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EZZELIN:
A DRAMATIC POEM.



EZZELIN:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY

TWO BROTHERS.



LONDON:

GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY BROTHER,
EDWARD KAYE JUPP,

I DEDICATE THIS

PLAY

OF

“EZZELIN.”

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PREFACE.

BY THE SURVIVING AUTHOR.



GOOD play needs no preface, a bad play is not improved by one. Whether the play of Ezzelin be good or bad my readers must decide; but I think a short preface is necessary to prevent the whole aim of the drama being misunderstood. It (the drama) may very possibly appear at first sight to have been written as a vindication of the persecuting spirit and policy of the mediæval Church of Rome, but I must distinctly state that it was not so intended. "Ezzelin" is merely intended to represent a phase of the struggle between the decaying despotism of the Church of Rome and the votaries of the new learning. This latter party, not unnaturally, enlisted on its side all the more ardent and cultured of the youth of Europe, and, inasmuch as no move-

ment—whether religious, political, or purely intellectual, can be said to work unmixed good,—admirers of the Renaissance and subsequent Reformation must forgive me if I have dwelt in this play rather on the darker than the brighter side of the great movement of the sixteenth century against the ancient creed of Christendom. In the ranks of those who hailed the downfall of scholastic theology and clerical tyranny were to be found many who aimed at annihilation and destruction rather than reform, and had no wish to see the powers formerly exercised by the Roman hierarchy transferred to the ministers of separate Christian bodies. They hailed the Reformation more as the inauguration of a reign of unbridled license, than as the beginning of a new and purer system of religion; and Ezzelin, the hero of this drama, must be considered merely as a type of this class of destructives—a class which, it is useless to deny, did exist, much to the regret of the chiefs of the reforming party.

One word, before I close this tediously apologetic preface, as to the character of the Inquisitor Dante. Englishmen have never had much admiration for the dark and bloody designs and machinations of the Inquisition (indeed the very Church which first instituted that baneful tribunal, has of

late seemed somewhat ashamed of its own progeny); but it may well be believed that among the Inquisitors many conscientious and even noble-hearted men were to be found; fanatics, perhaps, but men who were bitterly needed to check and restrain the paganism of the Renaissance and the lawlessness of the Reformation. Dante, I think my readers will admit, is no vulgar butcher, but a true follower of his great master S. Dominic, or, to use the mediæval expression current of the fierce followers of that saint, a true hound of the Lord (*Domini canis*), eager in the pursuit of heresy and crime.

My brother's early death prevented his doing more than composing a small portion of "Ezzelin." Any faults of style or language, and above all, any anachronisms must be charged on me—not against his memory.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALONZO, *an Italian Duke, father of Ezzelin.*

ARNOLD, *a Count, father of Annette.*

DANTE, *an Inquisitor, friend of Arnold and Alonzo.*

EZZELIN, *son of Alonzo.*

SEBASTIAN, *a Captain of Mercenaries in the service of the
Inquisition.*

UBERTO, *Chaplain to Arnold.*

LORENZO DA FIORI, *a relation of Arnold.*

TONIO, *Arnold's servant.*

GONZALO, ANTONIO, *Alonzo's servants.*

ANDREAS, *Dante's servant.*

Warder, Soldiers, Messengers, &c.

ANNETTE, *daughter of Arnold.*

LUCIA, *a Nun, daughter of Alonzo.*

JULIA, *a Nun.*

Women, &c. &c.

The scene lies in the north of Italy, not far from Venice,
but changes in two scenes to a Castle in the Tyrol.



EZZELIN.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Arnold's Castle (a room).*

Enter ARNOLD, DANTE, and ANNETTE.

Dante. *

HOW sweetly shines the moonbeam through
yon window ;
I ever did prefer the ancient quaintness
Of these old, pillar'd, fretwork-roofèd halls,
To that fine gilded glare, that men delight in.
I could have wish'd to pass the hour ere supper
Unlighted, save by moonbeams, and to let
'This holiness of scene pervade our talk ;
But this I tell you, that your entertainment
Will always come thrice welcome to my soul,
In this old knightly-memory haunted castle.

Arnold. Nay, then, I deem my castle is thrice
honour'd,

In winning praise from one so highly gifted
As thou art.

Dante. Such I ever yet have held it.
But, how now, Annette, have you any news
Of Ezzelin? Nay. Had I thought the question
Would make you weep, I ne'er had ask'd it you.

Arnold. Darling, I will explain the matter for you.
Alas ! we've had but bitter news of late
(Such as may well excuse my poor child's tears).
Ezzelin, we greatly fear, on his way home
Is ta'en by pirates.

Dante. How long back was this?

Arnold. Two months we heard no *news* ; last
week a rumour,
Too true, I fear. Just now the castle galley
Is injured, and I cannot send to seek him.

Dante. Thank Heaven ! a friend of mine,
A privateer, has just put in this morning.
I'll bid him follow on the track, and soon
You'll hear good news, I trust.

Arnold. Was ever priest
Beloved with so good cause? Could but I thank you

As you deserve !—Annette, my child, for shame !
Can you not dry your tears, and find some words
To thank this holy man ?

Annette. I wish I could

Say what I feel. I cannot.

Dante. Nay, then go,

And pour your thanks to Heaven, the true preserver
Of him and all.

Annette. I was going to the chapel

To pray for Ezzelin, and I came to you
To ask your blessing, father.

Dante. And I grant it.

[*Exit* ANNETTE.]

She pleases me more than I dared expect.
Your chaplain gave me no good words of her ;
He said that she was taken with wild fancies,
And yesterday she said (for so he told me),
She thought she ne'er could love the joys of heaven,
For thinking of poor souls that were in hell.

Arnold. Alas ! 'tis part of this calamity :

She is my only child, and I, perhaps,
Rate her too highly, but she seems to me
A ray, a lovely flower, almost an angel,
But for a kind of self-will, and devotion

To these wild fancies ; this makes me more regret
The loss of Ezzelin ; he was her star, her anchor.
She clung to him, as cling the creeping ivies
To some strong church tower, when fiends walk the
 night,
Rustling their leaves for fear ; he had a mind
For strength, and sweetness, far beyond his age,
And that she knew. O they were lovers indeed !
What joy I took in them, how I remember
Seeing them often in our garden glades,
Walking or sitting, with their arms fast twined
Around each other, and her eyes of blue
Meeting his dark eyes, with sweet earnestness,
Unconsciously a picture. Then it seem'd
That Ezzelin had no thought, save how to render
His Annette happy, and him worthy of her,
And Annette's soul was day by day more rapt,
To love, to trust, to cling to Ezzelin.
And yet I wrong them, none were more beloved
By all, and none did strive more earnestly
To school themselves, that others might be happy.
Well were they known by all around these walls ;
In all their sorrows did my vassals come
To them for sympathy and kindly aid.

The little children in the villages
Would run to meet them as they came along,
With flowers and humble greetings, nor were
spurned

By either, these poor offerings of affection.
But when young Ezzelin's father, Lord Alonzo,
Anxiously watching his son's youth, and eager,
(For ever did ambition rule his mind,
And though already duke, and sovereign ruler
Of more than half a province, where by thousands
Obedient vassals own his iron sway,
He aims at higher state by Ezzelin's marriage,
Alliance with some mighty family
High in the service of the emperor,)
Saw where his son's affections bent their way,
He sent him from this place, and bade him travel
To see fresh countries, trusting that the sight
And pleasures of the world would soon uproot
The old affection, for he vainly deem'd
That Ezzelin's love was but a boyish passion,
Fleeting and transient, but that love was fix'd ;
And since he knew that it was vain to strive
Against Alonzo's will, and having not
As yet the wherewithal to keep his Annette

In such estate as did become his rank,
 He told his tyrant father manfully
 That other love than Annette he would not,
 And though he bent his inclination then,
 That nothing in the world, save grisly death,
 Should tear their love apart—Yet say in truth,
 Desire you to hear more, or does my tale
 Seem wearisome?

Dante. Nay, my much honour'd friend,
 I love to hear of such a gallant youth.
 Deem not that priests (although they may not
 wed)
 Must shrink from tales like these ; nay, rather, when
 I hear of love like this, it makes me think
 Of that far higher love of One above.
 Think not that earthly love displeases God,
 Nay, rather, holy is it in His sight ;
 He placed it in man's heart, and He will bless
 Those who do rightly use the precious gift.
 In love of youth and maid to one another,
 Which prompts them to give up all joys or riches
 If call'd to do it, we may faintly see
 The shadowing of that ever perfect love
 Of Him who died to save His own elect,

And calls the Church His bride. But tell me more.
What said Alonzo to his son?

Arnold.

At first

He raved and threaten'd, and declared the grave
Should cover Ezzelin, ere he gave consent
To such a union; but his son, undaunted,
Still firmly said that he would never yield,
And then Alonzo changed his threatening tone,
And told his son to say no more, and smiled
In crafty guile, and laughingly replied
To Ezzelin's proud glance with soothing words,
And told him that he soon would cease to think
Of such a simple girl, when he should see
A little of the world, and know that wealth
Unbounded was his own, and he could choose
The proudest maiden of bright Italy,
Or some fair lady of the empire,
For bride; then bade him seek his couch at once,
And sleep such love-sick fancies off. A youth
Like him knew not what love was; he was caught
By a fair face, 'twas always thus with boys.
They knew not their own minds: but Ezzelin said,
"Father, no more of this; my vows are seal'd,
And I will see her ere I go," then turn'd

And sought his room—more of the scene I know
not.

Dante. Then Ezzelin did not come to see your
child?

Arnold. Oh yes, he did. In the bright early morn
While rosily the east gleam'd, and the clouds
In long white fleecy banners stretch'd across
The pale blue summer sky, and on each bush
And tree within the dewy castle chase
The birds were warbling, came young Ezzelin.
And she, my Annette, at her window stood,
Looking across the dewy lawns, to watch
The rising mists that floated o'er the sward
Of the green chase, (that as you know extends
With woods on either hand for many a mile,)
When her brave lover's form appear'd in sight.
Then down the winding castle stair she ran,
And o'er the drawbridge, o'er the verdant lawn,
Leaving a smooth wet track upon the grass,
And met her Ezzelin. I myself had waked
Early that morning, and with heated brow
Stood at the casement pane, and saw them meet.
Ah! can that scene fade from my memory's eye?
E'en now as I relate, I seem to see

My lovely daughter throw herself again
Upon her Ezzelin's faithful breast, while he
Clasp'd her with his strong arms, and thus they
stood.

At such a moment words refuse to come :
The only thought that fills the lovers' breasts
Is that they hold their dearest thing on earth
Within their arms,—the glances of their eyes
Speak more than words of fondest eloquence.
And thus it was with them : my Annette's eyes,
Glistening with tears, were fix'd on Ezzelin ;
While he, with such a yearning glance of anguish,
Bent his fond look on her. Ah me ! I doubt not
That they had fain waited in that embrace
For ever ! Calmly play'd the morning breeze
Around them, and the sparkling dews still lay
Upon the grass in clusters thick as beads ;
The birds' sweet songs grew louder, clear the thrush
Rang his shrill notes, and from the flaming sky
Faintly the mounting lark's sweet song was heard.
Unheeding all, lock'd in that tight embrace
They stood. At last poor Ezzelin softly loosed
His loved one's clinging arms, and bent his head
To her's, as if to whisper words of hope

And comfort for the future ; then my daughter
Bade him farewell, and Ezzelin slowly turn'd ;
But when he lost the sight of her he loved,
He quickly strode along the level sward,
As fearful that his shaking resolution
Might fail ; so up the forest chase he went,
And soon his form was swallow'd up in mists.
But Annette stood, still gazing after him,
Rigid like some fair statue, while the breeze
Play'd with her golden tresses, till the mists
Hid Ezzelin from her view, and then she turn'd
Towards her home, but blindly reeling, fell
Swooning upon the grass. I saw her fall,
And, issuing from the castle, with the help
Of her attendants, bore her to her room.
But for some time she lay in burning fever,
And, Father, sometimes I have fear'd her brain
Received a shock that morning, and has not
Recover'd altogether, but I know not.
She seems so wise and good, that I could think
My fears were groundless, save for these wild fancies
Of which my chaplain told you.

Dante.

Do not fear ;

I do not think because a maiden dreams

That you need think her life is sadden'd. Nay,
The young who think at all have ever fancies,
Strange and unnatural ; a lonely life
With little occupation, and much time
For musing,—separated too from one
She loves, accounts for all such thoughts as these.
I own that I was shock'd at first, but now,
Knowing her troubles, do not wonder ; but
'Tis long ere she and Ezzelin saw each other,—
Is't not?

Arnold. Full six long years at least.

Annette had reach'd her eighteenth year that morn
When Ezzelin went, and now is twenty-four.

Dante. And have you heard much news of
Ezzelin?

Arnold. But seldom since he went ; but for this
capture

He had been with us now. Men say, indeed,
That he is strangely alter'd ; yet I doubt not
His heart still beats as warmly now for Annette
As on that summer morn.

Dante. But do you know,
Has Ezzelin ever sent you any message?
Men sometimes have forgotten in the whirl

Of war or pleasure, their first love. Perchance,
 Although I would not grieve you, it is thus
 With your fair daughter's lover.

Arnold (aside). 'Tis ever thus with these cold-
 hearted priests ;

Forced as they are to crush all thoughts of love,
 They never can believe that other men
 Can really love : as well to talk of battle
 To some young convent girl, as talk of love
 To him. (*Aloud.*) Nay, father, this light conver-
 sation

Must weary you ; and, hark ! the bell for supper
 Calls us away.

Dante. My son, I soon will join you :
 I pray you bid my servant come to me
 As soon as possible. [*Exit* ARNOLD.]

Dante (alone). Poor Arnold ! he is wrapt in
 Ezzelin ;
 And though I see he sometimes doubts his love,
 Will not allow his inmost heart's suspicion
 To gather strength by hearing me confirm
 His doubts, yet none the less they haunt his soul.
 'Tis true, I know not much of Ezzelin,—
 But well I know his father and his kinsfolk.

(Ah! one of them too well; cease pining, heart!)
This Ezzelin comes not of a constant race,
But ^{one} inconstant as the tossing sea.

[*Walks to the window.*]

How clear the bay lies now before my eyes,
Like a cold plain of azure 'neath the moon,
Which seems to spread a holy influence,
Calming the heaving deep. May Annette's love
Shine like yon moon on Ezzelin, and bind
His heart if prone to changing. Ah! fair maiden,
Thou hast known many cares already: hard
It is to lose one's dearest friend on earth
When death removes him from us; harder yet
Perchance to wait as thou hast done, enduring
The anguish of suspense, to see thy lover
Embark upon the world's wide, tossing billows,
And know not where he is, or if his love
Burn constant or be quench'd. I hardly dare
To think upon thy future. Can they wed?
Nay, rather, shall they? may not God require
The separation of their hearts? She doubts,
So I have heard, and he—well, let it rest,
“Sufficient is the evil to the day,”
And in the Eternal breast the issue lies.

Enter ANDREAS.

Andreas, despatch a trusty messenger
 To seek Sebastian ; bid him come to me
 To-morrow morning, without fail. [*Exit* ANDREAS.
 Well, yes,
 I must see more of Annette, but the bell
 Calls me away. I must not linger here. [*Exit.*

SCENE 2. *The same room.**Enter* ARNOLD, ANNETTE, DANTE, and SEBASTIAN.*Dante.*

COUNT ARNOLD, this is my good friend
 Sebastian,
 The captain of the galley that you see
 Lying at anchor yonder, like a speck
 Upon the deep blue waters of the bay.

Arnold. Captain Sebastian, welcome to my castle.
 You may perhaps have heard of Ezzelin,
 Son of old Lord Alonzo, whose domains
 Lie not far off from mine.

Sebastian. Count Arnold, I have heard of him,
 I think ;

He was Alonzo's only son, a youth
Well made and full of courage.

Arnold.

Yes, the same.

During his journey from Illyria
His ship was taken by the Turkish foe,
And all on board were captured, but they say
The pirate ship was in the fray disabled,
And forced to put in port not far from here,
And so we heard the news of Ezzelin's capture.
The holy father has assured us here
That you will follow on the pirate's track
If possible, and rescue our young hero.
Oh, if you can but bring him back again
We never shall forget your services,
And anything that I can do for you
In bettering your fortunes shall be done.
Meanwhile accept my fervent gratitude
And my young daughter's thanks, for Ezzelin
Is her betroth'd. If you have ever known
What 'tis to lose a loved one, you will feel
For her. When you return I pray you honour
My castle by remaining some few days
Our welcome guest.

Sebastian.

I thank you greatly, Count ;

Methinks were I to slight an invitation
 To such a castle men could call me mad.
 And as for Ezzelin, I will do my best.
 Meanwhile, for your great courtesy, accept
 A rough old sailor's thanks; in two short hours
 My galley will be ready. Now, farewell.

[*Exit, singing.*]

The briny deep is the sailor's home,
 The deck is the sailor's bed;
 And he slumbers well, though the white waves swell,
 And the tempest roars o'erhead.

Arnold. A bluff old fellow.

Dante. Yes, but none the worse
 For that;—and let me tell you, my good friend,
 A better man ne'er breathed. He saved my life
 Not long ago. (*Aside.*) How well the fellow plays
 The seaman's part.

Annette. And how was that, my father?

Dante. Ah, Annette! you, like other girls, know
 well

The way to reach an old man's heart,—to tempt
 His vanity, by making him repeat
 Stories of his adventures,—yet I'm glad

To tell you anything ; but, Arnold, stay :
Would you not like to hear the tale ?

Arnold. Good father,

Business about the castle calls for me ;
But if you can amuse my daughter Annette,
And keep her thoughts awhile fix'd on your stories,
I shall be grateful. [*Exit* ARNOLD.]

Annette. Oh, my father, say,
Do you indeed think Ezzelin will be saved ?
I know I ought not thus to talk to you ;
But O ! you know how one is comforted
By hearing words of hope. I have imagined
My Ezzelin dead perhaps, or, badly wounded,
Lying in anguish on the blood-stain'd deck,
With no one near to bathe his smarting wounds ;
Or sold to be a slave. O father, father,
Tell me you think he will be saved ! I know
That God is watching o'er him, wheresoe'er
He lies ; yet e'en religion's voice at times
Falls cold and dull upon the bleeding heart.
This keen suspense will kill me ; I am like
One walking through a dark and dreary wood,
Following a winding path that ever seems
About to end in daylight, yet whenever

I think I see the sunlight not far off,
And hurry forwards, darkness comes again
With tenfold gloom and horror !

Enter ARNOLD in armour.

Arnold. Look not so frighten'd, Annette ; I've
determined
To join Sebastian in the expedition ;
For but this moment did a messenger
Come with the tidings that the enemy
Were seen not far from here in rapid flight,
Speeding across the bay. So I have arm'd
A band of stout retainers, and do purpose
To aid in the pursuit ; the thought of battle
Puts new life in me, and I feel no more
The numbing chill of age. Farewell, good father ;
I've given orders to my servants here
To treat you in my absence as their lord,
And bow to your commands. Farewell, my Annette,
I trust to see you smile on my return ;
A few short days, and you will see me back
With Ezzelin safe and sound.

Annette. Oh, dearest father,
Indeed you must not risk your life for him.

Shame on my woman's nature ! I could wish
That I had been a man, to take your place
And join in Ezzelin's rescue ! Well, 'tis vain
To talk like this—but, father, do not go !

Arnold. Come, cheer up, Annette ! do not let me
start

In such a tearful manner ; tush ! my child ;
There will not be much danger—I have been
In fifty fights at least without a scratch.

A soldier's daughter should not fear like this ;
Come, rouse yourself, and give me one fond kiss
Before I go. [*Embraces her.*

Annette. May all good angels watch
Over your head, my father ; now, farewell !

Dante (to Arnold). A word with you before you
go, my son. [*Exeunt ARNOLD and DANTE.*

Annette (alone). They say that trials never come
alone

In this sad world ; O, surely 'twas enough
To grieve for Ezzelin's safety, knowing not
If he were dead or living, forced to live
In agonizing doubt, with nothing certain
To satisfy the cravings of the heart,
And ever forced to draw my only source

Of comfort from a few detach'd reports,
 Which, like the ghostly lights that dance and flicker
 At night in reedy swamps, but make believe
 To show the truth, and sometimes fill the mind
 With hope awhile, yet soon again Despair,
 Following upon the steps of Hope, as darkness
 Pursues the day, returns with double horror.
 And now not only Ezzelin, but my father
 Is girt by danger ! O ! my heart will break
 Beneath its anguish'd load ! What have I done,
 That I should suffer thus ? Can Heaven be just
 To send me so much sorrow ? Have I ever
 Neglected our religion's sacred rites ?
 But yesterday I spent long hours in prayer
 Before our chapel's altar, and to-day
 My heart is stabb'd afresh ! Where shall I turn
 For comfort ? I can strive no more with sorrow.
 Oh Ezzelin ! Ezzelin ! [*Flings herself on the ground.*]

Enter UBERTO.

Uberto. What, no one here ? I'm sure I heard
 a voice
 Of one in sorrow or in pain. What ! Annette
 Extended on the floor in this wild manner,

With all her hair dishevell'd, and her clothes
Cover'd with dust! Come, Annette, what's the
" matter?

