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PLAYS AND POEMS:

BY

GEORGE H. BOKER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THIRD EDITION.



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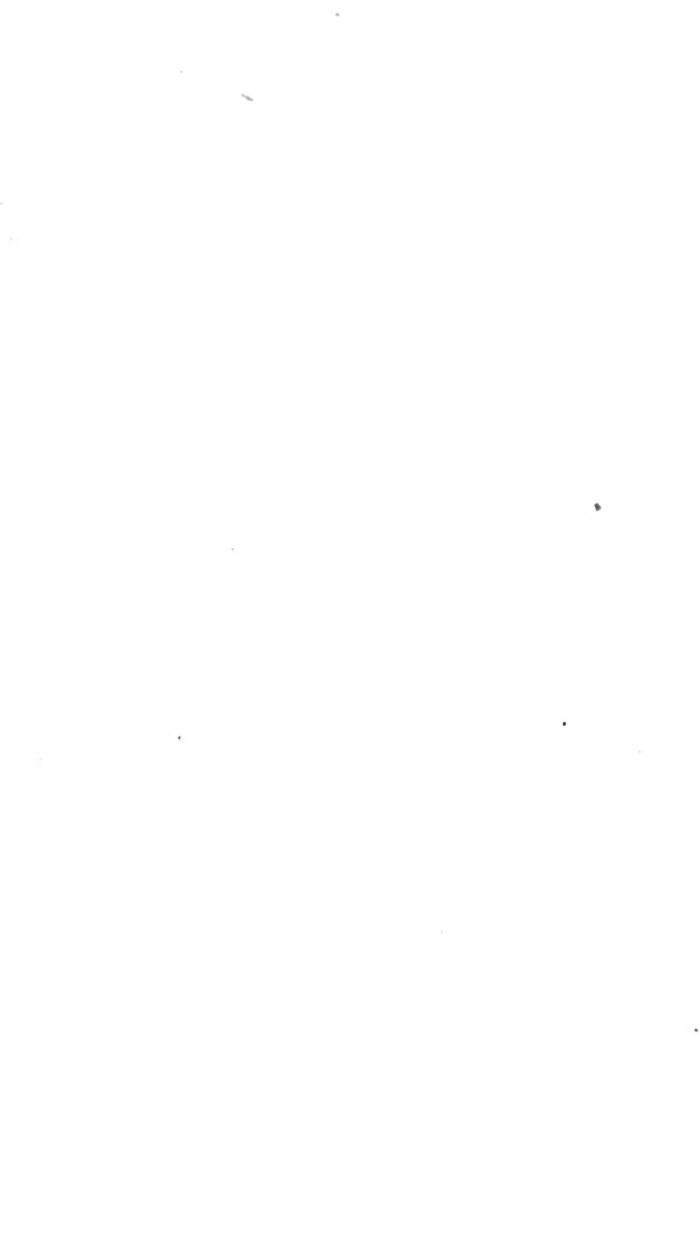
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MAIN

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

PLAYS.

	P o
CALAYNOS: A TRAGEDY,	1
ANNE BOLEYN: A TRAGEDY,	115
LEONOR DE GUZMAN: A TRAGEDY,	237
FRANCESCA DA RIMINI: A TRAGEDY,	349



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CALAYNOS:

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CALAYNOS,	<i>A wealthy nobleman.</i>
DON LUIS,	<i>His friend.</i>
DON MIGUEL, }	<i>Gentlemen of Seville</i>
DON LOPEZ, }	
OLIVER,	<i>Calaynos' secretary.</i>
SOTO,	<i>Don Luis' servant.</i>
FRIAR GIL.	
BALTASAR, }	<i>Calaynos' servants.</i>
PEDRO, }	
DOÑA ALDA,	<i>Wife to Calaynos.</i>
MARTINA,	<i>Her maid.</i>

Four Usurers, a Forester, Servants, &c.

SCENE, Calaynos' Castle, Seville, and the neighborhood.

PROLOGUE.

LOOK not, grave critic, for perfection here ;
No gods and goddesses shall move your ear ;
My little stage mere men and women fill,—
All have some good to love, to hate some ill ;
A hundred springs of action move each mind,
And in their mean the character you 'll find.
Interests and feelings, base and good, have they ;
Some draw towards heaven, and some — the other way.
Arcadian virtue and Arcadian crime,
In abstract form, may crowd the Epic clime ;
But 'tis the Drama's task the world to show,
Where bad and good alternate gloom or glow —
Where in each mind are various passions fixed ;
Virtue with vice, and vice with virtue mixed.
Some lean to virtue, some to vice give way ;
But neither bent has undivided sway.
Our plot turns on the loathing which they feel,
Who draw their spotless race from proud Castile,
For those whose lineage bears the faintest stain

Of the hot blood which fires the Moorish vein.
No time can reconcile, no deed abate,
For that one taint, the haughty Spaniard's hate :
As the sound man the loathsome leper shuns,
So pass Castilians by Granada's sons.
This is the key which gives our plot to view —
Turn o'er the leaf, the way is clear — adieu !



CALAYNOS.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The Great Hall in CALAYNOS' Castle. Enter PEDRO and BALTASAR, carrying bundles.*

Pedro. I LIKE not this journey to Seville.

Baltasar. O, you like nothing that savors of gentility.

Ped. How can I like it? I tell you this genteel savor is deadly. I'd as soon die by sprats as by turbot. I've a rhyme in my head.

Balt. And a rind over that: what is it?

Ped. "When a Calaynos shall go to Seville,
Then sure that Calaynos shall go to ill."

My grandam taught me that. She could read, and was a great diviner, with a beard that would make two of yours. She told fortunes by the way a cat jumped, or a sparrow flew; and as often hit the truth as the wisest of your scholars. If she hit it not, then was not the thing fore-ordered; and she left that for the schoolmen to wrangle about. Why does my lord go, Baltasar?

Balt. To do homage for his lands, as all vassals must. The king granted his ancestors lands; and

my lord must acknowledge the king's right and sovereignty, as he holds the land from his forefathers.

Ped. I know nothing of his aunt's sisters and his four fathers. If he had them, then was not his mother an honest woman. How many people go to the making of your one great lord! Now, I was turned out indifferent well; and, as I hope for grace, I had but one father, Haroun the Falconer, and no lands. Mayhap, some day, the king will take back his lands. Then what use are my lord's four fathers, more than my one?

Balt. 'T would pose him to do that.

Ped. Here's another wise thing! Is that a king's bounty? My lord says, "Sir king, I'll keep what's my own most faithfully." Says the king, "You may keep what's not mine." "Thank you most humbly, for nothing," says my lord; and so they part. That's worth a journey to hear! Why, a fool can see through it.

Balt. So I see.

Ped. If you see, you are a fool, and fell in a fool's trap.

Balt. So I see again, I fell in a fool's trap. Take up your traps, good fool, and be off; for here comes my lord. [*Exeunt with their bundles.*]

(*Enter CALAYNOS and DOÑA ALDA.*)

Doña Alda. Nay, dear Calaynos, go not hence to-day. Since morn, the clouds have hugged the hidden tops
Of the rude peaks that gird our mountain home;
Nor could the fiercest northern blasts shake off
Their close embrace. But now, in one huge mass,
The sluggish vapors down the mountains' sides

Roll like an inundation. Well thou know'st
That signs like these portend a coming storm :
Therefore, until the storm is past, delay ;
For nothing urges this immediate haste.

Calaynos. To please thee, Alda, I'll remain to-day.
But, for a mountain maiden, thou hast grown
Strangely afraid of gentle summer showers ;
Perchance thy love exaggerates the fear.
Thou'rt not thus chary to expose thyself
Even to the blasts which chilling winter blows.

Doña A. If not to-day, why go to-morrow morn ?
Or why next day ? Or why go'st thou at all ?
If thou wilt go, then let me go with thee.
An hour, and I'll be ready : I shall need
But scanty preparation to set forth.

Cal. Thou hast forgotten. But a moment since,
Thy fear was brewing a fast-gathering storm ;
Which thou, in fancy, on the mountains saw'st
Resting its threatening front. Alda, I see
That 't is thy fond intent to win my mind
From what I must perform. Long since in death
My father closed his eyes ; yet ancient rites,
Which seigniors owe their liege, by me unmarked,
Their term of grace have passed. But now the king,
By stiff set phrase of law, allegiance claims,
And homage due demands.

Doña A. Far be it from me
To counsel breach of law. Nay, go thou must ;
But why not I with thee ? Shall I thus pine,
Shut, like a cloistered nun, in these dark walls,
Whilst thou with retinue and pomp of power
Seville mak'st wonder ?— Beautiful Seville !
Of which I've dreamed, until I saw its towers

In every cloud that hid the setting sun ;
 Saw its long trains of youths and maidens fair
 Sweep, like a sunlit stream, along the streets ;
 Saw its cathedrals vast, its palaces,
 Its marts o'erladen with the Indies' spoils,
 Its galleys rocking at the crowded quays ;
 Heard its loud hum by day, its airs by night
 Struck from guitars, that guide the busy feet
 Of rosy youth across the springing ground.
 Methinks the moon shines brighter on Seville,
 And every star looks larger for mere joy !
 And then, Martina —

Cal. Ah ! Martina ? — so.

Doña A. But, dear Calaynos, thou 'lt not blame the
 girl :

She in Seville was born ; her youthful days,
 When the heart easiest takes impress of joy,
 Were in Seville all past. Martina says
 That 'mong the ladies there none could o'ertop
 In state or retinue, or worship paid
 By all the glittering throng that girds the throne,
 The bride of great Calaynos.

Cal. Alda, cease :

Thou 'rt pleading 'gainst thyself : nor dost thou
 know

How frail the fabric of the dream-wove vision,
 When cunning Fancy plies her golden hand.

Doña A. What meanest thou ?

Cal. Martina told but half :

Or did she tell how Sloth and Beggary,
 Closely attended by their handmaid Vice,
 Stare, with lack-lustre and ferocious eyes,
 Into the porch of every palace-gate ?

How Want creeps forth at night with tottering pace,
 And 'gainst the windows of the revellers
 Flattens its pinched and wasted features out,
 Cursing the feasts for which one half the world
 Labors unpaid? And, Alda, did she tell
 Of marketable crime, of sin for sale?
 Of multitudes neck-deep in ignorance,
 Toiling with murmurs 'neath a servile yoke,
 Checked and o'erawed by bayonet and axe?
 How they who bend to power, and lap its milk,
 Are fickler and more dangerous far than they
 Who honestly defy it? How jealousy
 Consumes their hearts who most caress and woo it?
 Know'st thou the slippery falsehoods of the Court,
 Where every step is on a quaking bog,
 Where men spend lives on hopes and promises,
 And pine on smiles, and starve on smooth-told lies?
 Thou know'st not this; nor shall thy rustic mind,
 Pure as the Guadalquiver, ere it flows
 Past the foul sluices that Seville outpours,
 Know aught of it.

Doña A.

If thou wilt have it so,

I needs must stay. But I shall count the hours,
 And chide along the slow-paced summer days:
 For thou art all with whom I dare to mate,—
 A lonely queen, without a court or friend.
 And, losing thee, thou leav'st me with these walls;
 Whose forms I'll hate, because they rise between
 Thee and myself. Ah! it is very sad
 To be shut up, for days and days together,
 With these old portraits of thy ancestors—
 That look like Moors, though they be Christian
 men—

All mailed and helmed, whose knit and warlike
brows

Beneath their casques send forth a settled scowl,
Darkening the hall; or see, like shadows, come
The old retainers, by my presence awed,
To beg some leave they need not have besought.
What gloomy state! Martina calls me Proserpine.

Cal. Again Martina! Love, I fear thy maid
Has put these vagrant fancies in thy head.
I never liked her bold, pert, city modes:
With upturned nose she treads the castle floors,
As if she thought the very air might breed
Some loathsome plague. Then at our festivals —
Time-worn, though quaint and homely they may be —
A supercilious smile comes o'er her face;
As if she, fallen from paradise, perforce
Endured the antics of rude savages.
I like not that her busy tongue should stuff
Thy open ears, who 'rt ever ripe for change,
With all the worn-out tinsel of a town;
And breed in thee a discontent for state
Which many a queen might pine with envy for.

Doña A. Calaynos, thou dost rate my girl too hard.
I wonder not that she, a city maid,
Should sometimes long for the more joyous scenes
With which her memory mocks our quiet life.

Cal. Well, let her go — she is no slave of mine.

Doña A. Her love for me has forged a stronger
chain —

Cal. Her love for thee! Nay, Alda, there are
those

Who love to live where they may scold and frown,
And toss their heads at everything they see:

So, by affected knowledge, seem above
 All the poor fools that round them wondering crowd.
 Such is thy maid.

Doña A. Calaynos, truce to this.
 Martina loves me ; shall I throw her off ?

Cal. I do not urge it. But thou 'rt lately grown
 Strangely ill-humored with thy dwelling-place,
 And vexed and discontented with thyself.
 Come to the casement ; look from these huge walls,
 Whose massive strength has held a king at bay,
 Down on the ripening fields of yellow grain ;
 Let thy eyes roam o'er swarming villages,
 Busy with life and filled with happy hearts,
 Far to the hills that, with their smoky heads,
 Hem in the view and guard our favored vale.
 Round this domain the proudest bird of air
 Could scarcely circle with an untired wing ; —
 All this is thine. O, what a field for good
 Lies here outspread before thee ! Life employed
 In ministration to this grateful land,
 Would win for thee a place beside the saints.

Doña A. Have I not ever given, at morn and eve,
 To all the ragged band that throngs our gate ?

Cal. This is but half the task of charity.
 Seek out the needy, cheer the wretched mind,
 Urge on the slothful, pour thy spirit's balm
 On wounds which time has fretted to the quick ;
 Counsel the weak, and make the strong more strong :
 The soul has urgent need for faith and hope,
 More pressing and immediate than the wants
 The choking sailor feels upon the wreck.

Doña A. Why, now, my lord, thou 'dst make a
 nun of me —

One of those maids of black-robed charity,
 Who sometimes hither come, with solemn step,
 To ask my bounty. Convents are there not,
 By thee endowed, to feed these starving souls?

Cal. Yes; but in works of good there cannot be
 Too many hands; the task is ne'er o'erdone.

Alda, my grave discourse fatigues thy ear. —
 Well, I must leave thee to prepare my train;
 My home-bred knaves are slack at setting forth,
 And I must urge them. Farewell, love!

Doña A. Farewell! [*Exit CALAYNOS.*]

Thus comes he ever with that thoughtful brow;
 Thus goes he ever with that calm, cold mien;
 Thus would he ever be, thus passionless,
 If all the world were hissing in his face!
 More like a father than a husband he —
 O! how could love for me usurp abode
 In such a heart! *Martina*, are you there?

(*Enter MARTINA.*)

Martina. My lady, did you call?

Doña A. Come hither, girl.

O, what a sermon has been preached to me!

Mar. On what? by whom?

Doña A. By whom but by my lord?

And what the subject, think you, of his speech?

Mar. On the regeneration of the world;
 Taking his text from Plato: quoting large,
 In Greek and Hebrew, to make clear the fact
 That two and two make four. Good Lord! they say
 He talks the *Cura* out of countenance;
 And so comes down upon the good man's head,
 With hints of things above his scope of thought,

That he, both night and morning, prays kind Heaven
To keep your lord from utter heresy.

Doña A. You have shot wide the mark ; for charity
Was all he taught.

Mar. Ho ! ho ! he 'd have you mount,
Like a mad nun, upon a sumpter mule,
And ride the country down, to vex the sick
With nauseous draughts ; or have you thrust your
face

In the affairs of every poor, proud man ;
So would you gain wry mouths for recompense,
Or haughty curses.

Doña A. Peace, you rattlepate !
My lord but thinks of benefits to man ;
His every wish and act inclines to good.
And sometimes, in the dead and hush of night,
When evil thoughts dare scarcely walk abroad —
When loneliness and fear half play the part
Of humble holiness, and force the heart,
Despite its wicked bent, to virtuous plans —
Some random word, which he, in passing, dropped
On the light fallow of my wavering mind,
Springs up and blossoms, with a promise fair ;
But with the morning dew dries up the fruit,
And I laugh down, as weak and childish fright,
What, 'chance, an angel whispered in my ear.

Mar. Dear madam, you have grown as grave and
sad

As your sage lord, by pondering o'er such things :
I prithee, drive them out with gayer thoughts ;
Or all within the castle may become
A band of nuns and sourest anchorites.

I heard a man, who spent a mortal life
 In hoarding up all kinds of stones and ores,
 Call one, who spitted flies upon a pin,
 A fool, to pass his precious lifetime thus !
 What might delight you, lady, may not him ;
 And yet your pleasures argue you no fool,
 Nor his grave brows prove a philosopher.

Doña A. Stop, malpert girl ! you 're trenching on
 my love ;

Your glibly-flowing tongue must not presume
 Too far upon the license I allow.
 Thus every day, of late, I 've caught you up,
 About to strike a side-blow at my lord.

Mar. Pardon me, madam, if I went too far.
 Of late my silly brain has been perplexed
 With a great problem, which I cannot solve.
 Thus runs the question : Who are wise, who fools ?
 The man with heavy brows and solemn thoughts
 Looks on the gay as blanks in fortune's wheel ;
 But then the fool laughs in his sapient face.
 At this the sage flies in a windy rage,
 And calls hard names, and works his angry liver
 To bilious fits, which end the good man's days ;
 When laughs the ribald jester more and more.
 Now, which is wiser ? He who frowns and scolds,
 And views sweet nature in a sallow light ;
 Or he who takes what pleasure comes to hand,
 Gleaning some honey from the bitterest flowers,
 And, when death scowls, smiles in his hideous face ?
 Can you resolve ?

Doña A. Not I, philosopher.

Your gentle education has nigh spoiled
 A most complete, well-mannered waiting-maid.

But there walks Oliver, in sober thought ;
Call him ; perchance he can resolve your doubts.

Mar. Yes, there he goes — just see him, mistress
dear ! —

Backward and forward, like a weaver's shuttle,
Spinning some web of wisdom most divine,
I warrant you. Observe his solemn brows,
His monk-like gait, his cap without a plume,
His stiff and formal clothes, sans tag or braid.
There is a nursling of this house of learning ! —
A man all head, without a heart or sense.
Once I made love to him, for lack of work,
And got a frown for all my tenderness ;
Therefore I hate him ! I can pardon one
Who felt affection, should he turn to hate ;
But never one who slips my favors by.
Shall I address him ?

Doña A. If it pleases you.

Mar. Ho, Oliver ! ho, sage ! a mortal calls —
A mortal wandering in dark error's path —
For light and succor !

(*Enter OLIVER.*)

Oliver. Did you call me, lady ?

Doña A. Martina called you.

Oli. Yes, I know her voice.

I thought she called for you ; her notes are pitched
Some octaves higher than your ladyship's,
And further heard.

Doña A. Nay, you two jar at once,
When brought in contact. Well, you must e'en strike
Your angry blows without a witness near. [*Exit.*]

Mar. So, then, you think my voice is over shrill
For your soft ears, attuned to Plato's spheres !

Oli. Why did you call so loud, I walking near ?

Mar. You near ! I thought you half way up to
heaven :

How can a man be where his mind is not ?
Wherein consists this thing which you call I —
In your gross flesh, or in your heaven-born spirit ?

Oli. Strive not to vex me with such mockery.
All your pert smartness, and your sallies shrewd,
Are spent with loss on ears as dull as mine.

Mar. Ugh ! man, but I do hate you !

Oli. Hate me, then.

Mar. Our clay, the preachers say, was warmed to
life ;

But yours, your dull, cold mud, was frozen to being.
I would not be the oyster that you are,
For all the pearls of wisdom in your shell !

Oli. A truce to this ! I haul my colors down ;
I have no means to fight your light-armed tongue.
But I must warn you — for I late o'erheard
The words which you with Lady Alda held —
That if you urge your sensual doctrines more,
To the pollution of my lady's thoughts,
My lord shall know it.

Mar. Pshaw ! I meant no harm.

Oli. I know not what you mean, but harm you do

Mar. Why talk you thus, you demi-atheist ?
I've heard you hold a creed against the church,
Which, spread abroad, might overturn the world,
And send us all unbaptized to the pit.
They say you have no faith in good men's prayers ;

And talk not of salvation, but progression. —
Are these things so?

Oli. Are you Inquisitor?

Mar. Did you say aught against the Holy Office?

Oli. No word, to you, O, pious Catholic!

Mar. Ambassador from cloud-land, take your leave
I do not wish to vex an oracle;

And we have bandied words enough to-day.

Oli. I go; but keep my warning in your mind.

[*Exit.*]

Mar. That man of learning has a lynx's eye

I'll be more circumspect: it will not do

To have the great Calaynos at my ears;

To leave behind a home as warm as this,

Where I'm half mistress of whate'er it holds,

Again to struggle with the ruthless world:

Yet to Seville I'll go for wantonness.

Well, we shall see what woman's craft can do

Against the brains of two philosophers.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

The Study of CALAYNOS. Enter OLIVER.

Oliver. I do not like this journey of my lord's —

And yet I know not why; the path is safe,

And we are guarded by a retinue.

'Tis many a year since last I saw Seville:

'Tis natural, therefore, I should wish to go:

Yet do I not. What can this feeling mean?

Is it that influence, o'ermastering will,

Presentiment, which pulls me from the wish,

And presses on my heart its leaden weight?
 I've heard that soundest sleepers will awake
 When danger steals upon them. It may be
 The first low knocking of death's pallid hand,
 Ere he flings wide the gate which shelters life,
 That so appalls my mind and shakes my purpose.
 Pshaw! this is idle. — I must e'en end thus,
 As I began, I do not wish to go.

(*Enter CALAYNOS.*)

Calaynos. Are all things ready for our setting
 forth?

Oli. They are, my lord.

Cal. Then, at the break of day,
 Mount all the train.

Oli. You have delayed till then?

Cal. Yes; 't was my lady's wish, not my intent.
 But on the morrow we must sure begone;
 We do but give our parting lengthened pangs
 By keeping doubt alive.

(*Enter a Servant.*)

Servant. My lord, old Friar Gil is in the hall,
 And craves admittance.

Cal. Friar Gil! how's this?
 'T was but a week ago we met, and then
 He tottered so beneath his weight of years,
 He scarce could ope the door that guards his cell.

Ser. He seems to walk with pain, and well-nigh
 dropped
 Ere we could bring him to the neighboring hall.

Cal. Admit him, then. [*Exit Servant.*] 'T is near a miracle ;
So feeble —

(*Enter FRIAR GIL.*)

Friar Gil. Son, my blessing !

Cal. Welcome, Father !

Thou art fatigued and weakened by thy walk. —
What cause has drawn thee from thy cell so far ?
Such lengthened walks, to one of thy great age,
Are full of peril. Why not send for me ?
Bring a chair, Oliver. [*OLIVER places a chair.*]

So, sit thee down.

Friar G. I feared to miss thee ; as I lately heard
That thou design'st a journey to Seville :
I came to warn thee from that dangerous step.

Cal. Dangerous ! What danger do you know or
fear ?

Friar G. None that is certain, every one I fear.

Oli. Ha ! here 's another seer. [*Aside.*]

Cal. Father, thy path through life was long and
hard,

And thou hast gathered wisdom by the way ;
But this idea is baseless fantasy.

Friar G. Hear me, Calaynos ! As I lay last night
Sleepless, but why I know not, on my bed,
Telling my beads and thinking o'er my sins,
Thy grandsire, as I saw him ere he left
This castle for Seville, before me stood,
Pointing his hand, through which the moonbeams
shone, .

To a great gash beneath his lifted arm ;
Then, solemnly and slow, he waved his hand,

As if in warning, towards the castle-gate.
 I strove to speak; but, ere my tongue was loosed,
 The melancholy shadow passed away.
 So, with the dawn, I rose to seek thee here:
 Once turned me back, to 'scape thy lordship's laugh;
 But, ere three steps were taken, I prostrate fell,
 Though the path 'neath me was without a stone.
 It seemed the will of heaven that urged me on,
 And gave my feeble frame unwonted strength:
 So have I sought thee, though but half in hope,
 To overrule thee in this enterprise.

Cal. For thy kind zeal I thank thee. 'T was a
 dream,

Bred on a superstition of our house,
 That to my race Seville brings fated death.

Friar G. Has it not been? Did not the one I saw
 Fall at Seville, struck by a coward's steel
 Over the wine-cup? So thy father thought;
 And he did homage by a deputy,
 As oft I've heard him say. Go further back;
 All of thy race shunned, as a plague, Seville.
 And thou, the last of all the mighty line,
 The wisest, greatest, without heir or kin,
 Wouldst tempt thy fate, though nothing urges thee!

Cal. This is a thing at which my reason laughs,
 And naught but actual trial can resolve.

Friar G. Go, go, thou headstrong man! Nay, I'll
 not chide;

May God go with thee! I have done my part.

[*Going.*]

Cal. Farewell! We'll meet again.

Friar G. Perhaps — farewell! [*Exit.*]

Oh. I hope, my lord, you'll take the Friar's advice.

Cal. Take what? — Take hellebore, good Oliver!
For you with Friar Gil have lost your wits.

Oli. I am not superstitious, as you know;
But when I think what greatness hangs on you,
And with your fall how much would be o'erthrown,
I nigh believe that watchful heaven might send
This anxious phantom to avert your ill.

Cal. I do not go through stiff-necked stubbornness;
I view these rights of homage to the crown
As a stale pageant better unperformed,
At least by me, who can depute the act.
But in Seville I have a most dear friend,
From whom, till late, I had not heard for years;
And now he writes me in the closest straits,
Saying his lands are forfeit for some debts,
By knavish means imposed upon his hands:
Should the law take its course, his wealth is gone,
And he turned forth in utter beggary.
Some days ago, I sent him present aid;
With promise to redeem his lands from pawn,
When at Seville I shall the court attend.

Oli. Let me not balk you in this noble act,
Though instant peril stare us in the face.

Cal. He loves not good who turns from it through
fear.

O, what a joy is it to have the power
That lifts from want the worthy sufferer!
What double rapture when he calls us friend,
And with that name wipes obligation off!
Out, out! — my heart's afire, till this be done!
Urge on the loiterers, — see them all prepared
To start at dawn, — our speed shall clip the way!

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Street in Seville. Enter DON LUIS and Soto.*

Don Luis. STAND here, good Soto ; should a dun
come by,
Stop the base fellow, ere he gain my door,
With some excuse you are so apt at framing ;
But by no means admit him to the house.

Soto. My lord, I'll try, if trying can avail.
Of late my stock of lies has run full low,
And all my wares are out of date and stale.
The creditors have got the wind of me,
And strive with tricks to meet my subtlest shifts.
For if I say you're ill, and in your bed,
The fellow vows he is a learned leech,
For whom your lordship sent. If, to the next,
I say you've gone from town to stay a month,
The rogue but asks admittance for a while,
To write a line for you, on your return.
Another comes hot haste, as if a friend,
Pregnant with news which argues you much good ;
Another bears a letter from the Court ;
Another has a package, stuffed with rags,
As a rare present from a nobleman.
I hear they watch all night the city gates ;
For fear you might escape.

Don L.

Then say that I

Am harbored with a rich, usurious Jew,
 Who lends me money on my country-house,
 With which I will discharge their claims ere long.

Soto. That will scarce do ; they have more knowl-
 edge got

Of your affairs, of what you hold, what owe,
 Of what encumbrances are on the lands,
 Than I conceive your lordship can possess.

Don L. Well, well ; but put them off, and I'm
 content.

I must be gone ; the town begins to wake. [Exit.]

Soto. Here's a fine prospect for an airy breakfast !
 He thinks I live on moisture from the earth ;
 So stands me here to take my fill of it.

Were I an ostrich, there's a tender stone,
 Soft as my master's heart, on which I'd feed ;
 But as a Christian man — nay, I'm a saint --
 I keep more fasts than all the Calendar :

A little out of time — but what of that ?
 I'll plead, the Pope has changed the almanac.
 Last Friday I ate meat — well, what of that ?
 Sunday and Monday, not a bone saw I.

To fast's the thing — the deed, and not the day —
 To mortify the flesh, and starve out sin.

Some mortified their flesh on Friday last ;
 But I chose Sunday — who is better now ?

I mortified my flesh as much as they,
 Only I took a better day to do it.

Lord ! who comes here, tricked off in grandad's
 clothes ?

So out of fashion, and so rustical !
 But yet the bumpkin has a noble air,
 As born for acts above his quality.

(*Enter OLIVER.*)

Ho, there! why stare you thus at every house,
As if you thought the stones could speak to you?
You are a stranger, if I judge aright;
Can I assist you in your present search?

Oliver. Thanks for your courteous speech and kind
intent.

In truth, I'm puzzled, in this thick-built town,
To find the single house for which I look.

Soto. Whose is the house?

Oli. Don Luis is his name;

On whom my lord intends to call ere long.

Soto. Here's a new trick of these cursed creditors!
What will they next? [*Aside*] What station hold
you, friend,

In your lord's pay?

Oli. His secretary I.

Soto. 'T is a good place. I once that office held —
By dint of an inked nail, to recommend —
Under a lord who flits about the Court,
For a good twelve-month. But, alas, one day
He fell in love, and called on me to write,
Then kicked me out of doors.

Oli. Why, how was that?

Soto. Simple enough, — I could not write a line.

Oli. Your impudence but bore its natural fruit.

Soto. I thought a courtier's scribe a thing for
show —

Part of his state, and not designed for use:
So 't-would have been, had he not fallen in love.

Oli. What station fill you now?

Soto. Of every use.

When my lord cannot play at dice or cards,

He kicks me round his room, to pass the time ;
 Or sets me at some villany, whereby
 He may be able to resume his play ;
 But the chief thing for which I am employed
 Is an experiment on human stomachs,
 To see how little man can eat, and live. —
 Are you well fed ?

Oli. More than a week's supply
 Is set before me daily. If I wished,
 I might bolt down an ox at every meal ;
 My lord would but admire my appetite.
 'T is a strange knave — I'll lead him further on.

[*Aside.*]

Soto. A whole ox !

Oli. Nothing less.

Soto. Most wonderful !

Yours is the place for me, could I but write.
 But certain services I've done my lord
 Unfit me for the change — so people think.
 Is your lord rich ?

Oli. The richest man in Spain.

Soto. What wages have you ?

Oli. All he has is mine,

Were I disposed to use it.

Soto. He's generous !

Oli. Free as the air, which all alike may breathe.

Soto. His name ?

Oli. Calaynos.

Soto. Fiends and furies seize me !

Why did I talk this way about Don Luis ?

All the town knows it — he must hear it soon ;

But yet he may not, if we manage right. [*Aside.*]

What man of lordly gait now hither comes ?
By his brave port, a more than common man.

Oli. That is my lord Calaynos. Can you tell
Where this Don Luis dwells, for whom we search ?

Soto. Down yonder street. . . . I must be off
apace,
To give Don Luis timely note of this. —

O, what a fool, to slander thus my master ! [*Aside.*]
[*Exit running.*]

Oli. Ho, fellow, stop !

(*Enter CALAYNOS.*)

Calaynos. Why do you call so loud ?

Oli. I held discourse with one of those poor
knaves,

Whom the world forms to play at foot-ball with ;
A rascal by compulsion, not by nature,
With something good beneath his villany,
Turned all awry by outward circumstance.
The knave had much intelligence and wit,
Appeared acquainted with this mazy town,
And seemed to know where good Don Luis dwells ;
But ere I pressed him past an empty hint,
The fellow fled as if a fiend pursued.

Cal. So, then, you have not found Don Luis' house.
What hint gave your companion of my friend ?

Oli. He pointed widely down yon narrow street,
But to no single house. I must inquire.

Cal. Come, I will aid you ; thus may we save time ;
For I am sick of everything I see.

In this huge city virtue is close housed,
And dares not show her face for very shame ;
While vice and folly, like two brazen drunkards,

Reel up and down the streets from morn till eve,
 Bullying the peaceful passers with their threats.
 Pah! what a purge of country air 't will need
 To drive this festering sickness from my brain!
 We must shut eyes and ears, good Oliver,
 Or we 'll go home two railing misanthropes.
 Come, let us on; and when we find my friend,
 We will have plucked at least one precious pearl
 From out this sea of misery and vice! [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

A Room in DON LUIS' house. DON LUIS alone.

Don Luis. All the supply of gold Calaynos sent
 At length has dwindled to a single coin —
 Curse on my luck! the cards will never change.
 By heaven! I swear, if ever I grow rich —
 By some unthought of chance, unborn as yet —
 I 'll shun all gambling from that very hour.
 But, being ruined, I must needs play on —
 For what wise gamester ever stopped in loss? —
 Hoping, by lucky change, to win all back
 With double interest — fortune's usury.
 'Tis villanous! for me, a gentleman,
 To be thus kenneled like a dangerous cur;
 Shut up by day, to prowl abroad at night,
 And forage scantily on my neighbor's fold

[Knocking.]

Who 's there?

Solo. (Without.) Unbar the door. 'Tis I, my lord.

(*DON LUIS opens the door. Enter Soto.*)

Don. L. You, Soto? Pray, what brings you back so soon?

Soto. Good news, my lord; up to your highest wish!

The wealthy friend, of whom you lately spoke,
Is in Seville, and seeking for your house.

Don L. Why not conduct him hither, dull-brained dog?

Soto. And mar your plot! No; I'm too old for that.

I threw him off the scent, and ran with speed
To warn you, señor, how to take the man.
You have not met your golden friend for years:
Mark my advantage, — I just quit his presence.
Lord! señor, here's a man to talk about
Before one's breakfast! That's my time of day:
Like a stopped clock, I point the self-same hour —
Just before breakfast! See my shivering hand
Upon this sinking button — mark the dial-plate!
Is there a clock in Spain that plainer says,
Just before breakfast? Ah! you flirt away:
I see my stomach does not gnaw your ribs.
Have you a bone hid?

Don L. Pish! what of Calaynos?

Soto. O wonders! miracles! He's not content
To feed his servants as your common lords:
No, no — not he! His secretary says,
If they complain of hunger — note his way —
He simply drives a live ox down their throats,
Horns, tail, and all! There's rural luxury!
There's doing dinner on a royal scale!
That I call living!

Don L. Sirrah, shall I give
Your hungry ribs an outside dressing?

Soto. Nay;

Your pounded meat is my aversion, señor.
But, O, this anaconda way of life —
This swallowing oxen with my appetite —
This blissful dream of always being full,
Squeezed out all baser matter from my brain.

Don L. I'll beat your prating skull till you talk
sense. [Seizes Soto.]

Soto. What, break the vessel of your own salva-
tion!

Sink ship, chart, compass —

Don L. Soto, now by heaven! —

[Strikes him.]

Soto. I'm down, I yield; you have persuaded me.
Calaynos comes to aid our suffering virtue:
For, by some words his secretary dropped,
And by the outward bearing of the man,
I deem him one for noble actions fit —
A generous mind, above suspicion quite;
Yet with an eye that looks through outward things
Into the soul, if once aroused to doubt:
Therefore be wary.

Don L. Fear me not, good Soto.

You've shown a shrewdness that I dreamed not of.

Soto. But above all, beware the man of ink —
A kind of humble friend to great Calaynos;
More of a worldly turn than is his master:
He might walk safely o'er the roughest path,
While his lord tripped by gazing at the stars.
You may betray the lord before his eyes,
But not the secretary, on my life.

[Knocking 1

Don L. Heard you a knocking? To the window,
quick!

Soto. (*Looking out.*) They 've come, the two, his lord-
ship and the scribe;

Looking like hares before a tempting trap.

Shall I go down and let the conies in?

Don L. Ay, quickly; shut your mouth, you grin-
ning knave! [*Exit Soto.*]

Now for another step in villany —

Pshaw, pshaw, no scruples! I have left the path

Which leads to good, so far from where I stand,

That all return is worse than hopeless now.

What if I should confess? Would he forgive?

No, he would shun me as a spotted leazar!

What tells me to confess? — Some mocking fiend,

That fain would snatch the prize within my grasp.

It cannot be; I was not formed for good;

To what fate orders I must needs submit;

The sin not mine, but His who framed me thus —

Not in my will, but in my nature lodged.

Formed as I am, I have no choice of fate;

But must achieve the purpose of my being.

Therefore away, ye cheating fantasies!

That would decoy me from the thing I'd clutch,

Then leave me poor, and wickeder than ever.

He is a fool who acts not for himself;

A worse than fool, who chases airy virtue,

And gains but knocks and hatred for reward.

Yes, I will grasp the stable goods of life,

Nor care how foul the hand that does the deed.

Hark! they are coming. Actor, to thy part!

'Enter CALAYNOS, OLIVER, and SOTO. DON LUIS and CALAYNOS embrace apart. OLIVER and SOTO advance.)

Oliver. You here! and pray, my friend, how came you hither?

Soto. This is our house; and there my master stands,

Doing his duty to your lord Calaynos.

The house is small, and scant of furniture;

But you'll find rich apartments in our hearts,

Where you may lodge until the walls decay.

Oli. What, he your lord! You're surely jesting me:

You made me think, but half an hour ago,

Your lord the chiefest villain in Seville;

Called him a common gamester; said he lived

By cheatery of all kinds and qualities!

But sure Don Luis is a worthy man,—

You, a deceiving trickster!

Soto.

So I said:

But I'm the greatest liar in Seville;

A bastard born, and therefore false by nature.

My family, sir, before me, all were liars;

'T is an infection that invades our blood;

For which I'm bound no more than is a king

For the bright crown that tops his stately brows —

Coming by course of nature, not desert!

I love to lie; 't is naught but romance-making,

Spoken, not writ — for I'm too poor to print.

I could tell tales would make Quevedo stare —

But not malicious ones; and if believed,

How proud am I, as proving truth to nature!

I was but practising my art on you.

See how you stare, what admiration show!

Here 's glory for an author, quits my pains.
 Yet have I done my lord no grain of harm,
 Now all the lie is out. Poor, honest man!
 Why, sir, his honesty brought on these straits.

Oli. Cease, you mad dog! perchance you 're lying
 now.

Soto. Not I; you here may trust me without fear;
 Beneath this roof I do not dare to lie.
 My standing here is most undoubted, señor;
 So is my calling —

Don L. Soto!

Soto. As you must perceive.

[Retires.]

Oli. I half suspect this fellow told the truth
 When first we met. I do not like the looks
 Of him he calls his master, yon Don Luis.
 Then the unnatural boast about his lying.—
 It may be so; for I have known some men
 Who boast of crime, as if they spoke of virtue;
 And hang their sins out as for ornament,
 Merely to make the wondering audience stare.
 The morbid wish to be observed of men
 Makes heroes of our dying criminals,
 And adds a goad to crime. But yet I 'll watch;
 This limping story does not satisfy.

[Retires.]

(CALAYNOS and DON LUIS advance.)

Calaynos. So, poor companion, thou art hunted
 down
 By these base creditors; thy house besieged,
 Thy actions spied, sweet liberty infringed;
 God's very air thy troubled bosom breathes,
 Shut up in this close mansion. Why not write,

Ere hardship fell upon thee? Why not fly,
 And seek me out among my native hills,
 Where I with open arms had welcomed thee?

Don L. It was with fear that I disclosed my state,
 Half doubting this return from even thee :
 For we were sundered in the May of youth,
 Nor since have held communion. Ah, I thought
 Thou, like my other friends, hadst callous grown.

Cal. How thou didst wrong me !

Don L. Wronged thee, noble man !
 Yes, I can ne'er forgive the thoughts I bore
 'Gainst thee, and 'gainst the race of man entire.
 For I have stood at bay before the world,
 Facing the wolves that well-nigh pulled me down ;
 Until I deemed mankind a hungry pack,
 Eager to suck their wounded brother's blood.
 But thou hast come to purge me of my gall,
 To heal my wounded heart, to dry my tears,
 And plant within my soul a love for man,
 Which, by Heaven's grace, wrong never shall uproot.

Cal. Dost thou remember, Luis, when we sat
 Remote from men, yet planned to mankind good ?
 What dreams we dreamed, what projects grave we
 formed,
 To guide our lives when we to manhood came ?
 And thou wert ever first in these designs ;
 Formed broader projects, gave a greater scope
 To thy sweet fancy, than thy backward friend :
 And wast thou first to plan these goodly deeds,
 Yet last to bear them out ? Ah me ! I fear
 The sprouts of fancy most luxuriant shoot
 In shallowest soils ; and, when most forward seeming,
 Oft-times but weak of root !

Don L.

It so has seemed.

Calaynos, hadst thou borne what I have borne,
 Thou wouldst not be so gracious to mankind.
 Thou hast been nursed in wealth and luxury,
 Thy every wish been father to the deed :
 Thou, from o'erflowing means, hast freely given
 That which it cost thee nothing to impart :
 But I, through bad men's acts, have fallen from
 wealth,

Nor know one day if I may feed the next ;
 So that the coin which I a beggar give
 A moment wavers 'twixt his need and mine.

Cal. Luis, you know not of the years I've spent,
 In patient study and unwearying search,
 To learn the wants of man. I have digged down
 Into the very roots and springs of things :
 All moral systems, all philosophies,
 All that the poet or historian wrote,
 All hints from lighter books, all common sayings, —
 The current coin of wisdom 'mong mankind, —
 Time-hallowed truths, and lies which seem like truths,
 I have turned o'er, before my mental eye,
 Seeking a guide to lead me on to good ;
 And find, the chiefest springs of happiness
 Are faith in Heaven, and love to all mankind.

Don L. This is a noble creed, above my reach —
 A creed for one in ease and affluence ;
 Better in speculation than in deed.

Cal. Not so ; and thou shalt go, poor brain-sick
 man,
 Far from these scenes, to heal thy wounded mind.
 Beneath my roof thou shalt forget thy cares ;
 And time's soft plumes will brush thy tears away ;

While I within thee may implant a faith,
To bear thee safely through this faithless world.

Don L. Thou art too good to one not worth thy
love.

Cal. Leave that to me. But of the creditors ;
I long to stuff their hungry maws with gold.
Send for them quickly.

Don L. Nay, I 'll go myself.
A walk to me is a rare luxury.

Cal. Well, then, we 'll seek them.

Don L. Nay, I 'll bring them here.
Repose a while ; I will return with speed.

[*Exit hastily.*]

Oli. (*Advancing.*) How fell Don Luis to such pov-
erty ?

Cal. By the connivance of some common knaves,
Who gained his name to certain bonds and deeds
Of a vile tool of theirs, that played his friend.

Soto. Two scurvy knaves, two knaves of clubs and
spades,
Took the last real he could call his own. [*Aside.*]

Oli. (*Drawing CALAYNOS away from SOTO.*) This shows a
lack of wisdom on his part.

Cal. Nay, Oliver, it shows a trusting mind,
Pure from suspicion, a most guileless mind.
He is a man whose loving heart was bruised
By acts of one whom most of all he loved.
For this, I quite forgive his bitterness.

Oli. A man like him, reared in a crafty town,
With his acuteness, was too easily caught
By a most shallow and most bare-faced trick.

Cal. Suspect you aught ? What, sir, you do sus-
pect ?

Oli. And I have grounds.

Cal. Rash boy, restrain your tongue!
Or that might follow which you may repent.
I tell you he is pure as yon bright sun.
Knaves flourish and grow rich: look round you here;
Does this poor house show aught of prosperous
crime?

If he were wealthy, or o'erblown with pride,
I'd listen to the silly words you speak.
I knew him from a child; you catch a glance;
And yet you tell me, as a trader would,
This gold is counterfeit! These words of yours
Savor of cunning low, and not of wisdom.
Yet never seek to sprinkle in my ear
Your worldly gall! What I will do, I will!
Nor you, and all the world —

Oli. My lord, my lord!

Cal. Pardon me, Oliver; thy wish was good,
And towards my interest aimed, though shot awry.
Think not of what I said. Let us go in:
There is a couch; I would repose a while.

[*Exeunt CALAYNOS and OLIVER.*]

Soto. Lord! What an actor has my master grown!
It takes a gentleman to lie complete.
I'm but a blunderer to this mighty man,
Who lies by rule, is armed at every point,
Ready for each conjecture. 'Tis a system
To which an humble man can ne'er attain.
I do not like that secretary's air:
He is too shrewd; and has a busy brain,
That ever seeks for plots and deep deceits
In a'l he looks at. For a rustic born,

The fellow 's wise enough : but what a fool,
 What a poor, generous, trusting dolt his lord !
 Here 's a fine subject for the Don to fleece !
 Why, we 'll grow rich on him, regain our state,
 And flourish bravely, as we did of old. —
 But I must warn Don Luis, once again,
 To keep an eye upon the cunning scribe. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

A Street in front of the Exchange. Enter four USURERS, meeting

First Usurer. What is the news on 'Change ?

Second Usurer. Of great import
 'T is said the Court to-morrow leaves Seville ;
 When all the chiefest gentlemen of Spain,
 Nobles and commons, follow it of course.

Third Usurer. Half of our business gone ! That 's
 news enough
 To break one 's heart. How slow are fortunes made !
 Here I 've been laboring for a score of years,
 With scarce a pittance for my daily toil.

Second U. O, that comes well from you, who could
 nigh buy
 A noble dukedom with one half your means !

Fourth Usurer. They say the plague is coming
 here again —
 That the French king is to a war inclined —
 I heard Don Luis sawed his head half off,
 With a dull knife, to cheat us creditors.

First U. That 's sure a lie ; for here Don Luis
 comes.

Third U. Nor tries to shun us! What does this portend?

(*Enter DON LUIS.*)

Don L. Good-day, my friends!

Usurers. Good-day, good señor!

Don.L. My friends, I do not wish you should bear loss,

By the large loans which you have each advanced;

So, by your leave, to-day I'll pay the debts,

On slight conditions which you'll not deny.

I have a friend in town, of ample wealth,

Who'll settle all, without a real's loss,

If you keep silent; nor, by word or deed,

Say aught of me, or why I raised the loans,

Or how I brought myself to poverty.

And should he ask for what I owe these sums,

You'll say that for a friend a bond I signed,

Whose treacherous flight makes me responsible.

Are you agreed? Say yes or no: if no,

Your only chance for pay is lost.

First U. My lord,

You are too sudden; give us time for thought.

Don L. (*Apart to SECOND USURER.*) Come hither, sir.

You are of gentle blood,

And, therefore, know what feelings cling to rank;

Nor would you shame, by an incautious word,

A gentleman who loves you for your birth.

I trust your honor; knowing that I lean

On that which might uphold a monarch's throne.

You'll not betray the secret which I leave,

With purest faith, intrusted to your hands.

A breath of yours might mar my state for aye,

And blot a noble family from the land,
To which you are of kin — though distantly.

Second U. Racks shall not wring it from me!

Don L. I 'm content.

The pompous fool! his race cleaned boots for ages

[*Aside.*]

Second U. (*Aside.*) There 's birth and breeding;
there 's a gentleman!

Called me his cousin! He may trust till doom!

[*Retires.*]

Don L. (*To FIRST USURER.*) I 'd speak a word apart
with you, my friend.

First U. What would your lordship?

Don L. You 're a prudent man;

And would not lose your loan by empty words —

Words which may do me harm, but you no good:

Therefore, if you desire to use the gold,

I charge you give no hint of my affairs

To him who pays the debt. Men call you wise,

And say you gained your wealth by strictest silence.

First U. Trust me, my lord; 't is not my wont to
prate

When any moneyed business is concerned. [*Retires.*]

Don. L. (*To THIRD USURER.*) Hither, you jackal
List to what I say!

If you reveal why I 'm in debt to you,

Or say a word of interest or its rate,

Or how I raised the loan, I 'll blow a storm

Shall drive you naked from Seville to-night!

There 's a young nobleman, a gay Don Juan,

With whom in trade you were concerned of late —

Look to it — if you dare to blab a word,

His father, old Alfonso, shall know more,
Before to-night, than what he dreamed this morn !

Third U. Good heavens ! you know —

Don L. Naught that I wish to tell.

I have the whip-hand of you — by the gods,
I 'll make you smoke if you prove restive now !

Third U. Fear not, my lord.

Don L. Nay, nay ; fear me, you leech !

Third U. (*Aside.*) How knows he this ? [*Retires.*]

Don L. (*To FOURTH USURER.*) Come here, you trembling slave !

If you by word, or look, or act, or sign,
Or hesitating speech, or stammering tongue,
Wise looks, or shrugs, which seem to hide a thought,
Give any token that you know me else
Than as a poor but worthy gentleman,
Who suffers through misfortune, not through fault —
If you act thus, by yon bright heaven, I swear
I 'll drive my dagger half-way down your throat !

Fourth U. Good lord, you would not kill me !

Don L. Kill you, rogue !

Ay, and throw out your carcass to the dogs ;
Thinking I 'd done the brutes small charity !

Fourth U. Dear señor, I 'll be quiet as a mouse.

Don L. Look to yourself ; my eye will be on you.

(*Turns to all the USURERS.*)

Follow me, masters ; if you have resolved
To act as I proposed.

Usurers. We have, my lord. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

A Room in DON LUIS' house. CALAYNOS and OLIVER.

Calaynos. What, not yet rid of your suspicious thoughts?

Pray cast them off, as unbecoming things,
 Unworthy to consume the idle time
 Which you will waste in entertaining them.
 Suspicious men are like those slinking curs
 That whine and fly, if we but show the lash,
 And suffer torture ere they feel a blow.
 If you will nourish them, I promise you
 Enough of food to rear your nurslings on ;
 For you will strain and twist his every act
 To confirmation of your worst suspicions.
 A falling straw shall make you swear him false,
 An idle word shall damn him past reclaim ;
 Though he, poor man, be innocent of crime,
 And all the guilt be harbored in your breast.
 I'd as soon be a conscience-hunted felon,
 As one pursued by packs of fantasies !

Oliver. My lord, for you, I'll try to love your friend ;

But you will pardon, if with poor success.
 When first I saw him, a cold shudder ran
 From head to foot ; the while my faint heart thumped,
 Like a great weight, against its prison-house ;
 And when he strained you in his close embrace,
 I'd rather have seen a tiger mount your breast.
 You half believe in these antipathies,
 That tell, like instinct, of some coming ill ;
 For you are firm of faith in sympathies,
 Which prove, if they exist, their opposites.

Cal. Cease, Oliver; we cannot harmonize.
I will not doubt him till I find him false.

Oli. Pray give me leave to ask the creditors,
Unknown to him, how in their debt he grew?

Cal. Yes, for your own repose; I'd have you
friends;
If that will satisfy, you have my leave.
Now to your writings; here Don Luis comes.

(*Enter DON LUIS and the USURERS.*)

Don Luis. (*Apart to CALAYNOS.*) Here are the cred-
itors; pray treat them fair:
'T will but make foes to chide them for their wrongs;
And, as thou know'st, I've enemies enough.

Cal. As you think fit. Come hither, gentlemen,
And give your papers to my secretary;
He will write orders for their settlement.

[*To the USURERS.*]

(*CALAYNOS and DON LUIS talk apart. OLIVER seats himself at a table.*)

Oli. This is a large amount for one man's bond.
[*Aside.*]
What usury did good Don Luis pay?

[*To the USURERS.*]

First Usurer. 'T was not by usury he came in
debt;
'T was by a bond, which he endorsed for one
Who raised the gold, and then proved false to him.

Oli. But where's the bond? When paid, 't must
be erased.

First U. (*Apart to the others.*) The devil! here's a
strait! What shall we say?

Don L. (*Advancing.*) What is the matter with you,
gentlemen?

First U. Señor, the secretary wants your bond,
Which we forgot to bring.

Don L. Nay, nay, not so ;

'T was put into my hands as we came here.

You gave it, did you not ? [To *FOURTH USURER.*]

Fourth Usurer. I did, my lord.

[*DON LUIS retires.*]

Oli. Baffled ! and yet 't is strange ! These cred-
itors

Take up their pay, as if they felt no shame ;
Which, were the action guilty, they should show.

[*Aside.*]

(*Turns to the FOURTH USURER.*)

Why, sirrah, what a curséd knave are you,
To grasp your cheatings with so meek a face !
You 've done a deed might bring you to the oar.
You, and your fellows, should march two by two,
With iron chains around your villain necks,
To seek the hulks, by dint of conscience driven.—
You slimy swindler, you vile cozener !

Fourth U. Why is it wrong to lend —

• (*DON LUIS advances, playing with his dagger-hilt.*)

to lend — to lend —

Oli. To lend what, rascal ?

Don L. Lend my house your room.

[To *FOURTH USURER.*]

Have you not paid these men, my gentle friend ?

[To *OLIVER.*]

Oli. I have, sir.

Don L. (*To USURERS.*) Gentlemen, you may depart.

[*Exeunt USURERS.*]

Oli. (*Aside.*) Here was a struggle ; but he bore
it off ;

A moment more, and he 'd have been betrayed.
 Yon man is guilty, though I have no proof.
 I'll seem his friend, but watch him as a foe :
 Heaven grant, thereby, I keep my lord from harm !

[Retires.]

(CALAYNOS and DON LUIS advance.)

Don L. My noble friend, what service hast thou
 done

To one unworthy of thy least regard !
 How like a dew thy gentle acts have fallen
 On that dry waste, my scarred and thirsting heart !
 O, may the blessings of a grateful mind
 Rise up in prayers to Heaven, like evening mists,
 To fall on thee in balmy freshening showers,
 Dropped from His hand who smiles on kindly deeds !
 I'll love my former sufferings from this hour ;
 Since, through my pain, thou hast such rapture
 wrought.

Cal. Cease, cease ! Thy words have overpaid the
 act ;

If thou proceed'st, thou plungest me in debt ;
 Such gratitude doth shame my blushing gold.
 But, Luis, to this corner of thy heart,
 Warmed with the heat of friendship's holy flame,
 Take not thy friend, unless thou 'lt take mankind ;
 And, for the love of one, love all his race :
 Many are worthier of regard than I.

Don L. I think not so ; but thou shalt use my heart
 As a poor mansion, over which thou rulest :
 If so thou will'st, call in thy dearest friends ;
 They shall be welcome, though they 're all mankind.

Cal. And now make ready to depart with me.

I long to have thee breathe my native air,
 And share such pleasures as my home affords.

Don L. An hour, and I'll be with you. [Exit.]

Cal. Oliver.

Oli. My lord.

Cal. Collect the train ; we must be gone.

Oli. How soon ? — To-day ?

Cal. Within an hour, at most.

Oli. It can be done.

Cal. Then haste ; your time is brief. [Exit.]

Oli. Confusion ! He departs with such hot speed,
 I'll not have time to see the creditors.

I purposed to untwist this tangled skein —

To free the Don, or to confirm his guilt :

But this unthought of haste o'erturns my scheme,

And leaves me wandering 'mid my doubts and fears.

[Exit.]

A C T I I I .

SCENE I. *A Room in CALAYNOS' Castle.* DOÑA ALDA.

Doña Alda. O, WEARY, weary days, how slow ye
pass !

Flow on, flow on, and bring Calaynos home !
Yet why should I desire my lord's return ?
His presence makes small difference to me :
Shut up in his dim study, pondering o'er
The yellow leaves of the most learned dead,
Short time he gives to me ; and when he comes,
With stately step, and quiet, solemn eyes,
He chills the joy that from my heart would burst,
With a most dreary smile, or smiling sigh.
Yet I do love him, or I think I do. —
Pale, melancholy man, thy godlike mind
Was rather formed for multitudes to praise,
Than for a woman's individual love
To spend its wayward feelings on, unawed.
No change, no change ! Can I be happy here —
I, running o'er with the hot blood of youth,
Eager for action, sick of dull repose,
That rusts my spirit with unburnished rest ? —
I happy ! plodding an unvarying round
Of sullen days, that slowly crawl to years ?
My life is like a dammed and sluggish pool,
Topped with a scum of foul, green discontent,

Which loads my breast, and keeps the sunlight off.

(*A horn sounds. Enter MARTINA.*)

What means that sound ?

Martina. The warder blew the blast ;
Your lord and train approach the castle gate.
What quick return from dear Seville he makes !
Had I been he, I 'd staid from home a year.

Doña A. 'T is a strange taste, his love for these
old walls :

He oft has said, he passes not an hour,
Which he calls happy, when away from them.

Mar. Lord ! lady, what a speech ! Were he well
bred,

He 'd say from you no happy hour was passed.
You were included in the walls, I deem,
With sundry other scraps of furniture.
I hate a man who rolls in self-content,
And needs no one to help his happiness !

Doña A. You hate my lord ?

Mar. O, no ! my lady dear ;
I spoke, as we unthinking women do,
In o'erstrained phrase, that means not what it says.

Doña A. In the brief letter I last night received,
He writes, a much-loved friend returns with him,
To share what sports our castle can afford.

Mar. What sports ! what sports !—To see the
half-bred Moors
Dance to their pagan drums, on Baptist's day ;
And howl and rave, as if the maw of hell
Had cast its devils up to mar our earth !
These are the only sports. The holidays,
Except Saint John's, go off with moody shows,

Which well-nigh make a Christian woman weep.
Who is the friend ?

Doña A. I know not : a young man ;
But yet not named. — How old do you suppose him ?

Mar. Thirty in years, and yet a century old !
A heart dried up, like one of Egypt's mummies,
All balmed and spiced in rare philosophy ;
A spindle-shanked, lean-visaged, red-eyed youth,
With a most rickety and crooked back,
That got its set o'er Plato ; one who fears
To look a pretty woman in the face,
Who would begin his prayers if one came near ;
Who with his senses has not lived a day,
Yet ages with his brains.

Doña A. And I suppose,
A man much like my lord, of earnest mien,
Of grave and reverend looks — incarnate wisdom
Made manifest and pure in earthly form —
A man without a sin, or fault, or stain :
Such must he be whom lord Calaynos loves.

Mar. Would he had brought a gallant gentleman,
Such as adorns the splendid court of Spain !
A man all smiles and service to us women ;
Faultless in dress, with a light, dashing air,
That wins his way to every lady's heart ;
A man of wit, in conversation apt,
Ready in trifles, with a thorough knowledge
Of all the little things which women love ;
One who can talk of China, or of cats —
Of furs, or frills — of lace, or Cashmere shawls —
And be as learned and absolute in these
As is your lord in metaphysics' lore :
That were a proper man — a man of fashion —

A man of feeling, delicate, refined ;
Not a great clumsy, learned elephant !

Doña A. Hark ! they are coming. — Get you in,
Martina.

Mar. I'll pass this way ; for I must see the guest.
[*Exit.*]

Calaynos. (*Without.*) Is Doña Alda here ?

Mar. (*Without.*) She is, my lord !

(*Enter CALAYNOS, DON LUIS, OLIVER, and SOTO.*)

Doña A. (*Embracing CALAYNOS.*) Welcome, my lord.

Cal. Dear Alda, in thy joy,

Thou dost forget the guest I bring to thee ;

A guest, and therefore to be welcomed first —

A friend, and therefore to be welcomed warmly.

Doña A. (*To DON LUIS.*) Pardon me, señor, if I once
offend

The courtesy a lady owes her guest.

'Tis the first parting we have e'er endured ;

Therefore our meeting is a strange delight,

New and most grateful. You are welcome, señor,

Both as a guest, and as my husband's friend.

Don Luis. Ask me no pardon, where is no of-
fence. —

Your double welcome I accept at heart,
And pray 't may have a long continuance.

How beautiful she is ! — Heavens, what a gem

This barbarous castle has shut up in it ! [Aside.]

Why came you not, fair lady, to Seville ? —

The court was there, and all was gayety,

Which lacked but you to make the joy complete.

Doña A. The very man whom last Martina drew.

[Aside.]

'T was not his will. [*Pointing to CALAYNOS.*]

Don L. Ah, then you wished to come?

Doña A. My lord's will is my wish.

Don L. Most dutiful!

Would that all ladies could be taught by you —

'T would save us aches!

Doña A. (To CALAYNOS.) My lord, we'll share thy thoughts.

Cal. Nay, heed me not. I must retire a while.

[*Exit.*]

Doña A. Perhaps 't would please you, sir, to view the castle?

No customary qualities it lacks,
Which dignify all huge and antique piles.
On every oaken door and painted window
There rests a legend, magnified by time;
Each tower is tenanted, at evil hours,
By other forms than walk its floors by day;
No stone but has its story. Some are gay,
Some grotesque; some are sad, some horrible.
I'll tell you but the cheerful — shall we walk?

Don L. Ay, like the Sultan of the Eastern tale,
I'll list a thousand nights with eager ears. [*Exeunt.*]

(*OLIVER and SOTO advance.*)

Soto. This is a fine old castle — somewhat musty.

Oliver. Ay, 't is the mustiest mansion in all Spain.

This castle my lord's race inhabited
Beyond all date.

Soto. How did they in the flood?

Oli. O, they were fishes then, and swam unchoked
They were advancing from their primal slime —
Hatched by the sun on some wide river's bank —

Through worms, fish, frogs, and beasts, upward to
men.

They lived here monkeys, till their tails wore off,
Then became Moors, and last you find them thus.

Soto. Why, here 's a pedigree for potentates !
That 's why they quarter beasts upon their shields ;
Relations they to all these rampant brutes.
Friend, I shall dread to kill the next mad dog,
For fear I spill some near relation's blood.

Oli. Fear you to kill a fox ! You were a fox —
A cunning, sly, most guilty-minded fox ;
Your master was a wolf, a dangerous wolf,
And you, sly fox, were his first counsellor. —
Fear to slay foxes, Soto !

Soto. What mean you, sir ?

Oli. Merely that men were one time animals.
My master was a lion, king of beasts ;
And you two, fox and wolf, once stole his crown,
And thought to wear it.

Soto. Friend, you speak in riddles.

Oli. O no, in fables I.

Soto. Speak plainer, Æsop !

Oli. I was a dog, — a faithful, patient cur, —
And watched my master while his eyes were
closed ; —

For you had given the king a sleeping draught,
Made of a flower called Friendship — falsely called !
I slew the fox and wolf, regained the crown,
And placed the golden circle on his brow : —
Now, in the fable, see what beast was I ! [Exit.]

Soto. This fellow looks through both of us like
glass :

He 's keener than my lord, and wiser far.

Some sunny day, we 'll both pitch o'er these walls,
 And he will be the man that breaks our necks.
 Ah! 'tis a sad thing, Soto, very sad,
 To be knave's knave, e'en though he be a Don!
 To take the peril, and do all the work,
 Then, at the last, come in for all the kicks.
 My lord must know the fable which I heard—
 He'll sleep the lighter for it, on my life! [Exit.]

SCENE II.

Another Room in the Castle. Enter DOÑA ALDA and DON LUIS.

Don Luis. Pray, noble lady, how do you kill time?
 The constant sameness of a country life
 Must sometimes bear with weight on your high
 spirit.

Doña Alda. Kill time, kill time! Ne'er breathe
 those words again—

At least, 'not where my lord Calaynos hears—
 If on his good opinion you set store.
 He uses time as usurers do their gold,
 Making each moment pay him double interest;
 He sighs o'er what in slumber is consumed;
 Robs the lead-lidded god of many an hour,
 To swell his heaping stores of curious learning.

Don L. I hope my words no treason to your ears;
 I thought not, gentle lady, to offend.
 But I have lived in cities, from my birth,
 Where all was noise, and life, and varying scene—
 Rêcurrent news which set all men agape—
 New faces, and new friends, and shows, and revels,

Mingled in constant action and quick change —
 Which things drive on the wheels of time apace ;
 Nor, but for scanty periods, have I known
 The changeless round of a calm country life.
 I have not weighed my minutes in fine scales,
 As lapidaries do the diamond's dust ;
 Content am I to wear life's blazing gem,
 Nor care what fragments fall in polishing.

Doña A. I have not passed my life in gayeties ;
 Duties, not pleasures, have filled up my days.
 My lord's domain is large, and peopled thick ;
 Though most are prosperous, some are old, some
 poor.

Those that can hither come, I here relieve ;
 But the more feeble I ride forth to seek,
 Freighted with goods which ease their present wants.
 Sometimes, I read old books of chivalry,
 And fill my wandering brain with idle fears
 Of dwarfs, enchanters, giants, eldridge knights,
 That throng the crowded world of old romance.
 Sometimes, I prattle with my town-bred maid,
 A girl of wit, who longs to see Seville,
 And has so filled my ears with her desire,
 That I'd fain go, if but to still her tongue.
 Then there are household duties infinite,
 Known but to women, which I must discharge.

Don L. So, then, at times you are an almoner,
 At times a romance-reader, next a housewife.
 These are grave things to spend a life upon !
 But where's Calaynos in this catalogue ? —
 Does he not cheer you, in your mournful tasks ?

Doña A. Are you his friend, and ask me this of
 him ?

He is a scholar of the strictest caste ;
 And from the portal of yon study dim
 Seldom comes forth into my little world.
 He is a man of grave and earnest mind,
 Wrapped up in things beyond my range of thought ;
 Of a warm heart, yet with a sense of duty —
 As how he must employ his powerful mind —
 That drives all empty trifles from his brain,
 And bends him sternly o'er his solemn tasks.
 Things nigh impossible are plain to him :
 His trenchant will, like a fine-tempered blade,
 With unturned edge cleaves through the baser iron.—
 Such is my lord, a man above mankind.

Don L. And can you feel companionship with him,
 An intellectual demigod, removed
 From all the sympathies that mark our race ?
 Can your warm woman's heart outpour its griefs,
 Or share its gladness, with a soul like his ?
 Can you unbidden leap upon his breast,
 And laugh or weep, as suits your forward mood ?
 He must despise all smiles, and mock all tears :
 Serene, and cold, and calm — an ice-crowned peak,
 Towering supreme amid thought's frozen clouds,
 Above the thaws that flood our vales of life.

Doña A. You're talking of my husband !

Don L. Of my friend.

Let me be your friend, lady, I beseech.
 I fain would see you live in happiness ;
 And his strange coldness cannot bring you peace.

Doña A. Husband and wife need not a go-between.
 I did not say I lived unhappily ;
 Nor that Calaynos wanted in his love.
 Señor, you take wild license with my speech,

To twist its meaning to so base an end.

I love him, he loves me.

Don L.

Your pardon, madam :

'T was but the share I take in all affairs,

Wherein my friends are mixed. I meant not ill ;

Nor, willingly, your harmless words would wrest
To any sinister or false intent.

'T was a mistake ; but such a one might hap

In the warm heart of any loving friend.

Doña A. Well-meaning ill the generous must for-
give.

When next we meet, beware how you uprake

The slumbering ashes in the fane of love,

Lest you come off with withered hands ! — farewell.

[*Exit.*]

Don L. Farewell, thou type of beauty, whom I'll
win —

Farewell, thou guileless seat of embryo love —

Farewell, thou temple of my burning heart —

Thou thief of honor — thou enchantress fair,

Who hast upset my nature by thy art,

And killed the latest seeds of good in me !

Farewell, all gratitude, and friendship's trust !

Come, smiling sin, and pour thy honeyed words

On tongue and lips, but in my heart pour gall ! —

Come, thin-robed sin, that show'st thy loveliness,

But hid'st thy wickedness and keen remorse !

That I may win my love, and hate her lord —

O, when had love a conscience or a fear !

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

The Study of CALAYNOS. CALAYNOS reading, OLIVER transcribing a manuscript.

Oliver. (Rising.) My lord, this learned manuscript
has raised

A crowd of strange conjectures in my mind,
That rush and jostle through my wildered brain,
In wild confusion, without settled purpose.

Calaynos. (Rising.) What part stirred up this riot
in your head?

Oli. That part in which it hints at God's design
In the creation of the earth and man.
I oft have wondered how omniscient God
Could take delight in forming things like men :
So full of meanness, yet so full of pride —
So strong in thought, and yet so weak in act —
So foul in nature, so o'ergrown with sin,
Yet destined for a sphere 'neath Him alone.
What pleasure finds He in our paltry deeds,
Begot of selfishness and headstrong will?
What feeling moves Him when the puny thing
Lifts up his voice, and boldly rails at Him?
How deems He, when He sees the myriad souls
That speed to death — their destiny forgot,
The purpose of their being unachieved —
Seeking, unawed, a hell of their own choosing?
Why did He form so fair a stage as this,
To dance His trifling puppet, man, upon?
And, last, does not this whole creation seem
'Neath His contempt, so far above it He?

Cal. Stop, Oliver ; you tread on dangerous ground,
 A mental bog, that quakes beneath your feet.
 These words would seem to come from humbleness,
 And low opinion of yourself and man ;
 Yet are engendered by the rankest pride,
 Arrayed in robes of meek humility —
 Stop! the next step is infidelity.
 Contempt for man begets contempt for God :
 He who hates man must scorn the Source of man,
 And challenge, as unwise, his awful Maker.
 The next step doubt ; and then comes unbelief.
 Last, you raise man above all else besides,
 And make him chiefest in the universe.
 So, from a self-contempt, grows impious pride,
 That swells your first-thought pigmy to a giant,
 And gives the puffed-up atom fancied sway.
 God is ! Philosophy here ends her flight ;
 This is the height and term of human reason :
 A fact that, like the whirling Norway pool,
 Draws to its centre all things, swallows all.
 How can you know God's nature to Himself?
 How learn His purpose in creating man?
 What 's ultimate to man, remains concealed :
 Enough for you, to know that here you are —
 A thought of God, made manifest on earth.
 Ah, yet His voice is heard within the heart ;
 Faint, but oracular, it whispers there :
 Follow that voice, love all, and trust to Him.
 O, learn, dear Oliver, to pity one,
 Who wanders in this world without a faith
 In something greater than his feeble self !
Oli. Yet thoughts, like these, will rise in spite of
 me.

Cal. I know it; 't is the taint of primal sin,
That mingles with each thought, mars every act,
That stains our very good with something ill ;
And, like the poison which abounds in plants,
Mingles its portion with our healthiest food.

Oli. Does not this knowledge of man's sinfulness
Awake a doubt of individuals,
And make you cautious, when you deal with men ?

Cal. No ; I have predetermined trust in man,
That never alters, till I find him false.
I am above the common herd in power ;
No rogue can wrong, but in my ample purse ;
Which I scarce feel, which, had he asked, I'd given.

Oli. 'T is all in vain ! I cannot raise a doubt
In his ingenuous nature. — There 's no hope.
I have but slender grounds to doubt Don Luis ;
And my own doubts, perchance, may work me ill —
Yet will I go to death, if he's not false !
I, from Seville, will gain the facts I want ;
Meantime — (*Aside.*) My lord, much of your friend
you 'll see ;
For you must hunt, and feast, to pass his time,
And show all courtesies that may befit.

Cal. Nay ; he 's too dear a friend to make a stran-
ger.
I will divide my castle and my wealth ;
Let him use each, as suits his present mood.
We will not clash in interests : he may hunt,
I study ; thus, each may enjoy his bent.
Then Doña Alda will be much with him.

Oli. Hum, hum ! I like not that, I like not that.

[*Aside.*]

Cla. She is so full of life, so fond of change ;

They two can put their restless heads together,
 Unhood their thoughts at every whim that flies,
 And chase the quarry till they bring it down.

Oli. Heaven grant, these coupled falcons prove
 not haggards! [*Aside.*]

(*CALAYNOS reads, OLIVER writes. Scene closes.*)

SCENE IV.

A Room in the Castle. Enter MARTINA.

Martina. I wonder where the strangers can have
 gone!

I've searched the castle o'er, to find them out;
 Yet, save the glimpse I caught as they came in,
 Have tried, in vain, to get a peep at them.
 The master has a gay and courtly air,
 Which proves him of high birth, and liberal training.
 The man, too, bears himself in proper trim,
 And shines, although reflected is his light.
 'Tis nigh as well to serve a gentleman
 As to be gentle born; to catch his ways,
 Follow his manners, and imbibe his tastes;
 Learn what is graceful, what to be eschewed;
 Garner the grain, and fling aside the chaff:
 Till, in the end, the copy may become
 A finer work than the original.
 I've half a mind to fall headlong in love;
 Certes I will, if he show sign of fire.

(*Enter Soto.*)

Soto. Good-day, fair maid! We have not met
 before.

Mar. Good-day, fair sir! — the better since we meet.

I'll show him I can speak as fair as he. [*Aside.*]

Soto. Are you a dweller 'neath this roof above,
Or but a passing angel here alit?

Mar. Ay, and a treader of this floor beneath!
Throw off your lofty style. — I'm not a fool,
Nor a plain country maiden, as you think.

Soto. Plain you are not; that can I truly say —
I hope a maiden.

Mar. As you are a knave!
What if I'm not a maid? — What if a wife?
I'm still my lady's maid, say what you will.
What if a widow? Would you like me less?

Soto. Shall I speak plainly?

Mar. Plainly as you think.

Soto. Then, if a maid, I hold you 'bove all price.
If you're a wife, keep your dear husband hence;
I'd spit the villain, as I would a toad!
If you're a widow, then I think of you
As of a nut, when all the kernel's gone —
As of a fruit, when all the juice is dried —
As of a feast, when all the meats are eat —
As fair outside, but rifled all within!
An unclaimed hawk may come to know the lure,
And we may teach the haggard as we list;
But when once broken, by an unskilled hand,
She gains such tricks as training cannot mend.

Mar. Why, the dog's mad in love! (*Aside.*) I am
a maid.

Soto. Let me catch breath, and thank you for those
words!

My blood runs free, that nigh became a mass,
 Congealed and stagnant, with my freezing doubts!

Mar. Come from your stilts. I fain would like
 you, sir;

But you must be familiar, not too lofty.

You fly your words above my simple ken.

If you'll make love, why, make it like a man,

Not like a demigod. We have enough

Of word-inflated mortals in our house. —

How do you like this place?

Soto. O, past all bounds —
 That is for you; for one thing else I hate it.

Mar. What thing is that?

Soto. Be secret — Oliver.

Mar. You hate him? I do too, most bitterly.
 The scurvy fool, who fain would be a sage!

Soto. The prying knave, who has discovered more
 Than his dull lord, with all his learning, could!
 Things are at pretty pass, when servants grow
 Above their masters — saving you and me.

Mar. Pray tell me all.

Soto. Well, let us walk apart:
 Some ear, less honest, our discourse might catch.
 I'll tell you all, for we both pull one way. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

The Park before the Castle. Enter DON LUIS.

Don Luis. The means, the means! — My love is
 cold as snow;

I dare not tell her what I burst to say.

But she may change; as Hecla sends forth fire

From out the ice, which hides its burning heart.
 But how? Alas, she knows not of my love;
 Can take no interest in me, uninformed.
 Did she but know, that might arouse her heart;
 For half the love of earth from this source springs:
 First woman's flattered at the heat she wakes,
 Then falls in love, to rid herself of debt.
 I dare not tell her; that might blast the whole,
 And drive me from her presence unrepaid.
 Yet she must know; but by some other means—
 Not know, but doubt it. Let that thought once in,
 No band of angels e'er can drive it out,
 No force usurp its sway. I'm well convinced
 She bears no love for her great booby lord:
 If she be secret, he can ne'er suspect—
 Too busy up in heaven to think of earth.
 There's Oliver;—I'll give him food for doubts,
 Which, if he breathe, I, through the influence
 Wielded by me above his heaven-rapt lord,
 Will drive the beggar forth. O, friendship dear,
 Through thee I'll work, and gain my end at last.

(*Enter Soto.*)

Soto. I have been looking for you far and near.
 I've all the castle's secrets on my thumb.

Don L. What know you, Soto?

Soto. Nay, what know I not?
 I know, my lord, all that one girl could say
 In scarce an hour; but what would pose ten men,
 And they fast talkers, in a day to tell.

Don L. Who gossiped thus?

Soto. Martina.

Don L. Who is she?

Soto. The confidential maiden of my lady ;
 A girl of wit, and most complete in form,
 With thoughts and aims above the place she holds.
 She, too, abhors the crafty secretary ;
 And when I told her how I scorned the wretch,
 She loosed her eager tongue, told everything
 Which she had gathered since she first came here.
 At last we fell in love, and there we rest.

Don L. Go on, good *Soto*, cram her to the brim,
 Love her as you have never loved before ;
 Or rather make her love you, that were best.
 I too have fallen in love.

Soto. With whom, my lord ?

Don L. With Doña Alda.

Soto. Are you much in love ?

Don L. In love to death !

Soto. O, that is nothing strange.
 You've sickened for a score, died for a score ;
 Till the next passion brought you health and life.
 There was Constanza, Clara, Viola,
 Maria, Isabella, Phillipa —

Don L. Peace ! you are crying this she-merchan-
 dise
 As tradesmen do their wares. I tell you, knave,
 The love which now I feel gnaws me like hunger !

Soto. They feed too well to give that figure force
 In this fat castle. But a week ago,
 When I was thin and famished in Seville,
 Such words had drawn forth tears of sympathy.
 But there's the husband loves you 'bove all heights.

Don L. And here am I, that hate him 'neath all
 depths.

Soto. Natural enough ; you bear it in your blood.

I lately heard a ballad, ages old —
 A scurvy ballad — a foul, lying ballad —
 Which told how some great ancestor of his
 Drove round Granada's laughter-shaken walls
 Kinsman of yours. Not with a manly sword —
 No, that were fair — with a base scourge he did it.

Don L. What mean you ?

Soto. He's of Moorish blood.

Don L. You fool !

Soto. Witness his Moorish name, Calaynos.

Don L. True.

Who told you this ?

Soto. Martina told me, señor.

'T is a mere taint he bears paternally :
 Though very slight, yet, in the pious eyes
 Of the hidalgos of Castilian breed,
 Worse than all crimes the devil ever did.
 'T is a grave secret, not to be divulged.

Don L. Ah, now I think, I heard it when a boy.
 What of his lady — is she Moorish too ?

Soto. No, of the purest blood.

Don L. Why, this is strange !

Soto. Her sire was proud, but sunk in poverty ;
 The lord was rich, but of the unclean blood ;
 And so they compromised, and struck a trade.

Don L. Then the Moor bought her ?

Soto. So Martina says.

That's why he would not take her to Seville,
 For fear she'd learn what half of Spain well knows.

Don L. You're sure she knows it not ?

Soto. Who'd dare to tell ?

He'd pitch the bold informer in the moat,
 To drink his health : he's more than sovereign here.

Don L. Now, lovely Alda, I have hold on thee,
Shall draw thee to me, should all else fall short.

[*Aside.*]

Go, Soto, tell this new-made love of yours
That I 'm neck-deep in love for her fair lady.
You need not tell her to be secret. — Go!

Soto. Here 's mischief brewing. (*Aside.*) I obey
you, señor. [Exit.]

Don L. Thanks, love! This news outgoes my
wildest hope.

I doubt no more, the thing is certainty ;
The chase is simple, and the conquest sure.
Sure 't is a virtuous deed to set her right ;
To show this cozening Moor in all his guilt,
In all the blackness of his foul deceit,
To her dear eyes. — Good Lord! a boy might tri-
umph!

Woe, woe, Calaynos! this sole crime of thine
Shall draw upon thy head a double grief! [Exit.]

SCENE VI.

A Room in the Castle. Enter MARTINA and SOTO.

Soto. There bloom twin rose-buds 'twixt your nose
and chin,
That I 'd fain taste.

Martina. Kind sir, beware the thorns!

[*Showing her nails.*]

Soto. I 've felt the thorns, they rankle in my heart ;
Naught but thy lips can draw their venom out.

[*Kisses her.*]

Mar. Your act has bruised the heel of your desire,
So close it treads behind. — Dost love me, sir?

Soto. Love thee! I love thee past the flight of
thought.

Words cannot tell thee — nay, I cannot think,
I cannot truly to myself conceive —
Cannot set bounds to, cannot understand
The one idea which o'er me reigns supreme,
And bows me at thy feet — (*Kneels.*) I can but feel
The might of that strong spirit. — Useless words!

[*Rises.*]

I see thou hat'st me, see thou think'st me mad —
Know thou wilt scorn me — send me from thee far,
To spend my days in mortified despair.
O, what a dolt was I, to tell thee this!
But my full heart drove on my silly tongue.
Farewell, forever!

Mar. Stay; I hate thee not.

Soto. But dost thou love me? Say that word,
or I —

Mar. I love thee.

Soto. Wilt thou ever love me thus?

Mar. Till soul and body fall apart, I will.

Soto. O joy, O love! Success beyond my hopes!
I, like a reckless gamester, staked my all
On this last throw, and, see, the game is won!

Mar. Play not again; or you may lose your
winnings.

Soto. Fear not, dear maid; I'm rich in what I've
won.

But dost thou know, Martina, that we two
Are not the only lovers here?

Mar. How so?

Soto. My lord thy lady loves, as I love thee,
And she must love my master, as thou lov'st ;
Or we this dismal house can never fly ;
Here he 'll abide till doomsday. — Dost thou see ?
We must contrive to win her to his love ?
For, if she fly, then in her train fly we.

Mar. She loves him not ; yet may be brought to
it. —

I'll do my utmost ; for thy sake, not his.

Soto. Where dost thou lodge ?

Mar. Just next my lady's room,
And Hymen keeps the key. — Fair sir, good-night !
[*Exit.*]

Soto. She's a brave wench ; but somewhat over-
prudent. —

Well, if I wed her, I'll not mate a fool.

Now to Don Luis ; let him watch his game,

If he will play at hazard with the Moor :

There 'll be swords drawn before this cast is o'er.

[*Exit.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Great Hall in the Castle. Enter DON LUIS and SOTO.*

Don Luis. YET I much doubt the power Martina holds.

In small affairs her influence may be great ;
 But in a matter like the one now toward,
 I fear she must come off with sorry grace.
 I value virtue, though I have it not,
 And know its power to set all wiles at naught ;
 Heart-rooted good may pass through fire unscathed,
 And chastity can keep a fiend at bay,
 With its pure, sinless front.

Soto. Bravo, my lord !

Here 's a fine speech, to come from one like you !

Don L. Soto, I 've trod all paths of sin and guilt,
 And know the wickedness and crimes of men ;
 Yet would have been a fool, had I not seen
 That virtue may exist, though rare indeed.
 I tell you, I have met it everywhere,
 In halls and hovels ; and have oft retired,
 Abashed and conquered, from its injured look.

Soto. My lord, if thus you reason 'gainst yourself,
 As if persuading from your first design,
 Give up the chase : I 'll never counsel guilt.

Don L. No, by the gods ! you misconceive my aim.

Fools come to naught, who follow cheating hope ;
 I ever look at the dark side of things,
 And weigh the chances 'gainst my own success :
 So bring to enterprise a wary eye,
 Prepared for every stop that balks my way.
 Naught but long-suffering good, that triumphs most
 When most oppressed by adverse circumstance,
 Can 'scape the snares that threaten Alda's feet.

Solo. Martina calls her weak, of fickle mind,
 Curious for change, and discontented here ;
 Unstable in design, thence easily led.

Don L. She may be thus, and yet be pure as
 heaven.

Solo. Monstrous, my lord ! Do you not blush with
 shame,
 To look on virtue, and dissect it thus ?
 If I e'er thought of good I'd turn a monk.

Don L. You say Martina knows no ill of her,
 No sin, the slightest — not a hook or loop,
 Whereby to lead her on ? Mayhap her lord
 Has told his Moorish birth, in some soft mood, —
 Has reconciled the stain, and won regard.

Solo. Martina gives but one reply to that ;
 She says her lady never had a hint
 Of how Calaynos wronged her ; — rest on this.

Don L. 'T is well, 't is well ; the sharper then the
 stroke,

The keener then the pang, the more she loves. —
 Nay, nay, she loves him not — to that I'll swear ;
 But this will tear respect and awe away.
 Martina must contrive we meet to-night ;
 And you stand ready at the horses' heads.
 If you would take your baggage, have her prompt,

And pack her safe upon another horse ;
 While you ride guard, to hinder all pursuit :
 My steed bears double. — See, the lady comes.

(*Enter DOÑA ALDA and MARTINA. SOTO and MARTINA talk apart.*)

Lady, I waited to address you here.

I on the morrow for Seville depart.

Doña Alda. So soon ! Calaynos knows not your intent ?

Don L. Not yet. An urgent matter calls me off.
 But ere I go — if, lady, you 'll permit —
 Some words, deep freighted with your happiness,
 Must claim a notice.

Doña A. Speak, sir — I attend.

Don L. Not now ; to-night, if you will meet me here.

Doña A. Speak now : why wait till night ?

Don L. Nay, bring your maid ;

Let her remain in ear-shot, should you call.

I mean no wrong ; I fain would do you right.

Doña A. Sir, on such terms, I grant what you request.

Don L. Adieu, till then — poor lady !

[*Exeunt DON LUIS and SOTO.*]

Doña A. What means he ?

“ Poor lady ! ” — This is strange beyond a dream.

Why does he pity me — why look so sad,
 With so much pain and trouble on his brow ;

As if he bore a load of secret woe,

That must have birth with many a fearful pang ?

I 'll seek Calaynos, and entreat advice —

No, no, 't will vex him. Sure he means no wrong
 For full-eyed pity never troops with guilt.

Martina, did you mark Don Luis' plight? —
How quick he left, as if to save me pain?

Martina. He seemed dejected, and o'ercome with
grief.

Doña A. Can you conjecture aught?

Mar. Not much, nor clearly.

Doña A. What do you think?

Mar. I think he is in love.

Doña A. Pshaw! that's the offspring of two silly
heads —

Soto and you are ridden to death with fancies —

He is too wise to love without a hope.

Men who have known the world as long as he,

But fall in love with great estates or gold —

Taking the encumbrant maiden as an ill;

And not with peril, such as he must brook

Who dares to love the wife of great Calaynos.

Mar. Yet such things have been.

Doña A. O, yes; sung in ballads.

Mar. Ay, and in real life, lady: Queens of Spain
Have had their paramours.

Doña A. So might it be,

Yet never hap to bride of a Calaynos.

No, no; some solemn mystery bore him down,

Which he must tell, though he'd fain shun the act.

Mar. What mystery deeper than an untold
love?

What keener pang than telling in despair?

Find me a grief, to rend a loving heart,

More cruel than separation without hope!

Believe me, lady, this is root of all.

Doña A. Ha! think you so? — Why, then, I meet
him not.

I'll not put torture to his tongueless love ;
 I will not tempt him to dare certain death,
 For the poor consolation words afford.

Mar. I may be wrong — perchance I may be
 wrong —

Nay, now I think, I cannot but be wrong.
 He would conceal his love from outward show
 Till the last moment — I am sure I'm wrong :
 Yet am I sure he loves you, though he go
 Without a sign to show the love he feels.

Doña A. I will not hate him for the love he bears ;
 Nor will I fan my secret vanity
 With his despairing sighs, as women do :
 No man can say whom he will love, whom hate —
 The act o'erleaps his will ; and a pure heart,
 That burns to ashes, yet conceals its pain,
 For fear it mar its hopeless source of love,
 Is not to be despised, nor lightly held.

Mar. You are too cruel, to gain and not return.

Doña A. I am too just to soil Calaynos' honor.

Mar. I never thought of him.

Doña A. Ne'er thought of him !

My chiefest spring and stimulant of good,
 Before whose face crime takes an humble guise,
 And blushes at its meanness — never thought !

Mar. My love for you admits no rival cares.

Doña A. And can you separate my lord from
 me ? —

What bears on him, has double weight for me.
 Did I not think this coming interview,
 Through me, held things of moment to my lord,
 I ne'er had granted it ; for he shall hear,
 Ere I have time for thought, the substance of it.

Mar. 'Tis but time lost:—I will not urge her
 more,
 Lest I disgust her with my Soto's lord.
 She ever flies from Luis to Calaynos;
 And when I name the Don, she bends her thoughts
 Full on her lord, and speaks of him alone.
 Her admiration has nigh grown to love.
 Luis must plead to-night—pray heaven he win!

[*Aside.*]

Doña A. What are you muttering, girl?

Mar. I hummed a tune,
 Of a poor squire who loved a noble lady.

Doña A. Heaven grant the lady was a maid, not
 wife!

Mar. I cannot tell.—When comes this interview?

Doña A. What hour?—O, I forgot.—He named
 no hour.

Mar. Well, say at two.

Doña A. But that is very late.

Mar. The better; for no listeners will be near.
 That base-born cur, that prying Oliver,
 Roams o'er the house, like a flushed hound on
 scent.—

I wonder what the villain would nose out?
 He counts us all, but his dear lord, as game.
 I vow, I have no peace: at every door,
 Through every glass, I see his ugly face.

Doña A. He is, you know, Calaynos' Mercury;
 Who, through him, watches that his guest is served.

Mar. Well, then, I'll say at two. [*Exit hastily.*]

Doña A. Stay, stay, Martina!—
 She hears me not. One hour is as another;
 'T will be no darker when two strikes than nine.

I would not trust this man at such a time,
 Having suspicion that he bears me love,
 Did I not hear his virtues told to me,
 From morn till eve, by my most thoughtful lord.
 If I should ask Calaynos, he 'd say — Go ;
 There is no fear where good Don Luis comes.
 Trust him, my child ; for he is honor's soul !
 Well, well, I 'll go — I marvel what it bodes ! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

The Study of CALAYNOS. CALAYNOS and OLIVER.

Oliver. When does Don Luis leave ?

Calaynos. Not soon, I hope.

His visit here has brought the color back
 To his wan cheek, and lent a healthy cast
 To thoughts that sickened o'er his former woes.
 We surely may predict much good of him,
 When he returns to mingle with mankind :
 He will not rust in ease ; he 'll speak and act,
 And do the utmost God has given him power.
 Ah, he who rests in sloth bears half the guilt
 Of him who goes about to compass ill ;
 For heaven has lent him strength to conquer sin,
 Which, through disuse, lets evil run unchecked.
 He who has power to plant one seed of truth,
 And does it not, is nigh as bad as he
 Who, with broad hand, sows falsehood through the
 land.

Oli. I hope with you ; and yet I fear, my lord.

Cal. Fear what ? Speak out. — Again at your
 suspicions !

Oli. I have received some letters from Seville,
Which place your guest in no too virtuous light
They say —

Cal. Before you speak, pray answer me. —
From whom this news, and how was it obtained?
I said you 'd surfeit doubt, if food you sought;
And here is proof. — Go on; whence came this news?

Oli. From a fast friend, who loves you as my
master:

A man whom anxious guilt would ne'er suspect
Of saying aught beyond the pale of truth.
He gained intelligence from public rumor —
Why, it is broad and common as the sun;
But chiefly from those very creditors
Who got your gold, and then enjoyed the trick.

Cal. And shall I doubt my friend for knaves so
base,

Who thus avow they practised villany?
Did he not tell me of the cunning traps
In which they snared him, in which now you fall?
If they 're so lost to shame, as to confess
That through a trick they wronged my confidence,
How shall I now believe, though seeming true,
The tangled tale they blush not to unfold?

Oli. Nay, sir, if you fling logic in my teeth,
And reason facts to falsehoods, I have done.

Cal. Can you not mask your thoughts, if they
offend?

Oli. Next God comes truth, and in that rank I
love it!

Cal. Sir, I have borne un murmuring, day by day,
Your wily hints, though wounded to the quick. —
I have been vexed by your sly, boyish tricks,

That sought to lead a man of twice your years :
 I told you once before, I tell you now,
 That guilty cunning which preys on itself,
 Content with proof would make a sophist stare,
 You have mistaken for wisdom. — Leave me, sir —
 To-morrow I shall want a secretary.

Oh. Good heaven! my lord, you would not cast
 me off?

You would not thrust me on this evil world? —

Cal. You will see all the traps, shun all the snares,
 And prosper bravely, as the wily do. —
 Nay, now I think, I have another house
 Beyond the mountains, out of sight and hearing :
 Go there and dwell — the pension is the same.

Oli. Spare me, my lord! Be just, if you are cruel ;
 Nor taunt me with the pay I never sought.
 Have I loved gold, or have I hoarded it? —
 Where is the wealth you gave in my command?
 If I must go, I go without a coin,
 Whose yellow look might curse me with its shame!

Cal. I never knew in you a sordid wish.

Oli. O, no! O, no! you knew me from a child ;
 I sat upon your knee, and called you father ;
 Played with your tasselled sword — ah, then you
 smiled,
 And kissed my forehead, for that tender name. —
 Our cheeks were touching, when you taught me
 letters ;

O, you were patient then, nor roughly chid
 Your stammering scholar if he spelled awry.
 You did not taunt me with a love of gold ;
 You did not stand upon your awful power,
 And tell your nursling to go forth and die!

Ah, no; you told me e'er to love you thus;
And for that lesson I am wrecked at last!

Cal. Poor boy! poor boy! Nay, then remain —

Oli. Not I!

I'd rather starve than eat unwelcome bread. —

That, too, you taught me, and I thank you, sir.

I value freedom o'er all else besides;

Nor would I be dependent for a throne.

To-morrow you'll be happy — I'll be free.

Cal. No, no; it shall not be. Come here, my
son —

Come close to me — I am again your father;

Nor shall e'en friendship sunder time-knit love.

Oli. Your blessing, sir, — 't will lighten many a
toil.

Cal. Are you resolved?

Oli. Ay, though my heart-strings snap!

Cal. God bless you, son!

Oli. God keep you from the snares!

Cal. Away, away! lest you revoke my blessing.

[*Exit OLIVER.*]

He does as I would do. O, stiff-necked pride!

That chokes each avenue to humble love —

That walls the glowing heart with stubborn ice,

And leaves the beds of feeling cold and dry!

Farewell! The first bright link is torn away;

Thus time will rend the reliques one by one. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

The Great Hall in the Castle. Enter DOÑA ALDA and MARTINA

Doña Alda. Has it struck two?

Martina. 'T is near that hour, my lady

Doña A. Before or after?

Mar. Just before, my lady.

Doña A. We are too soon. — The clock is surely wrong.

Mar. 'T is natural haste. He knows a woman well.

Doña A. Yes, yes ; a woman never waits for ill ;
We always meet it. — Did you hear a step?

Mar. Not I. — Did you?

Doña A. Perhaps it was my heart,
That beats so painfully against my side.
Would it were over! (*Clock strikes.*) Hark! there
strikes the clock ;

It sounds as if 't would wake the castle up. —

Did you e'er note before how loud it strikes?

This is not right — I feel it is not right.

I'll leave the hall. — See, how those portraits frown!
As if I'd done some crime, or were about it.

Mar. You are too late — look, where Don Luis
comes!

He means no wrong. — Nay, lady, I'll be near.

Doña A. Sure never evil wore so smooth a face.

(*Enter DON LUIS. MARTINA retires within.*)

Don Luis. Your prompt attention chides my
lingering steps.

Doña A. Speak quickly, sir : I have short time to
hear.

Don L. What, without more delay?

Doña A. Right to the purpose.

Don L. O, then prepare your ears to hear a tale
Shall shake your soul, and task your tottering mind
To bear its feeble body firmly up.

Doña A. With such dread prelude, what must I expect?

Don L. First, lest it seem 'gainst nature, or to prove

That I am quite devoid of gratitude

Towards him whose kindness I have felt, and feel,
Know the full cause which prompts me to the deed.

Know 't is to see you righted, who are wronged —
Wronged in a way that most concerns your honor —
Wronged by a wretch in whom you have most trust ;
But to be righted by a man who loves.

Yes, yes, I love you — love you with a heart
That ne'er before knew love for womankind.

But yet I love you purely as a saint :

I dare but worship, hope not to approach ;

I have not thought to win a smile or sign :

I bow in homage ; sacrifice a heart,

Though torn and bleeding, spotless as your own.

Nay, more, I pray to have my love forgiven,

Whose adoration may offend your eyes ;

For oft devout and reverend worship seems,

In others' sight, no purer than foul sin.

Yet must I tell my love ; my dammed up heart

At length has swept each choking fear away,

And caused a flood in which, perchance, I'll drown.

O, spare me, lady ! — say you can forgive !

Doña A. Audacious man, dare you overleap the
brink,

Nor know the fearful depth that yawns below ?

Have you e'er looked from yonder window's edge,

Down on the grisly rocks that jut beneath,

Ragged and cruel as the chafed boar's fell tusks ?

Have you e'er turned your dizzy eyes aloft,

To view the tower which hangs above those crags ?
 On that same tower, years since, a malpert page
 Sighed forth his love to our great-grandsire's
 daughter ;

Next day they found him on the rocks below,
 Mangled and dead. — Some said he slipped and fell ;
 But none knew how, or why. — Beware, fair sir,
 If not sure-footed, how you walk that tower !

Don L. Alas, alas ! this is a woful tale,
 That one should fall for love ! — You pity him ?

Doña A. Not for his love he fell, but telling it :
 There was the crime that caused his grievous slip.
 Better his fire of love had burned to dust,
 Than roused up sleeping justice with its blaze.

Don L. Have you no feeling for a burning heart,
 That cannot quench its fire, except in death ?

Doña A. “ Suffer in silence ” is the legend graven
 Beneath the shield that crowns our castle gate :
 When you came here you passed beneath that shield,
 Yet have not read the wisdom it contains.

Don L. Sweet lady, hear me.

Doña A. Nay, no more of love.
 Another word, I 'll call Calaynos forth. —
 Martina, are you there ?

Martina. (*Reëntering.*) I am, my lady.

Don L. Fool ! get you gone. [*Exit MARTINA.*]

Doña A. Ha ! dare you go ? — Come back !
 Good-night, good-night ; I have o'erstaid my time. —
 Sir, thank your gentle bearing for your safety. [*Going.*]

Don L. Lady, return ; you have not heard me out :
 This is but prologue to the tragedy ;
 Now comes the guilty tale of which I spoke

Doña A. Nay, there was guilt enough in what you said :

Tax not my ears to bear a weightier load. —

Farewell. [*Going.*]

Don L. And you are lost — forever lost !

O, I beseech you listen, on your life !

Doña A. Proceed — I'll hear ; but not a word of love.

Don L. No, 't is of hate, of most malicious hate —
Hate self-engendered, without cause or motive —
Against you borne by one you dearly trust ;
Shown in the heavy wrong 'neath which you live,
Though all unweeting that such crime exists.

Doña A. Who does me wrong ? — One whom I
love and trust ?

Martina ?

Don L. No ; strike nearer to yourself.

Doña A. Then Oliver ; for he is next my lord.

Don L. Your lord himself.

Doña A. 'T is false ! 't is false as sin !

I will not waste a moment on a lie. —

Get hence, you scurvy thing, base hypocrite,
That thus would stab your benefactor's back ! —
You dare not face him, coward, and say this,
Lest he should whip you with his undrawn sword !
Get hence ! 't was fit you should crawl forth at night,
If you must spit your pent-up venom forth ;
But keep your slimy poison from my ear,
Or I may crush you, toad !

Don L. Be calm, and hear.

Doña A. Be mad, and rave ! I might forgive you
then.

Don L. I tell you, mortal ne'er such wrong
endured —

Doña A. As you dare fling upon me.

Don L. Hear me out. —

Who do you think your lord, Calaynos, is ?

Doña A. The noblest, greatest, wisest man in
Spain !

Don L. I tell you, lady, he is one half Moor ;
His other half holds every baseness in it,
That spots the nature of the lowest white.

Doña A. A Moor, a Moor — a lie !

Don L. His name, his name !

Is it not Moorish, from the first to last ? —

'Tis sung of in our ballads.

Doña A. Gracious Heaven !

I never thought of that — I never thought —

Don L. Look at these portraits, dark by blood,
not age,

Clad in the Moorish steel from crest to heel. —

Thus scowled they on the ranks of Ferdinand,
When they mowed down the brightest flowers of
Spain ;

Thus proudly looked they, thus they him defied,
When round these walls his leaguering armies lay ;
Thus grimly smiled they, when the baffled king
Was forced to grant them lands he could not hold.

Why, are you purblind, that you see them not,
These dusky founders of his powerful house ?

Doña A. It cannot be ; my father then had
known —

Don L. Yes, he was poor, and sold you like a
slave —

A precious, fair-skinned slave, to sate a Moor !

You, you, the brightest jewel in all Spain,
 Became a thing to fill a miser's chests : —
 Why, he 'd have bartered with the devil for you !
 Would you have proof? — I 'll bring a crowd of it.
 This why Calaynos kept you from Seville —
 This cause of the secluded life you lead ;
 Forbid to mingle in the joys of life,
 To wrap his damned, black mystery closer up !

Doña A. O, misery, despair ! Where shall I turn ?

Don L. Turn to me, dearest, I will succor you.

Doña A. Avaunt ! you child of hell, you torturer !
 Foul, tempting fiend, through you I thus have fallen.
 Why came you here, to mar my paradise
 With knowledge proffered by the hand of crime ?

Don L. O, then return ; go to your darling's bed ;
 Crawl to his side, and kiss his thick-lipped mouth ;
 Play with his curly pate, and call him fair ;
 Pray heaven to bless you with a hybrid race !
 O, hug him close, close as fools clasp a sin,
 And dream you 're happy ; that were wise and kind.
 If you have woman's spirit, bear it not !

Doña A. O, foul — O, foul ! and they to do this
 thing —

Father and husband ! — O, my heart will burst !

Don L. I tell you, you were cheated by this Moor,
 Lied to and cozened, made a merchandise,
 Sold to the highest bidder — he bid high.
 Now he might sell you to some other hand,
 If he could get a profit on his ware. —
 What worse than this ? What worse can come than
 this ? —

Ah, you have breathed deceit, and fed on guilt ;
 Thought him a saint, who was at heart a fiend.

Poor child, poor child! now could I weep for you;
 But anger chokes the kindlier channels up,
 With thinking on this base, heart-cheating Moor. —

Doña A. Spare me! — Calaynos — [She faints.]

Don L. But one way remains.

Now nerve me, love, to bear my precious freight.

[He carries her off.]

(After a pause, enter CALAYNOS.)

Calaynos. Methought I heard a voice repeat my
 name;

And then a hurried rush of trampling feet.

No, 't was a fancy; all is still. — These lights —

Why burn they here, at this unwonted hour,

Watching, like grief, the dull, cold midnight through?

This is a strange neglect, unknown before,

And dangerous. I must draw a tighter rein.

These knavish servants — Ha! I heard a noise,

[Opens the casement.]

Like the dull sound a flying courser makes,

When urged to speed along the yielding sod.

Some of the deer have broken through the pale,

And gambol nimbly 'neath the winking stars.

Bright nightly watchers, tell your secrets now;

Unfold to me the mystery of your being;

Say why ye came, how long ye thus have kept

Your faithful vigils o'er this atom, earth!

Were you but formed for man to gaze upon,

To flatter him, and puff his spirit up;

Or in creation's scale do ye hold place

Of more import than sages ever dreamed?

Ye misty pleiads, where has gone the star

That, ages since, among ye disappeared?

Cal. Nay, get to sleep again.
I know not why I called — 't was habit — go.

Oli. You know full well I did not sleep last
night. —

'T is useless to attempt it.

(*Enter a Forester wounded.*)

Cal. Who are you,
That startle morning ere the cock has crowed?
Wounded and bleeding! If I see aright,
You wear the livery of my foresters.

Forester. My wound is nothing; but the way it
' came

May much concern your lordship, if you 'll hear.

Cal. Say on.

For. Well, señor, as I went my rounds,
Just ere the break of day, to watch the herd,
I saw two horsemen spurring to the blood
Across the park, as if to gain the hills.
The foremost bore a lady in his arms,
Who seemed nigh dead with fear, or dead outright:
Well, this one passed ere I could cross his way.
Beside the second rode a girl I 'd seen —
My lady's maid, I think her name 's Martina;
But who the man was I can scarcely tell.
Well, sir, I threw my staff across his path,
And bade him stand: out came his heavy sword;
With a side blow he struck me down to earth,
And split my skull with this unmanly wound.
The coward! If I 'd had a sword, my lord,
I warrant you I 'd make the fellow leap.
But then you see I was unarmed, my lord,

And it was nearly dark. I stood just so,
With my staff raised —

Cal. I thank you for your pains.

Here 's gold, to heal your wound. [*Offers money.*]

F.r. I 'd rather not :

The chance to serve you has been pay enough.

[*Exit.*]

Cal. There goes a man, a man without a price,
Who takes no fee for virtue ! Oliver.

Oli. My lord.

Cal. What think you of this fellow's tale ?
Soto has done us service, were it not
That her elopement will sore vex my lady.

Oli. But who the foremost horseman ? — whom
bore he ?

Cal. That 's strange indeed. Go call Don Luis up.
[*Exit OLIVER, hastily.*]

Here is brisk gossip for a week or two :
There 'll be no grumblers here till this is o'er.
I, too, am rid of one whose wanton breath
Forced into birth my lady's discontent,
To choke her peace with its unhealthy sprouts.

(*Reënter OLIVER.*)

Oli. Don Luis, sir, ne'er saw his couch last night ;
And all his lighter luggage is removed.

Cal. Call Doña Alda.

Oli. Sir, I passed her room ;
The door was open, not a soul within.

Cal. What can this mean ? — Why bite your
trembling lip,

And bend your eyes so sharply on my face ?

Oli. Ah, what sad prophets may our fears become !

Cal. What do you mean?

Oli. My lord, I dare not say.

Cal. 'T will not offend — speak out.

Oli. You promise me?

Cal. I vow, I will not say or do you ill.

Oli. The foremost horseman — who was he?

Cal. Go on.

Oli. Don Luis.

Cal. Ha! the lady whom he bore

Was —

Oli. Pardon me, for she was Doña Alda.

Cal. Monstrous! And wags the tongue that dare
say this?

Oli. 'T is true, my lord, or rend me limb from
limb.

Cal. Rash boy, I will be calm — calm as the storm,
Ere on your head its gathering terrors burst!

(*Enter a SERVANT.*)

Servant. My lord, some laboring men beset the
gate,

Who beg to see you; for they boldly say
That, as they went to work, they saw a man,
Mounted and armed like a stout cavalier,
Flying with Lady Alda in his arms.
On foot they could not reach him —

Cal. Out! begone! [*Exit SERVANT.*]

These torturing fiends are leagued to drive me mad!

Oli. My lord, my lord!

Cal. Why stand you there, dull sloth,
And stare upon me with your vacant eyes?

Slay wench and paramour. — Mount, mount, and follow!

(*OLIVER snatches a sword from the wall.*)

Ha! the hot blood of all the Moors is up,
And must have blood to lay it. — Mount, I say! —
You'll not desert me now?

Oli. Not while my soul
Clings to its wretched clay. — Shall I slay both?

Cal. Slay both; without a thought of mercy slay!
The shallow fools have fallen in love with death.

Oli. Murder will blot my soul when I return.

Cal. The murder of two wolves that tore your
lord!

Oli. Mine to obey; — I question not your man-
dates.

Cal. Stay, Oliver; their blood must be on me.

Oli. No, no; I'd rather do it.

Cal. O God, forgive —
Forgive my impious rage! Withhold thy frown,
Till I have sifted, to the very dust,
This hideous matter! Follow, but slay not.
Disguise your form, and seem not what you are —
The more like them who hid their acts as thieves.
Learn all you can, and then return to me:
Slow justice is more certain of its end.
If she repent, and you are moved to pity,
And dare to bring her where I catch a glimpse
Of her repentant features, by the gods,
I'll hurl you from the walls! — Be still, my heart!

[*Aside.*]

Oli. I will obey in all.

Cal. Away, away! [*Exit OLIVER.*]

Where shall I turn ? O, what thing shall I do ?
How have I scorned the men of ancient Rome,
Who left their fortunes to a flying bird !
But, now, I 'd hang my doubts upon a die,
Or whirling coin, and follow it like fate.
O, vain philosophy ! is this thy aid ?
When troubles darken, and the passions rage,
Must the philosopher become a man —
A feeble man, a very fool of impulse ?
'Tis all in vain, I cannot drive my thoughts
Into their wonted channels ; cannot weigh,
Nor calmly speculate upon my grief.
O, Alda, Alda, thoughts of thee come back,
And drive all speculation from my brain ! —
Why here am I, who thought to will to do,
Who thought I 'd schooled my passion as a child,
Raving at heaven o'er one of life's poor wrongs !
How brave, how brave in me to teach long suffering,
And, when I suffer, shrink without a tug !
O, Alda, Alda, never love thee more,
Never behold thee, never call thee mine ! —
I have a heart that mocks philosophy ;
Burst forth, my heart — I 'm but a man at last !

[*Weeps.*]

A C T V .

SCENE I. *The Great Hall in CALAYNOS' Castle. Enter CALAYNOS.*

Calaynos. THE strife is vain ; I cannot think nor read ;

My mind will wander, and my eyes grow dim :
 She clings to me like sin ! I catch myself,
 Involuntary, dreaming o'er the page,
 And all my dream of her. Day follows day,
 Yet deeper sinks the barb. Each hour my heart,
 Like a calmed vessel next a hideous rock,
 Heaves near this one idea. I hear her name
 Breathed by the air, in every gale that blows ;
 I feel her hand upon my shoulder laid,
 And sigh that sense can cheat. O shame, shame,
 shame !

Thy slime clings round me, and doth drag me down.
 O pride, O o'erblown pride, on which I swam
 In life's calm seas, and gayly smiled at fate ; —
 Thou, in the tempest's hour, dost toss me up,
 On the dread top of every howling wave,
 To send me thundering in its black abyss ! —
 Better beneath the choking brine to sink,
 And die untortured. Why did she deceive ?
 Why do this damning act ? If thunder roar,
 Men look above their heads, to find a cloud ;

But I am withered by a scathing shock,
 And yet the cause know not. What, Alda false?
 I'll not believe it — I am not awake;
 I'll wake, ere long, and find her by my side;
 Or she'll return, and tell it all to me.
 It is a trick to try me. She is hid,
 In some odd nook, to watch her jealous lord;
 Next thing she'll sally out, and mock my grief. —
 She false! I'd staked my soul upon her truth.
 Ah, 't is a trick, a trick — a trick to damn!
 What shall I do? Who shall direct me now?

(Turns to the portraits.)

I dare not question you, ye men of blood;
 I know your answer — draw the sword and kill!
 Fling out our banner, fire the culverins,
 Call in the war-bred from their ancient hills,
 And let the trembling valleys hear, aghast,
 Calaynos wars with man! O, empty threat!
 Blood cannot heal the scars which seam my heart.

(Opens the casement.)

The very sky is red, — is red as blood!
 Down, tempting devil, down! — I will not murder:
 'T is the last print of evening's fiery foot
 That burns in yonder clouds. Ere long, the night
 Shall fall as black as memory on my soul —
 O heaven! without a hope to light my path,
 One starry hope, to lend its guiding beam.
 Stumbling, and lost in darkness, on I grope
 To death — O yes, to death — to peace and rest.
 What dusky clouds o'erclimb yon eastern peaks?
 A storm? Come on, I like thy looks, my mate!

Shake thy red lightnings o'er this wicked world —
 Strike all the guilty with thy burning hand —
 Pour thy cruel hail upon their naked heads —
 O'erturn their habitations, root them out —
 Drive them, like sheep, before thy angry face!
 Nay, let them go: slay all the innocent —
 Slay all the sufferers, all that ache 'neath wrongs;
 For guilt can live in peace, and smile at them!

(*Thunder.*)

Alda, awake! the God of heaven is out,
 The God of justice! — No, the storm will pass;
 Or if it strike, perchance 't will kill a child.
 O, what a weary life is mine — strike me,
 In mercy strike!

(*Enter OLIVER.*)

Ha! thou 'st returned, my son?

[*Embraces him.*]

Didst thou see — Speak, I cannot question thee.

Oliver. Yes, yes, I saw too much. — Alas! my
 lord,

What dreadful thing has brought this change about?
 A month ago I left thee in thy prime,
 And, now, thou'rt old and wrinkled.

Cal. Yes, my son,
 My heart is old and wrinkled as my brow.
 I have not long to live; I feel it here.
 Yet, ere I go, I fain would tidings gain
 Of Doña Alda. — Is she happy now?

Oli. An hour ago, I passed a wretched town;
 But, ere I left, a squalid thing of rags
 Went by me, yet begged not; though I was clad,

Painted, and bearded like a cavalier.
I gave it, all unasked, it looked so sad —
That thing was Lady Alda.

Cal. Base-born dog!
And did you dare to give her charity?

Oli. 'T was of your gold I gave.

Cal. O, pardon me :
The devil in my blood will not be laid.
And did she take it with a courtly grace,
Learned at Seville from her bewitching Don ;
Or did she clutch it like a common drab ?
Say on ; I'm sorrow-proof.

Oli. Ah, no, my lord ;
She hardly felt the gold touch her thin palm ;
And then she smiled, so sorrowful, so sweet,
As one unused to kindness.

Cal. Know'st thou more ?
I'd steeled my heart to hear the blackest tale,
But this doth blacken fancy.

Oli. Few my words !
Of her dark story much I could not gather ;
And what I gained I came at by report.
She fled with thy false friend too well thou know'st ;
But why, is known to him and her alone.
From some vague hints, I think the guilt not hers ;
But that Don Luis used the foulest means,
And so achieved his wish most treacherously. —
'T is said, and I believe it.

Cal. Bless thee, Heaven !

Oli. She lived with him a while, but then she fled ;
This, too, a mystery ; — though I heard his knave,
His vile familiar, Soto, said in scorn —
“ She was too grand a lady for a mistress ! ”

Since then, she wanders on from town to town,
 With death's fell signet stamped upon her brow,
 Looking like grief in animated stone.

Cal. Yet the sun shines, and yet this villain lives!
 O, slow, slow justice, must I be thy tool?

(*Storm increases.*)

Oli. Mercy, how 't rains!

Cal. Ay, ay, alike on all.

Dost think poor Alda feels this bitter storm,
 Homeless and friendless, without cloak or food?

Oli. Perchance — (*A groan without.*) Hark, hark!

Cal. Methought I heard a sound,
 Like the weak moan of a sick, restless child.

[*Another groan.*]

Oli. And there again! It comes from 'neath you
 window.

Cal. Look out and see.

Oli. (*Looking out.*) I saw, by the last flash,
 A huddled form that cowered against the wall.
 Perchance some helpless child has lost its way,
 And cannot find the gate.

Cal. Go bring it in:
 No beast should suffer on a night like this.

[*Exit OLIVER.*]

(*Goes to the casement.*)

Ay, shake your fiery tresses, dusky clouds:
 I have resolved — ye cannot move my mind!
 Ye'll spare me for this act — ye love a crime;
 Or long ago ye'd scathed that viper's skin. —
 Three days from this he dies, and by my hand.

(*Thunder.*)

Roar on, roar on! I'll plunge my arm in blood

Up to the elbow — he shall bellow too !
 Poor Alda, whither roamest thou, sad wretch,
 Without a home or comfort ! — Spare her, Heaven !
 For thou canst soften tempests to a breath,
 To succor the shorn lamb — O, she is shorn !

(*Reënter OLIVER, with servants bearing DOÑA ALDA on a couch.*)

Oli. She has not long to live : — I brought her here.

Cal. Brought whom ?

Oli. The lady Alda.

Cal. Gracious heaven !

Why, I am passion's plaything. — Shall I rave ? —
 Shall I grow drunk on grief, and fire the house ? —
 Or what most desperate and headlong act
 Hast Thou reserved for me ? I'm ready — speak !
 Say anything ; but let me do, not think ;
 For I with thought grow mad !

Oli. Look on her, sir.

Cal. I cannot.

Oli. Look ; more harmless thing ne'er lived.

Ah, she is very still, and cold, and pale ;
 Scarce a pulse flutters ; she is nigh run down ;
 The balance of her body hardly beats :
 Another move, then follows endless rest.

Cal. Endless ! Stand here ; I'll look at her once
 more.

(*Approaches the couch.*)

Poor wretch, poor wretch ! why, grief hath rubbed
 thee sore !

I see its marks upon thy once smooth brow ;
 And it has crept among thy tangled hair,
 To nestle in its silk. Sad mark of woe,
 I'll not believe thy guilt ; 't was not thy fault ;

That villain Luis, by some hell-hatched lie,
 Drove thee past reason. Thou hast a tale, shut up
 Within the hollow chamber of thy breast,
 To make avenging falchions bristle earth;
 Thou couldst urge stony death to mend his pace,
 And strike the monster ere his day. — She moves.
 Go to her, Oliver; I cannot stay.
 Perchance, she 'd speak, yet has short time for words.

Doña Alda. Calaynos.

Oli. Hark! she calls thee, sir.

Cal. Go, go!

Oli. Lady, I'm here.

Doña A. Nay, nay, deceive me not.

I saw a pitying face bent over me,
 And it was his. Thou 'rt Oliver. O, sir,
 If thou hast trace of feeling in thy nature,
 Pray, bring him here. I'm weak, and ill, and fallen:
 He would not come for me; for he is proud,
 And I have wronged him to the depths of wrong —
 Not all myself; but yet he thinks 't was I. —
 Go, ere I die, in mercy go, kind sir.

Cal. (*Rushing to her.*) Alda!

Doña A. Break, heart! I am content to die.

Cal. O live! O live! I will forgive thee all. —

I will heap kindness on thee, till its top
 Shall knock at heaven. We will be friends, true
 friends;

If not my wife, thou shalt be dearer far. —
 If any here shall dare to mock at thee,
 I'll hang them from the walls to scare the wind. —
 I'll guard thee like a tiger! If the world
 Should choose to sneer, why, love, we'll laugh at it;
 Or, if thou lik'st, I'll ravage half of Spain. —

Yes, I'll do anything ; but live, O live !
 Far I can swear thou 'rt guiltless. Tell me all.

Doña A. O god-like man ! thy speech surpasses
 hope ;

I did not look for this from even thee ;
 I only wished to crawl to thee and die :
 For I have shamed thee in the face of man.
 I've made thy name a sneer and mockery ;
 And fools may spit their slander on thy fame,
 To gall thy pride, and shake thy glorious mind.
 O fie, O fie ! that I should do this act —
 This act beneath pollution ! Why not curse ?
 Why not call vengeance on my head like rain ?
 Why dost not spurn me ? Why not cast me forth,
 To rot with kindred filth, in some foul place,
 Where my rank guilt may not offend thy sense ?

Cal. Alda !

Doña A. It would be just. And I supposed,
 When I set forth to view thy face once more,
 That grooms would drive me from thy gates with
 whips ;
 For well I knew my guilt deserved no less : —
 I sat in judgment on it, all alone,
 And that the fiat which my conscience gave.

Cal. Speak not of this ; thou dost o'erstrain thy
 guilt ;

Let me not doubt thee, in this solemn hour.
 Tell me thy story ; for I think thee wronged.

Doña A. Yes, foully wronged ; but half the fault
 my own.

There is a packet hidden in my breast,
 Which holds the truthful story of my crime ;
 For thee 't was writ, ere I resolved to come.

Thou 'lt spare the shame of telling thee this thing ;
 'T would bring a flush upon the face of death,
 And drive thee from thy firmness. When I 'm dead,
 Tear forth the dreadful secret. — O, my lord ! —

Cal. What wouldst thou, Alda ? — Cheer thee,
 love ! — bear up !

Doña A. Thy face is dim ; I cannot see thy eyes :
 Nay, hide them not ; they are my guiding stars.
 Have sorrow's drops thus blotted out their light ?
 Thou dost forgive me, love ? — thou 'lt think of me ? —
 Thou 'lt not speak harshly, when I 'm neath the
 earth ? —

Thou 'lt love my memory, for what once I was ?

Cal. Yes, though I live till doom.

Doña A. O, happiness !

Come closer — this thy hand ? Have mercy, Heaven !
 Yes, press me closer — close — I do not feel. —

Cal. O, God of mercy, spare !

Doña A. A sunny day —

O ! — (*She faints.*)

Cal. Bear her in — I am as calm as ice.

Come when she wakes : I cannot see her thus.

[*Exeunt OLIVER and servants, bearing DOÑA ALDA.*]

'T is better so ; but then the thoughts come back
 Of the young bride I welcomed at the gate. —
 I kissed her, yes, I kissed her — was it there ?
 Yes, yes, I kissed her there, and in the chapel —
 The dimly-lighted chapel. — I see it all !
 Here was old Hubert, there stood Oliver —
 The priest, the bridesmaids, groomsmen — every
 face ;

All the retainers that around us thronged,
 Smiling for joy, with ribands in their caps. —

And shall they all, all follow her black pall,
 With weeping eyes, and doleful, sullen weeds?
 For they all love her: — O, she was so kind,
 So kind and gentle, when they stood in need;
 And never checked them if they murmured at her,
 But found excuses for their discontent. —
 They 'll miss her, for her path was like an angel's,
 And every place seemed holier where she came.
 Ah me! ah me! I would this life were past!
 Stay, love, watch o'er me; I will join thee soon.

(A cry within.)

So quickly gone! and ere I said farewell!

(Rushes to the door.)

(Reënter OLIVER.)

Oli. My lord —

Cal. Yes, yes, she 's dead — I will go in. [*Exit.*]

Oli. O, dreadful ending to a fearful night!

This shock has shattered to the very root
 The strength of his great spirit. Mournful night!
 And what will day bring forth? — but woe on woe.
 Ah, death may rest a while, and hold his hand,
 Having destroyed this wondrous paragon,
 And sapped a mind whose lightest thought was
 worth

The concentrated being of a herd.
 Yet shall the villain live who wrought this woe?
 By heaven I swear, if my lord kill him not,
 I, though a scholar and unused to arms,
 Will hunt him down — ay, should he course the
 earth —

And slay him like a felon!

If this be sin, let fiends snap at my soul,
 But I will do it! Lo, where comes my lord,

Bent down and withered, like a broken tree,
Prostrate with too much bearing.

(*Reënter* CALAYNOS.)

Cal.

Oliver,

I stole to see her ; not a soul was there,
Save an old crone that hummed a doleful tune.
And winked her purblind eyes, o'errun with tears.
O, boy, I never knew I loved her so !
I held my breath, and gazed into her face —
Ah, she was wondrous fair. She seemed to me,
Just as I've often seen her, fast asleep,
When from my studies cautiously I've stolen,
And bent above her, and drunk up her breath,
Sweet as a sleeping infant's. — Then perchance,
Yet in her sleep, her starry eyes would ope,
To close again behind their fringy clouds,
Ere I caught half their glory. There's no breath
now,

There's not a perfume on her withered lips,
Her eyes ope not, nor ever will again. —
But tell me how she died. She suffered not ?

Oli. She scarcely woke from her first fainting here ;
Or if she did, she gave no sign nor word.
A while she muttered, as if lost in prayer ;
Some who stood close thought once they caught thy
name ;

But grief had dulled my sense, I could not hear.
Then she slid gently to a lethargy ;
And so she died — we knew not when she went.

Cal. Here is the paper which contains her story :
I fain would clear her name, fain think her wronged.

[*Reads.*]

O, double-dealing villain! — Moor — bought her!
 Impious monster — false beyond belief!
 But she is guiltless — hear'st thou, Oliver?
 Nay, read; I cannot move thee as she can.

[*OLIVER reads.*]

He called me Moor. True, true, I did her wrong:
 The sin is mine; I should have told her that.
 I only kept it back to save her pain;
 I feared to lose respect by telling her.
 I see how he could heighten that grave wrong,
 And spur her nigh to madness with his taunts.
 She fell, was senseless, without life or reason —
 Why, tigers spare inanimated forms —
 So bore her off. Then lie on lie — O base!
 The guilt all mine. Why did I hide my birth?
 Ah, who can tell how soon one seed of sin,
 Which we short-sighted mortals think destroyed,
 May sprout and bear, and shake its noxious fruit
 Upon our heads, when we ne'er dream of ill;
 For naught that is can ever pass away!

Oli. And shall this villain live?

Cal. No, no, by Heaven!
 Those fellows on the wall would haunt me then.
 I hear your voices, men of crime and blood,
 Ring in my ears, and I obey the call.

[*Snatches a sword from the wall.*]

How precious is the blade which justice wields,
 To chasten wrong, or set a wrong to right!

[*Draws.*]

Come forth, thou minister of bloody deeds,
 That blazed a comet in the van of war,
 Presaging death to man, and tears to earth!
 Pale, gleaming tempter, when I clutch thee thus,

Thou, of thyself, dost plead that murder's right,
 And mak'st me half believe it luxury!
 Thy horrid edge is thirsting for man's gore,
 And thou shalt drink it from the point to hilt! —
 To horse! to horse! the warrior blood is up;
 The tiger spirit of my warlike race
 Burns in my heart, and floods my kindling veins. —
 Mount, Oliver, ere pity's hand can hide
 The bloody mist that floats before my eyes —
 To horse! to horse! the Moor rides forth to slay!
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Street in Seville. Enter DON MIGUEL and DON LOPEZ, meeting.

Don Lopez. Whither so fast, Miguel?

Don Miguel. To join Don Luis

And all his roaring fellows at a feast.

Are you not going? For a modern feast,

The thing will be as well as they know how.

Would the old times might come to us again,

When men drank sherry from a two-quart cup!

Pshaw! if I had my way, I'd turn time back.

Now, if I drank at this same scurvy feast,

As we of old could drink without a thought,

The weak-brained boys would point their silly thumbs

And ask their host if there the devil dined?

Plague on these times! Give me the jolly days

When men held mighty flagons in one hand,

And with the other grasped their mightier swords —

None of your toasting-forks ; a true Toledo,
 Edged at each side, and pointed like a spear :
 Why, bah ! these boys could scarcely lift such blades.
 Those were the glorious days of wine and war !

Don Lop. May all you giants live to drink a tun ;
 But pardon me about the rapier, sir.

Don M. O yes, you 'll talk of skill, and all that
 thing ;

But 't was more skill to 'scape a swashing blow,
 Than all your thrusts, and tierces, and such trash.

Don Lop. What a cursed shame, to mince a man
 to death —

To chop him into slices, break his bones,
 When a most gentle and well-mannered thrust
 Would do as well —

Don M. To skewer him, like a fowl,
 To puncture him, to make him die of pin-stabs :
 'T is like the death that poor Duns Scotus died,
 Slaughtered with pen-knives.

Don Lop. Did you hear the news ?

Don M. Whatever 's new is worse than last. What
 is it ?

Don Lop. The great Calaynos is again in town.
 He came with such a pomp of retinue,
 With such barbaric wealth, such trains of men —
 All clothed like Paynims of the ancient day —
 That wide-mouthed burghers thought Granada's peers
 Had scaled their graves, to fight for Spain once more.

Don M. Ay, ay ; what would your modern heroes
 do,
 If this were true, and all the Moors had risen ;
 Headed by that Calaynos, who one day
 Rode post to France, to crop the Paladins,

Just for mere love? They 'd drive you in the sea —
'Sblood! but they 'd make you caper!

Don Lop. This one, sir,

Is greater far than he of ballad note:
A braver man ne'er buckled on a blade;
And then so generous and polite withal.

Don M. You should have known his grandsire, as
I did.

His was a blade would tire your hip to bear,
E'en in its baldric: and he swung it so!
Just as a child would waft about a feather. —
Here was a drinker for you. — By the gods!
A man like him can never come again;
Earth is too base for such. Ah, he was slain,
Stabbed by an upstart coward, o'er his wine.

Don Lop. Methinks his drinking came to sorry
ends.

Don M. 'T was not his drink; 't was a cursed
rapier, sir,

Pinned him across the table. — 'Sblood, my life!
A manly blade had blushed at such an act.
Adieu, sir; I must leave you. — Pshaw! what times!
[*Exit.*]

Don Lop. Adieu, you drunken dotard! Who
comes here?

(*Enter CALAYNOS.*)

My lord Calaynos, if I know your face?

Calaynos. Don Lopez — am I right?

Don Lop. Your servant, sir.

Cal. Are you sincere?

Don Lop. My heart cries shame on words.

Cal. Then you can do me service 'bove all thanks.

There is a man who wronged me in Seville,
And I would kill him. Do you understand?

Don Lop. Write out the cartel — 't is a pleasure,
sir.

Cal. That have I done long since ; an hour ago
I sent it by my secretary.

Don Lop. Heavens !

My lord, that act is out of every form :

I wash my hands of this ; 't is next to murder.

Cal. Friend, fear not that ; you can escape the law.
Last night I made my will, and there I left,
To whom might be my second, gold enough
To build yon palace. 'T is but just I shield
Him whom my deeds involve. What say you, sir ?

Don Lop. Nay, for the love I bear you, I will
do it.

How ran the challenge ?

Cal. What can that import ?

Defiance to the death ran through each word.

Don Lop. Such savage terms are out of date and
harsh.

Now, I 'd have written a most gentle billet —

As — Señor So-and-so requests the length

Of my lord So-and-so's best tempered blade ;

Or any hint, polite and delicate,

Like that. Believe me, sir, a gentleman

May show much blood in wording of a challenge.

Cal. So I must bow my opposite to death,
Must kill by line and plummet, to 'scape blame. —
Sir, I 'm above polite hypocrisy.

Don Lop. Well, as you please. What is your
rapier's length ?

Cal. Here is my sword. [*Gives his sword.*]

Don Lop. 'T is a most worthy blade ;
 But near an inch too short : and next the hilt —
 Just here, my lord — an eighth or so too broad,
 And nigh a pound too heavy. Yet, for all,
 A worthy blade, though somewhat out of fashion.
 A true Toledo, if I 'm not mistaken ?

Cal. Not so : no man can tell its origin ;
 But divers quaint and wondrous legends hang
 Their superstitions on this mystic steel.
 Some say that 'mid the globe's eternal fires,
 The laboring gnomes, with many an impious spell,
 That made earth shake and stagger from her orbit,
 Tempered and forged the metal of this blade.

Don Lop. A wondrous tale, more wonderful if
 true.

Cal. I cannot vouch it.

Don Lop. Ah, I nigh forgot —
 Whom do we fight ?

Cal. Don Luis, sir.

Don Lop. Don Death !
 My lord, the man 's a practised duellist ;
 Has killed more scores than I have met in fight.
 He 'll name his thrusts, before he strikes a blow,
 And put them home, despite your wariest skill.
 Then there 's his trick, a sleight he caught in France —
 Thus, thus — (*Passes.*) — the shrewdest thrust beneath
 the guard ;

'T is fatal as the plague.

Cal. Enough of this.

We fight within an hour — you 'll find me here.

Don Lop. Your servant, sir. — Adieu ! [*Exit.*]

Cal. They 're all the same.
 These grinning courtiers, all smiles and bows,

All rules and etiquette. Such are the men
Who have our monarch's ear, and guide his councils.

(*Enter OLIVER.*)

How sad you look! — Did you not find Don Luis?

Oliver. Ah, yes, my lord, I found him at a feast,
Drinking and roaring, 'mid the wealth you gave.
He spied me out, and in politest terms
Inquired your lordship's health. Then turned again,
And of my lady asked with blindest voice :
No feature moved when I proclaimed her dead.
With that he rose, and, smiling towards his friends,
Proposed your lordship's health. 'T was not in fear,
But at the act I shook, and my chilled blood
Crawled coldly backward on its quivering source,
To see such baseness lodged in human form.
I flung your challenge in the monster's face,
And came to seek you here.

Cal. The mocking villain! — Well, well, let that
go.

I'm nigh to death, or I should hate mankind.

Oli. O say not so; there may be days of peace —

Cal. His sword will not rob life of many hours.
When I left home I felt I'd ne'er return;
All things appeared so mournful to my view.
The old trees shook their dark green heads above,
And waved their branches as if taking leave;
The grass was bending with the morning dew,
And dropped its woful tribute as I passed;
Ay, and the very flowers, the little flowers,
Turned on me their soft eyes o'errun with tears.
When we had gained the pass between the hills,
Whose windings shut my castle from the sight,

I paused to take one last, long look at home.
 Alas ! the very castle seemed to move,
 And beckon sadly in the flickering air ;
 The old gray turrets wavered to and fro,
 Nodding their hoary heads as if in grief.
 I could not choose but weep ; the man broke down,
 And my heart fluttered like a timid girl's.
 Ah ! since her death, a cloud has crossed the earth,
 And everywhere I see it. But thou 'lt return :
 Now swear to me, if thou dost love me yet,
 To do what I command.

Oli. I swear, my lord.

Cal. Thou know'st my latter days have chiefly past
 In patient labors of philosophy ;
 And from my toil a studious book was born,
 Whose gathered wisdom was designed for man —
 Swear to destroy it !

Oli. Pray forgive me this ;
 I cannot, dare not. What, that mighty book
 O'er which I've bent until the stars grew dim,
 And morning caught me o'er the magic page ;
 Forgetful of my task, my pen all dry,
 Enrapt in reading what I should have copied ?
 O, pardon me, my lord ; 't would be a crime
 Worse than oath-breaking, worse than blasphemy !

Cal. Didst thou love Doña Alda, Oliver ?

Oli. Past love, my lord ; but now I love her more.

Cal. And wouldst thou see some scribbler drag
 her name,
 Coupled to infamy and red-cheeked shame,
 Or slimed with pity of a vulgar mind,
 Into the preface of a book you love ? —
 Wouldst see her live in misery immortal,

Preserved for time coldly to comment on? —
 Wouldst have her memory, which you hold so dear,
 Banded about, the scoff and jest of fools?
 No, no; before this bitter thing shall be,
 Let my name perish from the thoughts of men.

Oli. And wouldst thou die in very name, my lord?

Cal. Only in name, — no further can I die.

Oli. We know not that.

Cal. Know not! then vain is knowledge.

All nature cries — Whatever is, must be!
 Earth's forms may change, but time can ne'er destroy
 The smallest atom in the universe;
 Much less this life of intellect, the soul,
 Whose very form is changeless. — Death is not!
 Serene, and calm, and indestructible,
 Above the touch of chance, or sin, or time,
 On these heaven-scaling attributes shall soar,
 In infinite progression towards their source: —
 In death is knowledge!

Oli. I will do it, sir.

Cal. Enough, I shall die happy. Get thee hence,
 And have my servants near the meeting place,
 To bear me from the field. But, on their lives,
 Let them not interfere till all is o'er;
 And should Don Luis kill me, let him pass.

Oli. They may, but I will not. (*Aside.*) I'll see
 't is done. [*Exit.*]

(*Enter DON LOPEZ.*)

Don Lopez. The terms are all agreed; though, I
 declare,
 I had some trouble with that old Miguel —
 He is Don Luis' second. By this light!

He 'd mounted you, with lances in your hands,
To run a tilt like Quixotes. Tell me, sir,
Does the first blood decide the combat o'er.

Calaynos. The first death, sir, decides this combat
o'er.

Don Lop. Of course, of course ; but death is out
of date :

'T is not the way we fight in these fair days :
Now gentlemen may fight without a scratch.
I do assure you, sir, that in a duel
Life is as safe as if you sat in church ;
You have the honor without fear of harm. —
Will not the first blood do ?

Cal. I 'm of a race
Who seldom drew a sword except to kill ;
They never bled, like leeches, nor will I :
Death, and not honor, is the thing I wish.
This duel, friend, did not originate
From treading on a toe without excuse.

Don Lop. 'T is out of date ; but as you please,
my lord.
Have you e'er fought before ?

Cal. No, not of late :
But, in my youth, through Salamanca's school
I fought my way, and lost no credit there.

Don Lop. Ah, yes ; I 've heard, they ever held
your blade
The foremost steel in Salamanca's walls :
'T is a good school. — But watch his French device —
The thrust beneath the guard. 'T is nigh the time.

Cal. Then, sir, lead on. 'T is ne'er too soon for
me. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The Fields near Seville. Enter DON LUIS and DON MIGUEL, meeting CALAYNOS, DON LOPEZ, and OLIVER.

Don Lopez. Stand here, my lord.

Calaynos. Let there be no delay.

Don Miguel. (*To DON LUIS.*) Stand here, my boy.

Don Luis. (*Aside.*) He 's ill ; I 'll kill him easily.

(*DON LOPEZ and DON MIGUEL advance.*)

Don Lop. 'T is a fine day, and this a glorious ground.

Don M. Yes, for a fight with good old-fashioned blades.

Don Lop. Excuse me, sir, but we must follow custom.

Don M. Yes, afar off. — Here is Don Luis' skewer.

[*Gives the sword.*]

Don Lop. (*Measuring.*) 'T is full an inch too long.

— I sent the measure —

There 's no excuse — they cannot fight to-day.

Don M. What cares a man against an inch or two ? Bah ! on your forms ! His grandsire, in his day, Would draw his dagger 'gainst an ashen spear.

Don Lop. I have a name, sir, among gentlemen, Which I 'll not hazard on so grave a thing.

Oliver. (*Advancing.*) Why pause you, gentlemen ? My lord is ill,

And loses strength by standing such a time.

Don Lop. Don Luis' blade is full an inch too long.

Oli. The murderous coward ! [*Aside.*]

[*Goes to CALAYNOS and returns.*]

Go on, gentlemen ;
If 't is a foot too long, my lord cares not.

Don M. Said like his grandsire : — there the old
blood spoke !

Don Lop. Well, as he wills ; but I again protest —
You 'll bear me witness, sir, before the world ?

Don M. Yes, yes. Stand here, my friend.

[*To DON LUIS.*]

Don Lop. Stand here, my lord. [*To CALAYNOS.*]
Draw, sirs — advance — guard —

Don M. God defend the right !

Don Lop. Heavens ! what queer phrases has this
antique man ! [*Aside.*]

(*CALAYNOS and DON LUIS fight.*)

My man fights well.

Don M. He fights too much for blood :
He 'll catch a wound.

Don Lop. There 's his French trick — I knew it !

(*CALAYNOS is wounded.*)

Lopez and Miguel. Hold, gentlemen !

Cal. Stand back — beware Calaynos !

Don M. Thus spoke his grandsire when his blood
was up.

Don Lop. Again !

(*CALAYNOS is wounded.*)

Lopez and Miguel. Hold, gentlemen — forbear,
forbear !

(*They rush between.*)

Don Lop. Are you not satisfied ?

Don Luis. I am, for one.

Cal. I came to die, or be that villain's death ! —

Stand from between us ; or, by heaven's great king,
I'll make a path across your carcasses !

Don Lop. Well, well, go on — but this is bloody
work !

(*They fight : CALAYNOS disarms DON LUIS.*)

Cal. Turn dog, and fly !

Don Luis. Not while I've legs to stand.

Cal. Down, down and beg !

Don Luis. No, never to a Moor !

Cal. Ha, wretch ! [*Kills DON LUIS.*]

(*CALAYNOS staggers and falls.*)

Oli. My lord, you're wounded.

Cal. Yes, to death.

Come nearer, son — I have short time to live. —
Why dost thou weep ?

Oli. O, why do I not die ?

Cal. Nay, live, dear Oliver, to think of us —
Of poor, poor Alda, and her buried lord :
Thou 'lt come at sun-down o'er the dewy grass,
And kneel beside us, and thou 'lt pray for her.
Was she not wronged ? — but pure, but pure as
heaven !

Oli. Most pure, my lord.

Cal. O bless thee, for those words !
Come close, my son : thou wert my only friend,
And next to Alda in my heart thou stoodst.
Wilt thou forgive me the harsh words I said,
For that false man — by Heaven's arm smote, not
mine ?

Oli. O woe ! O woe ! — Nay, nay, 't was all my
fault.

Cal. Not so — come nearer. Thou wilt bury me
 Next to dear Alda. — Now sweet death draws on :
 I feel his icy breath upon my cheek —
 The gates of knowledge lift to let me in —
 Already, half the mystery of life
 Rolls from my soul, like a divided veil !
 The secrets of the universe unclose,
 And I am filled with light !

Oli. O, mighty soul !

Cal. Stand from before me — give me air — I choke.
 Next Alda — next my wife — wife — O ! [Dies.]

Oli. The stony world may smile at broken hearts ;
 But there lies one cracked to the very core.

(*Enter Servants, and group round the body.*)

Tread softly — here is death !

ANNE BOLEYN:

A TRAGEDY.

VOL. I.

8

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

- HENRY VIII., *King of England.*
DUKE OF NORFOLK, *Uncle to the Queen.*
DUKE OF SUFFOLK.
DUKE OF RICHMOND, *Natural son of the King.*
MARQUIS OF EXETER.
EARL OF ARUNDEL.
VISCOUNT ROCHFORD, *Brother to the Queen.*
THOMAS WYATT.
SIR HENRY NORRIS, *Groom of the Chamber.*
SIR WILLIAM KINGSTON, *Lieutenant of the Tower.*
MARK SMEATON, *Groom of the Chamber.*
RALPH LONEY, *A creature of Suffolk's.*

QUEEN ANNE, *Formerly Anne Boleyn.*
JANE SEYMOUR, *A Maid of Honor.*
MARY WYATT, *A Maid of Honor, sister to
Thomas Wyatt.*
VISCOUNTESS ROCHFORD, *Sister-in-law to the Queen.*
LADY BOLEYN, *Aunt to the Queen.*
MRS. COSYNS.

*Lords, Ladies, Knights, Ushers, three Informers, Officers, Her-
alds, Guards, Citizens, Attendants, &c.*

SCENE, London and Greenwich.

TIME, A. D. 1536.

ANNE BOLEYN.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Room in Whitehall Palace. Enter, as from the Council, Duke of NORFOLK, Duke of SUFFOLK, Duke of RICHMOND, Marquis of EXETER, and Earl of ARUNDEL.*

Norfolk. NAY, nay, my lords, affairs must not stand thus.

She is my kinswoman, and I confess,
If but on my estate her influence bore,
I'd pass it by unchecked. No private griefs
Should wring a word from me, nor tutor me
To raise the hand that snaps a natural tie.
But see, my lords —

Suffolk. 'Ods blood! we have seen enough:
We have been open-eyed, your grace of Norfolk.
I trust we hold one mind?

All. We do, we do.

Suf. Why, then, your grace, we have stared ourselves stone blind,
Stared all our man to palsied impotence,
At this she-basilisk. Some years ago,
From the mere dregs and offscourings of your house,

We saw this girl emerge, and step by step
 Crawl slowly upward to the top of power —
 Why, she was queen before her crown was on! —
 Till, now, she threatens us from such a throne
 Of downright rule as queen ne'er held before.
 Nay, pucker not your brows, good Duke of Richmond
 While conscience echoes what I bluntly speak :
 Your royal father, more than any here,
 Has felt her deadly witchcraft.

Richmond.

Fie, for shame !

I thought this meeting one of policy :
 It never crossed me that five stalwart men
 Had leagued their brains to gabble scandal thus
 Of a poor queen, whose sole discovered crime —
 Heaven send a rain of such bewildering sin ! —
 Is too much beauty.

Nor.

Therein lies her power.

Rich. Then we depute you, as her nearest kin,
 To play Saint Dunstan to this fair Elgiva ;
 To raze her eyes out, sear her blushing skin,
 Twist off her nose, and slit her pretty mouth ;
 But O, 'fore heaven ! lay not your manhoods off,
 And stand here railing like a pack of drabs !

Arundel. Patience, your grace ; let Suffolk have
 his say ;

This was but prelude to the main affair.

Rich. Nay, if his song cannot out-go that pitch,
 Henceforth I 'll herd with women. Know, my lords,
 To ease you of her beauty's deadly grief,
 Her so-called strongest hold, my father's love,
 Is well-nigh yielded to a nimble wight, —
 No higher than your arm, your grace of Suffolk, —
 Through herald words, and showers of gentle looks.

Therefore, I counsel we withdraw our powers
Of bearded men, nor strive to win by storm
That woman's citadel, our sovereign's heart.

Suf. Your grace may flout and game at Holy
Writ,

Or any solemn truth ; nor stands a fact
Less in repute, because an empty jest
Has cracked thereon, and shown its hollowness.

Rich. I cry you mercy, lord of gravity !
Now wherefore meet we ? Exeter, speak out.
You have not strayed away in idle words ;
From which I argue you have kept to heart
This grave affair.

Exeter. Thus is it, then, my lords :
We all have sorrowing seen the growing power
Of her we call the queen — we call, I say ;
For, in my humble judgment, Katharine,
Our sometime mistress —

Rich. Heaven defend us all !
He 'll talk till cock-crow on that threadbare theme.
Will no one help us ? Is there no one here
Who knows exactly why five fools have met ?

Nor. Thus, then, your grace. We peers have nigh
become
A mere incumbrance in the council-seats.

Rich. Why, here is a man who has his wits alive !

Nor. Spare me, your grace ; too heavy this for
sport.

Rich. Well, I 'll be silent till the end. Go on.

Nor. This spawn of ours, whom I must blush to
own —

Rich. Ha ! more abuse !

Nor. — Usurps the state entire ;

Makes and breaks treaties; changes faiths and
priests;

Empties the treasury, and fills it up,
By loans and taxes, such as she may will;
Sends one abroad, and calls another home;
Orders a marquis here, and there a duke.
All this she does, and more than I can name,
With but such counsel as her wits may lend,
Counting us peers as toys.

Rich. Ah, now indeed

We reach the body of things politic.
If 't is a fight of wits, I am with you, sirs;
Though, I misgive, we shall be shrewdly cuffed.

Suf. All this — your grace of Richmond, mark we
well —

All this unqueenly power she strictly holds
By the fond tenure of our sovereign's love.
Let but the light, which now he suns her in,
Vanish in frowns, and this same haughty moon,
That floods our prospect with her filchéd beams,
Sinks to her native blackness.

Rich. So, stop there!

My lords, I'll join you in your enterprise
Against the sweet usurpings of our queen,
Perchance, when I behold you four tall men
Ranked on Tower Hill, the headsman standing by;
When meek-faced Suffolk is about to say,
“Good people, I confess I suffer justly.”

Arun. Exeter, I have caught cold by standing
here;

I feel the shrewdest of rheumatic pains
Twitching my spine above the shoulder-blades. —
I must withdraw. [*Apart to Exeter.*]

Ex. Nay, nay, stand fast ; he jests.

Rich. When noble Norfolk's humbly-worded letter,
 "Touching his close connection with the queen,"
 Meets in reply her gracious writ of death ;
 When scurvy poets sing in bastard rhymes,
 "The doleful ballad of lord Arundel ;"
 When slip-shod wenches, with out-popping eyes,
 And all unbreathed, pant out to passers by,
 "Pray, tell me, sirs, where dies false Exeter ?"
 Then will I aid you, then I'll run amain,
 Grovel and crawl, and kiss the royal shoe,
 And howl for pardon which she will not grant. —
 Till then, adieu !

Nor. Your grace will keep our counsel ?

Rich. Zounds ! I am a gentleman ; and prove it,
 sir,
 By having better business to my hands
 Than the undoing of my female kin. [*Exit.*]

Ex. He's a hot heart ; but such are mostly true.

Suf. What was the hint yon brain-struck bastard
 dropped
 About the king's love suffering change to Anne ?

Arun. Nay, I know not ; he dealt so much in
 tropes :

His grace of Norfolk is a poet's father,
 He may resolve us.

Nor. I have thought of that.

'T was a bare hint, but worth our scrutiny.

Ex. Ay, ay, indeed.

Suf. I half believe it meant :

When Richmond bays, there is store of game afoot ;
 We have found it so.

Nor. I'll to his majesty.
 If this prove true, our cause is well-nigh won.
Suf. Your grace will summon us to hear the news?
Nor. Trust me ; if true, I'll be too full to hold.
Arun. Methinks the country air would ease these
 aches
 About my neck ; another talk like this
 Nigh wrench my head off. [*Aside.*]
Nor. Till we meet, farewell !
 Be secret, but be watchful.
Exe. Time is fate.
Suf. We have not pulled the crafty Wolsey down,
 To whimper tamely at a woman's heels ! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

*Another Room in the Palace. Enter JANE SEYMOUR, pursued by
 KING HENRY.*

King Henry. O, prithee, tarry ! I am out of wind —
 I'll not have breath to tell you how I love.
 Stand, I adjure you, on your loyalty !

Jane Seymour. Now am I safe ; I owe you loyalty,
 And you owe me protection. [*Kneels.*]

King H. Nonsense, child ! [*Raises her.*]
 You are far safer with plain Harry Tudor,
 Than if the monarchs of all Christendom
 Circled you round. For what are angry swords
 To the raised finger of the baby Love ?
 I say, I love you ; that implies respect.

Jane S. Respect should teach you not to urge your
 love.

King H. Sweetheart, pray hear me. I am all
unused

To lover's logic, to the mincing phrase
That snares a heart in nets of sophistry ;
I'll not attack your passion through your brain ;
But at your love's unconquered citadel
I'll sit me down, with rough, unmannered haste,
And bid you open in your sovereign's name.
Jane, do you love me ?

Jane S. With all duty, sir.

King H. Tut, tut ! no duty. Would you be my
queen ?

Jane S. Your wife, my liege ; the tempting name
of queen

Makes no addition to a loving mind.

Love asks but love.

King H. So, well said, mistress mine !

I never thought to win your dainty heart
By bartering for it an unfeeling crown.
Love comes unsought, nor heeds the voice of power :
The very gem which, from his purple throne,
A fuming king may gaze and thunder for,
Beneath the willows of some muddy brook
A listless rustic may disclose and wear.
Then, as mere Hal, the shepherd, if you list —
Barring all sovereignty with equal terms —
Say, do you love me ? [*Kneels.*]

Jane S. Maiden shame, my liege —

King H. Liege me no more — Hal — Harry — what
you will.

Jane S. My maiden heart should send its blushing
force

Of startled blood to whelm my guilty face,

While I stand parleying with her dearest foe ;
 Yet am I pale — ah ! pale with fear to think
 What woful fate may be reserved for me,
 If our right noble queen —

King H. Hell blast the queen ! [*Starts up.*]

Jane S. Ha ! did I gall you so ? (*Aside.*) O pardon me !

King H. Girl, I am well-nigh maddened by the queen.

A pack of yelling fancies bait my soul,
 And each tongue seems to cheer the horrid rout,
 When my fierce conscience cries — The queen, the queen !

Jane S. O, had I suffered her extremest rage,
 Ere I thus angered you !

King H. Nay, I 'll not scold.

Forgive me, sweetheart, my unmannered spleen.
 My soul is much perplexed and tempest-tossed
 About my marriage with this cunning queen :
 I fear me, Lucifer made her a bait
 To trap my soul.

Jane S. O, you arch hypocrite ! [*Aside.*]

King H. Methinks the Pope was right — ay, must be right ;

Since by the creed he is infallible. —

Jane S. Not by the new one.

King H. There the sorrow lies :

I have main doubts of our new-gendered creed.

If he be right, then is our union void ;

For, by his voice, poor Katharine was my wife. —

I will consult my lords on this grave point.

Jane S. Your nobles wear your eyes ; but, then,
 the people —

King H. I'll make half England see without their heads,
 But I will wed you! Sweetheart, promise me,
 If I can offer an unmortgaged hand,
 That you will take it.

Jane S. Thus I promise you. [*Gives her hand.*]

King H. When next we meet, I'll show you many
 a way,
 To lead us from this labyrinth of doubt,
 As soft and thornless to your pretty feet
 As the rich velvet whereon you shall tread
 To mount the dais of our English throne.
 Till then, adieu!

(*They separate — she rushes back.*)

Jane S. Sweet Harry, be not rash!

King H. O, I would fawn, and play the stricken cur
 To any groom, whose love-illumined wit
 Could steal from time the weary chain of days
 That links our purpose to its hopeful end.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.

An Ante-room in the Palace. Enter the Duke of NORFOLK, meeting an USHER.

Norfolk. Has the king risen?

Usher. Anon he will come forth.

Nor. I will await him.

Ush. That is spared your grace.

(*Enter KING HENRY.*)

King Henry. Ha! Norfolk, Norfolk, you have
come in time ;

There is no face more welcome than your own.
I 'd rather see you, in this private way,
Than in your dignity of counsellor.

Nor. Your majesty o'errates my little worth.

King H. Not a whit, man. Sir Usher, keep the
door ;

Let no one enter till his grace withdraws. [*Exit USHER.*]

Nor. I came on business of her majesty —

King H. 'Ods blood! the queen again! Enough,
good Norfolk.

I have met no man since I arose to-day,
Who came not whimpering of her majesty.
Pray change your style ; the fashion had grown stale
Ere you were up.

Nor. O ho ! and how is this ? [*Aside.*]

King H. Norfolk, 't is pitiful ! No hour last night,
But my sharp senses, tuned to painful pitch,
Started, like guilt, upon the faintest sound ;
The very mice stalked by like sentinels
Ringing in proof ; the clock beside my bed
Hammered the hours like a gross forging smith ;
The gentlest gust of air howled like the damned ;
And when a noise, which in the joyous day
Would scarce make damsels wink, fell on my ear,
Up from my restless bed, like one possessed,
I bounded, with wide-stretched and glaring eyes,
And half cried — Treason !

Nor. Sir, I am amazed.
Shall I go seek your majesty's physicians ?

King H. Ah! 't is a grief their physic cannot touch.

My conscience, Norfolk.

Nor. Hum! join this to that,

And I might get some credit as a prophet. [*Aside.*]

King H. My conscience — O!

Nor. And 't was his "conscience, O!"

Made such a pother ere Queen Katharine fell.

[*Aside.*]

King H. Nay; do you hear me? 't was my conscience, sir.

Nor. Certes, within a month, another queen.

[*Aside.*]

Grief has bereft me of the power of speech.

Might Cranmer help you?

King H. No; you are the man.

Nor. Deign to unfold your majesty's distress;

And what so weak a man as Norfolk can,

He'll gladly undertake.

King H. Hear, then, the cause.

You know our present queen — [*Listens.*]

Nor. And hear her, too.

Queen Anne. (*Without.*) What, sir, deny me to his majesty?

Usher. (*Without.*) But 't is his majesty's direct command.

Queen A. (*Without.*) Stand from before me; I will answer it.

(*Enter QUEEN ANNE, followed by the USHER.*)

Queen A. Your highness —

King H. Fellow with an usher's wand,
Hand me your cane. Begone, your place is wanted!

Ush. Your highness, 't was the queen —

King H. Knaves, bite your tongue,
Or you may talk your head off! Fly, I say!
And if within the precincts of our court
Your traitor face be seen two hours from now,
I'll break your body in as many pieces
As this frail stick! [*Breaks up the wand.*]

[*Exit USHER.*]

Queen A. Nay, royal sir, I pray
Some show of mercy to yon guiltless man.
If there was fault, believe it mine alone:
He dared not stop my entrance.

King H. Say you so?
Well, madam, I believe it yours alone:
And much it vexes us that you, our queen,
Whose acts should but reflect our royal will,
Show, thus, a glass whence every traitor's eye
May take the foul impression of himself.

Queen A. My liege, forgive my over-zealous haste;
The cause that brought me is no common one.
Our faithful Protestants in Germany
Are sorely pressed —

King H. If they be pressed to death,
I care not. There are those within my realm,
Gross, headstrong Protestants, puffed up with pride,
Who should be sent abroad to get a squeeze.

Nor. Ha! ha! your majesty. [*Laughing.*]

Queen A. What owl is that
Crying so merrily as shadows thicken?
O, I beseech your majesty, sustain
The noble cause so happily begun!
You are the instrument, by Heaven picked out
From all the famous potentates of earth,

To work its high behest. Yea, after times
 Shall lay your memory as a sacred thing
 Upon their altars, radiant with such beams,
 Shot clear from heaven, that slander's eagle eye,
 Dazzled with light, can challenge no defect
 Most blessed of men ! when the great trump of doom
 Shall to its centre crack the startled world,
 And cheek by cheek the king and slave awake,
 Think what a band of heaven-persuading saints
 Shall circle God, and raise their tongues for you !

King H. Why here 's Erasmus in a farthingale !
 What say you, Norfolk ?

Nor. Nothing now, my liege :
 My brain is clearer in the council-room.
 I pray her majesty, the queen, may cease
 To load her spirits with our state affairs :
 The rugged shoulders of tried counsellors
 Can scarce endure the burden of these times ;
 And much I fear —

Queen A. I see through what you mean,
 Good uncle Norfolk. You are one of those
 Big bloated toads that cumber up sweet earth,
 A mere deformity in common sight ;
 Yet, 'neath the royal sun, you swell and swell,
 Blinking your dull but self-sufficient eyes
 Around the narrow bound your view may grasp,
 And then shake heaven with angel merriment,
 To hear you splutter — “ Lord, all this is ours ! ”

King H. 'Ods wounds ! forbear !

Nor. I'll give receipt for this. [*Aside.*]

King H. Why rate you thus our friend and coun-
 sellor ?

Your uncle Norfolk, whose unfaltering zeal
Has seemed to be the shadow of our will!—

Queen A. But seen in sunshine.

King H. If 't would please your highness
To blow these noxious vapors from your mind,
Have pity on us, nor infect our ears.

Queen A. Your pardon, sir, if my unbroken tongue
For once ran riot with my better sense.

King H. Ay, 't is a wilful jade.

Queen A. But hear me out.

King H. We 'll make no purchase from the samples
given—

Preaching and railing. 'T is but courtesy,
If you require this room, that we withdraw.
Come, Norfolk, come. — What said his holiness?

[*Exit, leaning on NORFOLK.*]

Queen A. What means this heavy feeling at my
heart?

What means the king by this unwonted coldness?

What means my uncle by his insolence?

Why stood the king with an approving smile,

And heard my most unnatural enemy

Offer reproof in semblance of advice?

I have seen the time—ay, not a month ago—

When, in the fury of his lion mood,

He 'd brained the scoffer with his royal hand.

But times have changed—ah! have they changed
indeed?

Has my life passed the zenith of its glory?

Must I make ready for the gathering clouds

That dog the pathway of a setting sun?

Well, let them come! The blaze of my decline

Shall turn to gold the dull enshrouding mists,

And show the world a spectacle more grand
 Than the young splendor in which first I rose.
 Ha! ha! par Dieu! now this is marvellous!
 A queen whose crown has scarcely ta'en the shape
 Of her young brow, the anointing oil scarce dried,
 The shouts still buzzing in my deafened ears,
 With which the people hailed me on the throne;
 Not two years queen, and moralizing thus,
 Like fourscore crawling to its certain grave!
 This is sheer weakness, the dull malady
 Of little minds that chafe at little ills.
 Great souls are cheerful with their inborn power,
 Feeling themselves the rulers of events,
 The sinewy smoothers of the roughest times,
 And not the slaves of outward influence.
 Despair is a fellow with a moody brow,
 Who shuts a dungeon door upon himself,
 And then groans at his bondage. Fear, avaunt!
 Thy shades but trespass on my noon of power.

(*Several Courtiers cross the stage, bowing. Enter THOMAS WYATT.*)

Ho! Wyatt, hither.

Wyatt. Did your highness call?

Queen A. Where go you, sir?

Wyatt. I and these gentlemen,

Inflamed with holy zeal of selfishness,
 Make to the Mecca of our hopes, the king,
 A solemn pilgrimage.

Queen A. What news abroad?

Wyatt. Not a breath stirring.

Queen A. Say they aught of me?

Wyatt. If praise might tire the courtiers' flowing
 tongues,
 Ere this they had been mute : to-day, as ever,
 The sweets of Hybla drop from every mouth.
 As I came here, a crowd of Protestants,
 All fire-burned artisans and men of pith,
 Their new-made zeal sitting like riot on them,
 Brandished the fragments of some papal crosiers,
 And cried — " Long live Saint Anne ! "

Queen A. Mockery !
 If history should hand my name to time,
 God grant its fame may rest on firmer base
 Than the disjointed sainthood of a mob !
 I keep you waiting. Fortune speed your suit.

[*Exit WYATT.*]

(Another throng of Courtiers cross the stage, bowing profoundly.)

These straws of courtiers watch the royal wind,
 And first predict the coming hurricane ;
 Certes, as yet I see no adverse signs.
 Some state affairs have galled the fretful edge
 Of hasty Harry's rash but loving heart :
 Anon he will return, and, cap in hand,
 Cry, " Pardon, Anne ! " But I'll pout and swell,
 Tossing my head, and tapping thus my foot ;
 Then all my pride, at one great, eager gasp,
 I'll seem to swallow, as I bound to him ;
 And then I'll pat his cheeks, and call him " Bear,"
 And chide him gently for his angry mood.
 But when his eyes blush at their starting tears,
 I'll laugh aloud, and puzzle all his wits.
 So from this egg, of seeming noxious wrath,
 Shall spring a new-born love of double power.

To-morrow sees a messenger despatched
To threaten Germany with fiery war,
If wrong befall our faithful Lutherans :
Whereat our uncle, the good Duke of Norfolk,
Shall gnaw his nether lip off with chagrin.
Ho ! cheer thee, Anne ! darksome passages
Oft mount to prospects, but for them unknown.

[*Exit.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Room in Whitehall Palace. Enter JANE SEYMOUR.*

Jane Seymour. A QUEEN, a queen ! a real anointed queen,
With trains of maids and smiling courtiers,
Diamonds like stones, and softest velvet pall
To grace the shoulders of my majesty !
All eyes on me, my beauties sung in verse ;
Each feature — ay, the tith of any one —
More than enough to swell a rondeau up !
My wishes fairies, flying at a sign
To bring the substance of my latest thought !
My kin ennobled to the last degree ;
My son a king, my daughters wed to kings ;
My name the pith of gravest history !
This is too much ! I cannot, if I would,
Put by the crown which fortune offers me.
But, then, the queen ? — The queen o'erruns with
pride ;
Last Tuesday week she cruelly rated me.
What mercy showed she to poor Katharine ?
I am but the instrument of justest Heaven
To make requital for her own misdeeds.
The king abhors her, and inclines to me —
Lo ! nature points the path which I should take.
Just as I mount, so must the queen descend ;

We hang in adverse scales. Now 'tis too late ;
My faith is plighted to the king, and I
Will dare the issue for the glittering prize !

(Enter KING HENRY.)

King Henry. All joy befall you, darling !

[*Embraces her.*]

Jane S. Welcome, sir !

King H. Are you still constant ?

Jane S. Can you ask me that ?

You have descended from your royal state,
And deigned to honor one so low as I ;
Chosen me, unworthy, from the common throng,
Nor cast your eyes upon the maiden hands
Of princesses that wait outstretched for you :
As well might the dull earth reject the sun,
That changes its grimed face to virgin gold,
As I refuse the glory of your love.

Henceforth my person is a sacred thing,
A common vessel turned to holy use ;
And should you now disdain my little worth,
All your great kingdom holds no mate for me.

King H. Tut ! mistress, with your gloomy fan-
tasies ;

And be not jealous of my love so soon.
Ours is a mere exchange of heart for heart ;
Crowns and such baubles enter not our trade.
That which I have, the sceptre of a king,
Possession makes nigh worthless in my eyes ;
That which I have not, your own beauteous self,
O'er all stale toys of royalty I prize.

Jane S. Then be content ; my heart is yours alone.
As virgin as the breast wherein it beats.

It rests with you to lift my fortunes up
On level with your own.

King H. By Heaven, I will! —
But how, but how? Let us to counsel, love.

[*Sets himself, with JANE SEYMOUR on his knee*]

There's Norfolk, eager at our first design;
But he is a Papist; to restore the Pope
Part of his creed; — a doubtful counsellor.
If I retrieve the Pope's authority,
Upon the act my marriage is annulled,
And I am free. True, true; but pause we here:
How shall we satisfy the plundered monks
Whom we have ousted from their fat domains?
How our good nobles who possess them now?

Jane S. And how the people?

King H. Let them fight it out.
They are half and half, Papists and Protestants,
And so divided, easily subdued.
I mainly fear to reinstate the Pope;
His holy finger is in every dish;
I must be king within my own domain;
Yet if the thing must be — 'Ods wounds! my love,
This matrimonial knot was hard to tie;
But 't was mere pastime to undoing it.
Would that the Grecian's sword might cut it — Ha! —

Jane S. What mean you, sir? Why do you glare
around?

And pale as death!

King H. As death!

Jane S. Ay, and as fearful.

Rouse, rouse, sir! You are ill — I'll call relief.

King H. Nay, sit you down again.

Jane S. But are you well?

King H. 'T was but a passing thought that tortured me,
As one may feel who murders. Clasp me tight ;
Pain would be comfort to such awful visions.

(*Enter QUEEN ANNE, behind.*)

Queen Anne. Ha !

Jane S. O, good heavens ! the queen !

Queen A. In luckless time

For you, base minion, treble traitoress,
False to yourself, false to your state and me !
The foulest sin that woman may commit
Made doubly hideous by the circumstance !
What ! in the palace that contains your queen,
The very seat of England's dignity,
Whence virtue, as the simple commons deem,
Springs to illumine this majestic realm !
Have you no shame ? Wear you that brazen front
When I hold up a mirror to your crime ?
Is not your Gorgon nature turned to stone,
At the bare glimpse of your own ugliness ?

King H. Peace, sweetheart, peace ! all shall be
well for you ;

Your maid is guiltless.

Queen A. Have you found a tongue ?

What sorcery bestowed this power of speech ?
Or has poor shame, bedazzled at her glory,
Shrunk from the world ?

King H. This foully-slandered maid
Is half distraught at your mad violence.

Queen A. And dare you, sir, before your injured
queen —

You, the copartner of her guilt and shame,
Protect you wanton?

King H. Dare I, dare I, madam!
'Ods wounds! who's king in England? Hold your
tongue,

You rank defier of your sovereign's power!
Have you not learned whose presence you are in?
Or must I teach you by some sterner means?

Queen A. O! shameless husband!

King H. She is pure, I say:
And, by high Heaven, as pure shall you remain
From touch of mine, till malice gnaw you up! —
This is forever. Come, sweet mistress Jane.

[*Exit, leading off JANE SEYMOUR.*]

Queen A. O, God! O, God! — The king — Nay,
Harry, Harry,

Come back; I will — O! killing agony!
Is there no pity in the heart of man?
Plead for me, girl — he loves you — plead for me!
I am his wife, your queen, your loving mistress.
I will forgive you, I will cherish you,
I'll love you dearer than my dearest friend. —
Gone, gone forever! Said he not, forever?
Kind Heaven, have mercy on my feebleness!
If this be trial of my strength, I yield;
I do confess my utter helplessness;
I bow me prostrate, a poor nerveless woman —
A queen no more. I'll trample on my pride,
And follow meekly where thy finger points.
By Heaven, not so! This is a grievous wrong,
By man inflicted. Devils ordered this,
And they shall pay it! — Hear me, writhing souls,
That minister around sin's ebon throne!

If to these murderers of my heart's dear peace
 A child be born, may she, in that sweet time
 When infant babble opes all heaven to her,
 Feel the cold hand of death draw, day by day,
 The clinging spirit from her! May her child
 Live in the vexings of a troubled time,
 And, issueless, die young! May he—O God,
 I cannot bid a curse light on the head
 Of him my child calls father! Bless him, Heaven!
 Give him the peace which he has stolen from me!
[Exit.]

SCENE II.

A Street in London. Enter MARK SMEATON and RALPH LONEY, meeting.

Loney. Mark Smeaton, if I breathe!

Smeaton. Who are you, fellow,

That thus accost her majesty's chief groom?

Lon. So soon forgotten! Know you not Ralph
 Loney,

Whilom your school-mate? Shame upon you, Mark!
 Had I turned Peter, and denied you thus,
 When the big smith made at you with his hammer,
 You would not bear your silken coat to-day.

Smea. Ralph Coney—Coney?—

Lon. Loney, Master Mark.

How should I call your name, not knowing you?

Smea. Think you, this is the first, or hundredth
 time,

That knaves have claimed acquaintance with my
 name?

We of the court are known to every one;

And I in chief, as the queen's favored groom —
 Nay, I may say, her most familiar groom,
 Ranked more as friend than courtly servitor —
 Am most conspicuous to the vulgar gaze.
 It would but prove a new-come clown in town,
 Had you not known me.

Lon. Here are tidings gained
 To please his grace of Suffolk. [*Aside.*]

Bless me, sir!

I pray forgive my vulgar forwardness ;
 Indeed I knew not of your dignity.
 Your worship would not harm a thoughtless man.
 Nay, frown not, good Sir Mark. — Do I misjudge,
 In calling you Sir Mark ?

Smea. On the way thither ;
 To-morrow, or next day, that style may suit ;
 Perchance, a higher one. Resume your beaver.
 Let me see — Loney — Ralph ? — Upon my life,
 When I reflect, I have a faint idea
 That once I knew you.

Lon. I will freshen you.
 Do you remember, on an Easter day,
 How the fierce urchins, half insane for meat,
 And rancorous with the bile of fishy Lent,
 Into a green and filthy pool bobbed you,
 Merely because they could ? How I alone,
 In pity of your plight — your slimy plight —
 Your most nose-wrenching plight —

Smea. Good Loney, cease !
 The zenith-topping sun forgets the clouds
 Which, in the dirty dawn, he struggled through !

Lon. Now, what bystander that had seen you rise
 From that green pond, fresh with your miry coat,

Had ever prophesied these gilded clothes ?
 And who that saw me, with my broken staff,
 Thrash to their doors your routed enemies,
 Could have foretold my present mean estate ?
 I should be captain of a great armada ;
 You should be dragging horse-ponds.

Smea. Prithee, cease !

These boyish pranks disgust my nicer sense.

Lon. I would not vex you ; but it comforts me,
 And reconciles me to my lot on earth,
 To summon back my childhood. As I then
 Had my full hours of triumph and renown,
 So have you now ; thus fate is justified.

Smea. You seem to be an honest fellow, Ralph ;
 Nor care I if from my abounding store,
 Ever replenished by my gracious mistress,
 I give a parcel. [*Gives a purse.*]

Lon. Luck be with you, sir !

Smea. When that is emptied, I 'll replenish it,
 If you will drink my royal lady's health.

Lon. You stand high in her favor.

Smea. Did you know
 The height I stand, it would amaze your ears.

Adieu ! we 'll meet again. [*Exit.*]

Lon. Farewell, poor fool !

We 'll meet too soon for you. Hell snatch the purse !
 [*Throws it from him.*]

It burns like heated brass. Now to the duke.
 Mark Smeaton's vanity, a seeming trifle,
 May in his grace's hands work great results ;
 Ay, even the unqueening of a queen.
 Alas ! alas ! poor Mark, that thy fine feathers
 Should draw the fowler's closely-prying eye !

So must it be ; why should I hesitate ?
 Curse on his bounty ! While we are beasts of prey,
 The little game must ever feed the great. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

*A Room in the Palace of the Duke of Suffolk. Enter Duke of
 NORFOLK, Duke of SUFFOLK, and Marquis of EXETER.*

Suffolk. Where 's Arundel, Lord Exeter ?

Exeter. Poor man !

His over boldness in once joining us
 Has scared him from a second wish of it :
 One valiant thought has terrified the rest.
 He bade me mention that some strict affairs
 Drew him away. When we have won the game,
 I pledge my faith, we 'll have him bickering hot,
 And bold as Mars to share the dangerous spoils.

Norfolk. We can well spare him. Since his
 majesty
 Has shown such favor to our enterprise,
 They who at first turned from us, virtue-sick,
 Deem it a blessed thing to be enrolled.

(Enter Earl of ARUNDEL.)

Welcome, my lord !

Arundel. A dear salute to me.
 I rode four horses dead, to keep my faith,
 And only reached you as the fifth fell lame.
 Good Lord ! good Lord ! they say his majesty —
 I had this from a sure but private source —
 Has gained intelligence of our design,

And smiles at it. Ugh! sirs, I'm out of breath :
When I have blown a while, I'll tell you more.

Suf. Nay, spare your wind. —

Nor. Poh! poh! don't anger him.

[*Apart to SUFFOLK.*]

Arun. Ha! you know all?

Nor. Yes, every tittle of it.

Arun. Then, sirs, to counsel.

Ex. Now he is head assassin. [*Aside.*]

Nor. His majesty is much perplexed with doubts ;
Nor knows he, better than ourselves, a plan
To rid the state of his ambitious queen.

She has committed no so gross excess
As may subject her to the common law :
A faithful wife, untainted in her fame —

Ex. And so was Katharine.

Suf. Come, come, be blunt :

We must destroy her, by fair means or foul.

(*Enter a SERVANT.*)

Servant. Your grace's servant, Master Loney,
waits.

Suf. Let him wait, fellow — I am much engaged.

Ser. I told him so. He said his business was
About the matter you have now in hand.

Suf. Ha! said he so? Admit him then. (*Exit SERVANT.*)

My lords,

Be not provoked by his familiar bearing.

He is my jackal, a most useful one,

But one who hates his trade.

(*Enter RALPH LONEY.*)

Loney.

My speech is short.

I met a youthful schoolfellow of mine,

A rare musician, now her highness' groom :
 The man 's a fool, and boasted of the love
 His mistress bore him. He would go still further,
 To gratify his itching vanity,
 And criminate the queen.

Suf. Go make him drunk ;
 Take witnesses, fit men, and pump him dry.

Lon. I will obey, sir. — 'T is but one man more.

[*Exit.*]

Suf. You 'll scarce believe, at times that fellow
 laughs ;
 But never when about my secret work ;
 Then he is ever sullen.

Arun. A strange knave.

Suf. But faithful.

Ex. Something grave may come of this.

Suf. Ay, something which, by us interpreted,
 May compromise the virtue of the queen.

Nor. Perhaps. O find me but some little charge,
 Less weighty than the air-drawn gossamer —
 Some dim tradition, gathered in a dream
 Seen by the blearing vision of a drunkard —
 Some hearsay mumbled by a maniac's lips,
 With fever scorched upon his dying bed —
 Some words the roaring tongues of angry blasts,
 Or zephyrs, lispng through the sluggish trees,
 Hummed in the ears of musing fantasy —
 Find one of these, to frame a charge upon,
 And I will warrant trial expedite,
 And sure conviction, though an angel plead.

Suf. I 'll answer, Loney's craft unearths a charge
 As horrible as death.

Ex. What mean you, sirs,
To bring a deadly fault against the guiltless?

Arun. Ay, prove it too.

Ex. This is flat villany!
'T is now too late to shape my course anew;
And England's weal outweighs a woman's life.

[*Aside.*]

Nor. Should this affair fulfil its promises,
We'll meet anon.

Arun. If 't would assist you, sirs,
Pray use my house.

Ex. Yon fellow glows with zeal;
He'd stab she-Cæsar in the capitol.

[*Aside.*]

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV.

A By-street in London. Knots of vagabonds occasionally cross the scene. Enter Viscount ROCHFORD and THOMAS WYATT.

Rochford. Here is, indeed, a walk to take a friend,
Good master Poet! Pray what place is this?
Are we in London or in Tartarus?
For, by my life, the visions we have passed
Seemed fit induction to the place of shades.

Wyatt. No, Heaven be praised, we are in "Safety."
sir;

So call the thieves this well of girding walls.
Here is a place as innocent of rule
As the dun sands of savage Araby.
Here pilferers divide their filchéd rags,
And bolder robbers share their golden spoils;
Here crime is native, natural, unabashed,

Walking abroad in easy confidence ;
 Here treason stalks, the dreaded ghost of courts,
 Whetting his knife, and mixing deadly bowls.
 From yonder porch, I heard a hoarse-voiced Jew
 Harangue a crowd of frowning murderers,
 Cursing the king, the state, the holy church,
 Until he choked with mere malignity.
 On yonder steps, I saw a quiet wretch
 Coolly thrust in an ell or so of steel
 Between his brother's ribs. — There they both walk,
 The Jew and murderer. No law is here,
 Save what the dwellers make, and that is shifting.
 I oft have thought the watchful eye of God
 Upon this place ne'er rested ; or that hell
 Had raised so black a smoke of densest sin,
 That the All-Beautiful, appalled, shrank back
 From its fierce ugliness. I tell you, friend,
 When the great treason, which shall surely come
 To burst in shards law-bound society,
 Gives the first shudder, ere it grinds to dust
 Thrones, rauts, and fortunes, and most-cunning
 laws —

When the great temple of our social state
 Staggers, and throbs, and totters back to chaos —
 Let men look here, here in this fiery mass
 Of aged crime and primal ignorance,
 For the hot heart of all the mystery ! —
 Here, on this howling sea, let fall the scourge,
 Or pour the oil of mercy !

Roch.

Pour the oil,—

In God's name, pour the blessed oil ! The scourge,
 Bloody and fierce, has fallen for ages past
 Upon the foreward crests within its reach ;

Yet made no more impression on the mass
Than Persia's whips upon the Hellespont.

Wyatt. 'T was not to harrow up your heart with
crime —

Though, haply, such amazement is not lost —
I brought you hither. 'T was to stand beyond
The utmost pale and influence of the Court,
Where men interpret a malignant mind
From every look the changing features wear ;
Find danger in the meeting of two friends ;
Rank treason in devices of our arms ;
Open rebellion to their gracious king,
Should we but furbish our time-rusted blades.
Now, Rochford, listen.

Roch. Heavens ! you frighten me.

Wyatt. No, I but caution you. My tale, though
sad,

May rest on fears as thin as summer clouds.

Roch. Why, that is cheering.

Wyatt. 'T is not for yourself,
But for her sacred majesty, the queen,
I have these vague misgivings.

Roch. What, the queen !
Pshaw ! Wyatt, was there ever woman blessed
As she is ? Courted and bepraised by all,
Sharing no empty title in the crown,
No mere producer of a royal brood ;
But by the force of her own intellect,
To all effects, an equal with the king.
Why, man, just now she stands at zenith height,
Flooding our land with peerless majesty,
The gaze and wonder of all Christendom.
The great reformer, Anne, preördained

But unperceived, the chamber of her highness.
 Scarce had she crossed the threshold ere she saw,
 Rolled in a heap and crammed into a corner,
 The person of the queen. She stood amazed,
 Not daring to approach ; and saw such grief,
 So absolute, so past all earthly bounds,
 So fiercely raging to pain's topmost pitch,
 That she shrank quivering to the ante-room.
 But there her ears made pictures to her eyes :
 Anon, she heard her clawing at the floor,
 Sobbing and wailing like a soul possessed :
 Then into one long, piercing, hellish scream
 Of hideous laughter broke her aching soul.
 At that my sister fled, with echoing laugh,
 And knew no more till from a lengthened swoon
 Her maids awoke her.

Roch.

This is past belief.

Without a doubt, the queen or she is mad.

Wyatt. My sister says, the king and queen ne'er
 meet ;

That notes unnumbered of her majesty's
 He has returned unopened. More, 't is noised,
 The king and Seymour's daughter oft of late
 Have been observed together ; that the foes,
 Once secret, but now open, of the queen,
 Stand in high favor with his majesty,
 And share his private counsels.

Roch.

Gracious Heaven !

If this be certain, there is more in it
 Than I dare utter. Have I been bewitched,
 That I remained o'er-confident so long ?
 Now you have mentioned it, a thousand things
 Which I have seen, but shuffled by unweighed,

Rise to confirm the gloomiest belief.
 My cold receptions, Suffolk's insolence,
 Arundel's vaporings, Norfolk's tart replies,
 My sudden dearth of courtly sycophants,
 And Wyatt's warming friendship. Noble man,
 Through all my life I never aided you —

Wyatt. Because I never asked it. Pshaw! George
 Boleyn,

Were we not playfellows 'neath Blickling's oaks,
 Where first my muse essayed her feeble lisp?
 Did you not praise and wonder at my rhymes,
 And cheer my heart with kindred sympathy?
 Have we not written sonnets and rondeaux,
 In kindly rivalry, to Anne's eyes?
 Did you not always swear my songs the best,
 Ere half were read, and force fair Anne's hand
 To place the laurel on my victor brow?
 Can I forget you? Can I cease to see,
 In England's queen, our little playfellow?
 Forgive me, Rochford; this is not a time
 To babble of our childhood. You are hemmed
 With scores of bold and ruthless enemies;
 And, God forgive him! the worst foe of all
 Is the first man in England's wide domain!

Roch. What shall be done?

Wyatt. Fly to her majesty;
 Drain to the dregs her secret cause of grief;
 Learn all her fears, the blackest of her fears,
 Nor care to know her dimmest gleam of hope.
 Armed for the worst, we gain a double strength —
 The power to conquer at the last extreme,
 And chance that such extreme may ne'er arrive.
 I will not slumber. What the brain of man

Can summon from its viewless armory,
Shall be arrayed to battle for her right.
I'll see you safe beyond this wretched place,
And then we part, but not without a hope.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A Tavern.* MARK SMEATON, *drunk*, with RALPH LONEY and three INFORMERS seated at a table spread with wine, etc.

Smeaton. Now, that's a song, and that's what I call singing.

Roar it again, brave master bull-throat, roar!

First Informer. [*Sings.*]

Old sack, old sack,
Thou hast a happy knack,
When fortune deals a sorry thwack,
When friends may flout and credit crack,
Old sack, old sack.

Old sack, old sack,
We'll bide the world's attack,
Though rosy Cupid turn his back,
We ask but this, that thou'lt not lack,
Old sack, old sack.

Smea. Is that the end of your rare melody?
Loney, my boy — Loney, you are dull as mud —
Were you not ravished by yon fellow's song?
That is the neat's-tongue of true poesy:
Nature applauds it in the thirst it brings.
The song is a miracle; that one being full
Yet asks for more upon it. Wine, there, wine!

[*They drink.*]

What are such poets as my lord of Surrey,
 Or whining Wyatt? — Some one curse Tom Wyatt!
 You singer with the stormy lungs, pray curse
 This Thomas Wyatt! Have I ne'er a friend
 Whose oaths are potent? Curse him black and blue,
 My rival Wyatt!

Lon. Rival, boy! and how?

Smea. Who is my love? Answer me, leather-
 lungs.

First I. Nay, sir, I know not.

Smea. Then you are an ass,
 Not knowing, and a wizard, knowing her.

Lon. We cannot miss by drinking her a round.
 Give us the toast.

Smea. Here's to our noble queen! [*Drinks.*]

Lon. That's good and loyal, and we'll quaff it off;
 But not what we intended. We would drink
 To your sweet darling, to your pretty May,
 Your wanton plaything. Come, boy, never halt!

Smea. Loney, observe me — every piece of me —
 Edgewise, before, behind. Now tell me, sir,
 What woman in this realm is worthy of me?

Lon. Some great one, without doubt.

Smea. I say, the queen.

Lon. Now mark him, sirs. [*Apart to the INFORMERS.*]

Informers. Ho! ho! the man is drunk!

Smea. What do you take me for, you foul-mouthed
 knaves,

A man of worship, or a common liar?
 Where have you lived, you scum of filthy earth,
 Not to know me?

Lon. Pardon the simple men;
 Indeed they knew not of your dignity.

This is her majesty's chief groom of state —
 The very front door to her royal ear ;
 You must needs pass him ere you reach the queen —
 Pray you, respect him.

First I. O, that alters it ;

A royal servant.

Smea. Are the villains blind ?

Well, well, I have comfort.

Lon. What may comfort you ?

Smea. That some fair day a goodly son of mine
 May mount the throne, and chop off all their heads.

Lon. Mark that again. [*Apart to the INFORMERS.*]

Second Informer. There is not a word escapes :
 I have engrossed it in my table-book.

Smea. Come, Loney, come ; we'll leave these
 stupid knaves.

Second I. Whither away, sir ?

Smea. To the queen, good dolt ! [*Going.*]

Lon. Forget not, masters, "To the queen," he
 said ;

And at this hour. So, boy, away, away !

[*Exit with SMEATON.*]

Second I. There is hanging in this.

Third Informer. Curse him ! what care I ?

I nigh had struck the braggart down myself,

For slandering thus her gracious majesty.

The base, ungrateful cur ! I'll see him hang.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The Queen's Apartments in Whitehall Palace. Enter QUEEN ANNE.

Queen Anne. So this is day, a broad, sun-staring
day —

And what had it been night? the same, the same.

All time to me is one confuséd mass,

Drowned in a flood of bitter misery.

There is no time to one without a hope :

Hopes are the figures on life's changing dial,

That first betray to us the passing hours,

Ere the great bell may summon us away.

All blank and meaningless is life to me :

I have no future. One eternal present,

Rayless as Lapland winter, wraps my soul ;

One ceaseless wrong, affording but one sense

Of cruelest agony, makes up my life,

Stretching from day to day its sole event.

What if the sun arise? what if the lark

Put on the glory of his morning song?

What if the flowers perk up their loaded heads,

And swing their incense down the thirsting gale?

What if the frame of the whole universe

Warm in the glow, and join the matin hymn?

While I remain in this dull lethargy,

There is no morn to me. Eternal One,

Who sent'st that joyous thing, the rising sun,

As if in mockery of my sullen woe,

To show how cheerless is my nighted soul —

O, end this mere existence! Rouse to life

The fire of my consuming energies!

O, give me scope, and fate-subduing power —
 Ay, though a pang be coupled with each act —
 Lest, in this trance, the erring scythe of death
 Pass o'er my frame, as o'er the trampled grain,
 And nature be defeated! Gracious God,
 Are we mere puppets of a rigid fate?
 Is all this labyrinth of cunning thought
 Bestowed to snare us? Must our exit be
 Through that one door which destiny holds wide?
 To me alone, of all the human race,
 Has the dread secret clearly been revealed?
 It seems so; for where'er I bend my eyes
 Some ugly phantom bars the hopeless way,
 And bids me wait the will of circumstance.
 This shall not be! Arise, my drowsing soul!
 Gird on thy blazing arms of intellect!
 One struggle more to master coming time;
 And if thy earthly walls then fall consumed,
 We'll scale those heights where conquering time
 is not!

(Enter MARY WYATT.)

Mary Wyatt. A fair good-morning to your majesty!

Queen A. Welcome, sweet mistress Mary!

Mary W. Joyful sight!

There is a flush of triumph on your brow,
 Such as it wore on Coronation-Day,
 Or when the spleenful butcher met his fall.

Queen A. Speak not of Wolsey.

Mary W. Have I ruffled you?

Queen A. O no, O no! to-day my heart is light.
 I feel as if another goodly crown
 Hung o'er my head.

Mary W. Your brother, Rochford, waits.
Since break of day he has been biding here.

Queen A. Ha! what has happened?

Mary W. Nothing that I know.

Queen A. Well, well, admit him. (*Exit MARY WYATT.*)

Rochford, at this hour! —

A man of ease; and waited here since dawn!
My heart is failing. — Nonsense! what can come,
Worse than the vision of that weak-brained girl
Locked in the circle of my husband's arms?

(*Enter Viscount ROCHFORD.*)

Good-morrow, Rochford! You are stirring soon.

Rochford. One stirs betimes who keeps a sleepless
night.

Queen A. Have you been ill?

Roch. Indeed I cannot tell.

Perchance a fever brought my waking dreams.

Queen A. What dreams?

Roch. I lay half slumbering, half awake,
And ever, as my senses leaned to sleep,
The same wild vision roused me from my rest.

Queen A. So you came here, before the break of
day,

To tell your dreams? I am no soothsayer.

Pshaw! Rochford, this is trifling. You have griefs —
Big, weighty griefs; I see them on your brow.

Roch. First hear my dream: I swear, no common
one,

For you were mingled in it.

Queen A. Well, say on.

Roch. I thought that you and I, for years and
years,

Had climbed the rundles of a slippery ladder.

I knew not why we clambered ; though above
 A blazing halo, like a sunset sky,
 Shone glorious, and towards it we bent our steps,
 Urged by resistless impulse. You were first ;
 And when I halted, by the labor tired,
 Or dizzy at the awful depth beneath,
 You cheered me on, and with your nimble feet
 Spurned the frail rounds, till sundered 'neath your
 tread

They fell around me. Woful, woful sight !
 Each stick in falling to a ghastly head
 Was metamorphosed. Here, Queen Katharine's fell ;
 There Wolsey's, More's, and Fisher's, spouting
 blood ;

And many a one whose face I could not catch.
 These, as they passed me, whispered in my ears
 A horrid curse, and grinned, and winked their
 eyes. —

Queen A. Good heaven, how awful ! Was there
 more of this ?

Roch. Ay, far more dreadful fancies.

Queen A. Could there be ?

Roch. Already through the radiant clouds above
 Your form was piercing, when our frail support
 Shook till I sickened : and aloft I saw
 A dreadful shape, in features like the king,
 Tugging and straining with his threatening hand
 To hurl our ladder to the depths below.
 I saw you clutching at the dazzling clouds,
 That, unsubstantial, melted in your grasp ;
 I heard you cry to the unpitied fiend
 Who held our lives in his relentless hands ;
 I saw you turn on me one fearful look,

In whose dread meaning desolate despair
 Had crowded all pale shapes of agony,
 Ere, with spasmodic catching at my breath,
 I shot down headlong. — With the fall, I woke.

Queen A. A fearful dream.

Roch. A most connected one.

The thing seems now an uttered prophecy,
 Whose power shall bend the neck of stubborn time
 To do its bidding.

Queen A. Cheer up, Rochford, cheer!
 Some one has told you that his majesty
 Looks coldly on me. So has he before,
 When I have crossed him in his fiery moods.
 To-day, I mean to win him back again.
 I must confess I have been negligent,
 Not to have closed our matrimonial flaw.

Roch. Sister, this levity is forced. I know
 That your proud soul has suffered keen chagrin;
 Nor in hope's sunshine stand you more than I.
 Jane Seymour —

Queen A. Nonsense, man, to place my worth
 Against the nothing of so weak a girl!
 The king's time lags; his ever-roving eye,
 Perchance his appetite, was caught by her:
 The eye soon tires, the heart is never full;
 The first is hers, the nobler prize is mine.
 Hope for the best. If I return to-day
 A conquered soldier, from this war of hearts,
 I'll give you leave to ease your sorry eyes
 O'er my afflictions.

Roch. Joy be with you, sister!

Your merry mood has stolen my fear away. [*Going.*]
 Yet what I have heard —

Queen A. Nay, what anon you 'll hear!

[*Exit* ROCHFORD.]

O, misery! to play this queenly part
 Even to my brother! To be so supreme
 That the sweet flood of human sympathy,
 In which the beggar's ragged form may lave,
 Can never touch me! This is royalty,
 To feel for all that have no sense for me:
 To have no kindred, no companionship —
 The lonely phoenix on her spicy fire.
 Alone, alone! Kind heaven, the king remains —
 My rightful mate, sole partner of my lot —
 And I will win him, though conspiring earth
 Turn all its dust to Seymours, and the laud
 Sprout with such weedy beauties as this girl! [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

Another Room in the Palace. Enter KING HENRY and the Duke of NORFOLK.

Norfolk. Admit the boastings of this silly knave
 Are merely grounded on his vanity:
 Yet these same boasts, converted to a charge,
 Would wear another aspect.

King Henry. Very true;
 But 't is too horrible. Disclose a charge
 Less dyed in blackness, bearing yet a color
 Sufficient for divorce, but not for death.
 I do believe her a most faithful wife,
 Loving and true; though now her tenderness,

Like healthy food to a distempered mouth,
Disgusts the thing 't would nourish.

Nor. I am dumb.

I know no charge but what involves a crime
As great as treason. For the lighter fault,
Of secret correspondence with King Francis,
We have no witness, and but scanty grounds
To base our own suspicions on.

King H. 'Ods wounds!

Would I could rack the French ambassador!
Is there no other way?

Nor. None, that I know.

King H. Then, in the name of all the lying fiends,
Clear out this woman by what means you can!
But mind you, sir, let there be proof enough
To forcè conviction to the very core
Of my own conscience.

Nor. Ah! that tender conscience! [*Aside.*]

Doubt not, my liege; the proof shall be direct.
Suffolk has sent a follower of his,
With three grave witnesses, most truthful men,
To bring Mark Smeaton to that mellow state
In which the tongue o'erleaps the sober will,
And blusters out its secrets. Truth 's a fool,
And drunkenness an artificial folly.

King H. Now, by my soul, perchance the charge
is true!

Nor. Doubtless, my liege. Nor is the groom
alone

The only evidence may be produced.
I have brought one, a deeply-injured wife,
The good Viscountess Rochford; she awaits
Your royal pleasure in the ante-room.

King H. "The good Viscountess Rochford!"

Nor. She can tell

Some wondrous matters to your majesty.

King H. Go bring her up. (*Exit NORFOLK.*) "The good Viscountess Rochford!"

If Hell were swept, to find its vilest soul,
That soul would blush at sight of this good lady.

(*Reënter NORFOLK with Viscountess ROCHFORD.*)

Nor. I pray your majesty, be gentle with her.

[*Apart to KING HENRY.*]

King H. Welcome, my lady!

Lady Rochford. Heaven protect your highness!

King H. His grace of Norfolk says your ladyship
Can tell some wondrous matters of the queen.

Lady R. Not I, my liege.

King H. 'Fore heaven! what brought you, then?

Nor. Nay, draw her gently on. She must be led,
my liege. [*Apart to KING HENRY.*]

King H. Who are familiar with her majesty?

Lady R. Why, Mary Wyatt, and sweet mistress
Seymour —

King H. Zounds, woman! — and what men?

Lady R. I know not all.

Besides the Council, and the Churchmen —

King H. 'Sblood!

And all my army, and my navy, too!

Madam, you trifle with us; pray speak out:

I swear no harm shall come, whate'er you say.

What paramours has she? Nay, I command;

Speak, if you love my honor.

Lady R. Doleful hour,

That I was forced to see her wickedness ;
More doleful far, to tell it ! Pray, my liege —

King H. I'll have no faltering. Speak ! or by
high heaven,

Look to yourself !

Lady R. I am but a timid woman ;
You are my king, and may compel my tongue :
But did not duty — pardon what I say —

King H. Enough, enough !

Lady R. These are her paramours —
Not fancied, but with certainty of proof —
Sir Henry Norris, William Brereton,
Sir Francis Weston, master Thomas Wyatt —
All proper men, all men of gallant parts —

King H. We 'll spare your comments on the lady's
taste.

Lady R. But there 's Mark Smeaton, a low com-
mon knave,
By virtue of her favor made a groom ;
And last of all, my husband, Viscount Rochford.

King H. But he 's her brother.

Lady R. All the worse, my liege.

King H. Monstrous ! The name that you reserved
to crown

The utter horror of this long-drawn list
Throws a discredit on the whole device.
Have you no enemy to name for him ?
Have you denounced them all ?

Lady R. I 'll prove his guilt
More clearly than the crime of any other.

'T was but this morn —

King H. For God's sake, take her hence !

[*Walks apart.*]

Nor. The king is satisfied. You may withdraw.
You have pleased him, lady, more than he dare show.

[*Exit Viscountess ROCHFORD.*]

King H. Must all these die ?

Nor. They all are mortal, sir ;
And our fair witness must have that agreed,
Ere she impugn them.

King H. Ay, her serpent mouth
Would sooner spit its rancorous member forth
Than bate one jot of its malicious spleen :
But Wyatt shall not, Wyatt shall not die.
We have had enough of executing scholars.
Who ever heard such hubbub through the world
As when Sir Thomas More was put to death ?
Herod and Pilate were crowned saints to me !
Why, men that looked like moles, old dusty things,
Came from their folios, leaving fear behind,
And to my teeth talked of the infamy
To which they 'd damn me. — Wyatt shall not die.
In my wide realm are herds of courtiers,
Knights and viscounts, and gallant gentlemen ;
There 's but one Wyatt. — Wyatt shall not die !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

A Room in the Duke of Suffolk's Palace. Enter Duke of Suffolk, Duke of Norfolk, Marquis of Exeter, and Earl of Arundel, followed by Mark Smeaton and Ralph Loney.

Norfolk. I tell you, fellow, you have not a hope,
Save by agreeing to forswear the queen.

Your guilty boastings, urged against yourself,
Will bring you to the gallows —

Arundel. Ay, and shall.

Nor. Unless before the Council you appear,
And there denounce your royal paramour,

Smeaton. But will that save me ?

Nor. 'T is your only hope.

Smea. But 't is a lie — a gross, atrocious lie —
And I am a villain if I uttered it.

Curse on the wine ! It was the babbling wine,
And not my tongue, that forged the calumny.

Suffolk. The boast you made was heard by wit-
nesses,

Who say you were but warmed, not drunk with wine.

Smea. 'T is false, 't is false ! Have mercy on me
sirs !

I am but an humble man, of no account ;
My death at this time, or a century hence,
Could make no difference to such mighty lords.
If noble mercy stoops not to the low,
At least be just to me. —

Arun. Cease, whining cur !

The game we are playing is to check the queen ;
What care we for a pawn ?

Smea. She is innocent.

The words I dropped were from a foolish whim,
To see myself admired by simple men :

I never thought to injure her, nor hear

My harmless folly rigidly explained

By noblemen. Ah ! Loney, you did this ;

And 't is the foulest act you ever did,

Though you have committed murder.

Loney. Help yourself.

Be not a double fool, first to get trapped,
 Then lack the art to burrow out of harm.
 Forget my deeds ; they are my own concern ;
 Nor stand there moralizing on the past.
 Seize on to-day — perchance 't is golden, man.

Smea. “ Perchance, perchance ! ” but not one
 promise given,
 Even by you.

Lon. The course they offer you
 Is bright with hope ; despair and frightful death,
 By wrenching tortures and heart-shrivelling fires,
 Threaten you darkly from all other ways.
 I know your courage. When you have been racked
 For one short fortnight, or a month at most,
 You 'll yield perforce. Why not confess at once,
 And gain the hope of pardon and reward ?
 Pray did you ever see a felon racked,
 Even for an hour ?

Arun. Come, fellow, will you speak ?
 Or shall I sound your carcass with my sword,
 To find your tongue ?

Exeter. The valiant gentleman ! [*Aside.*]

Smea. O, horror, horror ! Have compassion, sirs !
 O my poor mistress ! Is there not a hand —
 Now, while I shut my eyes — so merciful
 As to despatch me, and deliver her ?
 She is my maker, — she created me,
 From my vile dust, to be whate'er I am ;
 As well might I blaspheme as stain her honor !
 Good sirs, have pity !

Suf. Cease your agonies,
 You foul-mouthed slanderer of Heaven's majesty !
 Speak to the point — will you comply or not ?

Smea. But will that save me ?

Suf. Are we prophets, fool ?

What else can save you ?

Smea. But her majesty —

What will befall her ?

Nor. What is that to you ?

Have you the power to influence her fate ?

Arun. Are we the answers in your catechism,
That you so glibly question ?

Smea. I will not !

Suf. Loney, prepare the rack. [Exit LONEY.]

Smea. Forgive me, Heaven !

I will do anything : but spare my life !

O, this is awful ! I, that never dared

To touch her robe, or raise my fearful eyes

To the full glory of her angel face —

When her twin orbs of conquering majesty

I felt upon me — now, with stubborn front,

To stand before the gaze of frowning Heaven,

And call its host to register a lie,

A black, soul-killing lie ! O, urge it not !

There 's not an honest man, in England's realm,

Who will not sicken at my perfidy,

Or cram the falsehood down my caitiff throat

Ere I half utter it ! This is too foul,

And useless for the end to which you urge it.

Suf. Loney, the rack.

(*A curtain is drawn, and the rack disclosed, with Attendants standing near it.*)

Arun. Look there, Sir Constancy !

There 's what shall move you, every joint and limb —

There's what shall stretch you more than you'll stretch truth.

You'll strain a point for this — hey! hey! my boy?

Smea. O, nerve me, Heaven! — uplift my faltering heart!

Give me the strength to foil these sinful men,
And here assert thy might!

Arun. Away with him!

[*Attendants seize SMEATON.*]

Smea. I yield, I yield!

Suf. Then sign this paper, Mark,

And wait the issue.

[*SMEATON signs.*]

Ex. There an angel fell!

Here is a wretch who damns his endless soul

To save his mortal body. I had hoped,

For the poor cause of frail humanity,

To see yon fellow win a martyr's crown,

And give the Calendar of our new creed

Its first accomplished sainthood. [*Aside.*]

Suf. It is done.

Nor. In the king's name, Mark Smeaton I arrest
For treason manifest.

[*Attendants seize SMEATON.*]

Smea. Is this your mercy?

Suf. Traitor, no words! Away with him, away!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

An Apartment in Whitehall Palace. Enter KING HENRY.

King Henry. How easy 't is to run an evil course!
How many stubborn checks a virtuous meets!
Sure all the fiends have turned them engineers,
And smoothed the thousand pathways to their gulf,

So quickly trod by man. There's not a let,
 As far as reason's straining eye can pierce,
 To the career which sin points out for me.
 Jane daily warms; the queen grows proud and cold,
 Nor now besieges me with tender notes;
 My nobles leave her, all afire for me;
 And the most powerful — ay, her very kin —
 Hatch plots to work her sudden overthrow.
 My love goes smoothly. — Hum! and yet 'tis
 strange,
 When not within the circle of my eyes —
 That drink her beauties like the thirsting sands,
 And bear the hot thrill of her loveliness
 Into my very soul — how this same fever,
 That fiercely glowed erewhile, calms and is cooled;
 How, in the place of sudden pangs and starts,
 And all unrest, a holy peace succeeds;
 When comes the shape of my much-wrongéd queen,
 Crossing my mind in quiet majesty,
 And trampling on the dust of noxious fancies,
 That throned the long, long avenues of thought,
 As if of right she crushed my base desires!

(*Enter QUEEN ANNE, behind.*)

Queen Anne. Henry.

King H. Was that a spirit?

Queen A. Husband, king.

King H. How came you here? I left direct com-
 mand

That no one should disturb my privacy.

Have you again been tampering with my knaves?

Queen A. I came by a small passage — if for-
 gotten

By you, my liege, still to my memory dear —

I have no office to receive confessions.
 Yet—since you force me to play ghostly father—
 Is there no other sin, of grosser cast,
 By you committed, not towards Heaven alone,
 But to my honor?

Queen A. 'Tis a hideous lie!
 Who has abused your majesty's belief
 With such unworthy tattle? Did you stand
 And tamely hear your honor thus belied?
 I knew that I had enemies enough,
 Unscrupulous and cruel; but never deemed
 Such base, malicious, and unfounded charge
 Could move a human lip, or find an ear
 So used to gorging sickly mental stuff
 As to receive it. Try me, try me, sir.
 Wring every fibre of my woman's frame
 With piercing tortures—hold my modesty,
 In truth's keen sunlight, to the vulgar gaze—
 Confront me crownless with my slanderers:
 If at the last my trial prove me clear,
 And reunite our long-dissevered hearts,
 I'll hold the pain but lightly.

King H. Pshaw! my child,
 You waste your energy. This base report
 Is the light mintage of some idle tongue,
 In want of truer metal.

Queen A. Ah! my liege,
 I hold this shallow falsehood at its worth;
 But it afflicts me sadly, to behold
 Your easy method of avoiding it,
 Without a thought of punishing the wrong.
 How have I changed?—O, Henry, you have changed
 From that true Henry who, in bygone days,

Rode, with the hurry of a northern gale,
 Towards Hever's heights, and ere the park was
 gained,
 Made the glad air a messenger of love,
 By many a blast upon your hunting-horn.
 Have you forgotten that old oaken room,
 Fearful with portraits of my buried race,
 Where I received you panting from your horse ;
 As breathless, from my dumb excess of joy,
 As you with hasty travel ? Do you think
 Of our sweet meetings 'neath the gloomy yews
 Of Sopewell Nunnery, when the happy day
 That made me yours seemed lingering as it came,
 More slowly moving as it nearer drew ?
 How you chid time, and vowed the hoary knave
 Might mark each second of his horologe
 With dying groans, from those you cherished most,
 So he would hasten —

King H. Anne, that was you.

Have you forgotten, too, my merriment
 At your quaint figure of time's human clock,
 Whose every beat a soul's flight registered ?

Queen A. God bless you, Henry ! [*Embraces him.*]

King H. Pshaw ! why touch so deep ?

These softening memories of our early love
 Come o'er me like my childhood.

Queen A. Love be praised,
 That with such pure reflections couples me !
 Be steadfast, Henry.

King H. Fear not : love is poor
 That seals not compacts with the stamp of faith.

Queen A. My stay is trespass. We shall meet anon.
 Love needs no counsel in his little realm.

[*Embraces him, and exit.*]

King H. I hang 't wixt heaven and hell. — Anne, return ;

For, by my soul, one half my virtuous strength
Has gone with you ! O, I would rather be
The snarling cynic in his squalid tub,
And master of myself, than England's king,
Reared to indulgence of each flimsy whim
That passion hints at. 'T is the curse of kings,
This slaving to our pampered appetites ;
Which thwarted men nursed in vicissitude,
And by compulsion taught to check desire,
Gain strength to vanquish.

(*Enter JANE SEYMOUR.*)

Jane Seymour. Harry, royal Harry !

King H. Good-morrow, mistress Seymour.

Jane S. Ha ! so cold —

The queen just gone ! I'll match you, whirligig.

[*Aside.*]

I crave your pardon, that with rude alarm
I thus disturbed your gracious majesty,
Seeking for one I nicknamed royal Harry —
Not meaning disrespect to you, my liege,
But from a wanton fancy. Had I thought
Your majesty here present, I'd have held
A stricter rein upon my noisy tongue.

King H. Ah ! she is beautiful. This little mood,
Of mingled coquetry and tearful spite,
Sits like the angry rain-drops on a rose,
Giving fresh lustre to its crimson cheeks. [*Aside.*]
You have my pardon.

Jane S. Nay, I wish it not.

Pray cast your pardon on a graver slip :
Forgive the maiden greenness of a heart

That prattled to itself a silly tale
Of love, and hope, and thoughtless confidence,
Even in your very presence.

King H. Jane, what mean you ?

Jane S. But what my words imply.

King H. And are you angry ?

Jane S. No, I am deceived.

King H. Truce, truce, fair mistress !

Jane S. Nay, peace is not my purpose.

King H. Prithee stop !

Jane S. You may be king of half the universe,
For aught I care ; you are not king of hearts :
My heart shall speak, though every word cry
treason !

King H. Forgive my coldness.

Jane S. Ah ! I never deemed

A truer spirit lived than yours, my liege :
Else why did you, from your exalted height,
Descend with flattering promises of love ? —
Only to make me wretched ! O, 't is base !
A brutal hind might show more constancy
Than this anointed king.

[*Weeps.*]

King H. Nay, weep not, Jane. [*Kneels.*]

See me thus lowly in my penitence.

I swear I meant no insult to you, darling ;
And here, upon my knees, I once again
Put on the easy fetters of my heart.

Jane S. Swear fealty to love ! Your fickleness
Reproaches more your manly character,
Than the poor wrong to me —

King H. I swear, by Heaven,
Henceforth to love you with all constancy,
By night, by day, in sunshine and in storm ;

Nor will I alter in my steadfast aim
 To crown you queen, though every mortal sin,
 That fiends can reckon in their calendar,
 Lie between me and my unfaltering wish ! [Rises.]

Jane S. This oath is fearful.

King H. But irrevocable. —

What ask you more ?

Jane S. O, sir, I asked not that :
 I but demand of you a bare return
 For the great venture of my woman's heart,
 Unhappily launched upon a sea of love,
 With you for careless pilot. 'T is my all ;
 Though you esteem the charge of little worth.

King H. Tut, tut, my darling ! if our hearts re-
 spond,

Our windy tongues are poor ambassadors
 To bear their gentle greetings. Love is dumb,
 A potent spirit, felt, but never heard,
 Save when he murmurs inarticulate
 'Tween meeting lips, or buzzes wild conceits,
 That mock the language of our grosser sense,
 In lover's brains. Words are love's counterfeits :
 When stumbling fools would ape a shallow passion,
 Lies slide full glibly, and false rhetoric,
 Lashed to a foam, roars opposition down,
 And for effect kills feeling. Rail no more ;
 Or I shall doubt that sweet sincerity
 On which I live.

Jane S. O, never doubt my faith.

King H. Nor will I. (*Embraces her.*) I will bar
 my pliant ears

Against the witchery of sly Anne's tongue :
 Her airy magic cheats my spell-bound heart,

And for a moment shows a fancied spot,
Bright with the May-day flowers of early love,
Amid December's snow. And now for Norfolk.

Jane S. Nothing in haste, my liege.

King H. No; all in love. [Exeunt.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Lists at Greenwich, prepared for a Tournament. Flourish. Enter KING HENRY, QUEEN ANNE, Lords, Ladies, Attendants, Men-at-arms, etc. The King and Queen seat themselves under the cloth of state. Then enter the lists Viscount ROCHFORD and other Knights, as Challengers, with Heralds, Squires, Pages, etc. Trumpets sound a challenge. To them enter Sir HENRY NORRIS and other knights, as Defenders, with Attendants, etc. Flourish. ROCHFORD, NORRIS, and their respective Knights, engage. NORRIS and his party are driven back.*

Queen Anne. I PRAY your highness, let them breathe a while ;

Their sport grows earnest. Ill may come of this :
Rochford is dangerous when his blood is up.

King Henry. Poh ! poh ! mere bruises. Would you rather see

Rochford or Norris wounded ?

Queen A. Neither, neither !—

Good sir, 't is frightful.

King H. .Ha ! so kind to both ?

Then love admits not of relationship.

Queen A. Sound, herald, sound !

(Trumpets sound a retreat, and the combat ceases.)

King H. Now, by the holy rood ! [*Starts up.*]
If we were speechless, Heaven had been most kind
In sending one to exêrcise our function.

Queen A. I feared, my liege —

King H. O, this is nothing new :

You have governed England, me amongst the rest,
Since God knows when! — You thing of painted
cloth,

When next you blow without your king's command,
Look to your tabard. — Is our queen our tongue ?

[*QUEEN ANNE, in her terror, drops her handkerchief.*

NORRIS picks it up, kisses, and returns it.]

Monstrous, by Jove ! What, in our very presence ! —
Shameless adulteress ! Let the tilt be stopped !

We are as patient as most ill-used men,
But this we cannot bear. Set on, before !

Was ever king thus openly defied ?

[*Exit with Courtiers*]

Queen A. O ! horror, horror !

[*She faints, and is borne off.*]

Rochford.

Norris, did I hear ?

Or am I singled from among you all,
To bear the terrors of this fantasy ?

Norris. Alas ! your senses serve too faithfully :
Would I could doubt you sane !

(*Enter THOMAS WYATT, hastily.*)

Wyatt.

Fly, Rochford, fly !

And you, Sir Henry Norris, if you 'd live.

Nor. I fly ! and wherefore ?

Wyatt.

Ask not, but away —

Away to Scotland ; nor till every inch
Of English ground has vanished from your sight,
Draw rein or spare the spur !

Roch.

O ! I am stunned

With mere intensity of present grief ;
No after blow, that cuts my torpid soul

Loose from its clay, can bear a pang for me!
 I will not fly to live. I have beheld
 A sight to force me into league with death —
 The most unkingly, meanest, foulest deed
 That brother's eyes e'er saw.

Wyatt. Now 'tis too late.

(*Enter an OFFICER and GUARD.*)

Officer. Lord Rochford and Sir Henry Norris,
 yield;

I do arrest you for high treason, sirs.
 Give up your arms, and follow to the Tower.

Roch. Yes, yes. Come, Norris; for I make no
 doubt

What was our virtue has become our guilt:
 Love to the queen is treason to the king.

When the great fall the little must be crushed.

Nor. Wyatt, what means this? I accused of
 treason!

Wyatt. Ay, 'tis a royal charge!

Nor. Ha! say you so?

Had you this order from his majesty,

Or from the Council?

[*To the OFFICER.*]

Offi. From the king direct.

Come, gentlemen; my office stands in peril

By my indulgence to you.

Roch. Farewell, Wyatt!

Nor. My lord, be not down-hearted. This affair
 Will soon blow over.

Roch. Yes, to other men;

But I much fear that on my latest day

It will have reached its climax.

Offi. Come, sirs, come!

Wyatt. Heaven send your innocence a quick release !

Roch. With death to bear the warrant.

[*Exeunt* ROCHFORD, NORRIS, OFFICER, and GUARD.]

Wyatt. So I fear,

Doomed victims of a ruthless tyranny.

O, coming shape of English liberty,

Have my desires played wanton to mine ears ;

Or do I hear the faint prophetic sound

Of thy approaching footsteps echoing through

The mists of coming time ? Ye noble souls,

Grim heroes of the field of Runnymede,

Showing more glorious in your iron arms,

On peaceful deeds, than in successful wars —

Inspire the souls of your too slothful race !

Must all the liberty your courage won

Slip from the hands to which you rendered it ;

Till the supineness of our base neglect

Sink us to slaves ? Is there no man alive —

No heaven-marked hero, from the people sprung —

To lead the roaring multitudes of earth

Along the fated pathway they must tread, —

Ay, though they cross the throne, and trample out

The sacred name and dignity of king ?

Has man no rights but what a tyrant doles ? —

No fate above his will ? no claim on justice ?

Then doth God wrong His own dread sovereignty,

And free us from allegiance. And she has fallen,

Sole star amid this night of tyranny !

How low I know not ; but what eye e'er saw

The falling star remount and shine again ?

I feel my weakness to support her cause,

Against this pampered monster of a king —

This frightful idol of the people's will,
 Throned on the superstitious reverence
 Of the poor fools that glut his savage maw.
 O, what a curse to have an honest heart,
 Hemmed in and cramped by the fixed frame of
 things,
 That, were it free, might move the stubborn world,
 And hang its glories on the brow of time! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

A Room in the Palace of Whitehall. Enter KING HENRY.

King Henry. Too late, too late! I charged her
 openly ;
 The issue now lies between her and me,
 And not between her innocence and guilt.
 I am a villain, or the queen is false,
 Since I became accuser of her truth :
 If she escape conviction, on the crown
 Descends the infamy of calumny,
 And through our person England will be shamed
 Before the jealous powers of Christendom.
 So, so ! we owe it to our people, then,
 To prove our charge, or by conviction sure
 Seem to attest it. — This is plain enough.
 Besides, in what regard stands common life
 Before our kingly honor? Julius said
 That Cæsar's wife must be without a taint ;
 And, but suspecting, put Pompeia by. —
 Wise Cæsar ! 't was a solemn precedent
 That kings should follow. Wherefore halt I now ?

A limping purpose never reached its mark,
Though justice pointed. Should her guilt be
proved? —

Should an impartial court of noble peers
Condemn her too? O, woful, woful thought!
How shall I pardon her gross treachery?
Their candid verdict will stop pity's ears,
And force conviction to my doubting mind.
She shall have trial, fair and open trial —
No honest men would wrong the innocent;
And if they do? — her blood but swells their crimes;
I escape stainless.

(*Enter Sir HENRY NORRIS in custody of OFFICER and GUARD.*)

Officer, withdraw;

But stand in hail. (*Exeunt OFFICER and GUARD.*) Ah!

Norris, Henry Norris,

You have abused that open confidence
In which we held you.

Norris. I! and how, my liege?

King H. Nay, strive not, sir, to hide your secret
guilt

With artful candor and affected starts.
Sin can put on the guise of innocence;
Nor ever cheats us with its ugliness,
But with its seeming beauty.

Nor. On my life,
I know not to what sin your tongue directs.

King H. