite child, whom pitying God may send
To cheer with golden beams of sympathy
The chill probation of a winter life.
And thus, dear girl, I would that you should love
This man—but as a father, far removed
From earth and earthly passions. If sometimes
You feel transported further than your will,
Whether by flesh or spirit 'twere hard to say,
God will forgive. The earthly element
Inseparable from fallen flesh with time
And prayer will fall away—most innocent
Because involuntary. Sacrifice
The lowest and the least—the devil's part
In what is else holy and undefiled ;
And God will purge this passion, leaving it
Pure as the calm affection of a child.

(ENTER AGATHA *hurriedly*.)

IMELDA.

(*in glad surprise*)

What, Agatha, so soon returned ! And yet
It seems long ages since you went away.

AGATHA.

O madam, I have found you, praised be heaven !
A thousand awful fears beset my brain.
Some private news !—my mistress, life or death—
Without delay or question let me speak !

IMELDA.

(*to DOMENIC*)

Good Father, I must hear her. Go before,
And I will join you at the western gate.

DOMENIC.

Far better—more I long yet fear to say.
My conscience, burdened with perplexity,
Demands a breathing space for tranquil thought ;
I will await your coming 'mid the peace
Which dwells in sunset calm and solitude.

(EXIT DOMENIC. IMELDA *turns to* AGATHA.)

- IMELDA. We sent you hence, because incessantly
Against my guardian's will and my resolve
You strove to change my purpose. Agatha,
Promise me, child—
- AGATHA. (*seeing that DOMENIC is out of sight, interrupts*)—
Dear madam, there's no need.
News, news! A courier from Prince Ferdinand
Demands to speak with you.
- IMELDA. What may this mean?
- AGATHA. I know not, madam. If he came to say
The prince were free and loved you as of old—
Alas!—that cannot be—but if it could,
Would you be glad?
- IMELDA. O cruel Agatha!
Is the birch glad beneath the opening Spring
Which bursts its branches into vivid green?
Is the bird glad which hears its long lost mate
Come singing through the twilight forest glade?
Is the man glad who dying finds a pool
In the parched desert? Thus we thirst for life,
For life denied to me.
- AGATHA. Alas, poor lady!
(AGATHA has beckoned to FERDINAND who
ENTERS.)
- IMELDA. What man is this?
- AGATHA. He is a great magician,
Who makes sweet dreams come true.
(To FERDINAND.) Sir, lose no time! I will keep a
strict look out on every side; and even if I have
to kiss Onofrio he shall not return.
(EXIT AGATHA. FERDINAND throws back his
cloak.)
- FERDINAND. Imelda!
- IMELDA. Ferdinand!
(*They stand confronting one another.*)

FERDINAND. How oft in thought
Have I beheld this day with ecstasy!
Is our great love forgotten?

IMELDA. Dare you ask?

FERDINAND. The convent damp already chills your brow.
Belovèd, wake! I love you!

IMELDA. Ferdinand,
Alas! you trifle with me.

FERDINAND. I with you!
I, who have loved you dearer than my life;
Thought of you daily; counted up the hours
Of separation till they grew to years;
Longing to live through fevers, wounds, despairs,
That I might clasp you to my heart again,
And whisper in your ears unending love?

IMELDA. O cruel words! I might almost believe
That you were free and loved me; but, alas!
They only speak of your unhappiness.

FERDINAND. What hideous dream is this? That I am free?

IMELDA. Your wife—your wife is dead?

FERDINAND. She never lived.
I have no wife, nor ever had.

IMELDA. No wife?
O, what a liar is Lorenzo then!
My guardian has deceived me. He is false
And you are free? Ah! say that word again!
Free and you love me? (*Embrace.*) Thus can highest
God
From hopeless and unending woes bring peace
Speedily, as a cloud which lifts! My heart,
No comfort have I known so long; it seemed
Incredible the sun could ever shine;
And you, who are free and love me, have come home!

FERDINAND. To thee, belovèd bride of childhood's days,
With laughter trembling on the brink of tears;

Dear home, where all my wanderings sweetly end ;
Unruffled haven, from whose breast no storm
Of envious fate shall drive me till I die.

(RE-ENTER AGATHA *hurriedly*.)

AGATHA. Pardon me, but the priest is returning this way ;
if you draw aside he need not disturb you.

IMELDA. We must not leave this priest in ignorance
Of my good fortune, who in direst need
Befriended me. He bade me love you still,
When love seemed hopeless ; and this glad surprise
Will fill his honest heart with happiness.
Condemn me not as childish—both of you
Withdraw, and I will break the news to him.

(EXEUNT FERDINAND *and* AGATHA. RE-ENTER
DOMENIC.)

DOMENIC. Imelda, I must speak. Love yearns to speak,
And his sweet speech is music. May this joy
Which swells my heart to bursting, bring you peace !
'Twas not in vain that gentle heart was given ;
Your love has been returned.

IMELDA. Then you know all.
My heart o'erflows with speechless gratitude
To highest God.

DOMENIC. O gladness ! How the world
Is changed since yesterday. The very face
Of nature seems to smile and broaden out
In rippling laughter ; the unresponsive earth
Which felt so cold and bleak, now throbs with life.
Imelda, thus through all eternity,
For ever and for ever to be one ;
From this pure bridal day when soul with soul
Has blent in unimagined ecstasy !

(ENTER FERDINAND, *to whom* IMELDA *has*
beckoned.)

IMELDA. Ah, bliss too deep for words ! And you, dear friend,
Will give us first your blessing.

(IMELDA *and* FERDINAND *take hands*.)

DOMENIC. (*in stupefaction*) Leave her, Sir!
 O sacrilege! You shall not clasp that hand—
 A virgin vowed to heaven,—leave her, I say!
 You dare not! I command you, let her go!
 You shall not steal her from the church of God.

(ENTER COUNT LORENZO—*Imelda's guardian—*
and OTHERS. LORENZO stands in amazement.
As soon as he can find words to speak.)

LORENZO. What, Domenic!

DOMENIC. Lorenzo, save your niece!

LORENZO. May you and she be damned to endless hell!
 How dared you leave the house?

DOMENIC. (*piteously*) Her soul, her soul!

(ENTER *the VICEROY, followed by a great company*
of OFFICERS and OTHERS.)

FERDINAND. (*to LORENZO*) Count Lorenzo,
 I claim your niece in marriage. Years ago,
 Unknown to all the world, we plighted troth.

LORENZO. Her troth is plighted now to holy church.

FERDINAND. Through error and despair. She was misled
 By shameless lies and cruel treachery.
 You told her I was married.

LORENZO. It was true.

FERDINAND. A villainous lie.

LORENZO. Then I have been deceived.

FERDINAND. And being undeceived, give her to me!

LORENZO. Sir, by our kingdom's laws no wealthy woman
 Of any age may marry, save with consent
 Of parents or protectors. In this case,
 As guardian, in her father's place I stand
 To give or to withhold—and I withhold.

- VICEROY. Lorenzo, on what ground should you refuse
To sanction this betrothal? In times past
Their parents willed it thus.
- FERDINAND. Then she is mine,
And may their spirits bless us from the tomb!
- VICEROY. Softly awhile, my children! I am old;
What age may lose of fire it gains in caution.
Three years you have not met—eventful years;
In your fresh Spring of life, eternity.
How you have changed you know not. The crescent
mind
Outgrows its garment daily; like the snake
We cast our skin. But marriage is a bond
Which does not stretch or change; whose golden
ring
May gall the growing flesh to atrophy;
A road which stretches to the horizon's brim,
Dusty and dull, or fringed with violets.
- IMELDA. You will not part us.
- VICEROY. Child, take time, take time!
Love kills a woman as it scars a man.
If you should find in him, or he in you,
On calm reflection, what in time to come
May militate against your future peace,
I charge you both, in spite of present pain
Or childish promise, to dissolve this bond.
(Turns to LORENZO.)
Lorenzo, come, your answer! Once again,
I ask you on what ground can you refuse
To sanction their betrothal?
- LORENZO. By what right,
I ask, with due respect and reverence,
Can you demand my reason? I appeal
To what is higher even than your office here—
The law—that I may freely exercise
Without constraint or question my free choice.
I will not grant Prince Ferdinand's request
On good and solid grounds. Let that suffice.

VICEROY. You stand upon the letter of the law,
 And so will I. According to the terms
 Of her late father's will, you have no right
 To shut her from the world ; but, by a clause
 Short-sighted and most dangerous, if your niece
 Of her free will should choose a convent life,
 Her fortune lapses to the next of kin ;
 In other words, to you, her guardian.
 Her father's meaning is not hard to find.
 He sought to save his daughter from the snares
 Of hypocrites, who seeking by false means
 Their own salvation or the church's good,
 Might bias her free judgment. That being so,
 In order to defend her guileless youth
 'Gainst undue influence or compulsion,
 Until her final choice, and if she choose
 This world, until her fortune be possessed
 By her its rightful owner, I decree
 That she shall dwell protected by the State
 Within the precincts of my palace here ;
 Whose threshold I forbid you to approach
 On pain of banishment. My children, come !

FERDINAND. Sir, from our hearts, we thank you.

(EXEUNT *the VICEROY and his SUITE with FERDINAND and IMELDA into Palace. The CROWD disperses, leaving LORENZO and DOMENIC alone. DOMENIC, completely overwhelmed, stands spellbound at the bottom of the steps. Then AGATHA runs across the stage pursued by ONOFRIO.*)

ONOFRIO. Kiss me again !

Those lips again, bewitching Agatha !

(*He tries to kiss her. She slaps his face and*
 EXIT. *He looks round sheepishly on perceiving*
 LORENZO.)

LORENZO. Well, what have you to say ? O wretched fool !
 You let them meet beneath your very eyes,
 Although I charged you on your worthless life

To watch her every minute of the day.
Must I give up Imelda's fortune, fool,
And through your blundering? It is gone, all gone!
Well, it was mine. My brother cheated me
Through legal flaws, making this girl his heir.

(ONOFRIO is silent.)

She must become a nun; no other way
To stop investigation; and the priest
Must win her to consent. He loves her madly,
As only those who give their lust no scope
Are capable of loving—Ah! There's no time!
'Tis useless. You have ruined me.

(Takes ONOFRIO by the shoulders and shakes him.)

Fool, fool!

You wretched grovelling rat! (Shaking him.)

I have not patience

To be dishonoured by a thing like you.

(With a sudden look towards DOMENIC he lets him go.)

Begone, or I shall kill you!

(ONOFRIO takes to his heels, but realising that
LORENZO is not following him, he stops and
smoothing his coat with outraged pomposity,
in a horror-struck voice says sotto voce.)

ONOFRIO.

Am I a rat?

A wretched grovelling rat? You'll be surprised
To find how hard I bite.

(LORENZO turns suddenly. EXIT ONOFRIO.

LORENZO, as if struck by a sudden thought,
goes up to DOMENIC and lays his hand heavily
on his shoulder.)

LORENZO.

Why, Domenic!

Wake, man; you are asleep!

DOMENIC.

To lose her soul,

For which I would have burnt in penal fires!
To hear no more the music of her speech
Or see that face again! O mighty God,
And all who love Thee lonely?

LORENZO.

Hear me, man !

DOMENIC.

Vain fools and blind, who taught me to believe
 That woman's heart was evil, her pure beauty
 Unclean—that radiant garment of the soul
 And glorious image of God's loveliness
 Who clothes the grass with splendour ! Thou Most
 High,
 Through this bright angel, didst reveal to me
 Thy law of spiritual beauty, and I strove
 In humblest gratitude to keep her Thine.
 O, for Thy glory let me hold her still
 Immaculate, above the sensual slime
 In which she is falling ! Save her, save Thy child !
 She must not die through me.

LORENZO.

It is most strange
 That you of all mankind should be the means
 Of binding her to him, this Ferdinand ;
 The man of all the world from whose embrace
 You most of all would save her.

DOMENIC.

(catching eagerly and excitedly at the bait)

Merciful heaven !

I knew it from the first, beyond all doubt ;
 Yes, from the moment when I saw his face.
 Lorenzo, he's a villain. Own the truth,
 Which yet may be the means of saving her !
 I tell you, he's a villain.

LORENZO.

Need you ask,
 Seeing whose son he is ?

DOMENIC.

Son—son ? Whose son ?

LORENZO.

(as if drawing back)

O, pardon me ! Can it be possible
 That you of all men are in ignorance
 Of what the whole world knows ?

DOMENIC.

(with painful excitement)

Turn not away !

Lorenzo, tell me ! It is not for my peace
 But her salvation that I charge you—speak !

Or from a stranger I must learn the truth
In spite of you.

LORENZO. (*reluctantly*) You force me thus to speak.
His father was Francesco Caracciolo,
Whom you of all men have best cause to hate.

DOMENIC. The man who stole my mother! Fiends of hell!
His son!—it cannot be!—this man his son!
That fearful name, poisoner of childhood's peace!
How, from the grave of half forgotten things,
It rises writ in tongues of livid fire!
There's more, Lorenzo; tell me all the truth!
You called him villain—yes, and to his face
Declared that he was married. (LORENZO *starts.*)

LORENZO. (*entreatingly*) I implore you
To follow this no further.

DOMENIC. Did you think
That I could be deceived? How easily
I lay my finger on the tender spot,
Which your profound astuteness thought to hide.
Vain foolishness to treat me like a child,
When both your manner and your speech give shape
To those dread spectres, direful fantasies,
Which throng my bursting brain. Lorenzo, speak!
I will be told. Think not to thwart me thus.

LORENZO. I will not and I dare not tell you more.

DOMENIC. You must—you shall!

LORENZO. Peace, peace, you will go mad!

DOMENIC. (*pacing up and down in the utmost agitation*)
Some dreadful danger threatens her pure soul
With agony of everlasting death!
Speak! I conjure you in the name of God!
If what I say be false, deny it! Speak
One word, and free me from this misery!
The cruelest monster could not hold me thus,
Racked with despair and anguish, when a word
Would set me free.

- LORENZO. I dare not tell you. Though you are a priest
Your spirit's impetuous and might seek his life.
- DOMENIC. Despair and ruin ; madness ; misery !
- LORENZO. We must await slow-working providence,
Which, by inscrutable and mazy paths,
Achieves remotest ends. He holds her fast,
And while he lives we cannot set her free.
- DOMENIC. Tell me, Lorenzo, tell me all the truth !
(LORENZO *is silent.*)
I seek the viceroy then. (*He turns to go into the
Palace.*)
- LORENZO. Do as you will !
But doing so, I warn you, bid farewell
To any further chance of saving her.
- DOMENIC. Lorenzo, tell me all, the best or worst !
I beg you on my knees ! She is all I have,
This child ; I love her dearer than my life,
Than my immortal soul. (*He kneels.*)
- LORENZO. Get up, get up !
(*Vehemently, looking round with real apprehension.*)
You madman ! Should they see us acting thus
Beneath the Palace walls !—Egregious fool,
Rise, rise !
- DOMENIC. Then tell me !
- LORENZO. Sooner than ruin all
I needs must yield. (DOMENIC *rises.*)
Go quickly to your cell.
Await me there, and when the o'er-feasted town
Is sleeping, I will join you.
- DOMENIC. Tell me now !
I cannot, will not wait so long !
- LORENZO. You must,
Or, by my soul, no confidence with me.
Take heed ! If you compel me to divulge

A secret, which for your immortal good
I fain would keep concealed, remember this—
It must not even be whispered to the stones.
Control yourself! O dolt and madman I,
Who trusted you so far!

*(LORENZO leaves him alone at the foot of the steps,
and walks up the centre of the stage. It has
become quite dark.)*

DOMENIC.

Could I but steal

One sight of her to fortify my soul
And smother this foul devil in my blood,
Which urges me to deeds of violence!

*(A light appears in the Palace window. LORENZO
withdraws into the shadow, and beckons
DOMENIC to him.)*

LORENZO.

Look! She is at the window—he and she!

*(DOMENIC joins him and follows the direction of
his finger; then rushes back, covering his eyes
with his hands.)*

DOMENIC.

And thus my prayer is answered by the devil!
He gazes on that brow, those star-like eyes,
That glowing skin, those teeth of ivory,
And lips which it were madness sweet to kiss!
O God! what do I say? Forgive my sin!
I shall go mad! How trust in providence?
What harm befell his father? All the world
Respects the libertine. Men rather cover
The righteous with contempt who fear to sin.
She might have been my bride—forgive me, God!
My treasure is in heaven with the saints.

(LORENZO makes signs to him.)

LORENZO.

He kisses her!

DOMENIC.

Pollution, misery!

That leperous defilement of his lips
Can ne'er be washed away; she is unclean;
No burning prayers can make her pure again.
(He rushes beneath the window, and shakes his fist.)

Thief, thief! O damnéd thief! Thus years ago
His father kissed my mother. Horrible—
Pollute the body and destroy the soul!

LORENZO. Go to your cell! (EXIT LORENZO.)

DOMENIC. *(returns to the bottom of the steps)*
She shall be saved; I swear it!
*(He sinks on a bench, pressing his hands against
his eyes.)*

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I. DOMENIC'S Cell. *At the back are the door and a long narrow window. On the left wall a large crucifix hangs. In the middle is a bare stone table on which a single taper burns. Bright moonlight.*

(ENTER CONSTANTIA and PAOLO.)

PAOLO. Here is the cell; and, from that lighted candle,
He is not far away. How bright it burns!
A lonely flame; fit emblem of the life
Which men like him endure.

CONSTANTIA. I will await
His coming. Sir, without your timely aid
And helpful guidance I had missed my way.

PAOLO. But dare you venture back alone? The road
Lies o'er yon vine-clad summit, cypress-crowned.

CONSTANTIA. I thank you, yes. Good-night!
*(She takes his hand gratefully. PAOLO kisses
hers and then goes out.)*

(CONSTANTIA looks round the cell with a deep and melancholy interest. A cassock is hanging from a nail. She kisses it, and then returns to the table and regards the taper sadly and wistfully.)

CONSTANTIA.

Thy dwelling-place,
O light which I enkindled! Child, my child,
Uncared for, lonely as a wandering star;
No friend to ease thy sorrow but slow Time,
Who seals with bitter frost the fount of tears!
Across the darkness could I stretch my arms
And fold thee to my breast!—Accursèd thief,
Who stole thy life, I can but creep away,
My last of hope to spare thee further shame.

(ENTER DOMENIC. He shuts the door and advances to the table before perceiving CONSTANTIA. Seeing her, he stands rooted in astonishment. Throughout the following he shows the stress of great emotion, mingled with impatience for her to leave him.)

DOMENIC. What, you! Alone—at this late hour of night?

CONSTANTIA. Forgive me—I have come to say farewell.

DOMENIC. Farewell?

CONSTANTIA. (*producing a phial*)

I shall not see your face again,
So grant me one request and satisfy
My conscience. I entreat you to accept
This gift. The plague is raging now at Baiae;
You stand in daily peril. Take this phial!
It is not much to look on, but contains
A certain remedy. If stricken down
By any sudden sickness or disease,
Drink it, and in an hour you will be well.
It is infallible, and on it bears
The seal of Paracelsus.

DOMENIC.

(*graciously*) Keep it, then.
Your daily risk is greater far than mine.

- CONSTANTIA. I am leaving Naples, and before the dawn
Shall be in safety.
- DOMENIC. (*impatently*) Then bestow this boon
On one who seeks to live, and not on me,
Who only long to die.
- CONSTANTIA. You will not scorn
My humble gift, and send me grieved away!
This phial was once your father's. You alone
Of all men must possess it.
- DOMENIC. (*wearily*) As you will;
(*graciously*) I thank you.
(*With increased impatience.*) Sister, think me not
unkind!
Affairs of deepest moment claim me now.
- CONSTANTIA. (*imploringly*)
I crave your patience for an instant more.
Give me your blessing ere I go away!
- DOMENIC. My blessing! Can the peace of heaven descend
Through me!
- CONSTANTIA. Refuse not!
- DOMENIC. Gladly, if you will.
(*She kneels, and he stretches his hand over her and
blesses her. Then she rises half dazed.*)
- CONSTANTIA. All joy and good attend you!
- DOMENIC. (*opening the door for her*) Fare you well.
(*She goes out into the moonlight, and he looks
anxiously after her. As he does so, LORENZO
suddenly steps in from beside the door where
he has evidently been hiding.*)
- LORENZO. (*shutting the door*)
We are now safe.
- DOMENIC. Lorenzo, come at last!
Your secret! I beseech you, tell it me.
I could not bear this anguish—many a time
Went vainly forth to meet you.

LORENZO.

All is vain.

This villain will not need a marriage rite
 To bring her to his will. She dotes on him,
 And he has access to her night and day.
 No power can save her. Though I rack my brains
 Incessantly, I cannot find a means
 To stop this ghastly outrage. I go hence
 To-night from Naples.

DOMENIC.

(dumbfounded and incredulous)

What ! and leave her here
 In deadly peril ! Monstrous past belief !
 What, leave her here, defenceless and alone !
 Your secret ! Come, your secret !

LORENZO.

Useless now.

DOMENIC.

You shall not, dare not break your word with me.

LORENZO.

Because I feared you in your frenzied state,
 And dreaded what mad folly you might do
 If left in ignorance, against my will
 I made this promise ; then by desperate means
 Hoping to save my niece. That hope being dead,
 It were a vain and heartless cruelty
 To burden your clear conscience with a crime
 Inevitable as the stroke of death.

DOMENIC.

Speak not of conscience !
 Since you desert her in extremity,
 Which I could never do ; since you refuse
 To cherish hope, though life and strength are yours ;
 I charge you and command you on your soul,
 Leave her to me ! I welcome joyfully
 The chance, however desperate and forlorn,
 Which you relinquish.

LORENZO.

On your head the blame
 Since thus you overbear me ! Hear it then—
 But first your solemn vow that, chance what may,
 You will not breathe a word ; for this involves
 Another's life and safety.

- DOMENIC. On my soul,
Though I be tortured, slain, I will not speak.
- LORENZO. (*deliberately and deprecatingly. With each sentence DOMENIC'S excitement increases, until he bursts in with a cry.*)
Well, hear it, then!—the usual tale of lust.
A peasant girl betrayed—a brother's vow
To save her or take vengeance—ambush laid—
A midnight capture—a forced marriage rite,
With which the prince, surrounded by a hedge
Of bristling spears, redeemed his life from death—
- DOMENIC. O joy! Then he is married!
- LORENZO. (*continues with a scornful gesture*) No sooner done
And he in safety, than he cast away
Both wife and child.
- DOMENIC. He shall not, if I die!
He cannot!
- LORENZO. This the heartless rogue has done
Irreparably. An appeal was made
By friends and kinsmen, headed by the priest;
But when with protests he denied the truth,
The king refused to hear a peasant's plea
Against a noble prince.
- DOMENIC. (*with intense relief*) If this be true,
We still may save her from this libertine.
But are you certain? Have you any ground
For certainty? Who told you this?
- LORENZO. The priest
Who married them.
- DOMENIC. (*delightedly*) The priest!
- LORENZO. The Spanish priest,
Diego Valladolid, who of old
Had been a servant in my father's house;
Who, by strange chance, performed this marriage rite;
Who secretly conveyed the news to me.

- DOMENIC. *(with intense satisfaction and complete conviction)*
Then he is guilty! I will throw myself
Before the viceroy's throne and tell him all.
- LORENZO. *Sancta simplicitas!* Will she believe you
Against the word of him she madly loves?
Or will the viceroy second an appeal
'Gainst one so high in favour, when the king
Himself, by virtue of his absolute will,
Already has decreed him innocent?
No, Domenic. The time for words is gone.
One way alone remains. Yet, even for her,
I cannot, dare not, face a felon's death.
- DOMENIC. Our Blest Redeemer by a felon's death
Ransomed the world, and I to save this child
Would count it martyrdom to die for her.
- LORENZO. I had not thought of that! O Domenic,
If you had courage to perform an act
Of heavenly justice; dared to lay aside
All craven fears and scruples—I forgot;
You are a priest!—and yet, how easily
In your position—yes, and safely too—
Could you achieve an act impossible
For me, in face of what has chanced this day.
Suspected, watched, hemmed in on every side,
I cannot even get near him.
- DOMENIC. Speak not of fear
To me who never knew the taste of fear!
Would that my name were blotted from God's book
Of everlasting life and happiness,
If, by my loss, her purest soul might live.
- LORENZO. Then kill this man. No other means is left
To save her from dishonour worse than death.
- DOMENIC. No other means but murder?
- LORENZO. Just defence,
Not murder. Should some bandit of the street
Attack Imelda, you would strike him down
Remorselessly—yes, you, a holy priest,—

And stand absolved, though on his stricken soul
 Lay unrepented crimes. Yet when this villain,
 This ravening, stealthy wolf, for basest ends
 Of lust and gold, with craftiest subtlety
 Which cannot be repelled, attacks her soul—
 This cunning profligate whose blowfly lust
 Will turn to maggots her pure body and mind—
 You call it murder if I strike at him.
 Yet you, who let a scruple such as this
 Deter you, charge me with deserting her,
 For whose most innocent sake I would gladly dare
 A thousand times this deed.

DOMENIC.

O God! I cannot bear it! No relief,
 Outlet, diversion from this agony,
 Which beats and surges in my maddened brain
 And snaps the tortured strings! Ye fiends of hell,
 Whose pitiless laughter mocks me!—Villain damned,
 Seducer, murderer!—secret, climbing snake!—
 My mother, O my mother!—not again—
 Justice—I choke for justice—all the doors
 Shut—he enfolds her—madness, misery!
 Her soul, her soul, he shall not slay her soul!
 (*Knocking.*)

LORENZO.

(*in a whisper to DOMENIC*)
 Who knocks?

AGATHA.

(*without*) I pray you, open!

LORENZO.

Agatha!
 She must not see me here! Put out the light!
 (*DOMENIC stands dazed. LORENZO extinguishes
 the light, and withdraws into the window. More
 knocking. ENTER AGATHA, out of breath.*)

AGATHA.

Alas! you are alone! (*Pause.*) I seek the nurse—
 (*Pause.*) Paolo told me that the 'nurse was here
 —Have you not seen her? O, Sir, speak! Do
 you know where she has gone? I have been
 seeking her for hours. (*Pause.*) Pray, Sir, tell
 me! (*Long pause.*) My mistress sent me to find
 her, for the prince is ill.

DOMENIC. The prince—ill ?

AGATHA. Sir, how your face frightened me ! The prince is overtired, has fallen into a stupor. Nothing will persuade her that it is not the plague. Yet she will not leave him. The nurse cannot be found. Everything is at sixes and sevens in the palace since the viceroy left.

DOMENIC. (*with a startled exclamation*) The viceroy ?

AGATHA. He was called away suddenly this evening. Count Lorenzo has gone too. No one knows where they have gone or why. But it is the nurse we want—have you seen her ? Where is she ? I entreat you, tell me !

DOMENIC. I know not.

AGATHA. Alas, alas ! How can I face my mistress ! Come with me, father, and help to comfort her. I must go back at once, and send Paolo still to seek the nurse.

DOMENIC. (*excitedly*)
This man has not left the viceroy's palace !
Go on before, and I will follow you.
(EXIT AGATHA. LORENZO *comes out.*)

DOMENIC. (*in the greatest agitation*)
He will not die ! The evil never die ;
They grow and flourish, flattered and forgiven.
He shall not seize her—thief and murderer—
Through me, through me—she shall not die through
me !

LORENZO. What useless passion ! all is in our hands.
If he escape us now, the fault is ours.
(*Draws a phial from his pocket, and tapping it.*)
Two drops of deadly poison on his tongue,
And all the world will think it was the plague.
No further question. The way is open wide.
You cannot hesitate. Had I your chance !

Thus, with one stroke, you save Imelda's soul,
Prevent a monstrous crime, and send this creature
Purged and absolved to heaven.

(*movement from DOMENIC*) Just providence
Appoints you her preserver.

DOMENIC.

But his soul

Unshriven and unabsolved !

LORENZO.

Fear not ! Who drinks

This potent draught has ever a full hour
Of consciousness, which gives an ample time
For shrift and the last rites of holy church.
Body of Bacchus !—take it !

DOMENIC.

(*taking the phial*) This crystal fluid,
Transpicious and white as water drops
Which daily quench our thirst—O, can it send
In one short hour the busy brain to sleep,
And cut the thread of ever festering care
Which twines about the heart ?

(*sighing*) Most blessed poison,
To make such quick divorce from misery.

(*With the calmness of one whose mind is entirely made
up.*)

Dread talisman, I deem thee sent from heaven !

(*He places the phial in the moonlight and regards it
earnestly.*)

Away with doubt. To save two souls from crime
I dare to risk my soul.

(*turning away*) O gracious God,

Not for myself, but to deliver her,

By human law deserted and betrayed,

From everlasting death, I take Thy law

Into my hands. In this extremity

I cannot in base terror stand aside,

And watch the triumph of Thine enemies.

Then slay me if Thou wilt, for I am Thine ;

But pure and holy will I keep this child,

This helpless lamb, immaculate for Thee.

(*In error he takes his mother's phial from the table.*)

LORENZO. What have you in your hand ?

DOMENIC. *(after looking at it in bewilderment and then at the other)*

A phial, which
The woman left ; which saves a life from death
As yours will send to death. O blessed thought
To save a life from death !

LORENZO. Put it away !

You go to save her soul from endless death.
(He takes the phial of poison and gives it to him.)
Then purge your mind from all perturbing care.
Not in distress or doubt ; in righteous calm
Must you, the chosen delegate of heaven,
Achieve this act of justice. What is life
Weighed in the balance with her beauteous soul ?

DOMENIC. Lorenzo, you speak well. Be not afraid !
My rubicon is crossed and I am calm
As an avenging angel. Come with me !

(DOMENIC takes the two phials ; his mother's he conceals in his cassock, the other he keeps in his hand. He opens the door : the blinding moonlight pours in. LORENZO passes out ; DOMENIC pauses on the threshold.)

How peaceful is the night, that spacious dome
Of multitudinous stars ! Yon million eyes
Look down, so cold, so pure, so passionless,
And watch me burning in the flames of hell.

(A chanting of monks is heard ; he falls on his knees.)

My God, why hast Thou left her desolate ?
In the beginning if against my will
Some earthly baseness mingled with my love,
Forgive me ! I was starved, thirsty and sick.
Help me, who now transgress to save Thy creature,
The fairest on this earth—!

(He rises and looks round as if dazed and then, gripping the phial, moves towards the door.)

SCENE II. *A Room in the Viceroy's Palace.* FERDINAND is lying unconscious, with IMELDA watching over him. ATTENDANTS are present. ENTER AGATHA. *The ATTENDANTS withdraw.*

- IMELDA. *(in great agitation)*
The nurse, the nurse! What, you so long away—
Could you not find her? Have you come alone?
- AGATHA. I found the priest—he follows me.
- IMELDA. The priest!
Dread omen!—he is dying. But the nurse—
- AGATHA. Alas! in vain I sought her. Paolo
Still seeks her through the city.
- IMELDA. O despair!
The doctor went away an hour ago
Resigning him to death.
- AGATHA. O madam, madam!
(She approaches FERDINAND and looks at him.)
- IMELDA. What would I give could I prolong his life,
Though but for one brief moment!
(ENTER DOMENIC.)
- DOMENIC. *Pax vobiscum!*
(EXIT AGATHA with bowed head, weeping.)
- IMELDA. O Father! in your hands the sacred blood
Will liquify.¹ You cannot save his life!
- DOMENIC. His life! He is not dying.
- IMELDA. Yes, alas!
No power can save him; earthly hope is fled.
*(DOMENIC looks earnestly at FERDINAND and then
utterly swept away by revulsion of feeling he
falls on his knees oblivious to everything else.)*

¹ The blood of St. Januarius of Naples.

DOMENIC. Merciful God, I thank Thee ! O forgive
My sin ! How could I doubt Thy providence,
Thy justice and Thy goodness ; how suppose
That Thou, to compass Thine eternal ends,
Couldst need a wretched worm like me ? With joy
And speechless gratitude I dedicate
Her virgin life to heaven.

IMELDA. What dreadful words
Are these ? You dare to thank all pitying God
That he is dying ?

DOMENIC. Yes. The hand of heaven
Thus chastens you, Imelda, for your crime
In leaving heaven for him.

IMELDA. O monstrous lie !
Then would heaven's censure light on me, not send
His soul unshriven before God's judgment seat.
Alas ! I know you now. In my despair
You tempted me to thwart my father's will,
His dying wish. 'Twas vain. And you rejoice,
Thinking to gain your purpose through the death
Of him I love. You shall not. If he die
Lorenzo shall not profit ; and for you
Who trample on my heart, so help me God,
I will not ever see your face again.

DOMENIC. O, speak not thus ! You know not what you say.

IMELDA. I speak the solemn truth. Long hours ago,
When his last conscious thought was fear for me
And my unfriended weakness, to comfort him
I made a promise which no earthly power,
If I survive the sorrow of his death,
Shall force me to relinquish.

(Long pause. Then the PRIEST, struck by a sudden thought, eagerly places his hand on his cassock.)

DOMENIC. If he die ;
But if he live—if by some wondrous means
The power were mine to give him life again ?

Misjudge me if you will, but answer me,
For on your answer hangs this human life—
What would you give to save him ?

IMELDA. (*wildly*) Anything.
There is not any price I would not pay ;
Aye, pay it thrice, if I could save his life.

DOMENIC. And yet there is. You would not give yourself ;
You would not leave this man and dedicate
Your life to heaven.

IMELDA. You cannot make him live.

DOMENIC. Through God's most gracious providence that power
Is in my hands, and I can save his life.

IMELDA. (*clasping her hands*)
O Father, save him ! If the power is yours
You will not hesitate.

DOMENIC. It rests with you.
Have you the grace to do what heaven demands ?

IMELDA. You cannot seek to tear those hearts asunder
Which God has joined. If you can make him live,
It is your duty and your privilege.
Why speak of payment ? Could high heaven exact
Our dearest joy in payment for his life ?

DOMENIC. Your life for his—there is no other way.

IMELDA. O God, in pity help me !

DOMENIC. Say no more.
In charity I would have saved his life ;
But since this cannot be, then he must die
Unshriven and unabsolved.

IMELDA. (*approaching FERDINAND and looking at him*)
A deathly pallor
Has overspread his face ; he scarcely breathes.
What would you have me do ?

DOMENIC. 'Tis heaven's demand,
 Not mine. Imelda, you must give yourself
 In blind obedience to me ; you must vow
 That when God's providence has renewed his life,
 Without delay or question you will place
 Your life at my disposal ; doing that
 Which I, the chosen delegate of heaven,
 In absolute judgment may demand of you.

IMELDA. Anything, anything !

DOMENIC. Then by the blood
 Of our dear Lord, which on the cross was shed
 For our salvation, by the sacraments
 And by the relics of the blessed saints,
 I ask you, will you give your life to me,
 Exchanging yours for his ?

IMELDA. O, grant me strength,
 High God ! This bitter cross I cannot bear.
 Ferdinand, Ferdinand ! I choke with grief,
 The salt tears blind me.

DOMENIC. Can you love this man
 Who hesitate to sacrifice your life
 And save him ? I would give immortal life
 For one I loved.

IMELDA. (*hanging over FERDINAND*) Alas ! to make thee live
 Must I unsay the troth I plighted thee ?
 O, chide me not for my unfaithfulness !
 For my poor heart doth ever cleave to thee,
 And ever will unto eternity.

DOMENIC. Your oath, your oath, or heaven's dread thunderbolt
 Will light upon his head.

IMELDA. Alas ! to part
 For ever ! Can this be the will of God ?

DOMENIC. By sacrifice alone all creatures live.

IMELDA. (*kneeling at DOMENIC's feet*)
 Father, have pity ! God is pitiful.

DOMENIC. Death stands upon the threshold. Hark ! I hear
The rustling of his wings.

IMELDA. O, he is dead,
And I have slain him !

DOMENIC. Swear !

IMELDA. Yes, yes ! I swear
By all things holy. Yes ; I give it you,
My life for his.

DOMENIC. (*with a suppressed cry*) Mine, mine, for evermore,
To sanctify and save ! But, as you live,
You will not fail me, on whose good faith I build
In boundless trust.

IMELDA. I will not.

DOMENIC. Then withdraw,
And leave me with him.

(DOMENIC moves to the door to summon AGATHA.)

IMELDA. (*standing beside FERDINAND with bowed head and
broken voice*)

Spirit, where'er thou art,
Awake or sleeping, in the shadowy vale
'Twixt death and life, support me, comfort me,
By earthly hope forsaken ! O, must we part
Thus, in the Spring-time of our happiness ?
Thy gentle voice I may not hear again
Unless it speak to me in paradise.
Cold, cold and silent must our parting be ;
Yet more than speech thy plight is eloquent,
And breaks my heart with anguish of farewell.
I place this ring on thy unconscious hand,
I kiss thee like the dead upon thy brow.

(*She takes off ring and places it on his finger, then
kisses his brow. During the above, DOMENIC
has returned with AGATHA, and as IMELDA
kisses FERDINAND, DOMENIC excitedly
breaks in.*)

DOMENIC. Withdraw, or he will die !

IMELDA.

Farewell, farewell!

(With a supreme effort, she signs to DOMENIC to attend to FERDINAND.)

(EXEUNT IMELDA and AGATHA, IMELDA leaning heavily on AGATHA'S arm. DOMENIC makes fast the door. Then standing by the couch, taking a phial in either hand and looking from one to the other.)

DOMENIC.

Life!—*(pause)* death!—*(pause)*

Or shall I leave thee swooning, thus to drift
In calm unconsciousness from earth away?
What cause have I to pity thee or thine?

Thy father—did he spare my father's peace?

Yet heaven be praised, I bind her thus to God
And save from endless death my enemy.

Yes, thou shalt live. *(He opens the phial and the seal unnoticed falls to the floor.)* I pour these
healing drops

Down thy unconscious throat; I give thee life,
That tasting sorrow here, thou mayest escape
Some portion of the woes of purgatory:
And this I do in pity, not revenge.

(A knocking at the door. He hastily conceals the phial. The knocking is repeated. A pause while he looks at FERDINAND. He unfastens the door and CONSTANTIA and PAOLO ENTER.)

CONSTANTIA.

O God be praised! His blessed providence
Has brought you here this moment. In the name
Of love and pity, give me back the drug.

DOMENIC.

(in great confusion)
The drug!

CONSTANTIA.

My phial. I must bring to life
This man now dying. He is dear to me;
His need is greatest. You will pity him,
And give me back the drug.

(FERDINAND moves uneasily unobserved by the others.)

DOMENIC. That cannot be.

CONSTANTIA. You have not lost it—in so short a space ?

DOMENIC. (*greatly disturbed, feeling in his cassock*)
I cannot find it.

CONSTANTIA. When I left your cell
It stood upon the table.

(*Another movement from FERDINAND.*)

DOMENIC. Seek it there ;
Send Paolo. I cannot wait—farewell !
(EXIT DOMENIC.)

PAOLO. Does he yet live ?

CONSTANTIA. Ah, yes ! his labouring heart
Still beats. Paolo, hasten—fetch the phial !
There yet is time to save him.

(EXIT PAOLO. *Deep silence.* CONSTANTIA *bends over FERDINAND.*)

Must he die ?
Thy precious life is hanging by a thread
As fragile as the worm's untempered fibre !
(FERDINAND *moans uneasily, and with a shud-
dering sigh awakes to consciousness.*)

O God ! he wakes !

FERDINAND. Still, still this awful pain.

CONSTANTIA. Fear nothing ! I am with you.

FERDINAND. Nurse ! why nurse ?
Now I remember :—with me still. How went
The battle after I was borne away ?

CONSTANTIA. Your valour saved the king. The breach was stormed,
Our threatened rout became a victory.
(FERDINAND *lifts himself up and falls back exhausted.*)
Now sleep, I pray you !

FERDINAND. (*half delirious*) The moonbeams light this ring
And make the jewel sparkle. 'Twas a gift
Of our most gracious king. I promised him
That I would wear it always.—A noisy bee
Is buzzing round my head ; I cannot sleep.
(RE-ENTER PAOLO *out of breath.*)

PAOLO. I could not find the phial.

CONSTANTIA. Be silent, pray !
The prince is conscious, but he soon will sleep.

FERDINAND. He bade me wear it always. Yesterday
I gave it to—Ah no ! that was a dream,
For it is on my finger. I will sleep
And dream of her again.

CONSTANTIA. Paolo, look !—
There at your feet—what glistens there ?
(PAOLO *picks up the seal.*) The seal
Of Paracelsus ! Why, how strange—the priest
Administered the phial ere we came !

FERDINAND. O ceaseless chattering !
(CONSTANTIA *motions to PAOLO to withdraw.*
EXIT PAOLO.)

Side by side we stood
Together in the twilight—her dear hand
In mine :—she is no vision ;—but the ring—!
(*He half rises again, and falls back asleep.*)

CONSTANTIA. Asleep ! Most marvellous ! Had I but known
That healthful stream was coursing through these
veins !
Dear youth, thy life is saved by him I love,
And I at length may leave thee. Ferdinand,
Sleep on, until the healing work is done ;
Then wake to strength and joy and happiness,
While I go hence to age and misery ;
And may all holy angels keep thy soul
Unscathed by sorrow ! Sweetest friend, farewell !

SCENE III. IMELDA'S Room. IMELDA and DOMENIC. AGATHA
in attendance.

IMELDA. But must it be this morning ?

DOMENIC. No delay.

You made this holy compact in the heat
Of ecstasy—fulfil it ere you cool.

IMELDA. You fear lest I should break my solemn vow.
I will not.

DOMENIC. I but seek to spare you pain.
With all convenient haste I will prepare
For your reception. Peace be with your soul !
(EXIT DOMENIC.)

IMELDA. Could I but will him to me, lay my head
Upon his shoulder, and so gently die,
Freed from the weight of the approaching years !

AGATHA. They are deceiving you. He cannot live.

IMELDA. He lives and I have saved him. Ferdinand,
The dreadful price is paid. Come forth, I say !
The grave shall not devour thy loveliness,
Or sickness blight thy manhood's glorious bloom.
Come to me, love, I love thee !—Through the dawn
He hastens to me, folds me in his arms—
Belovèd !—what unlawful words are these ?
My brain is reeling—Agatha, he comes !
I know that he is near me—help me, girl.

(*She sinks weeping. AGATHA consoles her.*)

O, holy Mother, keep my soul from sin !

(*With a wild cry she rushes to the door.*)

Listen ! I hear his footstep on the stair.

AGATHA. It is the wind.

IMELDA. He is coming ! Hark ! My love,
You must not enter. Ah, he lives, he lives !
The priest has kept his promise.

(ENTER FERDINAND *at the door opposite to the one from which DOMENIC went out.* IMELDA *flies to his arms.* EXIT AGATHA *in astonishment and delight.*)

IMELDA.

Ferdinand,

Risen from the tomb. (*He takes her in his arms.*)
These arms which fold me

round

Are flesh and blood ; that heart still beats ! O bliss
Unspeakable to have you here alive !

(*Breaking away.*)

Ah, no ! alas ! my vow ; you live, you live !

Unhappy fate ! O leave me, Ferdinand !

Ah, God ! My vow ! We must not meet again.

FERDINAND. Your vow ? What mean you ?

IMELDA.

My most sacred vow.

For know you not, you lay at point of death,
When, through my sacrifice, I saved your life.

FERDINAND. What sacrifice can save a man from death ?

IMELDA.

You dead now live—by wondrous miracle
You stand before me now a living man.
But O ! the dreadful price ! The priest commands
That I should take the veil this very day.

FERDINAND. Priest, priest again ! No priest upon this earth
Shall come between our lives.

IMELDA.

But you were dead.

He pledged his word to bring you from the grave,
Demanding in exchange my solemn vow,
Should he deliver you, that I would give
My life for yours. He kept his word with me,
And so I must with him.

FERDINAND.

Incredible !

He tricked you thus, this cunning, treacherous rogue ;
Your guardian's creature, bribed by him to steal
Your liberty and shut you from the world,

That he, Lorenzo, through this villain's lie
 May keep your father's fortune. Yesterday
 I broke their web of falsehood. In a night
 These poisonous spiders bind you fast again ;
 But by God's providence a second time
 I come in time to free you.

IMELDA.

Ferdinand,
 The priest has saved your life—I know not how ;
 It matters not—you live.

FERDINAND.

But not through him,
 Or his unspeakable and shameless lie.
 The priest did nothing ; and this monstrous vow,
 Extorted from your weakness when despair
 Had sapped the throne of will, is meaningless
 And void as words unspoken. You are free,
 Free as the air and sunshine ; you are mine ;
 Belovèd bride, this rapturous dawn of Spring,
 Whose myriad voices cry unceasingly
 From every flowery meadow, stream and tree,
 "Come to me, love," leads in our marriage day,
 Shouting from heaven and earth—I love you !

IMELDA.

Cease !

My heart is breaking. Could I go to you—
 O bliss ineffable ! For one short year
 Beside you, I would gladly sacrifice
 All joy and life to come. For I am yours.
 My soul is dyed your colour and my thoughts
 Fill in your outlines ; therefore tempt me not !
 If you take sides with nature I must yield.

FERDINAND.

O be not cruel as you love me !
(He tries to draw her to him.) Come
 For ever from this evil place of dreams !
 Belovèd, wake ! The dreadful night is past ;
 We stand upon the threshold of the day.

IMELDA.

(gently but resolutely breaks away)
 O God, I cannot ! Hear me, Ferdinand !
 Could I persuade myself that phantasy,

Deceit or madness blinded me—Ah no!
 Death held you in his clutches and the priest
 By some mysterious means delivered you.
 He claims my sacred promise—we must part.
 And this I cannot, dare not disbelieve,
 Strive though I may against my conscience.

FERDINAND. Then I will free your conscience. I defy
 These rogues and plotters who deceive you thus,
 To triumph o'er our peace.
 Lorenzo shall disgorge this very day
 And give you all your fortune; this vile priest
 Shall make confession of his perfidy;
 The viceroy, to whose greatness I appeal,
 Will thwart their devilish projects.
(He moves towards her again.)

IMELDA. *(holding herself apart)* By that life
 Which I have saved, by your immortal soul,
 And as you hope for pardon and for peace,
 I charge you, nay, command you, to forbear
 From this, which cannot free my conscience;
 But only must increase a thousandfold
 Our bitter grief and hopeless misery.

FERDINAND. And by that gracious life which I will save
 From fraud and sorrow I must disobey.
 Then live for me or leave me as you will;
 But, as I live, you shall not die for me.
*(He makes one more movement towards her, which
 she repels, and then, accepting the inevitable,*
 EXIT FERDINAND. *As he goes out, ENTER*
 AGATHA.)

IMELDA. *(aside)*
 If I would keep my vow, it must be done
 Swiftly. They will prevent me! Agatha—

AGATHA. *(at the window)*
 Why do you let him go? He passes out
 Beneath the portal—Ah! How pale he looks!
 Have you no heart?

IMELDA.

The priest has blinded me,
For God could never sanction such a vow,
Or part our lives asunder. Ferdinand!

(She rushes to the door, throws it open, and confronts DOMENIC, who is on the point of entering. She shrinks from him, saying.)

Ah! let me pass, let me go!

(He makes the sign of the cross, and she falls sobbing at his feet.)

DOMENIC.

She is saved! She is mine!

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE I. *The same as Act I. Morning.* ENTER PAOLO with a bunch of flowers.

(PAOLO sings.)

THE SONG

Wake ; it is day!
Glad skylarks sing to the sun and the sea.
On orange sands in the bay
The long blue billows break and swell,
Laughing, laughing and dancing with glee.
Come! Let's away,
Love, in a waking dream of delight ;
Across the rainbow spray,
Through valleys where pale violets dwell.
Belovèd, wake! It is no more night.

(ENTER ONOFRIO.)

ONOFRIO.

Have you seen Agatha this morning?

- PAOLO. No. I have just returned from the country, and have seen no one.
- ONOFRIO. It is strange—would you believe it, that girl follows me about like a shadow ; cannot be happy out of my sight ; a most interesting and pathetic case of sexual attraction. And I have practically given her no encouragement at all—a look now and then, and a sigh—thus,—Heigh-ho !—no more.
- PAOLO. Ah, youth, youth ! As you are strong, Sir, you should be merciful.
- ONOFRIO. I never sought women. That is why they follow me. I am to them an enigma, a man of mystery. When I was younger I may tell you, in confidence, that the late Countess would make overtures to me twice a week ; but I always rejected her advances. She called me Joseph. If I had been a vain man, this solicitude might have flattered me. It was for Agatha that I got you to write verses, as I had not time to write them myself ; but unless they are entirely re-written, they will, I fear, jeopardise my reputation.
- PAOLO. Well, I must try to accommodate you. I confess, however, that the verses appear to me about as perfect as it is possible to make them.
- ONOFRIO. That is because you are young and vain, and have never had the advantage of sound criticism.
- PAOLO. But are we to work for the critics only ?
- ONOFRIO. Undoubtedly. The public dares not trust its own feelings ; so it employs those who are above feeling anything to decide for it.
- PAOLO. And are these decisions always just ?
- ONOFRIO. I am not speaking of the past ; in our present state of culture and enlightenment they are quite infallible. So you see, my young friend, that you have to go to school and learn ; and who knows but in time you may even become a critic yourself.

- PAOLO. O!—and you think that Agatha cares for you?
- ONOFRIO. I very much flatter myself that she does. I would not mention as much to anyone else—but, in the strictest confidence, mind—let me whisper it in your ear—she kissed me.
- PAOLO. Liar and slanderer! Stay, let me strangle you!
(ENTER AGATHA *from the side opposite to the Palace.*)
Agatha, this fossil says that you kissed him.
- AGATHA. Well—I suppose that my lips are my own to do what I like with.
- ONOFRIO. Ah, there, you see! She admits it! You owe me an abject apology.
- PAOLO. Let me kill him!
- AGATHA. Onofrio, leave us for a while, and I will bring the foolish boy to his senses.
- ONOFRIO. Foolish boy is good. Yah! Foolish boy! (*To AGATHA.*) You at least know how to appreciate the merit of comparative maturity.
- PAOLO. He is like the Winter pear, which was so long beginning to get ripe that it shrivelled. Now, Sir, do you hear her? Leave us!
- AGATHA. (*aside to ONOFRIO*) Onofrio, believe me, he is a little touched here (*tapping her forehead*). He has been thus since childhood.
- ONOFRIO. Merciful powers! An idiot—! I thought as much when I heard his depreciation.
- PAOLO. What is she telling you?
- ONOFRIO. Fellow, she says that you are an idiot.
- PAOLO. (*taking off his coat*) For the last time, I ask you to go.
- ONOFRIO. Will you brawl in the presence of a lady?

PAOLO. Sir, my best wish is to ignore you ; my last thought is to assault you, but I am compelled to remove you. I'll teach you to criticise my verses !

(PAOLO *chases him round from corner to corner, then grasps him and carries him out.*)

ONOFRIO. Help, help ! let me go !

(ONOFRIO, *who has broken away from PAOLO, runs back across the whole length of the stage and EXIT followed by PAOLO. When PAOLO reaches the centre, AGATHA seizes and detains him.*)

AGATHA. Paolo, you are a sad fool !

PAOLO. (*disengaging himself*) Agatha, do not touch me !
How can I marry you now ?

AGATHA. Do not mention marriage to me. Paolo, know that I have learnt to look down on the vanity of mere human love.

PAOLO. Is that why you kissed that inhuman old carrion ?
How strange ! This very morning, when I was out gathering violets, one of the girls told me, blowing on a dandelion, that my engagement would be broken off.

AGATHA. Which one dared to say so ?

PAOLO. Little Carmela.

AGATHA. The slut ! If I ever told tales, there are things about her—!

PAOLO. Has she been kissing Onofrio too ?

AGATHA. To-day my mistress enters the convent, and I have sworn to follow her there.

PAOLO. Your mistress—when the prince her lover is saved from death !

AGATHA. Alas ! that is the reason.

- PAOLO. O woman, woman ! And what do you expect me to do when you go into the convent ?
- AGATHA. Sing a little outside—and then die.
(*The Chapel bell begins to toll.*)
- PAOLO. But why in the world should your mistress do this ?
- AGATHA. She would not but for that hateful priest. He made her swear that if he saved the prince's life by a miracle, she would become a nun ; and he did.
- PAOLO. O Agatha ! and you called *me* a fool ! A miracle—the priest ! Why, a baby wouldn't be taken in by a trick like that !
- AGATHA. Paolo, what do you know about it ? (*With sudden admiration and hope.*) You know everything.
- PAOLO. O ! Then your fool is not such a fool as you took him for. Your mistress swore to become a nun if the priest would work a miracle. Agatha, as an atonement for—hm !—impropriety, will you swear to marry me—though I protest I don't want you—if I work another miracle and set her free ?
- AGATHA. Dear Paolo, save her, save her, and I will do anything you ask me.
- PAOLO. Impulsive Agatha, down on your ungrateful knees and thank heaven for me : for it was I—I the fool, the idiot, who found him out. The prince's recovery was no miracle. The priest saved his life with a drug which he had from the nurse. Kiss me Agatha !
- AGATHA. Paolo ! (*They embrace. AGATHA breaks away.*) O, that hateful bell ! It dins in my ear. (*Looking towards the Palace.*) Look, look—my mistress ! Why this mad haste ? Unhappy bride ; and I did not even dress her ! It was for this that she sent me away. I will throw myself at her feet.

(ENTER from the Palace a Procession of PRIESTS chanting, with ACOLYTES bearing candles, followed by NUNS. Then an open coffin; and lastly IMELDA walking under a canopy arrayed as a bride. As she reaches the centre of the stage, AGATHA breaks away from PAOLO, and throws herself at her feet.)

AGATHA. Stay, I implore you, madam! All is plain—
The priest deceived you, gave the prince a drug
Stol'n from the nurse—with this he made him live.
My gracious mistress, hear me!

IMELDA. Agatha,
I must not and I will not hear you. Girl,
Let go my dress and leave me!

AGATHA. What again,
You send me from you! In the name of God,
Once more I entreat you, wait.

IMELDA. I dare not wait.

AGATHA. O hideous wrong, deceit and trickery!

IMELDA. The priest delivered him—I know not how—
It matters not. Since he has made him live,
My life is vowed to heaven. Alas! poor child,
I cannot break my promise.

AGATHA. Dearest madam,
A promise which should never have been made
Is better broken.

IMELDA. This it shall not be,
And, as you love me, leave me, girl. Lead on!
(EXEUNT IMELDA and TRAIN into the Chapel.)

AGATHA. All, all is darkness; my last hope is fled.

PAOLO. Then we must overtake it. Courage, girl!
No time for vain despondency or tears.
Come, dry your eyes! I left the nurse asleep,
Exhausted Nature's prisoner. She knows all,
And she may help us yet. Come, Agatha!

SCENE II. DOMENIC'S Cell.

(LORENZO and DOMENIC.)

LORENZO. You have done well.

DOMENIC. Not I. 'Twas highest heaven
Revealed the means. The convent gates now close ;
She is for ever uncontaminate.
O hark, the bell which calls her home to Christ !
It dances in my heart like marriage peals.LORENZO. (*ironically*)
You speak most like a bridegroom.DOMENIC. It is true.
Our hearts are joined in mystic union.
My spirit has paced beside her through the streets.
Now she is in the chapel—ecstasy !—
And in the light of myriad twinkling candles
Kneels, her pure face upturned, for the last time
Framed in the glorious halo of her hair.LORENZO. (*astounded at this*)
Things have not gone so far ! Alas ! I fear
You have been over hasty.DOMENIC. (*with ecstasy and aloofness*) Alleluia !
Her soul is saved, her soul is saved ; and I
May watch the flight of that pure spirit, soaring
On airy pinions towards eternity.LORENZO. But first and most important—by the terms
Of her late father's will, ere she devote
Her life to heaven, I must obtain from her
A statement that it is of her free choice
She takes the veil.

DOMENIC. Such trifles vex us now.

LORENZO. My brother's dying wish must be fulfilled,
His last injunction. You must come with me.

DOMENIC. Matters of gravest moment keep me here.

LORENZO. But she is in your power, bound to obey
Your priestly orders—to act on these alone.
You, plainly, must demand her signature,
Not I.

DOMENIC. You cross my conscience sorely.

LORENZO. Come !
Wait here, and I will fetch the document
Drawn up for her to sign.
(EXIT LORENZO.)

DOMENIC. Could I refuse ?
She is bound to do my bidding. Gracious God,
When I would pray, what wild and monstrous
thoughts
Surge up against my will ; thoughts I abhor
Yet cannot stifle. Should their pollution spread
Beyond to her ? I care not for myself,
Who rather than defile her garment's hem
Would gladly die three deaths. Weak, weak my
will !
I, who denied myself the sight of her ;—
Yet at the first temptation I am fallen.
(ENTER CONSTANTIA).
Lorenzo, back so quickly ?

CONSTANTIA. It is I.
Strange news has reached me—that within an hour,
At your direction and by your command,
Imelda takes the veil.

DOMENIC. She gives herself
In gratitude to heaven.

CONSTANTIA. A miracle
Has been performed by you, a dying man
Restored to life. (*Pause.*) My phial saved his life.
You will not dare deny it. Look ! the seal,
Which, when surprised by me, your guilty haste
Let fall upon the floor.

(*She hands him the seal. For a moment he is overcome with confusion, but quickly regains his composure.*)

DOMENIC. The man was dead.
Imelda willingly relinquished him
To save his life, and I have made him live ;
No matter by what means. She had her will
And I her sacred promise.

CONSTANTIA. But this phial—
I gave it you in love, and with my gift
You break my heart. To gain your secret ends
You wreck the happiness of those I love.

DOMENIC. I save the souls alive of those you love.
O Sister, could you know the sacred end
For which this deed was done, you would rejoice
That heaven so blessed your gift !

CONSTANTIA. I know it well ;
I knew it from the moment when we met ;
You love Imelda,

DOMENIC. With a holy love
Which soars above the thoughts of this base world.
True love is of the soul.

CONSTANTIA. Body and soul
Are one. You think to split your being up,
To play the part of heavenly providence,
When all your thought, affection, sense, are merged.
In one fierce lava stream, molten with flame.
You speak of God—your God is jealousy.

DOMENIC. How gravely you misjudge me ! Yet for him
Whose infamy you know not, whom you trust
In abject faith and simple innocence,
Whose father wrecked my mother's soul,
 (CONSTANTIA *starts*) you seek
To steal this child from holy church and me ;
The only comfort I have ever known
Since my false mother left me and I stood
Forsaken by the world.

CONSTANTIA.

Though all the world
 Forsake us and forget us ; though none love us,
 Or man or god ; though on Promethean rocks
 We hang outstretched and vultures tear our hearts,
 We still may be as gods invincible,
 Triumphant over pain—and so will you :
 For God be praised, you are the instrument
 Of craftier hands than yours. At any cost
 Your eyes must now be opened, when I know
 That in love's name you will relinquish her.

DOMENIC.

(driven to bay and fighting in terror against the inevitable)

I will not hear you ! At this man's command
 You come to tear her from me. Get you gone !
 I hold her promise for I saved his life,
 And, as I live, I will not set her free.

(RE-ENTER LORENZO, with a document.)

LORENZO.

Here is the document.

DOMENIC.

(awaking to the situation) Yes, yes—I come !

CONSTANTIA.

But not before you have heard me.

LORENZO.

Domenic,

This very moment or we shall not see
 Imelda as a bride !

(As they prepare to go, CONSTANTIA places herself between them and the door.)

CONSTANTIA.

You shall not go !

LORENZO.

And who are you would stay us ?

CONSTANTIA.

Call me chance,

Or fate, or providence. Have years of grief
 Transformed this face so far from its fresh mould
 That recognition fails you ? Look on me !

(She approaches quite close to him.)

LORENZO.

(recoiling in amazement and terror)

Most horrible spectre, blast me not ! Go hence !
 The grave has cast you up.

- CONSTANTIA. And in good time.
If you repent and set Imelda free
The grave again shall swallow me ; refuse,
And all shall be disclosed.
- LORENZO. *(after pausing irresolutely, with sudden decision)*
Come, Domenic !
*(LORENZO makes a move towards the door,
CONSTANTIA again blocks the way. To
CONSTANTIA) :*
You will not let us pass ?
- CONSTANTIA. That will I not,
Until he first has heard me.
- LORENZO. Stand aside,
Or I will force a way in spite of you !
- DOMENIC. She is a woman, Sir.
- LORENZO. Ah, Domenic,
I needs must seem ungentle ! If you knew
Who stops your path ! Her very presence here
Degrades you and pollutes you ; her disgrace,
Unexpiated by the grave, is yours,
And brands you with an endless infamy.
- (The light slowly breaks on DOMENIC.)*
- DOMENIC. My mother, source of all my misery,
Who had not strength to live, or grace to die !
Could no shame keep you from the sight of me ?
*(He recoils from her and is on the point of turning
away with LORENZO. She again places
herself between them and the door.)*
- CONSTANTIA. Stay, for you wrong the living and the dead !
Has he the right to accuse me thus, and I
No right to answer him ? So help me God,
I am not guilty !
- DOMENIC. You ! Then deadly sin
Is virtue, loftiest goodness infamy.

CONSTANTIA. God is my judge, not you. My inmost heart
Is in His holy keeping, and the peace
Which passeth knowledge, like a winter calm
Encircles me. I will not answer you.
But, in behalf of those whose happiness
Lies trembling in your hands, I needs must speak
And save you from this villain.

LORENZO. Domenic,
Judge for yourself, who know me—have I need
To make reply? Who sent this woman here?
Upon her own confession, this vile man
For whom she pleads. A fresh conspiracy
Is plainly now on foot, and to gain time
He sends her, and with desperate cunning strives
To sow distrust between us. On your soul
Waste not an instant!

CONSTANTIA. May God's providence
Judge betwixt me and thee, voice against voice.
(To DOMENIC.)
And you, be not persuaded either way
Except on fullest proof. There speaks the man
On whose bare word your father cast me off,
Refusing even to hear me, whose bare word
Defiles the memory of a virtuous prince.
At length I hold him fast. Prince Ferdinand
Has led a life so honest and secure
From breath of scandal, that no calumny
Brought to the light 'gainst him can live. Be this
The crowning test between us who speaks truth,
Who falsehood; I will gladly venture all
On this plain issue—let this man produce
His evidence, and with the sovereign help
Of heaven, I will confound him.

LORENZO. Domenic,
Would that the nature of the case admitted
Of such a test! You know as well as I
We cannot furnish proof; had we the time
We could not. (*Sinking his voice.*) Who dare
thwart the king's decree?

- CONSTANTIA. I ask not you for proof ; but let me hear
Your accusation. If I fail to bring
Complete disproof, such as will satisfy
This priest's calm judgment, I will then admit
That justly in times past you took away
My credit, reputation, happiness.
- LORENZO. Modest request and reasonable—that she
Should have the right to doubt and question us,
Gaining our confidence in behalf of him,
This villain, whom she serves.
- DOMENIC. (*breaking in*) One moment, Sir !
(*To CONSTANTIA.*)
You left my father and in face of this
Most damning fact, assert your innocence ?
- CONSTANTIA. Unless temptation, at the eleventh hour
Resisted and repelled, be deadly sin,
Then I, so help me heaven, am innocent.
- LORENZO. She left your father, yet is innocent !
And with such fables she will keep you here !
Folly and madness ! Dreamer, madman—come !
- DOMENIC. Say what you will, I cannot leave her thus.
Lorenzo, think you after what has passed,
That I can ever know a moment's peace
Until I first have heard her ?
- CONSTANTIA. Listen, then,
To what I tell you now. Within a week
Of my mad flight from Naples, Count Francesco,
My best of friends, lay dying. In despair
At what had chanced, though his last hour had come,
He summoned Count Lorenzo to his bedside,
And pleaded for me. After he was dead,
This man with lies abused your father's ear,
Attesting falsely that the blameless prince
Was guilty of my ruin.
- LORENZO. It was true.

CONSTANTIA. As true or false as what you now allege
Against Prince Ferdinand, and on the same
Evidence, your bare word.

DOMENIC. My heart is rent
In pieces! Stand I spellbound on the verge
Of rapturous joy or measureless despair?
New hope, which, if fulfilled, ends all the hope
My hungry life has known!

LORENZO. You wretched fool!
Remain with her until eternity;
But I have neither time nor inclination
To be insulted by these fairy tales
Told by this lying strumpet, so farewell!

DOMENIC. Stop! As I live I'll hear her. As for you,
Your honour is at stake. Go if you will:
But since your niece Imelda cannot act
Contrary to my direction, as I live
She shall not sign until you first have made
Full answer to these charges. Stay you must:
But only—mark me!—on the strict condition
That you keep silence. Not a word or breath
Of interruption. Freely she must speak,
And freely I must hear her.

LORENZO. Be it so:
Since you determine thus, let her own words
Betray her and refute themselves.
*(LORENZO sulkily stations himself by the window,
and stands looking out.)*

DOMENIC. *(to CONSTANTIA)* Speak on,
I pray you. Tell me all from first to last.
*(As CONSTANTIA tells her story, DOMENIC grows
ever more eager and excited; LORENZO, who is
unseen by DOMENIC, ever more angry and
threatening. Again and again LORENZO is on
the point of breaking in, but checks himself
with difficulty.)*

CONSTANTIA. On your behalf I tell you, not on mine.
 Believe or disbelieve me as you will,
 But as your voice saved me in years long fled,
 So by God's blessing may mine save you now.
 Then hear my story—I was but a child
 When forced to wed your father, thrice my age ;
 We never met until our wedding day ;
 And I, unwooded, unwon, yearning for love
 Instinctively, as you do, gave my heart
 To one I called my friend. As in your case,
 My unacknowledged passions cloaked themselves
 Beneath acknowledged motives, in the guise
 Of honest friendship and a sister's love ;
 And he, a practised villain, fed my flame,
 Blowing upon the embers of my youth,
 (Craftily, as this man enkindles you)
 Till the fire crept, and I too closely watched
 For his vile purpose, he prevailed on me
 To leave your father's house. At dead of night
 I rose in fear and, like a guilty thief,
 Stole down the secret staircase. In the street
 A horse stood waiting, mounted by a groom,
 Who lifted me behind him hastily,
 And from the town we flew. Mile after mile
 Whirled by, an endless, awful solitude,
 Scarce lighted by the red, low-lying moon.
 And ever as we rode your gentle voice
 Came sobbing through the darkness after me,
 In anguished love, a helpless, yearning cry.
 Then with a start, I woke, and realised
 That I had cast that helpless love away.
 The spell was broken. I besought the groom
 To take me back to Naples ; he refusing,
 I flung myself to earth.

LORENZO. A likely tale !

(A warning gesture from DOMENIC.)

CONSTANTIA. Weeks later I awoke to consciousness
 In a poor peasant's cottage.

- LORENZO. (*pressing forward eagerly*) Domenic,
Now hear my test—upon what evidence
Can she establish this? Will any man
Confirm her childish story?
- CONSTANTIA. None, I fear;
But if he were alive this cobbler could,
Pietro Vaggio.
- DOMENIC. (*with a cry*) Agatha's father!
- CONSTANTIA. He
And his good wife nursed me with ceaseless care:
But when at length I sought in penitence
My husband's pardon, alas! it was too late;
This man to save himself had ruined me.
- DOMENIC. With this you charged Lorenzo. Was he then
This man's accomplice? Why—what desperate
motive
Urged him?—without a motive—you?—O God,
You loathsome devil!
- (LORENZO *has approached* CONSTANTIA *threateningly* and DOMENIC *flies at him*. He *draws his dagger*. DOMENIC *disarms him and throws the weapon to the far corner of the cell*. They *stand confronting one another*.)
- LORENZO. Violent, credulous fool!
Can you believe this unsupported lie,
Without a shadow of foundation?
- DOMENIC. (*after a long and painful pause*) Yes. (*Pause*.)
You tempted me to murder. (*Pause*.) But for her,
This guardian angel sent me from above,
The guilty blindness which had sealed my eyes—
Foul hypocrite!—had dyed my soul in crime.
Unclean, polluted, I am fall'n, am fall'n!
- (DOMENIC *bows his head on the table and weeps*.
EXIT LORENZO *stealthily, unperceived by him*.)
- CONSTANTIA. O waste no precious time in vain remorse,
Who yet have strength and purpose to do good!

- DOMENIC. *(the safety-valve is now open)*
 Mother! At last, at last! Enfold me now
 In those dear arms! O, I have missed you so,
 Longed for you so! My heart had grown so hard.
 Can you forgive me?
- CONSTANTIA. My son, my son!
(They embrace with the deepest emotion.)
- DOMENIC. Say, am I dreaming? Is it from the tomb
 You come most holy? I have had such dreams;
 My heart has wept for you unceasingly.
- CONSTANTIA. That sound I heard through all the bitter years.
(Long pause: then with a sudden return to the situation.)
 But you forget Imelda—set her free.
- DOMENIC. *(passing his hand over his brow in the greatest agitation)*
 I had forgotten her. O, pitying God,
 Cherish and strengthen me! Dear mother, come!
(She takes him by the hand lovingly.)

SCENE III. *Same as Act I. Service is proceeding in the Chapel.*
Organ and chanting of PRIESTS. ENTER the VICEROY with
 PIETRO, ONOFRIO and ATTENDANTS.

- VICEROY. *(to ONOFRIO)* Stay you with me! *(to PIETRO)* Then,
 Sir, you confirm this confession of the dying groom,
 Orsino. I understand from you that on the night
 in question, years ago, you found a man, out in
 the road near Amalfi, trying to lift a lady who was
 lying senseless on to his horse; that you took
 him for a brigand, and were about to attack him;
 but that at sight of you, he mounted quickly and
 rode off.
- PIETRO. Yes, your highness' grace; it is true, every word,
 as I'm a living creature.

- VICEROY. (to ONOFRIO) And you, Sir—you know this groom to have been in the service of Count Lorenzo at the time in question.
- ONOFRIO. Your Highness, I knew him well.
- VICEROY. Soft ; Lorenzo !
(ENTER LORENZO *in great haste with the document in his hand. He sees ONOFRIO.*)
- LORENZO. Well met, Onofrio. Come with me at once ; I need your signature as witness.
- VICEROY. Stop !
- LORENZO. I cannot, Sir.
- VICEROY. (*uncovering himself*) You must.
- LORENZO. My God, the viceroy !
- VICEROY. What have you in your hand there ? Give it me
- LORENZO. Your pardon, Sir. 'Tis but a private matter, Of no account to any but to me.
- VICEROY. I will see it. (*Takes the paper and reads.*) “ Inasmuch as I, Imelda—take the veil of my own free will, I now in accordance with—” What is this ? Take the veil—renounce her estate. Where is she ?
- LORENZO. Sir, in the law's name, let me pass !
(*In desperation he rushes to the Chapel doors and begins to hammer.*)
- VICEROY. Stay there !
In the king's name I charge you. (*The doors are thrown open ; the SACRISTAN appears, and on seeing the VICEROY, bows low.*) Sacristan,
Bear to the Lady Abbess instantly
This message from the viceroy—on his knees
He craves her pardon that he is compelled
To invade these holy precincts. But this lady,
Seeking to enter her noviciate,

Is in his charge, protected by the State,
And he must speak with her immediately.
In the king's name, bring her without delay.

(IMELDA is led out, escorted by NUNS.)

IMELDA. Against my will they bring me.

VICEROY. Countess Imelda,
Last night you were betrothed to Ferdinand ;
A few hours later you became a nun.
Is this incredible change of your free will ?

IMELDA. With my consent, but not of my free will.
It was heaven's will, not mine. I gave myself
To save the prince, who by a miracle
Has risen from the grave.

LORENZO. I charge you, girl,
To speak the truth. Was it on my persuasion
You acted thus ?

IMELDA. I have not seen you, Sir,
Since my betrothal.

LORENZO. Then we may proceed.
Here is the document for you to sign,
By which, according to your father's will,
Our interests are protected.

IMELDA. Bring a pen
And I will sign.

VICEROY. (*as she is about to sign*) You shall not.

LORENZO. By what law
Am I thus hindered when I would discharge
My brother's last injunction ?

VICEROY. You shall know.
Your former groom, Orsino, who lies dying
Beyond Amalfi, sent me yesterday
A full confession of your infamy.

LORENZO. What infamy ? I know not what you mean.

VICEROY. The story is confirmed by this old man.
Countess Imelda, what strange miracle
Redeemed your lover from the gates of death?
By whom was it performed?

IMELDA. By Father Domenic,
Our kinsman and a priest.

PIETRO. May it please your Grace,
This priest and kinsman was Constantia's son.

(ENTER FERDINAND, *followed by* PAOLO *and*
AGATHA.)

FERDINAND. Most noble viceroy, hear me!

VICEROY. Your pardon, Sir!
Here is the priest, and we will question him
(ENTER DOMENIC *and* CONSTANTIA *together.*)

FERDINAND. Constantia!

VICEROY. It is she. Unhappy lady,
I fear this man has done you grievous wrong.

CONSTANTIA. The fault was mine.

VICEROY. It takes more men than one
Or two to make a fault. This guilty wretch
Has much to answer for. But first of all,
As guardian he must straightway answer this—
Where is Imelda's fortune?

ONOFRIO. (*approaching* LORENZO) Rat, rat, rat!
But rats when shaken may turn round and bite.
(*At a sign from the* VICEROY, LORENZO *is*
arrested.)

LORENZO. The devil take you all!

IMELDA. In pity spare him!
I shall not need a fortune. It is his
When I become a nun.

- DOMENIC. That shall not be,
 Except of your free will. O, take her, prince,
 And make this working earth a paradise !
 (*To IMELDA.*) In mad presumption I would guide
 your life
 Who could not guide my own ! Thanks be to God,
 Who in the moment of extremest need
 Through this blest angel saved me. O forgive
 My guilty acts ! Imelda,—you have sworn
 To do in blind obedience what I bid you.
 Then take him without question, and we twain
 Whom providence has blessed, may from afar
 Behold the sunshine of your happiness.
- FERDINAND. I have no voice to speak ; my dearest mother,
 Blest angel, thrice you have saved me from the grave !
- DOMENIC. She is my mother too, who from the grave
 Has marvellously returned ; we then are brothers.
 This day we all have risen from death. Kind
 heavens,
 O'ershadow all our future paths with peace.
- CONSTANTIA. My son !
- VICEROY. Lead him away !
- IMELDA. O, spare him, Sir !
 I am ignorant of his crime ; but in the name
 Of this new happiness, let him go free.
- VICEROY. We must not leave the weasel and the kite
 At liberty to prey on helplessness.
 No, child ; you cannot have your will in this !
 (*AGATHA forces her way to the front, with PAOLO
 and followed by ONOFRIO.*)
- AGATHA. My dearest mistress !
- ONOFRIO. Kiss me, make love to me and then cast me off for
 this mountebank, this ballad-monger !
- IMELDA. (*pointing to PAOLO*) Will you take him Agatha ?

AGATHA. Madam, I tell him that I am not calculated to make the happiness of any young man.

PAOLO. But I have fulfilled my promise.

AGATHA. Paolo, if I take you, it is only with the intention of reforming you.

PAOLO. In that case my happiness is certain.

VICEROY. *(with a smile, giving his hand to CONSTANTIA)*
Come you within. The rest we may explain
At leisure ; but this very afternoon,
So dangerous is delay, shall be their nuptials ;
And I will stand as father to the bride,
While this good priest shall bind their lives in one.

(Acclamation. As the VICEROY and his party slowly ascend the steps, PAOLO sings.)

THE SONG

Now our play is over and done,
We may dance and we may run.
Children, cast your cares away ;
Dance and sing and shout and play ;
Leap and spring and speed and bound
In a circle round and round !
Thus may all our discords cease,
All our sorrows end in peace.

(The VICEROY and PARTY have reached the top of the steps, FERDINAND and IMELDA walking first, followed by CONSTANTIA, who walks between the VICEROY and DOMENIC. DOMENIC stands as if in a dream, holding his mother's hand. The CROWD cheer and dance.)

CURTAIN

BEETHOVEN DEAF

An Historical Drama in One Act

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS little play was written in December, 1903, and has remained unaltered since. In the Spring of 1904 I sent it to Sir Herbert Tree, and on May 24th of that year he wrote to me, with his invariable courtesy, as follows—

“ I have now had an opportunity of carefully reading your one-act play entitled ‘ Beethoven Deaf,’ but I am sorry to say that the size of it makes it unsuitable for production at this theatre. I have been much interested in reading it, and beg you to accept my thanks for having let me see the work.”

Two or three years ago a long play on the same subject met with great success in Paris and was afterwards translated into English and produced by Sir Herbert Tree at His Majesty’s, with an accompaniment of Beethoven’s music, such as I had mapped out, though on a much humbler scale, for my own little play. I did not see or read this work, and I only mention the date of mine from a fear lest I should be suspected of a plagiarism of which I am innocent.

Beethoven had two brothers, Karl and Johann.

(1) Karl, who was a hopeless drunkard, died in 1815 deeply in debt to Beethoven, to whom he bequeathed his only child Karl. Beethoven adopted the boy contrary to the advice of his best friends.

(2) Johann, originally a chemist, made a fortune out of the Napoleonic wars and purchased an estate at Gneixendorf, where the play opens. Both brothers married women of bad character.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

KARL Nephew and adopted son to
Beethoven.

JOHANN Landed proprietor ; formerly
a chemist ; brother to
Beethoven.

HOFRATH STEFAN VON BREUNING }
SCHINDLER } Friends to Beethoven

A DOCTOR

FRAU JOHANN Wife of Johann.

SALI } Servants to Beethoven.
SEFA }

The Scene opens at Johann's Gneixendorf house, and changes to Beethoven's apartments at the Schwartzspanierhaus in Vienna.

BEETHOVEN DEAF

SCENE. *Gneixendorf. A room in the house of JOHANN VAN BEETHOVEN. At the back is a French window opening into a conservatory ; on the left a piano. Wind and rain, which as the scene proceeds increases to a tempest. FRAU JOHANN is playing the piano and encouraging KARL, who pretends that he is his uncle conducting an orchestra. He stands in the middle of the stage with his back to the audience and beats time with the poker. First he crouches close to the ground, kneeling down and stretching out his arms to the floor ; then gradually rises, swings his arms about, and leaps higher and higher.*

KARL. Crescendo, crescendo!

FRAU JOHANN. Karl, you will kill me! You foolish boy, leave off! (*She stops playing and approaches him.*)

KARL. (*still beating time*) The music is over long ago ; the people are applauding, but I cannot hear them. Ah! what fire, what passion! Thunder and lightning!

FRAU JOHANN. Leave off.

KARL. Nay ; you must turn me round and clap your hands as if you meant it. O, it was a dreary performance! (*She takes his arms and turns him round. He bows gravely as if to an audience.¹ Then suddenly he kisses her.*)

FRAU JOHANN. Karl, how dare you!

KARL. (*still imitating his uncle*) A brotherly kiss. (*Passionately.*) If you look at me like that I must kiss you.

¹ The above is a travesty of the pathetic incident on May 7th, 1824, when Beethoven conducted the Ninth Symphony for the first time.

FRAU JOHANN. You forget yourself sadly. Because I have the unhappiness to be tied to a man old enough to be my grandfather, you must not forget that I am your aunt.

KARL. And may not a nephew kiss his aunt? (*Seriously.*) Nay, you know that I love you. Ah! cruel one, how can you be cold to me? It is you who make this intolerable place a paradise.

FRAU JOHANN. Intolerable indeed! O, the dullness! If you were not a silly boy I should be quite angry with you for speaking to me like this. How dare you? You are silent!

KARL. (*kneeling*) I love you, my angel, I love you!
 (*He takes her arms and is about to kiss her again. Meanwhile the door is thrown open, and a servant shows in VON BREUNING and SCHINDLER. In great confusion KARL and FRAU JOHANN escape through the conservatory, KARL last. The SERVANT retires leaving SCHINDLER and BREUNING alone. BREUNING treats SCHINDLER with a touch of superiority.*)

BREUNING. Surely that cannot be the boy!

SCHINDLER. O, that rascal! You must have seen him before.

BREUNING. You forget that it is eleven years since we quarrelled. And to think that boy was the cause! He would adopt him, and I besought him not. Beethoven was not the man to undertake the charge of anyone.

SCHINDLER. Our poor friend was always so unworldly.

BREUNING. Unworldly!—Why, in those days we had to pick his pockets before he went out, or he would bestow his entire fortune on the first beggar. What right had his drunken brute of a brother to saddle him with his son?

- SCHINDLER. The boy's mother was obviously an unfit person to leave any child with.
- BREUNING. But why should Beethoven be the victim? He had given the fellow ten thousand florins and was absolutely penniless himself; he knew well the hindrance the boy would be to him; yet he seems to have regarded his brother's dying charge as a sort of call from heaven.
- SCHINDLER. Yes. I should say that the great man in his awful loneliness may have felt a yearning tenderness for the child which drew him to act against his better judgment.
- BREUNING. That was just it; and as a consequence vengeance fell on me, the friend, who represented mere reason. After a quarrel, in which he laid to my charge every known crime, and some besides of which I had never heard, he practically turned me out of the house. (*Change.*) O, he treated me ill! very ill! My blood boils even now when I think of it.
- SCHINDLER. Ah! forget and forgive! The man is a mere child. I am more than glad that you are here, for I am greatly troubled about him.
- BREUNING. You do not mean—?
- SCHINDLER. I fear that he is not long for this world.
- BREUNING. You cannot mean that.
- SCHINDLER. I saw him out with his note-book in the woods last week.—You know how he works; writing each bar twenty or thirty times, until he gets it to suit his exacting sense of right.—As he danced and raved, unconscious of my presence, then I saw the finger of death on him. (*Pause.*) It was a joy when I received your letter asking me to meet you here this morning; for possibly between us we may persuade him to return to Vienna.

- BREUNING. Herr Schindler, I have felt for some time past that right or wrong I must make the *amende*. How few, how very few, there are whom as we get on in life we can genuinely respect ; and, notwithstanding his faults of temper, how great and noble my old friend is ! When I consider how short a span is left to us, mad indeed it seems to be sitting on opposite sides of a street irreconcilable, without a shadow of reasonable cause ; from mere foolish pride denying ourselves that mutual comfort, the possibility of which must so soon be lost beyond recall.
- SCHINDLER. Not a soul here cares for him.
- BREUNING. In heaven's name what is he here for at all ? He never spoke of his other brother, the chemist fellow, save in contempt.
- SCHINDLER. (*sinking his voice*) Surely you must have heard of the scandal.
- BREUNING. For eleven years I have practically lost sight of Beethoven.
- SCHINDLER. Young Karl, after a varied career, was expelled from the university. Next, having failed in a commercial examination, he attempted suicide.
- BREUNING. And failed in that too ?
- SCHINDLER. He was banished from Vienna. His uncle, who had stopped in town all the hot summer for the boy's sake, was obliged at a moment's notice to flee with him here ;—probably the last place which Beethoven would have chosen.
- BREUNING. Then my forebodings were fulfilled.
- SCHINDLER. I don't suppose, what with the woman and her son, that he has enjoyed a moment of peace for the last eleven years.
- BREUNING. Sh !
(ENTER JOHANN. *He bows pompously.*)

- JOHANN. Good afternoon, gentlemen. Herr Schindler, your servant. Herr Hofrath, it is many years since we last met, but anyone who is legally entitled to write *von* before his name is ever welcome to my poor estate. My brother is not in, and the kind heavens know when he may return. Perhaps in two minutes; perhaps never. (*He motions them to chairs.*) Very few people wish to see him now. What with his deafness, and his temper, and the extraordinary stuff he has been writing for years—
- SCHINDLER. His music becomes greater every day.
- JOHANN. Herr Schindler, haven't I got ears?
- SCHINDLER. I grant that it is very difficult to understand.
- JOHANN. Clean crazy, Sir. I always said to him in his palmy days, "Make your honey, my dear Ludwig, in the sunshine; and when Winter comes, like a wise bee stop in your hive and eat it."
- BREUNING. (*with satire*) And he would not listen.
- JOHANN. Never saved a kreutzer. Then the war came, and his fine friends were scattered. Now it is all Rossini, Rossini; nobody talks any more of Beethoven. And no wonder. Ever since he became deaf there has been no melody at all in his music. It gives me cold water down the back even to hear him singing it.
- SCHINDLER. Possibly future ages may come to entertain a different opinion.
- JOHANN. Future ages? Stuff and nonsense—begging your pardon, Herr Hofrath. As if future ages, overburdened with their own follies, will have time to bestow on the ravings of a half-crazy deaf man. Even if they should, what good would that do him?—it is an absurd dream. Why could he not try to go with the times, and write lively and pretty tunes? That was always the worst of

Ludwig—he was so conceited. Because he could play and compose, and because his rudeness amused the great, who always secretly respect those who have no fear of them, he thought the world was not large enough to contain him. It was the old story. They took him up, tired of him, and dropped him. You should have heard him talk in those days. (*Laughing.*) He used to compare himself—you will hardly believe it—with Napoleon! Once I called on him and sent up my card—Johann van Beethoven, Landed Proprietor. What do you think he did?

BREUNING. Nay, I have no idea.

JOHANN. He sent down his, and on it was written—Ludwig van Beethoven, Brain Proprietor. The arrogance! So like Ludwig! (*They all laugh, BREUNING and SCHINDLER at JOHANN.*) But in thus speaking freely of my poor brother, you must not think that I undervalue him.

BREUNING. (*to change the subject*) He has, I fear, had much sorrow since we last met.

JOHANN. His own fault, his own fault! He was always so unpractical—expected that young Karl would turn out a sort of shadow of himself. Boys will be boys. When the poor lad failed in his examination, he dreaded so much the reproaches of his uncle that he preferred death to meeting them. I confess that I have much sympathy with the boy; and so has my wife, who makes quite a pet of him.

SCHINDLER. Ah! (*Pause.*) It is evident, Herr Johann, that if we desire to hear Beethoven's praises sung, we must not come to you.

JOHANN. His praises? O, I know how great he was and all that; but it serves no good purpose to be blind to a brother's failings. That is the part of a flatterer, not of a friend.

- BREUNING. (*aside*) Men never discuss the failings of those whom they love.
- SCHINDLER. (*to Johann, meaningly*) It is very evident that you are his friend, or you would not keep him here so long on a visit.
- JOHANN. (*in some confusion*) O, ah, yes! To be sure, to be sure.
- SCHINDLER. But the main object of my coming to-day is to tear him from you—to persuade him to return to Vienna.
- JOHANN. (*eagerly*) You must not do that! He is absolutely in need of the country air; and besides, Karl would be arrested in Vienna. The disgrace would kill Ludwig.
- (RE-ENTER FRAU JOHANN *from the conservatory. She curtseys very stiffly to the visitors. JOHANN turns to her.*)
- JOHANN. My life, these gentlemen have come to see my brother, and they actually talk of persuading him to return to Vienna.
- FRAU JOHANN. And, in my opinion, a good thing too. Every hour he is up to some new mischief. A flood of water comes pouring through the best ceiling—Beethoven is washing his hands! There is a noise like the last judgment—Beethoven is swearing and breaking the furniture! The floor is covered with food—Beethoven is having his dinner!—though there has not been any cause to grumble about this for the last few days, as the monster has forgotten to eat any. He has thumped the soul out of my beautiful piano, Colonel von Bruyck's present to you—It is of no use your making signs to me to be silent. I know your reason for wishing to keep him here; but I am sure that the damage he does more than swallows up any advantage you may gain, and the sooner we are rid of him the better.

- JOHANN. *(at the window)* My brother is coming through the garden. He is simply not fit to be seen; so perhaps these gentlemen will retire while I try to persuade him to tidy himself.
- BREUNING. It is not necessary. But if *you* will do me the great favour to leave us for a few moments alone with him—!
- JOHANN *(somewhat haughtily)*. Certainly, Herr Hofrath, if you wish it. Come, my soul!
- FRAU JOHANN. He will shake the water all over my furniture!
(EXEUNT JOHANN and FRAU JOHANN.)
- SCHINDLER *(at the window)*. And now—do not let his appearance be a shock. I am glad that I had the chance of preparing you.
(BEETHOVEN comes in through the conservatory. He is unshaven, his clothes are disordered and his boots in holes. His hair is snow white. In his hand he carries a note-book and pencil. He is wet through, and proceeds to shake the water from his hat and coat over the furniture. Then, unconscious of the presence of the others, he goes over to the piano and begins hammering the keys with his fists, at the same time singing hoarsely. He puts his ear quite close to the keyboard.)
- BEETHOVEN. No sound, no sound!
Homer and Milton blind; Beethoven deaf! *(He writes.)*
- SCHINDLER. He has not noticed us!
- BREUNING. Sh!
- SCHINDLER. O, you may shout! He will not hear you. *(He places himself in front of BEETHOVEN.)*
- BEETHOVEN. *(in furious anger)*. Devil take you! How dare you put your fool-carcass there? Ach, God!—

flown, flown! (*Change.*) Friend Schindler (*graciously shaking both Schindler's hands*), you little know the evil you have done! Ever since five this morning I have been out trying to concentrate my thoughts; and inspiration had just come when you disturbed me.

SCHINDLER (to BREUNING). Come forward!

BEETHOVEN. Whom have we here? (*Recognises BREUNING, and starts back. Then turns sharply to SCHINDLER.*) Out of my sight, scoundrel! It is a plot, an infamous plot! You bring him here to gloat over my misery.

(*BREUNING holds open his arms with an appealing gesture. BEETHOVEN after a pause runs to him and falls sobbing into them. SCHINDLER retires to the window and begins to write.*)

BEETHOVEN. Stefan, Stefan! My benefactor; dear friend of my youth; fellow lover; when all the world forsakes me you come back! Ah, it was my fault, my fault! Forgive me!

BREUNING. O, if my voice could pierce those poor ears!

BEETHOVEN. Where all was dark, at any cost it seemed best to follow love. That was my only motive.

BREUNING. I know, I know.

BEETHOVEN. But you were right, right, Stefan. How splendid you look! Is the boy well? He must be an immense fellow by now. Ah! if you love him do not let him see it, or he will despise what comes to him unsought. Any more children? (*BREUNING shakes his head.*) Sly dog, sly dog! (*digging him in the ribs.*) Your pardon; one moment! (*He writes.*) O, I have been ungrateful! When I lost my own dear mother, yours treated me like a son. My dear, sweet Stefan, forgive me! (*He embraces him again.*)

- BREUNING. Have you a great work on hand?
- BEETHOVEN. (*handing him the note-book and pencil*) Be so kind as to write. I cannot hear you.
- BREUNING. (*writing*) O piteous spectacle! (*He hands BEETHOVEN the book.*)
- BEETHOVEN. (*During the following he slowly approaches the piano and begins to play dreamily and passionately. But the softer notes are inaudible, and when for a moment the music becomes loud he thumps terribly.*)
A quartette. I am also sketching my tenth symphony.—Ah! it might have been finished by now; but I have had sad interruptions. Would you care to hear the scheme?—(*suspiciously*)—but you will not breathe it to a soul?—It is a song of liberty. The human spirit as it advances, slowly prevails over the tyranny of outward things; until purged from the abject fear of power and the accursed worship of pomp and wealth, it stands in naked simplicity face to face with its Maker. I have united the august male virtues of Paganism with the female tenderness of Christianity—the patient defiance of Prometheus, the fiery tenderness of Christ. And through all this, the poor worm, man—suffering, hoping, yearning,—advances—yes; advances—(*He plays on oblivious of the others.*)
- SCHINDLER. He has forgotten that we are here.
- BREUNING. Do not disturb him.
(*BEETHOVEN begins to write rapidly in the note-book.*)
- SCHINDLER. (*showing BREUNING what he, SCHINDLER, has been writing*) I have begged him in your name and my own to return to Vienna. We still may save him. At any rate I can look after him a little there, and he may be persuaded to see a doctor.

BREUNING. To my knowledge he has already quarrelled with four.

(BEETHOVEN *who has again begun to play stops abruptly, banging the notes repeatedly with his fists. A complete change comes over him. Going hurriedly to SCHINDLER, with a boisterous, boyish laugh, he unties his tie. He then turns abruptly to BREUNING.*)

BEETHOVEN. Stefan, do you remember that day, in the Restaurant, when I emptied the stew over the waiter's head? How helpless he stood, with fourteen dishes balanced on either arm—ha, ha, ha!—alternately swearing—ha, ha, ha! and stopping to lick up the warm gravy as it trickled down his nose.

BREUNING. I can only nod my head and laugh: but I feel more disposed to weep.

BEETHOVEN. (*taking the paper from SCHINDLER*) What is this? (*Reading.*) Return to Vienna. Ah, my friends, how I should like to go with you! The weather would not seem so cold there. But it is impossible. My son is unable to return—no matter why—and I cannot leave him here alone with these people.

BREUNING. (*with an imploring gesture, and using his lips carefully to enunciate his words*) He is old enough to take care of himself.

BEETHOVEN. Ah, no! I cannot, will not leave him.

SCHINDLER. Alas! It is impossible to reason with a deaf man. He will give his life for this ruffian, who is not worth the dust on his shoes.

BREUNING. If we could get the rascal a commission in the army and pack him off, there might still be a chance of saving our friend.

SCHINDLER. I fear that is out of the question. No commanding officer would take such a *mauvais sujet*.

(BEETHOVEN is again writing rapidly and singing hoarsely the while.)

BREUNING. (*putting his finger to his lips*) We must not disturb him. Come! I will return in a day or two on the chance of finding him less busy.

SCHINDLER. Yes. I know of old that it is useless trying to influence him in these moods. It is a wild night, and we have barely time to catch the coach at Krems.

(*They steal out, unobserved by BEETHOVEN.*)

(RE-ENTER FRAU JOHANN. KARL pokes his head out from the conservatory and makes a ridiculous noise like the cooing of a dove.)

KARL. Coo—o—o!

FRAU JOHANN. Sh!

(ENTER KARL.)

KARL. Have they gone?

FRAU JOHANN. Yes. My husband is seeing them out.

KARL. Like this I suppose. (*Bowing and scraping with mock pomposity.* FRAU JOHANN laughs. *Then seeing BEETHOVEN.*)

FRAU JOHANN. Ah! So you are there! We will try which is stronger; we will see, my fine brother-in-law, if you shall break my piano with your fists.

KARL. (*aside, rubbing his hands gleefully*) Now for a tug of war!

(FRAU JOHANN seats herself at the piano and begins to strum the overture of the "Barber of Seville." BEETHOVEN slowly advances and without perceiving her sits on her knee. She screams.)

BEETHOVEN. Thousand devils! Out of my sight, woman!

FRAU JOHANN. (*beginning to play again*) That is all the apology you make, you insolent brute! A likely story—my own drawing-room, my own piano.

BEETHOVEN. I implore you to go. You cannot understand what harm you are doing.

FRAU JOHANN. I understand too well the harm you are doing my piano. What is the use of a piano to a deaf man? Better buy a cannon and fire it off.

BEETHOVEN. (*entreatingly*) But for one moment; one little moment!—Ah! these scenes waste so much time!

(FRAU JOHANN rises, locks the piano, and takes the key.)

FRAU JOHANN. Never again! The piano my precious Adolphus—I mean the Colonel—gave me! Never shall it be defiled by those monkey fingers any more. I will die sooner.

(FRAU JOHANN sweeps across the room. BEETHOVEN goes to the piano and after trying in vain to open it, begins hammering the case. KARL explodes with laughter; FRAU JOHANN turns on him furiously.)

FRAU JOHANN. Now you are making fun of me!

KARL. No, upon my honour.

BEETHOVEN. She-devil, give me the key! (*He rushes to her and seizes her hands. She screams.*)

(ENTER JOHANN.)

JOHANN. In heaven's name, what's the matter?

FRAU JOHANN. Murder, murder! (BEETHOVEN pursues her round the room.) Johann, if you don't save me from this madman, I will leave you for ever.

(BEETHOVEN sinks into a chair and bursts into tears.)

JOHANN. My angel, why could you not let him alone?

FRAU JOHANN. And have my piano spoiled as well as the ceilings and floors? No; if you want to keep this ape, Herr Beethoven, go into the forest with him and climb trees. A decent house is no place for such a monster.

BEETHOVEN. Brother, as I cannot be free from endless interruptions here, I will for the future work in my room. Order a fire to be made there immediately.

FRAU JOHANN. He will set the house on fire—I protest against this arrangement—besides the extra cost; and wood so dear!

JOHANN. It is quite out of the question.

FRAU JOHANN. Sometimes I wonder if he knows that he will have to pay us for staying here.

JOHANN. Karl, surely your father expects to pay for your board and his own?

KARL. He always expects so much. Heaven alone knows what he expects! I know that it would have been a blessed thing for me if I had never seen him.

JOHANN. Karl, Karl, you must not speak thus! Why, he rescued you from ruin!

KARL. Oh! he is very kind and all that. But then, he was the next-of-kin; and he had neither wife nor child of his own. I suppose that he could not very well have left me to starve.

BEETHOVEN. (to KARL) Go immediately to Krems and hire a piano. Say that Beethoven requires it.

(KARL and FRAU JOHANN move towards the conservatory. KARL looks at the rain and at his clothes, and shakes his head.)

BEETHOVEN. (to JOHANN) Brother, one word with you. I cannot longer refrain from speaking. I have saved a small sum for poor Karl; such a small sum. But he is your next-of-kin as well as mine.

- JOHANN. Good heavens! What next!
- BEETHOVEN. You are rich; you have no children; make my poor boy your heir.
- JOHANN. To have my fortune squandered by an ungrateful, heartless gambler; no, my good brother; you shall not cast your dust-bin refuse on me.
- BEETHOVEN. (*eagerly*) You agree! O my brother, it has been such a fearful weight on my mind all these years!
- JOHANN. The most impudent request I ever heard! (*Shakes his head savagely.*) No; a thousand times, no! (*To FRAU JOHANN.*) The fellow is raving mad!
- BEETHOVEN. (*wearily*) Brother, I did not mean to offend you. Is the fire made yet?
- JOHANN. (*shaking his head*) No.
- BEETHOVEN. The fire in my room, I mean.
- FRAU JOHANN. (*advancing*) Do not let him have the fire. It would not pay us even if we charged an extra five florins a week.
- BEETHOVEN. The fire!
- JOHANN. (*who has taken the book from BEETHOVEN*) That would not pay for the wood, to say nothing of the trouble and inconvenience. I have written that it is impossible. (*Hands it back.*)
- BEETHOVEN. Impossible! Dare you use that word to me? Johann, I am not so small a man as to remind you of all you owed to me when a boy; and it was good of you to take us in here. Perhaps I should thank you. I would have done as much for you, and it seems strange to thank you; and yet I do. Forgive me if I have appeared ungrateful.
- FRAU JOHANN. Heavens! He *does* think that he has been our guest for over a month—to say nothing of the damage!

- JOHANN. *(taking the book again)* This must come to a head at once. *(Begins to write hurriedly.)*
- BEETHOVEN. The fire, the fire! These interruptions madden me. All that this house contains is not worth one of my thoughts, which are wasting—running away! It is so small a request.
- FRAU JOHANN. The meanness! To think of his quartering himself on us like that—as if he could not afford to pay!
(JOHANN hands the book to BEETHOVEN.)
- BEETHOVEN. Surely no further excuse. *(Reads.)* What is this? Board and lodging—Ah! something which I have forgotten—No, no; it cannot be! We come to you for sanctuary, and you treat us like lodgers. *(Throws the book violently from him.)* Ah! miser; you hog, you lump, you worm! Curses of my life have been you who were born my brothers. My patience is gone.—Karl, have the horses put in. I return immediately to Vienna.
- KARL. *(moving his lips)* The police!
- BEETHOVEN. I care not. We will brave the police, my Karl, you and I together. O child! the cold night, the rain and the storm do not wound like ingratitude.
(EXIT BEETHOVEN.)
- KARL. King Lear on the heath!
- FRAU JOHANN. A good riddance I call it. But you will stay, Karl.
- KARL. *(aside)* O, the joy to be back in Vienna!
- JOHANN. This is insanity! I will not be a party to it. Certainly no horses or carriage of mine shall stir out on such a night.
- FRAU JOHANN. Then he will have to hire the milk cart. He will get his death of cold; that's one comfort.
(RE-ENTER BEETHOVEN with a pile of manuscripts.)

BEETHOVEN. Here is your money! (*He throws it piece by piece at JOHANN. Then, turning to KARL*) Are the horses ready?

JOHANN. You shall not have my horses.
(EXIT JOHANN.)

BEETHOVEN. What did he say, Karl?

KARL. (*speaking and gesticulating at the same time*) He will not let you have them.

BEETHOVEN. (*shouting after JOHANN*) Brain-eater! Pseudo-brother! Asinus! (*To KARL.*) No matter; come!

(EXIT BEETHOVEN *into the rain after first shaking the dust off his shoes.*)

FRAU JOHANN. O Karl, Karl, you will not go!

KARL. My angel, I must.

FRAU JOHANN. Then take this coat. It is your uncle's. (*She helps to envelop him in a long, warm coat.*) Good-bye, dear Karl! (*She kisses him.*)

KARL. Until we meet again!

(EXIT KARL.)

(MUSIC. *The SCENE CHANGES to BEETHOVEN'S lodgings in the Schwartzspanierhaus, Vienna. At the back there is a window, and by it a door leading to the inner room. Four days have elapsed. SALI is busy with a mop, which she uses with extreme clumsiness. Then ENTER SEFA, extravagantly overdressed in cheap finery.*)

SALI. O, here you are, are you! A nice thing for me to be slaving myself to death for you.

SEFA. (*in a scared voice*) Surely he has not come back.

SALI. Yes—the old devil; just like him, spying and prying as usual. Came back four days ago—in a milk cart!

- SEFA. O Lord! What did he say about me?
- SALI. He's been lying on his bed groaning ever since.
Even that's better than the noise he makes when
he's well.
- SEFA. Lord! It is a row!
- SALI. He sent me all over the place for a doctor; but
not one would come—and no wonder!
- SEFA. (*confidentially*) Did Herr Karl come back too?
(*Sniggers.*)
- SALI. O, yes. He made him go for a doctor as I couldn't
get one. That was three days ago. Devil knows
what's become of *him*!
- SEFA. (*significantly*) At his old games, I suppose.—Well,
after all, it's lucky for me.
- SALI. Yes; and it would serve you right if you had been
caught. A young girl like you to go gadding off
for days—and nights—together.
- SEFA. Really, Mrs. Propriety! And what have you been
doing? Has he thrown any more eggs at you?
- SALI. (*raucously*) What do you mean?
- SEFA. You know what I mean.
- SALI. Do you dare call me a thief? It's lucky for you
I don't call you something else—O, I couldn't
mention such a word, I couldn't!
- SEFA. You! You're a beauty, you are! Where were you
living before you came here?—I know.
- SALI. You little filth, you street-scum, you gutter-worm!
- SEFA. (*dancing round her*) O! filth, am I, street-scum—
(*She darts at her to scratch her face; SALI defends
herself vigorously with the mop.*)

(ENTER BEETHOVEN *from the inner room, wearing a dressing-gown, and holding a music score in his hand. He looks extremely ill.*
EXIT SEFA *hurriedly.*)

BEETHOVEN. Has Herr Karl returned? Has the doctor come?

SALI. No.

BEETHOVEN. (*sinking into a chair*) Leave me!

(EXIT SALI.)

Behold, we finite creatures, with a mind
Infinite, are but born for grief or joy;
And do the best obtain their happiness
Through sorrow? Master Musician, dost Thou wring
Our deepest notes from pain? O, look on me
Most miserable, forsaken and stone deaf,
Wasting the precious moments; I whose pen
But few, few notes has uttered—faint, first notes;
Gleanings of that bright harvest yet ungarnered
Which grows within my heart! Master of tones,
Thou whose poor servant I have ever been,
Waiting for Thy low whisper in my soul,
And caring little for the praise of men;
Child of Thy kingdom, Thou unknowable
And mighty God, who with bleak sorrow drawest
Thy chosen in; Thou wouldst not have me die,
Before my work is done, loveless, alone.

(ENTER SALI *showing in the DOCTOR.*)

SALI. You've come at last, Herr Doctor. We expected you three days ago.

DOCTOR. But the message has only just reached me!

SALI. Why, Herr Karl promised he would go at once.

DOCTOR. It was a billiard-marker who gave me the message.

SALI. A billiard-marker!

- DOCTOR. Yes. He was taken ill and brought to the hospital. When he saw me, he remembered that someone had told him to fetch me last Tuesday. (*While speaking the DOCTOR has approached BEETHOVEN, who now sees him.*)
- BEETHOVEN. (*rushing to DOCTOR and seizing him by the coat*) Doctor, doctor, where is my son Karl? Has he not come with you. Ah! They have arrested him, and he is in prison. I knew it, I knew it!
- DOCTOR. What does he mean?
- SALI. O, he is not mad! He often goes on like that.
- BEETHOVEN. Why have you been so long in coming? Did not Karl fetch you?
- DOCTOR. No.
- BEETHOVEN. (*very agitated*) Who was it, then? The police! Ah! my God, my God!
- DOCTOR. How shall I tell him?
- SALI. You will have to write it, Herr Doktor (*handing book*). Be calm, Herr Musiklehrer! Sit down!
(*BEETHOVEN sinks exhausted into a chair.*)
- BEETHOVEN. Excuse me, Sir, but where is my son, where is my son? Who asked you to come? I know that he could not have forsaken me—my good Karl—now that I am ill. (*He gets up and eagerly takes book which DOCTOR hands him. Reads.*) A billiard-marker! (*Pause. Sinks down in chair quite crushed.*) Gambling again; and for this he would let me die!—curse him, curse him!—his father! Thank God, I am not his father!—viper brood! (*With dignity.*) Sir, I was staying at my brother's country house and came back in the wretchedest of the devil's own conveyances. I do not think that I am very well; but perhaps I have only taken cold.

- DOCTOR. Yes, yes, Herr van Beethoven; come into your bedroom and we will see.
(BEETHOVEN *has a fit of faintness.* DOCTOR *supports him.*)
- DOCTOR. Come come! (To SALI.) I fear that he is very ill!
(EXEUNT BEETHOVEN *and* DOCTOR *into inner room.*)
(ENTER KARL.)
- KARL. Good morning, Sali. Pretty as ever. (*Kisses her.*)
- SALI. O, Herr Karl, for shame! (*Coquettishly.*) What would your uncle say?
- KARL. Sali (*confidentially*), can you lend me two florins—just till this afternoon? I left my money in the other room, and I don't want to worry my uncle.
- SALI. I sent all I had to my mother yesterday.
- KARL. You expect me to believe that! O Sali, Sali!
- SALI. Sh! The doctor is there, and he will hear you.
- KARL. What doctor?
- SALI. The one you sent the billiard-marker to fetch.
- KARL. I had forgotten. How did you know? Surely the man was not such a fool as to tell the doctor that he was a marker?
- SALI. Yes, he did; and the doctor has told your uncle. He is in a fine way about it.
- KARL. Good Lord! He will disinherit me. This is serious. What's to be done?
(RE-ENTER DOCTOR *very hurriedly.* KARL *screens himself from observation.*)
- DOCTOR. We have no time to lose. Herr van Beethoven is dangerously ill. There must be an operation within two hours. Come with me to the chemist: I want him to have a soothing draught at once.
(EXEUNT DOCTOR *and* SALI.)

KARL. Fool, fool, fool!

(Going towards BEETHOVEN'S door. The door opens and BEETHOVEN enters, in search of his score. He gropes and alternately pauses as if in pain, KARL keeping out of his sight.)

BEETHOVEN. *(in great agitation)* My score, my score; O, where is it! *(Then seeing KARL.)* Heartless devil! Out of my sight! Of a truth heaven punishes kindness as if it were a crime worse than murder; but the murderer goes free. Away! Go, go! I have done with you. Go back to your billiards! You have been with your harlot of a mother. *(KARL shakes his head.)* Liar, go to her and starve; you are her son! *(Half to himself.)* And for him I went coatless and shoeless—yet a moment's kindness to me in my need—ah God! hoping, praying for this satyr who was not worth half-an-hour of my time. *(To KARL.)* Go, go! *(Stamping. KARL bursts into tears.)* Your tears will not move me. I have often seen you weep since you were a passionate child. They are hysterical, not from the heart. Incurable as a cat, you have no heart but a stone. What are you waiting for? Go! I have done with you. Go, I say!

(BEETHOVEN begins again to look for the score, and when he fails to find it, his agitation becomes terrible. Meanwhile KARL sees the score in the chair and, with a quick look at BEETHOVEN, eagerly seizes and hastily conceals it under his coat. At last when BEETHOVEN has searched the chair in vain and is quite beside himself, KARL pretends to find the score and in an insinuating manner hands it to him. With a cry of relief he seizes it and, for the moment oblivious to all else, cries, "O Karl, Karl." Then, remembering the situation, he proceeds in a slightly softer tone.)

BEETHOVEN. When I think what I might have done but for you, forgiveness is a foolish word. Over my wasted years the wind of oblivion is blowing. This is Greek to you. Money and pleasure and to-day are all that you have ever understood. (*Break ; then sudden change.*) Karl, you were right, and I need forgiveness too ; I did not always set you the best example ; perhaps expected too much from you. (*Pause.*) Ah, boy, I will ask forgiveness ! Does not that touch your heart ? I ask *you* to forgive *me*. O, if you could be a new creature—even an honest creature, Karl, not staining our clean name—ah ! we would say no more of lofty flights, (*half regretfully*) though with your ability you might have flown once ; might even now, only you scorn to fly ! I who was proud and fiery am humbled to this. When the father saw his prodigal afar off, he ran to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him—I have never seen you afar off, and yet I run to meet you. Karl, Karl, it is only the heartless who are evil. Your mother took you away and taught you to scorn me. Why, why am I always to be a schoolmaster to you ? Now that you are grown up, cannot you see me as I am—loving you so tenderly (*with a long drawn breath*) and so lonely ? Have you no deep feeling which can be touched by your father's love ?

(KARL *rushes to BEETHOVEN and kneels at his feet. BEETHOVEN takes his outstretched hands, lifts him up and embraces him : then he goes to writing table and rummages among letters. ENTER SALI with a bottle of medicine.*)

KARL. It's all right, Sali ! I had a narrow squeak that time ; and it's true that I am a damned scoundrel. I never pretended to be anything else ; and I have been a damned, damned scoundrel.

SALI. O, not a scoundrel, Herr Karl ! A little gay, that's all. It's lucky you have made it up, for Hofrath

von Breuning has got you a commission in Field-marshal von Stutterheim's regiment, and they march at once.

- KARL. (*eagerly*) You lie! How do you know?
- SALI. I read the letter. It came this morning addressed to Gneixendorf. The authorities must have forwarded it.
- KARL. Uncle Johann never would!
- BEETHOVEN. (*with letter*) There's yet time. Karl, read this! Fly, fly, and order your uniform! It must be sent after you—never fear, I will manage to pay for it somehow. O child! I must part with you; but promise that you will look up as you pass the window.
- KARL. (*nodding*) Yes, yes!
- BEETHOVEN. Go, my dear boy; go and redeem your character. My blessing on you—your father's—
(EXIT KARL *hurriedly*.)
- SALI. And now, go to bed and take your medicine. (*Offers him the medicine bottle; he puts it aside.*)
- BEETHOVEN. Leave me, woman! (*Proudly.*) I must see my son pass by.
(ENTER BREUNING *with his son, a boy of fourteen, and SCHINDLER. BEETHOVEN rushes to BREUNING.*)
- BEETHOVEN. O most wonderful of men! How am I to thank you? My friend, my dear, dear friend, you have saved us. (*Shaking the boy warmly by both hands.*) Gerhard, old favourite! (*Holding him at arm's length.*) How you have grown! You do not remember me.
- BREUNING. (*to SCHINDLER*) We have got rid of the nephew.
- SCHINDLER. It is too late!
(BREUNING *writes.*)

- BEETHOVEN. What inspiration does a little joy bring! Ah! my Tenth Symphony! At last my long pupilage is over, and I begin as a composer in earnest.
- SCHINDLER. The king of music is talking like a servant.
- BEETHOVEN. I may still hope to bring a few great works into the world; and then, like an old child, to end my earthly course somewhere among good people.
- BREUNING. (*handing book to BEETHOVEN*) I tell him that Dr. Malfatti will come after all.
- BEETHOVEN. I cannot afford any more doctoring. Karl's outfit must be paid for, and I have no idea where to find the money.
- BREUNING. Curse Karl! Rare pain to have for friend a man who would murder you if you were to offer him money!
- SCHINDLER. I have this very morning received one hundred pounds from Moscheles. The Philharmonic Society in London, which intends shortly to give a benefit concert for Beethoven, send this on account.
- BREUNING. O, give it him!
- BEETHOVEN. What's this? One hundred pounds! The comrades of my youth, the kings and emperors and archdukes before whom I played and who were my friends, where are they now? And strangers in England send me one hundred pounds; yet people say that they do not love music in England! Stefan, Stefan, my joy is complete! (*Change. He leads BREUNING mysteriously to the writing table and opens a secret drawer.*) Friend, in case I die, let me show you the mechanism of this drawer. Here I will deposit the note. Here also are seven thousand florins which I have saved for poor Karl. It is his little fortune, and I would rather die than touch it. But, alas! how little it is.
- BREUNING. (*in amazement*) Seven thousand florins!

BEETHOVEN. (*cheerfully, though with physical effort*) Ah! I had to haggle for this. Publishers are a race of devils. (*He shuts the drawer and seats himself at the piano.*) They had always made such easy terms with me before, that they grew insulting when I demanded my due. (*Martial music sounds in the street, approaching.*) Listen! It is Karl. (*He drags himself to the window. The rest stand behind him.*) There they go! Left, right; left, right! And there sits the worthy Field-marshal in his carriage. He shall have my greatest quartette, and I, King Beethoven, will ennoble his name for ever. Look, look, there is Karl, in the last of the carriages! (*Change.*) Why, he is talking and laughing already; but he has not forgotten his old father. He will look up.

BREUNING. How strangely unfitted was our poor friend to deal with adventurers!

BEETHOVEN. (*with a bitter cry of disappointment*) He did not look up! He has forgotten already. (*The music dies away.*) Stefan, Stefan (*whispering and pointing to the boy*), is Gerhard like that? Tell me, I implore you! (*BREUNING shakes his head sadly but fondly.*) Why should I, who have so much work to do, and am so weak and unfit to bear, be rent in twain? Ah! years ago, when Ries wrote "Finis with the help of God," I answered, "O man, help thyself!" But, Stefan, I am so lonely, so lonely!

BREUNING. My poor friend!

(*SALI enters with a note, which she hands to*
BEETHOVEN. *As he goes on speaking he opens it in an absent-minded way, without looking at the direction.*)

BEETHOVEN. One cannot bear such a weight of ingratitude alone. Our dim eyes try to pierce the thick darkness, our hands clutch forward, yearning for a friend, a friend!—but His ways are past finding out.

SALI. (*drawing his attention to the letter in his hand*). A letter from Herr Karl!

BEETHOVEN. (*recognising the writing, and with a great revulsion of feeling*) Ah! he has written. Good boy, good boy! (*Reads.*) "Dearest Angel,"—he calls me his angel! "I have escaped from Ursus Major; and it is with infinite regret that I must leave thee for a time in the embraces of Ursus Minor. But courage, dear heart! I am now an officer in the army; and when I return, thy colonel will have to relinquish thee or die. Thine, Karl." (*With a puzzled air he turns the paper round.*) What is this? (*Reads.*) "To the high well-born Landed Proprietress Frau Johann van Beethoven." (*Beside himself.*) Johann's harlot of a wife—O God! "Ursus Major"—greater bear! That is me, his kind father. Damn him, damn him! (*He seizes the medicine bottle which SALI offers him and throws it down with all his force. It breaks.*) O fiends, O hell! With all my soul I hate him! My heart breaks—breaks! (*He swoons away, BREUNING and SCHINDLER catching him.*)

BREUNING. Unloose his collar,

SALI. (*aside, picking up the fragments of the bottle*) He has broken the bottle! And the chemist promised me two kreutzers for every one returned.

BEETHOVEN. *Plaudite, amici; comoedia finita est!*

(DARKNESS. Solemn music is heard. A wind rises. Then silence, followed by a terrific peal of thunder.)

(EPILOGUE: The stage grows lighter again. It is late afternoon. Through the window snow can be seen falling heavily. ENTER BREUNING from outside. As he gropes his way in, the door of the inner chamber opens, and SCHINDLER comes out.)

BREUNING. Is he yet conscious ?

SCHINDLER. Breuning, he has passed
 Beyond unkindness and a world of pain.
 Long time he wrestled in his lethargy ;
 But when the thunder sounded, he awoke.
 As if God's voice from heaven were calling him,
 Those deaf ears heard. One moment space he
 swayed
 His fist in air, as if he would defy
 The powers of darkness to molest him more ;
 Or like a mighty general, urging on
 His troops 'gainst some beleaguered citadel.
 Then the arm gently dropped, and he was dead.

BREUNING. Best so. That soldier spirit has won repose.
 Beethoven-Bonaparte he proudly wrote
 Across his hero-song. Presumptuous man,
 To link a name obscure with his who held
 The sceptre of the world ! Where is he now,
 That god who reared his throne on freedom's tomb ?
 Gone, cruel tyrant, drenched with human gore ;
 His glory scattered and his name a curse.
 But he, Beethoven, poor, despised and deaf,
 Has built his empire in the hearts of men,
 Where it shall stand and spread for evermore.

CURTAIN

Begun Dec. 3rd, 1903.

Finished New Year's Eve, 1903.

[NOTE. *It may be of interest to mention that the description of Beethoven's death is taken from the account of Hüttenbrenner (the friend of Schubert) in whose arms the great master died. At the moment of his death the devoted friends, Breuning and Schindler, were out together choosing a spot for the grave.*]

(MUSICAL NOTE. *Immediately after the thunder sounds, the Funeral March from the Eroica Symphony is faintly heard and continues throughout the Epilogue, swelling out as the curtain falls.*)

THE HOUSE OF THE WINDS

A Poetical Drama in One Act

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

TAJĪMA TOTARO	..	..	..	A Samurai of Kyōtō in the employment of the Governor of Yedo.
ITO	..	..	..	His friend.
TORA	..	..	..	Suitor to Tajima, friend of Ito.
HANAOKO.				

SCENE. Garden of the Governor's Palace at Yedo, changing to
the former residence of Tajima at Kyōtō.

THE HOUSE OF THE WINDS

SCENE. *Garden of the Governor's Palace at Yedo. Autumn. Bright sunshine. TORA and ITO are discovered. As the scene opens, a sound of cheering.*

ITO. Listen ! they shout again.

TORA. The Fortune God
Has fall'n in love with him. Like spreading flame
His bright career has leapt from point to point,
Till in full blaze of triumph he stands forth
The foremost of our time.
(*Another shout. ITO looks out.*)

ITO. How worn he looks,
As if the shouting of the populace
Wearied him past endurance.

TORA. What ails the man ?
Distinctions—honours, riches,—rain on him,
And yet he grows more gloomy year by year.
I wish a tenth of his good luck were mine.
What is it makes him sad ?

ITO. I cannot say ;
Unless domestic sorrows mar his peace.

TORA. Why are not men content ? They want the world,
Birth, beauty, riches, love, domestic bliss,
Enshrined in one frail woman. For his place
I would epouse the foulest witch alive,
And think her wondrous good and beautiful.

ITO. (*more seriously*)
I love this man ; and countless times of old,
When we were equals, it was on my tongue
To question him ; but prudence whispered " No.
If this deep woe be rooted in his home,
From old example you are likelier far
To lose your friend than serve him."

TORA. *(looking out)* Look! He comes
 Across the garden from the palace gate!
 If any man can bring my suit to thrive
 With him, 'tis you. I will withdraw.

(Bowing, in a falsetto voice.) Forgive me
 For having bored you so!

ITO. *(bowing repeatedly)*
 What words are these?
 Alas! my rustic wife, my bearish manners,
 My wretched bringing up, made me look bored
 When ravished by your charming conversation.

(EXIT TORA.)

(ENTER TAJIMA TOTARO, superbly dressed. He is
 attended by a retinue of SERVANTS, bearing a
 palanquin or kago. On seeing ITO, he gives
 them a signal to pass on. EXEUNT SERVANTS,
 bowing their heads on the ground.)

TAJIMA. Old friend, my heart is full. How many years
 Together we have watched the Summer snow
 Melt from the sacred peak of Fugisan;
 How often have we seen the year decline,
 And fruitful Autumn's golden days departed,
 Chill Winter reign once more. But in our hearts
 It has been Summer always.

ITO. Even so;
 And so I trust long years it may remain,
 Till we together glide into old age.

TAJIMA. *(with quiet decision)*
 My friend, alas! it is farewell.

ITO. *(with astonishment)* Farewell?

TAJIMA. This moment I leave Yedo.

ITO. You? Ah, no!
 Not for a day, not for a single hour
 Will you desert your lord and go away.
 Tajima has not grown dishonourable
 To sin past pardon and forsake his lord.

- TAJIMA. But you forget—the years have slipped away,
Our term expires this morning—we are free.
- ITO. And if we are, what matter ?
(*Gesture of dissent from TAJIMA, who moves away.*)
It is madness
To dream of going ; you, on whom the gods
Rain fortune past belief.
- TAJIMA. (*pacing to and fro*) The vengeful gods
In mocking retribution rain on me
Those heartless things for which I gave my heart ;
But in my heart is hunger day and night,
Longing unsatiated and black remorse ;
A desert dryness past relief of tears.
- ITO. Why should you be unhappy ?
- TAJIMA. (*He stops. Looking at ITO.*) Is it strange
In this wild world, where all is out of tune ?
- ITO. 'Tis you are out of tune, and not the world.
Old friend, your welfare is more dear to me
Even than your friendship. Tell me I entreat you,
What discord mars the music of your life ?
(*TAJIMA pauses irresolute. Then he presses his
hand over his brow, as if to shut out a vision.*)
- TAJIMA. Last night again I saw her ; fair as of old ;
And all the sea was glimmering with the dead,¹
Whose ghostly lanterns lighted o'er the flood
Their wandering barques towards the world of
shades.
- ITO. A brain-sick fancy !
- TAJIMA. Fancy ? 'Twas my wife ;
You did not know my wife.

¹ An allusion to the shoryōbune, or boats of the blessed ghosts—little vessels, two feet long, made of woven barley straw, which were launched at the conclusion of the feast of the Dead ; each household by this means despatching its relatives back to the unseen world.

ITO. You are dreaming, friend !

TAJIMA. *(with increasing passion)*
 The woman whom you knew—she was no wife,
 Who took, but gave me nothing in return ;
 No love, encouragement or loyalty,
 No sympathy or aid ; but ceaselessly
 Fretted and fumed, indifferent as a stone ;
 And cared not if I lived or if I died,
 So long as while I lived she had the right
 To weary me past patience.

ITO. *(the light breaking upon him)* Another wife !
 Had you a former wife ?

TAJIMA. Yes, years ago,
 Before I left Kyōtō and came here.
 My lord was dead. We fell on evil days
 Of direst poverty, and strove in vain
 To stem the adverse tide. Then came the chance,
 Which seemed the making of my life.

ITO. You mean
 The chance which brought you here.

TAJIMA. *(pacing restlessly away from Ito)* Unhappy wretch
 Was I, to be so tempted, so betrayed !

ITO. *(persuasively)*
 Nay, tell me all.

TAJIMA. A Kūge nobleman,
 Who shone resplendent in the sacred court
 Of the Mikado, now befriended me.
 He knew my father, who in better days
 Before my birth had done him benefits ;
 And being stricken with a late remorse
 That he had left his old friend's heir to starve,
 He offered me his aid if I would wed
 His daughter.

ITO. You divorced your former wife ?

TAJIMA. Ah yes !—and left Kyōtō.

- ITO. You did well.
You could not live and die in poverty.
- TAJIMA. What pity had I for her left desolate?
- ITO. A good Samurai¹ sacrifices all
To serve his lord ; for him treads underfoot
All ties of love and friendship ; and a wife
To serve her lord, her husband, gladly gives
Her love, her husband, yea, her very life.
You left her with her father.
- TAJIMA. She had none ;
No relative or friend in all the world. (*Pause.*)
I see her now. Her eyes were blind with tears,
Yet with a trembling voice she bade me go.
'Twas eve. The cherry blossom scattered lay,
And blown by every fitful gust of Spring ;
And as we parted from our last embrace,
The wild azalea glowed and flamed like fire
Along the sunset hills.² Wisterias hung
In trailing mauve and white across the path
Which I traversed, leaving my life behind.
- ITO. Small cause had you to quarrel with your friend,
Whose influence and kindness placed you here.
- TAJIMA. Ito, I might have known—man's charity
Is love of self and not of others. He,
My patron father-in-law, most patronising,
Had eased his conscience, and with the same shrewd
stroke,
Had freed his house of her.
- ITO. Your second wife.
- TAJIMA. Wife ! Do not call her wife ! Ah, then too late
I came to know the wife that I had lost !

¹ The relation of a Samurai wife to her husband is similar to that of her husband to his feudal superior.

² Only those who have been in Japan can realise the beauty of this spectacle.

- ITO. That is a story old as human life.
And yet in spite of all you prospered here.
- TAJIMA. Then through my mind a thousand daily acts
Of sweet unselfishness, unmarked before
Or taken as my due, began to troop
In ghostly throngs : and in the wakeful nights
I realised that all this world contains
Is dust and ashes when divorced from love.
Or if I slept, in wild, tumultuous dreams
I saw her kneeling in the old room alone,
Hiding her tears within her poor, worn sleeve ;
Or seated pale and listless at the loom
With idle fingers, where day and night for years
She toiled to aid me in my poverty.
- ITO. (*appealingly*)
You must not dwell on such unwholesome dreams.
The past with its dim hopes, delights, regrets
And golden possibilities, is dead
Beyond recall. No god can make it live,
And happiness lies in forgetfulness.
So forward ever !
- TAJIMA. (*with absolute decision*) No. My course is run.
If you but knew the joy which fills me now
At prospect of release, the yearning hope
That I may fold her in my arms again—!
- ITO. What you would follow, leaving earth behind,
Is but the shadow of a fevered brain,
Having no substance in reality.
- TAJIMA. Love is no shadow. What we courtiers seek—
Our crude ambitions, selfish purposes—
What are they but the shadow of a dream,
As baseless, fleeting, unsubstantial ?
But love like hers, the very spring of life,
The salt of action and the goal of thought,
Is real ; and I would rather woo its shade
If she be dead, than follow shadows here.

ITO. Tajima, if you go, I follow you.

TAJIMA. Your love is dearer to me than my life,
And by that love you shall not follow me
To cold obscurity. Your sap is green
And urges you to spread and grow. Stay here
In this bright sunshine of the prince's court.
I have besought his highness to bestow
My place on you ; and thus by my departure
Your fortune is achieved.

ITO. Say what you will,
But I will follow you.

TAJIMA. (*with absolute decision*) It cannot be.
Think not I undervalue or despise
Your tender love, which moves me even to tears ;
But for your sake and mine you must remain.
I go to meet my joy or grief alone,
And may the gods rain blessings on your head !
My retinue awaits me. Friend, farewell !

(*In grief he averts his face. EXIT TAJIMA. ITO stands with an expression of resolution looking after him.*)

(DARKNESS. INTERMEZZO. *The wind rises, and continues in long gusts throughout the scene. The voice of HANAKO is heard speaking through music.*)

He will not come ! Fast fades the day,
And o'er the rice field beats the rain ;
The dragon-fly has flown away,
The year draws in. My hope was vain.

To-morrow he will come. Ah, no !
I dare not hope, I cannot pray !
Camellias bloom amid the snow ;
But I am fading day by day.¹

¹ It is strictly in keeping with Japanese feeling that Hanako in her sorrow should compose a simple poem. Literary composition is regarded in Japan by all classes as the best antidote to grief.

(The stage grows lighter. The scene has changed to the former dwelling of TAJIMA in Kyōtō, a mean and dilapidated house. It is night. A ray of moonlight issues through a crack above the alcove. The wind whistles dismally, and alone disturbs the dead silence.)

TAJIMA.

(In the distance)

Hanako!

(A gust of wind. He is heard to force the shutters open in a distant room.)

(Nearer) Hanako! (He is heard approaching.)

(Stronger wind. Pause. He draws the fusuma aside.)

Hanako!

(An overwhelming gust. He enters the room and looks round in despair. The wind continues in long gusts, and throughout the following makes a duet with the speaker.)

TAJIMA.

Dark, ruined, desolate! Devouring Time,
 For ever moving on, thou wilt not deign
 For all our tears to stand a moment still!
 Amid thy ceaseless wreck of all we are
 O, is it possible our consciousness,
 That part which thinks, and hopes, and dreams, and
 loves,
 Shall fade and perish everlastingly;
 Gaining no recompense for sufferings past,
 For cruelty, injustice, ingratitude,
 When good and evil alike are swept away
 By thy cold avalanche to endless sleep?
 And wretched creatures wild to make amends,
 To blot out past indifference with warm love—
 Too late, too late, too late!

(He kneels in the alcove, facing the wall.)

Hanako! Wife,

Come to me; I call thee; come to me! Where
 art thou?

Somewhere, O surely somewhere, this wild night,
(wind)

Alive, or wandering on the viewless wind ;
 Or in some moonlit cavern by the shore
 Of an unfathomed sea, where children dead
 This midnight hour are piling heaps of stones.¹

(A crack of light is seen between the panels of the fusuma behind him.)

Ah ! if unkindness has not killed thy love
 My voice must pierce this earthly atmosphere,
 And reach thee, voyaging through the million worlds
 Which dot the ethereal vault with sparks of fire.
 Hanako ! Wife ! Where art thou ? Come to me !
(Turning he sees the light, and rises in wildest agitation.)

A light, a light ! Her favourite room—ye gods
 Mock me no further ! You will drive me mad.

(With trembling fingers, in expectancy and half ecstasy, he draws back the fusuma. HANAKO is discovered sewing by the light of a paper lantern. He starts back spellbound pressing his hand to his brow ; then utters an exclamation of delight. At the sound she lifts her eyes, and greets him with a happy smile.)

TAJIMA. O joy and sorrow mingled ! Blessèd pain
 Of too much happiness ! O bursting heart !

HANAKO Tajima ! Did you find your way to me
 Through these dark rooms unlighted and alone ?

TAJIMA. What darkness of the night or nethermost hell
 Could cause me miss my way ? Year after year
 One burning thought has held and tortured me
 To madness—I was bound ; I could not flee,
 Bursting my chains asunder, to thy feet
 Where now I kneel. Forgive me ! Ah, how cold

¹ An allusion to the cave of Kyu-Kukedo-San, which the spirits of dead children are believed to inhabit. They are supposed to spend their time playing in this manner.

Is language! If repentance, bitter tears
Wept inwardly, long years of sleepless pain
May win forgiveness from thee—

HANAKO.

It was wrong

To let my foolish memory give thee pain.
I always felt profoundly how unfit
I was to be thy wife; yet notwithstanding
'Twas only poverty drove thee away;
And I have never ceased to pray for thee.

TAJIMA.

(regarding her with amazement)

What miracle is this? Here I behold thee
In bloom of beauty and youth as when we wed,
More young than when we parted. The years have
left
No trace of toil or suffering on that brow.

HANAKO.

Speak not of sorrows; all the bitterest griefs
Were sweetest joys if borne, my lord, for thee.

TAJIMA.

O Hanako! thy griefs are ended now.
I will redeem the past—thy past and mine.

HANAKO.

It is my joy to think upon the past,
Thy gentleness and patience with me then.
Another would have left me long before.
But O, my lord, if this indeed were true—
If thou indeed hadst done me any wrong,
Thy honourable visit here to-night
Would more than make amends.
(Quietly dropping on her knees.) What sweeter bliss
Than thus to have thee at my side again,
Though but for one brief moment.

TAJIMA.

Say not so.

Say rather for the space of seven long lives,
Of all eternity! I have come back
To live with thee for ever. Hanako,
I now am free, I now have riches, friends;
At earliest dawn my servants will appear
And make this ruined home a paradise,
And they will wait on thee from morn till eve;

So farewell toil, so farewell poverty.

(Apologetically.)

To-night I come thus late and travel-stained,
Because my longing would not give me time
To change my dress or sleep.

HANAOKO. *(in an access of emotion)* Dear lord, my love !
*(As if remembering something she turns away weeping
bitterly. Her head sinks in her hands to the ground.)*

TAJIMA. Thus an o'erburdened lotus in the storm
Empties its heavy head surcharged with rain.¹
If this be joy !

HANAOKO. *(raises her head)* Forgive me ! When thou hadst
gone
I strove to think of thee unselfishly ;
And yet against my will I missed thee so,
That all my heart went out in one regret,
One yearning wish to have thee here again ;
And this has conquered. Love's imperious might
O'erleaps vast continents and oceans wide,
And travels swifter on his rainbow wings
Than sound, or light, or air.

TAJIMA. Beloyèd wife,
If thy winged thought was blown into my brain,
Like dust of honeyed flowers in summer time
Driv'n by warm breezes from the burning sun,
O love, it fertilised my barren life,
Until through suffering I became a man !
And with a man's clear judgment, Hanako,
A second time I claim thee for my bride.

HANAOKO. *(with a change to intense gravity and with solemn
appeal)*
Forget me, O forget me !

TAJIMA. What wild words
Are these ? Has my unkindness killed thy love ?

¹ This is an interesting sight in Japan. With a loud noise the flower empties its calyx and then stiffens up again.

- HANAKO. O help me, gods !
- TAJIMA. The mighty gods though just
Are pitiful ; and for one grievous fault
Will not for ever leave me desolate.
- HANAKO. I cannot reason and I cannot strive !
My eyes are heavy with the dew of tears.
- TAJIMA. The cherry blossom pales before the plum ;¹
Joy enters when desire and passion part.
I bring thee now a love more passionate,
The child of grief, of yearning, of regret,
Of knowledge born through pain. I love thy soul.
Come to my heart, beloved, come to me,
And o'er the crumbling ruins of the past
I will rebuild the broken arch of love !
(He attempts to embrace HANAKO. She imperceptibly withdraws from him.)
- HANAKO. *(quickly and with trepidation)*
Return to her, thy friends, thy wealth, thy life !
(Imploringly.)
O leave me, I entreat thee !
(Outside ghostly birds begin to sing, though it is still night.)
- TAJIMA. Hanako,
Hear me ! By all the blessed gods I swear,
And by the ghosts of our wave-wandering dead,
O wife, for one short moment in thine arms
I would give all the world ten thousand times,
And all the future worlds bereft of thee.
Come to my heart for ever, Hanako !
The years that lie between us were a dream,
And we are in the spring-time once again.
- HANAKO. Forgive me, love ! No longer can I strive.
I love thee utterly, more than thy life,
More than thy happiness. O pity me !

¹ The lotus flower is the symbol of innocence ; the cherry of sensuous and the plum of intellectual love.

(She falls into his arms. As he embraces her she slowly fades away. He stands as if turned to stone. DARKNESS. As the darkness closes in, TAJIMA falls prostrate. The voice of HANAKO is heard.)

Woe, woe, woe !
I have slain my love. His heart is dead,
And I in freedom wander on the wind
For ever, alone, alone !

(The stage grows light. It is dawn. TAJIMA lies stretched on the floor. The voice of ITO is heard in the distance calling him. ENTER ITO. He rouses TAJIMA, who at length sits up absolutely dazed.)

TAJIMA *(as in a dream, not realising the presence of ITO)*
Hanako ! Wife. O come again !

ITO. *(shaking his head sadly)* Peace, peace !
(Pause.)
She pined and faded after you were gone ;
And seven years yesterday, as the maple trees
Turned crimson in the Autumn air—she died.

(As the curtain falls, TAJIMA bends forward in hopeless despair.)

CURTAIN



ROUSSEAU'S DISCIPLE

An Historical Drama in Four Acts

*“ At length, that grounded maxim,
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that to the public good
Private respects must yield, with grave authority
Took full possession of me, and prevailed ;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoining.”*

MILTON.

PREFATORY NOTE

THE tragedy of Robespierre, like that of Brutus or Hamlet, lies in the failure of a man of thought and inward vision amid circumstances which demand action. Robespierre, a type of character by no means uncommon at the present time, in which fanatical enthusiasm for man in the abstract had swamped all sense of love and justice to individual men, had reached his position as leader of the Revolution by waiting on the acts of others and profiting by them. The opening of the play finds him for the first time under the necessity of acting.

In March, 1794, there were four ruling powers in France—

1. *The Two Committees*—the Committee of Public Safety and its shadow, the Committee of General Security. The Committee of Public Safety, which had at this time absorbed all the powers of the executive, may be roughly likened to the Cabinet.
2. *The Convention*, or Parliament.
3. *The Commune*, or organized mob of Paris.
4. *The Jacobin Club*.

The Committee of Public Safety, whose supremacy was threatened on the one side by the Extremists, or Atheists, on the other by the party of Moderates who wished to end the Terror, struck in turn first at the Atheists (villains like Hébert and Chaumette, visionaries like Clotz), who were executed 24th Germinal; and within a week at the Moderates headed by Danton and Camille Desmoulins.

Danton,—by far the greatest and most powerful of the later Revolutionary leaders, who shared with Mirabeau alone of all the French politicians of that epoch the distinction of being endowed with a spark of political genius,—four months before he retired in July, 1793, wearied out, from the Committee of Public Safety, had inaugurated the Revolutionary Tribunal, and he more than any man had been instrumental in establishing the Reign of Terror. The following October he withdrew for a time to his native place, Arcis, and after his return to Paris, in November, believing that the object at which he had aimed of saving France from invasion had been accomplished, and aghast at the lengths to which his monstrous engine was being driven by a band of pitiless fanatics, he came to

represent what is always the largest party in any country at any time,—and, alas for humanity! always the worst organised—the party of moderate men. Though still supporting the Committee, he disapproved of its excesses, and his ideas (eloquently and fearlessly promulgated by Camille Desmoulins in his journal, the “Vieux Cordeliers,”) drew down the implacable enmity and fear of the Committee, which resolved boldly and swiftly to silence them.

Robespierre, in circumstances where the issue was uncertain, as usual was filled with the desire to remain inactive, to let matters take their course. But, as will be seen in Scene I, he was compelled to take action, and the difficulty of choosing which side to adopt was very great.

He was at that moment by far the most popular man in France,¹ through sheer “gift of the gab,” but his was too feminine a character to possess any commanding influence among the ruder spirits of the Committee of Public Safety, his colleagues, who, however, found in his popularity and reputation for virtue their greatest asset. As Lord Morley says, “we cannot doubt that both he and Danton were perfectly assured that the anarchic party must unavoidably roll headlong into the abyss. But the hour of doom was uncertain. To make a mistake in the right moment, to hurry the crisis was instant death.” If he were boldly to side with his old friend Danton against the Committees, the Convention, the Jacobin Club and the vast majority of reasonable men would side with him. Lord Morley expresses doubt if Danton and Robespierre together could have succeeded in playing off the Convention against the Committees in face of the fact that Robespierre alone failed to do so three months later. But surely it is plain that Robespierre *had* succeeded on the 8th of Thermidor, and was lost only through want of Danton—because, to quote the psychological seed of my play, the sea anemone needed the crab; because through lack of guidance by a man of action, Robespierre in his paralysis of indecision threw all his chances away. In any case Robespierre was bound by all considerations of chivalry and decency to defend Danton, and as the sequel abundantly shows, to have done so was his one chance of final success.

¹ Billaud says, speaking of Robespierre’s “extraordinary popularity,” that “with this ascendancy over public opinion, with this irresistible preponderance, when he reached the Committee of Public Safety he was already the most important being in France.”

In Scene I, Billaud, by dint of playing on Robespierre's fear of being left behind, his jealousy and mistrust of Danton, his suspicion, vanity and fanaticism, succeeds in getting him to consent to Danton's death. From that moment Robespierre's fate is sealed. With an intoxication of infamy Robespierre hounds Danton and his followers to the scaffold. Then comes the crisis, as in *Hamlet* and *Julius Cæsar*, in the middle of the play. Hamlet will not kill the king when he has him in his power; Brutus lets Antony speak. Robespierre, now that Danton is out of the way, determines to act by himself against the Committees and end the Terror, the very crime for which he is sending Danton to death (almost incredible, but historically true); and even while he speaks the voice of Danton is heard from outside foretelling his downfall,—which Danton actually did, singing on his way to the guillotine.

Robespierre proceeds to make every possible mistake. His only hope of success is to enlist in his behalf one or more of the ruling powers. Ten days after Danton's death, by his *Feast of the Supreme Being* (Act III, Scene 2), he ruins himself with the *Convention*. He next (Act III, Scene 3), quarrels hopelessly with *The Two Committees*. *The Jacobin Club* supports him and *the Commune* rises in his behalf, but (Act IV, Scene 1) hoping to awe the Convention by mere show of armed force he will not allow the seizure of the members of the two Committees—according to all historians, an absolutely certain *coup*. No; like Brutus, he will give the Convention "reasons." But (Act IV, Scene 2) the Convention will not listen to his reasons. He would not allow them to hear Danton. Now the blood of Danton chokes him. Two courses are still open: he may take his trial like Marat, with every hope of a triumphant acquittal at the hands of the people; or, breaking his arrest, he may place himself at the head of the Commune and proclaim himself Dictator. He fails to do either. First, he breaks his arrest (Act IV, Scene 3) and places himself outside the law; then he refuses to head the Commune. He had counted on their acting for him. In this great emergency he can only talk—and so the cause of the Revolution is lost. As Danton said (his own words)—

"One thing is certain—
I drag down Robespierre; he follows me."

Camille Desmoulins had a vein of heartless levity in his hysterical temperament, and was painfully and incorrigibly reckless of human

life, but his noble pity and scorn which still burn in the pages of the " *Vieux Cordeliers* " make him a hero ; that and his beautiful married life blot out a multitude of sins. Danton appears to have been an enigma to his own times, and his character has been alternately blackened and whitewashed ever since. My own views of the Revolution lean to those of de Toqueville and Taine, and I regard all the chief actors after the fall of the Girondins as more or less abortions. The ordinary restraints of civilisation swept away, man becomes an animal more terrible for lust and cruelty than all the wild beasts united. In the atmosphere of great art and exalted religion we teach him that he is an angel, and lead him to become one. But once apply this idea to politics and excesses are likely to follow more frightful than those of Domitian or Caligula. As a nation is, so will its rulers be ; and amid the welter into which France was plunged, rent with desperate factions within, threatened with annihilation from without, only a reckless brute, a pitiless fanatic, or a military despot, could hold the reins of power. A human brute may still be warm-hearted and generous, open to remorse and pity, and Danton was pre-eminently all these. When he realised in what his system of Terror, which had saved France from invasion, had ended, his heart was broken and he wished to die.

These three men, Robespierre, Danton, Camille, like all their contemporaries, were devoured by an overpowering self-esteem which did not hesitate to find relief in words. Perhaps vanity is the national vice of the French, jealousy of the Germans, and materialism of the English ; though modern nations change so quickly that such generalisations are dangerous. But they were all three as much superior to the Corsican rascal who succeeded Robespierre as a man of principle and a patriot is superior to a heartless adventurer.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ROBESPIERRE	}				Members of the Committee of Public
ST. JUST	}	..	..		Safety, known as the Triumvirate.
COUTHON	}	..	..
AUGUSTINE ROBESPIERRE					Brother to Robespierre.
BILLAUD-VARENNE	}	..	..	Members of the Committee of Public	
COLLOT D'HERBOIS	}	..		Safety.	
TALLIEN					
PANIS	}	..	..	Members of the Lower Committee of	
BOURDON DE L'OISE	}	..	..	General Security. Enemies to	
LEGENDRE	}	..		Robespierre.	
DANTON					
CAMILLE DESMOULINS	}	..	..	Chief of the party of the Indulgents.	
FABRE D'EGLANTINE	}				
DILLON	..	..	..	Ex-General, friend to the Dantonists.	
HERMAN	..	..	..	Judge of the Revolutionary Tribunal.	
FOUQUIER-TINVILLE	..			Public Prosecutor.	
TRINCHARD, NAULIN, TOPINO-LEBRUN,				Jurymen.	
DUCRAY	..	..	..
HÉRON	..	..	..	Chief of the Police.	
SANSON	..	..	..	The Executioner.	
HANRIOT	..	..	..	Commandant of Paris.	
FLEURIOT	..	..	..	Mayor of Paris.	
DUMAS	..	..	..	President of the Revolutionary Tribunal.	}
COFFINHAL	..	..	..	Vice-President of the Tribunal	
PAYAN	..	..	..	Agent-National of the Commune	

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—(continued)

DAVID Artist and Deputy, friend to Robespierre.

LUCILE Wife to Camille Desmoulins.

HER MAID

HÉBERT'S WIFE

DEPUTIES, CITIZENS, A JAILOR, AN OLD MAN, ETC., ETC.

THE SCENE IS LAID IN PARIS. TIME, 1794.

- ACT I. SCENE 1. On the banks of the Seine near the Pont Neuf.
 SCENE 2. The Residence of Danton and Desmoulins in the Passage du Commerce.
 SCENE 3. The Theatre of the Tuileries.
- ACT. II. SCENE 1. The Court of the Revolutionary Tribunal.
 SCENE 2. The Conciergerie.
 SCENE 3. At the House of Duplay.
- ACT III. SCENE 1. At the Gate of the Conciergerie.
 SCENE 2. The Garden of the Tuileries.
 SCENE 3. The Pavilion de Flore at the Louvre.
- ACT IV. SCENE 1. The Jacobin Club.
 SCENE 2. The Theatre of the Tuileries.
 SCENE 3. The Hôtel de Ville.

Robespierre " se précipita à la tête de cette opinion qui hurlait contre ses amis de la veille. Afin de garder son rang habituel en avant de la Révolution, afin de profiter pour sa popularité d'un supplice que le cri public semblait réclamer, il parut l'auteur de ce snpplice qu'il hésitait, hier encore, à trouver utile, et qui était moins utile, en effet, à lui qu'à ses futurs antagonistes."

D'HERICAULT.

" La veille où Robespierre consentit à l'abandonner."

BILLAUD-VARENNE.

ROUSSEAU'S DISCIPLE

ACT I

SCENE 1. *On the banks of the Seine, near the Pont Neuf. On the left the bridge; on the right a house approached by steps. DANTON and DESMOULINS stand leaning against the wall overlooking the river, over which the sun is setting in splendour. TALLIEN, PANIS, LEGENDRE and BOURDON DE L'OISE, all members of the Lower Committee of General Security, and secret enemies to ROBESPIERRE, are seated on the other side of the stage. As the curtain rises a number of CITIZENS pass over the stage apparently commenting on the fact of DANTON being there, and EXEUNT.*

DANTON. Look, Camille, look! The river's red with blood!

DESMOULINS. It is the sunset.

DANTON. It is blood, blood, blood.
Too much is shed. The earth is sick of it.

DESMOULINS. The very vanes and windows are on fire!
It is the sunset glow of tyranny:
I know we shall prevail with Robespierre.

DANTON. He is the least a villain of them all;
Yet I have little hope of moving him.

BOURDON. (*looking towards DESMOULINS*)
Camille, grown serious.

TALLIEN. He was more amusing
When he was gay; before his murderous pen
Went mad for clemency.

PANIS. To hear him now,
No turtle dove could coo more tenderly.
"Open the prisons, set the prisoners free."

DESMOULINS. (*who has advanced towards them, and overheard*)
 Yes, Panis, those two hundred thousand captives
 You call suspect ; weak women, toothless men ;
 Are they so dangerous ? Of your enemies
 The cowards and the sick alone remain.
 The brave and strong have perished miserably
 At Lyons or La Vendée, and the rest
 Do not deserve your anger. Monstrous folly !
 Would you exterminate your foes ?

PANIS, Yes, all.

DESMOULINS. Then what you worship is a piece of stone ;
 And never has there been idolatry
 More costly or more stupid. Liberty
 Is justice, equality, reason, happiness.

LEGENBRE. (*somewhat lightly*)
 We are not met to argue, but to dine.
 (*To DANTON.*)
 Will you not come ?

DANTON. We wait for Robespierre—

TALLIEN. (*approaching DANTON*)
 It was in vain I warned you. The Committee
 Are plotting your arrest.

DANTON. But Robespierre—
 He would not dare betray us.
 (*PANIS and BOURDON strain their ears as if listening.*)

TALLIEN. (*significantly*) Robespierre !
 (*Distant sound of a CROWD approaching.*)

DANTON. If I believed he had the bare idea,
 I'd eat his bowels !

LEGENBRE. Danton talks of eating someone. I don't know
 who it is, but I hope that he will leave some for
 me. I am dying of hunger.

BOURDON. O, I am hungry too !
 (*A sound of cheering in the distance.*)

PANIS. Surely that is Robespierre approaching.

(All move up stage. ENTER ROBESPIERRE over the bridge surrounded by his BODYGUARD of Sansculottes, who wear red caps and are armed with sabres and big clubs. At his heels follows a boar hound. General cheering.)

ROBESPIERRE. Good friends, I thank you ; though against my will
 You follow and protect me. Liberty
 Should walk without an escort. When the reign
 Of Virtue is established, and this land
 Is purged of evil men, we shall be free.
 Now, when assassins lurk on every side,
 And dearest friends turn traitors, such protection
 May be permissible. But if my blood,
 Poured out by these vile scoundrels, can avail
 Or profit you, blest people, it is yours
 To the last drop.

TALLIEN. You shall not die. Live, Robespierre !

(Acclamation.)

(At a sign from ROBESPIERRE the BODYGUARD withdraws. He greets the others, and then with an air of surprise, as if he had not expected to meet them, gives a hand to DANTON and DESMOULINS.)

ROBESPIERRE. Danton and Camille ; friends and schoolfellows !
 No one prepared me for this glad surprise.
(To CAMILLE artificially.)

How is that fair Lucile, and little Horace ?
 The Graces dwell on your domestic hearth,
 Thrice happy man. It seems but yesterday
 Since you were married. Still, we age, we age !

(He takes an arm of either and conducts them into the house, the others following. As TALLIEN, who is last, is entering the house, BILLAUD-VARENNE, who has entered unperceived, clutches him by the arm.)

- BILLAUD.¹ Tallien, a word—'twas you arranged this meeting,
Who fawn on Robespierre and flatter him ;
You, who in secret are his enemy.
- TALLIEN. Plain speech ! And if I were his enemy ?
- BILLAUD. You think to overwhelm him with the fate
Which hangs o'er Danton and Desmoulins. Fool !
- TALLIEN. He longs to end the Terror—Robespierre
No less than Danton.
- BILLAUD. Should the Terror end,
We end. Reaction comes. The Royalist party,
Through this misguided plea for clemency,
Already is on foot and threatens us.
If, with his wondrous popularity,
He should oppose us, Danton's cause is won.
- TALLIEN. You are not serious.
- BILLAUD. (*with great emphasis*) Backed by the Convention,
The length and breadth of France would follow
them.
(*Producing a document from his pocket.*)
This paper he must sign. It is the warrant
To arrest these men.
(*With determination.*) Yes ; and he shall sign too ;
No more equivocation. For the future
He's with us or against us, out and out.
Go to him privately, and tell him Billaud
Demands to speak with him,—and look you,
silence !
Your life or death hangs on the issue. Go !
(*RE-ENTER two or three in search of TALLIEN,
including ROBESPIERRE, who starts on seeing
BILLAUD. At a sign from BILLAUD, TALLIEN
and the others withdraw leaving BILLAUD and
ROBESPIERRE alone.*)

¹ One of the most powerful members of the Committee of Public Safety. "Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois were the real rulers of France under the Terror."—*Morse Stephens*. Billaud was nicknamed the tiger, Robespierre the cat.

- BILLAUD. A strange construction might be set on this—
You, dining here with Danton and Desmoulins.
Whom the Committee have condemned.
- ROBESPIERRE. (*very awkwardly*) Why not ?
Am I not free to dine with whom I will ?
- BILLAUD. What, you—a party to these men's arrest.
With whom you dine ?
- ROBESPIERRE. I did not vote for this ;
Neither did Lindet.
- BILLAUD. He is not Robespierre,
Our first of Citizens, whose lightest word
Re-echoes far and wide through listening France.
O, it is dangerous !—most unfair to us
Your colleagues ; yet more harmful to yourself,
Who do not hear what all the world is saying.
- ROBESPIERRE. And think you that I heed what men may say ?
- BILLAUD. Still friendship bids me beg you heed in time ;
For what the whole world whispers is a charge
Which in these times no man has yet outlived,
Whose very breath means ruin. It is this—
(*Approaching and in a solemn tone.*)
That Robespierre becomes a Moderate ;
(ROBESPIERRE *starts*)
Who cannot face the necessary vigour
Which stamps out faction in the Provinces ;
Who saved the seventy-three ; brought Tallien
back—
- ROBESPIERRE. No more !
- BILLAUD. But what is worse, far worse ; your colleagues
Say to a man that Robespierre would profit
By actions which he dare not countenance ;
That when the time for vigorous action comes,
You stop at home and feign that you are ill ;
Reserving for yourself if we should fall
A loophole of escape ; avoiding measures

For which we risk our lives, lest in their wake
Should come unpopularity to you.
They will not bear it longer, Robespierre ;
I warn you, they are leaving you behind.
(*Handing him the document.*)
This document awaits your signature.

ROBESPIERRE. (*hesitatingly*)
I will not sign.

BILLAUD. Then league yourself with Danton,
And be our open foe. You will be crushed ;
The Commune is made cold by Hébert's death.
Even if by miracle success attend you,
What then ? You place your neck 'neath Danton's
heel.
(*Cynically.*)
When he becomes the foremost man in France,
(*contemptuously*)
O, where will be your reign of Virtue then ?

ROBESPIERRE. I have decided that I will not sign.

BILLAUD. Then farewell Robespierre ! I say no more.
(*Preparing to go.*)

ROBESPIERRE. He was my friend ; (*doubtfully*) he may be innocent.

BILLAUD. (*cynically*)
Most certainly he may be innocent.
(*Going further off.*)

(ROBESPIERRE stands very irresolute. Receiving
no answer from him, BILLAUD turns and
deliberately comes back, saying insinuatingly.)

BILLAUD. Innocent !—Danton !—him you call your friend,
Who mocks at virtue ; you must know his proverb,
“ He who hates vice—hates men ” ; and mocks at
you
With undisguised and measureless contempt,
Saying you have not brains to boil an egg.
(*Pause.*)

- ROBESPIERRE. Let Danton mock me in his jealousy :
I hold an open mind concerning him.
- BILLAUD. Can this be Robespierre, whose mighty speech
Once slew the Tyrant ; saying " Do not ask,
If innocent or guilty. 'Tis enough
That for the public good the man must die."
- ROBESPIERRE. (*with great solemnity, almost pompously, but with the
deepest conviction*)
Salus Reipublicæ suprema lex.
Yes ; for the public good all men must die.
To this great end I sacrifice myself,
My son, like Brutus ; or my dearest friend.
- BILLAUD. And for the public good these men must die.
They seek to end the Terror. By whose aid
Can they accomplish this ? Whose interest is it
For which they work ? The interest of all those
Who have good cause to fear ; with whose vile help
Alone they can prevail. What follows then ?
The flood of all reaction is let loose ;
Royalists, nobles, priests ; the prisons open,
The emigrants return ; within three years
The little Capet sits upon the throne.
Danton knows this—do you deem him ignorant ?
His influence is gone : he'll win it back
By any means he may.
- ROBESPIERRE. (*in a conciliatory tone*) You misinterpret
My meaning. When I say I will not sign,
A sentiment of honourable scruple
Forbids me to contribute to the fall
Of those who were my friends and schoolfellows.
- BILLAUD. This is a time for action, not for scruple.
If you are weak and will not act with us,
Your influence is gone. If you are blind,
And let this man betray you, once again
I tell you that your influence is gone.

- ROBESPIERRE. *(as if in revolt at the irony of things)*
 Unhappy world, in which our dearest friends
 Compel us to these painful sacrifices!
*(DANTON and DESMOULINS are heard outside
 in conversation approaching, and the name
 ROBESPIERRE is distinctly audible.)*
- BILLAUD. Remember, no relenting! I will wait.
*(BILLAUD moves to the back of the stage at the
 extreme left and stands gazing out over the
 river.)*
- DANTON. What is it that detains you, Robespierre?
- ROBESPIERRE. *(in considerable confusion)*
 I cannot dine to-night. In these strange times
 It seems we do not know our oldest friends;
 No, not our brothers.
- DANTON. *(with a side glance at BILLAUD)* Is there any cause
 For such a sudden change?
- ROBESPIERRE. Why should there be?
 Unless, indeed, *you* know of such a cause.
- DESMOULINS. No cause can separate such men as you,
 Our first of patriots, indispensable
 Each to the other.
- ROBESPIERRE. Are you so sure of that?
- DANTON. If any other man but Robespierre
 Adopted this strange tone, I should conclude
 He sought a cause to quarrel.
- ROBESPIERRE. Quarrel? I?
*(Strained effect between DANTON and ROBE-
 SPIERRE. DESMOULINS interposes hurriedly
 and lightly.)*
- DESMOULINS. Both hear me while I speak a parable.
 At Naples dwells a sea anemone,
 Who, when desiring movement, seats himself
 Upon the broad back of a friendly crab;
 And thus he voyages through the ocean world.
 The interpretation—Danton is the crab—

ROBESPIERRE. Is this a time for wit and pleasantry ?

DANTON. *(in a conciliatory tone)*
Peace, Camille ! There's a time for everything.

DESMOULINS. This Reign of Terror and excess must end.
You know it, Robespierre, as well as we.
We are rushing down to death ; leap from the car
Before it overturns ! The whole Convention,
Except a few vile spirits, will follow you.

ROBESPIERRE. *(pause. Then shaking his head and significantly looking at DANTON)*
The earth must yet be purged of evil men.

DANTON. It surely cannot be that of free will
You countenance this daily feast of death,
For which poor workmen, women, innocent babes
Are butchered in cold blood.

ROBESPIERRE. You counselled terror.

DANTON. *(almost rudely)*
I tell you, Robespierre, the need is gone.
Our armies are victorious everywhere,
And civil discord has been choked with blood.
France has been purged from tyranny. Great God !
What further do you seek ?

ROBESPIERRE. *(with the air of an inspired prophet, getting more and more excited as he proceeds; DANTON more and more contemptuous tries to stop him)*

(solemnly) To substitute
Morality for selfishness ; love of glory
For love of money ; pride for insolence ;
Contempt of vice for scorn of poverty ;
The charm of happiness for the toil of pleasure ;
Greatness of man for littleness of the great ;
Reason for fashion ; genius for wit—

DANTON. *(interrupting scornfully)*
Enough, enough ! we need a miracle !
How will you work such wonders among men ?

DANTON. That scum you call the people ?

ROBESPIERRE. I said the people ; and the people say,
Danton, that you grow rich with foreign gold ;
That Pitt is leader of your moderate faction.

DANTON. *(attempting to control himself)*
Let us be patient for the sake of France !
It is impossible that you should credit
These lies about my wealth. Your friends befool
you
With talk of poison, plots and poniards.
Bloody St. Just, yon treacherous butcher Billaud ;
Cowardly hounds ! They are Cain's brotherhood.
O, league yourself once more with honest men
Or all is lost ! *(Movement from ROBESPIERRE.)*
Yes, yes—I will be patient.
Suspect me as you will. Fame is a strumpet,
Posterity mere nonsense. Let my name
Be blotted out, the memory of me perish,
If only France be free !

ROBESPIERRE. *(looking meaningly at DANTON and as if a revelation
had come over him, without a word goes over to
BILLAUD)*

Come, Billaud, come !

(EXEUNT BILLAUD and ROBESPIERRE.)

DANTON. Vain, vain my toil ! I laboured in the storm,
Masking my pity 'neath my bellowing,
And brought increase of fear, decrease of ill.
I gave the helm to him—Alas, alas !
Danton has slept too long !¹—We are on the rocks.
O, I am weary, weary ! My heart breaks !

*(He weeps and stands absolutely broken down.
DESMOULINS moves towards him and lays his
hand on his shoulder affectionately.)*

Come, Camille ! It is time that we were gone.

¹ "Danton sleeps—he will awake !" These words were spoken by Danton during his retirement.

SCENE 2. *The residence of DANTON and DESMOULINS in the Passage du Commerce. LUCILE stands near the window ; her MAID at a little distance from her.*

- LUCILE. The sun set hours ago. Most dreadful time
Of danger and suspense ! (*To the MAID.*)
He dines to-night
With Robespierre. Will he be long away ?
- MAID. An hour at least ; nay more. But you will eat ?
(*LUCILE returning to the window looks out.*)
- LUCILE. No, no ; I am not hungry. (*Aside.*) Gracious God,
'Tis Thou who hast inspired us to be free,
But O, the cost, the cost !
- MAID. For many days
Your appetite has failed ; your face grows pale,
As with long watching, cares and wakefulness.
There is a look of terror in your eyes.
- LUCILE. Fetch me the looking-glass !
(*There is a knocking at the outer door. LUCILE starts anxiously, and signs to MAID to answer the summons. The MAID returns with a letter which she hands to LUCILE.*)
- LUCILE. His father's hand—
The looking-glass !—Sealed with black. Should
this fulfil
Our presage of misfortune ! Better so
Than it should light on him.
- MAID. (*handing the looking-glass*) Hist ! In your ear.
That servant on the ground floor is a spy,
Whom the Committee of Public Safety pays
To shadow Citizen Danton.
- LUCILE. (*sharply and questioningly*) How know you this ?
- MAID. (*in some confusion*)
Believe me, it is certain. (*The door opens.*)

LUCILE.

Away! He comes.

(EXIT MAID *hastily, with looking glass.* ENTER DANTON and DESMOULINS. DESMOULINS embraces LUCILE *tenderly.* DANTON *gravely salutes her without speaking; then, crossing over to the fireplace, he seats himself, and, lost in thought, takes up the poker and begins to stir the fire.*)

DESMOULINS.

(tenderly looks into her eyes)

You have been weeping.

LUCILE.

(with forced gaiety, as if hunting for an excuse)

Yes. I bit my tongue;

The foolish tears would come.

(DESMOULINS conveys the idea that he understands, at the same time unconsciously looking towards DANTON.)

But Robespierre—

You have persuaded him to side with you,
And save the country. *(Noticing his weariness.)*

Sweet, no matter now!

You are weary.

DESMOULINS.

(seeing letter) What is that?

LUCILE.

Not now; not now!

DESMOULINS.

It is for me; it is my father's hand.

LUCILE.

Read it when you have rested.

(DESMOULINS *gently obtains possession of the letter. He opens it, and with a groan falls into a seat and buries his face in his arms.*)

DESMOULINS.

My mother dead!

(Reads.)

"I have lost the half of myself!"

O father, thou dost meet calamity
Most like an ancient Roman! I must weep.
Dear mother, from whose tender breast I drew
My love of virtue and of liberty,

Why must I lose thee in a time like this,
 When liberty and virtue both are dead ?
 Thy blessèd spirit should choose some happier
 season
 To leave us desolate !

LUCILE. Camille, I will strive,
 Unworthy as I am, to fill her place.

DESMOULINS. Ah, child, you fill all places in my soul
 To overflowing : mother, wife, companion !
 If they should part us !

LUCILE. Sweet, they cannot part us ;
 And if we were in separate planets, Love
 Would make a path of little twinkling stars
 That I might speed to you. Then say no more
 " If they should part us."

DESMOULINS. (*his voice sounding sleepy*) Faultless in your virtues !

LUCILE. Ah ! I will never be a flatterer.
 I see your faults, I know them ; and I love them.

DESMOULINS. You melted all my virtue into pity,
 And made a counter-revolutionist.
 You have much to answer for.

LUCILE. If that were all !

DESMOULINS. (*vainly trying to keep awake*)
 If that were all—if that were all !

LUCILE. Dear heart,
 You are weary. O, take comfort now and sleep !

DESMOULINS. (*with effort*)
 No sleep for me this night. (*He sleeps.*)

LUCILE. The fickle god
 Comes when defied. O gentle soul, good-night !
 (*LUCILE kisses him lightly and tenderly on the
 forehead ; then props his head very carefully
 with cushions. Meanwhile PANIS ENTERS
 hurriedly and approaches DANTON.*)

PANIS. I come from Lindet and from Rühl. Beware !
 (See SCENE 1.) This night they will arrest you.

(DANTON *turns contemptuously still holding poker.*)

DANTON. Well—what then ?

PANIS. (*seeing that DANTON will make no effort*)
 You surely will resist—you must.

DANTON. That means
 The shedding of more blood. I am sick of it.
 Better be slain than slay.

PANIS. Then you must fly,
 And speedily.

DANTON. If France, when she is free,
 Has cast me forth, what other resting place
 In the wide world awaits me ? Does a man carry
 His country with him on his shoe-soles ? No ;
 I am not guilty and I will not fly.
 Danton is weary. He will take his rest.
 (*Change.*)
 Besides—they will not dare ; they will not dare !

PANIS. Then God be with you ! I dare not stay. Good-
 night.

(EXIT PANIS *hastily*. LUCILE, *who has been trying to listen, crosses over to DANTON. Her previous affected calmness is now succeeded by wild terror.*)

LUCILE. Danton, what man is that ? Tell me, I beg you !
 You dined with Robespierre. Those fearful
 monsters,
 If he protect you, will not dare to strike ;
 Is it not so ?

DANTON. Yes, yes. (*As if convincing himself.*)
 They will not dare.

LUCILE. You parted friends? (*A reassuring look from DANTON.*)
 Yet I mistrust him most
 When he is friendly.

DANTON. Peace! They will not dare.
 (*DESMOULINS mutters in his sleep. LUCILE returns hurriedly to him and softly strokes his hair. A long pause of uncomfortable silence, during which DANTON continues gazing into the fire. From time to time the flame leaps up, casting a red glow over his face. Suddenly from the street is heard the sound of a troop of National Guards approaching; at the word "Halt" their muskets are grounded. DESMOULINS springs up.*)

DESMOULINS. They have come to arrest me!

LUCILE. No, no, no!
 (*LUCILE clings to him. DANTON rises and waits contemptuously, the poker still in his hand. ENTER a troop of POLICE, followed by HÉRON. The POLICE stand just inside the door.*)

HÉRON.¹ My most lamented duty, citizens,
 Compels me to arrest you in the name
 Of the Committee of Public Safety. Camille,
 I am deeply sorry. More I must not say.

LUCILE. You shall not take him! Villains, murderers!
 (*She throws herself into DESMOULIN'S arms.*)

DESMOULINS. Dearest Lucile, fear nothing! The Convention,
 In which our friends are strong and numerous,
 Will not permit our trial. If they did,
 The people in its wrath would vanquish them
 And tear us from our judges.
 (*LUCILE swoons.*)

¹ Chief of the Police.

HÉRON.

Citizen,

Leave your rich wife ; I hope it is not she
Has warped your better judgment.

DESMOULINS.

Héron, hear me !

Before I knew and loved her, I believed
In immortality. So many times,
For liberty and happiness of the people,
I had sacrificed my welfare, that I said,
When persecution came, surely elsewhere
Must be reward for virtue. But my marriage
Has been so blissful, my domestic peace
So great, with earth turned into heaven by her,
That hope departed. Now with calumny
It lives again. (*Breaks down.*)

(HÉRON goes to his men to give the order to form
up ; meanwhile DANTON, who stands calmly
awaiting his arrest, whispers to DESMOULINS,
putting his hand on his shoulder.)

DANTON.

No tears ! If we must die,

Let us die laughing !

(*As the scene closes, movement of police and
prisoners towards door. LUCILE, who has
been taken from her husband, lies in a swoon.*)

SCENE 3. *The Hall of the Convention, formerly the Theatre of the
Tuileries. TALLIEN in the President's seat.*

ROBESPIERRE.

(*aside to ST. JUST, his celebrated colleague*)

In framing the decree of accusation,
You have not failed to follow those rough notes
With which I furnished you. I had no time
To write them clearly, or to amplify ;
Yet every point was there. You are quite certain
That you could read them ?

St. JUST.

I deciphered them ;

And I have followed you implicitly
In every detail. He will not escape.

- LEGENDRE. *(rising in his place)*
 (See SCENE 1.) Citizens, during the late hours of darkness
 Four members of this house have been arrested.
(Sensation.)
 Danton is one. *(Murmurs, and from certain
 quarters exclamations of surprise.)*
 The others' names I know not.
 What matter names if they be culpable?
 But I demand that you shall be their judges.
(Movement.)
 Summon them here. I do not cast a slur
 Upon the members of the great Committee,
(ironically)
 Who think, no doubt, his speech will fail to clear him,
 When I suggest that private hates and passions
 Have robbed our greatest man of freedom. *(Tumult.)*
 Yes ;
 My honesty is clearer than the day ;
 And Danton, I believe, is pure as I am.
(Applause.)
- TALLIEN. Let every man speak freely what he thinks.
 (See SCENE 1.) *(Firmly.)*
 Our duty is to safeguard liberty.
- LEGENDRE. Before you hear their accusation,
 I charge you, call them here and let them speak.
*(Tremendous uproar, the majority crying " Let
 them be heard!" ROBESPIERRE mounts the
 Tribune. TALLIEN motions to him. General
 approval expressed. When he is ready to
 speak he watches the effect of his appearance
 on the DEPUTIES.)*
- ROBESPIERRE. *(very deliberately)*
 From the disturbance which has been created
 By the last speaker, it is evident
 The gravest question holds us, life or death—
 Shall a few privileged persons be esteemed
 More precious than the country's welfare? No.
 Why should you grant this day a privilege

Which you have never deigned to grant before ?
 Did you hear Brissot, Pétion, Chabot, Hébert ?
 What privilege had they ? And why is Danton
 Superior to his colleagues ? Have we made
 Heroic sacrifices, like these acts
 Of dolorous severity and justice,
 Which every patriot mourns, to fall once more
 Beneath the yoke of intrigue and ambition ? (*Great
 tumult.*)

(*Looking at* LEGENDRE.)

What care I for the praises men bestow
 Upon themselves or friends ? Painful experience
 Has taught me to distrust such' praise. Legendre
 Pretends he does not know the other names.
 The whole Convention knows them. His friend
 Lacroix

Is one of them. Why does he not defend him ?
 He has not impudence enough. But Danton—
 He mentions him no doubt, thinking a privilege,
 Attaches to that name. He is mistaken.
 We will have no more privilege, no more idols.

(*Tremendous applause.*)

(ROBESPIERRE *having felt his way continues.*)

This idol long since rotten, must be shattered.

(*Renewed applause.*)

Some members of this house, we know it well,
 Have taken order from those now in prison
 To plot the downfall of the two Committees.
 They speak of despotism ; as if the confidence
 The people placed in you, and you transferred
 To these Committees when you gave them power,
 Were not sufficient pledge of patriotism.
 In doubting they defy you. Yes, I say
 Whoever doubts at such a time is guilty.

(*More applause.*)

And in me also did these intriguers,
 These friends of Danton, strive to waken terror ;
 Saying that Danton's danger would be mine.
 He was my buckler of defence, my rampart,

Which once o'erthrown would leave my life exposed
 To the arrows of my enemies. They beset me
 With letters and with speeches. Did this relax
 My zeal for liberty? Hear me! I declare
 If Danton's danger truly be my own,
 This circumstance is not by me considered
 A public calamity, demanding privilege.
 What matter dangers to me? My life my country's,
 My heart exempt from fear—thus let me die,
 Without reproach, without ignominy.

ALL. Live, Robespierre! Incorruptible patriot! You
 shall not die! (*Tremendous applause.*)

ROBESPIERRE. I also was the friend of Pétion—
 He was unmasked and I abandoned him;
 I was in league with Roland—he turned traitor
 And I denounced him. Now my former friend
 Danton is in their place. (*With a sweeping gesture.*)
 I blot him out. (*Applause.*)
 He has become my country's enemy. (*Great
 applause.*)
 We must have courage, magnanimity.
 Mean spirits and guilty always are afraid
 To see their fellows fall, for by that fall
 Themselves are threatened. But if in this assembly
 We have mean spirits, we have heroes too,
 And these will brave all perils. Happily
 The number of the guilty is not great;
 But liberty is outraged by Legendre,
 Demanding for one citizen more favour
 Than for another. Sacred equality
 Is ruptured; your judgment censured; you are
 defied;
 These infamous conspirators are defended
 By those whose common interest lies with them.

LEGENBRE. Robespierre cannot think me capable
 Of sacrificing to an individual
 Our liberty. Citizens, is there one among you
 Believes me an accomplice? I am pure.

I love my country dearly, and declare
 My blood, my life, belong to her alone.
 When I proposed this motion it was not plain
 To me these men were guilty, as no doubt
 It is to those who have the proofs before them.
 I would not here defend a single person.

TALLIEN.

The question is that Danton shall be heard
 In his defence. Those who approve say "Aye."
 (*Silence.*)

No sound. The motion's lost. I call St. Just
 To read the accusation.

(*A movement, followed by dead silence.*)

ST. JUST.

(*speaking in a judicial tone*) Citizens,¹
 The love of country is a fearful thing ;
 Jealous ; exclusive ; which without remorse,
 Exempt from pity, fear, humanity,
 Immolates all men to the public good.
 Filled with this sentiment, your two Committees
 Bid me denounce these traitors, now in league
 With all the kings of Europe ; who from the first,
 Like slimy reptiles in the torrent's course,
 Have followed revolution ; who as the tiger
 Pursues his prey, have followed liberty.

(*Dramatic pause.*)

My patience leaves me when I even think
 Of this man Danton. Why, all Europe knows,
 Save we who are blind, that Danton has been
 bought

By royalty. Thou lax, immoral man !
 Indolent, greedy, a liar and a coward !
 Mirabeau knew thy price and paid it ; Brissot
 At thy dictation framed that fell petition,
 Under pretence to drag the tyrant down,
 Which slew our patriots on the field of Mars.
 With him thou didst escape. It was not strange :
 Tyranny had no need to murder thee,

¹ This speech may be omitted in representation.

Its choicest weapon. Only when its fall
 Became inevitable, didst thou return.
 The tenth of August came ; the tocsin sounded ;
 The palace was besieged—and where wert thou
 In that great hour of danger ? Fast asleep ;
 While Fabre, thy friend, held parley with the court.
 Whoever is the friend of such a man
 As parleys with the court, that very fact
 Proclaims him guilty ; such a fault is crime.
 'Twas thou didst nominate Duke d'Orléans
 To the assembly, saying that this rascal,
 Prince of the Blood, would lend us more importance
 In the eyes of Europe. Thou didst first propose
 To banish Capet, not to kill him ; thou
 In secret didst uphold the Girondins ;
 Didst urge thy friend Dumoriez to make war
 On Paris, telling him—if funds should fail,
 Thy hands were deep in Belgian money bags.
 " Hatred," saidst thou, " is foreign to my heart ;"
 Another time, " I have no love for Marat."
 Is it not then a crime to have no hatred
 For the enemies of liberty ? Is it thus
 By private leanings that a public man
 Determines his indifference or his hate ?
 Thou hast conspired, bad citizen ; false friend,
 Thy dupe Desmoulins thou hast foully charged
 Behind his back with shameful, secret vice.
 Fit friend of traitors, and of Englishmen
 Whose dinner tables groan, thou hast compared
 Public opinion to a prostitute ;
 Saying that honour was ridiculous,
 And glory and posterity mere wind. (*Indignant
 exclamation.*)
 If Fabre, d'Orléans, Dumoriez were pure,
 Thou and thy dupes are. Representatives,
 Renown is nothing. Give your hearts to wisdom.
 Like that eternal providence, which sets
 The world in harmony but is not seen,
 Accomplish justice and the public good,
 But do not seek renown ! These evil men,

Whose name is now notorious through the length
 And breadth of this wide world, their day is done.
 Republics are not made with clemency,
 But with a rigour stern and terrible.

(With the air of an inspired prophet.)

The words we have spoken shall not pass away
 From the earth for evermore. We merit life ;
 Men who, like us, have dared all things for truth ;
 But on the scaffold must the evil die. *(Loud and
 prolonged applause.)*

ST. JUST.

The National Convention, after having heard the
 report of the Committees, decrees the accusation
 of Camille Desmoulins, Hérault, Danton, Philip-
 peaux, Lacroix, charged with complicity with
 d'Orleans and Dumouriez ; with Fabre d'Eglantine
 and the enemies of the Republic ; of being
 steeped in the conspiracy tending to re-establish
 the monarchy, and destroy the national repre-
 sentation and the republican government ; and
 in consequence it orders them to be tried with
 Fabre d'Eglantine.

*(ROBESPIERRE approaches TALLIEN and urges
 him to put the question.)*

TALLIEN.

The question is that Danton and his friends
 Be brought to trial. *(Shout of assent.)*

Those who oppose say " No."

(Silence.)

Carried unanimously.

ST. JUST.

Then France is saved.

LEGENDRE.

Whoever quarrels with this just decree
 Will have Legendre for mortal enemy.

END OF ACT I

“ [Robespierre] decided to end the Reign of Terror. But first he desired to overthrow the declared opponents of his projected Reign of Virtue. His colleagues in the Great Committee of Public Safety and the majority of the Committee of General Security must follow Danton to the scaffold with their sympathisers in the Convention.”

MORSE STEPHENS.

ACT II

SCENE 1. *The Court of the Revolutionary Tribunal on the banks of the Seine. As the Scene opens, a PRISONER is just sitting down amid cries from all parts of the Court and shouts from outside. The windows are open, and an enormous CROWD is collected outside, which, as Danton shouts his defence, again and again bursts out into the wildest enthusiasm. The PRISONERS are all crying for witnesses, and continually interrupt the proceedings. As the scene opens extreme disorder prevails. "Bring us our witnesses," "Confront us with our accusers," "Scoundrels," "Assassins," cry the PRISONERS.*

HERMAN.¹ Danton, stand forth! You are accused
By the Convention of complicity
With Mirabeau, Dumoriez, d'Orléans,
The Girondins, the foreigners, and the faction
Which plots to re-establish royalty.

DANTON. My answer. Let the cowards who accuse me
But show their faces; I will cover them
With infamy. Call the Committees here.
I will not make reply, save in their presence,
Who are my accusers and my witnesses.
Let them come forward. As for you, your judgment
Affects me not. I have already told you
That my abode will soon be nothingness.
Life has become a burden. Take it from me.
I long to be delivered from it.

FOUQUIER-Danton,
TINVILLE.² Audacity like yours betokens guilt;
And calmness innocence.

DANTON. Can I be calm,
Thus shamefully traduced? From men like me
Do not expect a cold defence. Ah, no!
Upon my brow is written liberty.

*(He shakes his head and defies the Tribunal. A
tumult of applause. He holds up the Act of
Accusation.)*

¹ The Judge.

² Public Prosecutor.

I, bought by Mirabeau, Dumoriez,
 D'Orléans, the despot horde! A man like me
 Exceeds all price. Thou, cowardly St. Just,
 Wilt have to answer to posterity
 For all thy shameless accusations.
 In reading through this catalogue of horrors
 I feel my whole frame shudder. Where are those
 men
 Who found me sleeping on the tenth of August?
 Bring my accusers here!

HERMAN. Control yourself!
 You must be calm, or else you shall not speak.

DANTON. In awful calmness I now call for them.
 I will expose those downright slaves and scoundrels
 Who now surround and ruin Robespierre.

*(HERMAN rings his bell. DANTON shouts louder
 and louder against the bell. Growing tumult.)*

Let them come forward here, and I will plunge them
 Into that nothingness from which such villains
 Should never have emerged. Approach, imposters.
 And from your hideous faces will I tear
 That mask which screens you from the people's
 vengeance!

(The CROWD burst out with a great shout.)

Approach, I say, approach!

HERMAN. *(after a final effort to drown DANTON'S voice)*
 The Court's adjourned!

*(As the GUARD come towards DANTON he moves
 away to door by himself, speaking vehemently
 as he goes but with great dignity. The others
 resist. Great uproar. DANTON'S voice is
 heard above it all.)*

DANTON. The voice of one defending life and honour
 Must drown thy bell. Within three months from
 now
 I prophesy the people all will tear
 My enemies in pieces.

(Tumult, followed by uproar outside.)

HERMAN.

(As the PRISONERS reach the door and the CROWD grows more noisy outside, HERMAN looking round the Court almost shouts.)

I promise you
That Danton shall be heard when he returns.

(The PRISONERS are led out and the Court is cleared.)

NAULIN.¹

You cannot well refuse these witnesses.

They have the right to call them. *(Applause, repeated outside with enthusiasm.)*

FOUQUIER-
TINVILLE.

The Convention
Is the accuser. How then can its members
Be Danton's witnesses?

CROWD
OUTSIDE.

Live, Naulin! Yes,
Let them be called! They shall have witnesses.

FOUQUIER-
TINVILLE.

(to JURY)
This public scandal and gross brawl must end.
Two hours ago I wrote to the Convention,
Whose orders when proclaimed shall be obeyed.
Meanwhile, withdraw! We must deliberate.

(EXIT JURY, speaking in disagreement. At an unusually loud shout from outside, the windows are shut.)

HERMAN.

I thought this jury were most carefully chosen.
We shall not hold them.

FOUQUIER.

We are *in extremis*.
(A stone breaks one of the windows.)

FOUQUIER.

It was to the Committee that I wrote,
Begging most urgently for a decree
To stop the trial. *(Great noise outside.)*
If this brawl proceed,
We shall be murdered by the populace.

(ST. JUST and BILLAUD are ushered in.)

¹ A juryman.

ST. JUST. I bring you our decree. (*Hands decree to HERMAN.*)

FOUQUIER. It is high time.

HERMAN. (*rapidly overlooking decree*)

Recall the jury! Lead the prisoners back!

(*He hands the decree back to ST. JUST and whispers earnestly and rapidly to him.*)

(*The JURORS are summoned and re-enter. The Court fills again. The PRISONERS come in, all preceding DANTON, who is deliberately kept back by the OFFICERS. As he nears the dock he sees ST. JUST.*)

DANTON. What! do you dare confront me? Ah, false man,
Could you forget resentment as I now
Forget my anger, for the sake of France,
I would embrace my bitterest enemy!

(*HERMAN rings bell and makes a gesture to DANTON.*)

HERMAN. (*with firmness*)

We cannot yet proceed; there's a decree
Of the Convention, which must first be read.
Throw open wide the windows. All must hear.

(*They are opened. He gives the sign to ST. JUST.*)

ST. JUST. Citizen President, when those accused
Of crime, all panic-stricken by the law,
Revolt before your very face, we need
No further proof than such audacity.

(*Murmurs.*)

Innocent men do not revolt. (*Great uproar.*) And
yet,

A further proof is here. (*Great excitement.*)

Would you believe
That even in prison they are plotting still?

(*Sensation.*)

A fresh conspiracy has come to light

Since yesterday; a plot most infamous.

Dillon, who bade his army march on Paris (*hisses*)

Betrayed the secret ; and by his confession
It is established that Desmoulin's wife,
Who daily haunts their prison, has received
Three thousand livres ; with order to promote
An insurrection, set the prisoners free,
And murder this tribunal.

*(Great tumult, during which is heard a few cries
of " ROBESPIERRE.")*

DESMOULINS. *(with a great cry)* My wife, my wife !
Will they destroy her too ?

BILLAUD. *(handing note to HERMAN with much deliberation, and
speaking with the object of winning over the CROWD)*

Here is the proof ;
Which Robespierre demands that you shall read
To this whole court assembled.

*(Tremendous tumult ending in shouts for
ROBESPIERRE.)*

ST. JUST. The Convention,
On my advice, unanimously adopted
This means of safety.

*(He hands decree to FOUQUIER. Cheers from
the CROWD. The prisoners hoot at him.)*

DANTON. Despicable hounds,
Who are hunting us to death.

(Almost moved to tears he turns to the CROWD.)

I make appeal
To you, just people, who now hear me speak
For the last time ; your best, most faithful friend !
That when you recognise these foul assassins
Who slay us, as you will, and know them traitors ;
When they are punished, torn in pieces, exterminated
As they shall be ; O, in that hour be calm !
Be worthy of yourselves, of the fair name
Of French Republicans ! For you my life
I joyfully relinquish.

*(Silence. He relapses into disdainful silence
on seeing that the CROWD is against him.)*

- ST. JUST. (*seeing that the CROWD is entirely with him, with quiet strength, addressing the JUDGES*) In just hands
We leave the issue gladly, and withdraw.
(*EXEUNT ST. JUST and BILLAUD.*)
- FOUQUIER. (*reading decree*) "The National Convention decrees
that all persons accused of conspiracy who shall
resist or insult the national justice, shall not be
heard further; but shall receive immediate
judgment." (*Sensation.*)
- HERMAN. Then we have done. Remove the prisoners.
(*Murmurs among the JURY.*)
- DANTON. (*hardly trusting himself to speak*)
Done!
No documents have been produced against us,
No witnesses been heard. (*Uproar against DANTON.*)
- FOUQUIER. We have in waiting
A cloud of witnesses, whose testimony
Confounds the accused. (*Cheers.*)
- HERMAN. In face of this decree,
You cannot call them now.
- DESMOULINS. (*tearing his defence across*)
Here's my defence.
Insolent scoundrel, I hurl it in your face!
(*He throws it at HERMAN.*)
- FABRE.¹ This is not justice. You are murderers.
- DESMOULINS. Quick with your verdict: we have lived too long!
- ALL THE PRISONERS. Brigands! Assassins! Bear us off to death.
- HERMAN. I ask you, jurors, are you satisfied?
(*TRINCHARD bows.*)
(*HERMAN makes a sign to the GUARDS, who
advance to remove the PRISONERS.*)

¹ Danton's colleague.

- DESMOULINS. (*struggling*)
I will not go! Assassins! Murderers!
(*He clutches the bench on which he sits, and three GUARDS endeavour to remove him. At length DANTON, with a persuasive gesture, lays his hand on his arm. The PRISONERS are led out. DANTON in contemptuous scorn.*)
(*JURY talking among themselves.*)
- TRINCHARD.¹ There is no need for us to leave the court;
We have decided on our verdict.
- NAULIN.² Yes.
By every law these men are innocent.
- TOPINO-LEBRUN.³ This is a question of high policy,
And not a point of law. You are not jurors,
But statesmen here. It is impossible
For both these men to live. Would you prefer
That Robespierre should perish?
(*Cries outside for DANTON, which are drowned in ringing shouts for ROBESPIERRE.*)
- NAULIN. No.
- TOPINO-LEBRUN. Which means
That Danton is found guilty. Say no more;
The sentence was in print an hour ago.
- TRINCHARD. (*to HERMAN*)
Our verdict is decided.
(*Murmur of disagreement among JURY.*)
- FOUQUIER. (*with studied moderation*) I demand,
Considering the demeanour of the accused,
Their indecorum, sneers and blasphemy
Before this Court, that judgment be pronounced
Without recalling them.
- HERMAN. It is allowed.
Your verdict.

¹ A juryman.² A juryman.³ A juryman.

TRINCHARD.

All are guilty.

(*A wild cry of approval from the CROWD. The JURY still murmur.*)

HERMAN.

For such crimes

The law provides one penalty—instant death.

(*There has been a general murmur of conversation all through the latter part, mostly of approval; but at the words, "instant death," there is dead silence.*)

SCENE 3. *In the Conciergerie. A JAILOR enters, unbars and throws open the doors. ENTER DANTON and DESMOULINS.*

DESMOULINS.

Condemned without a hearing! Must we die,
 And this warm Nilus tide of youth and hope
 Be checked to lean sterility? Lucile,
 Poor ruined bird which beat its wings in vain
 Against my prison bars! Thou, hapless one,
 Hast dashed thyself to death! Forgive me, sweet!
 How should I know of man's injustice—I,
 Born to make verses? I have murdered thee.
 Could I but see thee, hear thee, smell again
 The fragrance of thy hair! We cannot die!
 We cannot, shall not die!
 Horace! Lucile! My Horace! My beloved,
 What will become of you?

DANTON.

Be brave! When men

Go gaily to the scaffold it is time
 To break the scythe of death. Sweet consolation
 Is ours—that distant ages will applaud
 The chief of those who died for pity's sake.
 Their love will follow us beyond the tomb.

(*ENTER the other PRISONERS dejectedly.*)

Fellow conspirators, let us be cheerful.
 Some wine to drink the health of Robespierre.

(A bottle of Burgundy is brought. He fills the glasses.)

The head of the Republic drinks to you
My friends, for the last time. Within an hour
It will be headless. *(He sits down.)*

JAILOR. *(showing in DUCRAY)* Citizen Ducray
To read the verdict.

DANTON. Citizen Ducray,
We will not hear your verdict.

DUCRAY. I must read it
By the Tribunal's order.

DANTON. By my order
You shall not read it. Take yourself away.

DUCRAY. Nay, I must read.

DANTON. Sirs, will you hear this fellow?

ALL. We will not.

DANTON. There's our verdict on your verdict ;
We do not wish to hear it. Get you gone.
As for your paper—thus !
(He takes it from him and tears it across.)

DUCRAY. I must report
This violence to the Committee.

FABRE.¹ Do so,
And let them murder us twice over.

DUCRAY. Citizens,
I take my leave. And I am glad to find you
So merry, citizens.
(EXIT DUCRAY.)

DANTON. What is the date?

FABRE. Sixteenth of Germinal.

¹ Danton's colleague.

DANTON. Twelve months ago this day did I set up
That infamous Committee. I implore
Pardon from God and man. One thing is certain
I drag down Robespierre ; he follows me.
Far better be the poorest fisherman
Than strive to govern men ! At Arcis now
The blackthorn is in blossom and the poplars
Are breathing silently. Yet we, who turn
Sooner to dust, wear our short lives away,
Squandering in vain our peace ; obsessed by dreams
Of human liberty and happiness ;
Deeming an ape a god. At length I see
The end of Revolutions—sovereign power
Held by the most abandoned.

FABRE. (*groaning*) Oh ! Oh ! Oh !

DANTON. What ails you ?

FABRE. I have written a play.

DANTON. Accept
My heartfelt sympathy !

FABRE. 'Tis called " The Orange,"
" The Maltese Orange."

DANTON. It must be unripe
To cause you such discomfort.

FABRE. That rascal Billaud¹
Will steal my play, and rob me of my fame.

DANTON. O, let him have it ! That's revenge, indeed.
And he may take it to a manager,
And wait, and wait until his hair grows grey.

FABRE. My verses !

DANTON. You yourself within a week
Will make a better play. Contending armies
Will march across your stage. A million worms
Will be scene-shifters. The beetle and the mole,
Your audience, will not hiss you.

¹ Billaud was the author of a comedy, Collot a well-known playwright.

FABRE. No, no, Danton !
It is a fable. Human flesh is spared
That last indignity.

DANTON. I beg their pardon—
The worms—I wronged them. They have better
taste,
And will not meddle with humanity.
Robespierre is an actor. When he reaches
The climax of the Fifth Act, he will fail. ¹
(ENTER SANSON *and his* ASSISTANTS.)

SANSON. ² Citizens, I regret the hour has come.
(*They begin to bind the PRISONERS.*)

DANTON. Then it is time to make my will. I leave
My legs to Couthon, my virility
To Robespierre. The other parts of me,
Since the worms will not have them, I bequeath
To the Committee. Am I allowed to sing ?

SANSON. There's nothing to prevent you.

DANTON. (*bows mockingly*) Sire, I thank you.

(*Sings.*) Sanson with his bloody crew
Will cut our spinal cords in two ;
And that debilitates us.
Though he and his can make us die,
They cannot kill posterity ;
That thought resuscitates us.
Ha, ha, ha, ha ; Ha, ha, ha, ha !
'Tis that exhilarates us.

DESMOULINS. I beg you, Danton, place this lock of hair
Between my helpless hands when I am bound !
Farewell, beloved Lucile, my life, my soul,
Divinity on earth ! Farewell, my father,

¹ It will be noticed how extraordinarily these real words of Danton's were fulfilled.

² The Executioner.

Horace, Annette, Adèle ! The shores of life
 Recede from me ! I see you still, Lucile !
 My bound hands yet embrace you, and my head,
 Though falling, rests its dying eyes on you.

(DANTON places the hair in DESMOULIN's hands.)

DANTON. My wife, my children ! Come, no weakness,
 Danton !

(FABRE, who is bound, leans forward to kiss
 DANTON. He is roughly prevented. DANTON
 turns to the JAILORS.)

DANTON. Have they commanded you to be more cruel
 Than death ? Vain folly ! How prevent our heads
 From kissing in your basket presently ?

(He laughs ; and then with a complete change
 to seriousness,)

Our toil is ended : we will take our rest.

SCENE 3. ROBESPIERRE's room in the house of DUPLAY, filled from
 floor to ceiling with pictures and busts of ROBESPIERRE. It is
 very plainly furnished ; contains a bed covered with blue and
 white damask, and four cane-bottom chairs. Two windows,
 one overlooking the courtyard, the other the street. ROBESPIERRE
 is alone. A volume of Racine lies on the table and two pistols.
 ROBESPIERRE holds a second volume in his hand. There
 is a noise outside of the gates being opened. He rushes to the
 courtyard window and shouts.

ROBESPIERRE. (at the courtyard window)

Make fast the gate ; make fast the gate ! I
 charged you

Not to admit a soul. Who is that man ?

(His hand seeks one of the pistols. ENTER
 St. JUST.)

St. Just !

ST. JUST. (*pointing to the pistol*)
 You took me for a murderer.
 Your nerves betray you.

ROBESPIERRE. (*to himself*) Yes, those nerves, those nerves !
 If I could conquer them !

ST. JUST. The people all
 Are shouting Robespierre. They speak of Danton
 No longer ; save as an example, showing
 The incorruptible virtue of that man
 Who loves his country better than his friends.

ROBESPIERRE. Ah, virtue, leading seldom to success,
 More often to defeat and martyrdom !
 Thou costly attribute ! I sometimes feel,
 When the crowd most applaud, thy loneliness.
 That Camille whom I prized, my schoolfellow,
 How came his feather brain to be seduced
 By satyr Danton ? And his fair Lucile,
 Whose child I oft have dandled on my knee,
 Must she turn traitor ? O the loneliness
 Of virtue ! No wonder men are driven to vice.

ST. JUST. Lucile has been arrested.

ROBESPIERRE. (*with an air of martyrdom*) It is well.

ST. JUST. These rival factions being swept away,
 A boundless vista opens at your feet.
 You hitherto have waited on success.
 The time to act is come.

ROBESPIERRE. If I could see
 My way with certainty ! By leaving Danton
 We are identified with those wild beasts
 Which fill the two Committees—What noise is
 that ?

(*He listens anxiously.*)

ST. JUST. Men weary of the terror as success
 Attends our armies. Some vain-glorious General
 May march his troops on Paris, make himself
 Dictator ; and so ends our liberty.

ROBESPIERRE. That is my constant dread, both day and night
 Pursuing me. Not for myself I care ;
 But for my country, for humanity—
 The peoples of the world, which wait for France
 To free them from their fetters ; France which
 stands
 Two thousand years ahead of all mankind
 For justice, liberty, enlightenment—
 This cannot, shall not be.

ST. JUST. Ah! that's the way
 I love to hear you speak ! That's Robespierre
 To whom I listen now.

ROBESPIERRE. These warring factions
 Are gone ; and on their ruins will I build
 The throne of virtue and of liberty.
 No, Chaumette ! Death is no eternal sleep ;
 It is the gate to immortality.
 Throughout this land, so late defiled by thee
 And all thy atheist crew, will I proclaim
 Eternal providence. So dies thy faction.
 As for that Danton, who would end the terror—
 What noise is that approaching ?

ST. JUST. I hear nothing.

ROBESPIERRE. Yes, I will end the terror with more terror.
 Those infamous blots shall all be purged away,
 The scum of the Convention ;—violent men,
 Who dye the Revolution red with shame
 For their vile ends.

ST. JUST. If these defend themselves
 Like Danton ?

ROBESPIERRE. They shall not defend themselves.
 We will incur no charge of moderation ;
 The public safety shall not be endangered
 Again for such as they. Our great Committees,
 Re-organised and filled with honest men,

The reign of virtue and of liberty
Will rise in solemn splendour, o'er the wake
Of Revolution, a gigantic sun.

*(Sudden stop on hearing noise quite close to
window. Tumbrils arrive. The shouting of
a CROWD.)*

ROBESPIERRE. *(shouting)*
The gates are fast ?

CROWD. Down with Danton ! Traitor, scoundrel ! To the
guillotine ! Away with him !
(The tumbrils stop.)

ROBESPIERRE. Why do they stop ?

ST. JUST. The crowd is pressing round.

ROBESPIERRE. Make fast the shutters.

ST. JUST. Listen ! He is singing.

DANTON. *(sings)* Now they drive us off to death,
Scoundrels bad as e'er drew breath ;
'Tis that which desolates us.

ROBESPIERRE. Make fast the shutters !

DANTON. But very soon will dawn that day
When Robespierre will pass this way,
And that exhilarates us.
Ha, ha, ha, ha !

(The shutters are closed.)

(More distantly and with a mocking sound.)
Ha, ha, ha, ha !

*(With a rushing noise the tumbril drives on.
ROBESPIERRE falls forward.)*

END OF ACT II

La fête de l'Être suprême était, de la part de ROBESPIERRE, un pas pour sortir de la Terreur. Aussi est-ce à cette époque que se rapporte la proposition faite par lui à ses collègues d'un plan de gouvernement régulier. Seulement il croyait la réalisation de ce plan impossible, si l'on ne frappait d'abord les terroristes du Comité de sûreté générale, tels qu'Amar, Jagot, Vadier, Vouland, et ceux des commissaires de la Convention qu'il accusait de s'être "souillés de sang et de rapines," tels que Fouché (de Nantes), Fréron, Tallien, Carrier.

L. BLANC.

The conspicuous attitude assumed by ROBESPIERRE on this occasion greatly displeased his colleagues ; by his own confession on 8 Thermidor, some of them laughed, and some even showed more marked signs of disapproval ; and if this famous Festival marked the height of ROBESPIERRE'S greatest nominal popularity and authority, from it too can be dated the commencement of the movement which led to his overthrow and death.

MORSE STEPHENS.

ACT III

SCENE 1. *At the gate of the Conciergerie. LUCILE, GENERAL DILLON, and HÉBERT'S WIFE are being conducted to the tumbrils, which wait outside. A huge chestnut tree in the Courtyard is in fullest blossom, and beneath it a lilac. A flower-seller stands among the crowd in the gateway, arranging a profusion of spring flowers. A young mother dances her child in her arms. LUCILE is dressed with exquisite care, and wears a white handkerchief on her head. She appears smiling and radiant. As she is led into the yard, DILLON advances towards her and bows.*

LUCILE. Forgive me, Dillon! I have caused your death.

DILLON.¹ Ah, no! It was a mere pretence. But you, Great God! what consolation—!

LUCILE (*gently interrupting*) Look at me! Have I the appearance, think you, of a woman In need of consolation? Ah, my friend, Had they not murdered Camille, I would bless them For what they do this day. (*Much more seriously and with impassioned utterance.*) I cannot live Without him, Dillon. Could I bid farewell To my sweet babe and mother, once again I say that I would bless them.

MADAM HÉBERT.² Thrice happy you! There is no shadow on your fame. You go From life by the grand stairway. Not a soul Speaks ill of you. With me, alas, alas! How different!

LUCILE. Do not weep! Be comforted!

MADAME H. Our husbands slew each other.

¹ The celebrated General.

² Wife of Hébert the Extremist, denounced by Desmoulin, and executed a week earlier.

- LUCILE. And their widows
 Are reconciled in death. What happiness,
 Within an hour to be with him again !
 Farewell, dear General ! I fall asleep
 In the calmness of innocence ; let men
 Write on my tomb, " She loved."
- DILLON. Ah, dearest lady,
 Sweetest of women, queen of wives, farewell !
- LUCILE. *(bowing with playfulness as she turns away).*
 Until we meet again !
(She is led away with HÉBERT'S WIFE.)
- DILLON. *(looking towards heaven)* Long live the king !¹

SCENE 2. *The garden of the Tuileries. In the background the Palace. Beneath the balcony of the Palace, and communicating with it, is an immense Amphitheatre, with seats tier above tier. In the centre is an elevated Tribune, somewhat resembling a throne. In front of the Tribune, occupying the fountain basin, is a colossal group of figures, representing Ambition, Egoism, Discord and Duplicity ; and these support a huge figure of Atheism labelled in large letters. Across the group is inscribed " Sole hope of the Foreigner." Everywhere are festoons of flowers, intermingled with tricoloured ribbon. Beneath the trees are groups dancing. A number of CITIZENS of both sexes are undergoing a final rehearsal. DAVID, who wears his Deputy's dress, is reading to them the orders of the National Convention, which are to be followed in the festival. They stand on either side of the Amphitheatre. All the males from fourteen to eighteen years of age carry sabres. The females are dressed in white, with tricolour scarves from right to left. The young girls have their hair decorated with flowers.*

- DAVID.² Now, to make sure that we all know our parts, I
 will read you once more the orders of the Con-
 vention. *(Reading.)* " While the infant presses

¹ Dillon at the foot of the scaffold returned to the Monarchist faith of his early days.

² The celebrated Painter, friend and admirer of Robespierre.

its mother's breast, of which it is the most beautiful ornament, the son, aglow with the ardour of battle, with vigorous arm, seizes his sword, and hands it to his venerated father."—(*The youths draw their swords somewhat tamely, and hand them to the old men.*) They are not toasting-forks! Once more—all together! You won't cut yourselves! Good, very good! (*Reading.*) "The old man, smiling with pleasure"—and mind you do smile! "his eyes streaming with tears of joy, feels his spirit become young again in presenting the sword to the defender of Liberty." (*The old men return the swords.*)

OLD MAN. Citizen, suppose that I cannot make the tears come at the right moment?

DAVID. Then you must cover your eyes thus (*cutting a ludicrous figure*) and appear to weep. (*Reading.*) "During this time the young women will throw flowers towards heaven." (*The young women make a motion with their hands as if throwing flowers.*) You are not feeding the poultry! "Sharing in the enthusiasm of their sons, the transported old men embrace them."—Hold, hold! the sons. You must not kiss the women! (*A salvo of artillery is fired off, followed by a rolling of drums.*) They approach! Citizens, remember your parts!

(MUSIC. *The PROCESSION of the different Sections ENTERS. The flag and banner of each Section is surrounded by a battalion of youths armed with guns. The men and boys march to the right of these battalions, the women and girls to the left. The women, who lead their young daughters by the hand, carry bouquets of roses; the girls baskets of mixed flowers. Both wear tricolour gowns. Fathers lead by the hand their sons, who are armed with swords. Each male holds a branch of oak. Every one wears flowers.*

Each section is conducted by an armed Commander. The women take their places on the left of the stage, the men on the right. A deputation ascends to the balcony to announce to the Convention that all is ready, Alarum. ENTER from the Palace balcony the MEMBERS of the CONVENTION, accompanied by a large number of musicians. The DEPUTIES are uniformly dressed in blue coats with red facings, and each carries a symbolical bouquet of wheat, flowers and fruit. They seat themselves slowly on the steps of the Amphitheatre. Then, amid braying of trumpets, the salute of cannon and the cheering of the populace, ROBESPIERRE appears on the balcony. He is attired with scrupulous care, in a coat of sky blue satin, a white waist-coat, yellow leather breeches, top boots; a round hat smothered with feathers and tricoloured ribbons; hair powdered as usual; in his right hand an enormous bouquet of flowers and wheat-ears. Both ROBESPIERRE and the DEPUTIES wear ample tricoloured sashes and plumes. Imperial acclamations hail him. In the wildest enthusiasm people embrace one another, but the DEPUTIES sit unmoved. Smiling and radiant, he descends to the Amphitheatre in a state of ecstasy.)

ROBESPIERRE. Behold the universe assembled here!
O, Nature, how sublime and sweet thy power!
Tyrants must pale at such a spectacle.

(He ascends the Tribune. Music. The DEPUTIES murmur and show great distaste at his attitude. As the music ceases he rises in his place. Trumpets and cannon, accompanied by thunders of applause.)

Frenchmen, Republicans; at length has dawned
The blissful day which we may dedicate
To the great Author of the Universe.

Ah! never has that world which he created
 Afforded through the ages any sight
 So worthy of his contemplation!
 He has seen crime, imposture, tyranny
 Triumphant on the earth. He now beholds
 A mighty nation, to a man at war
 With all the oppressors of humanity,
 Suspend the course of its heroic toil,
 To raise its thoughts and vows to that great Being
 Who fixed its mission and inspires its force.

(Reverent murmurs.)

Kings were not made by him to oppress mankind,

(Stronger murmurs.)

Nor yet fanatic priests, whose grasping pride
 Has linked us trembling to the car of kings,
 Like beasts of burden. This boundless universe
 He has created to proclaim his power;
 Man to solace and love his fellow-man,
 And attain happiness by the path of virtue.

(" Ah ! " " Yes ! ")

'Tis he impels the just to hate the evil;
 Adorns with modesty the brow of beauty;
 Inspires maternal joy and tenderness;
 Bathes with delicious tears the infant's eyes,
 Pressed to its mother's breast; who subjugates
 The most imperious and most tender passions
 Before the love sublime of patriotism.

(A suggestion of emotion in the CROWD.)

He has bound mortals by a chain of love.
 Perish the tyrants who have dared to break it!

(Shout. Pause.)

Frenchmen, Republicans; it rests with you
 To purify the earth which these have soiled.
(Buoyantly.) O generous people, give yourselves
 this day

To transports of the purest happiness.

(Cheers and " Yes, yes ! ")

To-morrow we will combat once again,
Unto extinction, vice and tyranny.

(“ Ah ! ” with determination.)

(*Acclamation. As ROBESPIERRE slowly descends from the Tribune and approaches the group of symbolical figures, the following is sung by the CHOIR, as nearly as possible to the tune of the “ Marseillaise.” During the second verse the mothers embrace their younger children and present them in homage to the Author of Nature ; the young women throw flowers towards heaven ; the youths draw their sabres, and after swearing in dumb show to be victorious, hand them to their fathers ; who give them back, and laying their hands on their sons’ heads, bestow a paternal benediction.*)

I

Eternal Being, God of might,
Thy fearless people’s shield and stay ;
Success attends with rapid flight
Our standards on their way !
O’er Alp and Pyrenee
Kings see their glory fade.
O’er Northern fields, dismayed,
Their scattered legions flee.

ALL THE
PEOPLE.

Before our swords triumphant we lay by,
We swear to extinguish crime and tyranny.

II

Warriors offer courage !
Maidens, offer flowers !
Elders, give in homage
Your sons, the conquerors !
O, bless the steel which glory
Has hallowed in the fight !
On it the eternal Might
Has graven victory !

ALL.

Before our swords triumphant, etc.

(MANAGER'S NOTE. *The second verse might very well come later as the PROCESSION is forming to march towards the Champ de Mars.*)

(*At the conclusion of the song an enormous torch is handed to ROBESPIERRE. On it is inscribed "Truth." He sets fire to the figure of Atheism. The whole group is extinguished in coloured flames, and in its place appears a Statue of Wisdom ; but terribly blackened by the smoke.*)

A DEPUTY. Look, look ! His wisdom is darkened !

ROBESPIERRE. Now has it vanished into nothingness,
This monster, which the genius of her kings
Has vomited on France. With it have gone
All the unhappiness and all the crime
Which blight this beauteous world.

(*Amid music and shouting ROBESPIERRE returns to the Tribune. A rolling of drums. The PROCESSION departs for the Field of Mars in the following order :—(1) A detachment of troops preceded by trumpeters. (2) A corps of sappers and firemen. (3) Artillery. (4) Drummers. (5) The Sections march out with their banners, accompanied by a band of music. (6) The Choir. (7) The Musicians playing patriotic airs. (8) ROBESPIERRE, walking alone, a long way in front of the Convention. (9) The National Convention, its members encircled by a tricoloured ribbon, which is borne by children crowned with chaplets of violets, youths with myrtle, men with oak, old men with vine-branches and olive. In their midst goes a triumphal car of an antique pattern, drawn by eight milk-white oxen, covered with festoons and garlands, and with gilded horns. The car is draped with red, and*

on it is a trophy composed of instruments of art and trade—a printing press, etc.—and an oak overshadowing a statue of Liberty; in front of the car are ranged wheat sheaves, at the back stand shepherds and shepherdesses. As the Convention is about to follow ROBESPIERRE, TALLIEN says to the DEPUTIES.)

- TALLIEN. Wait, wait! Let the Dictator march far in front!
(He leaves the PROCESSION with LEGENDRE, PANIS, BOURDON and OTHERS. EXIT the PROCESSION and they are left alone.)
- LEGENDRE. Will you not follow?
- BOURDON. I? No more for me.
 I have had enough of fooling.
- LEGENDRE. Let us wait here
 Until the rest return,
- TALLIEN. He has gone too far
 With the Convention. They will not forgive
 His attitude this day.
- LEGENDRE. And many think
 That his new law, which Couthon introduces,
 Is aimed at us, and threatens all our lives.
- BOURDON. It more than threatens us. He has drawn up
 Long lists of deputies for execution.
 All the proconsuls of the provinces,
 Carrier and Fouché, Tallien—all the Committee
 Of General Security. As for me,
 I sleep away from home.
- PANIS. This is mere gossip.
- BOURDON. Believe me it is certain. Carnot found
 By accident his list of deputies.
- TALLIEN. With this terrific law he will destroy
 The two Committees, and so end the Terror.
 'Tis Danton's scheme transformed. His enemies
 dead,

The reign of virtue follows—that's himself,
 With Couthon and St. Just for satellites.
 The deputies have been his abject slaves,
 Through fear, since Danton's fall. It is high time
 That by another fear they should undo him.

BOURDON. Once spread belief that no man's life is safe
 From Robespierre's ambition, and the Right
 Are ours to a man ; should he attack the Mountain,
 The whole Convention follows.

*(Stage begins to darken, and gradually gets
 darker until the end of scene.)*

TALLIEN. The time is ripe ;
 And while disgust still holds the deputies
 Let us work diligently. He will not dare
 To name his threatened victims. Being unnamed,
 All men will fear proscription. The Committee
 Of Public Safety, which on Danton's death
 Swore to oppose henceforward accusations
 Directed 'gainst the deputies, without fail
 Will call him to account.

BOURDON The friends of Danton
 In the Convention still are strong. This law
 Destroys them all.

LEGENDRE. I was the friend of Danton ;
 And every friend of that most injured man
 Will slave to drag this priest and tyrant down.
 You may rely on me.

PANIS. Yes, and on me.

LEGENDRE. Weakness acknowledged yet may grow to strength.
 If in my weakness I forsook my friends,
 I will earn pardon by avenging them.

*(DARKNESS. The stage gradually lightens. The
 DEPUTIES with ROBESPIERRE at their head are
 returning to the Palace. BOURDON and the
 others have joined them. As they reach the
 fountain basin, ROBESPIERRE pauses. The
 DEPUTIES murmur threats and imprecations.*

ROBESPIERRE *appears uneasy, sullen and dejected, and has the air of fleeing for his life, in contrast to his pompous exit. He moves about restlessly from place to place on the opposite side of stage to DEPUTIES, as if avoiding them; until just before they go out, when he stands by the fountain.*)

BOURDON. How radiant he was! How he inhaled
The homage of the people. He already
Feels himself king; he would be God also.

LEGENDRE. Pope of the Revolution!

TALLIÉN. Let him beware;
The fatal rock stands near the Capitol.

PANIS. His God is like himself—an icicle.

BILLAUD. With his Eternal Being he begins
Infernally to bore me!

(Many of the DEPUTIES laugh and many murmur.)
Tyrant! Dictator!

(ROBESPIERRE is standing by the fountain; ST. JUST joins him. EXEUNT the OTHERS in twos and threes into the Palace, some of them looking back at ROBESPIERRE.)

ROBESPIERRE. *(looking after them)*
Malignant flies; hateful to God and France!
Ah, yet their demon voices fill my ears!
Their breath has poisoned me! About my throat
I feel the dank and bony hand of death.
—You will not have me long!—"Brutus still
lives,"
Cried one.

ST. JUST. His Brutus is a Cataline,
Who plots his country's downfall. In case of need
We must fall back on Paris. Hanriot's faithful,
But wanting in resource. If we should summon
Your brother's friend, Napoleon Buonaparte,
To fill his place—

ROBESPIERRE. (*moving away and decidedly*) No, no ; no Generals here !

These easy victories make them popular.

(*Moving down stage. Pause. Then, counting on his fingers.*)

One,—two—

Tallien and Bourdon ; Barras, Panis, Fréron ;
Thuriot, Guffroy, Rovère, Lecointre, Legendre ;
Vadier and Vouland ; Carrier—

(*continues counting silently*) and the rest

As fortune may direct. Unhappy France,
Which calls for such purgation !

ST. JUST.

Day and night

Attach the Commune and the Jacobins

More closely to you. With their aid alone

We can ensure success.

ROBESPIERRE.

(*moving up stage*)

By every post

Fresh horrors reach me.

(*Burning with indignation.*) Representatives

Consume rich food while poverty lacks bread.

(*Impassioned.*)

No Roman emperor in his madness ever

Surpassed these fiends in reckless cruelty.

(*Dropping his voice in a tone of horror.*)

Rapine and murder ; lust too terrible

For human thought ; the Loire, entirely choked

With corpses of the dead, spreads pestilence.

ST. JUST.

Your country calls you, and in her behalf

Encourage happy thoughts.

ROBESPIERRE.

(*changing his tone to one of strong deprecation*)

Death—ever death !

These villains cast the blame of all on me.

O, what a memory shall I leave behind !

ST. JUST.

All France supports you. For her sake become

A Cæsar purged from all ambition.

ROBESPIERRE.

Cæsar ! (*with startled expression*) a strange
suggestion !

- ST. JUST. This new law
 Places the life or death of every man
 At your disposal. (*With confidence.*) You will use
 it well ;
 Not as the tyrants who have soiled the world ;
 But for your country ; for humanity.
- ROBESPIERRE. I was not born to rule. But I am strong
 To combat crime and faction. They shall die.
-

SCENE 3. *The hall of the Committee of Public Safety in the Pavillon de Flore, richly decorated with the bronzes, mirrors, tapestry and furniture of the ruined Court. The MEMBERS of the two Committees are present, except ROBESPIERRE, ST. JUST and COUTHON. There is a movement to and fro, as if matters of the deepest importance are imminent. Most of the MEMBERS are seated in knots of three and four. TALLIEN and the OTHER CONSPIRATORS are sitting at the central table. As they speak many of the OTHER MEMBERS draw up.*

- BOURDON. He will not come.
- TALLIEN. He will not dare refuse,
 And make an open rupture. When he speaks
 We must attack him. That will drive him mad ;
 And he may break with Billaud and the rest
 Of his Committee.
- LEGENDRE. I cannot understand
 Why Billaud has not left him long ago :
 Billaud, the ruler of the whole Committee ;
 He cannot stand in awe of Robespierre.
- PANIS. Fanatic babbler !
- TALLIEN. All submit through fear
 Of strengthening the Convention, which a split
 Would render unavoidable.
- BILLAUD (*who occupies the President's seat, apart to COLLOT*)
 There's need
 Of patience, Collot.

COLLOT.¹

I will do my best.

BILLAUD.

And yet this man's presumption maddens me
Beyond control of prudence.

(ENTER ROBESPIERRE and ST. JUST. *The moment they open the door, the others stop talking and silently move to their seats. After a momentary pause ROBESPIERRE and ST. JUST seat themselves amidst ominous silence.*)

BILLAUD.

Robespierre,
The two Committees call you to their bosom
In friendliest courtesy. So many minds
Become distracted through uncertain fear,
That, in the name of all our deputies,
We seek to know your purpose.

ROBESPIERRE.

Mine? What mean you?
Am I dictator? Have I any purpose
Apart from your Committees?

BILLAUD.

This new law,
Drawn up without our knowledge or consent,
Strikes terror into all.

ROBESPIERRE.

Do I make laws?
Am I a Cromwell? Why did the Convention
Adopt this law, which breeds disquietude,
Unless convinced of its necessity?

BOURDON.

The violence of your faction overbears
The whole Convention, which is no more free.

ROBESPIERRE.

My faction, insolent scoundrel? Is it for this
I have fought against all factions; giv'n my life
In martyrdom to liberty? Yet men
Accuse me of dictatorship, who stand
A melancholy victim; all alone,
Without support and hopeless; a mere target
For the poniards of assassins. Fortunately
I do not count my life for anything,
But only virtue and providence.

¹ Billaud's most powerful colleague. See note in Act I, Scene 1.

- BILLAUD. Robespierre,
 Your virtues are the theme of every tongue,
 Of all men's admiration. But this law—
 You have assured us that no personal grievance
 'Gainst the Convention moves you, whose members
 thus
 Are robbed of their old right to give consent
 Before their fellows may be brought to trial.
- ROBESPIERRE. It was the aristocrats, the friends of Danton,
 Hébert, Chaumette, who had the impudence
 To ask for this assurance. You speak of fear.
 Fear is the scourge of evil consciences ;
 The virtuous know it not.
- BILLAUD. And yet men fear.
- ROBESPIERRE. You speak again as if this law were mine,
 A single member of your Great Committee.
 The whole Convention ratified my law.
- BILLAUD. The whole Convention would undo your law ;
 And to that end our two Committees, met
 In solemn conclave, here have summoned you.
 With your consent it shall be abrogated.
- ROBESPIERRE. I never will consent. If evil minds
 Would shield the evil ; if the friends of Danton
 Grow strong in the Convention ; they may slay me :
 They shall not soil my conscience.
- BILLAUD. *(to the members of both Committees)* Citizens,
 This law we speak of was proposed by Couthon,
 Drawn up by Robespierre without our knowledge,
 Consent or approbation. We declare it.
 St. Just alone had cognizance. As for us,
 The other members of the Great Committee
 Of Public Safety, we utterly refuse
 To entertain the thought that any member
 Of our Committees, or of the Convention,
 Save with permission of the deputies,
 Shall be exposed to trial.

ROBESPIERRE. (*to the members of both Committees*) My suspicion
Is justified. It is an infamous plot
To separate me from my colleagues. Yes,
I am the scapegoat. On me would they cast
All the opprobrium of iniquities
Which are committed. (*To BOURDON.*) A ferocious
faction,—

ALL SHOUTING. Faction! (*Pause.*)

BOURDON. Names; names!

ROBESPIERRE. I shall know how to name them when I must.
(*Murmurs of discontent.*)

BOURDON. Is it your spies who bring you news of them?

TALLIEN. Yes, we are watched. (*Movement.*) Even in our
own Committee
You have your prying members. ("Ah!") At
eight last night
I walked with Bourdon in the Tuileries.
Five creatures followed, giving ear intently
To all our conversation. I knew them well
For spies of the Committee, (*movement*) and I told
them
We were the people's representatives. (*Big movement.*)
They said that made no difference. Then they
laughed;
They mocked at us.

BOURDON. Yes, yes; they mocked at us.

ROBESPIERRE. (*to BILLAUD*)
Is this the reason you have summoned me
To be insulted by these—citizens?
(*Looking at TALLIEN and BOURDON.*)

BILLAUD. The impudence of Tallien is extreme.
Those men, the messengers of the Committee,
Were all good Jacobins; I know them well.
(*Mixed impression.*)

(To ROBESPIERRE.)

But Robespierre, you surely will consent,
On due reflection, to repeal this law.

ROBESPIERRE. I never will consent. (*Great movement.*)

BILLAUD.

It cannot be.

You still persist in spite of what we say
That you will act alone ; treat us with scorn,
When both Committees and the whole Convention
Oppose what you decree. (*Turning to the rest.*)

Mark, Citizens,

A single individual rules us all,
And we are subject to his will. (*Murmurs.*)

ROBESPIERRE.

(*losing his temper*)

Beware !

You go too far. 'Tis unendurable
That my pure efforts in the people's cause
Should be distorted thus. If you persist
In slandering me, (*very threateningly, to BILLAUD*)
let those beware who fill

The armies with conspirators and nobles,
Though with what secret purpose they know best,
While through their fingers public money flows :
Then, at the mention of severity,
Their guilty consciences cry out afraid,
Who would protect the people's enemies.

BILLAUD.

Come down to earth and answer with plain speech !
Do you attack your colleagues, or the Committee
Of General Security ?

ROBESPIERRE.

I, attack ?

I attack no one. Dare you say " attack " ?
I am attacked, accused of tyranny ;
A tyrant—I ! The force of calumny
Chokes me ; I am oppressed ; I cannot speak.

(*He weeps. Movement of disagreement.*)

COLLOT.

(*vehemently and quickly*)

Robespierre ever says he is oppressed,
He cannot speak ; yet no one speaks but he.

- BILLAUD. I have no further patience! There you stand
 And posing, with an air of martyrdom,
 Make filthy charges while defying us.
 It is insufferable! Through fear of you
 Some sixty deputies sleep away from home.
 You are the tyrant of the two Committees.
(General growing movement, and some uproar.)
- ROBESPIERRE. I will not stay to be insulted thus.
(To BILLAUD.)
 Then I release you from my tyranny.
 I am no Cromwell. *(He rises and prepares to leave.)*
- COLLOT. You renounce this law?
(Appealing gestures of anxiety that he should say yes.)
- ROBESPIERRE. Never. And do not you deceive yourselves
 That, when the truth is known, our great Republic
 Will suffer your Committees to protect
 The people's deadly foes. I will appeal
 To France. The die is cast. I cannot stay.
 My colleagues drive me out.
- BILLAUD. Your own high-handedness,
 And lust of domination drive you out.
(Cries of "Yes—yes," much noise.)
 It is not we who drive you.
- ROBESPIERRE. *(in a strong voice)* You are afraid.
 The issue is quite clear 'twixt you and me:
 You would protect the people's deadly foes;
 I will destroy them. Since corruption fails,
 You cover me with shameless calumny,
 And send me from among you. Be it so:
 Without regret I go. But bear in mind
 That in the people's cause I am fighting still.
 You have attacked me: I appeal to France.
(Going out, followed by ST. JUST.)
(As the curtain is descending, general break up in Conference.)

“ Un mot de Robespierre, et les sections armées et la foule innombrable qui garnissaient les abords de l'Hôtel de Ville s'ébranlaient, se ruaient sur la Convention, jetaient l'Assemblée dehors. Mais ce mot, il ne voulut pas le dire. Pressé par ses amis de donner un signal que chacun attendait avec impatience, il refusa obstinément.”

HAMEL.

ACT IV

SCENE 1. *At the Jacobin Club. Night.* ROBESPIERRE *is reading his speech to his supporters.* COUTHON, PAYAN, COFFINHAL, FLEURIOT, DUMAS, HANRIOT, DAVID, *and many others are present.* Also in the background BILLAUD, COLLOT, TALLIEN, *and others of his opponents.* The audience is largely composed of women.

ROBESPIERRE. (*reading*)

Shall these vile scoundrels force us then, on pain
Of being pronounced dictators, to betray
The people's cause? Must we submit? Ah, no!
Let us defend the people at the risk
Of being its victims. Let our enemies
Approach the scaffold by the path of crime,
And us by that of virtue.

(*He lays down the paper and takes off his spectacles.*)

This defence
Is my last will, my testament of death.

VOICES. We all will die to save you!

ROBESPIERRE. (*solemnly and decisively repeating*) Yes; my will.
The league of evil has become so strong
I cannot hope to escape it. Well, I yield
Without regret; my memory I bequeath
To you, my friends. It will be dear to you;
You will defend it after I am dead.

PAYAN.¹ We will defend you now.

COFFINHAL.² We will avenge
The father of our country on the heads
Of wickedness united.

¹ Agent-National of the Commune.

² Vice-President of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

- HANRIOT. ¹ I still know
The way to that Convention, which last June
I purged of infamous conspirators.
- DUMAS. ² Then separate the wicked from the weak. ³
Deliver the Convention from those villains
Who now oppress it. Render it the service
Which it expects of you. (*Tremendous excitement.*)
- ROBESPIERRE. No violence!
These villains yet are representatives,
And their expulsion must be brought about
By lawful means alone. If I should fail,
In spite of my pure efforts, I will drink
The hemlock with composure.
- DAVID. ⁴ Robespierre,
I'll drink it with you!
(*Tremendous applause.*)
- COUTHON. ⁵ Fellow Jacobins,
Let those opposed to Robespierre be ejected
At once from our society.
(*More uproar.*)
- DUMAS. In the crowd
I can distinguish Billaud, Collot, Tallien.
Look! They are standing in the shadow there!
(*Uproar.*)
- COLLOT. I claim the right to speak.
- BILLAUD. And I.

¹ Commandant of Paris.

² President of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

³ Billaud-Varenne subsequently put these words in the mouth of Robespierre: but no admirer of Robespierre has ever accepted them as his. Indeed, they are quite foreign to his character, and were probably attributed to him in order to confirm the idea of his aim at Dictatorship. Billaud, in his great speech on the following day (see next Scene) said that it was the President of the Tribunal (*i.e.* Dumas) who the night before had openly incited Hanriot to march against the Convention.

⁴ The artist.

⁵ Robespierre's celebrated colleague.

PAYAN. Confusion !
How dare they show their faces ?

VOICES. Turn them out !
(A tremendous scuffle. BILLAUD, COLLOT, TALLIEN and others are hustled and threatened with knives.)

COLLOT. Here, take my life ! It were in vain to speak
Of labours and of service gladly given
For the Republic.
(Tearing open his waistcoat.)
This my wounded breast,
Still smarting from a foul assassin's touch,
I offer to your violence.
(He is hooted and jeered at. Some attempt to stab him.)

BILLAUD. *(approaching Robespierre)* Robespierre,
I would have sided with you, but you are
Insatiable ; and I would rather die
Than bear your insolent dictatorship.

COFFINHAL. ¹ Down with these ruffians ; down !
(A free fight. The women shriek and throw themselves at ROBESPIERRE'S feet. BILLAUD, COLLOT, TALLIEN and their followers take to their heels ; the greater part of those present, including COFFINHAL, pursuing them out and singing the "Marseillaise." The following to be made prominent.)

FLEURIOT. ² *(to HANRIOT)* Is all in readiness ?

HANRIOT. The troops even now
Are under arms. The bridges all are held
By batteries of cannon.

FLEURIOT. *(whispering)* The Convention . . . ?

¹ Vice-President of the Tribunal.

² Mayor of Paris.

- HANRIOT. Fear nothing. My artillery will be placed
In the Carrousel. At a moment's notice
The hall is blown to fragments.
- FLEURIOT. Coffinhal
Secures the Faubourgs. When the tocsin sounds
The sections will assemble.
- HANRIOT. You may trust me,
And go to sleep in calm security.
*(A number of Jacobins who have returned from
the pursuit of BILLAUD and his followers,
begin to sing in the Courtyard outside.
RE-ENTER COFFINHAL.)*
- COFFINHAL. You should have seen them run! Our men
pursued,
Hooting and yelling through the silent streets.
They reached the Tuileries; Billaud and Collot
Went bounding up the staircase, in a fury
To tell their colleagues of the Great Committee
All that had passed.
- PAYAN. ¹ *(to ROBESPIERRE, who during the foregoing has been
standing apart, but within hearing distance, at a
table, arranging the loose pages of his speech)*
They hold a permanent sitting,
This night, the two Committees. *(With persistence.)*
Robespierre,
The time to act is now. A brilliant thought
Has struck me. Hanriot's troops are under arms,
The people all are with us. Let us march
Immediately and take them prisoners,
Conspirators and tyrants, where they sit
Assembled. Not a villain of them all
Will thus escape, and with a single blow
We triumph.
- ROBESPIERRE. No; no violence. The might
Of truth and virtue are strong, and will prevail.

¹ Agent-National of the Commune.

- DUMAS. ¹ *(trying to convince him)*
 O Robespierre, the moment once let slip
 Will never more return !
- ROBESPIERRE. *(with difficulty drawing PAYAN away)* The mass of men
 Are honest ; and St. Just to-morrow morning
 Denounces the conspirators.
- FLEURIOT. ² If he fail !
- ROBESPIERRE. I am no Cataline. If right should fail,
 The victim will be ready.
- PAYAN. *(with growing disgust)* Is it for this
 We risk our lives ? Such moments come but once—
 Dreamers who never know the time of day !—
 We are infamously treated.
- HANRIOT. *(with difficulty drawing PAYAN away)*
Payan, Payan !
 You should have done this, and not spoken of it ;
 Act for the future. I know Robespierre.
 When you have triumphed, he will be the first
 To claim and profit by your insurrection.
- PAYAN. And shall I give my life for such a man,
 To make him master ? No.
- HANRIOT. *(with intense eagerness)* You have gone too far ;
 You are bound to us now. All's well. Be silent,
 man !
 To-morrow we shall triumph ; wait till then.
- ROBESPIERRE. *(aside to COUTHON)*
 There is no need to fear. The Right and Plain
 Who form the vast majority, when they see
 The people fly to arms in my behalf
 Will vote against these butchers.

(ROBESPIERRE having collected his papers, bows.)

EXEUNT ROBESPIERRE and COUTHON.)

¹ President of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

² Mayor of Paris.

- FLEURIOT. If Robespierre will not be our chief, his name
 Shall be our banner. We must disregard
 His fine disinterestedness, or the Republic
 Will perish.
- PAYAN. Where is Danton? He would have saved
 The people. Why should virtue be more scrupulous
 Than vile ambition?
- FLEURIOT. Would to God Robespierre had that ambition
 Of which all men accuse him!
- HANRIOT. (*with decision*) To our posts!
- COFFINHAL. (*at the window*)
 The sun already floods the stormy East
 With sullen presage of tempestuous day;
 And people stirring in the streets await
 With bated breath the issue.
- HANRIOT. (*pointing to the sunrise*) Friends, Good day!

SCENE 2. *The Hall of the Convention. The House is sitting, with COLLOT in the President's Chair. TALLIEN, BOURDON, PANIS, LEGENDRE and other CONSPIRATORS are standing in a knot near the door.*

- LEGENDRE. I hear the tocsin!
- PANIS. No. It does not sound.
- BOURDON. The streets are full of arms. Artillery
 Is rattling up. I saw it as I passed
 Through the Carrousel.
- TALLIEN. Hanriot has been summoned
 By the Committees.
- BOURDON. He refused to obey.
- TALLIEN. That is flat insurrection.

BOURDON. Yes. By his orders
The sections are assembling. Robespierre
Will carry all before him.

(ENTER ST. JUST, *he ascends the Tribune.*)

TALLIEN. Look! St. Just,
With his attack prepared. He little knows
The Right to a man are pledged to vote with us.

(ENTER ROBESPIERRE. *He remains standing
beside the Tribune. He wears the same dress
as on the Feast of the Supreme Being.*)

ST. JUST. Though of no faction, I will freely state
My own opinion of the root and motives
Of our dissensions.

TALLIEN. Yes! Tear down the curtain!

(*Tremendous applause, during which the OTHER
MEMBERS of the Committee of Public Safety
ENTER. When BILLAUD sees what is taking
place, he rushes to the Tribune and forces
St. JUST aside.*)

BILLAUD. Upon a point of order! (COLLOT *signifies assent.*)
Citizens,

A frightful danger calls for instant speech.
Tremble with indignation and alarm!
There is a plot against us all. (*Movement.*) Last
night

The Jacobin Society was filled
With murderers, who threatened openly
To slaughter the Convention. (*Great indignation.*)

There I heard
Men vomit forth, unchallenged, infamies
The most atrocious. Nay, they even strove
To slay those members whom they have proscribed.
(*Sensation.*)

Look! on the Mountain one is sitting now!
There he is! There he is!

MANY MEMBERS.

Arrest him! Arrest him!
*(A Member is borne forth. Tremendous
 applause from the populace in the galleries.)*

BILLAUD.

Prepare to freeze with horror. The armed force
 Of Paris is in parricidal hands,
 And threatens us. *(Great movement.)*
 Its leader, Hanriot,
 Has been denounced to the Committee of Safety
 By the Tribunal as a Hébertist;
 As a conspirator most infamous. *(Tremendous
 excitement.)*

VOICES.

Down with him! Down with him! Long live the
 Committee of Public Safety!
(Tumult.)

BILLAUD.

Robespierre tells you that he is estranged
 From us, his colleagues. He is very careful
 You should not know the cause. *(Movement.)*
 He does not tell you
 That having tyrannized in the Committee
 For six whole months, he met resistance there
 That moment when, alone, he forced on us
 His law of Prairial; ("Ah!" general growing
 movement)
 his infamous decree, ("Yes!"
 "Yes!")
 Which, in the hands of his vile ministers,
 Menaced with death the purest patriots.

*(Mixed impression and great excitement.
 ROBESPIERRE rushes to the Tribune, and
 places himself behind BILLAUD. BILLAUD
 keeps him out. Shouts for ROBESPIERRE,
 drowned by cries of "Tyrant.")*

BILLAUD.

It is incredible that any here
 Would choose to live under a tyrant.

ALL.

Perish all tyrants! *(Applause.)*

No;

BILLAUD. (*addressing the galleries*) Ah! the people love us,
And patriots all will die for liberty. (*Cheers.*)

ROBESPIERRE. I claim to speak—I will be heard—The voice—
(COLLOT *rings his bell against ROBESPIERRE and motions BILLAUD to proceed.*)

BILLAUD. Yes; I repeat it, we will die with honour.
(*Prolonged applause. ROBESPIERRE again attempts to speak, but is prevented by COLLOT.*)

BILLAUD. I well remember, when I first denounced
Danton to the Committee, Robespierre
Threw himself at me like a fury, saying
I sought to slay the best of patriots.
(*Much indignation.*)

ROBESPIERRE. Now let me speak—When shameless calumny—
(COLLOT *furiously rings bell. Tumult.*)

BILLAUD. A thousand other charges could I bring
Against this man. And he accuses us!—
We who are isolated; who know no one;
Who pass our days and nights in ceaseless toil
To organize the victories—we are traitors!
(*Great tumult.*)

He has set spies upon those deputies
Marked out for slaughter. (*Increasing agitation.*)

It is infamous
To speak of justice and virtue, despising both,
And doing naught but what is contrary.

(*Renewed tumult. ROBESPIERRE again endeavours to force his way past BILLAUD.*)

ROBESPIERRE. Once more I claim to speak; you shall not stop me!

THE CONSPIRATORS. Down with the tyrant! Down with the tyrant!
(*Cheers.*)

ROBESPIERRE. (*slightly turning and choking with anger*)
Tyrant! you call me tyrant!

(Uproar. TALLIEN darts to the Tribune and forces his way past ROBESPIERRE. BILLAUD gives place to TALLIEN, and COLLOT signifies assent for TALLIEN to speak. ROBESPIERRE remains pressing behind TALLIEN.)

TALLIEN.

I bade you rend the veil. With joy I see
It has been torn in pieces. Hitherto
I have kept silence, fearing for my life.
But when last evening at the Jacobins
I trembled for my country, when I saw
The army of this Cromwell form itself
Beneath my eyes; the time to act had come.
Swearing to kill a tyrant or to die,
I armed myself. *(Draws a dagger.)*

This dagger will I plunge
Into his breast, if this assembly lack
The courage to decree his accusation.

(He brandishes the dagger in ROBESPIERRE'S face, who recoils. Cheers from the galleries. A moment of silence; then, as if in a dream, ROBESPIERRE advances into the centre of the hall and gazes round the benches. From all sides there bursts forth a cry of "Tyrant, Tyrant!" He crosses in front of the President's chair, and, folding his arms, looks up at the Mountain.)

LEGENDRE.

Back, back!
The dreadful shade of Danton still sits here!

ROBESPIERRE.

Is it of Danton's death you accuse me? Coward!
Why did you not defend him?

VOICES.

Tyrant, Tyrant!

(He then addresses the Plain.)

ROBESPIERRE.

To you, pure men, will I address myself,
And not to ruffians. *(He seats himself.)*

PANIS.

That was Vergniaud's place.

(Uproar. ROBESPIERRE rushes to the Tribune. COLLOT rings the bell furiously. The confusion is at its height, TALLIEN and ROBESPIERRE shrieking, COLLOT demanding order.)

ROBESPIERRE. President of murderers, for the last time
I ask your leave to speak!

(Suddenly a moment of dead silence. ROBESPIERRE clutches wildly at the air and tries in vain to speak.)

LEGENDRÉ. You cannot speak;
The blood of Danton chokes you!

(ROBESPIERRE leaves the Tribune. Like a hunted animal he runs up the gangway at the extreme Left, and stands at bay facing the Convention. Silence.)

ROBESPIERRE. Decree my death!

BOURDON. Arrest him!

LEGENDRÉ. Yes; arrest the vile Dictator!

TALLIEN. To the vote, to the vote!

PANIS. St. Just and Couthon also
Must be included.

ROBESPIERRE Behold me guilty as my brother here;
JUNIOR. I share his virtues; I demand his fate.

BOURDON. Arrest them both.

VOICES. Arrest, arrest, arrest!

COLLOT. The question is that all these deputies
Shall be arrested.

ALL. Yes. Arrest them, arrest them!

COLLOT. If any be opposed, now let them speak. *(Dead silence.)*

Carried unanimously.

(Applause, followed by an awful silence.)

BOURDON.

Will not the accused
Withdraw themselves beyond the sacred pale
Of the Assembly ?

*(The FOUR DEPUTIES move slowly to the Bar of
the House.)*

LEGENDRE.

Will no officers
Dare to secure them ? Are we come to this ?
How hard it is to strike a tyrant down.

*(The USHERS advance timidly and with hesitation,
and lay their hands on the shoulders of the FOUR
DEPUTIES. DARKNESS. When the stage grows
light again hours have elapsed, it is evening,
and the lamps are all lighted. The Repre-
sentatives are sitting or standing in little
groups, anxiously discussing the situation.)*

BOURDON.

We are as good as dead.

LEGENDRE.

Enraged, the Commune
Has liberated all the prisoners.
Well, life or death, this time we will be brave.

TALLIEN.

A deputation of the City Council
Now holds a sitting at the Jacobins.
All flock to them.

BILLAUD.

(ascending the Tribune) Our danger is extreme.
Hanriot has won the whole artillery
To side against us ; and he stands without
In the Carrousel, with his guns all turned
On this assembly. Every moment now
May be our last. *(Stampede of the ONLOOKERS.)*

COLLOT.

(taking President's Seat) Then, Representatives,
The time for dying at our post is come,
Since villainy has made itself the master
Of this our National Palace. I speak for all.
We will endure no Cromwell, no Dictator—

*(Acclamation. Those of the MEMBERS who are
strolling about, seat themselves.)*

But, as the Roman Senate sat of old,
Awaiting their barbarian conquerors,
Here let us sit in calm tranquility
And solemn silence, awaiting the event.

SCENE 3. *The Great Hall of the Hôtel de Ville, lighted by innumerable candles. Overhead the tocsin is ringing; other bells reply. A noise of arms and shouting in the Square outside. FLEURIOT and DUMAS are at the window, anxiously listening.*

FLEURIOT.¹ I do not hear the bell of Notre Dame.

DUMAS.² It does not sound.

FLEURIOT. The precious moments flee.
We can do nothing without Robespierre.
(*Goes to the door. ENTER PAYAN hurriedly.*)

PAYAN.³ He will not come. We have entreated him,
Urged, nay commanded, almost threatened him;
'Twas worse than useless. (*Hopeless despair.*)
Still he sits and talks,
Disputing the strict right of insurrection;
Doubting it, asking for persuasion;
And time is racing on.

FLEURIOT. (*going to door, and looking out*) Four precious hours
He thus has wasted.

PAYAN. It is mere cowardice,
The paltry fear of breaking his arrest.
He dreads to step outside the law; demands
His trial, saying that Tribunal which
Acquitted Marat, will deliver him.

DUMAS. (*going up stage*)
And what of his good friends, the hundred here
Who signed the roll; to whom this insurrection,
If it should fail, means death?

¹ Mayor of Paris.

² President of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

³ Agent-General of the Commune.

- PAYAN. But Hanriot—
 Why with his cannon at the very door
 Of the Convention, did he fear to strike ?
- FLEURIOT. His men were lukewarm. This paralysis
 Of Robespierre's indecision ruins all,
 And Hanriot dared not act.
- PAYAN. O drunken fool !
 O miserable caitiff ! That our fates
 Should be entrusted to this man of straw !
- FLEURIOT. I have despatched him now with Coffinhal,
 As a last hope, to summon Robespierre.
 (ENTER COFFINHAL.)
- COFFINHAL. ¹ News, news. We have prevailed, and Robespierre
 Is on his way hither.
- FLEURIOT. Then our cause is won.
 Illuminate the façade ; bid our friends
 Assemble speedily ! A word from Robespierre
 Will echo, thrilling to the heart of France,
 And brace our slackened sinews to prevail
 Against these brigands, thieves and murderers.
 (*The room fills with Leaders of the Insurrection
 and Members of the Populace. AUGUSTINE
 ROBESPIERRE ENTERS and is embraced by
 FLEURIOT ; then ST. JUST and LE BAS, who
 are enthusiastically received.*)
- FLEURIOT. Citizens, patriots, Frenchmen, here assembled,
 The father of the people, Robespierre,
 In whose behalf we count it gain to die,
 Outraged by the Convention, spurned, cast forth,
 Imprisoned ; by our action now is free
 And hastens to our bosom. (*Tremendous applause.*)
He has dared,
 Being more solicitous for public good
 Than for his safety, to defy the law,

¹ Vice-President of the Tribunal.

Escaping from his captors, and is come
To head our insurrection. (*Cheers; wild excitement.*)

Now success

Is certain; we may live for liberty.

(*A sound of cheering in the Square, with loud cries of "ROBESPIERRE." The doors are thrown open, and ROBESPIERRE is carried in triumphantly, accompanied by HANRIOT.*)

ROBESPIERRE. I thank you, Citizens. This noble Commune
Which overthrew the Tyrant, now once more
Has merited well of liberty. Your efforts
To free me from the hands of a vile faction,
An infamous faction, which by calumny
Conspires to ruin me, deserve the praise
Of all Republicans.

(*Tremendous applause. They seize him by the hands and embrace him.*)

ST. JUST. (*embracing him*) O Robespierre,
At last you see the time to act has come!

ROBESPIERRE. (*to ST. JUST, with cold severity*)
By foul deceit they won me to this course—
This fatal course—to break the public law.

FLEURIOT. The troops for hours have been in readiness
To march on the Convention. Sign the appeal,
And Hanriot will depart immediately!
It is not yet too late.

ROBESPIERRE. (*plausibly and with great conviction*) I cannot sign.
You must perceive it is not meet that I,
A Representative, should rise in arms
Against my fellows; who unanimously
Have voted my arrest. The shade of Verres
Beckons to me out from its dim abode,
And warns me not to sign.

HANRIOT.¹ (*with deep earnestness*) O Robespierre,
Without you we are nothing!

¹ Commandant of Paris.

ST. JUST. *(strong tone)* Can you let
Such scruples weigh in such a time as this?
By breaking your arrest you placed yourself
Beyond the law. If this attempt should fail,
Farewell at once to life and liberty.

PAYAN. *(hastily returning from door).*
Bad news! The Representatives at length
Have wakened from their stupor. Many sections
Which were inclined to waver, have been won
By them. Their forces under Leonard Bourdon
Are marching to attack us.

FLEURIOT. Then to arms!
Waste not another moment! (EXIT HANRIOT.)
Robespierre,
You will address your followers from the window:
A word from you, and still our cause is won.
*(He attempts to lead ROBESPIERRE to the open
window.)*

ROBESPIERRE. I cannot and I will not: do not ask me!
(COUTHON is carried in.)

PAYAN. *(to the Leaders of the Insurrection)*
There is worse news to follow, which I fear
To speak aloud. Legendre with new found courage
Has closed the Jacobin Club. The Municipality
And Hanriot have been outlawed.

COFFINHAL. Robespierre,
It is for your sake we are come to this.
Proclaim yourself Dictator.
*(The sound of trumpets in the Square is heard,
followed by the voices of CRIERS.)*

Hark! The criers
Of the Convention in the very Square
Are shouting their Decree.

ROBESPIERRE. *(they press round him)* No, no; I cannot!

COUTHON. Then only death awaits us.

- ROBESPIERRE. You have said it.
- ST. JUST. 'Tis you who sacrifice us ; you alone.
- ROBESPIERRE. I cannot soil my conscience with a crime.
- FLEURIOT. (to PAYAN)
Then publish this Decree, that from despair
May come that power redoubled which is ever
The offspring of success ! Make it include
The whole of those assembled.
- PAYAN. (shouting) Citizens,
We all are outlawed !
(Great consternation.)
- A VOICE. Save yourselves who can !
(Rolling of drums and a murmur of voices.
Words of command are given, followed by
cries of " Long live the Convention " and
counter cries " Long live the Commune."
Stampede of all the ONLOOKERS, who rush out
in confusion. RE-ENTER HANRIOT wounded.
He staggers to the window.)
- HANRIOT. They are divided and they will not march.
(Rushing to window and shouting.)
You know me, Hanriot, your general !
- VOICE WITHOUT. He is an outlaw !
- ANOTHER VOICE. Where is Robespierre ?
- CRIS. Yes, Robespierre. You have not got him there.
- ST. JUST. (To ROBESPIERRE, with great vehemence)
The everlasting welfare of the world
Hangs on your voice, and yet you will not speak.
- HANRIOT. They are dispersing. (Shouting from the window.)
Soldiers, comrades, brothers !
Ah, hell ; they will not hear me !—I am wounded.
(He sinks exhausted.)

- ST. JUST. (*hurriedly*) In the name of the Convention,
Which is where we are.
- ROBESPIERRE. (*almost slowly*) No; we take up arms
To murder the Convention.
- COUTHON. (*hurriedly*) In the name
Of France and the French people.
- FLEURIOT. (ROBESPIERRE *pauses irresolute*) Hark, they come!
(*The Troops of the Convention march into the
Square.*)
- PAYAN. (*looking out*)
Our men have all dispersed. Not one remains.
(*Pause. The word of command is given followed
by hammering at the outer doors. A noise
of the doors being broken in. AUGUSTINE
ROBESPIERRE dashes himself down from the
window. The rest go out hastily; except
ROBESPIERRE, who sits holding the pen as if
dazed; and ST. JUST who remains calm and
contemptuous.*)
- ST. JUST. (*quietly and without emotion*)
So ends our liberty!
- ROBESPIERRE. (*as if awaking, looks round. Pause*) We are alone.
- ST. JUST. Yes; with your conscience, Robespierre.
- ROBESPIERRE. I will sign.
(*He writes the first letters of his name, and then
pauses and gazes wistfully at the paper. As
he does so, the doors are thrown open, and a
file of Gendarmes enters, followed by LEONARD
BOURDON. As BOURDON is about to point
to ROBESPIERRE, one of the Gendarmes quickly
leaves the ranks, lifts a pistol, and shoots
ROBESPIERRE, who falls forward over the
table, and then sinks unconscious to the floor.
ST. JUST runs to him, and kneels beside him
on one knee, trying to staunch the wound.
ENTER LEGENDRE and OTHERS.*)

LEGENDRE. There lies the tyrant !

ST. JUST.

Tyrant ? No, Legendre :

Leave it to those in love with servitude
To heap their maledictions on his grave,
Who held the safety of the people's cause
More precious than the life of any man.
Yours is no triumph : dying he frees France
From all of you : your master, the Convention,
Will send you racing down the road to death,
Before the conqueror comes in clouds of war,
As he foretold, and grinds unhappy France
Again beneath the heel of tyranny.
So end our dreams and strivings in defeat !

(DARKNESS. *The back of the scene lifts, and through a haze NAPOLEON is seen in misty morning light crossing a swamp at the head of his troops. The sun rises. In the foreground a single ray of moonlight still illumines the dying ROBESPIERRE.*)

CURTAIN

(MANAGER'S NOTE : *For the last Tableau, follow as closely as possible Meissonier's picture in the Wallace Collection.*)

AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

An Original Drama in Three Acts

It is the merit of the Anglo-Saxon race that it has produced men of the stamp of a Washington or a Hampden; men careless, indeed, for glory, but very careful of honour.

LECKY.

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS little play is, in the proper sense of the term, strictly historical only so far as it concerns the career and character of Washington. My aim was to help to popularise this history, and after much hesitation I designed a love motive out of the Asgill episode; an episode which was, of course, so far as it concerned Asgill, entirely true. The character of Virginia is fictitious. The background of romance between Washington and Mary Cary is a reminiscence of what was told me many years ago by some old friends who were closely connected with the chief characters and possessed many of Washington's letters, but I am not certain if Miss Randolph ought not to have figured instead of Miss Cary. Some fairly extensive reading (entirely of American authorities) confirmed what Mr. Hubert Hall once informed me—viz., that the rights and wrongs of the quarrel between England and the United States were so evenly balanced that it is impossible to determine which side has the better claim on our sympathy. I desired above everything to give a fair view of the struggle for Independence which might appeal both to Americans and Englishmen, and to depict the sublime patience and nobility of one of the sweetest characters in history.

It may quite reasonably be objected that all this is too serious to have been entwined round a love story, and I plead guilty. The character of Washington is a difficult one to make interesting in a modern drama. I therefore strove for once to mix the powder with the jam, though I am conscious that this has entailed a certain lack of unity. It has also involved what is at the moment considered the unpardonable offence of introducing two stories which have no necessary connection with one another into the same play, though as quite one half of the classic comedies which have kept the stage from *Much Ado About Nothing* to *The Rivals*, are constructed in this way, I must admit that I have sinned with an easy conscience.

A playwright, on hearing of my design, said to me: "Washington!—the public cares nothing about Washington, and knows nothing except that he cut down a cherry tree." The story of the

cherry tree is an absolute fable, and if "the public," after forty years of the School Board knows and cares nothing about Washington, all I can say is that the look-out is a bright one for the future of our country in the hands of its omnipotent legislators.

In interpreting the character of Washington it must be remembered that his stilted and laboured style resulted from the self-consciousness of a modest man who realised that his education had been imperfect, and was not the sign of a formal nature or a cold heart.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

COMTE DE ROCHAMBEAU.. Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in America.

HAMILTON.. .. General in the American Army; Member of Congress after Yorktown.

FORMAN

NICOLA

ARMSTRONG

} Officers in the American Army.

THE MARQUIS OF CORNWALLIS.

LORD CHEWTON His Aide-de-camp.

CHARLES ASGILL

HON. JAMES LUDLOW

} .. Captains in the British Army.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

GOVERNOR TRUMBULL.

MISS CARY A Loyalist.

VIRGINIA Her companion; a Patriot.

AMERICAN OFFICERS, AN ORDERLY, A MESSENGER, ETC., ETC.

ACT I. SCENE. Headquarters of the British Army at Yorktown.

ACT II. SCENE 1. Yorktown.

SCENE 2. Washington's Tent in the trenches before Yorktown.

ACT III. SCENE 1. The American Camp at Newburgh.

SCENE 2. The Jersey line. Interior of a Prison.

SCENE 3. Annapolis. The Hall of Congress.

Gouverneur Morris was sitting over the polished mahogany at Bedford with John Jay, when he suddenly ejaculated through clouds of smoke, "Jay, what a set of d—d scoundrels we had in that Second Congress!" "Yes," said Jay, "that we had," and he knocked the ashes from his pipe.

LIFE OF JOHN JAY.

"I wish I had given you a complete history from the beginning to the end of the journey of the behaviour of my compatriots. No mortal tale can equal it. I will tell you in future, but you shall keep it secret. The fidgets, the whims, the caprice, the vanity, the superstition, the irritability of some of us is enough to —"

DIARY OF JOHN ADAMS.

AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

ACT I

SCENE 1. *The English Headquarters at Yorktown, in the house of Miss Cary's Uncle. Indian summer. CORNWALLIS is seated at a writing table with a quill in his hand. On the table lies the Agreement of Capitulation. By his side stands LUDLOW. At a little distance CHEWTON is seated.*

CORNWALLIS. I would rather die than sign this ; but what must be must be. (*Signing the agreement.*) This signature is writ with my life's blood.

(*He hands the agreement to LUDLOW. EXIT LUDLOW with set determination.*)

CHEWTON. Believe me, Charles, you take your defeat too heavily.

CORNWALLIS. Seven thousand Englishmen to capitulate !

CHEWTON. Seven thousand yield to sixteen thousand ; and seven thousand of the enemy are seasoned French troops.

CORNWALLIS. (*pacing up and down*) To be caught like rats in a trap !

CHEWTON. Through no fault of yours. From a sense of duty you consented to serve your king in a war of which you strongly disapproved, and you have done everything which was in the power of man to accomplish.

CORNWALLIS. Chatham would not allow his son to serve. Why did I not follow his example, and keep clear of this stupid business which has robbed me of all that I held dearest—wife¹ and reputation.

¹ Lady Cornwallis died of grief at her husband's absence.

- CHEWTON. From a sense of duty.
- CORNWALLIS. Ay, sense of duty! Or was it lust for glory?
How mingled and obscure are the motives even
of our best actions!
- CHEWTON. After all, it is to Englishmen that you surrender.
- CORNWALLIS. Since the beginning of these dissensions they have
dropped the name. They are now—Americans.
- CHEWTON. Call themselves what they will, we surrender to
men of our own race.
- CORNWALLIS. Surrender? It is to the blundering of our ministers,
our wretched party divisions, stupidity of Tories,
treason of Whigs that we surrender. What had
we to contend against? A mere handful, with
their government lukewarm and jealous of them.
Why, half the colonists were either openly or
secretly loyal to the king. A mere handful of
ragged men, I say; without money or discipline;
rent with internal dissensions—
- CHEWTON. So they still are. Cannot you see that it is these
very dissensions which ensure the final triumph
of our cause? Our main army is still at New
York; theirs will melt away before the Spring.
Even now it is on the brink of universal starva-
tion and mutiny. Their Congress will not pay
them.
- CORNWALLIS. It makes my blood boil to think that in the begin-
ning Howe might have crushed them a hundred
times. He would not; and now Europe is in
arms against us, and it has come to this! How-
ever, it is fruitless to repine. (*Rings a handbell.*)
We must not forget to warn our kind hostess.
As a loyalist she may be in danger.

(ENTER ORDERLY.)

William, my respects to the ladies, and I shall be
glad if Miss Cary can afford a few minutes to
speak with me.

- ORDERLY. Miss Cary desires to do herself the honour of waiting on your lordship.
- (ENTER MISS CARY. *She is middle-aged. CORNWALLIS rises and bows in a very stately fashion. MISS CARY courtseys stiffly. Throughout the play the manners of the Colonials should be a little overdone; more formal and less easy than those of the English and French.*)
- CORNWALLIS. I trust, ma'am, that our movements during the night did not disturb your slumbers.
- MISS CARY. I thank your lordship. At the best of times I am but an indifferent sleeper.
- CORNWALLIS. And your young companion, the little rebel?
- MISS CARY. Virginia Huddy? O, she slept peacefully through all!
- CORNWALLIS. (*taking up a despatch*) There is a Captain Huddy in the rebel army.
- MISS CARY. Her father.
- CORNWALLIS. I fear that I have bad news of him. He has been taken prisoner by the loyalists of New York.
- MISS CARY. Then heaven help him and her! Our people are rabid against him—they accuse him of murdering their adherents. I must try to keep the poor child in ignorance of his fate.
- CORNWALLIS. Since we were forced yesterday reluctantly to quarter ourselves on you, permit me, in the absence of your uncle, to convey to you the thanks of myself and staff for your generous hospitality.
- MISS CARY. The officers of the king are ever welcome beneath the roof of his loyal subjects. Is your lordship satisfied with our poor accommodation?
- CORNWALLIS. So vastly well indeed, ma'am, that our only regret is that we are unable to continue enjoying it.

- MISS CARY. You do not mean that you think of moving ?
- CORNWALLIS. Miss Cary, it is my painful duty to inform you that my inglorious part in this unhappy war is terminated. I have been forced to capitulate to the rebels.
- MISS CARY. Alas! then our worst fears are realised. The justice of our cause has not sufficed to ensure our success.
- CORNWALLIS. There is much justice on both sides of every cause which for a number of years divides a great and enlightened people. The self-interest of either side by special pleading makes out a perfect case for itself. I have made no secret of it from the beginning that in my opinion, as in that of all our best thinkers in England, this war ought never to have been fought ; so in the hour of my disgrace, perhaps I may be permitted to extract what comfort I can from that reflection. But to business! On your account I am somewhat anxious. I have obtained the right to despatch one vessel to New York. On her I mean to send all the loyalists. I must ask you to go, for as a loyalist your life may be in danger.
- MISS CARY. My lord, I have nothing to be afraid of so long as General Washington is here ; so I must decline your kind offer.
- CORNWALLIS. You cannot conceive how furious the rebels are against your people ; and they say that the Commander-in-Chief is, if possible, more rabid than his followers.
- MISS CARY. My lord, let me assure you that I have nothing to fear from General Washington, or from his followers so long as he is here.

(RE-ENTER LUDLOW. *He hands despatch to*
CORNWALLIS.)

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CORNWALLIS. (*after glancing at despatch*) Our conquerors await us, and the cup of our humiliation is full. (*To CHEWTON.*) My lord, come with me! Captain Ludlow, in half an hour your Company will be ready to march.

(*CORNWALLIS bows to MISS CARY. EXEUNT CORNWALLIS and CHEWTON.*)

MISS CARY. Captain Ludlow, Virginia is in the next room. Will you have the goodness to send her to me on the piazza?

(*EXIT MISS CARY. LUDLOW opens double doors, which disclose an inner room, and VIRGINIA and ASGILL are discovered seated together.*)

LUDLOW. Charles, your Colonel has been looking for you everywhere. If I had not been a fool I might have known that Miss Huddy was monopolising you.

ASGILL. (*advancing with VIRGINIA into the room*) I have been trying to get her to come and peep at the lions; but it was of no use.

VIRGINIA. He has been trying to persuade me to associate with the enemies of my country.

LUDLOW. Well, Miss Huddy, it seems to me that you find the society of the enemies of your country, as you call them, far from uncongenial.

VIRGINIA. O! you are only boys; (*exclamations of "Ah!"*) and I am quite sure that you have never hurt anybody. (*"Oh!"*) But those great, wicked English lords—

ASGILL. Take care! His father is what you call an English lord.

VIRGINIA. It is my belief that all English people are lords.

- ASGILL. In their own estimation? I'm not sure that you wrong them. But Jimmy's father is one of that great class who hand down to their posterity an unearthly wisdom and virtue, in which mere ordinary mortals have no share.
- VIRGINIA. (to LUDLOW) And do you imagine that you possess this unearthly wisdom and virtue?
- LUDLOW. Yes, I feel it bubbling out all over me.
- VIRGINIA. (to ASGILL) I suppose that your father is a lord too?
- ASGILL. He was Lord Mayor.
- VIRGINIA. I think there *is* something fine in being Lord Mayor.
- LUDLOW. For which service to humanity, a grateful country created him a baronet.
- ASGILL. And thus, as has been wittily said, he ceased to be a gentleman without becoming a nobleman.
- MISS CARY. (*without*) Virginia, Virginia!
- VIRGINIA. Coming, Miss Polly. I had forgotten. It is the dinner that I must order.
(EXIT VIRGINIA.)
- ASGILL. The dinner!
- LUDLOW. Charles, I suppose you know that Lord Cornwallis has capitulated.
- ASGILL. The deuce he has!
- LUDLOW. Yes, whilst you have been philandering with Virginia.
- ASGILL. Captain Ludlow, you will oblige me by withdrawing those words.
- LUDLOW. You take me too seriously. I forgot that I must not jest on sacred things. (*Pause; then laying his hand on ASGILL's shoulder.*) Come with me! We are due in twenty minutes.

- ASGILL. Due where ?
- LUDLOW. We have to march out and eat humble pie before the rebels.
- ASGILL. Good God !
- LUDLOW. Yes, my boy, we are now prisoners of war. (ASGILL prepares to follow VIRGINIA. *With feeling.*) Come along, Charlie ! It's no use.
- ASGILL. I may not see her again.
- LUDLOW. My dear boy, why are you so unpractical ? As a man of the world and your friend, I beseech you not to do anything foolish.
- ASGILL. Jimmy, I can't tolerate you when you put on your man of the world air.
- (RE-ENTER MISS CARY. *She advances towards ASGILL, who motions to LUDLOW to withdraw. EXIT LUDLOW, pausing and looking back anxiously.*)
- MISS CARY. Captain Asgill, I am truly sorry that we had to turn you out yesterday. Unfortunately my uncle's house is not ample enough to accommodate all of you.
- ASGILL. Miss Cary, I shall always regard the last few weeks as the happiest of my life. Now that the cause which we both espoused is lost, now that I am about to become a prisoner of war, to be confined I know not where, far from the prospect of seeing you again—(*Change.*) Miss Cary, may I confide in you ? Will you help me ? I need your help—I am in despair. (*He looks frankly into her eyes.*)
- MISS CARY. I would do anything in my power to help you.
- ASGILL. In a word then, I am in love.
- MISS CARY. But what can I do for you ?

- ASGILL. O, Miss Cary, I know that I am unworthy of her—
Ah! there is no hope for me, and you are too kind to tell me so.
- MISS CARY. Hope? Why—you cannot possibly mean—that you are in love with Virginia?
- ASGILL. O, ma'am, could anyone be near that sweet angel for three weeks and not love her?
- MISS CARY. Young girls are not angels, Captain Asgill. They are incredibly silly and ignorant; impulsive and hysterical; as full of whims as a jibbing horse.
- ASGILL. You wrong, her, ma'am; you wrong her!
- MISS CARY. Do you think that it is by throwing yourself at a woman's feet and calling her an angel that you win her good graces? What they want is a bit and a pair of blinkers—above everything, a master.
- ASGILL. She is an angel to me.
- MISS CARY. You have been shut up in this quiet town for weeks. Why does a patient fall in love with his nurse? In a month, amidst new surroundings, you will wonder what you could ever have found to care for in poor little Virginia Huddy.
- ASGILL. Ma'am, I vow that you wrong me.
- MISS CARY. Ah! do not wrong her. Romantic love never lasts. And when it has faded into the light of common day, what is there in this simple child that can retain your affections?
- ASGILL. Her loyalty, her cheerfulness, her good sense, her pure heart.
- MISS CARY. The daughter of a poor man, a Colonial and a puritan, what sort of figure would she cut among your fine friends in England?
- ASGILL. She is a thousand times too good for them or for me.

- MISS CARY. Your prospects are brilliant. You owe it to your position to make a brilliant marriage.
- ASGILL. I owe it to myself to make a happy marriage, for 'tis said that on marriage the happiness or misery of life depends. Ah, to me she has been a revelation!
- MISS CARY. You do her a great honour, Captain Asgill.
- ASGILL. Miss Cary, I have lived all my life amongst two classes of people. When I was a boy and my father a humble City merchant, money was everything—to make money, to possess money; there was no other reasonable object or ambition in life. I grew up and, my family having prospered, found myself in new surroundings. It was still the same worship of money, but we were no longer the sellers, but the buyers.
- MISS CARY. Dear me, how interesting! And what did you buy?
- ASGILL. A small number of people have established themselves at the top of the social ladder. Their doctrine is that the further they are off from merit, the more meritorious are they. To claim fabulous descent from a Norman robber, or for an ancestor centuries ago to have purchased a few miles of land, gives precedence in their eyes over the ablest soldier or statesman of King George who has risen through superiority of brains or character. And in order to buy the contemptuous tolerance of these people, we eagerly give our wealth, our daughters, our souls.
- MISS CARY. Captain Asgill, I fear that your ideas are very French.
- ASGILL. You cannot suspect an army officer of knowing French.
- MISS CARY. You are talking just like Mr. Jefferson.

- ASGILL. *(laughing)* Pardon me! I forgot that I was speaking to Queen Elizabeth's cousin, to say nothing of the goose.
- MISS CARY. Our crest, Sir, is a swan;¹ though I admit that when painted by a colonial artist there may be some excuse for your mistake.
- ASGILL. I humbly beg its pardon.
- MISS CARY. As a Virginian, I would rather die than give up Queen Elizabeth or the goose. Everywhere, especially over here, is it not necessary to happiness to imagine some sort of superiority over one's fellows? If so simple a creature as a goose suffices to fill the aching void—
- ASGILL. Should Miss Huddy demand a goose, I fear that I have only myself to offer her. *(With an air of relief.)* But after all, she is no relation of Queen Elizabeth.
- MISS CARY. Virginia belongs to a far more exclusive aristocracy. It is true that her people made little pretence to rank or worldly position, but they claimed the whole of the world to come; and earthly estates assume trifling proportions in the eyes of those who map out eternity. I fear that your wealth and position would have little attraction for simple Virginia.
- ASGILL. I did not mean that. *(Pause.)* Then you will not help me?
- MISS CARY. Captain Asgill, do you take me for a match-maker?
- (RE-ENTER VIRGINIA *from the verandah. She holds a flower in her hand. During the following, MISS CARY, though apparently otherwise occupied, is closely watching VIRGINIA.*)

¹ The Cary crest was obviously a Mother Cary chicken, but the Fourteenth century was a closed book to the Eighteenth.

- VIRGINIA. (to ASGILL) Miss Polly has told me the news. (*With feeling.*) I am sorry to be so rejoiced over what must give you pain. It's too bad!
- ASGILL. The fortunes of war—a war of which I never approved.
- VIRGINIA. (*much interested*) You disapproved of the war! How then could you fight in a war of which you disapproved?
- ASGILL. A soldier's duty is to obey; not to approve or disapprove. My father had insisted on purchasing for me a commission in the Guards. (*Laughing.*) I suppose they thought the uniform suited me. When danger became connected with the gold and scarlet, could I shirk the obligation? If every soldier were to refuse to fight, there would be an end of armies.
- VIRGINIA. And what a blessed thing that would be! What sort of an army had General Washington at Valley Forge? He has shown us how much patience and faith can accomplish.
- ASGILL. (*interrogatively*) Aided by large sums of French money, large numbers of French troops, and an overwhelming French fleet which cuts off our retreat? You see, in England we think that we are in the right and you in the wrong; and that makes all the difference.
- VIRGINIA. (*with conviction*) How can anyone think that it is right to trample on liberty?
- ASGILL. (*lightly*) Ah! that's your way of putting it! In a hundred years we may be able to judge the rights and wrongs of the present contest.
- VIRGINIA. (*heroically*) If I were a man I would not wait; I would fight.
- ASGILL. (*triumphantly*) And yet you blame me for fighting.
- VIRGINIA. On the wrong side.

ASGILL. (to MISS CARY) She's trying to make a rebel of me. Her arguments are so convincing that for the king's sake it's lucky that you are here to refute them.

VIRGINIA. Now you are laughing at me !

ASGILL. I protest, no. (*Looks at his watch. Change, and with emotion.*) Ladies, I cannot say how deeply I thank you for the perfect happiness which you have given me during the last few weeks. You have turned the end of this dreary and inglorious campaign into the brightest period of my life.

VIRGINIA. (*in great surprise*) You are not going away, Captain Asgill ?

ASGILL. You forget that from to-day I am a prisoner. We shall be sent home, no doubt, with Lord Cornwallis.

MISS CARY. Believe me, we shall both miss you.

(VIRGINIA stands self-consciously picking the flower to pieces.)

ASGILL. Excuse me, (*with a half sigh*) I must go. My Company waits for me. When this last unhappy parade is over, I will steal a moment in which to return and bid you farewell. Meanwhile, *au revoir*. (*He bows to both.*)

(EXIT ASGILL.)

MISS CARY. And he said that he did not know French ! (*To VIRGINIA.*) Virginia, have you a heart of stone ? I do not believe you are in the least sorry that Captain Asgill is a prisoner.

VIRGINIA. How can I be sorry when my country is victorious ?

MISS CARY. Or that he is leaving us.

(NOTE. Throughout the scene it must be made plain that VIRGINIA is struggling with her feeling for ASGILL.)

- VIRGINIA. I shall miss him—for a few days. But, after all, he is not a person of my stamp.
- MISS CARY. Would to God that you could find a good man of any stamp who might win that kind, foolish little heart of yours.
- VIRGINIA. The sort of man who might win my heart would never want to marry me ; so if I fall in love I am like to die broken-hearted.
- MISS CARY. And what must this paragon be like ?
- VIRGINIA. He must be just a man. I want a real man—one who will do something in the world ; not a mere follower of fashion.
- MISS CARY. (*very seriously*) Child, take warning by what I am going to tell you.
- VIRGINIA. Don't *you* think I am right ?
- MISS CARY. At your age I was like you. I, too, wanted a hero for a lover, and I would look at no one who presented himself. "Mary Cary, quite contrary," they all called me.
- VIRGINIA. Miss Polly, I can't imagine you in love.
- MISS CARY. (*with a sense of being hurt*) Perhaps not now.
- VIRGINIA. Forgive me ! Pray go on.
- MISS CARY. At last one day a new wooer came. He was tall and angular, and his talk was heavy ; but he loved me truly and tenderly. This man did not look like a hero ; he was only a poor surveyor, and I was too proud even to think of him. So I let him go. (*She weeps.*)
- VIRGINIA. (*anxiously*) And did he die ?
- MISS CARY. No. To-day he has become the greatest man in the whole world. Now I know that I love him, now that it is too late.

- VIRGINIA. Miss Polly! O! (*Pause.*) I see. (*Pause and in an awe-struck voice.*) It was General Washington.
- MISS CARY. Ah, child, never despise true love! If only one person could profit by my experience!
- VIRGINIA. Dear Miss Polly!
- MISS CARY. Disinterested affection is the rarest plant on this earth and its flowers are those of paradise. Virginia, I have an idea that someone is fond of you. (*Pause.*) You know whom I mean. (*Pause.*) Do you not like him?
- VIRGINIA. (*trying to deceive MISS CARY and herself*) I like him as a friend and pleasant companion.
- MISS CARY. Think of the bliss of living all one's life with a pleasant companion and friend. Too often it is a lifelong stranger and enemy that marriage brings us.
- VIRGINIA. (*arguing against herself*) But even if I cared for him or he for me, could I desert my father? He would never forgive me if I were to marry an English officer, an enemy. Could I leave him to go to England, who has no one in the world to care for him but me? (*Pause.*)
- MISS CARY. Virginia, you love this man.
- VIRGINIA. Miss Polly, I was raised among people who taught me that duty comes first; before happiness; yes, before love. (*MISS CARY kisses her.*) After all, our love is our own, to give or to withhold.
- MISS CARY. Think what it would mean if a man of such boundless prospects were to lay them all at the feet of a penniless girl—his name and his fortune.
- VIRGINIA. That is what I should dread most of all—the wealth, the ease. It is all very well for those who have never known anything different; but I could never be happy to be at ease in a world where so many suffer unjustly and toil unceasingly.

- MISS CARY. Either you are talking very much like Captain Asgill or Captain Asgill is learning to talk surprisingly like you. It reminds me of the good little children in the story-book. (*With infinite regret.*) And to think that I saw nothing of all this!
- VIRGINIA. Dare I take the risk of making him unhappy? He who belongs to a world so different from mine.
- MISS CARY. Some people are made up entirely of conscience; and these, it seems to me, exist very largely for the encouragement of those who have no conscience at all. Here is a fine young man ready to marry you; and instead of facing the facts soundly and squarely, you yield to a thousand scruples, and send him away in despair to be caught by the first unsuitable minx who angles for him; while with an air of successful martyrdom, you resign yourself to being an old maid.
- VIRGINIA. Miss Polly, if you were in my place, would you desert your father?
- MISS CARY. (*pause*) No; I don't know that I should. What a muddling, unsatisfactory old world it is!
- (RE-ENTER CHEWTON.)
- CHEWTON. Ladies, the rebel army is entering the town.
- MISS CARY. Our friends are all safely embarked?
- CHEWTON. All out of danger—except you, who alone insist on remaining. The rebel officers make their headquarters here. General Washington always likes to quarter his military family on a loyalist when he gets the chance. I should counsel you to withdraw, at least until the arrival of the Chief; for some of his followers may have more zeal than politeness.
- (*A military band playing "Yankee Doodle" is heard approaching.*)

VIRGINIA. Listen !

CHEWTON. It is the Marquis de Lafayette approaching.

MISS CARY. Come, Virginia ! This is no place for us.

(EXEUNT MISS CARY and VIRGINIA. *The doors are thrown open.* ENTER LAFAYETTE and the COMTE DE ROCHAMBEAU.)

ROCHAMBEAU. Milord Chewton, your servant. (*All three bow.*) I pray you to accept my sentiments ze most distinguished. You are without merit in dis position.

CHEWTON. Without merit in disposition ?

LAFAYETTE. Monsieur de Rochambeau vould say zat your position here is unmerited.

ROCHAMBEAU. Bah ! I am playing wis de fire. Monsieur de Lafayette, you speak for me. (*To CHEWTON.*) He speak English better zen I.

LAFAYETTE. Ze matter is one of some delicacy.

ROCHAMBEAU. Yes, yes ! Zat's right, my old one !

LAFAYETTE. He say zat he and all his brozer officers, my countrymen, experience a grief ze most vivid. Zat it is no disgrace to yield to numbers overwhelming. Since a few weeks you have been here enclosed ; and you will, he feels sure, pardon his indelicacy in saying zat if zis has caused to any of your gallant brozer officers ze least pecuniary embarrassment, his purse and zat of my fellow-countrymen and of France is entirely at your service.

ROCHAMBEAU. Zat's right, zat's right ! Godam !

CHEWTON. Monsieur de Rochambeau, your kindness deeply touches us all. Should the tables ever be turned—

ROCHAMBEAU. Ze tables ! (*looking round*).

CHEWTON. I can only hope for the sake of my country that the opportunity of evincing our gratitude will not be forgotten. (*He shakes hands with ROCHAMBEAU.*)

ROCHAMBEAU. Ah! no, no!

CHEWTON. Monsieur, there is no courtesy so great that it need surprise us when it comes from the generous people of France.

ROCHAMBEAU. Ah!

CHEWTON. The chivalrous people of France.

ROCHAMBEAU. I come zat I may embrace you! (*He kisses CHEWTON on both cheeks.*)

(ENTER TRUMBULL *and a number of AMERICAN OFFICERS including HAMILTON, FORMAN, NICOLA and ARMSTRONG. They look like Falstaff's soldiers, and are in rags. EXIT CHEWTON.*)

LAFAYETTE. (*to HAMILTON*) Ze British kept zeir eyes fixed on ze uniforms of my countrymen. Zey vould not look at our American nakedness; so I ordered ze band to strike up ze "Yankee Doodle" Ah, zen zey turned when zey heard ze big trompette! (*Cheering outside.*)

HAMILTON. The American trumpet played by a patriot would make anybody turn green.

LAFAYETTE. Aha, milord Cornwallis! He say zat he vould catch ze boy. (*Pointing to himself.*) Zat vas me! (*Renewed cheering outside. The name "Washington" once or twice. The doors are again thrown open. ENTER WASHINGTON.*)

WASHINGTON. Gentlemen, once again I congratulate you on a success, which is due to the goodness of our cause; the wise counsels of our officers; the help of our distinguished allies; and above all to the favouring smiles of providence, whose finger throughout has been so plainly discernible.

LAFAYETTE. Cheneral, your hand! Permit me wiz all my 'eart to congratulate you. Now has liberty dawned upon ze world! Never before has been a bravery so steadfast, a patience so sublime as yours.

- WASHINGTON. (*shaking his head*) My dear Marquis, while your congratulations are delightful, your spirit of optimism is causing me very painful sensations.
- FORMAN. (*holding out his hand*) General, I have no words!
(*He weeps.*)
- HAMILTON. (*to WASHINGTON*) 'Tis you alone who have held us through poverty and defeat, through intrigue and darkest treason.
- WASHINGTON. (*to HAMILTON*) Hamilton, we are but at the beginning of fresh troubles. Unless Congress can be prevailed on to pay the troops, our army will have melted away before the Spring. You may rely upon it, their patriotism and long-suffering are almost exhausted.
(*TRUMBULL approaches.*)
- HAMILTON. Here comes the spirit of Congress incarnate.
- TRUMBULL. (*bowing*) Your excellency, accept my heartfelt congratulations on an event which will hasten the wished-for happy period when your excellency may retire to, and securely possess, the sweets of domestic felicity and glorious rest from the toils of war.
- WASHINGTON. (*with great stiffness*) Sir, when that day comes Congress will not be so eager to tear my sword from me as I shall be to relinquish it.
(*TRUMBULL moves up stage.*)
- HAMILTON. (*to WASHINGTON*) This miserable jealousy of you and the army!
- WASHINGTON. Patience, General, patience!
(*Murmurs heard outside. Sentry challenges.*
ENTER CORNWALLIS.)
- WASHINGTON. (*to CORNWALLIS*) My lord, though on public grounds we have lately been foes, your private qualities enshrine you in the respect and esteem

of all Americans. May I ask your lordship and the rest of your gallant staff to honour me with your company at dinner ?

CORNWALLIS. Your excellency, we shall all esteem it a great honour to be included in your party.

ROCHAMBEAU. Zat's right, zat's right ! Kiss yourselves and be friends.

LAFAYETTE. (*to CORNWALLIS and pointing to himself*) Ah, milord, 'ave you caught ze boy ?

CORNWALLIS. No, Monsieur. I admit that the boy has caught me.

WASHINGTON. (*to ROCHAMBEAU*) Count, as you are returning, will you do me the favour to escort his lordship to my tent ?

ROCHAMBEAU. You come too ?

WASHINGTON. I have some affairs to settle, but will follow you very shortly.

ROCHAMBEAU. Ah, zen, *j'irai de mon côté*—I vill go on my side.

(*ROCHAMBEAU tries to get CORNWALLIS to go before him. After much bowing and awkwardness, he takes his arm and marches off with him. EXEUNT all save WASHINGTON, HAMILTON, NICOLA, and ARMSTRONG.*)

WASHINGTON. General Hamilton, I understand that you wish to speak with me on an interesting matter.

HAMILTON. A most disagreeable affair, your excellency. You know Captain Joshua Huddy ?

WASHINGTON. I know him well. The Tories have made him a prisoner of war. Well, Sir, I trust they have not treated my officer with indignity.

HAMILTON. Far worse.

WASHINGTON. Worse ?

- HAMILTON. Last week, after a mock trial, he was sent from New York in charge of a number of refugees, commanded by a certain Captain Lippincot—
- WASHINGTON. Well, Sir.
- HAMILTON. And—on the heights—near Middletown.
- WASHINGTON. And what, Sir ?
- HAMILTON. Hanged, your excellency.
- WASHINGTON. What ! Hanged ? No, no ! It is monstrous, unheard of !
- HAMILTON. Colonel Nicola and Major Armstrong, who have just arrived in great haste from the Jersey Line, will confirm my statement.
- WASHINGTON. (*in a burst of anger, which grows with the effort to control it*) Murder a prisoner of war—my officer ! It cannot be ! Even savages have respect for rank and custom.
- ARMSTRONG. Your excellency, the patriots in New Jersey are so strongly exasperated by this horrid act, that unless you interpose they will take the matter into their own hands.
- WASHINGTON. No wonder.
- HAMILTON. And still more horrible murders will be committed.
- NICOLA. Here is a petition signed by the majority of the respectable inhabitants, in which they appeal for justice to you, as the military guardian of their country.
- WASHINGTON. (*in extremest agitation*) My God, my God ! Who do you say was the man who committed this abominable outrage ?
- ARMSTRONG. Lippincot, your excellency.
- WASHINGTON. (*after a moment's pause and with an air of absolute decision*) He shall be given up.

- HAMILTON. Sir Henry Clinton will never consent.
- WASHINGTON. (*almost shouting*) He shall give him up—or I hold myself justified in the eyes of God and man for what I must do.
- HAMILTON. Pardon me, your excellency. But in the event of Sir Henry's refusing, are we not powerless?
- WASHINGTON. (*taking the petition and glancing over it*) Our people shall not be murdered with impunity; they shall not be driven to take the law into their own hands, nor appeal to me for justice in vain. (*Pause.*) We will retaliate.
- HAMILTON. Do you mean that you will hang a prisoner of war to avenge Captain Huddy?
- WASHINGTON. If Sir Henry Clinton will not give up this murderer—yes. Let the officers immediately assemble and decide if this be a case where retaliation is just and expedient; and if so, should it take place at once; or should a previous representation be made to Sir Henry Clinton, and this murderer be first demanded of him. Come with me. There is not a moment to lose.
- (EXEUNT WASHINGTON *and* HAMILTON.)
- ARMSTRONG. Colonel Nicola, one moment! Let me finish what I was saying just now, for I have been charged to ask you a favour.
- NICOLA. You mean, concerning Congress and the Army.
- ARMSTRONG. If these enormities are committed while Congress is only Congress and we are still an army, what sort of treatment may we expect when Congress is called a Republic and the army is disbanded! What awaits us all then?
- NICOLA. Dishonour and starvation.
- ARMSTRONG. Is it for these swillers of Madeira that we march with bare and bleeding feet, naked in the depths

of winter, hungry always, while they gorge in Philadelphia? Is it to these men who swindle us of our pay that we mean to give the final victory?

NICOLA. There will be no final victory.

ARMSTRONG. Winter is coming on again, the air already is full of murmuring. Now that the troops have time to think, the recent mutiny will be as nothing to that which will burst out; next time in a general conflagration which the Chief will be unable to stay. Our troops will disperse, the American cause will be lost. There is but one hope.

NICOLA. And that is?

ARMSTRONG. To make Washington king.

NICOLA. Ah! He will never consent to that.

ARMSTRONG. Was ever the man born who in such a situation could refuse? Our theories and high-flown ideas have to yield to the tyranny of facts. And it is a very pleasing tyranny which forces us to be kings in spite of ourselves.

NICOLA. Major Armstrong, consciously or not, you are voicing what has long been in my mind.

ARMSTRONG. You have a brilliant record; you have won the Chief's confidence. To be frank with you, as my connection with Gates puts me entirely out of court, our friends have empowered me to sound you as to your willingness to sign an address to General Washington.

NICOLA. That is a matter which requires careful consideration. It might entail the sacrifice of my position in the army,

ARMSTRONG. If you would undertake this responsibility, there is no one who would have a better chance of obtaining a favourable answer.

NICOLA. I must have time to consider the matter. In two hours I will let you know. Meanwhile, come; they are expecting us to vote in the Huddy business.

(EXEUNT ARMSTRONG *and* NICOLA. RE-ENTER MISS CARY *and* VIRGINIA.)

VIRGINIA. Miss Polly, please stay close to me! He said that he would return to bid us farewell, and I am afraid that he may catch me alone.

MISS CARY. But I hear that the prisoners, after all, are not to leave for some days.

VIRGINIA. Nevertheless, it must be farewell; and if he should remain, then I must go away.

MISS CARY. Listen! Voices are approaching. It is hard to have to play hide and seek in one's own house.

VIRGINIA. (*looking out*) General Washington is coming.

MISS CARY. Well, I shall have to meet him sooner or later, and I will hold my ground. Go on to the piazza, and when I have spoken to him I will join you.

(EXIT VIRGINIA.)

VIRGINIA. (*looking in*) I should like to get a near view of the General. May I peep through the blind, or have you anything private to say?

MISS CARY. You can look if you wish to. Sh!

(ENTER WASHINGTON. VIRGINIA *is seen by the audience through the Venetian blind looking at him. A stiff bow from WASHINGTON. Pause.*)

MISS CARY. General Washington, you have forgotten me.

WASHINGTON. (*looking at her keenly*) Why, Miss Polly!

MISS CARY. Time has not altered me so much if you can still recognise me.

- WASHINGTON. Time alters us all ; though we would all fain believe ourselves exceptions to his law. Happy are we if he does not harden our hearts as well !
- MISS CARY. Surely sometimes he softens them. (*Pause.*) I should like to welcome you to my uncle's house—
- WASHINGTON. Only I have come without being asked ? However, if you can consent to tolerate my presence here for a few hours, I will pledge my word not to inflict myself upon you longer or more often than is absolutely necessary.
- MISS CARY. I did not mean that.
(ENTER HAMILTON.)
- WASHINGTON. (*to MISS CARY*) Your pardon one moment. (*To HAMILTON.*) You have the decision of the officers ?
- HAMILTON. Your Excellency, they decide unanimously that the case is one for retaliation ; by a majority of twenty that before the sentence is carried out, an appeal should be made to Sir Henry Clinton.
- WASHINGTON. (*to MISS CARY*) Madam, we are discussing the most wanton, unprecedented and inhuman murder that ever disgraced the arms of a civilized people ; the worst among the many atrocities which the party to which you have the misfortune to belong have committed during this parricidal war.
- MISS CARY. Has my party had the monopoly of crimes ?
- WASHINGTON. One of my officers, a prisoner of war, has been basely and treacherously murdered—hanged like a dog. But such enormities shall end—shall end. I will put a stop to them once for all. (*To HAMILTON.*) Order a messenger immediately to make ready. Let my secretary draw up an appeal to Sir Henry as follows : “ Candour obliges me to be explicit. To save the innocent,

I demand the guilty. Captain Lippincot, therefore, the officer who commanded at the execution of Captain Joshua Huddy must be given up—”

(At the mention of her father's name the audience see the figure of VIRGINIA absolutely collapse. MISS CARY goes towards WASHINGTON, prevents him from speaking, and uses the utmost persuasion to get him out of the room. ASGILL ENTERS behind. At a sign from MISS CARY he pauses.)

MISS CARY. *(interrupting WASHINGTON)* For God's sake, stop!
Sh!

WASHINGTON. Miss Polly—!

MISS CARY. Not a word more! Come within, and I will explain to you. *(She looks anxiously towards the blind.)*

WASHINGTON. This is very mysterious.

MISS CARY. In the name of humanity, come!

(MISS CARY draws WASHINGTON and HAMILTON into the inner room, at the same time motioning to ASGILL to look after VIRGINIA.)

ASGILL. O God, if she should have heard! *(He draws back the blind. VIRGINIA is seated at a table, sobbing, her head buried in her hands.)* Child, child, I cannot bear to see you unhappy; let me help you, for I love you so tenderly; have loved you—you must know it.

VIRGINIA. *(rising and with flaming eyes)* You! *(Pause, in which the revulsion of feeling comes.)* What is my happiness to you, to all of you. Thieves, murderers! And I have been making friends with his enemies while they killed him—killed him like a dog! My treason is punished. I hate myself—*(going)*—and you!

(EXIT hurriedly in intense emotion.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1. *The same, some days later.* MISS CARY and ASGILL.

MISS CARY. Captain Asgill, I assure you that it is quite impossible. The puritan will, when it is a question of making its owner uncomfortable, has acquired through constant exercise a strength which nothing can bend.

ASGILL. But the chief obstacle to our marriage has been removed by her father's death.

MISS CARY. Believe me, no. Her sense of duty towards that unhappy man while he lived pales into insignificance before the reverence she pays to his memory now that he is dead. He would have objected to her marriage with you, an English officer—he was rabid against England;—officer of an army in opposing which he gave his life; graced by an education and culture which he despised and suspected.

ASGILL. No, ma'am; I protest! You flatter me.

MISS CARY. If he had lived you could probably have won him; for there is little virtue in this sublunary planet which is proof for long against riches, and a title however small. But being dead, the shadow of his implied disapproval comes hopelessly between you.

ASGILL. Then I fear that her inclination for me is slight.

MISS CARY. I fear so too. Yet with these strong natures one never knows. They are so used to self-restraint. It is only when the barriers are swept away that we realise the strength of the flood. Thus General Washington will almost hang a man for swearing. But in rare moments when he loses self-control, his own language brings the leaves off the trees—at least that is what those who have heard it say.

- ASGILL. We are ordered away this afternoon.
- MISS CARY. The very best thing both for you and for her. If she has any dormant feeling for you, your departure may awaken it ; and change of scene and thought will relieve your mind from its present strain. For you are far too much of a man to let an unrequited passion ruin the usefulness of your life.
- ASGILL. Miss Cary, I cannot go without bidding her farewell. Could you not persuade her to speak with me ?
- MISS CARY. For your own peace it would be better for you not to see her.
- ASGILL. I cannot go without seeing her.
- MISS CARY. I will do what I can.
(ENTER CHEWTON.)
- CHEWTON. Madam, I trust that I do not intrude.
- MISS CARY. Not at all, my lord. We were discussing something in connection with the universal topic of conversation—Captain Huddy's death.
- CHEWTON. That is an extremely grave subject ; and it is on that very point that I desire to speak with Captain Asgill.
- MISS CARY. Is there any news from Lord Clinton ?
- CHEWTON. (*gravely*) There is. He declines to deliver Lip-pincot up, and has referred the affair to a court martial. General Washington finds the answer unsatisfactory.
- MISS CARY. It is wicked ! It is terrible ! An innocent man to suffer for a guilty—and to think of the way the rebels treated our people both before the war and since it began !
- CHEWTON. Cousins never make allowance for one another's failings ; still less for their failures.

- MISS CARY. Who will this victim be ?
- CHEWTON. A British officer of equal rank—a captain.
- ASGILL. But luckily for all of us here he must be an unconditional prisoner of war, and we are but prisoners under capitulation.
- MISS CARY. (*with relief*) Ah! (*To ASGILL.*) While you are speaking with his lordship, I will endeavour to persuade Virginia to see you.
(EXIT MISS CARY.)
- CHEWTON. Charles, my boy, I fear that we shall need your presence for a moment in the next room.
- ASGILL. My presence—what for ?
- CHEWTON. Do not be alarmed. (*Gravely.*) There is at present no unconditional prisoner of war of the rank of a captain.
- ASGILL. Then the execution cannot take place. What a good thing !
- CHEWTON. My dear Charles, it is not to end quite so simply.
- ASGILL. How then ?
- CHEWTON. General Washington has decided that in these circumstances the victim must be selected from among those who are prisoners under capitulation or convention—in other words, from us.
- ASGILL. You cannot mean it !
- CHEWTON. Acting on his orders, General Hazen has assembled all the captains in the next room to decide the matter by drawing lots, and they only wait for you. After all, it is less than a twenty to one chance that the fatal number will fall to you, and you incur as great or greater risk every time you go into battle.

- ASGILL. Egad! I'm almost glad of the excitement to change my thoughts—*(as if in explanation)* it has been dull enough here lately.
- CHEWTON. *(significantly)* My dear Charles, it's high time you were gone. And wonderfully well you have got out of it if you only had the grace to see straight.
- ASGILL. My lord Chewton, I do not understand you.
- CHEWTON. *(taking his arm)* Come, come, my dear boy, no misunderstandings between us!
*(CHEWTON leads ASGILL towards the inner room.
ENTER VIRGINIA and MISS CARY.)*
- ASGILL. One moment! I will follow you.
(EXIT CHEWTON. MISS CARY moves on to the verandah.)
- ASGILL. I could not go away without bidding you farewell. Miss Huddy, I will not leave with this cloud between us. Is there any reason why we should cease to be friends?
- CHEWTON. *(within)* Charles!
- ASGILL. *(after turning impatiently)* Even at the risk of intruding on your great sorrow, I felt it necessary to tell you that although you call me your enemy, I still wish to have the privilege of being your friend.
- CHEWTON. *(re-appearing at the door)* Charles, we wait for you.
- ASGILL. *(to VIRGINIA)* Pardon me. A matter of the greatest importance demands my attention in the next room. In one moment I will return. Pray do not go.
*(EXIT ASGILL.)
(From this point until the re-entrance of ASGILL the scene is taken very slowly.)*
- VIRGINIA. Miss Polly!

(RE-ENTER MISS CARY.)

MISS CARY. Where is Captain Asgill ?

VIRGINIA. He has gone.

MISS CARY. How strange ! You did not send him away ?

VIRGINIA. No. Some urgent matter in the next room demanded his attention.

MISS CARY. How very mysterious ! I wonder what it can be. (*Peeping through the door.*) The room is full of officers. Why, how serious they all look !—He is drawing something out of a bowl—It must be a lottery.

VIRGINIA. Gambling ! That is an important matter to detain him. (*A look of intelligence and horror on MISS CARY'S face.*) Gambling ! (*A murmur arises from the next room.*) And they told me his heart was breaking.

MISS CARY. (*crossing to VIRGINIA*) Virginia, dear.

VIRGINIA. Why, how pale you are !

MISS CARY. O, nothing, nothing ! A moment's faintness, that is all.

(RE-ENTER ASGILL *with a paper in his hand.* When MISS CARY sees the paper, she is about to utter a cry, but is checked by a movement from ASGILL. With a meaning look he implores her to be silent.)

VIRGINIA. Do not let me disturb your play, Captain Asgill.

ASGILL. My play ?

VIRGINIA. I mean the sweepstake.

(ASGILL looks puzzled, and then as she glances towards the paper in his hand, replies with forced gaiety.)

ASGILL. O no, I assure you !

(Unseen by VIRGINIA, he shakes MISS CARY'S hand, and motions to her to withdraw. EXIT MISS CARY.)

- VIRGINIA. It seems so strange to me that men will entrust their fortunes to tiny slips of paper.
- ASGILL. It does. Yet what loss or gain may not so tiny a scrap cover? A horse or a woman, honour or dishonour, life or death.
- VIRGINIA. And yet it pleases men to play. But doubtless your stakes do not extend beyond a horse—or at most a woman.
- ASGILL. On the contrary, my entire fortune lay in that paper.
- VIRGINIA. From your manner I fear that you have drawn a blank.
- ASGILL. (*with an effort turning to her*) No; I have drawn—the prize. (*Pause.*) As I was saying—deuce take it! What was I saying? O yes! About remaining your friend and all that. You can't think how annoyed I was at those silly words which I let slip the other day. I could have bitten my tongue out the next moment. To speak the truth, I can't bear to see a woman in tears, and that was why I went further than I meant. Jimmy Ludlow will tell you that I have done the same stupid thing a dozen times before. I know it was unpardonable, but I am only a rough soldier, here to-day and—and gone to-morrow—so for the sake of the pleasant weeks,—please forgive me. (*Pause. With forced gaiety, covering intense emotion.*) Of course I never thought seriously of making love to you. (*Pause.*) Miss Huddy, I hope that some honest man who is in earnest will succeed where I failed; that you may be happy and prosperous all the days of your life. And now, having made my confession and asked your pardon for conduct which I admit was quite unpardonable, with that wish I bid you farewell for ever.

VIRGINIA. (*with a scared expression, to herself*) Farewell for ever! (*With strong effort.*) Farewell, Captain Asgill!

(ENTER CHEWTON.)

CHEWTON. Charles, my dear old friend, I must speak with you.

ASGILL. (*aside*) Sh! (*Aloud.*) There is every prospect of a pleasant journey, and with cards and dice we shall no doubt manage to kill the time. Egad! To tell you the truth, the prospect of getting away from this quiet little village makes me feel positively gay.

CHEWTON. You must get your things at once.

ASGILL. For God's sake, don't let her hear! Keep the others away.

CHEWTON. They have all gone.

ASGILL. Sh! (*sings*)

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
 Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
 So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
 And let us e'en toast them together.

Forgive me, but after all, it is pleasant to be moving again! Once more, good-bye, Miss Huddy—good-bye.

(VIRGINIA turns away from him, in surprise at his manner. ASGILL clutches CHEWTON'S arm and almost breaks down. EXEUNT CHEWTON and ASGILL. VIRGINIA walks to the table and sits down, and with her arms on the table and her head in her arms, sobs violently. ENTER LUDLOW.)

LUDLOW. Miss Huddy! You have heard then—you know! Poor Charles has had bad luck lately, but this last is too terrible. To have to die for an offence of which he was entirely innocent—to die in cold blood the death of a felon—

- VIRGINIA. What do you mean ? I do not understand you.
- LUDLOW. You do not know ? Oh !
- VIRGINIA. Captain Ludlow, you have gone too far, and you must tell me everything—I insist. (*Pause.*) Captain Asgill has to—die ?
- LUDLOW. Surely you understood that General Washington meant to retaliate for your father's death.
- VIRGINIA. (*trying to guess his meaning*) Retaliate—what is that ?
- LUDLOW. He notified Lord Clinton that unless the loyalist Captain Lippincot, who—(*pause*)—executed your father were given up, he would select an officer of equal rank from among the English prisoners of war, and hang him.
- VIRGINIA. What nightmare is this ?—Captain Asgill—my father's death—Captain Asgill never saw my father.
- ASGILL. (*outside*) Ludlow, Ludlow ! Zounds, man, where have you hidden yourself ?
- (*RE-ENTER ASGILL from the verandah. The moment ASGILL sees LUDLOW and VIRGINIA, he re-assumes his jovial air.*)
- ASGILL. (*sings*) Let the toast pass—
 Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the
 glass.
- Glorious fellow Sheridan !
- LUDLOW. It's no use, Charles. She knows all.
- VIRGINIA. (*stonily*) Yes—I know all.
- (*ASGILL makes an exclamation of despair ; then signs to LUDLOW to withdraw. EXIT LUDLOW.*)

ASGILL. I wished to keep the burden of this horror from your young life ; and I should have succeeded if our blundering friend had not been too quick for me. Now the mischief's out. But this unfortunate affair is no fault of yours or mine ; so you must not let the mere coincidence that I should be selected to avenge your father's death weigh on your spirits. (*Pause—then continuing in a judicial tone.*) You see, the situation was complicated. This Lippincot acted under orders from his superiors, so Sir Henry Clinton cannot give him up. At the same time, General Washington feels it his duty by a striking example to prevent—(*pause*). Virginia, will you kiss me once before I go ?

VIRGINIA. (*running to him and falling at his feet*) I love you, I love you, I love you !

ASGILL. No, child, no ; it is only pity.

VIRGINIA. Do you not hear ? I love you !

ASGILL. Virginia— ! (*Embrace.*) Is it only when I am robbed of everything, that our lives at last roll into one ? I was rich ; now I am poor enough—how mean and paltry do these trifles seem in the face of love and of death ; is it not so ? It is adversity which binds our hearts together.

VIRGINIA. You shall not die.

ASGILL. (*emphatically*) Do not nurse the faintest hope of a reprieve. Think of poor André's fate.

VIRGINIA. But he was a spy, and you are innocent.

ASGILL. It seems to be the law of this world that the innocent must suffer for the guilty.

(RE-ENTER LUDLOW.)

- LUDLOW. Charles, my poor old Charles, they are waiting to arrest you. Forgive me for having told her.
- ASGILL. I thank you with all my heart for telling her. But will it be necessary for me to leave Yorktown ?
- LUDLOW. You are to be taken to Philadelphia to-night.
- ASGILL. And to-morrow ?
- LUDLOW. To-morrow—you must not ask me to tell you any more.
- ASGILL. (*to VIRGINIA*) We have had one moment of paradise sweeter than falls to the lot of most mortals. It is all that is allowed us. Farewell, farewell !

(*VIRGINIA tries to follow him.*)

- VIRGINIA. I will go with you ; I have the right ; they shall not take me from you.
- ASGILL. If you love me do not strive to come further ! Think what it costs me to say this ; think what it costs me to part from you ! Let it be here, in this sweet room where I met you, where I have spent the happiest hours of my life. Let me part from you in appearance free as when first I knew you. I would not have your last thoughts of me as of a captive doomed to an inglorious death. I go to give my body up, but my soul is innocent, fearless and free. For my sake, be brave. Farewell ! (*He kisses her and shakes LUDLOW'S hand.*)

(*EXIT ASGILL and LUDLOW, LUDLOW weeping. As the Scene closes, VIRGINIA stands absolutely motionless looking straight in front of her.*)

SCENE 2.¹ *Night. WASHINGTON'S Tent in the trenches. WASHINGTON is pacing up and down; LAFAYETTE sits at a short distance from the line of his walk. WASHINGTON approaches a writing table, and rings a handbell. ENTER ORDERLY.*

WASHINGTON. Request Colonel Nicola to attend me here.

(EXIT ORDERLY. WASHINGTON seats himself, picks up an open letter, reads it and then, with a sigh, lays it down.)

WASHINGTON. There must be something strangely attractive in this title of king, that it can be used as a bait to angle for the integrity of men. I fear that I lack imagination, for I would rather be on my farm than be made emperor of the world. What would you say to a man if he offered to make you a king?

LAFAYETTE. I should say—Enemy of ze human race, you who would rupture ze sacred equality of men who are all born equal and free, do you sink zat I prize your torn rags of feudalism, your crowns of tinsel and ceremonies slavish? Do you sink zat I would like men to bow before me and offer ze incense of flattery? No. Ze naked savage in his manly simplicity is to me a more attractive spectacle zan ze most pampered and luxurious of monarchs.

WASHINGTON. Savages are very dirty and unpleasant people, Marquis; and in the attribute of simplicity, the fox is not so cunning as they. As to their ceremonies and superstitions—

LAFAYETTE. I speak of ze ideal savage, Cheneral, of a type more primitive zan any zat now exist on ze earse.

WASHINGTON. Ah! (*Pause.*) Well, the matter on which I desired to speak with you is this—Here is my old and trusted officer, Colonel Nicola, exhorting me to assume the position and title of a king. I wish

¹ It is not absolutely necessary to change the scene here unless desired.

to ask you if you know anything of this scheme. Is it a private suggestion emanating from the mind of Colonel Nicola, or is he the mouthpiece of a party ?

LAFAYETTE. Such an idea 'as, I know, been prevalent for some time.

WASHINGTON. Discontent is unhappily widespread.

LAFAYETTE. Ven it increase zere will be universal mutiny. Ah ! Cheneral, vot a chance for glory ! Your troops to a man will follow you to ze dease. Yes, yes ! Send zese what you call petti-foggers to mind zeir business, and in zeir place establish a government firm and just.

WASHINGTON. With myself as king ?

LAFAYETTE. As president of a crate republic. A president is not ze same as a king.

WASHINGTON. No, indeed. A president who elected himself by means of an armed force would be more powerful than most kings.

(ENTER NICOLA. WASHINGTON, *after motioning to him to sit down, addresses him.*)

Sir, with a mixture of great surprise and astonishment, I have carefully read the sentiments which you have submitted to my perusal.

NICOLA. The well-known modesty of your excellency would cause any suggestion which might seem to include your own aggrandisement to sound strange in your ears.

WASHINGTON. You flatter me, Sir. Colonel Nicola, the relations between us have hitherto been of the most friendly nature. I charge you to tell me if there has been anything in my past conduct towards you or others which could give the smallest encouragement to such an address as this ?

NICOLA. Nothing whatever.

WASHINGTON. Eight years ago, the outbreak of hostilities found me in the enjoyment of the position which I value highest on earth—that of a country gentleman residing on and developing his own estate. With extreme reluctance, at the bidding of Congress, I was compelled to relinquish the life I loved, to which at this moment it would be my highest bliss to return ; and sacrificing domestic happiness, comfort and security, to take the chief command of the patriot army.

NICOLA. Your excellency, it is the knowledge of these sacrifices that you have made in the past, which emboldened me to address you. The wretched condition of the country, the distress and poverty of the troops—

WASHINGTON. No one feels more deeply than I do the melancholy condition of the army.

NICOLA. These cry out on the dangers of a weak government ; these exemplify the fatal weakness of all republics.

LAFAYETTE. No, no ! Zat is 'eresy !

NICOLA. (*more vehemently*) A form of government which even in cities and small states has never been permanent ; which is utterly impracticable when it is a question of ruling large and scattered masses of men.

WASHINGTON. In a word, what is it that you and your supporters would have me do ?

NICOLA. March to Philadelphia and disperse Congress. Then establish a mixed government with yourself at the head of it.

LAFAYETTE. Ah ! Zat's good !

WASHINGTON. With the title of king ?

NICOLA. Possibly not at first.

LAFAYETTE. No, no ! No king !

- NICOLA. When other matters were duly adjusted, I believe that strong arguments might be produced for admitting the title of king. You who have already given up so much, will not hesitate if you are called on for your country's sake to make this final sacrifice.
- WASHINGTON. Colonel Nicola, I fully believe that man was not designed by the all-wise Creator to live for himself alone. Are you quite sure that it would be the final sacrifice—that by this step I should lose nothing further than the relinquishment of my private happiness in order to become a king?
- NICOLA. Quite certain, your excellency. You will consent!
- WASHINGTON. Well, Colonel, I'm not very sure about that. It appears to my limited understanding that there is one more thing which I should have to sacrifice—a small thing, no doubt, to conflict with so interesting an undertaking as the establishment of a kingdom.
- NICOLA. May I ask to what you allude?
- LAFAYETTE. Ah! vat is zat?
- WASHINGTON. The honour of George Washington. (*Pause.*) Congress entrusted to me the American forces; to Congress I pledged my word; as its servant I am fighting.
- NICOLA. Congress has never paid you a dollar.
- LAFAYETTE. True, true—ze mean 'ounds!
- WASHINGTON. I would not take money from that honourable body. Had I consulted my own feelings, nothing in the world would have persuaded me to obey their command. Any remuneration they could have offered me would but have accentuated my feeling of sacrifice. That is the reason why I gave my services gratuitously.
- NICOLA. And how has Congress rewarded you?

WASHINGTON. It is of my duty to Congress that we are speaking.

LAFAYETTE. Cheneral, pardon me. It is of your duty to your country zat he is speaking—zat country which you have made victorious in spite of Congress. Let me add my appeal to his.

NICOLA. It is the one means of saving the American cause, the troops from universal mutiny, in a word—your country.

WASHINGTON. Sir, for my country I am willing to risk my life ; for my country I am willing if necessary to sacrifice my fortune, though with that probably a man parts more reluctantly ; but for the world and all that it contains I will not give up one jot or tittle of my honour. (*Change.*) Ah, Sir, believe me that nothing has ever caused me more painful sensations than the discovery that such ideas as you have expressed exist in the army. I view them with abhorrence, and reprehend them with severity. They are in my opinion big with the greatest mischiefs that can befall my country. No commonwealth fit for a free man to live in is founded on ambition or treason.

NICOLA. Your excellency !

WASHINGTON. Let me conjure you, then, if you have any regard for your country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts for ever from your mind. We will treat your letter as if it had not been written. With that idea, I offer you my hand and seek to remain your friend.

(RE-ENTER ORDERLY.)

ORDERLY. Your excellency, a young lady desires urgently to see you. (*Hands paper.*)

WASHINGTON. (*looking at paper*) The daughter of the murdered Captain Huddy ! (*He signs to the ORDERLY to admit her.*)

- LAFAYETTE. Ah! we had better retire.
- WASHINGTON. You will believe me that no man possesses a more sincere wish to see ample justice done to the army than I do. As far as my powers and influence, in a constitutional way, extend, they shall be employed to the utmost of my abilities to effect it.
- LAFAYETTE. Ah! you will see justice done to ze troops!
- WASHINGTON. It is, I admit, imperative that a strongly worded petition be presented to Congress. This, I am at liberty to tell you, shall be done at once.
- NICOLA. Your excellency, I thank you.
(ENTER VIRGINIA. NICOLA and LAFAYETTE gravely bow to her and EXEUNT.)
- WASHINGTON. Miss Virginia, I am glad of an opportunity to express to you my deep horror and detestation of the foul crime which has robbed you of a kind and affectionate parent.
- VIRGINIA. Sir, I loved my father dearly.
- WASHINGTON. Though I fear that the foul perpetrator of that dastardly act will escape, your father's manes shall be appeased. The outraged honour of the American army shall be avenged.
- VIRGINIA. Do you think it is right that an innocent English officer should be executed for the murder of a man whom he never saw—
- WASHINGTON. What do you mean?
- VIRGINIA. A man of whose existence but for me he would never have heard?
- WASHINGTON. Such is the fatal necessity of the case, though humanity prompts a tear for the unhappy victim.
- VIRGINIA. It is not right—not right! It is murder to slay the innocent.

- WASHINGTON. Cannot you see that it is Sir Henry Clinton who slays the innocent? By refusing to give up to justice this Captain Lippincot, your father's murderer, who has violated all the rules of civilised warfare, it is he who compels us to retaliate by the only means that is left to us.
- VIRGINIA. And do you think that this is a right means?
- WASHINGTON. Yes, emphatically, yes. The enemy must be made to respect us, or fresh outrages will be committed. This is not the first by a long way, but it shall be the last.
- VIRGINIA. And this innocent man—has he no claim to be considered?
- WASHINGTON. Miss Virginia, when a man fights for a cause, he sinks his personality in that cause. Do the common soldiers in the British army clearly understand for what they are fighting? Why, a large proportion even of the officers disapprove of the war. A hostile army represents its chiefs, and for their right or wrong doing is responsible in all its parts.
- VIRGINIA. This may be justice—they say that women do not understand justice. What I come to beg from you is not justice but mercy.
- WASHINGTON. Your conduct is very beautiful and Christian in pleading on your father's behalf that his murder should be unavenged.
- VIRGINIA. It is not on my father's behalf that I plead. (*Pause.*) It is on behalf of his daughter.
- WASHINGTON. What? You do not mean—
- VIRGINIA. Will you compel me to explain?
- WASHINGTON. Is it possible that this man is anything to you?
(*A long pause.*) Merciful powers!

VIRGINIA. He asked me to be his wife when my father died. I did not know him then—I called him a murderer—and as if he were a murderer you will hang him, though he is none—my wicked words have brought down this curse upon him! (*She weeps.*)

WASHINGTON. (*feeling more emotion than he will show*) Miss Virginia, to a sensitive mind, all this is most distressing. As an old acquaintance of your father—if you will honour me by allowing me to say so, as your friend—may I beg you to consider if it is not horror and pity for Captain Asgill's sad fate which has led your heart momentarily to reverse a decision which appears to have been in the highest degree prudent. Love is said to be an involuntary passion, and it is therefore contended that it cannot be resisted. This is true in part only.

VIRGINIA. Do you think I came to you to be cured of loving him? It was to save him. You can release him if you will.

WASHINGTON. Miss Virginia, from the bottom of my heart I pity you. But I am powerless to avert the fell dart of fate. Even if you were my daughter or he my son I could not do it. It is justice, not charity, which must bind the action of a public man. Sir Henry Clinton forced us to retaliate, and the honour and safety of the American Army are bound up in this matter. It is as a captain in our army, not as your father, that we must avenge your father's death. The lot has fallen on Captain Asgill. Would it be right because you love him that some other officer should suffer in his place?

VIRGINIA. (*pause—then quickly*) If Sir Henry Clinton had given this murderer up, would you have been satisfied?

WASHINGTON. Most assuredly.

- VIRGINIA. O let me go to him and throw myself at his feet! The English officers are all wild at his refusal. Humanity demands of you that you should delay the—long enough to allow me to appeal to him. You must—you will do this.
- WASHINGTON. Miss Virginia, remember that fruitlessly to prolong the term of Captain Asgill's imprisonment would but prolong the term of his anguish.
- VIRGINIA. Ah! you consent! God bless you, God bless you!
- WASHINGTON. Miss Virginia, nurse no flattering hope!
- VIRGINIA. (*hysterically*) You will let me go, you will let me go! (*Rushing towards the door. At the door.*) He will be free!
- WASHINGTON. I implore you, do not be too hopeful.
- VIRGINIA. (*as she hurriedly goes out*) Thank God, thank God! I know that he will be saved!

END OF ACT II

ACT III.

SCENE 1. *The American Camp at Newburgh. The OFFICERS are assembled in a state bordering on mutiny.*

- ARMSTRONG. Congress has flouted the Chief's petition. Our country tramples on our rights, disdains our cries, insults our distresses. Thank God that our foolish patience is at an end!
- VOICES. Yes, yes! The filthy swabs! We will have our pay. (*Cheers.*)
- 1ST OFFICER. News, news! The Whigs have come in in England.
- 2ND OFFICER. That means peace.

- VOICES. Huzzah !
- 1ST OFFICER. I believe that peace has been settled long ago.
- ARMSTRONG. Peace !
- 2ND OFFICER. They only keep the knowledge from us because they fear us.
- ARMSTRONG. Peace ! What have you to expect from peace, when your voice shall sink and your strength dissipate by division ; when those very swords, the instruments and companions of your glory, shall be taken from your sides, and no remaining mark of military distinction be left but your wants, infirmities, scars ? Will you, then, consent to be the only sufferers by this revolution, and retiring from the field, grow old in poverty, wretchedness and contempt ? Think what it means to owe the miserable remnant of that life to charity which has hitherto been spent in honour ! If you can, go, and carry with you the jest of Tories and the scorn of Whigs ; the ridicule, and what is worse, the pity of the world ! Go, starve, and be forgotten ! (*Murmurs of growing acquiescence with the speaker.*) But if your spirits should revolt at this (*great movement*) awake, attend to your situation and redress yourselves ! (*Thunders of applause.*) If your determination be in any proportion to your wrongs, redress yourselves !
- 1ST OFFICER. Where is Gates ?
- A VOICE. He couldn't borrow a shirt, so he was afraid to come lest we should all be shamed. (*Laughter.*)
- 2ND OFFICER. The Chief shall lead us. If he won't go, we'll take him.
- 1ST OFFICER. Or someone else.
- (*Cries of " Washington " drowned by shouts of " Gates " and ringing cheers.*)

ARMSTRONG. Let us appeal no longer to the justice, but to the fears of government. Let Congress be told that the slightest mark of indignity must now part us for ever.

(ENTER WASHINGTON, *who is arrested by the words. ARMSTRONG does not perceive him, and WASHINGTON by a warning gesture orders those of the officers who see him to maintain silence as to his presence among them.*)

That whether it is war or peace, our course is clear. If war, that courting the auspices, and inviting the direction of your illustrious leader, you will retire to some unsettled country, smile in your turn, and 'mock when their fear cometh on'; if peace, that nothing shall separate you from your arms but death. (*Cheers.*)

WASHINGTON. Gentlemen, the words which I have by accident overheard, fill me with amazement. If my conduct heretofore has not evinced to you that I have been a faithful friend to the army, my declaration of it at this time would be equally unavailing and improper. But, as I was among the first who embarked in the cause of our common country, as I have never left your side one moment but when called from you on public duty, it can scarcely be supposed, at this last stage of the war, that I am indifferent to your interests. (*Grudging applause.*) But how are they to be promoted? The way is plain, says the last speaker—if the war should continue, remove into the wilderness, there establish yourselves; and leave an ungrateful country to defend itself.

VOICES. Yes, yes!

WASHINGTON. But whom is it to defend? *Our* wives, *our* children, *our* farms and other property which we leave behind us? Or are we to take the two

first, our wives and children—the farms and most of the property cannot be removed—to perish in a wild country with hunger, cold and nakedness? If peace be declared, never sheathe your swords, says he, until you have obtained full and ample justice.

VOICES. Yes, yes! Justice, justice! (*Applause.*)

WASHINGTON. (*sternly*) This dreadful alternative, of either deserting our country in the extremest hour of distress, or turning our arms against it, which is the apparent object, unless Congress can be compelled into instant compliance, has something so shocking in it that humanity revolts at the idea. (*Passionately.*) My God! what can this speaker have in view by recommending such measures? Can he be a friend to the army? Can he be a friend to this country? Is he not rather an insidious foe? (*OFFICERS begin to turn to WASHINGTON'S views.*) It is my decided opinion that Congress entertains exalted sentiments of the services of the army, and from a full conviction of its merits and sufferings, will do it complete justice; (*stronger movement*) but like all other large bodies, where there is a variety of different interests to reconcile, their deliberations are slow. For myself, I declare most solemnly that in the attainment of complete justice for all your toils and dangers you may command my services to the utmost extent of my abilities. (*Much appreciation from OFFICERS.*) Let me entreat you, gentlemen, on your part not to take any measures which will sully your glory; let me request you to rely on the plighted faith of Congress that it will fulfil all its obligations towards you to the utmost farthing; and let me conjure you in the name of our common country, as you value your sacred honour, to express your utmost horror and detestation of the man who wishes to overturn the liberties of our country,

and who wickedly attempts to open the flood-gate of civil discord, and deluge our rising empire in blood.

(Gradual signs of disapproval towards ARMSTRONG during the foregoing.)

WASHINGTON. *(with quiet decision)* Gentlemen, I invite you to withdraw and consider this matter. You will not, I am sure, on calm reflection, adopt measures which may tarnish the reputation of an army which is celebrated through all Europe for its fortitude and patriotism.

(Enthusiasm. The OFFICERS retire in animated discussion. ENTER HAMILTON in civilian dress and MISS CARY. WASHINGTON bows to them.)

HAMILTON. Your Excellency, the deputation has returned from New York. The enemy held a court martial on this Lippincot.

WASHINGTON. Well ?

HAMILTON. He was acquitted.

WASHINGTON. Ah ! Is that so ? *(Pause.)* Where is the unfortunate young lady ?

HAMILTON. She has gone with Captain Ludlow to the Jersey Line. Miss Cary is here to plead with me against the execution of this sentence.

WASHINGTON. With you ?

HAMILTON. Yes, your Excellency, with me. *(Pause.)* Sir Guy Carleton has sent a full report of the court martial, which I have been studying this last hour. It is true that they acquitted Lippincot, but I am convinced that on similar evidence our side would have done the same.

WASHINGTON. On what ground could they possibly have acquitted him ?

- HAMILTON. On the ground that he was not responsible for Captain Huddy's murder.
- WASHINGTON. Not responsible! Why, he hanged him.
- HAMILTON. Yes. But what he did was not the effect of malice or ill-will. He acted in obedience to the orders of his superiors, the Loyalist Board of Refugees, not doubting that they had full authority to give such orders. The Board seemed anxious to exculpate themselves wholly, and to leave Lippincot to his fate; but in the course of the trial it became abundantly clear that it was they, not he, on whom the responsibility rested.
- WASHINGTON. That only removes the responsibility further back. Why in heaven's name should they hang my officer?
- HAMILTON. (*drily*) It appears that it was an act of retaliation.
- WASHINGTON. Retaliation for what?
- HAMILTON. For the murder of one of their associates, Philip White. Joshua Huddy was pitched on as a proper subject for retaliation because he had been a very active and cruel persecutor of their friends, and had boasted of being instrumental in hanging Stephen Edwards, one of their brethren—nay, it is asserted that he himself tied the knot and put the rope about his neck.
- WASHINGTON. A mere excuse invented to shield the guilty.
- MISS CARY. Are you sure of that?
- HAMILTON. (*reading from the despatch*)
Sir Guy Carleton wishes to declare in unequivocal terms to General Washington that notwithstanding the acquittal of Lippincot, he reprobates in the highest degree the lawless deed; and he gives the fullest assurances of prosecuting a further inquiry. As a preliminary he has dissolved the Associated Board of Loyalists, and by

this means has rendered any repetition of the horrid act impossible for the future. At the same time Sir Guy charges General Washington with want of humanity in selecting a victim from the British officers so early as he did.

WASHINGTON. And what do you think, Sir ?

HAMILTON. Suppose the enemy had demanded that we should give up one of our officers without trial, should we have complied ? Suppose that when tried he had been acquitted, should we then give him up ?

WASHINGTON. Yes, Sir Guy is right there. I confess that I acted over hastily.

MISS CARY. It is hard for a strong man to own that.

WASHINGTON. It is a weak man, Polly, who will not own when he is in the wrong. (*To HAMILTON.*) And what, Sir, is your opinion of the whole situation ?

HAMILTON. It appears to me that this communication from Sir Guy Carleton alters the ground of our action in the case of Captain Asgill.

MISS CARY. O George, think what a terrible effect this execution would have on the growing hope of peace, what passions and desire of reprisal it would arouse among the British—passions which now are happily being laid to rest !

WASHINGTON. (*after a long pause*) Miss Polly, do you think that you alone have a feeling of humanity, that to me all this has been pleasant ? Do you take me for an ogre thirsting for the blood of the innocent ? General Hamilton is right. This communication does alter the ground of our action. Our object has never been to wreak vengeance for what was done, but solely the prevention of such deeds for the future ; and this it appears to me on due reflection the action of Sir Guy Carleton, sufficiently guarantees.

MISS CARY. Dear me! I had forgotten. Sir Guy gave me this for you just as we were leaving New York.

(She hands a document to WASHINGTON. He passes it on to HAMILTON.)

HAMILTON. *(after reading it)* Miss Virginia flew forth like the dove over the troubled waters, and she has returned with an olive leaf. It is a discussion of the preliminaries of peace.

(RE-ENTER ARMSTRONG.)

ARMSTRONG. Sir, it is resolved unanimously that the American army view with abhorrence, and reject with disdain the infamous propositions made to them; propositions totally subversive to all discipline and good order. Also, that the thanks of the officers be given to those whose wisdom and prudence have presented the late address to Congress; and that they be requested to continue their solicitations at Congress until the objects of the mission are accomplished.

WASHINGTON. Major Armstrong, Sir, I have sufficient reason for believing that the object of the speaker was just, honourable and friendly to the country; though the means suggested by him were certainly liable to much misunderstanding and abuse. General Hamilton will convey to the officers the pleasant feelings excited in my breast by the affectionate sentiments they express towards me.

(EXEUNT HAMILTON and ARMSTRONG.)

MISS CARY. And now give me an order for the release of Captain Asgill, or you will have one of those poor children insane.

WASHINGTON. Alas! I am powerless to give you such an order. Congress has most explicitly ordered retaliation. Until it instructs me I can do nothing.

MISS CARY. George, George, you do worship this Congress!

WASHINGTON. Yes, Polly. To me it represents law and order and loyalty.

MISS CARY. George, it is a hard thing for a woman to say ; but after more than a quarter of a century—I should like you to know before we die—O, George, I was a fool !

WASHINGTON. (*tenderly*) Polly, you know that deep down in my soul I never loved a woman except you.

MISS CARY. There were a great many of them, George.

WASHINGTON. There were, Polly, there were. (*Resignedly.*) After all, which is the best—contentment or love ?

MISS CARY. That is a very ungallant remark, General Washington. Both, of course.

WASHINGTON. They rarely go together.

(RE-ENTER HAMILTON.)

HAMILTON. Sir, a regiment in Philadelphia has mutinied, and Congress has fled to Princeton.

WASHINGTON. Grave news indeed ! (*To MISS CARY.*) I pledge my word not to lose an instant in Captain Asgill's behalf. Have the goodness to wait here until I return. General Hamilton, I come.

SCENE 2. *The Jersey Line. A prison. Moonlight. ASGILL seated at a table reading. The doors open and he starts to his feet.*
ENTER LUDLOW.

ASGILL. James ! It seems like an eternity since you went away. How is she ? (*LUDLOW turns away.*) Ah ! I see that you have no good news for me.

LUDLOW. May George Washington, Henry Clinton and Guy Carleton all be damned together !

- ASGILL. I told you that your kind efforts would avail nothing. Do not think that I have entertained any flattering hope of a reprieve. Believe me that I have nursed myself into resignation. It would be untrue to tell you that I do not care for my life—it is immeasurably precious to me. I will not pretend that it is not repugnant to me to die like a felon. But we must all die some time; and such a death is but a pang, no more. Where is she?
- LUDLOW. Her entreaties would have drawn tears from marble. Strong men wept when they heard her plead for you.
- ASGILL. Where is she? If I could—
- LUDLOW. Would it not distress you to see her?
- ASGILL. Can it be possible? Distress me? Ah, friend, there is no distress for me where she is concerned; all is comfort. Tell me, is she here?
- (LUDLOW goes to the door, opens it and leads in VIRGINIA thickly veiled. She gropes her way to him with outstretched arms. EXIT LUDLOW.)
- ASGILL. (*embracing her*) Child, child! I have you still!
(VIRGINIA slips to her knees at his feet.)
- VIRGINIA. Forgive me—I could not save you—they are all hard! I hate them all—all!
- ASGILL. Dearest, take comfort.
- VIRGINIA. (*half sobbing*) They would not give up one man to save another. But our side! How proud I was of our success. How I dreamt that our republic could never do an injustice. Fool that I was to think a mere name could make men just!
- ASGILL. How can there be a perfect republic in a world of imperfect men? The true republic is within us.
- VIRGINIA. (*hopelessly*) I was so certain that I should save you.

ASGILL. You have saved me—from the worldliness which is death in life. Let me look on you, my love! We have at least this supreme moment. Let us then be happy! (*He throws back her veil and kisses her.*) Ah! if we had not been thus bound together by adversity we could never have drawn so near to one another.

VIRGINIA. (*sobbing*) O, to lose you now! (*He kisses her.*) My love, when you were condemned to die a felon's death, for my sake you could smile, could hide your feelings to save me pain—Alas! I am not unselfish like you. I cannot be brave, even to spare you the sight of my suffering.

(*They stand leaning on the window sill, RE-ENTER LUDLOW with MISS CARY.*)

LUDLOW. Charles, can you bear a great piece of news?

MISS CARY. (*to LUDLOW*) Break it gently!

LUDLOW. Charles, this life is a damned uncertain business.

ASGILL. What do you mean?

LUDLOW. Here is a letter from General Washington.

ASGILL. Read it to me. I cannot see.

LUDLOW. I will read the end first. (*Reads rapidly, in a see-saw tone.*) "I cannot take leave of you, Sir, without assuring you that, in whatever light my agency in this unpleasing affair may be viewed, I was never influenced, through the whole of it, by sanguinary motives, but by what I conceived to be a sense of my duty, which loudly called upon me to take measures, however disagreeable, to prevent a repetition of those enormities which have been the subject of discussion." (*Taking breath.*) A nice, terse style has the Commander-in-chief!

ASGILL. There is nothing new in all this.

LUDLOW. Wait a moment! (*reads*) "And that this important end is likely to be answered without the effusion of the blood of an innocent person, is not a greater relief to you, than it is to, Sir, your most obedient and humble servant, George Washington."

ASGILL. In God's name, what does this mean?

LUDLOW. Here is an enclosed copy of an Act of Congress of the seventh instant. It means, my dear old friend, that you are free.

VIRGINIA. No, no, no! You are deceiving him! It is not true! (*She bursts into hysterical laughter and, convulsively sobbing, falls into a chair; then relapses into silence.*)

ASGILL. Leave us! The relief has been too sudden; but the shock of joy rarely kills.

(MISS CARY and LUDLOW press his hand silently and EXEUNT. Pause. The Church bells begin to ring. There is a sound of cheering, and of a voice crying, "Declaration of Peace.")

VIRGINIA. (*lifts her head. Then staggering to her feet and moving towards the window in a dazed manner*) It is peace!

ASGILL. (*embracing her*) Yes, my soul—it is peace!
(*She looks into his eyes. Then her head sinks on his breast.*)

SCENE 3. *Annapolis. The temporary Hall of Congress. The PRESIDENT and MEMBERS of Congress, including TRUMBULL and HAMILTON, are seated and covered. The SECRETARY stands by the side of the PRESIDENT.*

PRESIDENT. Gentlemen, Mr. John Adams, our first ambassador to the Court of St. James's (*applause*), has been presented to His Majesty King George. (*Applause.*) On this momentous occasion, Mr. Adams

said, "I think myself more fortunate than all my fellow-citizens in having the distinguished honour to be the first to stand in your Majesty's royal presence in a diplomatic character; and I shall esteem myself the happiest of men if I can be instrumental in recommending my country more and more to your Majesty's royal benevolence, and in restoring the old good-nature and old good-humour between people who, though separated by an ocean and under different Governments, have the same language, a similar religion, and kindred blood." (*Applause.*)

(ENTER *a* MESSENGER *who advances to the* SECRETARY.)

MESSENGER. General Washington waits in the ante-room.

(EXIT SECRETARY.)

PRESIDENT. To this the king replied, "I wish that it may be understood in America, that I have done nothing in the late contest but what I thought myself indispensably bound to do by the duty which I owed to my people. I will be very frank with you. I was the last to consent to the separation; but the separation having been made, and having become inevitable, I have always said, as I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power. Let the circumstances of language, religion and blood have their natural and full effect."

(*Acclamation.*)

(RE-ENTER SECRETARY *escorting* WASHINGTON *attended by his* AIDES. *He conducts* WASHINGTON *to a chair.* WASHINGTON *sits, with an* AIDE *standing on each side, and the* SECRETARY *resumes his place.* *The* PUBLIC *are then admitted, including* LAFAYETTE, MISS CARY, VIRGINIA, ASGILL, *and* NICOLA. *Then the* SECRETARY *demands "Silence."*)

PRESIDENT. (*addressing WASHINGTON*) Sir—The United States in Congress assembled are prepared to receive your communications.

WASHINGTON. (*rising and bowing. He speaks with strong emotion*) Mr. President—The great events on which my resignation depended having at length taken place, I present myself before Congress to surrender into its hands the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country. (*Movement among Congress and audience.*) Happy in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, I resign the appointment I accepted with diffidence ; which, however, was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the supreme power of the nation, and the patronage of heaven. (*Reverential murmurs.*) Having finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action ; and, bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my Commission and take my leave of the employments of my public life. (*Mixed murmurs of approval and disapproval.*)

(WASHINGTON *delivers his Commission to the PRESIDENT and then returns to his place, where he remains standing.*)

PRESIDENT. Sir—The United States, in Congress assembled, receive with emotion too affecting for utterance, the solemn resignation of the Authorities under which you have led their troops with success through a perilous and doubtful war. Called upon by your country to defend its invaded rights, you accepted the sacred charge, before it had formed alliances, and whilst it was without funds or a government to support you. You have persevered, till these United States, aided by a

magnanimous king and nation, have been enabled under a just providence to close the war in freedom, (*bursts of cheering*) safety and independence. (*Cheering intensified.*) Having defended the standard of liberty in the New World, you retire with the blessings of your fellow-citizens ; though the glory of your virtues will not terminate with your military command, but will descend to remotest ages. (*All in accord and enthusiasm.*)

(WASHINGTON bows. *The Members of Congress uncover without bowing. Then Congress rises and disperses in little groups, while WASHINGTON'S friends, both of Congress and otherwise, press round him and shake his hand.*)

WASHINGTON. (*taking LAFAYETTE solemnly by the hand*) Marquis, I have no words in which I could express my affection for you, were I to attempt it.

LAFAYETTE. Ah, Cheneral, ze greatest joy of my life is to 'ave my son called after you ; my greatest pride zat my cran'children vill relate how I vas a 'umble soldier in ze army of George Vashington. Dear Cheneral, zis vill not be our last parting.

WASHINGTON. Alas, Marquis, I am now descending the hill of life. Could I but hope—yet frankness warns me !

HAMILTON. *General* Washington, farewell ! Our leader you shall still be for many a long year—the first President of the United States.

WASHINGTON. General Hamilton, if you ever suggest such a thing, egad, Sir, I will never speak to you again !

(ASGILL, NICOLA, MISS CARY and VIRGINIA have approached.)

NICOLA. (*having heard the last words, to MISS CARY*) We would have made him a king !

MISS CARY. You could not make him anything. God Almighty made him a king—yes, and something far higher and better than a king—He made him an English gentleman !

WASHINGTON. Captain Asgill, it rejoices me that an unfortunate incident has terminated thus happily. (*Taking his hand.*) May your union with this young lady symbolise the affection which I trust will ever unite the old country with the new. Sir, it has been your great happiness to win the best fortune of all, what is most adorable on earth—the love of a good and faithful woman.

CURTAIN

KING RODERICK

A Tragedy in Five Acts

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS play is founded on a legend almost as old as King Arthur, and though Iberia is once or twice called Spain, the period is of course long anterior to the formation of any kingdom of that name, and centuries before the character of the inhabitants in their contests with the Moors, had acquired the pride and religious fervour which we associate with our idea of modern Spaniards. But the half savages of Iberia have no more connection with the characters of my play than the half savage Danes have with the characters in *Hamlet*. The "atmosphere" is purely romantic, not in the remotest degree historical.

There were two branches of the royal family of Iberia closely related. The head of one of them, Witiza, deposed the father of Roderick and made himself king. He was a bad ruler, and having incurred the anger of the Pope by permitting the priests to marry, the Pope overthrew him and placed Roderick on the throne, the more easily inasmuch as his jealousy and suspicion of his nobility had caused him to destroy all the fastnesses of his country. His sons, Sisabert and Edda, who were children at the time, were left in charge of Roderick. The youthful king had performed prodigies of valour during the war, and displayed a genius for organization rare at his years. The most powerful noble in Iberia, Count Julian, Lord of Ceuta and Tangier, although he was the brother-in-law of Witiza, had sided with Roderick, and it was mainly through his intervention and aid that the Papal party had been successful. Two years later Julian's only son died from a wound which he had received when fighting by Roderick's side.

At the period when the play opens Roderick had been king for twelve years; a time of ceaseless strife, for the Moors were threatening Iberia and had already possessed themselves of the whole African coast, except Ceuta—opposite to Calpe now known as Gibraltar. At Ceuta Count Julian dwelt with his daughter Florinda and by his indomitable courage kept them at bay. Ceuta was the

door of Iberia, and with its fall the Moors would easily be able to effect a landing and overrun the country.

During one of the contests, Egilona, a Christian maiden, through the cowardice and treachery of her father, was taken prisoner by Abdulasis, son of the Moorish commander, Musa. Roderick freed her and made her his queen.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

RODERICK	..	..	King of Iberia.
PELISTHES	..	..	Commander in-Chief of the King's European Army.
JULIAN	..	..	Lord of Ceuta. Commander-in-Chief of the King's Army in Africa.
URBANO	..	..	Chamberlain and Confidant of Roderick.
EUGENIUS	..	..	Papal Nuncio.
SISABERT	}	..	Sons of the former King Witiza, who was deposed by Roderick with the aid of the Papal troops, for his evil deeds.
EDDA		..	
OPPAS	..	..	Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, brother of the late king.
A STEWARD.			
THEUEMIR	..	..	Second in command under Julian.
TARIK	..	..	Second under Musa, the Commander-in-Chief of the Moors.
ABDULASIS	..	..	Son of Musa.
HASSAN	..	..	Aide-de-camp to Abdulasis.
AN USHER.			
A SERVANT OF TARIK.			
TWO RETAINERS.			
EGILONA	..	..	Queen of Roderick.
FLORINDA.	..	..	Daughter of Julian.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—(*continued*)

JACINTHA }
 ORMESINDA } .. Maids of Honour.

OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, CITIZENS, SERVANTS, ETC., ETC.

- ACT I. SCENE. Roderick's Palace at Toledo.
- ACT II. SCENE 1. The Queen's Garden.
 SCENE 2. A Room in the Palace.
- ACT III. SCENE 1. The Palace at Toledo.
 SCENE 2. The Citadel of Xeres.
- ACT IV. SCENE 1. The Citadel of Xeres.
 SCENE 2. Julian's Castle at Ceuta.
- ACT V. SCENE 1. Beside the Guadalquivir.
 SCENE 2. A Street in Toledo.
 SCENE 3. Beside the Guadalquivir.

KING RODERICK

ACT I

SCENE 1. *Courtyard of the Royal Palace at Toledo. Over the battlements an extensive view of the surrounding country. A flight of steps can be seen leading up to the Courtyard. On the Left is a throne covered with costly draperies, with a large Oriental carpet spread in front of it. On the Right is a tower with a large door. URBANO, PELISTHES and ATTENDANTS are discovered. As the curtain rises, URBANO and PELISTHES are seen standing on the battlements looking out expectantly.*

PELISTHES. *(turning to URBANO)*
I question much if Julian will obey.
You know his masterful and haughty mind.
(A trumpet sounds without. URBANO advances to the parapet.)

URBANO. A messenger! His horse is flecked with foam.
(ENTER USHER hastily.)

USHER. News, news! Count Julian comes. His retinue
Has reached the city gates. Behind him rides
His child, Florinda, like an April flower
Upon the heels of frost.

PELISTHES. His daughter, mean you?

USHER. His only daughter and his only child.
Your pardon, Sirs. I must acquaint the king
With his arrival.

(EXIT USHER.)

the steps leading up to the battlements. These ENTER and occupy the back and Right of the stage. COUNT JULIAN'S former STEWARD is conducted in and takes his place to the Right. When all is in order ENTER from the Left a procession of NOBLES with their LADIES. Then the MAIDS OF HONOUR of the Queen walking backwards, followed by the QUEEN. ENTER the ROYAL PRINCES, SISABERT and EDDA, sons of the late King. Great applause from the NOBLES. SISABERT bows. Then crossing over to the QUEEN he makes a great show of respect to her.)

QUEEN.

(to SISABERT half laughing)

We all have grown to love you, Sisabert :
Keep on your cap.

SISABERT.

Not now. There are strangers here,
And they may think strange thoughts.

QUEEN.

Who cares for them ?
I care not what men think or what men say.

SISABERT.

(more confidentially and in a low voice)
The king goes hence to-night. I have the keys
Which ope your garden gate. Till then, my queen,
The moments all are years.

QUEEN.

Ah, Sisabert !

(After turning to the LADIES, who arrange her dress, she seats herself. The King's March is heard outside.)

SISABERT.

(with a gratified air, aside to EDDA)
She's mine, my brother, body and soul all mine,
And I shall soon be king.

(USHER RE-ENTERS and bows to the QUEEN.)

USHER.

Our liege, the king.

(The music swells out. ENTER KING RODERICK leaning on the arm of the Papal Nuncio EUGENIUS. He bows to the QUEEN who makes him an elaborate curtsey, and speaks from the steps of the throne.)

RODERICK. Men of Iberia, hail! With joy we greet
Our general Pelisthes, (*acclamation*) who returns
From years of golden labour with our troops;
And with him comes this learned Cardinal,
The friend and close companion of my youth
Before I left my cloister for a crown.
Both are thrice three times welcome to our court.
(Applause.)
Would that the cause for which we are assembled
Were pleasant as these greetings. My noble
kinsman,
Count Julian, is in waiting here to answer,
A grievous charge. Though I who know him best
Am certain he is guiltless, (*murmurs of dissent*)
it seemed just
That charges which have publicly been brought
Should publicly be answered. To our presence
Summon straightway the accuser and accused.

(The USHER throws open the tower door and escorts JULIAN in. JULIAN ENTERS with FLORINDA hanging on his arm. At the sight of FLORINDA, a murmur spreads among the crowd. JULIAN bows proudly to the KING.)

RODERICK. Lord of lone Ceuta, where Atlantic waves
Press through the portals of the tideless sea—
Great son of Spain who, from thy barren rock,
Didst hurl the myriad legions of the Moor—
I am the king, and in my equal sight
The mightiest of my subjects, even thou
Whom like a father I esteem and love,
Must rank no higher than the meanest wretch
Crawling between the cradle and the tomb
When justice is in question.

JULIAN.

Mighty king,
I fain would know the meaning of your speech,
And for what purpose you now summon me.
What am I here to answer ?

RODERICK.

Steward, stand forth !
What is this crime with which you charge him ?

(STEWARD *steps forth and kneeling to the KING*
bows his head on the ground.)

STEWARD.

Treason.

RODERICK.

Speak fearlessly, and tell us all you know.

STEWARD.

Great king, I was the steward of all his treasure
For eight long years, and wondering watched it grow
Far faster than could be accounted for
By usury or trading. Many times
The Moorish general, Tarik, bearing gifts
Of gold and costly raiment, he received
In secret audience, when the tell-tale sun
Had sunk beneath the waves ; (*murmurs*) and all
night long
They held hushed converse. But when morning
light
Lay spreading o'er the plains we led him back,
The heathen dog, beyond the Moorish lines.

RODERICK.

What answer make you, Julian ?

JULIAN.

It is true : (*sensation*)
But once, not many times. He came to me
Disguised, and craved for audience, which I gave
him.
Is it for this that I am summoned here,
To explain or answer all that jealous rumour
Or idle gossip fixes on my name ?

STEWARD.

May it please you, gracious king, this is a prelude
To far more grievous charges. By these papers
In his handwriting you may be advised
How this unscrupulous man, whose traitor hands

Enclose your throne, your safety and your life,
 Conspires in secret treaty with the Moors.
 Their myriad legions, which pressed on unseen
 Through Mauritania all the winter months,
 Are massed along our frontier. When the time
 Is ripe, Lord Julian will ope wide his gate
 And let them into Spain.

RODERICK.

What answer you,
 Lord Julian? Are these papers in your hand?

JULIAN.

King Roderick, I have served you faithfully ;
 With no eye service, but as befits the subject
 Of a much mightier king than you—myself.
 And if the hour should come—which heaven
 forbid!—

When to that mightier monarch it may seem
 More worthy to oppose you than to obey,
 I from that moment am your enemy.
 My power, my present place, I hold from you :
 And these are yours, and while my honour stands
 Shall not be used against you. For the rest,
 I cannot stoop to answer every charge
 Which those befriended by me in the past,
 Ever our bitterest foes, may choose to bring ;
 Nor will I answer. If an upright life
 Make us not fearless with our fellow men,
 'Twere better to do evil ; and my life
 Has not been passed in secret, gracious king,
 But openly, and in sight of men.
 If you mistrust me, take my place away,
 Bestow it on a worthier. 'Twere dishonour
 To answer this vile wretch. I will not speak.

SISABERT.

(rising in his place)

Great monarch, that which rankles most with men,
 Injustice, prompts me now. A baser motive
 No doubt will be assigned. The late king's son,
 The jealous crowd will say, seeking to avenge
 His father's banishment and untimely death,
 With loss of his own honours, would make strife

Between his uncle Julian and the king.
 Let them say what they will. Lord Julian teaches
 That honesty regards the praise of men
 And their opinion as a thing of naught,
 And holds it a great gain when doing good
 To be accounted evil, undignified
 To explain a doubtful action. I ask, how better
 If he were guilty could he cloak his fault
 Than by assuming such an air as this—

(Murmurs of approbation from the NOBLES.)

Refusing to be questioned, owning allegiance
 To some strange king, himself, chosen perhaps
 As being greater than all earthly kings
 At present throned. *(Laughter and applause.)*

No doubt he's innocent ;

But so are we, the other peers of Spain ;
 Yet we are watched, our children kept from us
 As hostages at court, while he alone,
 Who holds our lives in fee, may come and go,
 Unquestioned and unchecked ; and if by chance
 Some doubt should rise, may flout his lawful king,
 Refusing to be questioned. What I seek
 In justice is that Julian shall be treated,
 Despite his high renown, as one of us ;
 Not like some mighty god who sits immune
 Above temptation and regard of man.

(Great applause from the NOBLES.)

RODERICK. Look you, Lord Julian, what a strange complexion
 Your conduct bears in sight of other men.

*(JULIAN makes no answer, and quietly folds his
 arms.)*

Why are you silent ?

JULIAN.

If those other men
 Be relatives and foes, an angel's answer
 They soon would wrest to evil. These vile plotters
 Abuse your ear, great king ; and as for me,
 I did not side with them, these relatives,

In years gone by when Witiza was king
 And you Don Roderick. I cannot stoop
 To cringe and flatter, but my very life,
 My fortunes and my daughter, king, are yours
 For any honourable use. My pride
 Forbids me stoop to answer such as he,
 A forger and imposter, in the pay
 Of these my—relatives. Apart from him
 Use any means to test my loyalty.

SISABERT.

(very angry)

Great king, Lord Julian will not answer charges
 Against himself, yet scruples not to bring them
 Recklessly, wildly, against other men. *(Applause.)*
 Beware lest he, a servant in times past
 To my dead father, his own brother-in-law,
 Whose banner he forsook, a second time
 Will sell his king—no doubt with holiest motives,
 Serving that higher king, which is—himself.

(Laughter and acclamation.)

RODERICK.

Lord Julian, hear me! I appeal to you,
 That Julian I have always known, who prizes
 In this most pompous, vain and vulgar world,
 Perfection, which is God, and general good
 Above all private gain and happiness;
 Who would far sooner live o'erwhelmed with grief
 In sorrow's quicksand, than by sinking wilfully
 An inch in his own eyes procure relief.
 Believe me, obstinacy is a foible
 Of narrow virtue. Answer, as you can,
 These grievous charges. You owe it to us all;
 You owe it to yourself, who being placed
 In power and trust above all other subjects,
 Must surely stand in spotless reputation
 Unchallenged by the world.

FLORINDA.

(imploringly, clinging to her father)

Dear father, speak!

Dispel these idle charges as a cloud
 Of noxious flies are scattered by the wind.

- JULIAN. (to FLORINDA)
Be silent, girl!
- FLORINDA. (addressing RODERICK) O Sire, I pray you, hear me!
- JULIAN. Are you so quickly won to side with them
Against your father?
- RODERICK. By your leave, Lord Julian.
- JULIAN. I am her father, Sir.
- RODERICK. And I her king.
- FLORINDA. Forgive me, father; if I disobey,
It is in your behalf. Most gracious king,
Could I express the love and loyalty
Which breathe from every action of his life,
Who brought me up to love and worship you,
Singing your praises daily in my ears
As first of men, pattern of Christian kings,
You could not question his integrity.
'Tis true I am his daughter, a mere girl,
Who plead in his behalf. My testimony
Has little weight to win your confidence;
But if my life laid down could furnish proof
Of my true statement, gladly would I die.
- RODERICK. Lord Julian, I have loved you, honoured you
Above all other men. Year after year
My nobles murmured, saying that the subject
Grew greater than his king; until at length,
Far more to still the rancour of their tongues
Than in mistrustfulness, I summoned you
To test your loyalty; and you disdain
To answer, though a definite accusation
Is levelled at you, offering me instead
Your life, wealth, daughter, which you say are
mine.
I take you at your word. Leave her with me,
According to our custom. (JULIAN starts.) You
alone
Of all my nobles have no child at court.

JULIAN. My only child! Is this my recompense
 For years of service, when the night of age
 Is closing round my path? Would you transplant
 My tender sapling here in stranger soil,
 Now in her time of youth when most I thought
 To bind her to me; in that budding season
 When our affections are most easily swayed
 By sport of outside influence?

RODERICK. O, Count Julian,
 You seek some other test of loyalty;
 You offer me your wealth, your child, your life.
 Are these mere words, hollow and meaningless,
 Which you withdraw as soon as they are brought
 To any test of action? Hitherto,
 In deference to your lonely situation
 And many sorrows, I have overlooked
 An else unvarying rule—with this result.
 Henceforward in behalf of all my subjects,
 And most of all, yourself, I have decided
 To treat you like the rest. She being here
 No man will dare to doubt or question you.

FLORINDA. Ah, dearest father, I will give my life
 To mend the breach that enmity has made
 Between your loves.

JULIAN. *(to RODERICK, after an obvious struggle)*
 I bow to your command.
 Against my will I leave her, king, with you.
 O guard her well! She has a noble nature,
 A golden bent of kindness and of love,
 But is most ignorant. Should she come to harm,
 God may forgive you, but I never will.

RODERICK. *(with much dignity)*
 A maid of honour, nearest to the queen!
(Movement from the QUEEN.)
 She cannot come to harm.

*(He extends his hand to JULIAN, who somewhat
 haughtily kisses it.)*

SISABERT. (*aside to QUEEN*) You hear that, Madam.
A maid of honour, nearest to the queen !
That must not be.

QUEEN. And shall not.
(*She is rising angrily, when SISABERT with a persuasive gesture stops her.*)

SISABERT. Madam, forbear !

FLORINDA. Will you not kiss me, father ?

JULIAN. O my child,
I charged you to be silent e'er we came,
And on that understanding brought you here ;
Yet in despite of me and my command
You chose to speak, giving my character
As if I lived upon the praise of men.
There is one virtue that a soldier prizes
Above all shows of love—obedience.

(*He kisses her coldly.*)

(EXIT JULIAN. FLORINDA follows him instinctively as far as the door, and then looks over the battlements silently controlling her grief. The QUEEN is handed down from the throne by RODERICK and curtsseys to him. EXEUNT QUEEN and HER SUITE. At a sign from RODERICK the SOLDIERS disperse the CROWD, and the rest bowing retire, leaving on the stage only URBANO, PELISTHES, SISABERT and the immediate ATTENDANTS of the KING.)

RODERICK. (*aside to URBANO*)
Urbano, it were best the princes go
To join our army in the Guardialete.
The late king's party daily grows apace
In insolence and power.

URBANO. Most gracious king,
The reinforcements march this afternoon.
My prayer is answered. Send them hence this day.
The safety of the state demands their absence.

- RODERICK. (to SISABERT)
 Prince Sisabert, your spurs are yet to win,
 Yours and your brother's. Popularity
 Should rest on acts not accidents. To-day
 Your chance has come, and you will both depart
 To Xeres with the troops. Men are not made
 To lose their lives in pleasure. Get you gone
 Immediately!
- SISABERT. (aghast) You do not mean to-day!
- RODERICK. I mean this very hour.
- SISABERT. Most gracious king—!
- RODERICK. Young prince, no answer! I your king command,
 And, without question, you will both obey.
- (EXIT SISABERT. *The KING is going out with the ATTENDANTS when he sees FLORINDA standing alone, a figure of despair. Motioning to the rest to withdraw, he goes to FLORINDA.*)
- RODERICK. O lady, it is useless to lament!
 There's nothing in the world is worth our tears.
 Thinking to overwhelm your father's foes,
 In love I summoned him. He would not speak,
 And thus compelled me to appear unkind.
- FLORINDA. It is not for that cause that I am sad.
 (*With great emotion.*)
 No human love will cheer him on his way,
 A journey lonely as the road to death,
 With none but dogs to greet him at its close.
- RODERICK. (*surprised*)
 Are you so dear to him?
- FLORINDA. (*shrinking at the question and shaking her head sadly*)
 He needs me, Sir.
 His heart was broken by my brother's death,
 And his affections, hopes and happiness
 Lie buried in the tomb. I hoped with time
 To win his heart and make him less alone.

- RODERICK. *(bitterly)*
To win a heart ! Far easier win the world.
Ah ! those who seek for love shall never find.
- FLORINDA. My king, you cannot know his need of love.
The whole world thrills to you—he is alone.
- RODERICK. 'Tis love alone that makes us not alone
In this brief world where each must die alone.
Your father, child, is richer far than I.
Believe me, for the love of one such heart
I would exchange my kingdom for his rock,
And count myself most happy. *(Pause.)* Years ago
I saw you in your stronghold when the Moors
Laid siege to Ceuta. Then with childish fear
At sound of my approach you swooned away.
I tax your memory further than I should :
You were a child.
- FLORINDA. 'Twas when you brought the queen
In triumph, rescued from the cruel hand
Of Abdulasis. Never while I live
Shall I forget the glory of those days.
- RODERICK. Yes, those were times of triumph when of old
I rode to battle by your father's side.
- FLORINDA. *(with glowing enthusiasm)*
It seems but yesterday—the long suspense,—
They told me all was lost ; small fear had I—
And then the hurrying of a thousand feet
As cowards in wild confusion took to flight :
But when hoarse clamour drowned the stormy sea,
And brave men weeping bore you to our home,
Although I swooned away it was not fear :
My heart shouted for joy—" the king, the king ! "
- RODERICK. *(meditatively)*
The king ! It was a kingdom long ago,
But soon the splendour sank to starless night.
Enthusiasm's fitful flame went out—
It never burns for long—each sought his own.
Your speech recalling thoughts of happier days

Has cheered the winter darkness of despair,
 And if I dared to listen, in my heart
 Your voice might waken hope.

FLORINDA.

Most gracious king,
 When all the voices of the woods are mute
 Save one poor thrush, we listen.—Your pardon, Sir!—
 I fear I speak too freely.

RODERICK.

(who appears lost in thought) Ah, child, child!
 If such a voice had sounded through my youth,
 Long since we might have triumphed o'er our foes,
 And swept all opposition from the world.

*(ENTER the QUEEN, hastily, attended by
 JACINTHA and ORMESINDA. When she sees
 FLORINDA, with a haughty gesture, she moves
 indignantly away. RODERICK follows her.
 FLORINDA goes aside with the MAIDS.)*

QUEEN.

You wrong me past all patience, all restraint!
 The princes ordered hence without a word,
 Without a moment's warning! Do not think
 That I will tamely cringe to your decrees!
 The right to choose my ladies rests with me,
 My one prerogative, and I refuse,
 Say what you will, I utterly refuse
 To take this traitor's child.

RODERICK.

What mean you, Madam?
 Your speech amazes me.

QUEEN.

It is provoked
 By your most cruel actions. First you chose
 To insult me publicly in face of all
 Your gaping court, demanding what you knew
 I would not, could not grant—to take this girl,
 This traitor's offspring to my inmost heart;
 And now, in feeble spite, to punish me
 For seeming to demur, you send away
 The princes and their suite; who since they came
 Have introduced a gleam of cheerfulness
 To light this hateful prison where we dwell.
 A poor revenge!

RODERICK. Since as your husband, it is ever vain
To seek obedience from you, in despair,
As king I must command. She must remain,
Treated with every honour that befits
Her name and station.

(ENTER URBANO followed by the PRINCES and
their Suite.)

URBANO. (*bowing*) May it please you, Sir,
The princes beg for leave to say farewell.

(RODERICK signifies assent and the PRINCES
approach.)

RODERICK. Princes, farewell! I who dethroned your father
Give you a father's blessing. Go!—proclaim
By loyal service that old strife is dead;
That henceforth all Iberia as one man
Unites to drive the invaders from our fields,
And send them, scattered, to Arabia.
Bid farewell to the queen.

(SISABERT advances to the QUEEN, and while
EDDA is bowing over RODERICK'S hand, says
quickly, aside.)

SISABERT. Count Julian's steward
Will bear our messages. (*Satirically.*) Madam,
farewell!

(RODERICK taking FLORINDA'S hand and kissing
it.)

RODERICK. Lady, with joyous greeting to our court
And to our hearts, we welcome Julian's child.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I. *The Queen's Garden. A Terrace. Below lies a gorgeous flower garden with a river beyond. In the background the MAIDS OF HONOUR sit spinning, FLORINDA among them. In the foreground ORMESINDA sits apart. ENTER JACINTHA hastily.*

JACINTHA. (to ORMESINDA)
The queen is beside herself at what I told her.

ORMESINDA. The more fool she.

JACINTHA. I knew that our ice king would thaw.

ORMESINDA. Thaw! The Equator would not thaw him. The poor man strives by kindness and courtesy to atone for the queen's intolerable treatment. Why should the queen object to this? She does not care enough for her husband to be jealous of him.

JACINTHA. But she would give her eyes to revenge herself on him and Florinda. Hush!

(ENTER *the QUEEN*. JACINTHA *hastily joins the others*.)

QUEEN. (*sinks on a seat, weeping*)
Laugh me to scorn; play wanton with the king
Before my very eyes! Tale-bearer and spy!
I will not bear it. May I die in torments
If they shall treat me thus.

ORMESINDA. Why should they, Madam?
Assert yourself. I would not be so meek
For all the world contains, were I a queen.

QUEEN. Yes, and I will assert myself. This devil
Who sits apart devouring all we say,
Her baby eyes casting reproachful glances
On me, and looks of pity on the king—
This puling hypocrite shall go hence this day.

Jacintha tells me that she spends long hours
 Alone with him, this Joseph, who would bar me
 From human intercourse. Go, summon her!

(ORMESINDA goes over to FLORINDA, who
 approaches the QUEEN and curtsseys.)

QUEEN.

Madam, the cause is obvious why the king
 Compelled me to receive you. Other men,
 In humbler station keep their mistresses
 And lawful wives apart. This crowning wrong
 He chooses to inflict, and openly
 Makes love to you in presence of my court.
 He tired of me long since, and I am callous
 What may take place in private; but stay here
 While I am called his queen, you shall not. He
 May cast me into prison, or take my life:
 My spirit is free. The wretched and the wronged
 Have this last refuge 'gainst calamity.

FLORINDA.

Madam, alas! What evil I have done
 I know not, which incurred your enmity
 From the first moment of my coming here.
 A frightful charge like this should not be made
 In such gross terms against the meanest wench,
 And I am Julian's daughter, left with you
 In your protection by the king's command.

QUEEN.

I need no answer, girl. Go to the king,
 For he rejoices in your speech, not I.

FLORINDA.

And tell him what? Repeat this monstrous charge,
 Most shameless, most unfounded, which you bring
 Against the noblest man in all the world.

(She weeps.)

QUEEN.

These guilty tears you shed are for the king.
 I ask you on your honour and your conscience
 Dare you deny you love him? (Pause.) Can you
 say
 You love him not? (Pause.) Ah! strangely silent
 now!
 The answer which so glibly came of late
 Now freezes on your lips.

FLORINDA.

Madam, I go
As you command me. I will seek the king
And beg him on my knees to send me hence,
To free me from a shame unbearable.

(EXIT FLORINDA.)

QUEEN.

(to ORMESINDA)
Insulted, slighted, scorned!

ORMESINDA.

Forget your grief.
The prince's messenger has lately come
With others in his train.

QUEEN.

Go, summon him!
He comes in my despair to comfort me.

*(The STEWARD is ushered in, followed by
ABDULASIS disguised as a fortune-teller, with
HASSAN as his servant bearing a pack.
STEWARD prostrates himself. ABDULASIS
remains in the background. The QUEEN
motions to the LADIES to withdraw. EXEUNT
LADIES.)*

QUEEN.

Speak, fellow!

STEWARD.

May it please you, glorious queen,
I bring you tidings from Prince Sisabert.
With all his heart he greets your majesty;
Commends this packet to your gracious hands
Wishing you endless health and happiness;
*(He hands the QUEEN a packet, which she puts down
listlessly.)*

And further—to beguile a tedious hour
He sends with me a great astrologer,
With letters of safe conduct—a fortune-teller.

QUEEN.

(looking with some interest at ABDULASIS)
Knows he the past and future?

STEWARD

Yes, dread Queen.
The man is a magician; and he comes
Bearing rich store of wondrous merchandise—
Elixirs which ensure perpetual youth,

With many other drugs and simples rare
 Culled out by hoary wizards in times past ;
 These, with profoundest humbleness, he begs
 Grace to display before your majesty.

QUEEN. I place but little credence in this trash,
 But will not slight the prince from whom he comes.
 Let him approach.

HASSAN. (*aside to ABDULASIS*) Most mighty lord, beware !
 You will be recognised !

ABDULASIS. (*to HASSAN*) Silence, thou fool !

(*The STEWARD and HASSAN draw near to the
 QUEEN. STEWARD and HASSAN prostrate
 themselves. ABDULASIS remains standing at
 a little distance.*)

QUEEN. (*to ABDULASIS*)
 Come hither, Sir ! You know the past and future.

(*ABDULASIS remains with averted face muttering
 to himself.*)

HASSAN. The spirit moves him strangely, most dread queen.
 Some secret matters he would fain impart
 In private to your ears.

(*The QUEEN motions to STEWARD and HASSAN
 to withdraw. They go up stage and remain
 leaning over the parapet of the terrace. HASSAN
 as he passes ABDULASIS, whispers.*)

HASSAN. May Allah keep you !

QUEEN. Tell me the past, that I may form some notion
 Of what supernal prescience may be yours
 Who claim to know the future.

ABDULASIS. Queen of Roderick,
 A Moorish chieftain loved you in times past,
 Yearned for your beauty, even Musa's son ;

(*Stifled exclamation from the QUEEN who sits as
 if spellbound.*)

You spurned him. He made war on you and seized
you ;

(with increasing passion)

If by vile treason he had not been betrayed

He would have won you to him body and soul.

QUEEN.

(scarcely articulating)

How dare you ! *(He uncovers his face.)*

(Drawn out.) Abdulasis !

ABDULASIS.

(firmly and sternly)

Silence !

I hold you at my mercy. Sisabert

Has told me of your plot to kill the king.

*(Throughout the following the QUEEN sits in
horror as though fascinated by a snake.)*

QUEEN.

Kill ! 'Tis a lie.

ABDULASIS.

(producing papers) In your handwriting, queen ?

These papers which I hold from Sisabert

Tell all.

QUEEN.

(to herself) A shameless traitor !

ABDULASIS.

Did you suppose

Because you spurned me once, that Abdulasis

Had passed out of your life ? How strange is fate !

How little did I think that such a chance

Would be vouchsafed to me ; that by your means

I might with safety meet you face to face

Here, in the stronghold of my enemy.

The past and present are that I love you ;

The future is that you shall love me, queen.

It is your fate and mine.

QUEEN.

(as if in a nightmare) Most loathsome wretch,

With all my body and mind and soul I hate you !

ABDULASIS.

You tired of Roderick. The young fool, Sisabert,

The puny braggart who has won your love,

Whom you would place upon your husband's
throne,

'Twas he who told me that. In idle sport

I journeyed here to see the ravages
 Ten years had made upon your youth and beauty.
 I find you fairer, lovelier than before.
 Women like you grow younger with the years.
 'Tis those who live with you grow old ; their heart's
 blood

Is your elixir of perpetual youth.

(Blazing out with increasing passion.)

And that eternal freshness will I win ;

Thy coldness will I conquer ; in those blue veins

So icy now, shall flow a liquid fire.

Hide where thou wilt—beneath the shell-strewn
 floor

Of ocean, in the sulphurous womb of earth,

Or fiery centre of profoundest hell,

I'll track thee out and seize thee ; drag thee forth

And in thy quivering flesh I'll set my teeth ;

For thee I pant. Turn not that head away :

Its liliated splendour mocks me, and its pride

Burns like hell fire. *(He gradually approaches.)*

Be scorned by thee, cold queen,

I will not. Ah ! What care I for my life—

So close—let Roderick slay me—I will seize thee—

I'll bear thee hence—

(Suddenly springs close to her with tiger-like ferocity.)

Thou must and shalt be mine.

(With a sudden change he falls on his knees sobbing.)

I love thee, queen, I love thee !

*(As ABDULASIS kneels, the QUEEN'S look of
 helpless fascination changes to one of bitter
 scorn.)*

QUEEN.

(shouting)

Help, O, help !

*(The QUEEN swoons. ENTER ORMESINDA
 hurriedly. With a loud scream she cries.)*

ORMESINDA.

Help, help !—the queen !

*(The MAIDS OF HONOUR rush in shrieking.
 HASSAN forcibly drags ABDULASIS away.)*

HASSAN.

My dreaded lord, you must !
This is merely folly and madness ! Come away !

(ABDULASIS resists. In the struggle he drops the papers. Then HASSAN, by sheer force, drags him away. EXEUNT ABDULASIS and HASSAN through garden. As the STEWARD is hurrying off, SOLDIERS ENTER and seize him. OTHERS prepare to follow ABDULASIS.)

QUEEN.

very faintly)

Stay, I command you ! The maids mistook my cry.
'Twas but the summer heat caused me to swoon.
The man meant well. Let him depart in peace.

(With a peremptory gesture she indicates to STEWARD to come quite close to her, which he does reluctantly.)

(in a low voice)

Go tell your lord, the villain Sisabert,
I banish him for ever from my thoughts.
I know not if 'twas he or Moorish gold
That drew you into this conspiracy.
Go ! wretched creature, and may infamy
And endless hunger dog you till you die.

(The QUEEN turns to her LADIES. As the STEWARD shrinks away he sees the papers lying on the ground. He gives a glance at the QUEEN, seizes the papers, and conceals them hastily. As he goes out he turns with a look of triumph.)

SCENE 2. *A Room in the Palace. RODERICK and EUGENIUS.*

RODERICK.

This is the cause for which I summoned you,
The help I sought. Your coming wakened hope,
To which my heart so long has been a stranger
That I have let the days and weeks run by,
Fearing lest speech should bring me back despair.

- EUGENIUS. Speak on—for speech eases the troubled breast ;
And may this comfort bring you perfect peace—
You have escaped the worst of human woe,
Your conscience all is clear. Thank heaven for
that.
'Tis better to be wronged than wrong. The worm
Of black remorse leaves you unscathed and free.
- RODERICK. Alas ! 'tis help, not comfort which I need.
- EUGENIUS. Of all the miseries that afflict mankind,
There's none more hard to comfort than this grief ;
Most easily cured and yet incurable.
- RODERICK. Use not a word that shuts all comfort out !
Incurable ! Eugenius, go to Rome
And win the holy father's dispensation
To free me from this marriage.
- EUGENIUS. Could the pope
Make an exception in the single case
Of you the Church's champion ? I entreat you
Dismiss that hope for ever from your mind :
He could not and he would not grant it you.
Your choice was free. O, mighty friend and king,
Disastrous choice it was, and yet your own.
- RODERICK. You speak of choice, you dare to call me free ?
You brought me up, a healthy, passionate boy,
Bidding me to renounce on pain of death
All wandering thought. I took you at your word,
In love with moral beauty ; purged my mind
From every evil fancy ; stilled the voice
Of wholesome Nature urging me to seek
Companionship of body, mind and soul—
- EUGENIUS. All these are lawfully obtainable—
- RODERICK. And in the plentitude of ignorance
I fell into a trap so clumsily laid
As would not have deceived the feeblest creature
With any past experience for a guide.
I fell, my thwarted nature blinding me,
And from my holy life I reaped my curse.

EUGENIUS. Speak not so rashly ! From unholy lives
Men reap more bitter curses.

RODERICK. I was ready
To bend my nature to one lawful mould,
And all the hubbub in my mind I tuned
To one sweet harmony—domestic bliss,
Having no thought or wish beyond my home :
Peace, help, companionship—'twas all I sought :
The honest meaning and the end of marriage,
And lacking these a man is most alone.
Peace—hourly fretfulness ; help—daily thwarting ;
Companionship—unceasing loneliness
With one I could not love, respect, or trust,
A tangle of moods, no woman. Yet, believe me,
Although I fear it savours of self-praise,
With all my soul I pitied her ; forgave
Wrongs blacker far than hell, thinking hard hearts
Grew soft with kindness ; tried to overcome
Obstinate indifference—'twas all in vain.

EUGENIUS. O hear me patiently ! The few must suffer
To keep those holy laws inviolate
Which work the general good of all the world,
And these are blessed martyrs. Every grief
By time and patience is made tolerable.

RODERICK. Patience and time ! You mock me with such words.
Year after year a parching desert wind
Drying the wholesome springs of energy ;
An aching void, a dungeon loneliness,
A grief renewed each day for all a life ;
No hope of change, no prospect of release ;
An open grave where flowers will never grow,
Which Time may water with forgetfulness.
Marriage was made for man, not man for marriage.

EUGENIUS. How many blessings press upon your path
Which are denied to others ! See men toil
From dawn till night in bitter penury
To win the silence of an obscure grave.

We cannot separate your flesh in twain,
 For death alone can part what God has joined.
 Behold your cross, which you must learn to bear
 With quiet resignation. The only cure
 For this heart-rending sorrow of the soul
 Is earnest prayer and trust in providence.
 Your conscience tells you that I speak the truth—
 But one right means is left us. Give me leave
 To render you that best of human aid—
 Pray for you.

RODERICK.

Go! This is the end of hope.

(He sits down wearily.)

EUGENIUS.

(his hand raised in benediction)

No, the beginning: peace be with your soul!

(EXIT EUGENIUS quietly. RODERICK sits with his head bowed on his arms. A pause. Then ENTER FLORINDA. She stands silent, regarding RODERICK with pity and love. He raises his head, and welcomes her with a smile of relief.)

FLORINDA.

Sir, do I trespass on your privacy?

RODERICK.

Even as returning sunshine ends the rain.
 You interrupt my thoughts, and they are sad.
 O stay with me awhile! You cannot think
 What help and comfort your mere presence brings;
 A breath of pure, keen air from fields of snow,
 A calm, cold hand impressed upon my brow,
 And rest, rest, rest!—Florinda, when you speak,
 I seem to wander from the prison cell,
 Into a world which never may be mine.

FLORINDA.

A favour, Sir, I must entreat of you,
 And further, that you will not question why
 I am compelled to seek it.

RODERICK.

Speak, Florinda:

There's nothing in my power I will not grant
 At your request.

FLORINDA.

(dropping on her knees) Then send me to my
 father.

- RODERICK. (*aghast*)
Your father! Would you go? You are unhappy.
(*Sigh.*)
It is not strange; yet I would give the world
To make you happy here.
- FLORINDA. I pray you, Sir,
Question me not, but give me leave to go.
- RODERICK. Child, I am powerless to grant you this.
A messenger from Calpe brings us news—
The long foretold has come to pass; the Moors
Besiege your father's fastness, and my armies
Under Pelisthes march to succour him.
- FLORINDA. O send me to him! I am not afraid.
- RODERICK. Your wish is vain, The Moors encompass Ceuta;
You could not reach your father's rock alive.
- FLORINDA. (*in great agitation*)
Send me, I pray you, to some place of safety:
I dare not, and I **must** not linger here.
Great Sir, I pray you, save me!
- RODERICK. Are you not safe protected by your king?
Is it so small a thing that we should part?
(*Pause, then with great emotion.*)
You see me hopeless. Among fruitful men
I stand condemned, and Time's oblivious waves
Beat o'er my head. A trackless waste of years,
And then the end with failure written round
Is all my future. I had grown a clod
Until your coming reawoke belief
In human truth and goodness. Will you go
And leave me now to sorrow and despair?
- FLORINDA. Alas! I come between you and the queen.
- RODERICK. The queen and I are as the poles apart.
- FLORINDA. She will not have me stay—and if she would
I could not, after what has chanced.

RODERICK.

The queen !

The queen would send you hence ! She has had all,
 Youth, hope and liberty. It is not strange
 That she should seek to tear you from my side.
 But I will see her drawn in pieces first
 'Ere she shall compass this. What said the queen ?

(Pause. FLORINDA begins to weep wildly.)

She told you that I love you. It is true ;
 I love you more than life or happiness.
 I love you. Is it strange ? Our love despised,
 The treasure of our hearts poured out in vain,
 Deceived, wronged, outraged—you, my fount of life,
 Healing and restful as a warm sea wave :—
 And I will love you ; though the heavens above
 With burning bolts o'erwhelm us, I will stand
 And yell injustice at the pitiless skies.
 No power of earth or hell shall drive you hence ;
 They shall not part us ever till we die.

FLORINDA.

My gracious lord and master, can this be ?
 Am I so dear to you ? O, ecstasy
 Beyond all utterance or the power of thought,
 Which overflows my being, in my heart
 Pants with excess of joy ! Was I a stone ?
 Could I look on unmoved and see your grief ?
 With all my soul I love you—far too well
 To wreck your life, and therefore we must part.
 There's more than love, my king. You are a man ;
 Your kingdom and its welfare count for more
 Than any private bliss.

RODERICK.

'Tis in your hands,
 For you alone can save it. 'Neath your sway
 Its barren cornfields which lie fallow now
 Might spread in rippling gold from sea to sea.

FLORINDA.

(shaking her head sadly)

My king, how easy could we cut the knots
 Which bind our lives !

RODERICK.

Then I renounce my crown,
My throne and kingdom which I cannot save
Weighed down and warped by hopeless misery.
I'll be a king no longer, but a man
Without a kingdom, free and fetterless.

FLORINDA.

Each has his kingdom, every man his throne
Which none but cowards and traitors abdicate.
Though evil triumph, you will steer straight on ;
Though fate should rain injustice round our path,
And fruitless sorrow quench our youth with tears,
They shall not bend or break us ; if success
Be fashioned out of failure, if good men
In every age have seen their fortunes fall
To seeming desperation, if such moments
Reveal the man, if he who flouts defeat
May rise and vanquish all his enemies,
Thus bravely will you battle 'gainst despair,
Thus bravely conquer. Roderick, I so love you
That living death will be as paradise
In your behalf : I love you more than love.
Ah ! you would hate me, I should hate myself
And count my love your bitterest enemy
If it could come between your life and you,
Or make you less my hero. Send me hence !
I dare not stay—a woman deep in love,
A woman unprotected, weak and frail.
My lord and king protect me ! In this world
Are any weaker found than such as I ?
My king, my hero, dare you bid me stay ?

RODERICK.

Count Julian's daughter ! Bitterness of death !
Though all my future life be misery,
And all my soul goes out in one wild cry
Against the cruel fate which maddens me ;
Though all my faith in justice and in good
Is blasted, gone, I dare not bid you stay.

FLORINDA.

My king, if any goodness guide our life,
If any pity mark the sparrow's fall,
These bitter and inexplicable griefs

Are but heaped fuel, which obscures our flame
To make it burn the brighter. We must part.

(RODERICK *kneels and passionately kisses the hem of FLORINDA'S robe. Then he clasps his hands to her as if in devotion and she kisses him on the brow.*)

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE 1. *The same as in Act I. A number of Officers are assembled.*

PELISTHES, *holding a petition in his hand, is addressing them.*

URBANO *is present. From without is heard the stir and bustle of impending departure.*

PELISTHES. This much at least is granted,—your petition
Shall be presented to our liege the king. (*Applause.*)
But if his gracious wisdom which knows best
Go counter to our hopes, your loyalty
Is proof 'gainst disappointment. (*Shouts of assent.*)
To your posts!
Make ready; I will join you on the plain.

(EXEUNT OFFICERS.)

(To URBANO.)

Our armies clamour that the king should go.

URBANO. Would that they might prevail! He pines in grief,
And since Count Julian's daughter went away
To Xeres' fortress, wrapt in state affairs
He scarcely stops to eat. But in the nights
I hear his restless pacings to and fro.
Poor soul—he is in torment.

PELISTHES. Their petition
I pray you bear to him. If any voice
May win his thoughts to action it is theirs,
The soldiers whom he loves.

URBANO. Wait here, I pray you,
And I will bring you tidings presently.

(EXIT URBANO, with petition. Pause. ENTER
TWO SENTRIES dragging in the STEWARD,
disguised, with his clothes in tatters.)

SENTRY. May it please you, Sir, this fellow, whom we found
Lurking without the palace, charges us,
On our allegiance to his majesty,
To lead him to his presence.

(PELISTHES motions to the SENTRIES to stand
aside. STEWARD falls on his knees.)

PELISTHES. What man are you ?

STEWARD. Lord Julian's former steward ;
And would my wicked tongue had been torn out
Before it wronged my master !

PELISTHES. Your motive, Sir,
For such a dastardly and fiendish crime ?

STEWARD. I did it in revenge for wrong. The count
Had charged me falsely with defrauding him,
And sent me packing. In my necessity
I fell a prey to those who seek the throne.

PELISTHES. What mean you ? Seek whose throne ?

STEWARD. (*agitated*)
You swear not to betray me ?

PELISTHES. Speak the truth,
And through my means you shall not come to harm.

STEWARD. The late king's sons and his most treacherous
brother
Are secretly in treaty with the Moors—

PELISTHES. Well, Sir ?

STEWARD. Who offer to divide the realm in twain
'Twixt Sisabert and Edda, on condition
The caliph shall be suzerain.

- PELISTHES. So you bring
Fresh accusations !
- STEWARD. Let me prove them, Sir.
Lord Julian is the hindrance to success,
And hoping to replace him in his office
By one of their own faction, the charge was made.
- PELISTHES. What proof have you of this ?
- STEWARD. These documents.
- PELISTHES. Are they the ones you brought against the count ?
- STEWARD. Those were but forgeries ; these are genuine.
If not, destroy, imprison, torture me.
But meanwhile, I beseech you, keep me safe !
I stand in peril of my life.
- PELISTHES. (*reluctantly taking the papers*) No fear
But I will keep you safe.
(*To the SENTRIES.*) Come hither, friends !
Arrest this man, and—look you—treat him well,
Whilst holding him in strictest custody.
- (*EXEUNT SENTRIES leading STEWARD. ENTER
RODERICK and URBANO.*)
- RODERICK. Pelisthes, honoured general, dearest friend,
May all good fortune smile on us, and strew
Your homeward path with roses ! I much fear
That Julian is in dire extremity.
If he should fail, our future rests with you.
- PELISTHES. Ah ! would it were with you, my gracious liege.
- RODERICK. And so it should be, if a thousand griefs
Had left my metal bright.
- PELISTHES. There is no grief
That ceaseless action will not mitigate ;
And, at the worst, our life is not our own
To waste in fruitless sorrow. Discontent
Is brother to achievement, and misfortune

Oft makes our metal current with alloy
To golden uses. If I am too bold,
I pray you pardon me.

*(A noise of trumpets and cheering is heard
outside.)*

URBANO.

My sovereign liege,
Those trumpets bid them march within the hour!

PELISTHES.

So dear a love your soldiers bear to you
That your mere presence, in spirit alive or dead,
Would be our surest pledge of victory.

RODERICK.

That being so, Pelisthes, have your way.
For good or evil I will go with you,
Even to this green world's end.

PELISTHES.

There spoke our king!
May I proclaim it from the battlements?

*(RODERICK signifies assent. PELISTHES goes
over to the battlements and shouts)*

Men of Iberia, your king himself will go
And lead his faithful troops to victory.

(Great shouting without.)

RODERICK.

(to PELISTHES)

Let every haste be made. Within an hour
I join the troops.

PELISTHES.

Right gladly I obey.

(EXIT PELISTHES.)

RODERICK.

This may be for the best. The spirit of man
For ever anchored round a grievous thought
Becomes a targe for madness and for death.
The shock of my departure may break down
Her obstinate and mad indifference.

URBANO.

Dismiss her from your mind. Believe me, Sir,
You strain your nature further than you should.
You sought the highest and are met with scorn.
Fly lower then. Revenge is in your hands!
Who will not love the king? But speak the word—

Mothers will fling their daughters at your feet.
The world will smile and heartily condone
Errors of blood, especially in a king.

RODERICK. Urbano, all my life I have steered straight,
And habit is far harder to break down,
Whether for good or evil at my age,
Than to submerge the land beneath the sea.

(Wild cheering is heard from without.)

URBANO. There's more on earth to occupy your thoughts
Than an ungrateful woman. Hark! They shout,
Your soldiers, in their joy. There is a music
May drown the thought of care. I pray you, Sir,
To show yourself in answer to that cry.

(RODERICK stands on the battlements. Deafening cheers. ENTER the QUEEN hurriedly. URBANO indicates to RODERICK that the QUEEN is there, and as the cheering subsides and the QUEEN begins to speak, URBANO bows himself off.)

QUEEN. What means that frightful din? Tell them to
cease!

RODERICK. The troops are cheering me.

QUEEN. 'Tis impudence
To make this clamour 'neath the palace walls.

RODERICK. Their loyalty is music in my ears.
I lead my troops in person and depart
Immediately.

QUEEN. *(eagerly)* High time that you should go!
Too long you have tarried here in idleness.

RODERICK. It does not grieve you, then, to part from me?

QUEEN. It is for your advantage.—Impossible
To please you! If I wept and tore my hair
It would be selfishness, when all the world
Is hanging on your absence.

RODERICK. (*appealingly*) I implore you
 Let us rule out the past and start anew !
 Wife, wife, I ask so little at your hands ;
 Not understanding, only sympathy ;
 But give me that, and I will sacrifice
 The mingling of our souls, our minds, our tastes.
 I die of hunger : hunger moves the world,
 Turning to madness when too far restrained ;
 Hunger of heart, mind, body, soul—O wife,
 Cannot you see I hunger ?

(*QUEEN makes a scornful exclamation.*)

It is for you
 That I have bound up all my span of life,
 Who taking all I have, a poisonous plant,
 Consume my soil, my sap, my atmosphere,
 Turning to bitter madness all my days,
 Until with murderous thought I cannot quell
 I wish that you were dead ; or last of hope,
 That you may be far from me when I die.

QUEEN. There spoke your heart at last ! You wish me dead.

RODERICK. And can you blame me if I wish you dead ?
 I saved your life. You won me with a lie,
 And having bound me in eternal chains
 Made all my life a curse, requiting me
 With endless, hopeless, mad indifference.
 Your death would be my life. Is it then strange
 That I should wish you either changed or dead ?

QUEEN. No doubt 'tis noble and manly to rake up
 Your generous deeds and my enormities
 Of long ago—I had forgotten them.

RODERICK. They never gave you nights of agony
 Or stamped your brow with wrinkles, never streaked
 Your hair with snow. You injured only me,
 Who count for less than nothing in your sight ;
 But I grow desperate in my misery.

(*Pause. ENTER URBANO and PELISTHES hastily, with the papers which the STEWARD gave to PELISTHES.*)

PELISTHES. Most gracious king, forgive the liberty
Of utmost haste and need.

(Handing the packet to RODERICK.)

These documents—
Should they be genuine, as I fear they may be,
The whole disposal of our fighting forces
Is altered from this very day.

*(RODERICK goes apart with the papers. ALL
watch him eagerly as he examines them.)*

URBANO. *(to PELISTHES quickly aside)* Pelisthes,
They implicate the queen!

RODERICK. What this—and this!
O, monstrous treason, base ingratitude!
(To PELISTHES and URBANO.)
Pray you withdraw awhile.

*(PELISTHES and URBANO bow low and EXEUNT.
RODERICK hands the packet to the QUEEN, who
indignantly refuses to take it.)*

RODERICK. O, treachery
Beyond imagination or belief!
You are in league with Sisabert, conspire
Against the king, your husband. You would sell
His life and kingdom to the cruel Moors,
Making the caliph suzerain—and for what?
That you may reign as queen of Sisabert?
O woman, woman, has it come to this?
Is this the end of all these bitter years?

QUEEN. *(speaking with vehement scorn)*
The end of your own folly, Roderick.
What chance had I, so young and ignorant,
With you the mighty hero, who would mould me
To be a pale reflection of yourself,
Your thoughts, ambitions, which I could not share?
For you had passed your boyhood when we met,
And knew, or might have known, before you pressed
Your burning suit upon me. 'Twas your folly
That brought me where I am. Do what you will:
I care not. But your preaching I cannot bear.

(EXIT QUEEN *weeping*. RODERICK *walks towards the battlements and stands overcome by dejection*. Pause. ENTER URBANO. *He stands for a moment regarding RODERICK with sympathy*.)

URBANO. The Fates work for us. Thus one stroke of fortune
Has healed your many sorrows—you are free.

RODERICK. Free ?

URBANO. The queen is guilty of high treason, Sir,
For which the award in every land is death.

RODERICK. And must I walk to freedom o'er her grave ?
The queen must die for this—O frightful judgment,
When all salvation of the judge demands
The prisoner's death ! After this condemnation
Could I who had killed her dwell in peace again ?

URBANO. Your kingdom is at stake, which cannot live
When you, her king, consume your strength in grief.

RODERICK. Would that Pelisthes had not found these proofs !
The plot would then have freed me. Accursèd life,
Which we prolong by ending other lives !
Accursèd world, where those who are not cruel
Must suffer cruelty ! If painless death
Had swept her from my path long years ago
It had been well for me. Cannot I escape
And gain my freedom save by killing her ?

URBANO. The welfare, nay, the safety of the state
Demand her death ; and justly she will die ;
Whilst you by this incredible good fortune
Have gained your freedom.

RODERICK. Tyranny of conscience,
Which makes whatever course we wish to follow
Suspected in our eyes ! O, for a voice,
Authoritative, final, whose mere fiat
Might guide me through this hopeless labyrinth !

(ENTER USHER.)

A slow intelligence, an unformed mind,
 With little power to frame or weigh its actions,
 With dim perceptions both of good and evil,
 Hoodwinked for the instant by a crafty villain
 Whom she abandoned knowing him : I see
 A conscience slowly struggling into life.

RODERICK. You surely cannot ask me to receive her,
 Taken red-handed in the foulest crimes
 Back to the closest relationship of life,
 Which love and trust alone make bearable !
 With her light nature all that she has done
 Would be forgotten in three days.

EUGENIUS. My king,
 If you should cause her to be put to death
 Would not this thought embitter all your life—
 “She might have mended ?” What a chance is
 yours
 To save this erring soul ! Send her away
 To some still convent, where the holy sisters
 May fan the embers of that smouldering flax,
 Until in time, it may be months or years,
 Awakened, they may give her back to you.

RODERICK. Then I should wait until eternity.
 I cannot lead your monk's life—I, a man
 In fullest health and vigour. Is this all
 Your wisdom ? Is there no alternative
 Save this of death to her or death to me ?

EUGENIUS. You are the judge ; you question should she die
 For what is lately done. I charge you then
 Blot out the past and future, fix your mind
 On this one point alone—would you forgive
 This miserable plot if you were free
 From an unhappy marriage ?

RODERICK. (*eagerly*) Yes, Eugenius,
 A thousand times. There's nothing to forgive.
 This wretched plot has failed. If I were free
 With all my being I might pity her.

- EUGENIUS. Then it is plain that you will have her die
Because you are unhappy, not for the crime
Of which she stands convicted.
- RODERICK. O priest, priest !
Remember that you speak to flesh and blood !
- EUGENIUS. It is the king I speak to, not the man ;
The representative of most high God,
Who gave the sovereign sceptre to your grasp
To wield impartially in pity and love,
Not for achievement of your private bliss.
And what are you, so deaf to penitence ?
Have you in thought been ever true to her,
At any moment have you wished her dead ?
- RODERICK. Eugenius, let this woman take her life
And set me free ! This misery makes me mad,
The wrong and strife unceasing, the sorrow of years.
- EUGENIUS. (*sternly*)
I tell you that it is impossible.
- RODERICK. You place me in extremity. Take heed !
If I am crushed the Moors will conquer Spain,
Wipe out your anchorite faith, and all for what ?
- EUGENIUS. (*slowly and with ineffable aloofness*)
We question is this action right or wrong ;
And not of its remoter consequences,
Which we may safely leave in the hands of heaven
So long as we do right. A human soul
Weighs more than all the kingdoms of the world,
More than the sun or stars.
- (From this point RODERICK becomes more excited
and eventually loses control of himself.)*
- RODERICK. O man aloof
From human feeling, you seek to drive me back
To life imprisonment ; to bind once more
The intolerable burden on my shoulders ;

To shut me from the patch of heavenly blue
That shows at length through darkness and despair.
Take your ideals, your dreams ; at any cost
I must and will be free !

EUGENIUS.

Then kill the queen,
And live your life in fullest liberty.

(*Pause. RODERICK strikes on a bell. ENTER USHER.*)

RODERICK.

Bring me my crown and sceptre.

(*To EUGENIUS.*) You have strained me
Until I break. (*To USHER.*) Summon my courtiers
here.

(*EXIT USHER.*)

I will not slay the meanest earthly creature
At your dictation : you shall not force me to it.
Why did your faction place me on this throne ?
To make my tenure here impossible ?
Was it in bitter mockery ? Can I breathe
Stifled by hopeless, endless misery ?
I cast away your chains. Preach suicide
And chastity among the lecherous Moors ;
My higher life you have quenched. At any cost
I will be free—yes, free !

(*ENTER URBANO, PELISTHES and OTHERS.*
The crown and sceptre are brought.)

Urbano, Pelisthes,
My courtiers, hear me ! See this crown of thorns,
My pride to win, my happiness to wear—
Justice and joy are wrong ; so is all strife
Against disease, discomfort, villainy,
Which we should bear as scourges of high heaven
Not seek to end. Let beasts of prey abound,
This fruitful soil become a wilderness,
That its inhabitants may feed on nuts
And meditate upon the world to come.
Let misery spawn, reckless, improvident,
And fill the earth with hunger. Bondage is best.

Let opposition cease. The all-conquering Moors
May overrun the kingdom.

(Taking the crown and sceptre.) O glittering gold
That bound my brows, and thou, earth-swaying
sceptre,

With which I made the evil-doer quake,
Villains henceforth shall triumph ; your use is gone.
Thus do I hurl you from me !—

*(he throws down the crown and sceptre. Then shouting
out wildly)* King no more,
I leave a crumbling realm to anarchy.

*(He rushes out. Surprise and consternation
prevail. Some go to the ramparts and look
over. The scene closes amidst great confusion.)*

SCENE 2. *Outside the Citadel of Xeres. Sun just going down. An
exquisite landscape with green lawns overhung by great trees
and a profusion of flowers. FLORINDA is discovered seated in
an attitude of the utmost dejection.*

RODERICK. *(outside)* Florinda, Florinda !

*(With a cry of joy she springs to her feet. ENTER
RODERICK as if in a dream, pale and with
disordered hair and dress.)*

RODERICK. Three days and nights I rode upon the wind,
But could not reach this place, which still swept by
Evading me. Incessantly I strove.
O bliss, I grasp it now ! *(He falls senseless.)*

FLORINDA.

My dearest love,
Come back to life, I love you ! O, not dead !
That heart long burdened with its bitter freight
Of unrequited love, must not stand still
Here at my feet, who yearn to comfort you.
Come back to life, my love ; you are not dead !
O joy, you are not dead !

RODERICK. (*faintly, as if seeing a vision*) Thrice happy dream
That mocks my slumber nightly! With the dawn
It fades away. This earthly paradise
Spreading in splendour towards the setting sun—
Green lawns and alleys flecked with shadowy
flowers,
And you, dear angel, kneeling by my side:
Weep not, blest shade of goodness! I have passed
Beyond avail of tears.

FLORINDA. I am no shade,
But warm and living. Roderick, look on me!
You know me, love, you know me!

RODERICK. What, you live,
My world, my hope, my bride! In this blest place
Where murmuring water and melodious birds
Mingle sweet music in the twilight air,
What peace and bliss to dwell for evermore,
Florinda, all I long for, all I love
Beside me—these are tears; weep not for me.

FLORINDA. I weep for very gladness. My dear lord
How came you here?

RODERICK. (*still half dazed*) Swiftly upon the wind.
I had to come and tell you I was free.
(*More coherently.*)
She plotted 'gainst my life with Sisabert,
Against the king her husband. She would reign
With Sisabert upon Iberia's throne,
A traitor double-dyed. (*He sinks back exhausted.*)

FLORINDA. Then you are free,
And I may win you back to happiness.
O joy too sudden! Sweet, we must not die
Whose life has just begun: we must live on.
You knew not how I loved you when black fate
Parted our lives asunder; how with each day
Of melancholy absence my great love
Grew deeper and more hopeless; how I prayed

For dreamless death. But now my peace has come :
The parching wind of sorrow is o'erblown,
And love and patience bring us peace at last.

RODERICK. There is no peace but death for those who fail.
O tyranny of fate ! I still am bound,
They bade me kill her and then come to you.
I could not be a butcher to win my world.

FLORINDA. The woman who was called your wife is dead.
The Church will free you.

RODERICK. (*with growing indignation*) Child, the blackest crimes
May be absolved, regardless of the wreck
And misery they have wrought in other lives.
But one mistake in that most pregnant matter
Where men are blindest and most prone to err,
Wherein the wisest have been most misled,
By which the most well-meaning suffer most :
And then farewell to every human thought.
They will not free me. Pitiless they stand
Upon the murderous letter of their law.
I asked for bread—they slew me with a stone,
I begged for life—they coldly bade me die.
What answer made they ? This—she is your flesh,
Her death alone can free you. Then I cast
My crown and sceptre to the empty winds
And fled from that bleak madness of despair,
Poor as the day I left my cloister cell.

FLORINDA. Because you could not slay your deadliest foe,
They dared to treat you thus ! My lord and king,
You shall not bow before such tyranny.
Are ties of flesh so holy as to outweigh
All claims of spirit ? Have plot, deceit and guile,
Condoned and sanctified by a magic rite,
An endless leave unpunished and unchecked
To work destruction in a human soul ?
Take back your crown. Life, honour—both are yours :
My heart and conscience shout that you are free,
That I am free to love you.

RODERICK.

It is vain,
For I am tied and fettered hand and foot,
Bound to a putrid corpse.

FLORINDA.

Then in the name
Of all that is most sacred, I choose the spirit
And cast the stifling letter to the winds.
As we were strong to part when shameful ties
Made all your splendid life a purgatory,
When these are swept away we must proclaim
That right and justice are the will of God,
That nothing now shall part us till we die.

RODERICK.

I dare not link that radiant life with mine.
What chance against the world ?

FLORINDA.

What honest soul
Who knows your wrong will side against his king ?
One daring righteous act wins more with men
Than endless cries for justice or redress.
But if this were not so, the smallest chance
Is in the eyes of love a certainty.
We both were bred to battle ; without fear
Have watched the dawn of many a dreadful day
Which threatened certain death before its close.
One thought is mine alone—that you are free,
One bliss—that you are mine for evermore,
One blessed hope—that I may save you still,
And lead you from despair to victory.
O love, for such a hope would I not dare
A thousand deaths, ten thousand miseries ?
Then take me, take me, Roderick : I am yours.
The woman who was called your wife is dead :
And we will teach the cold hard-hearted world
The mystery of true marriage—to be one
In mind and heart and purpose all our days,
As in love's garden side by side we grow
Like happy trees in sunshine.

RODERICK.

O sweet joy
Of this deep harmony ! Through days and nights
I hungered for thee, thirsted for thee. Gone

The aching pain which hung so many years
 About my heart. O peace, O ecstasy!
 Here in the presence of all-seeing heaven,
 Beneath this canopy of solemn stars,
 I plight with thee a troth no earthly priest
 Will consecrate. My bride, there is no need
 Of promise; all my being is one with thine,
 All thought, emotion, feeling. What are words
 But vestures which half hide and half reveal
 The burning thoughts they cover? O my wife,
 The silent planets sing our marriage song,
 The soft winds blown about the sleeping earth
 Breathe benediction o'er us; dreaming flowers
 Yield incense which ascends with our pure prayers
 Before the altar of eternal love,
 Whose temple is our hearts. May this our marriage
 Be fruitful in high thoughts and noble deeds,
 In added powers and gracious purposes
 Which grow and ripen in the light of joy;
 Till our sweet passion seize the callous world,
 And make its ebbing pulses beat anew
 With crimson tides of youth and happiness.

FLORINDA. O love, my love, I hold thee here at last;
 And I will love thee, love thee till I die.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

SCENE 1. *An Apartment in the Citadel of Xeres. Morning. Two*
 RETAINERS.

1ST RETAINER. I ask you, neighbour, who would have thought it?
 But after all, we are all alike—all mortal.

2ND RETAINER. I hope, Sir, that you don't allude to me.

1ST RETAINER. No ; to a higher than you—but we must not say it. We are poor creatures at the best of times. Well, well ! A man needs kindness and motherly care.

2ND RETAINER. If he can get it.

1ST RETAINER. He'll get it.

(*A trumpet sounds from without the Castle.*
ENTER a SERVANT from the king's apartments.)

SERVANT. What means that trumpet call ? The king would know.

(*ENTER 3RD RETAINER.*)

3RD RETAINER. A solitary horseman stands without,
 Who craves to be admitted to the king.

(*Noise of altercation without.*)

SERVANT. (*looking out*)
 By all the powers of darkness and of death,
 It is Count Julian !—Say the king has gone,
 Tell any lie, but let him not approach.

2ND RETAINER. Too late ! They have let him in.

SERVANT. Had I but known !

(*ENTER JULIAN with 4TH RETAINER.*)

JULIAN. I tell you, fellow, that the king is here.
 Then lead me to him. You will not dare to say
 That you have orders which extend to me
 To bar me from his presence.

SERVANT. (*advancing and bowing low*) Most noble count,
 The king is indisposed.

(*The RETAINERS move towards the inner door
 whispering and obviously ill at ease.*)

JULIAN. More reason then
 That I should see him and immediately.
 The news I bring may haply make him well.

SERVANT. I pray you, wait.

JULIAN. Why all this mystery,
Whispering, and the evident desire
To put me off? I will not wait—the king!

(ENTER RODERICK, who stands transfixed on
seeing JULIAN. At a sign from RODERICK
EXEUNT SERVANT and RETAINERS.)

JULIAN. If I intrude, the nature of the news
Of which I am the bearer must avail
To justify abruptness.

RODERICK. I pray you, speak them.

JULIAN. I would not send a meaner messenger,
But came myself. The long encroaching Moors
Are driven away in multitudinous flight.
Their leaders, Musa and Tarik, I compelled
To make a treaty of peace, which only waits
The caliph's signature. In the meanwhile
Tarik and Musa's son, great Abdulasis,
I hold close prisoners.

(RODERICK is silent. JULIAN ironically.)

Have I your approval,
Most gracious king, for all that has been done?

RODERICK. I thank you for your loyal services.

JULIAN. That was my news; and since my presence here
Is plainly not desired, there is no need
For me to linger. (Pause.) Does the reason hold
Why you should keep my child?

RODERICK. What shall I say?

JULIAN. Your silence and constraint—where is my daughter?

(For answer, RODERICK, after some hesitation,
with sudden decision, leads in FLORINDA from
the adjoining room.)

What mystery is this? Tell me, Florinda,
Why are you here? Where are the other maids,
The queen, your mistress?

(FLORINDA, *with a quick glance as if asking what she should say, looks down.*)

At the outer gates
Men whispering—Why are you silent, girl?
You anger me. The queen—where is the queen?

RODERICK. The woman who usurped the name of wife
In sight of reason is divorced and dead.

JULIAN. Speak not to me of reason—I am armed
And you defenceless—lest I strike you down
There, where you stand. You cannot, dare not say
You have seduced my daughter, whom I left
In your protection.

(RODERICK *holds out his hand to FLORINDA.*
She puts hers trustingly in his.)

Speak! Why are you here
Alone with her?—so stealthily alone—
Traitor and villain—I care not for your crown—
O give me strength, kind heavens, to bear this blow;
Let it not kill me ere I have discharged
The lightnings of my vengeance!
Ah God, rain down thy curses on the evil!
Let the hard-hearted who defile the earth
Die; but for me, I cannot suffer thus
While rogues and harlots thrive.
Florinda, tell me I have wronged thee! Child,
It is not true—the king has lately come—
You still are innocent.

(RODERICK *drops FLORINDA'S hand.*)

What, silent still!
Foul thief and traitor, you have forced my child!
She is innocent of this. I'll ne'er believe
Her will polluted. You have overcome
By drugs or magic, not with her consent.
Tainted in body, she is pure in mind.
There's no dishonour comes to any man
Save from himself.
(*To RODERICK.*) Draw and defend your life!

- RODERICK. I am not armed ; but if I were secure
From head to foot, and weaponed like to thee,
I would not fight with thee. Here is my heart.
Strike me and spare not ! 'Tis true I won the love
Of thy dear daughter ; true that with no rites
Save those of holiest love and fervent prayer
Breathed from pure hearts unto the mercy-seat
Of the great Father of good, I married her.
But when you know the cause for what was done—
- JULIAN. Your acts explain themselves, and you shall die.
(He approaches RODERICK and threatens him.
FLORINDA *interposes.*)
- FLORINDA. Hold, hold ! you wrong him. 'Twas not he but I
Who compassed this. It cannot be my father
To whom the inward voice is all in all,
Who dwells so far above the praise or blame
Of man that he disdains to answer kings
When fronted by false accusation ;
It cannot be my father who yet dares
To judge so rashly of his only child
That he would kill unheard his gracious king.
- JULIAN. Florinda, leave that man !
- FLORINDA. I cannot, Sir :
Although it breaks my heart to disobey,
My spirit cleaves to him for evermore.
- JULIAN. Then I have done ! *(He throws his sword on the
ground.)*
(To FLORINDA.) Henceforth for evermore
Thou art become a stranger to my blood.
I blot out all remembrance of past days,
All thoughts of girlhood and of innocent joy ;
Thou hast killed my joy, and I am with the dead.
- FLORINDA. My father !
- JULIAN. Do not dare to call me that,
Or I will curse thee !
(To RODERICK.) Lecherous, heartless villain,
Who took by force my child away from me
To your foul clutches, and dishonoured her,

The only daughter of your oldest friend,
 Taking advantage of her tender youth,
 Her innocence and ignorance of the world—
 I will not slay an undefended man.

(He moves to the door, and then turns.)

Hear me, King Roderick, thou for whom I fought,
 For whom I conquered, for whom I gave my son,
 My world, the sole horizon of my hopes,
 Wounded to death and in behalf of thee ;
 From whom I have reaped reward for years of toil
 In foul suspicion and in treachery
 So heartless and so monstrous that the world
 Of alien men will weep to hear my tale ;
 From this time forth until most wished for death
 Shall free me from this burden, all my days,
 My thoughts, my hopes, my strength, my very being
 I dedicate to vengeance. I will make
 Thy name a scorn and terror to all time,
 Thy treachery the theme of every tongue ;
 Till even the ravening winds and the deep thunder
 Shall swell the dreadful volume of thy shame
 When I, returning, drag thee from thy throne.

(EXIT JULIAN.)

FLORINDA. My father, my father !

*(She sinks on a seat, sobbing. RODERICK kneels
 beside her.)*

SCENE 2. *Centa. A hall from which a flight of steps descends to the sea. It is overhung with garlands in honour of the expected return of JULIAN and FLORINDA. TARIK and ABDULASIS (the prisoners) are discovered with HASSAN and MOORISH ATTENDANTS. TARIK is seated on a carpet. Night. Storm. ABDULASIS looks out over the waters.*

TARIK. The day is breaking. See'st thou aught save stress
 Of mighty winds contending with the waves ?

ABDULASIS. The beacon light still burns. I plainly see
 The towering front of Calpe, forest-crowned,

Beyond the foaming waters on whose back
Count Julian is embarked. Would that the waves
Might swallow him! There lies our promised land
And we are captives here!

TARIK. O murmur not
Against the will of Allah. He knows best.

ATTENDANT. (*respectfully approaching TARIK and prostrating
himself before him*)

Will you not sleep, my master?

TARIK. All the day
Is but an idle sleep for men like me
Who cannot grow to action. Get thee gone;
And may the mercy of the merciful
Send thee good slumber! Thy unselfishness
In following the fall'n fortunes of thy lord
Proclaims that I have one devoted friend
Who loves me for myself; and that is wealth
Which kingdoms cannot purchase.

VOICES OUTSIDE. A sail, a sail!
(*A sound of cheering is heard. ENTER
THEUDEMIR and several SERVING-MEN.
GUARDS lead the PRISONERS out.*)

THEUDEMIR. Count Julian's craft has reached the Water-gate.
Bring faggots; make a blaze! Though summer time,
'Tis cold as winter.

SERVING-MAN. Should we strew these roses
About the floor, or wait until she come?

THEUDEMIR. The maidens bearing baskets wait without;
Give them the flowers to scatter lavishly
Before her when she enters. Strike the bell.

(*A large bell which hangs in sight is rung. The
GARRISON ENTERS. Some bear torches. A
number of MAIDENS dressed in white—carrying
flowers and some instruments of music. A
cheering is heard below which is suddenly
silenced.*)

Now for such hearty greeting as befits
The followers of a mighty conqueror.

(Music. ENTER a number of SERVANTS bearing torches. Pause. Then JULIAN alone. Loud cheering. He stands as if in a dream. Silence, save that the music continues.)

JULIAN. What means this tumult, and the maddening sound
Of music? Let it cease. Take down those garlands!
This is no village playground, but a fortress.
To your posts!

THEUDEMIR. Forgive me, Sir; the fault was mine.
Our hearts were filled with joy that your dear
daughter—

JULIAN. You know not what you say. Get ye to bed!
*(EXEUNT OMNES. As the last are going out,
RE-ENTER TARIK between TWO GUARDS.
JULIAN signifies to Guards to withdraw.)*

JULIAN. Tarik!

TARIK. A captive and your ancient foe
Would bid you welcome,

JULIAN. Better far than friend.
You never broke my heart, betrayed my trust,
Forsook me in my sorrow.

TARIK. O that fate
Had made you of the faithful! Then your acts
Would shine in splendour to the end of time.

JULIAN. Faith, glory, reputation—these are dreams
And flatteries of death. We puny men
Pile up mere sandheaps on an infinite shore,
Which the returning water smooths away
Until no trace is left—so fare our deeds,
Both good and evil. We who seek to rise
Above the sensual slime, but build on air,
And when our bubble throne seems most secure
It bursts and we are broken.

(ENTER an OFFICER.)

OFFICER.

Sir, a messenger
From Lord Pelisthes, following you post haste,
Demands immediate audience.

JULIAN.

Lead him in.

TARIK.

The chains which check my freedom seem as air
To those which weigh your spirit down. Good
night.

(EXIT TARIK.)

*(The storm rises higher. The OFFICER goes out
and returns ushering in URBANO, who is
armed and with his vizor down. At a sign
from JULIAN the OFFICER withdraws. URBANO
lifts his vizor.)*

JULIAN.

Urbano! In whose interest come you here?

URBANO.

Pelisthes and the nobles bade me bear
This answer to your summons, begging them
To side with you against their lawful king—
They all are men of honour, and they will not.

(Movement from JULIAN.)

They further bade me in King Roderick's name,
Since you have ceased to serve the king, demand
That you deliver straightway to my hands
Your seals of office.

JULIAN.

Far too moderate!

I will go bow before King Roderick's throne,
And thank him for the honour he has done me—
That, being so great a monarch, he should deign
To look upon my daughter.

URBANO.

Most noble count,
Our hearts bleed for you; but the sovereign cause
Which led Pelisthes and the rest of us
To disregard all private rights and wrongs,
Is our distracted country. Should we become
A prey to civil discord, the wakeful Moors
Will fall upon us. Shall ten thousand men

Groan for the wrongs of one? Shall innocent
women

Be ruined to avenge one woman's guilt?—
And yet if you knew all—

JULIAN. *(with a warning gesture)* I know enough.
Urbano of the oily tongue! I know you well,
And why they sent you—to smooth matters o'er.
You are his friend, enjoy his confidence;
Your coming is an insult.

URBANO. I implore you
To pause before you lend your influence
Against your country's welfare.

JULIAN. Well done, Urbano!
You do your business well, seeking to sow
That scruple in me. You but waste your time.
Like an omnipotent god, who in pursuit
Of his remoter and most glorious ends
Permits the earthquake, famine, pestilence,
Torturing disease, heartbreaking poverty,
Blindness and madness—all the ghastly evils
Which stand between him and his final will,
Thus move I forward to my destined end.
Summon the garrison—you are master here.
You do not stir! Then I will summon them.

*(JULIAN begins to toll the bell. The GARRISON
comes pouring in half dressed, and at a sign
from JULIAN, remains standing, silently
expectant.)*

JULIAN. *(pointing to URBANO)*
Behold your leader from this day!—My soldiers,
You see me now a traitor to that cause
For which we fought in many a tented field,
Shedding our blood like water. The greatest
sacrifices
Are always made in vain. Your lord and master
Demands my resignation.

(Murmurs, which spread and grow.)

What have I done
 To merit this? Ask not; your loyalty
 Should be above such questions, seeing you serve
 A king so noble. True I gave my life
 To set Don Roderick on Iberia's throne
 And keep him there; my relatives; my fortune
 Poured out in torrents; my beloved son,
 And all my fair hopes of posterity;
 My very name which now will die with me.
 But yet I murmur not. The grievous crime
 For which I am deprived of my command
 Is of so monstrous and so gross a kind
 As justifies extremest punishment.
 Tell it, my lord Urbano!

(URBANO is silent.)

A SOLDIER.

He cannot speak!
 Long live Count Julian! We will follow him!
 (Cheers.)

CROWD.

(shouting)
 Speak, Julian!

JULIAN.

One comfort yet remained to me—my daughter,
 Last of my line, sweet blessing of my age.
 The king in his great wisdom heaped on me
 Undreamt of calumnies, and took my child—(pause)
 Because he could not trust me—he! (Pause.)
 Great God, I cannot speak!

(JULIAN pauses, choked with emotion.)

CROWD.

Florinda! Where is she?

JULIAN.

He took my child,
 And won her to his lust—our gracious king—
 (A storm of indignation, which grows.)
 Defiled the innocent mirror of her mind,
 To passion melted all her purity,
 Whilst I was battling for him far away.
 And when I went to Xeres Citadel
 Bearing him news of our great victory,
 I found them there together, yes, O God,

Unarmed, defenceless, and I did not slay them.
 This is the cause for which I am deprived
 Of my command. I gladly lay it down
 And my allegiance with it. Both are gone.
 Now freed from obligation I may speak.
 Say, will you have this Roderick for your king?

ALL. We will not!

(Tremendous uproar.)

URBANO. In King Roderick's name I speak—
(Renewed uproar.)

JULIAN. Comrades and friends, I charge you, spread straight-
 way
 This news among the troops. Should they decide
 To follow me—

VOICES. They will! To a man they will!
(Cheering.)

JULIAN. Then we will march, men flushed with victory,
 To drag this thief and villain from his throne.
(Scene ends amid great confusion.)

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

SCENE 1. JULIAN'S Camp on the banks of the Guadalquivir. The river flows at the back. TARIK and ABDULASIS guarded by SENTRIES. The murmur and confusion of a large encampment is heard, which increases as the scene proceeds.

TARIK. My noble Sir, but school your soul to patience,
 Be master of your thoughts.

ABDULASIS. Philosopher!
 While we sit idle, Julian makes himself
 The master of Iberia. Could we have sent

Our comrades tidings of their civil strife,
This rupture and division might have turned
To our advantage.

(Confusion without. ENTER HASSAN.)

ABDULASIS. Hassan, what news? Is Julian safe in Xeres?

HASSAN. Julian is routed. Half his troops are dead,
The rest are scattered in inglorious flight.

ABDULASIS. It cannot be! You must be mad to say it!

HASSAN. The king swept all before him, with his forces
United as one man. There's more to come.
Cardinal Archbishop Oppas, the late king's brother,
Stirred up by Sisabert, has won the pope
To place a ban upon Iberia's kingdom
Should Roderick prove victorious. By this means
Dissension will be sown among the troops,
Who, torn between their conscience and their king,
Will grow to slackness.

ABDULASIS. *(placing a jewel round his neck)* My best of news-
bearers!

(Shouts and disturbance without.)

HASSAN. *(to ABDULASIS, sinking his voice)*
The queen who followed Julian all the day
In expectation of his victory,
With headlong haste fled from the stricken field.

ABDULASIS. *(to TARIK)*
Our time has come! Count Julian, in despair,
Will buy our aid by any means he may.

TARIK. He is too honourable.

ABDULASIS. The sense of wrong,
A fixed idea, which haunts him day and night
Like an impetuous craving unappeased,
Will sting him into madness. He is ours.
Offer the caliph's aid, twelve thousand men
To swell his vanquished army. In return

Our liberty ; and if he should prevail,
He may elect whatever king he will,
So long as, paying tribute every year,
They hold the caliph for their suzerain.

(General shouting.)

TARIK. First let me ascertain with my own ears
If this report be true.

(EXIT TARIK.)

ABDULASIS. Thus do I spread my net. But, by the tomb
Of our most holy prophet, it is I
Will be Iberia's king. As Tarik thrives,
So grows he in my father's jealousy ;
And he and Julian shall be stepping-stones
O'er which I stalk to my majestic ends.

(Great noise outside, followed by cries of " Save yourselves who can ! " The SENTRIES rush out excitedly. Then shouts of " The queen," followed by a stampede. The QUEEN is borne on to the stage in a litter. As she comes in sight of the audience she is surrounded by mutinous SERVANTS who compel the bearers to put her down.)

QUEEN. What means this mutiny ? Slaves, bear me on !
You will not fly ! What, leave your queen in
peril !

Is chivalry all swallowed up in fear ?

*(SERVANTS crowd round her more menacingly.
She shrinks away.)*

1ST SERVANT. We hate you !

2ND SERVANT. You she-devil, your day is done !

3RD SERVANT. Let go ! I'll have that jewel from your neck !
(He seizes the jewel, and tries to wrench it from her.)

QUEEN. Help, help !

SERVANT. Yes, cry for help. 'Tis our turn now !

- ABDULASIS. (*springing on him and striking him*)
Down, dog; down, traitor!
(*He beats him. HASSAN helps to disperse the OTHERS. Clamour without. They fly, pursued by HASSAN.*)
- QUEEN. Will no one help me?
- ABDULASIS. I am here, my queen.
- QUEEN. Far sooner would I beg to them for mercy
Than look on thee. Most loathsome beast, away!
With all my soul I hate you!
- ABDULASIS. (*passionately*) Thou art my fate,
And thou must love me. I will make thee queen;
A queen indeed; no other wife but thee;
And we will spend each day in new delights,
And all our nights in bliss and revelry.
(*He almost enfolds her in his arms.*)
- QUEEN. I hate you!
(*Striving to release herself, struggling desperately, she scratches him.*)
I will bite you!
(*He draws her closer to him.*)
- ABDULASIS. (*with great vehemence*) How many times
Will such a hatred lead to burning love?
And so it shall with thee.
- QUEEN. Never! Help, help!
(*Beating him with her fists.*)
- ABDULASIS. Yes, call for help until thy throat strings crack!
(*Releasing her and looking into her eyes boastfully.*)
There's no one who will help thee now but me.
- QUEEN. You! (*Turning from him with contempt.*)
Wretched coward!
- ABDULASIS. (*blazing out*) You dare not call me so!
- QUEEN. (*rapidly with vicious anger*)
I see you now in ignominious flight

Before a handful of King Roderick's men.
You coward and negro!

ABDULASIS. (*with uncontrollable rage*) You know those words
are false.

Be careful! I will drag you by the hair,
And print my finger nails upon your throat.
You know those words are false.

QUEEN. I know they are true.
Son of a slave base born, whose timid thoughts
Dare not advance above a chamber wench.

ABDULASIS. Devil though thou art, they dare advance to thee!
(*Moving towards her with blazing eyes.*)
Say, wilt thou love me?

QUEEN. Hold!

ABDULASIS. (*almost crushing her*) I will not hold.

QUEEN. Never, never, never, never! (*She strikes him.*)
Coward! (*She strikes him again.*)

I will not have your love. I hate you! Slave!
(*She strikes him in the face viciously. He stands
momentarily as if transfixed.*)

ABDULASIS. But thou shalt love me! (*Shaking her.*)

I will have thy love.

(*She makes a great effort to resist. With deliberate intention he strikes her with force. She drops at his feet huddled up with a cry of horror and pain, which turns into a paroxysm of sobbing. Great shouting is heard outside. After a momentary pause, the QUEEN gradually lifts her head looking at him, and then with a gesture and audible sign of complete surrender, she holds out her hands to him.*)

ABDULASIS. (*triumphantly*)
My bride, I will bear thee hence within my arms.
(*He carries her out unresisting.*)

SCENE 2. *Toledo. A street. On the right the door and steps of the Cathedral. Martial music. A MOB kept back by ARMED MEN is surging and swaying. ENTER the TROOPS of Roderick, which march past. Then PELISTHES on horseback, followed by the NOBLES with URBANO, and finally RODERICK and FLORINDA dressed in deep mourning. The cheering of the CROWD ceases, and a hush of expectancy supervenes. A CHILD advances and presents RODERICK with a laurel wreath. He puts it away.*

RODERICK. Not as a haughty conqueror, laurel crowned,
My children, do I come. When brothers fight
The upshot must be gloomy. It is true
Count Julian's rebel forces have been driven
Beyond the seas. Alas! he is my subject,
The father of my bride, whose tender love
Has nerved my arm to battle and victory.
Thus grief is blended with our deepest joy,
And lamentation mingles with our praise.
Let us proceed in silence to the throne
Of infinite love, and bow our hearts in prayer.

(In silence he advances up the steps of the Church, followed by the NOBLES. As he would enter, the doors are thrown open and CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OPPAS, accompanied by ACO-LYTES and CANDLE-BEARERS, comes out and confronts him. EUGENIUS follows with anguished countenance and stands beside him.)

OPPAS. Back, back, presumptuous man, nor dare pollute,
Crimson with guilt, this holy sanctuary.
You, who have put away your lawful wife
And glory in sin, shameless adulterer,
Flaunting your mistress in the public view,
This heartless woman, for whose brazen sake
You drench your land with seas of Christian blood—
Hear the pope's pleasure, in whose name I speak
For this most deadly sin you are deposed,
And his election falls on Sisabert.

Henceforward those who serve you are God's foes,
 Accursèd traitors to their lawful king.
 For such hell gapes. No blessèd sacraments
 Shall be administered to them: when they die
 Their bodies shall not rest in holy ground;
 Even as these glimmering candles are extinguished,
 So shall their souls' light sink in endless gloom.

*(The candles are blown out. A great uproar.
 The ARCHBISHOP and his SUITE return into
 the Church. The CROWD, who would follow,
 are restrained by an appealing gesture from
 RODERICK. The Church doors are closed.
 EUGENIUS, who has remained alone on the
 steps, addresses the CROWD.)*

- EUGENIUS. Men of Iberia, I am King Roderick's friend.
 There is no creature on this earth so base
 As he who leaves his comrade when mischance
 Or sorrow or sin o'ertakes him. I, a priest
 Who loved this king from childhood, love him still.
- SOLDIERS. It is a plot! The late king's relatives
 Have won the ear of the pope. King Roderick,
 hail!
 Down with the archbishop! Down with Sisabert!
(They advance threateningly towards the church.)
- RODERICK. *(on the steps)*
 My children, hear me!
- SOLDIERS. Silence! The king, the king!
(Murmurs from the crowd.)
- RODERICK. This holy man speaks well. He is my friend.
 Let me entreat you to do nothing rash
 Of which hereafter we should all repent.
- EUGENIUS. *(speaking apart with RODERICK)*
 My purpose lies in that one word 'repent.'
 The pope is pitiful; with absolution
 And public penance all may yet be well.
 O son, if I may save your soul alive!—
 I need no further bliss until I die.

RODERICK. Your absolution—it is not for me.
I will not have your pardon. Friend Eugenius,
In reason there is nothing I have done
For which I should ask pardon.

EUGENIUS. O my king,
If reason were our only guide on earth,
What monstrous crimes would follow ! The Church's
law
Outsoars all reason. There are mysteries
Deeper than our weak minds have power to gauge.
It is not strange. How short a line we cast
Into the infinite ! Contradictions there
On every side perplex us. On this earth
We are but children. We must kiss the rod,
Though its kind chastening leave us desolate,
Not break it in our disobedience :
Justice and joy lie in the world to come.

RODERICK. (*speaking to all*)
If justice count for nothing here on earth,
I will not seek it in a world to come.
I seek it here, for each long-suffering soul
Whose light is quenched by heartless tyranny,
In whose behalf my conscience cries aloud
That every plea for patience is long past,
That in revolt lies right : and such was I
Until this radiant lady saved my life
And made it fruitful once again for good.
If any here condemn us, let them go ; (*shouts*)
If any fear to fight for liberty
Against oppression, it is time to part. (*Shouts.*)
(*Noise without.*)

PELISTHES. (*to RODERICK*)
Most mighty king, the traitor Sisabert
Has landed at Almeria with an army.
The discontented flock to join his banner.
(*Movement from RODERICK.*)

But what is worse, my gracious liege, I fear
The people in the Market Place grow cold,
Both soldiers and civilians. This late bolt
Has touched their consciences.

(ENTER a MESSENGER *hurriedly*. *He kneels*.)

MESSENGER.

Most gracious king,
Count Julian in despair has joined the Moors :
A mighty army, led by him and Tarik,
Advancing quickly o'er the groaning earth,
Has reached the Guadalquivir.

RODERICK.

(*to PELISTHES, speaking aloud*) Quickly lead
Our loyal comrades to the Market Place,
And I will follow and address them. Friends,
With willing men and free alone I fight.
Once more I say—if any love his life
More than his country, let him leave us now.

(*Shouts of "No."*)

PELISTHES.

You hear the king's command. To your places !
March !

(EXEUNT the TROOPS. *While they are moving
out EUGENIUS approaches RODERICK and
kneels*.)

RODERICK.

Farewell, Eugenius !

EUGENIUS.

My dear liege ! Farewell.
Alas ! henceforward we are enemies.

RODERICK.

Farewell old times of youth, remembrance dear ;
When borne on wings of brightness, the young soul
Soared to perfection through the body's heat !
Our paths lie far apart for evermore.

(EUGENIUS *with great emotion bends over
RODERICK'S outstretched hand. Deeply moved,
RODERICK embraces him. EXIT EUGENIUS.*)

RODERICK.

Belovèd wife, the heavens grow dark above.

FLORINDA. But all is joy and gladness in our hearts ;
There is no room for sorrow or regret,
Faint-heartedness or fear. Our banner Love
Outspread before us, we will win our way
Through darkness and despair to victory.

RODERICK. Joy of my life, dear comfort of my soul !
*(They embrace. A sound of cheering and
martial music is heard.)*
Our comrades grow stout-hearted once again ;
Their loyalty reproaches our delay.
Come ! the long march awaits us and new wars.

SCENE 3. *Same as Scene 1. Beside the Guadalquivir.* SOLDIERS
and OFFICERS. *The sound of an engagement.* ENTER
PELISTHES.

PELISTHES. Comrades, our cause is lost, but we are men.
A few short moments will decide our fate.
Though we are forced to yield, our gracious king
Holds the main body and centre of our troops,
And doubtless has prevailed.
*(ENTER URBANO in great haste and disorder.
He pauses to take breath.)*
Urbano, speak !

URBANO. All, all is lost. Like hungry ocean waves
The overwhelming legions of the Moors
Swept all before their onset. Though they fell
A hundred men to one upon our spears,
Still from behind pressed on, o'er walls of dead
And dying, myriads more. All hope was gone
Ere Roderick fell wounded to death ; *(murmurs)*
and then
A panic seized our troops. A few brave men
Conveyed him from the field. The rest dispersed
Like scattered sheep, before the Moorish hosts,
Who forced them to surrender. Tarik sat
In proud elation, flushed with victory.

Then came a wonder. Crafty Abdulasis,
Placing on his own brow King Roderick's crown,
Arrested him, and in the caliph's name,
To whom these Moors bow down as to a god,
Took over all Iberia. Doubtless now
Julian will share his former leader's fate.

PELISTHES. So fare all traitors! He deserves to die,
But O, our wives, our country and our faith!

(Tumult is heard without. JULIAN, accompanied by HASSAN and a number of MOORISH OFFICERS, forces his way in.)

JULIAN. Yield in the caliph's name!

PELISTHES. I know you not
Or with what warrant you demand our swords.

JULIAN. Yet you were wont to know me.

PELISTHES. Never, Sir.
I knew Count Julian; but he was a man
Of stainless honour and a Christian knight.
I see before me now a wretched traitor,
Who sells his God, his country and his king.

JULIAN. These are mere quibbles. Yield your swords to me,
I represent the Caliph.

HASSAN. *(to JULIAN)* Softly, Sir!
Stop! I arrest you in the caliph's name.
With Tarik you conspired, using our troops,
To found a Christian kingdom here in Spain.
Behold this warrant, with the seal of Musa.

(He hands the warrant to JULIAN. SOLDIERS advance and arrest him. OTHERS draw up beside URBANO and PELISTHES.)

PELISTHES. Urbano, one small comfort yet remains—
This despicable traitor shares our fate.

JULIAN. And gladly he will meet it.

HASSAN.

Lead them on
To Xeres closely guarded. The day is won.

(EXEUNT OMNES *Left. Pause. From the Right a devoted few of his adherents ENTER carrying RODERICK on a roughly improvised litter. FLORINDA walks beside him.*)

RODERICK.

Florinda, I am dying.

(FLORINDA *kneels beside the litter, the rest move away weeping.*)

Lay thy head
Upon my breast! Belovèd wife, I leave thee
And my dear country in the reckless hand
Of lust and violence! It shall not be—
(*He makes an effort to rise and falls back helpless.*)

FLORINDA.

Thy love is round me like a sheltering flame,
And such a weight of happiness is ours
As triumphs over death. O let us sing
Our threnody, a hymn to mightiest love,
Whose joy and sweetness flood this barren world
With beauty and with gladness and with song,
With fruitfulness, with splendour, and with praise;
For though our glory fade, no part had we
With blind and scornful souls who win success
By crooked ways half evil and half good,
But in the light of love our days were spent;
So bravely we may fail and gladly die.

RODERICK.

(*very feebly*)

I cannot see: my tide ebbs fast away.
Lay thy face close to mine. Now all is light
Within the warmth and bliss of thy embrace.
Belovèd, do not weep!

FLORINDA.

They are tears of joy,
Of praise and thankfulness. For I am thine
For ever. Through the night of endless sleep,
Or waking splendours of immortal day,
No change, no evil, neither life nor death
Shall tear our hearts asunder.

RODERICK.

O holy love,
Sun of the world! With my last dying breath
I sing thy glory and praise—and so I die.

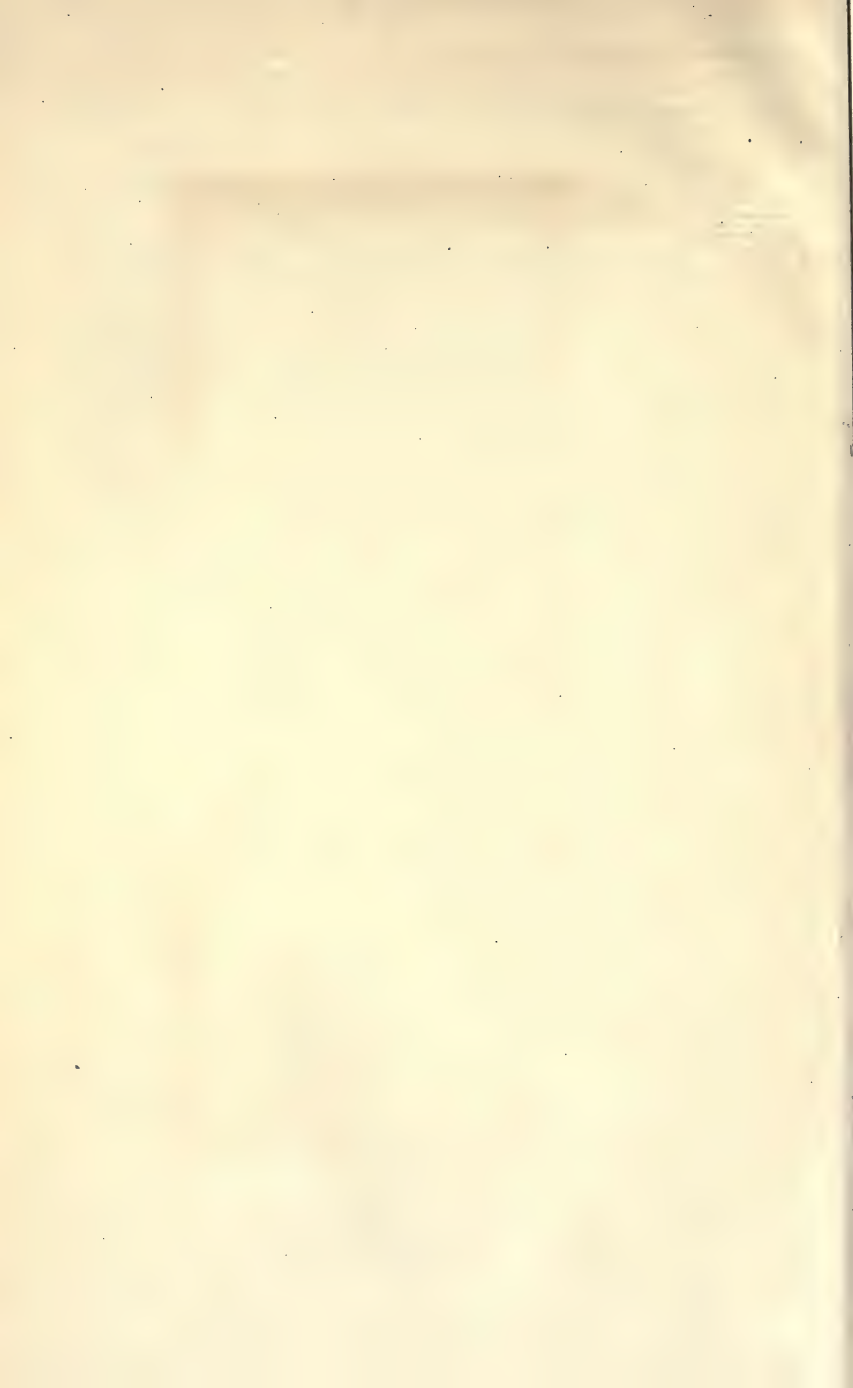
(He dies. FLORINDA lies prostrate upon his body. ENTER a number of PERSONS in procession; with ABDULASIS crowned and in the royal robe, which he wears over his armour, leading the QUEEN. They pass across the stage without noticing FLORINDA and RODERICK, the CROWD shouting as the Curtain descends.)

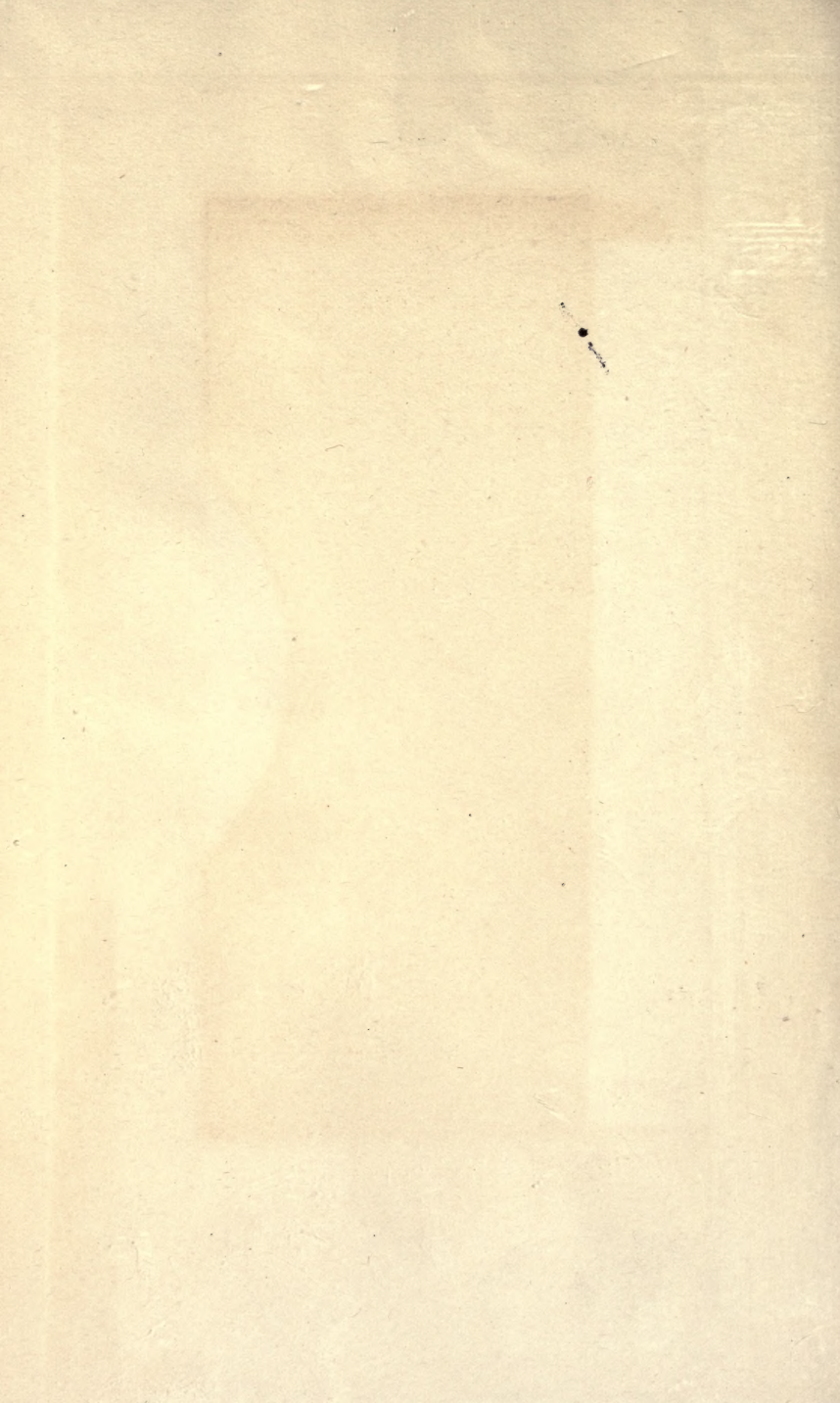
CROWD.

Abdulasis, king!

CURTAIN

THE END





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