Annette (impatiently). Leave me, I say.

Uberto. If you must throw yourself
Upon the floor, you surely might have found
A better place than this old dusty corner!
You'll get yourself into a mess, I say.
Get up! don't lie there like a naughty child,
But tell me what your sorrow is.

Annette (rising). This place
Is not the confessional, so leave me;
Or you may stay, and I will go.

[*Crosses the room, and exit.*]

Uberto. Good heavens!
I'm sure that girl is mad! how can she dare
To speak in such a way? I never yet
Heard such impertinence from anybody,
And I'll not stand it either. Would her father
Were safe return'd from his mad expedition.
Plague on these lovers! men should live like me,
And leave the race of women to decay;
And so it should, could I but have my way.

SCENE 3. *The same room.*

Enter DANTE and UBERTO.

Uberto.



ES, my good brother, that young girl is mad ;
I do believe that love has turn'd her brain.
But now I found her stretch'd upon the
floor,

And when I gently bade her rise, and tell
Her griefs to me, she told me to my face
That I was not in the confessional,
And that she would not tell me, and then ran
Out of the room.

Dante (smiling). Good brother—pardon me—
I do not think you understand the girl.

Uberto. Not understand her ! why, I've lived as
chaplain
In this old castle nigh on thirty years,
And heard her tell her sins a thousand times.
Not understand her ! that's a fine idea !

Dante. That girl needs careful management, my
brother,
Or she will fall away from truth, I fear ;

Already she has got some strange ideas,
And does not fear to question what one tells her ;
But if you rule her well, with such a nature
As her's, she'll prove a pure and holy lamb
For the Good Shepherd's pasture. With permission
From you, I'll hear her at her next confession.

Uberto. O certainly, I shall be very glad ;
She only wearies me with her strange notions
About religious mysteries. I hope
That you will scold her well for disrespect,
And make her do a sharp and heavy penance.

Dante. Do you know much of Ezzelin, her
lover?

Uberto. O, he's a fine young man, beloved by all,
And pays me great respect.

Dante. I mean, my brother,
Is he a faithful son of Rome—one fit
To be this maiden's husband?

Uberto. I believe
He's orthodox enough, at least I hope so ;
I know his sister is.

Dante. Well, if he's rescued,
I'll see to it ; for look you, my dear brother,
Heresy is about us ; 'tis in vain

We wage against it wars of fierce oppression,
And drag its votaries to the burning pile ;
This will not stamp it out—we must be wary ;
Priests must bestir themselves if they would check
The doctrines of the dog apostate Luther.
I tell you, Fra Uberto, when I look
Around, and see the shepherds of the flock
Idle and bent on luxury, and the Church
Diseased and rotten, that the thought comes o'er
me—

What if this heresy be God's awful judgment
Upon us for our sins ! O, may His Passion,
Who on the tree endured the assault of hell,
And led the tyrant captive, shield us now
From the approaching plague ! To all that's evil
The Lutheran doctrine shows a tempting bait.
We must watch well our charges, lest the tares
Of heresy be sown ; therefore I ask'd you
So earnestly about young Ezzelin's faith.

Uberto. Good brother, you are eloquent indeed ;
Your warnings make me shiver ; do you really
Believe the Church to be in danger now ?
Have you forgotten that the infernal gates
Are powerless against her ?

Dante. True, while she keeps her first and chosen
love,

And leans on her true Spouse ; but now, alas !
The world, the flesh, the devil hem her round,
And she is weak and wavering ; sin's bright glare
Dazzles and fascinates her failing eyes.

Uberto (aside). 'Tis very hot, listening to this
fierce priest,

And yet I like him for his earnestness.

I wish I had some wine. (*Aloud.*) Well, my dear
brother,

What is the remedy for such a state ?

Dante. Brother, the remedy lies in ourselves :
We must not weary, but be ever working,
Bearing the harvest day's fierce heat and burden ;
Rest comes at eve ; still 'mid the tossing sea
Uprear the Saviour's Cross, and on the Rock
Of Ages stand ; 'tis vain to trust in princes,
Vain to give up our work to hired soldiers.
He calls us now to follow Him, to go
E'en as He went, and call to all to come
Where only rest is found. Let all men know
That we can work for Him Who died for us,
Enduring till the end ; so shall the clouds

Disperse, and heavenly calm return again.

Uberto. Yes, this is very well ; but it is time
We had some dinner, surely (*going*).

Dante. Stay a moment !
You told me Ezzelin had a pious sister—
What is her name ?

Uberto. Her name, I think, is Lucia.
She is a sister in a convent here ;
But Annette knows far more of her than I do,
They used to be great friends.

Dante. And is this Ezzelin
Fond of his sister ?

Uberto. Yes, devoted to her,
And she adores him too.

Dante. Then I will go
And see her ; sisters often have great influence
Upon their brothers. So, farewell. [*Exit DANTE.*

Uberto. What, go
All that way fasting ? what a zealous man !
I wish I had such energy. But surely
Our meal must be prepared. [*Exit UBERTO.*

SCENE 4. *A Cell in the Convent of St. Margaret.*

Enter LUCIA, alone.

Lucia.



THE sun is slowly sinking in the west,
Over the gleaming sea ; as he goes down,
He paints the clouds around him with the
hues

Of amber, gold, and crimson, while afar
The snowy eastern cloud groups faintly glow
With rosy tints. The quiet time of eve
Comes on apace, and soon the silver moon
Will rise above the distant woods. How sweet
The air is now ! I ever yet have loved
The eventide more than the glare of day.
For this is not my rest, nor would I have it ;
Yet e'en as children love the time which tells
Of coming joys, so in the evening's calm
I fain would shadow forth the eternal peace
Which comes, when in the chilly waves of death
Life's sun is set, and He shall bid me welcome
Who bids me work for Him beneath the Cross.

'Tis growing dark ; the compline hour draws near,
 Blest hour of prayer, which calls each child of God
 To bend before the Crucified.

Enter JULIA.

Julia. My sister,
 An aged priest desires to speak with you ;
 He waits without.

Lucia. Then bid him come, my sister.
 Who may this priest be ? 'tis some stranger, surely.
 [*Exit JULIA.*]

Enter JULIA with DANTE.

Julia. This is the sister Lucia, reverend father.
 [*Exit JULIA.*]

Dante. Hail to thee, daughter ! I have come
 to-night
 From Arnold's castle, where my home has been
 The last few days. I am an old acquaintance
 Of your renownèd father, Lord Alonzo.

Lucia. A friend of my dear father ! can you be
 The Father Dante ?

Dante. Even so, my daughter.

Lucia. Oh ! then you are no stranger ; I have
 heard

My father often speak of you : he loves you
And honours you, and he has ever wish'd
That I might know you too.

Dante. Well, now you see me.

You are Alonzo's daughter, I his friend ;
Methinks we need no further introduction.
But, in good truth, I should not have supposed
That I should find you here.

Lucia. Why not, my father ?

Dante. Daughter, Alonzo often used to say
That he would never let a child of his
Enter a convent.

Lucia. Yes ; but when my brother
Left us to travel—but indeed I ought not
To trouble you.

Dante. Fear not ; speak on, my child.

Lucia. My father ever did oppose my brother
In his pursuit of Arnold's daughter, Annette ;
And when poor Ezzelin left us, Lord Alonzo
Blamed me for having introduced my brother
To Annette ; but indeed I did not mean
To injure Ezzelin—she was my friend,
We loved each other dearly from our childhood,
And Ezzelin used to join us in our sports

(For he was never happy save with me—
 Whate'er I loved he loved, and so with Annette).
 When childhood's guileless time was past, new
 feelings
 Came o'er my brother and my friend, the seeds
 Of fondness sown in childhood bloom'd at last
 When youth arrived into the flower of love.
 Yet, oh ! what should a maiden vow'd to heaven
 Know of such feelings ? [*Turns away.*

Dante (smiling). Do not grieve, my daughter ;
 It is no sin to *tell* of earthly love
 In other hearts, so that it does not taint
 Our own.

Lucia. But, father, sometimes my weak heart is
 touch'd
 By the sweet poison.

Dante. Yes, the Via Crucis
 Is ever mark'd by earth's affections strewn
 Along its tear-stain'd soil, yet doth it lead
 To that bright land where love may freely burn
 In pure unearthly glory. Every tear
 Wrung from the eyes of those who here below
 Have torn themselves from love as if from life,
 Turns to a pearl to star the coronet

Laid up for them above, and each new triumph
Shall gild with added glory that fair crown
They cast before His feet who died for them.

Lucia. Yes, if they freely give themselves to
God.

Dante. And is it otherwise with you, my daughter?
Are you placed here against your will?

Lucia. No, father,
When Ezzelin left us I was forced to leave
Our home ; my father said that I had ruin'd
My brother's prospects, and he could not bear
To have me with him,—so I took the veil,
And now am reconciled to this my life ;
Nor would I change it, yet I cannot say
That freely I laid down youth's joys and pleasures
Before the cross, and sometimes vain regrets
Disturb my soul.

Dante. “Let the dead bury their dead,
And follow me.” See from above thy couch
The Crucified smiles on thy daily path.
A brighter smile shall greet thee when at last
Thou layest down thy burden at His feet.
And canst thou tell if to meek constancy
And sweet obedience in the course decreed

For thee, as fair a crown may yet be given
 As gleams on those who from their earliest youth
 Have borne the virgin's lamp. 'Tis easier far
 When Heaven calls us on the way we love
 Than when the path demands a sacrifice.
 But I have come to-day from Arnold's castle
 On special business with you. Have you heard
 Of Ezzelin or Annette?

Lucia. Yes, my father ;
 Annette has been to see me once or twice.

Dante. And did you think that she was changed
 at all?

Lucia. No, not at all. She was the same as
 ever,—

A gentle, trusting girl.

Dante. Is she religious?

Lucia. I think so; but you seem to doubt a
 little!

Dante. I do. I fear that Annette is too fond
 Of dreaming to be safe. She may be gentle,
 But she is given to questioning what the Church
 Lays down. But what of Ezzelin, your brother ;
 Is he a faithful son of Rome?

Lucia. Oh, yes ;

He always has been so ; most true and fervent
In his devotion to our glorious Church !

Dante. Thank God for that ! Know you not that
your brother

Intends, ere long, to wed with Arnold's daughter ?

Lucia. Oh, father ! he will never gain consent.

My sire always did oppose their union.

I do in truth believe that such a marriage

Would drive him to the grave ; he fondly hoped

That Ezzelin would soon forget his love.

For me, I know not what to say ; my father

Is dear to me, I would not have him suffer.

Yet Ezzelin will never know what joy is

Until he weds his youthful love. But tell me,

May a son thus provoke a father's curse ;

For Ezzelin will endure his father's anger

If they are wed ?

Dante. Daughter ! the ties of love

Are stronger than the bands of prejudice.

There is no reason for your father's hatred

Of Annette. Ezzelin has sworn to love her.

He may not break that oath and shun the vengeance

Of Heaven ; and Alonzo has no right

To curse him. Curses, sent without the sanction

Of God, are powerless as summer lightning,
Which flashes midst the clouds, but cannot dart
A forkèd bolt to earth—But do not weep.

Lucia. I cannot help it. Oh, I vainly hoped
That God would smooth our troubles. I have
pray'd

So often that my father's life might be
Shielded from sorrow ; for, although he sent me
Away from him, he is my father still.
Indeed, he thought that I had injured Ezzelin ;
He did not mean to be unjust. My father—
You can do much, I know—go with my brother
To Lord Alonzo, he will hear *you* speak ;
Use your best arts ; tell him that Ezzelin's happiness
Is centred in this union. He will grant
Consent at last, I hope ; and if he does not,
Why then they *must* be wed. But oh, I doubt
If Annette's love will prove a consolation
To Ezzelin for his father's wrath. But why
Look you so pain'd ; have *I* in aught offended ?
Forgive me if I have.

Dante (with a sad smile). No ; as you spoke
A bitter shaft of memory touch'd my soul.
Lucia ! thou art not like thy stalwart father ;

Whom dost thou most resemble?

Lucia. Before my hair
Was shorn away beneath the convent shears,
They used to tell me that my face was like
A sister of my father's.

Dante (in an agitated voice). And her name?

Lucia. Her name was Viola ; she died in Spain,
Long, long ago.

Dante. Yes, many years have pass'd
Since then ; yet, Lucia, hearken. I desire
To have her name remember'd in thy prayers.
Wilt thou do this for me?—Now, to our business.
You have well spoken, I will see Alonzo ;
But, ere your brother marry, it were well
He saw you, for you know that wives have influence
Over their husbands. Ezzelin may be faithful,
But Annette may give way. Foul heresy
Prowls round the Church, like wolf around the fold,
Seeking God's children, and perhaps might taint
Her wavering heart. Now, if you met your brother,
And told him in a sweet and tender manner
Of these our doubts, his eyes would soon be open'd,
And he would watch her well. From you, my
daughter,

Such words would better come than from myself.

Lucia. But how can I arrange a meeting, father?
Men may not enter here.

Dante. I will arrange it.

(The bell tolls.)

But, hark ! the bell tolls out the compline hour,
And we must part.

Lucia. But grant me ere you go
Your blessing. [*Kneels, and folds her hands.*

Dante (laying his hand on her head). May the
Heavenly Spouse of Virgins
Fill thee with His pure love while through the world
Thou walkest ; may He give thee grace to follow
Where'er He wills, in joy or agony ;
May He sustain thee, and when time is past,
And at St. Margaret's side thy throne is set,
May God's own hand upon thy virgin brow
For ever place His coronet unfading.

[*Exeunt DANTE and LUCIA.*

SCENE 5. *A room in Arnold's Castle.*

ANNETTE *looking out of window.*

Annette.



IS very dark to-night ; the sable clouds
 Are hurrying o'er the sky in rapid flight,
 Driven before the wind ; around the moon
 They crowd, like sorrows o'er the path of love,
 Dimming her glory and at times obscuring
 Her silver round, yet evermore she shines
 More lovely than before, and e'en the clouds
 That fain would hide her face are gently touch'd
 By her soft radiance ; so the bitter troubles
 That close around a lover oft are soften'd
 By the sweet light of pure devotion's moon.
 Oh ! what is trouble, what are pain or grief
 That meet us in love's spring-time ? Then our
 thoughts
 Are not our own, we share another's heart.
 We think, whene'er we see a thing of beauty,
 " What would he think of it ?—how would he like it ?"
 Till in that path divine we lose our hearts
 And think with his, gaze with his eyes, and feel

His pleasures or his griefs ; and thus my life
Will be surrender'd to my Ezzelin.

If he return ! Oh, cruel, cruel IF !

On that short word my coming fate depends.

I will not doubt it, lest distraction seize

My heart. Oh, Ezzelin, Ezzelin ! dearest love,

Say, are you coming ? does yon cloud-girt moon

Silver the white sails of the happy bark

That bears you home ? [*Turns to the fire.*

The flame has faded now,

And the hot embers cast a deep red glow

Upon the tapestry that shakes and sways

In the night wind, the arras-painted figures

Look as if once again in life they moved.

The embroider'd horses champ the bit, the

knights

Look up to their fair ladies ere they couch

The deadly lance, that scene so often view'd

Brings back the memories of happy days.

Would that the future, like the past, could open

To those who long for joy ; yet when he comes

All will be well, these weeks of grief and sorrow

Will seem as nothing then. But I am weary,

Weary with watching here. Come to me, Sleep,

And bid me dream of Ezzelin. What, if waking,
I find him by me? [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

(*Enter EZZELIN.*)

Ezzelin. At last, I stand within the castle walls,
And breathe the air she breathes. Each little thing
That calls *her* Mistress, glows before my eyes.

(*Seeing her.*) And there she lies. The darkness
cannot blind

The eyes of true affection. Ah! she sleeps.
Like some still mountain-lake she seems, whose
waters

Look loveliest in repose. Oh! would that I
Were master o'er her dreams. [*Sits down by the couch.*]

I'll linger here

And feast my eyes with beauty. God of sleep,
Delay not here too long! She stirs and murmurs.
What does she say? I will not spoil her rest.
Down, down, impatient spirit. See, she moves,
Her eyelids open, yet sleep lingers still,
Dulling their stainless azure. Come, love! Annette!
It is no blissful dream—I am beside thee!

[*Bends over her. She starts up and flings
her arms round his neck.*]

Annette. 'Tis he! 'tis he! I see thee once again,
 My own, my dearest Ezzelin; but this moment
 I dreamt I saw thee lying cold and dead
 Upon the straw of some drear castle chamber;
 And, as I gazed on thee, a voice exclaim'd,
 "This is thy work!" and, shuddering, I awoke,
 And thou wert here. It was my latest wish,
 Ere slumber came, that when I woke thy form
 Might greet my eyes. Thou wilt not leave me now?
 Go not away again. I have so much
 To tell thee, and to hear from thee, and yet
 Words will not come, I only sit and look,
 Feeling that this, alone, is perfect bliss.

Ezzelin. Yes, Annette, six long years seem little
 now

Beside thee. Thou art just the same as ever.
 Why art thou troubled? Why that look of pain
 Upon thy face?

Annette. Ezzelin, that horrid dream!

Ezzelin. What then? our dreams are naught
 save fancy's work.

Annette. But sometimes they come true, you
 know.

Ezzelin. Hush, dearest!

No more of this ; shall this our hour of meeting
Be aught but joy !

Annette. I hear steps on the stairs.
They come to spoil our meeting ; it is hard
We cannot be alone a little while.

Enter ARNOLD, DANTE, UBERTO, SEBASTIAN, *and*
SERVANTS, *with lights.* ANNETTE *springs up,*
rushes up to her father, and throws herself into
his arms.

And you are safe, dear father ! Heaven has kept you
From every hurt.

Arnold. Not quite unscathed, my daughter.
Annette (turning pale). What is the matter,
then?

Arnold. A trifling wound,
Given by a dying pirate as I strode
O'er his body. Do not look so white :
Is this the smile you ought to wear when Ezzelin
Returns at last ? Come, Ezzelin, comfort her.

(EZZELIN *advances and stands by* ANNETTE.)

It does me good to see you two together.

Look, reverend fathers, there's a well-match'd pair.

Ezzelin. Father Uberto, you, I trust, are well ;
'Tis long since I have seen you.

Uberto. Yes, my son,
I think I'm well, but I am growing old,
And people do not treat me as they ought,
But shun my counsel.

Arnold. Father, what mean you ?

Uberto. Why, Mistress Annette does not treat
me well,
She gets quite forward now.

Arnold. Annette, for shame !
How can you bear yourself like this, my child ?
It is not maidenly.

Dante (in a low voice to Arnold). Do not ques-
tion her.

She did not mean to be insulting ; grief
And sharp suspense oft make us lose command
Over our tongues. (*Aloud to Uberto.*) Come, brother,
do not speak

About the matter now. Pray pardon her.

(*Stepping forward to EZZELIN.*) You are the son of
Lord Alonzo, Ezzelin.

Have you heard mention of my name by him?

Ezzelin (aside). Why is it that they cease to rail
at Annette

When he forbids it? Priests are ever busy
On other men's affairs. I must be wary,
Or he will gain her heart. (*Aloud.*) Your pardon,
father.

Are you the Father Dante?

Dante. Yes, the same,
Your father's friend. I have already seen
Your sister at her convent, and now wish
To know you, too, my son.

Ezzelin. Surely, my father,
I shall be very glad.

Dante. Your young betroth'd
And I are friends already, Ezzelin.

Annette. Yes, Ezzelin, he has been very kind
To me while you were captive, but I fain
Would hear your story.

Ezzelin (looking round). Are you all willing,
friends?

Arnold. Ay, let us hear it.

Ezzelin. After the day on which I sail'd from
Venice

I gave myself to travelling, and journey'd
 Through several countries, and at last I reach'd
 The Imperial Court, meaning to push my fortunes
 In Royal Charles's service ; but the intrigues
 Of jealous courtiers baffled all my plans.
 At last, indignant, with my sword I met
 And slew an officer whose slanderous tongue
 Aspersed me to his master ; then, unchampion'd
 By those in power, I was forced to flee.
 Where should I turn ? War open'd out to me
 Some hope of fame, so with the French I march'd
 To Pavia's bloody field ; there taken captive
 With luckless Francis, I was kept awhile
 Close prisoner. At last, released, I sought
 The princely court of Saxony's Elector.

(DANTE *frowns.*) There I remain'd until his death,
 and then

Return'd towards Italy, meaning to come
 Again to you ; but on the way our vessel
 Was taken by the Turks, and all the crew,
 Myself among the number, thrown in chains
 Into the hold, until your rescue came.

Arnold. We had a desperate fight ; the Turks
 withstood

Our onset with the fury of despair.

Five times they drove us back, at last we gain'd
The deck and flesh'd our blades in Paynim blood.
I never shall forget how Turk and Christian
Reel'd in the death-grasp on the heaving deck
Slippery with blood. The dark Mahometans
Gave way at last as the brave sons of Venice
Press'd on, with dripping swords, the while the
surge

Boil'd round the vessels, as the strife wax'd hot,
And many a bleeding corpse was thrown to feed
The hungry waves, and, but a little distance
From where we fought, the blue sharks hung
suspended

Beneath the sea, the destined tombs of those
Who fell in battle.

Ezzelin. Where we lay we heard
Your war-cry, and with anxious hearts awaited
The issue of the conflict, and we strain'd
Our ears to listen to the shouts and tramping
And clash of deadly steel. At last I loosed
My chains, and broke away and reach'd the deck
Just as the Turks were clustering round the mast
For one last struggle.

Sebastian. Yes, young Ezzelin came,
Like a young boar amidst the tawny caitiffs,
And by my soul I think he gored a few!

Dante. Enough of tales of war. Do you not see
Annette is looking pale? what do you purpose
To do, young Ezzelin, now?

Ezzelin. To seek my father
Ere many hours have pass'd. I trust that he
Will grant my earnest wish. But, hark! the bell
Calls us away.

[*Exeunt all but EZZELIN and ANNETTE.*

Annette. Oh, Ezzelin, must you leave me?

Ezzelin. Dearest Annette,
'Tis but awhile I go; when I return
Then ne'er on earth again, I trust, shall we
Be parted. I *must* go to-morrow.

Annette. Ezzelin,
Can you not wait awhile, after to-morrow
Will be the feast-day of my patroness.
Can you not stay for that?

Ezzelin. Your patroness!
Then you will be at the confessional
To-morrow?

Annette. Yes, but not to our good chaplain;

I shall confess to Father Dante. Hark !
My father calls. Come with me then, dear Ezzelin.
You must be friends with Dante. Were all priests
But like him earth would be indeed like heaven.
Now, do not linger, we must come away.

End of First Act.





ACT II.

SCENE I. *The Castle Chapel.*

DANTE *seated.* ANNETTE *standing by him.*

Dante.



Y daughter, you have now, I trust, confess'd

Your sins, and show'd to me your inmost soul.

What shall I say? One thought alone has fill'd
Your heart, one name is written on your soul,
The name of Ezzelin. And will you give
All, all to him—have you no other service
Save to your lover? Do we sojourn here
Only for carnal love? I tell you this,
That love unsanctified will prove a curse,
An ulcerous sore, eating the better nature.
All that is good and pure will be dissolved

By the hot passion ; yet the love itself
Will turn to dust and ashes.

Annette. Father, father,
You are too hard. Can that be very bad
Which makes us ready to endure all pain,
All disappointment, for another's sake,
And count our ease and joy of no account
Compared with his ?

Dante. 'Tis in this way that such as you, my
daughter,
Deceive yourselves, when love in all its youth
First burns within you ; then you kiss the sword,
And think its point is honied ; but hereafter,
When the first flame dies out, in many cases
Your hearts grow cold. Where, then, are all the
boasts
Of perfect self-devotion to your partner,
Of meek obedience to his slightest wish,
Of constant self-denial, gladly bearing
All grief and pain, so only he be happy ?
Gone, with the dreams of youth in which they sprang.

Annette. Forgive me, father.
May I but ask one question ?

Dante. Speak, my daughter.

Annette. 'Tis strange to me that one like you, a
 priest,
 Vow'd to a single life, should thus exhort me ;
 And, with all reverence to your sacred office,
 I marvel greatly whence you learnt the secrets
 Of such a thing as love?

Dante (in a changed voice). Annette, Annette,
 I never thought to have unlock'd my heart,
 But I will tell *you*, daughter. Listen well,
 And know that he who stands before you now,
 Clad in the sacred garments of the altar,
 Once loved, and may the fearful tale I tell you
 Sink deeply in your soul. Down, down, weak heart !
 I *will*—I *will* ! O Saviour, for Thy sake,
 To warn this child of Thine from heresy,
 I tell this story ; let my heart-strings bleed,
 And let the hidden secrets of my soul
 Endure the searching day, the agony
 Of all too keen remembrance, so I save
 One soul for whom Thy precious blood was shed.

Annette (speaking in a terrified voice). O ! father,
 do not tell me ; I have err'd.
 My wicked, wicked scorn and unbelief
 Have caused me thus to wound thee.

Dante (sternly). Silence, daughter.

I loved her once, a timid, shrinking girl,
With azure eyes, clear as the noonday sea,
Soft raven hair, and neck as white as snow.
I see her now before me with a look
Of agony upon her lovely face,
Blacken'd with smoke; and o'er her white-robed form
The yellow flames are leaping! Oh! depart
Vision of horror, in the name of Him
For whom I did it.

Annette, I loved her! and she knew it well.
Born of a fall'n house, I could not wed her;
Wealth was not mine. I sought the wild career
Of arms, and trusted there to gain renown,
And then return to win her. How I prosper'd
The world knows well; nor does it suit that I—
Vow'd unto Him Who pray'd for those who slew
Him—

Should boast to thee of the high fame I won
On many a bloody field; at last, my aim
Achieved, I sought the brother of my love,
And ask'd his sister's hand. Ah! 'twas in vain:
She had been faithful, but her iron brother
Had sold her to a German Duke, to gain

A few bare acres. She was gone ! I saw
The hand of God was heavy on my life.
So, deeming that He will'd it, I laid down
Before the Cross the warrior's helm and blade,
And hid my sorrows in the robe of serge.
Say, dost *thou* ask *me* if I ever loved?
Bear witness nights of racking agony !
Bear witness torturing dreams, when at the altar
I stood beside her, and those azure eyes
Gazed into mine ! The lonely years roll'd on,
And I stood high among my brethren,
A leader 'mid the captains of the faithful.
Yet, like a lofty oak by lightning blasted,
'Mid verdant beeches or green underwood,
I tower'd above the rest ; so when at last
Dark heresy rear'd up its serpent head,
We form'd the Inquisition, to protect
The faithful from its snares, and power was given
To me to judge the wretched ones who spurn'd
The Lord Who died for them. Amidst the number
Of those who would not yield I found *her*, Annette,
The loved and lost. O ! that my lips should tell
This tale of tenfold horror—bear with me ;
I sentenced her to die, *I* bade the deaths-men

Strip her young form, and bind her tightly down
Upon the straining rack, until the blood
Oozed from her naked limbs, and those pure lips
Were blue with agony ; she knew me not,
But *I*, more wretched, heard her piercing cries
And wails of anguish, as the biting cords
Tore at the joints and wrench'd the tender frame,
Till the fierce pain exhausted all its store,
And faintness came upon her ; then they loosed
The blood-stain'd ropes, and bore her to her cell,
Only to live a few short days of pain.

Then the black stake was rear'd ! I see it now !
The years have roll'd away ! My brain will burst
With the fierce conflict, yet the faith shall conquer.

Annette. I cannot bear this dreadful story, father ;
Yet I must listen. O ! had you the heart
To see her burn ?

Dante (leaping up). Yes, yes ; I stood beside
The stake while she was fasten'd, and the wood
Heap'd up around, but as the hooded butchers
Lighted the pile, she gazed upon my face,
And knew me. O ! those straining eyes, they pierced
My writhing heart ; but then the smoke leap'd up,
And the dry wood 'gan crackle with the heat

Of the red, hungry flames. I raised my eyes
(I would not look, though midst the roaring flames
I heard her call my name) to where on high
Above the smoke the image of the Christ
Upon the wall behind was hung ;—methought
The pale, sad brow look'd stern, the eyes were bent
In pitying indignation on my face ;
Then I could see no longer, and my head
Grew dizzy, and I fell ; and when my senses
Return'd, I only saw a blacken'd heap
Of ashes, that was all. Amidst those cinders
Lay all my dream of love, and yet I tell you
I never loved her more than when I bade
Those scorching flames consume her graceful form.
For God will punish sin, and earthly flame
May save from endless fire ; remember this,
Thou who now shudderest at my tale of anguish.
Perhaps she thanks me now. O grant it, Lord !
Dread Judge, have mercy on me, and receive her
Into Thy arms at last, her sin wash'd out
By Thy redeeming blood.
Thus, Annette, ask yourself, *do I not know*
A lover's pangs ? can I not counsel thee ?
My love was e'en as thine, the fruit of passion,

And when it took a better, truer form,
God proved it thus! O! ask of him, my child,
To grant thee His own gift of perfect love,
And fear not, when thou kneelest at His feet,
To tell Him all; the Virgin's Son knows well
The tender feelings of a virgin's soul.

Now go, for I would be alone. [*Exit ANNETTE.*

She knows not

Alonzo's sister; in my breast alone
Lies the dread secret, yet I fain would have her—
Annette, I mean—know that I shall not shrink
From any duty; so, if she be wise,
She will not doubt the faith; and knowing this,
She may warn Ezzelin, also, if his heart,
As I suspect, has drunken in the lies
Of that accursèd Luther; but I must cease.
It was God's will. Shall I repine? a man
Complain because the Father wills to punish
His sins? Nay, it is just; and when the cord
Is loosed, and this poor body, wearied out,
Seeks its last bed, may I not meet again
The lost one, and behold that angel face
Sinless before His throne,—no longer stain'd
With tears, as when she lay upon the rack,

Suffering her punishment, but joyful, wearing
 Heaven's radiant smile? May she not come to
 meet me,

And stretch her hands with earnest thankfulness
 Towards me for that sharp and fiery torture,
 Which purged away the sin, and bade her enter
 In the bright land where tears are wiped away!

[*Exit.*

SCENE 2. *The Vestibule outside the Chapel.*

Enter EZZELIN.

Ezzelin.



WHY comes she not? The sun is riding
 high

In heaven's deep azure, and my time is
 short.

That priest is keeping her from me; *he* knows not
 A lover's pangs who waits to bid adieu.

Will she be there all day? Why, by my soul,

Her sins cannot be many: would I were

There to confess her! Still no sound or motion;

I cannot stay much longer. Hark! I hear

Her gentle footstep on the marble floor.
No, 'tis my fancy. That old father Dante
Seems fond of hearing her ; small blame to him
To dote on Annette, everyone who sees her
Loves her. I would I dared to interrupt them,
But no, I must not try it. Father Dante,
Be quick, I pray you ; I am waiting here !
Hark ! 'tis a footfall now ; by Heaven, she comes !
I thought I heard a sob,—yes, there again.
What has he said to her ? O God ! those priests !
No wonder men have oped their eyes at last,
And soon will spurn their bondage.

Enter ANNETTE, weeping.

Ezzelin (folding her to his breast). Dearest
Annette,
What is your grief ? What moves you thus to weep ?
Tell me, my own !

Annette. No, no ; I must not, can not.

Ezzelin. Nay, but you must. O do not sob like
that ;

Has your confessor been severe ? But fear not,
A few short years——

Annette. Nay, Ezzelin, for shame !

I heard his footsteps as he pass'd that way,
And then the door was slowly shut.

Ezzelin.

Sit down

Beside me, dear. You know to-day I go
To seek my father, and I hope indeed
To win him to my side. If not, I purpose
To push my fortunes in the Saxon Court,
And find a home for thee. Since first I left you
The world has changed. We stand upon the
brink

Of a great crisis. Soon the storm will come,
And Superstition with her thralling chains
Be swept away. Already in the North
Men are preparing for the contest dire,
When Truth and Error face to face must meet.
The German race is not like ours, inert
And satisfied with spiritual bondage ;
Their brains are keen to rend away the veil,
And view all things. Thou, love, hast often seen
How, ere the dawn, the darkest hour comes.
That hour is passing : Truth's bright sun will rise
In perfect glory, for the morning star
Shines bright already.

Annette.

You are very strange.

What can you mean by Truth's bright sun, my
Ezzelin?

Have you pick'd up these notions in the North?
I do not like you to be serious
And thus abstracted.

Ezzelin. Are you satisfied
To be no other than a captive, led
In priestly chains, and ever more believe
All that priests tell you, Annette?

Annette. Wherefore not?

Ezzelin. Does not your fancy sometimes strive
against
These spiritual laws, and long to know
Why these things are, to search uncheck'd, un-
hinder'd,
The boundless plains of knowledge?

Annette. Never yet
Have I been eager after knowledge,—love
Is all I crave.

Ezzelin. Yet, even *love* is chain'd ;
The so-call'd Church is mistress over this.
Does all you have been taught seem right and good?

Annette. You speak not as you did, my soul is
fearful.

What would you have me tell you?

Ezzelin.

This, in short,

Say,—have you ever doubted?

Annette.

Yes! a little.

Ezzelin. And so have I; and now I know your
faith

Is worse than none.

Annette.

O, Ezzelin! what mean you?

Ezzelin. A miserable lie, a rotten system

For gaining power over human souls,—

Such is the faith of Rome. I tell you freely,

I do not—will not hold it; and, my Annette,

You shall not hold it either.

Annette.

Ezzelin!

Ezzelin. Ay, you are frighten'd; but you need
not fear:

I will instruct you in the new belief,

For I have stood and heard the burning words

Of one who, once a monk, has burst his fetters—

The Doctor Luther!

Annette (making the sign of the cross). What! the
heretic?

Ezzelin. So many call him; and his enemies
Would shed his blood, but that full many a German

Is ready to protect him. I will fight !
 I, Ezzelin ! in his quarrel. He has friends
 In many a German Court ; to them I'll go,
 If Lord Alonzo will not do me right.
 You shall see Luther too.

Enter DANTE suddenly.

[EZZELIN] *springs to his feet with a gesture towards
 his sword ; ANNETTE starts back in dismay.*

Dante. Yes, at the stake !
 Unless he teaches other doctrines ! Ezzelin,
 I heard you speak of that apostate monk ;
 Say, do you know him ?

Ezzelin. Yes, I know him well !

Dante. And like him too ?

Ezzelin. Yes !

Dante. Well, the man can talk ;
 And doubtless what he teaches is attractive
 To ardent minds like yours. The faith of Christ
 Is far too poor for lofty intellects ;
 You must know more.

Ezzelin. The doctor says he teaches
 That faith of Christ.

Dante (frowning). And do you think so too ?

Ezzelin. How should I know? I am no
 theologian,
 But I seek knowledge, and he promises
 To teach men that.

Dante. Knowledge of good and evil?

Ezzelin. Yes, I suppose so!

Dante. So did some one else
 Of whom the Scriptures tell. Yet speak, my son ;
 If you have doubts, I trust *I* can explain them.
 Fear not to tell your troubles,—but, my daughter,
 You must depart.

Annette. Yes, father. Farewell, Ezzelin.
 Oh ! I shall count the moments till you come
 Back from your journey. (*Comes forward and em-
 braces him, whispering.*)

Ezzelin, beware ! he's an inquisitor.

Ezzelin. Farewell, my best, my dearest, loveliest !
 [*Exit* ANNETTE.]

Dante. Now hearken, son. I know the mind oft
 beats
 Against the bars of faith ; but when the body
 Would run to riot, virtuous youths restrain it.
 Why not the mind as well? The faith of Luther
 Is one which speaks to intellect alone,

And not to holiness. A mere belief
 In what few doubt is all that *he* requires.
 He says that Christ has bought us with His
 blood,
 And through that all-sufficing work our deeds,
 Either for good or evil, do not matter,
 So only we believe. Is this a faith
 To raise a world thus steep'd in wickedness?
 Think well of this, young Ezzelin. The serpent
 Said, "Ye shall be as gods; ye shall not die
 Through sin." Such was his teaching; endless
 woe

Was the result.—But now I see you wish
 To go. Farewell! and may the perfect wisdom
 Of the all-gracious Spirit fill your heart,
 And ever guard you in the narrow way,—
 The only one that leads to endless life.

Ezzelin (*coldly*). Farewell! [*Exit* EZZELIN.]

Dante. I thought as much,—he has embraced
 The doctrines of that cursèd renegade.
 A shrewd suspicion cross'd my mind when he
 Spoke of his sojourn at the Elector's Court.
 'Tis well! They *shall* not wed! I'll to Alonzo,
 And urge him to forbid it. If the youth

Refuse to yield, his doom must be the flame.

Yet even so may Annette's soul be saved.

She must not wed a heretic!—Ho! Andreas.

He is not there; I must go forth and seek him.

SCENE 3. ALONZO'S *Castle. A room.* ALONZO
alone, walking up and down.

Alonzo.

I KNOW not how it is, my heart is heavy
With grave foreboding of a coming ill,
And yet my state is rich, and, while I live,
Will ever flourish, for I stand alone,
Yet always ready, and my will is such
That none may thwart me. Though my trusty
soldiers
Are few, yet still I fear not mutiny,
For, by a little show of firm resolve,
I fetter down the hate of thousand hearts,
And, by a scanty force of men obedient,
Thousand unruly hearts are stay'd in terror,
While one wise man rules, lord. Such is Fate's law,
That passions wild shall shrink before firm reason—
Reason that fears no ill, and feels no pity!
Such is the life I lead—war, war for ever.

Fear curbs down hate. Those that hate much, fear
more,

And cowering, first in dread, find out thereafter
Obedience is a gain ; while all good men,
Preserved from riotous ills, bless the firm hand
That binds them but to shield them. Yet to me
What gain is this ? The love that kind hearts
moves,

The unrestrained joyousness of speech
With those no more than us ; the joyousness
Of those, whom deeds severe, whom iron sternness
Have not cut off from the fresh thoughts of inno-
cence,

Can never more be mine ! Cliffs that face tempests
Are doom'd to barrenness ; yet, like a cliff,
I'll bear my rock-bound front, and face, unmoved,
The scowls of hate, the sneers of dark revenge,
The cruelty of loneliness, the terrors
Which, like an enemy in some citadel,
Within the heart itself spread waste and ruin,
And lured by proud Ambition's tempting bait,
By Hope's sure guidance, by the consciousness
Of great deeds done, all foes without, within,
I'll face them and I'll rout them ; thus a name

I'll leave for time to tell ; and to my son
 I'll leave a sure possession won from discord
 By my undaunted toil. Men used to say
 That he had all my virtues, and united
 A gentleness his own. I grudge him naught.
 So may Alonzo's name and that of Ezzelin—
 Of him who won and him who ruled and prosper'd,
 Of him who curb'd a mutinous State to order,
 Of him who led an order'd State in happiness,
 Of him who men had slain because they fear'd him,
 Of him whom men obey'd because they loved him,
 Pass side by side together. Yet two things—
 Two things alone I ask for—Heaven grant them!—
 That I may see him ere I die, and he
 O'er-rule that luckless love which else may ruin
 him.

Love, thou wert born the enemy of all good,
 The world-deep curse, the deadly foe of reason.

(*Enter* GONZALO.)

Gonzalo. My lord, the father Dante waits with-
 out.

Alonzo. Admit him instantly. [*Exit* GONZALO.
 Why comes *he* here?

But I must always keep the Church's favour.
 The fear of endless punishment does much
 To hold in check the rabble. Here he comes.

(*Enter DANTE.*)

Welcome, my friend, I'm truly glad to see you.

Dante. And so am I, Alonzo, thus to meet you.
 We have not met for nearly ten long years.

Alonzo. It must be that at least; do you re-
 member

How first we met? Yet why recall that time?

I own to you I grieve to think on it.

I wrong'd you, Dante, sorely; but, alas!

Pride and ambition's freezing snows aye hang

Around the crest of him who strives to rise

Above his fellow-creatures. Yes, I err'd,

And, as you know, I sold her to a stranger,

Hoping to gain fresh strength. Poor Viola!

A few short years ago she pass'd away.

Yet why recall that time?

Dante (sadly). Ah! why, indeed?

Alonzo. They said she died in Spain; but no
 one knows.

She disappear'd, I know not where she lies.

In vain I sent a trusty courier
To search the matter out.—Your pardon, Dante ;
I fear I've wounded you !

Dante. Some wounds of youth
Are quickly heal'd ; but others, Lord Alonzo,
Death only cures ; but, for her sake and mine,
Speak not again of this. I've lately come
From Arnold's castle.

Alonzo. Does the man still live ?

Dante. He lives ; but I believe his days will
soon

Be number'd ; he is daring, and has lately
Been wounded in a fray, and now his health
Has yielded to the shock.

Alonzo (aside). That is good news.

(*Aloud.*) And that young, pale-faced girl, that
Annette, Dante,

Is she there still ?

Dante. Yes, she is there ; but I have news for
you.

Alonzo. Of whom ; not of my son ?

Dante. Of Ezzelin.

Alonzo (aside). By God, this priest has proved
my enemy !

I see his aim ; he is sent here to force me
To give consent. (*Aloud.*) And so you've seen
my son !

Does he still love that Annette ?

Dante. You oppose it ?

Alonzo. Do you ?

Dante. I do most certainly, Alonzo.

Alonzo. Thank Heaven ! I dreaded you would
be my foe,

And now you'll prove a friend most powerful.

Dante. Ezzelin has been in Saxony, and there
Has caught the infection of those cursèd doctrines.

Alonzo. Curse on the boy ; what shall we do,
my friend ?

Dante. Hark ! here comes some one.

(*Enter EZZELIN. He starts back on seeing
DANTE.*)

Alonzo. Ezzelin, my son,

Whence come you ?

Ezzelin. From Count Arnold's castle, father.

Alonzo. I thought as much. O you are duti-
ful

To seek your mistress first ! For six long years

We have been parted, Ezzelin, and you
Treat me like this?

Ezzelin. Father, I may have err'd,
But love is unrestrain'd by duty's law :
Yet pardon me.

Alonzo. I grant you pardon, freely.
How have you liked your ramblings, Ezzelin?
When first I let you travel I scarce hoped
To see you back so soon. You seem the same
As when you left ; the same in every way,
I fear me.

Ezzelin. Yes, unchanged in this at least,
I love *her* still most dearly.

Alonzo (scornfully). Fie ! my son !
Have you not learnt more wisdom than to love
A girl like that ?

Ezzelin. You do not know her, father,
Or you would love her too.

Alonzo. The girl is fair,
I have no doubt ; but know you that her father
Is dying, and I will not let you wed
Into a falling house.

Ezzelin. I am no more
A boy to be compell'd.

Alonzo (*fiercely*). I say you *shall* not !
By every saint in heaven, *Ezzelin*,
You shall not wed that maiden !

Ezzelin. Shall not, father ?

Alonzo. Ay, shall not, by my soul ! I think you
know me ;
My will has reign'd uncheck'd for many years ;
I've trodden down each hydra of rebellion
That dared to rise : think you I will be thwarted
By my own son ?

Ezzelin. And do you think that I,
Who face to face have stood with ghastly death
In war's stern game, and rush'd with dripping blade
Upon the Spanish spears ;—who have inherited
Your stern, determined will, can yield so lightly ?
I'll wed her, spite of you.

Alonzo. Beware, my son :
You are beside yourself with love, young fool !
Or else you had not dared to brave me thus.
Get you to bed ; to-morrow I will hear you,
When you are wise again. [*Laughs bitterly.*

Ezzelin. And do you mock me ?
From henceforth the parental ties are snapt ;
I own you not.

Alonzo. Look you, young man ; one word,
And you shall hear my dungeon's iron door
Grate loud behind you.

Ezzelin. Threatening will not daunt me,
Although I know full well your iron nature,
How, in your frantic wrath, you drove poor Lucia
Out of these walls to seek the convent cell,
Where she, who once was bred in luxury,
Must pass her days in fasting and rude toil,
And e'en submit to scourging, at the word
Of cruel priests.

Alonzo (to DANTE). Do you hear this, my friend,
What the young scoffer says ?

Dante. Hearken to me :
Lucia is well and happy ; in her cell
She prays for both of you. Young Ezzelin,
If you have ever loved her, do not scorn
Her blessèd lot ; and as for you, Alonzo,
Your harshness has brought forth a happy fruit ;
I never yet have seen a holier maiden
Than your fair daughter. (*To EZZELIN.*) Youth,
thou art too hot ;
Love which can brook no crossing is not love.

Ezzelin (drawing). I'll stay no longer ;

Your soldiers dare not seize me, Lord Alonzo !

[*Exit* EZZELIN.

Alonzo. Ho there, Gonzalo ! bid my guards disarm
The youth who just has gone. (*To* DANTE.) I will
confine him

Awhile until this fury has abated ;
And you, if you be urgent to convert him,
May visit him as often as you please.

[*Terrific uproar in the Castle.*

What is that tumult ? Ho ! Gonzalo, come !
What is it now ?

Enter GONZALO.

Gonzalo. Lord Ezzelin has escaped.

Alonzo. Hell's fury ! Has escaped ! Why did you
let him ?

Gonzalo. He sought a secret passage in the
wall,

And reach'd the rampart ere your orders came ;
The sentinels let him pass, and so he gain'd
The street ; but there a soldier bade him stand,
For we had signall'd, but Lord Ezzelin
Cut down the sentinel, and quickly mounting,
Urged his swift horse away, and by this time

Has reach'd the open plain ; six horsemen now
Are on his track.

Alonzo. Ay, that is well ; but hark you !

[*Whispers to GONZALO.*

Gonzalo. Yes, my good lord. (*To DANTE.*) The
sentinel is dying,

And our good chaplain is not there ; can you
Come with me, holy father ?

Dante. Yes, my son.

[*Exeunt DANTE and GONZALO.*

Alonzo. Oh Heaven, thou smilest on me ! this is
well ;

Had he been taken, I *must* have confined him
Here in the castle dungeon, and the priest
Would soon have found him unassailable
In his new doctrines, save by flame or torture.
Now they will catch him, and convey him hence
Unto my German castle, where no priest
Has ever enter'd. To the Father Dante
I'll say he has escaped, and to Count Arnold—
Nay, but I'll think on that anon. [*Exit.*

SCENE 4. *A Room in Arnold's Castle.* ARNOLD
asleep on a couch, ANNETTE sitting on a low stool
beside him.

Annette.

NINE days have pass'd, and still he does
 not come ;
 Where is he? what has happen'd? Has

he gone

To seek a home for me? But no, my heart,
 Ill-boding, says it is not that which stays him.

Oh, if he knew what agonizing fears

Rack me, he would not linger thus away.

Yes, it is well for men, whose life is action

And danger ; they can bear to leave us women

A little while ; new scenes, new actions rise

And court their minds, till in the giddy whirl

Of ever-fresh excitement, time slips past

On eager feet, and then, the journey o'er,

They seek our sides again. But who can soothe

The desolate and forsaken one who pines

In forced inaction, till each passing thought

Is fraught with terror of some undefined

Yet hideous stroke of fate. Could I but sleep
Till he returns ! but ah ! it is in vain
To hope for this ! I am indeed forlorn :
I see the sun blaze o'er the eastern hills
With listless eyes, I see the sunbeams fall
In burning noonday heat, and then the shades
Pass darkening o'er the fields, then in the west
The sun dips down ; then comes the yellow moon,
And night, with torturing dreams ; such is my life.
I, heedless, mark the hours that quickly pass,
Yet each new day seems longer than the last.

Arnold (*waking*). Is Annette there ?

Annette. Yes, father ; do you want me ?

Arnold. What is the hour, my child ?

Annette. 'Tis nigh on sunset.

Arnold. The sun is setting, and my life sinks down,
Following his steps. My Annette, I had hope
To see you and your Ezzelin united ;
Not so has Heaven will'd it, for I feel
I shall not see another sun.

Annette. Dear father,

Do not speak thus, you are not really worse.

Arnold. Deceive me not ; the fever has abated,
But all my strength is gone. I trust to-night

To make my peace with Heaven. Would that Dante
Were here !

Annette (in a forced voice). Can we not seek him,
father dear ?

Arnold. No, Annette ; 'twould be vain, my dearest
child.

If you can bear to hear it, I would speak
About your future life : the only one
Who lives and bears our name, is one Lorenzo ;
I do not know him well, but many summers
Have o'er him pass'd ; to him the lands descend
Upon my death ; you, Annette, will be left
An unprotected orphan. In the care
Of Dante I have placed you—nay, my child,
Weep not like that ! the years will roll away,
And we shall meet again. You must not fear
Your father's friend. Dante is rather stern,
And knows not maidens' ways ; but he is true,
And will befriend you, so you but obey
His ghostly counsels.

Annette. Father, but one word !
Oh, I beseech you, father, do not let him
Force me to take the veil !

Arnold. Do not fear,

My darling child ! The cloister walls shall never
 Enclose your graceful form ; those waving locks,
 So long, so long my pride, shall never fall
 Beneath the shears. Have you forgotten Ezzelin ?

Annette. Ezzelin ! Oh no, but if you leave me, father,
 Thus unprotected, I shall be the prey
 Of his stern father's wiles. If Ezzelin
 Would only come, I should be safe ; but now
 You leave me, and he is not by to help.
 What if he never come again—must I
 Trust to a priest ? And Dante does not like me ;
 Nay, I am sure, that once within his power,
 The cloister walls would be my prison. Father,
 Is there no way to save me ?

Arnold. None but this—
 By marriage, Annette. I had many friends,
 But I am friendless now ; stern death has reap'd
 The comrades of my youth ; but this I tell you—
 Should Ezzelin never come, your only trust
 Must be in Dante. Wherefore should you fear him ?

Annette (aside). I dare not tell him how my heart
 has learn'd
 To doubt the Church's faith. (*Aloud.*) What would
 he do with me ?

Arnold. Place you as pensioner in some old
convent,
For it's protection that you need, not money ;
I am not rich, but you will have enough
To live on without stint or care, my child.
But I am weary now. Ho ! Tonio, come
And lead me to my room.

Enter TONIO.

My dearest Annette,
You have been ever good and dutiful,
A grateful daughter ; may God's blessing rest
Upon your youthful head ! Good night, my child ;
We'll meet again when morning comes.

[*Exit with* TONIO.

Annette. O why on me must grief and anguish fall?
How long shall this poor heart be pierced and wrung
With blow on blow ? what will the next one be ?
Oh, I could long for death ! the grave were better
Than this intolerable agony,
With none to comfort, none to weep with me,
No loving breast on which to lay my head,
And sob out all my sorrow ; no, not one
To say, " I will protect thee !" Here I stand,

Almost an orphan, and in trembling fear
 That some black tale will soon invade my ears.
 Hark ! hark ! a messenger ! Now does my heart
 Leap up and quiver, as the panting deer
 Who, wounded, seeks some lonely forest glade
 To die, and, as he cools his bleeding sides
 With woodland dews, hears in the distance bay
 The savage bloodhounds, as their muzzles track
 His path. O God ! what is it ? if I stand
 Against the door, their words will reach my ears ;
 I can but try it.

[*Leans against the door. A voice is heard without.*

Voice. Hush ! do not speak so loud—Count
 Arnold's dying.

What of Lord Ezzelin ? Nay, it *cannot be!*
 Oh my poor lady ! Nay, but are you sure
 It was *his* body ?

Another Voice. Ah, 'tis but too true !
 I knew him from his childhood ; he is dead ;
 I saw him stretch'd among the dewy brambles,
 While the red life-blood drench'd their slender
 boughs.

[ANNETTE utters a low groan and falls
senseless on the floor.

SCENE 5. *ARNOLD'S Castle. ANNETTE sitting alone.*

Annette.

DEAD! dead! and in the grave; and I can
never

See him again, nor even share his lot.
Oh! why were we two made? or why, if made,
Allow'd to meet and love? or if allow'd,
Why not cut off together? Can the rose
Blossom and live when the green stem is snapp'd?
Can the heart beat, when from the bleeding trunk
The head is torn? No! in the deadly stroke
Both die: and why may I not perish too?
I cannot live alone; the cruel blow
Which tore my murder'd Ezzelin from my side
Crush'd all of good within me; would that night
Were ever o'er me with its shrouding mist.
Vain, vain desire; when has mortal grief
E'er stay'd the fleeting hours? Could he have come
But for a moment to my arms again,
To hear me pledge my never-ending love
Before the death-god call'd him, I should mourn

With far less grief than now. Oh, cruel Death!
Hast thou no pity, none? Can not the hope
Of larger booty tempt thee to give up
The prey an instant; since if he *could* come
I would not stay behind him,—we would seek
Thy mouldering cells together. Ah! I rave.
My brain is struggling against the weight
That presses on it. Better, yes, far better,
When still supine I lay beneath the stroke,
So stunn'd that thought and memory fled alike.
Now they return again, and add new torture,
Stabbing my bleeding senses with the thought
Of that last scene amongst those crimson'd
 brambles,
When struggling with the murderers he fell,
And in the rushing torrent of his blood
My heart was borne away. Fain would I seek
Oblivion, but it comes not; and the scene
Dances before my eyes, until at last
A sickening faintness comes which blunts awhile
Fancy's cold knife. . . . Hark! there is some one
 coming.
Why must they come to me? To be alone
Is all I ask, and yet they will not grant it.

Enter DANTE and LUCIA.

Dante. My dearest child! my heart has bled for
you,

For I have heard it all. I know full well
In the first hour of grief, 'tis hard to hear
A stranger offer comfort; but, my child,
I will not leave the castle; your dear father
Ask'd me to care for you, so if you want
To see me I will come at once. May God
Turn e'en this bitter trial to your good;
For those on whom He lays the heaviest cross
He loves the best. Could we but feel this more,
Grief would be welcome. May His benediction
Fill you with that calm peace He left to all
Who follow in His footsteps. [*Exit DANTE.*

Annette. Is he gone?

Lucia. Yes, dearest, he is gone! Full well he
knows

That grief must have its way.

Annette. The cunning serpent.

Lucia. Serpent! Who do you mean?

Annette. The father Dante.

Lucia. Annette, for shame! grief surely has
overcome

Your better nature.

Annette. Ezzelin was your brother
And my betrothed ; but for that wretched priest,
He now had been beside me. I am sure
He set Alonzo's mind against our marriage,
And I believe hired the bloody wretches
Who murder'd Ezzelin.

Lucia. Annette ! are you mad ?
Remember whom you speak against ! (*Clasping her
hands.*) O God,
Pardon her, for she knows not what she says

Annette. Know you not Dante's cruel nature,
Lucia ?

Have you not heard how he condemn'd a maiden
To suffer on the rack, and at the stake
Yield up her life amidst the ravening flames,—
One whom he loved,—because she was a heretic ?
That was enough ; if he had but suspected
That Ezzelin. . . . O my God ! what am I saying ?
Forget it, Lucia.

Lucia (*crossing herself with a shudder*). Ezzelin a
heretic !

Annette. Oh, no ! he was not one. Oh, do not listen
To what I say ! I have been very wicked.

(*Aside.*) If they but find out what he thought, his
body

Will be dug up and burnt as if unworthy
Of Christian burial. My Ezzelin !

They shall not treat even your cold remains
With disrespect. (*Aloud.*) Forgive me, dearest
Lucia !

My sorrow is too much for me. I meant not
To speak like that of Dante. You are kind,
Dear Lucia, thus to come and sit with me,
For I need comfort sorely. (*Bursts into tears.*)

Lucia (gently). So I thought,

My Annette. You have had a bitter cross
To bear, I know ; but oh ! you need not droop
In quenchless grief, for he was pure and good,
And every virtue which adorn'd his nature
And made you love him, Annette, now shines
bright

In undimm'd radiance in our Father's presence ;
For if you loved him when his heart still bore
The stains of sin, then how much more may you
Love him in Heaven, for the gates of death
Cannot keep love from entering, since by love
Death's portals first were open'd.

Annette. Lucia, tell me,
 You are a nun, and yet you speak as though
 You had known love like Ezzelin's for me.
 —Nay! nay! I did not mean to wound you thus.
 Those quivering lips and tearful eyes have told
 me
 All I would know.

Lucia (speaking with effort). Before I took the
 veil
 I shared the common cross of women, Annette.
 I loved and was beloved when Ezzelin went,
 And my stern father bade me seek a home
 Apart from him. We could not wed. I felt
 I could not have return'd my lover's vows
 By such a treacherous scheme as let him wed
 With a deserted and undower'd maiden,
 For he was poor and so—and so we parted,
 Never to meet again on earth. I know not
 Whether he lives or not; yet every day
 Brings us both nearer to a blessèd union
 Among the saints. Dear Annette, would you like
 To take the veil?

Annette (excitedly). No, no! I will not do it!
 Are you sent here to lure me to the cloister?

Lucia. But wherefore not, dear friend? What
 happier refuge
 Can you discover than the peaceful cell?
 Forgive me if I say it,—you are friendless.
 I know you loved my brother, and you cannot
 Wed with another. How can you do better
 Than seek a holy life like ours (*rises and clasps*
her hands together)—a life
 Of constant prayer and deeds of charity,
 Oft cheer'd by glimpses of the future glory
 Which crowns a faithful virgin; and at last
 Received above, to live for ever blest,
 Following the Lamb where'er His footsteps lead.
 Think well on this; I would not urge you now.
 May He who smiled on blessèd Magdalene,
 In His dear love persuade you also, dear,
 To choose the better part!

Annette (impatiently). Hark! some one comes!

Lucia. Then I'll withdraw. O think on what
 I've said!

If you decide to join us, there will be
 One there at least ready and glad to give you
 A sister's welcome to your peaceful home.

[*Exit LUCIA.*

Annette. Another wile to lure me to the cloister!
 Dante has sent her here. I'd rather wed
 The worst of men than take the convent veil.
 Ezzelin would sooner see me thus.

Enter TONIO.

Tonio. My lady,
 The Signor da Fiori has arrived
 And asks for you. Shall I call Father Dante?

Annette (hurriedly). No! I'll receive him; bid
 him come this way.
 I must be married, Ezzelin; for thy sake,

[*Exit* TONIO.]

My murder'd love, I'll do it. Shall I enter
 One of those houses which support the faith
 Which thou didst hate?

Enter TONIO and LORENZO DA FIORI.

Tonio. Signor Fiori, lady.

Annette. I bid you welcome, signor, to your
 castle.

Forgive me for my want of courtesy,
 But you have heard how bitterly I've suffer'd
 Of late, in losing my dear father.

Lorenzo. Lady!

Do not speak thus, I pray you. I once knew

Your worthy father ; you, I trust, will honour me
By making this your home a little while. [*Aside.*
The girl is pretty, and might soon be taught
To be a careful wife.

Annette. I thank you, signor ;
Will you retire unto the banquet-hall ?
I cannot favour you to-night.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

End of Second Act.





ACT III.

SCENE I. LORENZO'S *Castle* (formerly ARNOLD'S).

A room.

Enter UBERTO.

Uberto.

MAY Heaven's plague light upon them both !

This life

Is past enduring : O for the golden days
When poor Count Arnold lived !—this castle then
Was fit for man's abode ; now Lady Annette
Sulks all the day, and as for that Lorenzo,
If a poor man but tastes a cup of wine,
He scowls as if he'd done some fearful deed.
What with her temper and his stinginess,
I know not how to live. I thought her love
For Ezzelin was but stuff. Why did she wed
That hoary miser ?—not but what I smiled
When she pursued him, and the aged gallant

Leer'd softly from the corners of his eyes,
 And spoke in courtly phrases, conn'd from books
 In the old library. But now all's past,
 They have been wed a twelvemonth, by my soul ;
 And I—why, all my clothes hang loose and free
 Upon my shrivell'd frame. The only pleasures
 Lorenzo lets me have are idleness
 And slumber ; these, he says, will cost him nothing.
 Ha ! here's a flask of wine. I'll drink it up :
 No one is looking. What a happy chance !
 Who can have left it there? [*Drinks.*

Enter LORENZO, *in an old robe.*

Lorenzo. No one is looking?
 Indeed, sir monk, I saw you all the time.
 What have you got? Good Heavens ! the flask of
 wine
 I left for strangers ! Hark you, sirrah priest,
 You only live on sufferance here ; beware
 What you are doing.

Uberto. Signor, a man must live.
 A priest indeed is vow'd to self-denial,
 But even we at times are overcome
 By thirst and hunger.

Lorenzo (*scornfully*). Thirst and hunger, priest !
Have you not breakfasted ?

Uberto. Five hours ago.

Lorenzo. Can you not wait till dinner, then ? must
you

Be ever drinking ? Why, methinks a man
Like you is ruinous. Where is my wife ?
Priests always know where women are.

Uberto. I saw

The Lady Annette pass some time ago.

Lorenzo. Where was she going, priest—tell me at
once ?

Uberto. I know not.

Lorenzo. What ! you know not ? You shall know.

Uberto. But here she comes, ask her yourself.

Enter ANNETTE.

Lorenzo. Here, Annette,

Where have you been ?

Annette. Why do you wish to know ?

Lorenzo. Have you forgotten I'm your husband,
girl !

No one shall leave this house without *my* know
ledge ;

I do believe I'm always watch'd by spies.
You have been in the cellars.

Annette. No, indeed,
I have not been there.

Lorenzo. But I say you have :
If ever you go there again, I'll turn
Your chamber to a prison. You shall stay there
Until your cheek grows pale. Tell me, proud girl,
Am I the master here or you?

Annette. Lorenzo,
I never have been there. You, if you like,
May wander in the gloomy rooms below :
I'd rather not.—But why are you suspicious?

Lorenzo. What's that to you? I choose to be
suspicious ;
It is my nature. If you wanted love
You should have married some young cavalier,
[ANNETTE *turns away.*
And not a man whose beard is fleck'd with grey.
I never took you for a wife, my lady ;
All that I wanted was a careful mistress
To keep my house and make my servants work.

Annette (bitterly). Oh, Ezzelin ! would I were
dead beside thee !

Lorenzo. Ha! what is that? Who may this
Ezzelin be?

I've heard you murmur Ezzelin in your dreams;
Now who is he? Oh, oh!—and do you weep?
Doubtless he loved you once. And now methinks
I've heard of him: a passionate young braggart,
Who was waylaid and murder'd in his flight
From his old father's house.

Uberto. Signor, for shame!
Have you not heard how tenderly she loved
Poor Ezzelin?

Lorenzo. Speak when you're wanted, priest.
Ha! who comes now? Some plaguy stranger, surely,
Who has been here in Arnold's time, and deems,
Because *he* wasted all his means on strangers,
That I shall do the same.

Enter ANDREAS.

Who are you, fellow?

Andreas. Signor, I come from Father Dante.

Lorenzo. Well,
What's that to me?

Andreas. He purposes to come here,
And stay some days perhaps, your guest.

Lorenzo.

Indeed !

I never ask'd him here ; another trick
 Of yours, you selfish girl. Have you no thought
 Save for yourself, that you must thus invite
 Strangers to eat your husband's bread, and tax
 His slender means ?

Annette.

Indeed, I never ask'd him.

Uberto (in a low voice to LORENZO). Take heed
 to what you say, the father Dante
 Is one whose name is known throughout the land
 As one of power unlimited—in fact,
 He's an Inquisitor. You must not speak
 About him thus.

Lorenzo.

And so he wants to come
 And stay here, does he ?

Andreas.

So he purposes.

Lorenzo. Tell him I shall be glad to see him, fellow.

Andreas. I will, good signor. He will come to-
 morrow.

Farewell.

Lorenzo. May curses light upon those priests !

Uberto (aside). Beware ! your life is in my hands,
 Lorenzo.

[*Exit* UBERTO.]

Annette. Lorenzo, you had best be careful now.

Lorenzo. And wherefore, madam, I should like
to know?

So you must lecture me?

Annette. 'Tis for your good.

Take heed to what you say in Dante's presence.

Lorenzo. Ha! ha! I am not Ezzelin, to be school'd
By you. Ha! ha! where's that old rogue Uberto?
What, what, you will not answer? O I see
You're weeping, are you? Well, begone upstairs,
And weep your fill up there.—But nay, you shall not.
Stop where you are. [Exit LORENZO.

Annette. And I must ever live
Beside this heartless wretch! O Ezzelin,
I did it for thy sake, and see my fate!
How the old miser taunts me with thy name.
My only peaceful time is when I sleep
And dream of thee, but O! the dreadful waking!
To know him by me like some fiendish shape
Bred from the spells of nightmare, O! it is horrible.
Chain'd to a man like that, yet with the memory
Of those bright, happy days! When will it end?
When will death come? One may die any day,
And one may live. O come in mercy, death!

Thou art the only friend can serve me now.
Not many young as I seek after thee,
And yet thy scythe is daily, hourly, reaping
The flowers of youth ; then do not pass me by,
Break, break the wither'd stalk that sadly bends
Over the scatter'd leaves of faded joys.
Yes, it is strange how bitterly I hated
That Dante : now the thought of seeing him,
Of seeing any one whose name is link'd
To those glad days, is pleasing, and I long
To see once more the haughty priest who crush'd
My youthful life, confronted with Lorenzo.
How will the wretch who calls me wife, endure
The searching glance of Dante's eagle eye?
Yet Heaven is my witness that I tried
Even to love Lorenzo. Now 'tis past,
And all my hope is centred in one thing,—
An early death, a quiet, lonely grave.

SCENE 2. *A room in a castle in the Tyrol.*

Ezzelin (alone).



TWELVE months have pass'd, autumn re-
 turns again,
 And still I linger here a prisoner,
 And watch each day the sun sink slowly down
 Behind the fir woods on yon western ridge.
 Yes, *he* can travel, *he* can light the place
 Where Annette is ; but I, when shall I see her ?
 Must I die here within these dreary walls,
 With all my breast still fired by keenest passion,
 Like some proud eagle girt by cruel bars ?
 Oh ! madden'd haste ! Oh ! fatal, fatal journey !
 Oh ! reckless threat ! Why did I ever go ?
 Did I not know my father's iron will ?
 What fury then misled me ? Had I but sought
 My northern home at once ! The goading thought
 Is fraught with woe untold, and careless fancy
 Mocks me with visions of the glorious prize
 Snatch'd from me. Oh ! she seems to stand before
 me,

And wave the treasures of her golden hair
Before my eyes, while in the azure depths
Of her bright orbs a look of sad reproach
Dwells, and the accents of that silver voice
Speak to me, "Ezzelin, Ezzelin, where art thou?
Ah, love! we had been happy for awhile.
I cannot come. What if she deems me faithless?
Oh! could I but escape! 'Tis vain, 'tis vain!
Despair before me points alone to death,
And the deep calm around this dreary castle
Is maddening! Oh! how hard to see the grass
Below my grated window. Were I there
They should not bring me here alive again.
Curse on the crafty ruffians, and my curse
Light heavily upon my father's head.
Foul-mouth'd Ambition, blackest spawn of hell,
How hast thou wasted many a happy love!
When all the ills, which from Pandora's box
Leap'd forth, shall meet around the throne of
Satan,
Each with the record of his ghastly harvest,
Few will compete with *thee*. Yet not alone
For Annette's sake I curse thee, stern Alonzo:
My heart was full of schemes to aid the cause

Of liberty ;—with sword and tongue to work
 With Hutten and Sickingen in the war
 With the usurping Church. Now I am here,
 Like a bright sword rusted and laid aside,
 My hopes of glory sped

(An owl screams.)

Ha! 'tis the owl,
 Which hoots the rising moon with gibing scream,
 Angry that e'en her silver eye should watch
 His ravening flight across the weedy lake.
 Behind the wood the moon shines through the
 mists
 Which late, like white and ghostly spectres, hover'd
 O'er the still gleam-lit water, now the fogs
 Are turn'd to blood-red hues beneath the moon.

(The owl screams again.)

Where is the night-bird? Ah! I see him now
 Gliding athwart the mists, a dull grey speck ;
 Now plainer he appears ; his long grey wings
 Beat the cold air with noisless touch ; at last
 The lake is cross'd: he hovers o'er the grass,
 Intent on prey. The timid hares creep forth,
 And from the distant wood the red fox yelps ;

And now the moon has risen, and her face
 Turns into silver, as she breaks the mists,
 And a wide flood of light illumines the water,
 Save where the clear-cut shadows of the hills
 Rest on its surface. Ah, sweet eventide !
 Not even harsh captivity can rob me
 Of all thy charms. (*Starts.*) What is that deep-
 toned sound
 Which floats towards me on the wailing breeze ?
 A death-bell tolls ; how strangely sound the notes !
 'Tis but some convent bell, which tolls afar
 The requiem of a nun ; hence Superstition,
 Vex me not with thy terrors ; in the world
 Are mysteries enough without the aid
 Of thine unearthly fancies. *[Lies down.*

SCENE 3. LORENZO'S *Castle.* (*A room.*)

Annette.



AND so he comes to-day ! A year has flown
 Since last we met ; perchance I wrong'd
 him then.

Stern, and devoted to the Church of Rome,

He is, I know ; but still he could not stoop
To murder. Yet who could have done the deed ?
I know not ; let it rest among the crimes
Which, hidden from mankind, yet cry for ven-
geance

Before the throne of God 'Tis very strange,
But o'er my heart a boding shadow creeps,
As if this life of weary, dull despair
Were drawing to an end, and some great change
Coming towards me. As I look'd last night
Out of my casement towards the pine-girt rock
They call the Raven's Crag, methought I heard
The sable bird croak loud, and, as he ceased,
From the white waves afar the sea-gull cried.
Then all was still awhile, and then, methought,
Across the darkening plain, distinct and clear,
A death-bell sounded. Some one's doom is near :
Can it be mine ? No, that were far too good
For me, ill-fortune's victim . . . Do not strive
To pierce the mystery. Ha ! who comes here ?

Enter TONIO, *showing in* DANTE.

Annette. Welcome, my father ! You have long
delay'd

Your visit to me.

Dante. Yes, my daughter ; those
Who guard the fold have little time for pleasure.
I deeply grieve that I was call'd away
Before your marriage day. Where is your husband?
I fain would see him.

Annette. I will go and fetch him.

[*Exit* ANNETTE.]

Dante. I like not this, she seems cast down and
bow'd,
As if in sorrow unassuaged she mourn'd
O'er Ezzelin's tomb. Why did she wed Lorenzo?
Men say he is a miser, and 'tis strange
That she should marry where love cannot be.
The girl is not inconstant, and she loved
Alonzo's son. Her marriage spoil'd my purpose
To fold her in the cloister. Ha ! 'twas that !
She must have learn'd my scheme, and fearing
this,
Have ta'en the marriage vows with this old man.
A daring thing to do ; it was vexatious
I could not stay here when her father died.
Our life is ever thus ; the news from Rome
Was urgent, and I could not linger here.

Enter UBERTO.

Uberto. Welcome, dear brother; times, alas! have
changed

Since last I met you here.

Dante. Methinks they have.

You do not look as well as you did then.

Uberto. Fasting is very well indeed *at times* :

But here my life is one continued fast.

And not the flesh alone is sorely weaken'd,

But the poor spirit also shares its fate.

Dante. Then it is true what I have lately heard
About Lorenzo?

Uberto. Do not speak of him;

It makes me shiver.

Dante. Then you do not like him?

Uberto. Like him! why, no one ever liked him yet,
Not e'en his wife.

Dante. I thought as much, my brother.

Uberto. Their wedded life is one perpetual feud.
He never speaks to her except to scold her :
In fact he never speaks to anybody
In other way than this.

Dante. How does she bear it?

Uberto. Poor girl, she seems as if she did not care

For anything—her heart is almost broken.

Dante. What did she wed him for?

Uberto. Heaven only knows!

The man's a lean, old, discontented miser,
And half a heretic.

Dante (sternly). This must be look'd to.

Uberto (aside). Plague on my tongue, and his
ill-temper'd zeal.

(*Aloud.*) I only meant to say he does not care
About religion; you must not imagine
That he believes in Luther's cursèd doctrine.

Dante. You should exhort him, brother. Pardon
me,

We must not sleep in dangerous times like these.

Uberto. He would not listen to me.

Dante. Warn him, then:

Say that the Inquisition is not rich,
And that a law has given them power to seize
The wealth of those who are believed to favour
The Lutheran doctrines.

Uberto. Cease! Lorenzo comes.

Enter LORENZO and ANNETTE.

Annette. This is the father Dante.

Lorenzo.

Oh, indeed !

Do you suppose I cannot use my eyes ?
There are but two here, and I know Uberto,
So that the other must be Dante. Yes,
I've heard of him.

Dante. Nothing but good, I trust.*Lorenzo.* O surely. What's the latest news from
Rome ?

Dante. A general alarm pervades the city
Touching the new-born heresies of Luther.
Men deem the pontiff casts uneasy looks
Towards the north ; the cardinals and bishops
Say that the weapons of the Holy Office
Are blunted and inactive, gold is wanted
To edge St. Peter's sword, the laity
Must give their treasure to the new Crusade.
And more than this, the Church is now enforced
To confiscate the goods of such as favour
The new belief, therefore it doth behove
All men to seek her favour by their zeal
For the true faith ; as for the loose and careless
She hath her arm laid bare.

Lorenzo.

Ay, burn them all.

Dante. I'm glad to see you zealous for the faith.

'Tis well, but do not let your zeal outrun
 The bounds of Christian charity; the Church
 Takes not the sword until all other means
 Have fail'd, e'en as the gardener pray'd his lord
 To spare the barren vine.

Lorenzo. Holy man,
 Your words are eloquent, I pray you honour
 My castle for a little while, in truth
 I'll do my best to make your entertainment
 Such as becomes a father of the Church.
 But I am poor, my lady young and careless,
 Still, since I know that priests are vow'd to
 fasting,
 You will forgive me if your fare be scant.

[*To ANNETTE, who looks impatient.*

Now do not speak, you always spoil my plans.

Dante. Thanks, signor, do not vex yourself for me.

Annette. My father, have you heard of Lucia
 lately?

Dante. Alonzo's daughter? Yes. Her Christian life
 Has won her high preferment in the convent,
 And when the Abbess died, the nuns elected
 Lucia to fill her place; though young in years,
 Her conduct is esteem'd by all the sisters

As fitted for the post.

Lorenzo (to ANNETTE). And who is Lucia?

Annette. A friend of mine.

Lorenzo. That answer will not do,
I must know more.

Dante. You cannot well know more.—
But hark! who comes this way? I hear the tramp
Of some fast horse, as if a messenger
Charged with important news came towards the
castle.

Lorenzo. By Heaven, I trust 'tis not another
stranger;
These visitors will ruin me, I know.

Enter ANTONIO.

Antonio (to DANTE). O, holy father, I have fearful
news
To tell you—Lord Alonzo has been murder'd!

Annette (staggers against the wall). Murder'd!

O God of Justice, 'tis Thy work!

Dante. Murder'd! it cannot be!

Antonio. He is not dead,
But life is ebbing fast, and he has sent
For you in haste.

Dante. Who did the fatal deed?

Antonio. We know not, the assassin leap'd the window,
And has escaped.

Dante (to LORENZO). Forgive me, worthy signor,
But I must go, I trust I come in time.

Look to the Lady Annette, she has fainted.

[*Exeunt DANTE and ANTONIO ; UBERTO and attendants carry ANNETTE out.*]

Lorenzo. By all the Saints I am well quit of him :
She only sent for him to lecture me.

SCENE 4. ALONZO'S Castle. A room. ALONZO stretched on a couch.

Alonzo.



AND are they gone at last, the noisy crew
Who feign'd to weep around my dying bed?
All gone? O Saints! to be struck down
like this

Beneath a murderer's knife, when all my plans
Were crown'd with victory! Am I really dying?
So said the leech. I was not made for death.
Cannot the spirit by its iron strength

Support the failing body. All things as yet
 Have yielded to me, now must death be conqueror?
 Nay, if I cannot win the strife, at least
 I will not tremble. I will die,—I will,—
 E'en as I lived. Avaunt! ye boding thoughts.
 Shall I be made the sport of mocking fiends,
 Who ruled the passions of ten thousand hearts,
 And crush'd beneath my heel like writhing worms,
 Fell spirits from whose schemes Satan himself
 Had learnt a bitter lesson; and shall death
 Subdue me? Put forth all thy thousand terrors,
 And since I cannot choose but yield, I'll sink,
 Yet not dismember'd, like a bark whom waves
 'Whelm in mid ocean. Ay, these darkening eyes,
 This sudden ceasing of the raging pain,
 Tell me too truly that death hovers o'er me.
 Come, then! [Faints away.]

Enter DANTE and SERVANT.

Dante. Leave us alone, myson.—Yes, there he lies,
 Swathed round in blood-stain'd bandages, who late
 Possess'd such power as men can rarely gain.
 Such is the fate of despots. Is he dead?
 Upon his brow the fearful sweat of death

Stands out in chilly drops. Can I not rouse him?

Alonzo!

Alonzo (faintly). Who is there? I know thy face,
But cannot now recall it.

Dante. I am Dante.

Alonzo (feebly). Dante?

Dante. Dante Colonna.

Alonzo. Ay, the youth

Who sought my sister. I remember thee.

What wouldst thou? She is wed.

Dante. Alas! my son,
All that is o'er. Hast thou no thought to make
Confession of thy sins?

Alonzo. Confession, father?
I cannot do it! Brain and sense are reeling,
I *cannot* call them up!

Dante. And knowest thou not
The sinner's doom,—the lake of fire,—the worm
Which cannot die; and wilt thou dare to trifle
While the red flames are heated for thy soul?

Alonzo. I cannot tell them now; had you but come
An hour ago—

Dante. Say only, "I have sinn'd,"
And He who died for thee shall snatch thy spirit

Back from the fiend.

Alonzo. Yes ; more than that I cannot !

Father, if you will have it, I have sinn'd.—

But life goes fast : young Ezzelin, lives he yet ?

Will he still thwart me ? In my German castle

A year has pass'd over his head—they shall not,—

I say, they shall not wed ! [Dies.

Dante.

May God absolve thee !

Amidst the penal fires be thy soul

Purified quickly, and thy bloody death

Warn all who leave the narrow way of virtue

To scale the dizzy heights of wild ambition.

Alas ! poor wretched man, struck down by God

When all thy schemes were crown'd with victory.

'Tis ever thus : the bolt is long delay'd,

While we wax haughty, and at last forget

That *He* reigns over all. O could we see

Behind the clouds of heaven, the angry Judge

Grasping the lightning as the years roll on,

And the dread doom comes nearer. Ah ! may Christ

In His sweet love accept that last confession.

[Turns to the body.

How calm the smile which dawns upon that face

Hush'd in death's perfect slumber ! As I gaze

Upon those features, sad remembrance comes
 Of thee, my lost and loved one ! Yes, he wears
 A smile like thine. I seem to see thee sleeping
 Upon the dungeon floor, as once I saw thee
 After the torture, when the rack's sharp anguish
 Was lull'd by sleep's oblivious charm, and dreams
 Dispell'd awhile the knowledge of the doom
 Awaiting thee ;—ay, such fond hopes were mine
 In manhood's early years. [*Takes out the crucifix.*

But Thou hast placed

Thy tortured form across the evil way.
 Despised, rejected, dying for my sake,
 No earthly love was Thine ! Upon that Tree
 Let me hang with Thee, till a Saviour's pangs
 Pierce this weak heart, and such a love as thine
 Burn through me ; yes, the sacred love of God,
 Which dares to judge, yet ever wills to save.—
 Now to my work. The dead man spoke of Ezzelin
 Before he died—the youth we thought was dead !
 Poor Annette, thou wert sore deceived ! Where, then,
 May Ezzelin be ? Alonzo spoke, I think,
 Of some old castle. I must speak with those
 Who have the secret, then I'll send Sebastian
 To bring the youth to me ; here I'll remain

Until the burial, and perhaps 'twere well
 To summon to my aid a score of soldiers
 To help the castle guards, and hold in check
 The rabble here.—Ho! Andreas!

Enter ANDREAS.


Send out
 To seek Sebastian. Heaven grant that Ezzelin
 May not prove froward!

[*Exeunt DANTE and ANDREAS.*

SCENE 5. *The Castle in the Tyrol.*

EZZELIN *alone, pacing up and down.*

Ezzelin.

Y Heaven, this is too much! I cannot
 bear it
 Much longer—nay, I will not; either life
 In perfect liberty, or else the grave!
 What is my life indeed?—a sort of death,
 A slow decay of mind and body also,
 A weight which presses on the fever'd brain
 With stern, relentless pressure, or a flame
 Of burning wrath which sears it? I, shall I
 Fear death? What more of misery can death

Afford?—nay, then my anguish will be less
 Than lingering here, like Ixion, ever burnt
 By my fierce love. What boots my youthful strength,
 The glorious dreams of usefulness to others
 Which fill'd my heart, how she and I would live
 To serve mankind? What boots the thirst for know-
 ledge

At length unclosed to man, and worse, O! worse,
 The passionate love by which I vowed to her
 My strength, my zeal, my talents, ay, my life.
 I laid them at her feet; all that God gave me
 I would have given her. Heaven, hast thou *no* pity?
 Say, can I serve thee here? were I but free
 Beside her, I would work alike for thee
 And for mankind. God! let thy deadly lightning,
 The pale blue sword of Heaven, descend and strike
 This cursèd tower, though amongst its ruins
 My blacken'd form would lie. O! damned bars!
 Can I not break you? [*Shakes the bars furiously.*

Nay, you shall give way.

Fiends give me strength, if God will not: break!
 break!

One last attempt for Annette.

[*Wrenches the bars frantically; they give way.*

It is done !

Now how shall I escape ?—my brain grows dizzy
Ill used to such success. I will command it
And summon up my powers ; 'tis for her !
Where is the sentinel ? Next time he passes
I will attempt the leap : the grass seems nearer
Than ever. See ! a horseman riding up
With news. Good Heavens ! the sentinel has
vanish'd.

The messenger alights, his charger feeds
Unwatch'd ; now, now, for freedom and for Annette !

[Leaps the window.

End of Third Act.





ACT IV.

SCENE I. LORENZO'S *Castle. A room.*

Enter LORENZO, ANNETTE, and TONIO.

Lorenzo.

DOES the moon shine to-night ?

Tonio.

Ay, surely, signor ;

She's nearly at the full.

Lorenzo.

I have a journey

To take to-night, on business of importance.

Annette. Will you be long away ?

Lorenzo.

Now there's a question !

I am not journeying on your affairs,

But on my own. I shall return to-morrow.

Annette. It's growing dark

Lorenzo (interrupting). And you'll be happy now,
Without me for awhile ; but do not count

Too much on that. I shall be back to-morrow ;
Mind what you do while I'm away.

[*Exeunt* LORENZO and TONIO.]

Annette.

Ay, go !

I feel as if the clouds were suddenly lifted,
And a pale sun-gleam came, when thou art gone.
Yes, sometimes vain repinings fill my mind,
As if the cloister cell *had* been a refuge—
The peaceful life had sooth'd my anguish'd heart.
There are some steps we never can retrace,
And such was mine ; yet was it not for love
I bent my neck beneath the yoke of marriage ?
And death alone can break the bridal vow.
When some fair being, on whom all things smile,
Is struck by Death's cold dart, all prayers are vain
To move him ; no delay, however pray'd for,
Is given. But to me, thou wilt not come !
When the stern death-bell toll'd that fatal night,
I hoped it was for me. 'Tis vain, 'tis vain.

Ezzelin (speaking behind the arras). Annette !

Annette (starting to her feet). Oh ! 'tis his voice !

Say, are you come

To fetch me ? I am ready : with you, love,
I do not fear to go.

Enter EZZELIN, from behind the arras.

Ezzelin. Fear not, my own.

Annette (interrupting). Oh, no! I do not fear.

Fain would I fall

Upon thy breast, but that I fear to clasp

Thine air. Is thy grave far from hence?

[*Recoiling with a shudder.*]

Ezzelin. My Annette,

I am not dead; it was a wicked lie

They told thee, love.

Annette. O cease, wild heart, to beat!

My brain is reeling, ah! 'tis but some fiend

Who takes thy shape; it is not really thou—

Not e'en thy spirit, that were far too blissful

For one like me.

Ezzelin (approaching her). Come dearest, it is I,

Weary and soil'd with travel, but myself

As real as when we parted.

Annette. Speak again!

Thy voice is like the sunshine-gleam which breaks

O'er some dismasted ship, which floats at will

'Midst seething waves, and shows the long'd-for

haven

To mariner's weary eyes. And art thou really
Ezzelin?

Ezzelin (taking her in his arms). And will not
this persuade thee?

Annette (recoiling). Ah, 'tis he

Again! Oh, Ezzelin, Ezzelin! would to God
We ne'er had seen each other!—go; oh, go!

Ezzelin. And is it for a word like this I braved
All danger, seeking thee, my guiding star
Ever when night was darkest? Could not thy love
Endure a season? Art *thou* faithless, Annette?
Then life indeed has lost all gleams of sunshine.

*Annette (falling on her knees and seizing EZZELIN
by the arm).* Nay, hear me, Ezzelin! By
every tie

Between us,—by those golden days of youth,
Ere sorrow came; by every cruel pang
That pierced my bleeding heart when first I heard
That thou wert dead, unbend that angry frown,
Or thou wilt kill me. Do not turn away.
I love, O yes! I love thee more than ever.
But no, I cannot be thy wife—not now—
I am

Ezzelin. Another's? no! thou dost not say so, girl!

O traitress ! To have ponder'd, grieved, and fought,
And does it end in this? [*Draws.*

Where is thy husband ?

This steel shall pierce his heart, and then my own,
Fair fiend.

Annette. It is not like thee, Ezzelin !

Wilt thou condemn me ere my tale is told ?

Ezzelin. I will not wrong thee ; speak, I wait to
hear.

Annette. Canst *thou* believe that *I* have done
thee wrong ?

O Ezzelin, Ezzelin ! was it not for thee
I sold myself to bondage, and endured
Treatment unworthy of a slave from him
Who called me wife, that every night I water'd
My bridal bed with tears—to save thy bones,
That they might rest in consecrated ground
Safe from abuse ? O listen to me now !
I tell thee that I heard that thou wert murder'd
The night my father died ; a mangled body
Was shown me like to thine. What could I think ?
I hoped in vain, and strove against despair,
But the long weeks roll'd onward, and thou camest
not.

What could I do, but let the fatal tale
 Enter my heart? Yes, I was left alone,
 A friendless orphan, widow'd ere a bride,
 With none to comfort; and stern Dante came
 To claim me for the cloister. Then I thought
 That thy sad spirit had return'd to earth,
 If that had been my fate, so I choked down
 The burning tears, and turn'd my griefs to smiles,
 For marriage was my only refuge. Ezzelin,
 Thou knowest the zeal of Dante; wouldst thou
 rather

Have found me veil'd and vow'd to superstition
 Than as I am? O for thy sake I did it,
 And thou requitest me thus!

Ezzelin.

Forgive me, love;

Thou *hast* been faithful! Annette, listen now.
 Are we not married by the vows of hearts
 Long interchanged? Can such weak vows as
 thine,
 Built upon false foundations, cope with ours?
 Has not God join'd us? Thy false marriage vows
 The doctors of the German Court must loose,
 For thou art mine,—thou canst not be another's,—
 Thou dost not love him?

Annette. Love him ! O, dear Ezzelin,
Would you could save me from him !

Ezzelin (*pointing to his sword*). Wherefore not ?

Annette. You would not murder him !

Ezzelin. But he had best
Beware how we two meet. But look you; Annette,
I broke away from prison, and lay hid
Among the hills of Tyrol for a while ;
Then, when night fell, I mounted and rode fast
Towards Italy. But yestermorn I reach'd
My castle, and I heard that Lord Alonzo
Was dead. I enter'd in and claim'd my lawful
rights.

They did not speak of you, so when the dusk
Fell over earth, I journey'd here unnoticed,
And sought the secret passage to your room.
Now when I reach'd my castle, I was told
That Dante's bloodhounds had been sent to seize
me

In the Tyrolean prison, and that Dante
Waited for me at Venice—yea, in truth,
The day before I came had left my castle.
My vassals will obey me, but I dare not
Remain there long. Say, wilt thou fly with me

To Germany? Brave Francis Von Sickingen
 Will shelter us, and priestly mercenaries
 Dare not invade his lands. Think not of vows,—
 I am your husband; but the time is short,
 I *must* escape ere long.

Annette. You tempt me sorely.

Ezzelin. Think well: to-night—this hour, thou
 must decide:

Choose'twixt my faithful love and thy base husband.

Annette. Parted so long, I cannot let thee go;
 It would be worse than ever. *Ezzelin,*
 I must be—yes, I am, thine, thine alone.

[*Throws herself into his arms.*]

Ezzelin. How I have long'd for this. The past
 is gone;—

One drop of love like thine will quench the fires
 Of thousand sorrows. Let me keep thee here,
 My own poor wounded dove, come home at last!

[*Gazes down on her face.*]

But thou art changed. What have they done to
 thee?

Thy brow is worn with sorrow.

Annette.

Oh! my life

Has been a hideous dream. The wretched man

Whose name I bore has mock'd me with thy name.
 But thou—why comes that cruel smile again?
 Why dost thou handle thus thy rapier, Ezzelin?

Ezzelin. Not for you, love. Look you, to-morrow
 night

I'll come for you ; you must be waiting here.
 I cannot come before, but do not fear,
 I will not fail ; my servants will be waiting
 Not far from hence with horses.

Annette. But Lorenzo
 Returns to-morrow night, and he will miss me.

Ezzelin. Fear not ! Lorenzo shall be cared for,
 Annette.

Stain not thy lips by speaking of him, dear.
 I will engage he shall not miss thee long.
 Now I must go. Thy servants do not come
 here?

Annette. Never at night ; and none save I and
 thou
 Know of the passage. Stay ! Lorenzo knows it :
 If he discover?

Ezzelin. He will not betray us !
 He may not be with thee, perchance. But see !
 The moon is high, and I must leave thee now,—

But for a day,—at midnight I'll return.

Forget not to be here.

Annette.

And can I choose

But count the hours till then?

Ezzelin.

When thou art safe

Within my walls, as thou shalt be ere long

(Thou knowest I cannot take thee with me now),

Then love will be our happy lot again :

Farewell till then.

SCENE 2. *A Wood not far from LORENZO'S Castle.*

Enter EZZELIN and SERVANTS with Horses, &c.

Ezzelin.



TAND both of you where hangs the
thickest shade.

Let not your torches' gleam show e'en so
much

As doth the glow-worm's lamp or owlet's eye.

Ye know full well the work I deign for you !

Watch for some signal from yon little casement

Whose tiny light ye see ; when I have done

That which I purpose, ye must do the rest.

[Comes forward out of hearing of the servants.]

Now over all things floats night's dusky veil,
And sable clouds are gathering. It is well,—
Fit cover for the deed; and here I wait
Before the castle. Grim and strange the towers
Stand 'neath the rolling night-clouds; lights are
passing

Down the long passages: like spectral eyes
They gleam from every window. What is that
noise?

The horn they blow when guests arrive. Lorenzo
Has come already. How like a note of doom
The sound rings out above the darkening copses,
Scaring the owls around! . . . In times like these
The mind must draw its only source of counsel
From its own depths: I would not ask of *her*.
The guilt—if it be guilt—shall fall on me.
Hath he not wrong'd her,—crush'd her youthful
life,

Already pierced by sorrow for my sake?
Taunted her when she wept for me? O God!
My blood boils at the thought! *If it be guilt!*
Why is it things are different in the glow
Of noonday heat from what they are when night
Veils all things? Is it of a truth, as poets

In the far North have told, that day alone
Belongs to man ; but, when the sun is gone,
The powers of ill begin their ghostly reign
Beneath the grim white moon? that woodland trees
Change into hags and goblins? When I left
Annette, the deed I purpose seem'd as light
As when we tread with careless foot a worm
That lies across our path. Dim sophistries
Shrink into naught, and in its fearful nature
The deed stands out—I dread to speak the word—
And it is *murder!* Nay, so harsh a word
May not apply to this. Why may a nation
Commit a thousand murders, and remain
Unpunish'd, while a man may not avenge
Foul injury? All men agree that man
May not for private cause assault the life
God gave another ; yet, on slight pretexts
Of human policy, men march to battle
Beneath the approving smile of reverend priests,
Bless'd by their prayers; the while, in stately
 churches,
Fond wives and mothers kneel before the Cross
Of Him, from whose pale lips a prayer for pardon
E'en for His murderers issued in the death pang,

And pray for victory and Heaven's protection
For those who strike to dust their fellow-men !
These do no wrong ! But I may not avenge
Poor Annette's tears, and 'scape the wrath of
Heaven !

Yet why should I be nice on points like these ?
Dark is the chaos of conflicting creeds,
While each fresh-springing sect allows the sword
To back its quarrel. If such a thing be lawful
On any grounds, surely my cause is just.
I only slay Lorenzo to escape
Pursuit,—to save my Annette from the wrath
Of Dante. It were worse than criminal
To leave her with Lorenzo,—I *must* save her :
Her safety doth demand Lorenzo's death.
Then why this weakness ? If the deed be sinful—
(I do not say it is, for no one knows
Now what is sin or not since Luther taught,
And none return to tell us of the truth
Of those deep points where theologians jangle ;
And Luther says to those who hold the faith
God can impute no sin, and I believe
In Luther's doctrines more than those of Rome)—
Well, *if* the deed be sin, I can repent

In after-life. Yes, let the future rest.
I will not scruple longer,—'tis his blood
I crave for: I *will* have it. Annette mine,
And but Lorenzo's death betwixt us two,
A happy life beyond: long years of bliss
Made sweeter by the past, due justice wrought
Upon my darling's persecutor;—such the prospect
Which spreads before me. Here, I swear, it shall be!
Down, coward doubts! hush, ceaseless voice of
conscience!

I will not hear thee; ay, beside her wrongs
The voice of God were powerless to restrain me.
Nor could the snowy robes and golden crowns
Of which priests tell, if they are forfeited
By this my work, allure me from the path
On which I set my feet.

[*The castle clock strikes twelve.*

The fatal hour strikes.

[*Glides forward towards a secret door in the
wall, and then turns towards the wood.*

Hark! what a roar
Of gathering winds sweeps by; the storm long
waiting
Rages around me. Ay! my thoughts forbade

My senses to perceive the rushing tempest.
 Roar, winds ! ere morning comes a wretched soul
 Shall toss among you.

[*Draws his sword and enters the door.*

SCENE 3. LORENZO'S *Castle.* *A room.*

Enter ANNETTE.

Annette.



HE wind blows cold, and raves around the
 castle :

Now in low wailing sounds its voice is
 heard,

Now, with a shriek of mingled rage and fear,
 It rushes on ; the pattering sleet beats fast
 Upon the wall ; the woven tapestry
 Now swells, now shrinks. Hark how the castle gate
 Screams in the wind ! and from the gloomy sea
 A roaring voice is heard ; athwart the night
 I see the white crests leaping ; what a crash
 Of falling trees, and wailing birds, that fly
 Homeless amid the tempest. How the walls
 Rock in the blast, which maddens more and more,
 And screams defiance at the Lord of Storms

Who drives it on ! How sudden the storm has risen !
 The sky was cloudless but an hour ago.
 'Tis nearly midnight ; Ezzelin must be near :
 What if he meet Lorenzo as he comes
 To search each room, and see the bolts drawn
 fast ?

Ah, I forgot ! Oh fatal, fatal error !
 He always comes *here*. Oh, my Ezzelin,
 You will be slain ! O God ! what shall I do
 To save you ? Ah, too late, the hour draws near :
 O time ! run slow ; midnight ! delay thy wings,¹
 And let the search be done ere Ezzelin comes.
 He must not die. My brain reels round with horror.
 Betray'd by *me* to death ! The clock unheeding
 Is on the stroke. I hear Lorenzo's footsteps.
 What can I do ?

[*The clock strikes. and LORENZO enters.*

Lorenzo. What are you doing there ?
 Thinking of Ezzelin ? You do wrong to waste
 A heart so capable of love on one
 Whom worms are gnawing.

¹ "O lentè lentè currite noctis equi."—MARLOWE'S
Faustus.

Ezzelin (suddenly lifts the arras and leaps into the room with his sword bare). Be not too sure of that !

Lorenzo. Ha ! who is that ? Ho, there !

[*Runs towards the door.* ANNETTE springs to it and locks it, throwing the key among the brands.

Lorenzo (turning furiously on her). Harlot, is this thy work ?

I'll kill thee for it ! [Draws.

Annette. Ezzelin, save me !

Ezzelin (rushing on Lorenzo). Villain !

Unhand her.

Lorenzo (throwing ANNETTE on the ground).

Trapp'd like a wild beast ! have at you !

[*They fight, and LORENZO falls.*

Ezzelin. Lie there, foul beast, and be thy hoary beard

Dabbled in blood ! You would wed youth and beauty ?

Ha, ha ! you thought you had a helpless girl
To deal with, did you ? May the devil rack you
With fiercest pain for this.

Lorenzo.

Oh ! I am dying !

Help! help!

Ezzelin. 'Tis vain, my vengeance is complete.

Lorenzo. Yes, murderer, I die, but you shall never
Know happiness again; my blood-stain'd ghost
Shall ever stand beside you. And for thee,

[*To Annette.*

Cursed harlot, in thy death hour I will come
To drag thee down with me.

Ezzelin (lifting his rapier). I will not hear
More of this graveyard eloquence. Come, Lorenzo,
My latest act to thee shall be a deed
Of mercy.

[*Stabs LORENZO furiously again and again.*

Lorenzo. Oh! oh! ye devils, fetch me quick! hell
fire

Were easy to this torture! [*Dies.*

Ezzelin (wiping his sword). The deed is done!
Now let the earth receive the blood-stain'd body.
And men forget Lorenzo's name.

[*Goes to the window.*

Annette (who has risen). Oh, Ezzelin,
What have you done? Lorenzo, where is he?

Ezzelin. Name not his name, my darling; all is
o'er

'Twixt him and thee. His cruel tongue shall never
Torment thee in thy sadness. Come to me—
Mine, mine at last.

Annette. O Christ! that mangled form
Stretch'd on the floor, from whose deep wounds
the life-blood
Runs into ever-widening pools of crimson—
That—that Lorenzo?

Ezzelin (*stepping forward and throwing a cloak
over the body*). Turn thy eyes away.
Forget his name: those cruel months of grief
Shall seem henceforward as some dream of midnight
To one who walks amid the morning gales.

Annette. Love sees no evil in the fiercest act
Of him who hath the empire o'er her heart;
Nor I in thine. But oh! remove the body:
That cloak but adds new terrors to my fancy.

Ezzelin. Love, they will soon be here to whom I
gave
Charge of the burial. (*Listens.*) How the night wind
screams!
('Tis ever strange to hear the wind at midnight,
But never have I heard it rave so loud),
His spirit calls for vengeance to the blast.

Annette (*shuddering*). Talk not like that. O God!

I hear a footstep

Echoing along the passage.

Esselin.

Do not fear.

'Tis but the pattering of the rain outside,

Or else my servants are at hand.

Enter SERVANTS.

Esselin. Take up this carrion, and bear it hence
Unto the forest; in its leafy depths
Prepare a grave. Henceforth the "lated traveller,"¹
Who seeks the castle, shall at midnight hear
The night-owl scream above Lorenzo's grave.

[*Laughs scornfully.*]

Annette. O let us go! I dread to linger here.
Were you obliged to slay him?

Esselin.

But for that

He would have slain thee. All around is silent,
The castle seems buried in sleep; they know not
Their master's fate. It was in this same room
We parted, was it not?

Annette.

No, in the vestibule

¹ "Now spurs the 'lated traveller apace."—*Macbeth*.

Before the chapel. Wherefore do we wait?

Ezzelin. We wait until my servants gain the wood.

[*Looks out of window.*]

The storm has ceased, the clouds are rolling off,
And the broad yellow moon will soon appear.
Already on the bay I see a line
Of gold, which shows where her celestial beam
Falls in mild radiance, though to our weak eyes
She's wrapt in storm-black clouds; thus many a deed
Which seems all black to man, yet casts a glow
On some unresting heart, and bids her passion
Rest and be still. See, Annette, how afar
The edge of yonder sable cloud is bound
With a broad line of gold, which deepens yet
Brighter and wider as the darkening vapour
Shrinks 'neath the moon. And now the moon
comes forth
In undimm'd glory. Round her, in the gap,
The stars gleam bright; full on thy face the moon-
beam
Streams, and illumines thy brow; a halo quivers
Above thy golden hair, which softly waves
In the cool night wind, and I see thine eyes
Fix'd on my own. O Annette! on this night

I trust our troubles end : soon we shall be
In Germany together, far away
From all these fearful memories. My sweet bride
(For that thou art, howbeit the Romish Church
Scowls at our union), I in vain would strive
To know the full perfection of my bliss.
All I can tell is that thy heart is mine,—
Yes, really mine at last ; and those sad months
Have made this time still dearer. Come now.

Annette :

We must not linger here.

[*Turns to lead her out, and suddenly starts back.*


Why did they leave
That gory pool to curdle on the floor?
How blue it looks ! the moonbeam dances in it.
Come love, away, away,—our horses wait
To bear us to my castle.

[*Exit EZZELIN and ANNETTE through the
secret passage.*

SCENE 4. LORENZO'S *Castle, the room of
the murder.*

Enter DANTE, SEBASTIAN, and TONIO.

Sebastian.

 LORENZO disappear'd, and Annette too,
So I have heard ; and when the servants
sought

The room, they found the door was strongly barr'd.
They forced the door, and—

Dante. Well, Sebastian, then
What happen'd ?

Sebastian. Nay, I know not : Tonio saw
The room, not I.

Dante. Speak, Tonio, then ; what saw you ?

Tonio. The floor was stain'd with blood ; and on
the boards

Lay our old Signor's rapier smash'd and broken :
The arras was torn down, and searching there
We found a secret passage whose dark boards
Were stain'd with blood ; upon the chamber floor
A pool of gore lay curdling, and the door-key

Lay 'midst the wasted brands.

Dante. There has been murder !

Saw you no traces of the Lady Annette ?

Tonio. No, none whatever.

Dante. That will do, my son ;

You may depart. [*Exit* TONIO.]

Dante (*to* SEBASTIAN). The thing is plain enough. You should have warn'd Lorenzo when Lord Ezzelin Escaped.

Sebastian. Escaped ? We never even saw him. I reach'd the castle and they found him gone. He must have leap'd the window, for the bars Were wrench'd away,

Dante. You might have well been certain He would have come here straight, and so he has,— Murder'd Lorenzo, and escaped with Annette. When you came to me with the news that Ezzelin Had broken from the castle, I made sure He would be here, therefore I bade you come With me from Venice. I have here full powers From the Inquisitors to seize them both. Doubtless they are now at young Ezzelin's castle : We must arrest them there.

Sebastian. But, holy father,

Know you not that the vassals there have risen,
Furious from famine and neglect, and now
Besiege the castle?

Dante. That is well, my son ;
They cannot flee, but have you men enough
To put to flight the rabble, and besiege
The castle?

Sebastian. Yes, I have a force sufficient ;
But here's a messenger.

Enter MESSENGER.

Dante. Whence come you, son ?

Messenger. From young Lord Ezzelin's castle,
now beleaguer'd
By the infuriate mob.

Dante. Is Ezzelin there ?

Messenger. Yes, he is there ; but no one ever sees
him.

He keeps himself apart, with no companion
Save a young girl, who seems of noble birth.

Dante. What is she like ?

Messenger. She has long golden hair,
And deep blue eyes.

Dante. 'Tis Annette, sure enough.

But what's your message, friend? who sent you here?

Messenger. I came to say the convent of St.
Margaret

Was threaten'd by the rebels.

Dante.

By St. Mary!

This must be stopp'd. Sebastian, muster quickly
Your soldiers. I will go with you, and march
Upon the convent.

Sebastian.

Why not march as well

Upon Lord Ezzelin's castle after that?

Dante. Ay, that were well, use all your best
endeavours,

And I will join you.

[*Exeunt* DANTE, SEBASTIAN, &c.]

SCENE 5. *A room in EZZELIN'S Castle (formerly
ALONZO'S).*

Enter EZZELIN.

Ezzelin.



THOUGHT to reap success, and drink
henceforth
From pleasure's choicest bowl; but O!
dark thoughts

Intrude themselves upon my harass'd soul,
And will not pass away. "Who sheddeth blood
By man shall die!" a voice cries in my ears;
And keen remembrance of the death-scene ever
Haunts me. Need I have done it? Ah! 'tis vain
To plead I only slew him to preserve her.
That will not do; words cannot mask design,
And what was meant is what God looks upon.
Yes, things are plain that never were before;
I wrapp'd my vengeance in a subtle web
Woven of human sophistries, but God
Has torn them from me, and in all its guilt
I stand convicted of the sin of murder.
O blood, blood, blood! O dark, ensanguined
stream!
Red sap of hatred, do not float around me!
Cannot sweet thoughts of love dispel thy bane?
I thought to burst the ties which kept me sever'd
From Annette's side; I slew him, and a sea
Of crimson sweeps me from her into hell.
Oh, God! I have defied Thee, and Thy wrath
Lights heavily: still, bid it fall on me.
Spare her, the guiltless. Yet, O Annette, Annette!
Would that I ne'er had seen thee! O that innocence

Again were mine ! Have I not dragg'd thee down
Into my ruin ? Cease these dreadful bodings !
Where am I ?—in my room ? My head is burning,
Yet I feel chilly ; what a murmur rings
Around the castle !—nay, what am I doing ?
Am I devoid of reason ? No, I know
These walls, whereon the face of my dead father
Frowns on me : here he died.

Enter ANNETTE.

Annette.

My Ezzelin,

You look quite wearied out ; come, let me sit
Beside you.

Ezzelin. And you love me still, then, darling ?

Annette. Love you ? whom should I love but you ?

To-night

We start for Germany, I think you said ?

Ezzelin. We start to-night, but I would sleep
awhile.

Stay with me ; do not go : I cannot sleep

Unless you stay with me.

[*Sleeps.*

Annette.

Ah, love at last

Ought to be ours ; let not deathly thoughts

Come 'twixt us two. The past is gone, then why

Call it again? Hark! Ezzelin stirs and murmurs;
 What does he say? [*Bends over the couch.*]

Ezzelin (in his sleep). Yes, blood for blood! a
 harlot?

Nay, she is pure. They foully lie who dare
 Say otherwise. [*Waking.*]

Annette, you do too much.
 You must not always think and care for me.
 Already your fair features grow quite pale,
 And your bright eyes are dim; but do not weep,
 I love thee better, dearest, than the name
 That men call honour.

Annette. Can I choose but weep?
 Ezzelin, I am unstain'd.

Ezzelin. Who dares deny it?
 And if you were an outcast, scorn'd by all
 Who ever knew you, you would find a refuge
 Upon my breast.

Enter WARDER, hastily.

Warder. Pardon, my lord, I come
 With heavy tidings; the inconstant rabble
 Have risen against you. For some time the city
 Has been upon the verge of revolution.

Outcasts from Germany, whose homes were burnt
 In the rebellion of the peasantry,
 Head the uprising; they invest the castle
 And threaten to besiege you.

Ezzelin (starting up). But they dare not!
 They think that I am gentle and unlike
 My father, do they? they shall find me still
 Alonzo's son. Man instant every wall,
 And let them do their worst: ere set of sun
 Full many a household shall be fatherless
 If they persist (*staggers back*). What has come over
 me?

My head is dizzy. Go, good friend; I'll come
 And help you soon. [*Exit* WARDER.

The room is reeling round!
 Support me, Annette. [*Falls on the couch.*

Annette. He has swoon'd away;
 I must have help.

[*Exit; soon after returns with an old WOMAN.*
Woman (looking at EZZELIN). I know not what
 to say,

Signora; he is struck by some disease.

Annette. Have you no leech?—oh! for the
 Virgin's sake

Help me !

Woman. No leech, Signora ; old Tommaso,
Our chaplain, ran away when Lord Alonzo
Was murder'd.

Annette. Can you not procure assistance ?
There's money.

Woman. Money ! it will soon be had
For nothing, for the rabble are besieging
The castle, and I cannot stop with you.
I must escape.

Annette. And will you leave your lord
Untended, save by me ?

Woman. He will not need
Thy care much longer ; death has set his mark
Already on his brow. God keep you, lady.

[*Exit WOMAN.*]

Annette. O no ! it cannot, cannot be ! not death.
She has deceived me ! O my love, my Ezzelin !
Speak to me !

Ezzelin. Who's there, my sister Lucia ?

Annette. No, I am here—thy Annette !

Ezzelin. Ah ! poor Annette !
What have they done to her ?

Annette. Lie quiet, dearest,

Till rest restore thee ; thou art over-wearied.

Ezzelin. How shall we flee ? O, why am I struck
down

Now, while each moment's precious?—the old
bloodhound,

Dante, will find us soon, and send his guards

To seize us, and our doom will be the stake.

Not for myself I dread it, but for thee.

O horrible ! to see thy glorious beauty

The prey of hungry flames.

Annette (*repressing a shudder*). The death thou
diest

Shall not affright me ; side by side we'll perish.

Ezzelin. Ay, we may *perish* side by side indeed,

But, *after* death, will our two souls be placed

Together ? What if thou art doom'd to spend

Eternity with him whose life I took

For daring to be with thee here ?

Annette.

Oh, Ezzelin !

• Speak not like that ! you did it for the best.

Ezzelin (*bitterly*). Yes, for the best, I made my-
self my God ;

How the real God requites me you may see.

And heavier punishment is yet in store.

Annette. And canst thou love me still—thy fatal
curse?

Ezzelin. Love thee? yes, at the bar of angry God,
When from His lips our endless doom goes forth,
I *never* will forsake thee.

[ANNETTE *bursts into tears.*

Yes, weep thou canst ;
I cannot weep. A murderer may not weep ;
His tears are drops of blood.

Enter WARDER, *hastily.*

Warder. Lord Ezzelin,
The rebels swarm on every side against us.
Fierce, angry men stand marshal'd for the assault,
All the worst spirits that thy father ruled
Inflame the mob. I cannot hold the castle
More than a day.

[EZZELIN *sinks back with a groan.*

Annette. He cannot hear thee. Thou wilt do thy
best
To help us, wilt thou not?

Warder.

I will, Signora.

[*Exit* WARDER.

Ezzelin. This is intolerable! Were I but freed

From this o'er-mastering fever, my right arm
Should clear a way to safety for us both,
Or we would die together. . . . Who is that
Up in the corner pointing at us, Annette,
With his lean arm ?

Annette. 'Tis but thy fancy, Ezzelin.

Ezzelin. No, 'tis Lorenzo, I can see the wound.
He said he'd haunt me. Girl, he was thy husband :
Drive him away.

[*Starts up in a terrified manner ; ANNETTE
vainly strives to soothe him. At last he
sinks back exhausted.*

End of Fourth Act.





ACT V.

SCENE I. *A room in LORENZO'S Castle.*

Enter TWO OFFICERS OF THE INQUISITION.

1st Officer.



AND so the rebels burn'd St. Margaret's
convent?

2nd Officer. We only came in time to
save the chapel.

The mob were howling round it, and the sisters,
In terror of their lives, lay at the foot
Of the High Altar.

1st Officer. But you came in time
To save them from the threaten'd violence?

2nd Officer. Yes, old Sebastian took good care
of that :

The nuns were rescued, and the rebels' corpses

Lie thick around the sacred edifice.

Sebastian, when our arms at last grew weary,
 Bade us desist from slaughter, and commanded
 That I, with twoscore lances, should conduct
 The sisters here, the while the remnant march'd
 To the assault of Ezzelin's castle.

1st Officer. Good,

That is well done; where are the sisters now?

2nd Officer. At vespers in the chapel.

Enter DANTE.

Dante (to 1st Officer). What tidings bring you?

2nd Officer. None yet, most reverend.

Dante. Are the sisters here?

2nd Officer. Yes, in the chapel.

Dante. That will do, my sons;

Retire, and let me know when news arrives.

[*Exeunt OFFICERS.*

Dante (goes forward to the window). The scene
 unchanged, as when I trod these floors
 So many months ago, and saw the moon
 Shine on the calm blue waters, while around,
 Each tree and rocky point rose sharp and clear
 In the cold, silvery light. Now blackest darkness

Lies on the scene ; the stars of heaven are hid
By the grey host of clouds, and winds are still.
So awful is the calm, it seems to speak
Of boding tempests coming o'er the sea.
(For ever doth a fearful calm precede
The rush of coming storms). Yes, here I stood,
And mused upon their fate ; in other hands
The issue lies. O God ! I tried to save them !
Now naught remains but stern, unflinching justice
For both the guilty lovers, and my voice
Must speak their sentence. Lord, from Thee I took
The dread commission to absolve or judge ;
Teach me to rightly wield the dreadful sword !
Oh ! awful power to a mortal given—
Yea to a sinner ! and I cannot shun
The strict account which such a task demands
At the dread Bar where He shall sit, while earth
And starry skies roll backwards in dismay,
While round Him blaze the countless seraphim—
A sea of angel faces, flashing swords—
While the red lurid waves of hell toss high
Upon the left hand, where the wretched gather
In silent agony. May those dread eyes
Smile on me then, with calm, approving glance !

Will it be so? Can e'en a Saviour's blood
Cleanse all away—that dark array of sins
Open and secret?—nor my sins alone,
But theirs, who in the hush'd confessional
Have ask'd my counsels, and through them have lost
The narrow path; when these arise to judgment,
Will they not plead against me? Yet one ray—
But one—breaks through the clouds, that never yet
Have I sought after slothful ease, nor stay'd
The work He gave me; and I know, I know
My labour in the Lord was not in vain.
Lord, I presume not! at Thy nail-pierced feet
I fain would lay my life, its cares, its sorrows—
Yea, e'en its sins! dare I to hope at last
For me the gates may open? O! could they weep
Whose tears the awful Father wipes away,
Would it not be when they behold that Form
Their sins have wounded—see the Spotless One—
Know that they cannot leave His side again;
And then cast back a shuddering glance of anguish
On e'en the least offence which weigh'd Him down
Beneath the Cross, or wove the crown of thorn?
Nay, we shall never know the fearful nature
Of our black deeds till sin and pain are fled

In Heaven's "eternal bowers;" for He will'd
 Alone to tread the wine-press—He alone,
 Wearing a heavenly nature, bow'd His soul
 To wear the loathsome robe of sin's defilement;
 On earth we know not half its misery,
 In Heaven all sins are banish'd
 Hark! the sisters
 Lift up glad voices to the blessèd One
 Who saved them. How the flood of holy song
 Swells up in rich, sweet music to the roof
 Of the high castle chapel!—how it floats
 Among the fretted pillars!

HYMN OF THE NUNS TO THE VIRGIN.

Single Voice.

On Calvary, beneath the Cross, the Maiden Mother
 stands,
 And gazes on the thorn-wreath'd brow, the bleeding
 feet and hands;
 Her brow with bitter grief is pale, her eyes with
 tears are dim,
 But neither human grief nor tears shall turn her
 eyes from Him.

Heart-broken, while unearthly pangs her blessèd
spirit rend,

She lingers there beside the tree, and meekly waits
the end.

Yet still on Him alone she thinks—her Son—and
strives to pray

The death-hour may be hasten'd, and the chalice
pass away.

Full Chorus.

Hail heart with sorrows wounded !

Hail eyes with tear-drops stain'd !

By mocking foes surrounded,

By scornful ones disdain'd.

For us to Jesus pleading,

Oh ! make our spirits share

Thy pangs, and, with Thee bleeding,

The marks of Jesus wear.

Single Voice.

Fair Virgin Queen, enthroned above, where sorrows
may not come,

And troubled hearts, from care released, rest in the
Father's home,

And virgin souls around the Spouse for evermore
shall see
The glorious One who bore the Cross and set the
captive free,

Look down on us, who lowly kneel before the
golden gate,
Who through the midnight watches drear the rising
dawn await;
And grant that though on earth our brows must
wear the thorny wreath,
And we must uncomplaining tread the path of pain
and death,

Full Chorus.

That when before His throne who bled
The thorns are laid aside,
And crowns of glory deck the head
Of every faithful bride,

We too our grateful songs may raise
With them, the warfare done,
And aye in "sinless anthems" praise
The Mother and the Son.

Dante. How sweet the varying strain ! it calls
to mind

The words of him, before whose dazzled eye
The golden doors of Heaven were oped—who saw
The crystal sea, the emerald rainbow blaze
Around the jasper throne, and caught the sound
Of many waters, as the song unknown
Burst from ten thousand times ten thousand voices ;
While, like the waves beneath the midnight moon,
The white-robed hosts bow'd low before the throne,
And cast their starry coronets at the feet
Of Him who sat thereon !

How long, how long
Wilt Thou delay Thy coming, holy Lord ?
The skies are dark above us, everywhere
Foes press around the Church—her chosen rulers
Are sold to wickedness ! Is this the city
Which came descending from the highest Heaven—
Immanuel's bride, robed in the righteousness
Of saints and martyrs ? yea, men spurn her now,
Reject her doctrines, batter down her walls
And mock her children

Yet from many a heart
Prayer rises like the dewy breath of morning.

Come, Lord, delay not, we are waiting here—
 Avenge Thy saints, defend Thy chosen bride,
 Let the star-spangled clouds of midnight flee
 Before Thy chariot wheels !

Lord, Lord, I trust

The end is coming. Faith grows less and less ;
 Men strive to use the Spirit's sword to wound
 The Church, not to refute the wiles of Satan.
 And, Father, I would plead for those two souls
 In danger of Thy wrath. Oh ! turn them yet,
 For all is possible to Thee. I strove
 To save them—now I cannot ; be the doom
 Of the weak flesh the saving of their souls
 Before Thy Bar ; and steel my shrinking heart
 Against weak mercy. Thou wilt bear to say,
 " Depart, ye cursed ! " Shall these lips refuse
 To speak the sentence of Thy bride, which dooms
 But to a few brief moments of the flame ?
 God give me strength to do Thy will, whatever
 May be the cost.

Enter OFFICER.

Officer. Sebastian has arrived and waits to see
 you.

He brings important tidings.

Dante.

Bid him enter ;—

Yet, stay, I first would speak to the good chap-
lain

Ulberto ; let Sebastian wait me here.

SCENE 2. *A room in LORENZO'S Castle. Enter*
SEBASTIAN *and* 2ND OFFICER.

2nd Officer.

WHAT makes the Inquisition interfere
About Lorenzo's death? The Court of
Venice

Is bound to do full justice on the murderer.

Sebastian. Aye, but the Court of Venice works
too slowly ;

Besides, Lord Ezzelin is accused of heresy.

That is enough for us : the Holy Office

Has warrant for the deed ; if we perform

The business of the State, the State must pay us.

Why, had we waited till the proud Dalmatians¹

¹ The troops of the State.

Were ready for the journey, we had found
Our prey escaped.

2nd Officer. But now you have him safe?

Sebastian. Aye, safe enough, him and his lady
too.

I have not seen him, but a sentinel
Is station'd at his door, another watches
Below the window, and in every corner
Of the long, winding staircase stands a spearman ;
A ring of soldiers watch around the castle,
Whose camp-fires flare against the chilly dawn
That rises o'er the hill-tops.

2nd Officer. Then you know
That he is there?

Sebastian. I heard his voice, and more,
After the rebels fled, the castle warders
Lower'd the drawbridge to the Church's banner,
And I found entrance. Well, a warder told me
That scarce an hour before, as he was watching,
Lord Ezzelin pass'd him, and, in truth, the soldier
Deem'd him at first a spectral shape, he seem'd
In such strange guise.

2nd Officer. But why have you not seen him?

Sebastian. The father Dante bade me wait for him

Before I made the arrest. I know not why,
But such were his commands.

2nd Officer. Where will you take them?

Sebastian. We have no lack of dungeons for
such guests.

Their doom is sure enough ; I always know
By father Dante's looks when he means death.
Besides, thou knowest Ezzelin's life is forfeit
Unto the State for murder.

2nd Officer. But methinks

The State would prove more gentle than the
Church ;

The axe or cord are easier than the stake.

Sebastian. Ay, that is so, I've seen enough of both.

2nd Officer. Hast ever seen a woman burn'd,
Sebastian?

Sebastian. Yes, scores of times ; I never like to
see it.

I think there's something tender in my nature ;
A woman seems to me a woman still,
Though thrice a heretic. I always damp
The straw when females suffer.

Second Officer.

And the smoke

Soon ends their sufferings?

Sebastian. Yes, oft they die
 Before the flame has even scorch'd them. Comrade,
 Whate'er the Church ordains must needs be right,
 Nor may we question aught that she requires ;
 Yet still 'tis strange, when the grey smoke curls up
 Around some writhing girl, whose piercing screams
 Ring through the torture-chamber, to behold
 On the black wall the Virgin's image placed
 As if she smiled upon the dreadful work !

Enter DANTE.

Dante. Deem not she smiles, Sebastian ; her
 meek heart
 Is wrung by anguish keener than the victim's,
 And thou art over-bold to speak like this.

Sebastian. Pardon me, father ; but thou knowest
 ill thoughts
 Infect our hearts at times.

Dante. Restrain them, then.
 Think'st thou the Church grieves not for such frail
 children ?

I tell thee, couldst thou but endure to gaze
 One moment down the drear abyss of hell,
 And see the torments of the damn'd who burn

In quenchless flame, thou wouldst be glad if
aught,

However painful to the flesh, could save
From that undying fire, and deem a death
More easy dearly bought. But come, thy tidings?

Sebastian. The castle is surrounded by your
soldiers.

Dante. And know you aught of Ezzelin?

Sebastian. Father, they say that for three days at
least,

Ezzelin has scarce been seen or heard of. Some
Tell me that he is ill; the lady Annette
Is with him—this I know.

Dante. And you are certain
They cannot flee? 'Tis well. Now muster quickly
Your soldiers. You, Sebastian, have done well,
And merit our approval. [*Exit* SEBASTIAN.

Dante. So Ezzelin is ill,—at least they say so;
Keeps himself from his servants, and the girl
Annette alone is with him. I must question
The servants as to what they know: at present
Our only certain charge is heresy,
And that he may refute. As to the murder
I feel no doubt, but proof is not sufficient—

At least, I think not ; while poor Annette's guilt,
 Though very black, takes not a hue like his.
 Heresy, I trust, has not yet tainted her ;
 And as to murder, I can hardly think
 She joined in it. . . . Ha ! I will summon Lucia
 To go with me, and give the unfortunate
 Unto her charge : she yet may clear herself,
 And Lucia will do more with her than I.
 Ho ! Andreas !

Enter ANDREAS.

Summon the Lady Lucia
 To meet me here at once. Poor girl ! for her
[*Exit ANDREAS.*
 'Twill be no pleasant task to see her brother
 Arrested for a crime like this. O love !
 When unrestrain'd by piety or reason,
 What ills thou workest on a noble nature !
 For Ezzelin show'd many a hope of virtue.
 Poor wretch ! how blighted is the stately promise
 Of thy young life !

Enter LUCIA.

Lucia.

You sent for me, my father ?

Dante. Yes, Lucia : I have words of grave
import

To tell you ; can you bear to hear me tell them ?

Lucia. Speak ! I will listen ; if I must, I can.

(*Clasping her hands.*) Saint Mary give me strength,
if, as my heart

Forbodes, you have to speak to me of Ezzelin !

Dante. You love your brother, Lucia : now that
love

Must prove itself. I grieve to say that Ezzelin
Is charged with heresy.

Lucia. O, father, no !

Say anything—yes, anything but this !

My brother ! oh, my brother ! hast thou drunk

Of that accursèd poison ? Father ! father !

I would have died rather than hear this tale.

(*Struggles to repress her emotion.*) What can I do for
thee ?

Dante. Annette is with him ;

But she, I trust, is guiltless of this crime.

I want your aid, my daughter, to discover

All that she knows about another matter,

Of which I'll tell you while we journey there.

Lucia. Yes, father, it is well ; I'll come with thee.

Dante. Come then ! the morn is rising cold and
cheerless ;

We must not linger here.

[*Exeunt DANTE and LUCIA.*

SCENE 3. *A Room in EZZELIN'S Castle.*

EZZELIN lying on a couch, ANNETTE sitting by him.

Annette.



HE sleeps awhile ! The fury has abated
Which madden'd him ; exhaustion's
deadening calm
Pervades his sinking frame. I thought I loved him
Long years ago : what was that love to this ?
Dearer, far dearer, in this agony
Art thou. O could I only soothe thy pangs
Or share them with thee ! in thy pains I'd find
Some consolation. Ezzelin ! for thy sake
What could be bitter ? Ah ! I fear not now
My coming doom. O may kind death remove thee
Ere that last vengeance ! Do not say the guilt
Alone was thine : I was the cause of all.
On me may vengeance come : I can defy it.

And when stern Dante's satellites invade
Thy dying chamber, they shall find me ready,
For I will not remain behind thee long.

Ezzelin. Why are they there?

Annette.

Who, dearest?

Ezzelin. Seest thou not

How they are gathering round me—how their eyes
Blaze, and their snaky tresses wave and toss
Upon the hell-born wind? Fiends! fly! begone!

Annette. There's no one here, indeed, but you
and I.

Ezzelin. No one but you and I? then why that
noise—

Those frantic shouts mix'd with the shriek of wind?
A thousand death-cries blended into one—
Loud shouts of furious wrath and wild alarm?
They scale the walls (*leaps up*), we'll hurl them
down again;
Think you my tower will yield? Down! down, I
say!

And be your direful screams drown'd in the blood
Of dying rebels! Annette, where's my sword?

Annette. I cannot keep him back! Oh, Ezzelin,
Cease these wild ravings!

Ezzelin. But they shall not hurt you—
 Ay, you shall rather die beneath my blade
 Than be their prey. My sword, I say!—my sword!
 I will not yield. . . Ah no, 'tis but some dream;
 'Tis but the wind that raves around the castle,
 And lashes up the waves. . . Who sits beside me?—
 An angel form with waving golden hair
 And eyes of icy blue. How pale and white
 She looks! But who is it? I know I've seen her
 Before; where was it? in the German castle?
 No, no; it was not there.

Annette. 'Tis I, thy bride—
 Annette.

Ezzelin. O yes! 'tis you; I have been wandering.
 How goes the day?

Annette. The sun is going down,

Ezzelin. And why are you so pale?

Annette (trying to smile). 'Tis nothing, Ezzelin.

Ezzelin. But you are ill and worn with watching
 me.

Lie down awhile, and let me sit by you.

Annette. No, I'm not tired, and if I were, by thee
 It would be sweet to watch. O try to sleep!
 You frighten me by the wild things you say:

Sleep while you can, love.

Ezzelin (lies down and sleeps, but soon starts up).

 Annette, see ! the bar
 Is set 'twixt earth and heaven, and the Judge
 Descends amid the clouds. Hark ! hark ! how loud
 That fearful trump is sounding ! and the ground
 Swells up and bursts : see ! the dead rise all gory.
 Lorenzo comes—Annette, he comes again !
 I thought I'd slain him.

Annette (looking round apprehensively). There is
 no one near us.

Ezzelin. The sunset glow shines redly on the
 wall,
 Darkening the shade above ; across the light
 I saw him pass, and still the red wound stream'd,
 And the blood bubbled up

 Mount, mount and ride !
 The chargers scent the dead ; they plunge, and toss
 The gory leaves aloft. Spur on ! spur on !
 Will the night never pass ? See how the trees
 Stand dark against the leaden skies of midnight !
 Ride on ! This ghastly wood must end at last.
 See the moon gleaming through a sudden rift,
 White on yon tree, where lie the rolling leaves

In many a heap—ha ! fatal spot ! again
 We pass the grave, love. Annette, look not back ;
 The steeds of those who bear the dead man's soul
 Sweep on behind us, and the owlet screams
 The welcome of the grave.

Annette.

O ! hush, my own !

Didst thou not rescue me from cruel taunts
 And a dead life of misery ?—can the Father
 Who pities the unfortunate be angry
 With thee for this ?

Ezzelin.

Cut off from life unshriven !

No time to plead for pardon from his Maker !
 This weighs me down. How shall I hope for mercy ?
 Where can I turn ? the blood-red stain of murder—
 Who can release from it ? And must I perish ?
 Is there no hope for Ezzelin ?

Annette. How shall I comfort him ?—for me he
 did it,

Yet still it cannot be the sin he thinks it.
 Was I not struggling in Lorenzo's grasp,
 Who would have kill'd me ? Ah, this cruel struggle !
 I cannot bear to see it : and I feel
 My strength is sinking ; yet I must not yield
 To this strange weakness which creeps o'er my frame,

Till all is o'er with him.

Ezzelin (leaping up). There is no hope!
 Despair, be thou my ruler! in thy depths
 I'll find some courage yet; unfearing still
 I drive towards death's sea. Then, dead Lorenzo,
 Think not to fright me; for my deadly hate
 Towards thee when living shall not be diminish'd
 When thou art dead—ay, hate can conquer fear!

[Seizes his sword and catches up a light.

Where art thou, spectral form? I will unearth thee!
 Thy shroud shall feel my rapier's bloody point!
 Ha, ha! my strength returns, and savage vengeance
 Has nerved me! Annette, let me go! you shall not
 hold me!

I'll track him through the bowels of the earth.

Stay me not!

[Pushes her from him and rushes out of the room.

ANNETTE staggers back and falls on the couch.

Annette. What is this sudden weakness which
 comes o'er me

When most I need my strength? I must give way—

I cannot stand it longer! Ezzelin!

Come back! oh, do not leave me here alone!

I would not thus have left thee, Ezzelin!

A raging pain has seized my head, and dews,
 Chill as the death-sweat, gather on my brow.
 All, all is dark. He will return again,
 He must! Oh! what if he be gone for ever?
 I must be there when he returns—I must—
 For who will tend his wants, and soothe his anguish,
 Which gains the mastery even o'er his reason,
 If I be helpless? Oh! while life remains
 I would be found by him, for I have wrong'd him:
 My love has been his ruin.

SCENE 4. *A Room in EZZELIN'S Castle.*

ANNETTE lying on a couch.

Annette.



WHAT! will my beating heart for ever tell
 Its tale, and strike the pulses in my
 temples
 Till all my body seems alive with sounds
 Ringing and bursting? O! my forehead burns
 Hotter and hotter, and I cannot turn
 To gain relief, I am so very weak.
 In vain I close my eyes, sleep will not come,
 I only feel the sickening pulses beat

Like hammers on the brain whene'er I let
 The lids close o'er the pupils, and I cease,
 And stare at the grey twilight. Ezzelin!
 Say, are you there? Ezzelin! Ezzelin! wake!
 He is not there. I am alone—alone.
 Oh, Ezzelin! I never loved but you!—
 O! do not leave me, husband!

See, he comes,

And I shall fling my arms around his neck,
 And lay my weary head upon his shoulder.
 O! God! it is not he, it is another!
 Why lookest thou thus, Lorenzo? 'Twas not I!
 Why does the blood still trickle?—long ago
 Thy bones were laid among the rotting leaves!
 He stretches out his earth-stain'd arms. O! save
 me!

He holds me! O those eyes, in which the worms
 Are crawling, glare on mine! I will not come!
 God pity me! O! do not let him have me!
 Keep off! keep off!
 It is a horrid dream—
 This fever'd couch, and I shall wake to health
 When daylight comes; but O! long hours of dark-
 ness

Must pass before the sun, and I may die—
 Die in this darken'd room, while blackest shadows
 Close o'er my form. O! where is Ezzelin?
 Ezzelin! your Annette wants you! for your sake
 She gave up all—her honour and her God.
 O Ezzelin! come! I should not fear to die
 If you were here; we two would die together,
 And in some lonely wood, where sunbeams fall
 With crimson glories in the summer days,
 And the great moon at night looks down, we too
 Would slumber side by side

.

Oh, I am dying!

He will not come. I feel that other beings
 Are in this room; the roof is sinking down
 Towards me, and around my bed I see
 Old faces that I loved—yet not the same:
 They are not angry, but they gaze on me
 With eyes of grave-born earnestness and wonder.
 There stands my Father, there stern Dante frowns,
 And at his side a lovely maiden kneels,—
 Yes, lovely, but her neck is red and scarr'd
 As if by fire, and she looks with sorrow
 Towards me. There is Lucia! O! my friend,

Speak to me ! See ! she lifts her tearful eyes
 To Heaven for me. O ! dearest, best of all
 I ever knew, would that I too had worn
 The robe of serge !
 Will the day never come ?
 No, not for me ; my soul will soon be gone
 And fly with flying shadows. Dreams are past,
 Mists float before my eyes : where shall I go ?
 The bed is yielding under me, the floor
 Rises and sinks, and voices seem to ring
 Around my dying bed.
 O ! God have mercy !
 I own my sin—the vow of lawless love
 Unbless'd by Thee. Have mercy on my soul,
 Ere she goes forth into the dreary void !
 I hunger'd after love, and love destroy'd me.
 Death comes, he wraps me in his arms . . . forgive
 (Dies).

Enter EZZELIN, with a light.

Ezzelin. I will return to her. I cannot sit
 Alone ; that bloody form is ever near me !
 I do not see it—no, I do not see it ;

But still I know it hovers round about me.
 I hear the stealthy footfall of the dead
 Behind me when I tread the castle stair.
 But now the door is shut.

Oh ! here's poor Annette—
 Asleep? Yes, fast asleep. How fair she looks !
 She was not well to-day. When was it, though,
 She told me she was ill? Was it to-day,
 Or yesterday, or when I walk'd with her
 In the rose-garden? Nay, it was not then ;
 At least, I think not—I am never certain.
 Since last I saw her I have seen such sights !—
 Black pirates, torn by sharks, amid the sea-weed,
 Down far below the water ; while white owls
 Hooted at them, as through the blood-red mists
 Which veil'd the autumn moon they wing'd their
 flight.

Nay, is that Annette sleeping there? How cold
 She feels!—well, it is cold to-night. Lorenzo
 Can never rest among those chilly leaves,
 And so he comes to warm his mouldering bones
 By Annette's fire. Ha ! ha ! old man, art there ?
 Come from the corner !—make us sport, and wake
 Thy fair one from her sleep ; she dreams of thee!

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! Now, Annette, rouse yourself
 And kiss him ; let thy clinging arms embrace
 His neck, and thy long golden tresses blend
 With his white, festering locks. Ha ! get thee gone
 Back to the midnight wood—fit haunt for him
 Who stole my love ! Oh ! flames of hell consume
 Thy wither'd form, and greedy devils tear
 Thy mouldy entrails !—thou hast kill'd her, slave !
 Annette, awake ! awake ! the cocks are crowing !
 No, she is dead—is dead—and I will die
 Beside her. But a growing chill comes on ;
 My limbs are held, my body slowly sinks
 Into weak stupor. Why destroy the body
 And leave the brain still strong ? Oh, pitiless !
 A power restrains me, and I cannot move—
 Not e'en to press, with cold and quivering lips,
 Her death-pale cheek. (*Sinks into a chair and drops*
his sword.)

But now the night of reason quick approaches,
 Moonless and starless, and a floating cloud
 Bears her from me unto the angel bands.

[*Recovering, he looks around him.*

This is my death-stroke ! Life is fading fast

(Like dreams and shadows when the sun lifts up
 His burning face behind the misty hills).
 Visions of dread are gone, reality
 Comes in their place. Oh! rather let me know
 The wildest scenes of horror that e'er seized
 The madman's teeming brain, than see the truth—
 This room, this chair, my prison, and my wife
 Dead at my feet! I cannot turn my eyes
 From her—my darling—cold and ghastly white
 Beneath the glimmering dawn she lies. Lorenzo,
 Happier art thou in thy dim forest grave
 Than I, thy slayer. Come not now to haunt me!
 Upbraid me not! A little, little while,
 And I shall be as thou—perchance, with thee
 In the drear spirit-world. *There* take thy vengeance
 And wreak thy wrongs upon my soul; and hers
 With thine shall blend to scourge with bloody
 whips
 The murderer who slew ye both. Oh, Annette!
 I, who was thine—yes, thine alone—have kill'd
 thee,—
 Crush'd thy young life and closed thy glorious eyes,
 Never, oh! never to behold thee more
 In life, my darling! . . . God, Thy hell has nothing

More dread than this—to linger dying here
With my dead love beside me, and to see
Nothing but that dead face, so pale, so sweet,
Until the morning of the day shall come
And bring life's eventide! Oh! haste thee, death!
Three hours sure have past! No! 'tis three
minutes!

How fast run on our thoughts when death is after!
How would my quivering heart have burst for
horror

Once in a time like this! But now all's past—
The blood, the nerve, the sinew of the soul
All turn'd to dust; my limbs refuse obedience
To the fierce dictates of the raging brain,
Or that cold steel that glitters on the floor
Had snatch'd me from the world. I cannot
reach it!

I must wait here for death. . . . Oh, God! in
mercy

Blast me with madness; let Thy hell begin!
Better to know the worst than linger here
In dread anticipation.
. 'Tis in vain
That I would think myself beyond the tomb,

Among the spirits ; all is real around me,
 All touch'd with life—the trees, the yellow dawn,
 And the dead form beside me. There the bloom
 Of life dies out

 Another life *must* come—the past pursues me,
 And rages wildly round my fearful soul.
 Cease, cease, dim shadows!
 This world is not small—
 The world of men ; there are large desert tracks
 Where men may dwell unheeded and unwatch'd ;
 But the dark world of spirits, the unknown,
 Is larger far—a dreary void, to which
 Death soon will drive me. Shall I not discover
 Some lonely place where I may safely rest
 At anchor, while the phantoms of the past
 Seek me and cannot find
 The future looms
 Like night-clouds, driving o'er the tossing waves,
 Black and impenetrable !

[Starts up, and staggers against the wall.

The gloomy mists
 Fill up the room, and wrap me in their folds,
 Shooting cold chills upon my heart and brain ;

But Annette's face shines through the murky
 vapours,
 Like the white moon through night-fogs, when the
 raven
 Croaks from the ivied crag! Ha! ha! they come!
 Dim and uncertain round me, forms of ill—
 Hideous and mocking faces fill the air.
 Yet still I see her lying there. I'll turn,
 I will not look again. The white swan sings
 Before he dies, and so will I. Come, listen
 To Ezzelin's death-song, spirits born of evil!

*[Scratches on the wall with his dagger for
 some time, and then drops senseless on
 the floor.]*

SCENE 5. *The same Room.*

Dante (speaking outside the door).



SEBASTIAN, stay without, and Lucia also,
 Till I have seen the room.

Sebastian. The room is still as death;
 some dreadful deed

Has taken place!

Dante. Ay, you must force the door.

[*The door is forced open, and DANTE enters.*]

Dante. 'Tis very still. (*Seeing the body.*)

What, Annette here, asleep?

No, 'tis no sleep! (*starts back*) dead? dead! Oh,

God of justice!

And has thy justice fallen? Wretched girl!

Is this the end of thine unholy love,

Thy treacherous marriage, and deceitful vows

To dead Lorenzo, when thy weak heart spurn'd

The Saviour's gentle call—"Come unto me

All ye that labour and are heavy laden,

And I will give you rest?"

Yea, love has been thine idol: thou hast follow'd

Along the burning path from sin to sin,

Ending in murder and a harlot's bed,

Then death at last, uncared-for and unseen.

(*Seeing EZZELIN stretched on the floor.*) And there he

lies, thy guilty paramour,

Smitten with drivelling madness. For a face,

Fond youth, thy soul was given; from my hands

Your doom is taken, and thy guilty passion

And fatal heresies shall cry for vengeance

To Him in whose right hand the lurid bolt

Gleams ever ready. Thou thrice-damn'd apostate,
 Luther! another chain is forged for thee—
 A heavier weight of wrath to sink thee lower
 (If yet a lower place is found for thee),
 By this, thy victims' deaths, Annette and Ezzelin,
 Betray'd by thee—ay, so the Church foretold,
 That in the north the seat of Satan lay.

What if from Germany the Antichrist
 Was doom'd to come, in likeness of a priest?—
 I know not! (*Turns to EZZELIN.*)

Oh, miserable pair! the dying youth
 Plays with dead Annette's hair, and fondles it.
 Yet life remains; the spark may shine a moment—
 Salvation yet be Ezzelin's. Saviour, grant it!
 (*Bends over EZZELIN.*) Ezzelin, Ezzelin! speak!
 can you not hear me?

Ezzelin. The night-fiend calls! The gibbering
 spectres run,
 And crouch in hollow trees and weedy caverns
 To hide them from his burning eyes of flame
 Who comes to drag them down.

[*Lifts his head and glares at DANTE.*

Dante (holding up the crucifix). Oh! look, my
 son,

Upon the blessed sign!—that brow was torn,
 Those limbs were mangled for thy sake ; His wounds
 Plead for thee. . . Fiends, give way before His sign
 Who led you captive ! Father, grant Thy child
 One moment of full consciousness to pray
 For pardon ! think upon His death who bought him !
 Shall that dread toil be wasted ?¹ Ezzelin,
 Turn not away ! . . . He will not look ; he buries
 His face among the straw. I'll send for Lucia ;
 Her voice may kindle yet his dying senses
 To know his need of mercy. [*Exit.*

Dante (*re-entering with LUCIA*). I need thee not
 For sterner duties than a sister's love
 Would fain bestow ; their doom no more
 Depends on mortal voice. May He support thee,
 Who, when the sun was veil'd, knew of this hour,
 And bore thy sorrows then !

Lucia. Oh ! what has happen'd ?
 They are not dead ?

Dante. Annette is dead, but——

Lucia. Annette ?
 Yes : there she lies. O ! see how deadly pale,—

¹ "Tantus labor non sit cassus."—DIES IRÆ.

How wasted are those features which were once
 Fairest among the fair. What lines has anguish
 Traced on that youthful face! the teeth are
 clench'd

As if she struggled in death's cold embrace,
 And that sad smile that lingers on her lips
 Tells more of pain than rapture! (*Bends over the
 body.*) Look, my father!

In her cold hand she grasps the crucifix,
 As if she fain had press'd it to her lips
 In the death agony. (*Clasps her hands.*) . . . Thank
 God for it!

The lamb had wander'd far amid the wilds,
 Yet, in the darkest eventide, He sought her,—
 The thorn-crowned One,—and led the wanderer
 home.

Dante. God grant it has been so! God grant
 her guiltless

Of heresy. But, Lucia, leave the dead
 Unto her Judge and Saviour. Turn to him—
 The living—who still lingers at the gate
 Of death.

Lucia. What! Ezzelin! Where is he, father?

Dante (*pointing to Ezzelin*). There he lies!

Lucia. Yes, but not living! See his latest words;
He seems to have fallen down in writing them.

(Reads on the wall.)

No more! no more! the night falls fast,
The shades drive o'er the sea;
And flies my bark before the blast
Of drear immensity.

The voices of the woeful past
Are far off following me,
But not a look before be cast
To tell what hence may be.

Death, with his drooping, shadowy wings,
And eyes of silence cold,
Has launch'd me, while the seagull sings
Her deathly tales of old.

And now the world far from me flies,
And ghostly billows moan;
The closing twilight of dim skies
Shall—speed me—on—alone!

Dante. There he stopp'd short! I fear we
cannot rouse him
Now from his deadly trance.

Lucia. O ! I could weep
My heart away, and sigh my soul to air
To see him, whom I once so prided in,
Thus weaker than the weakest, and so stain'd
With blackest sin unshriven——.

[EZZELIN *groans* ; LUCIA *kneeling by him.*

Ezzelin !

Speak to me, dearest, but one word !

Ezzelin. Where's Annette ?

Lucia. Do you not know me ?

Ezzelin. Annette ! you have watch'd
Too long beside me ; you are wearing out.
Kiss me and good night ! I must see your eyes
Look bright again to-morrow.

Dante. He knows thee not !
His thoughts are still with her !

Ezzelin. Turn not away.
Though all men hate you, I will never leave you.
Sob out your grief in my arms ; the world is
nothing
When we two are together.

Lucia. A deadly change
Is stealing o'er his features ! There is one
Standing beside him whom we do not see.

[*To DANTE, in a voice of smothered agony.*

Pray for him ere the spirit quit her frame.

[*Kneels, and clasps her hands.*

Dante (*kneeling by Ezzelin, and supporting him in his arms*). Oh, Son of God! Who on the bitter Cross

(When every human sin upon Thee press'd,
And the Eternal turn'd His face away),
Didst cry, "My God! my God! why hast Thou
then

Forsaken me?" think of that fearful hour,
And by those seven dread words, and by the love
Which loved us from the first, be with this sinner.
If it be possible blot out the doom
Decreed against him, and in Thy dear hands
Receive the parting soul.

Ezzelin. All is too late!

If you must fade then I must follow you.
My life has leap'd into its last long flicker,
And now is sunk in smouldering.

Dante. All is over:

Death's hand's upon him!

Ezzelin. Farewell! [*Dies.*

Dante. At that word

He breathed his soul out. Ay, 'twas well like him
Bidding the world farewell.

Lucia (*bursting into an agony of tears*). And do
we part

For ever thus? Can neither prayer nor suffering
Gain thee release? For ever and for ever
Must thou be banish'd from the Father's presence?
(*To DANTE.*) You are of those to whom the Master gave
To bind and loose. Tell me, I here implore you,
Is death the end of hope? O! but one word
To say my prayers could aid him, and I'd give
My life to prayer, and wear the biting scars
Of scourges keen, as gladly as a maiden
Deck'd out for marriage wears her bridal gems;
And day and night I'd bathe my Saviour's feet
With streaming tears! O Ezzelin! my brother!
Oh! had I died for thee it had been well!
Or if thy soul had flown to meet thy God
Wearing the robe unstain'd, I had not wept!
But now my lips can hardly speak the words—
"Not as I will, but as Thou willest, Father."
My heart is broken; life can never more
Be aught but endless sorrow for thy doom.

[*Hides her face in her robe.*]

Dante. Would I could comfort thee ; but lift
thine eyes

To higher beings than poor sinful man.

Dost thou grieve thus for *one* o'erwhelm'd by sin ?

Then think of Him, who bore the scourge, the
thorns,

The blood-stain'd agony beneath the olives !

And yet in vain, for many, was His passion :

They will not come to Him ! And look to her,

The blessèd one ! What are thy pangs to hers ?

Pierced through with seven sorrows like a sword !

Yet, Lucia, I can tell thee this : God often

By our sufferings works His awful will !

And, who can tell, if to those favour'd ones

Who clasp the bitter Cross, like Magdalene,

And kiss the bleeding feet, and strive to suffer

E'en as He suffer'd, He may deign to grant

Their prayers, and let their pangs and tears atone

For the black sin of those they love ?

Yes, Lucia,

Thou wilt do well, for Ezzelin's sake, to tread

The path of sorrows ; and perchance at last,

After long years of suffering, grief, and prayer,

All, all may be forgiven ; and thy brother

Enter at last those blissful fields of light,
Where wicked foes for ever cease to trouble,
And weary ones have rest.

Lucia (turning towards the body, then clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to Heaven). Then night and day

I'll pray ; nor care for weariness or pain,
So I may meet thy soul in Heaven again !

FINIS.

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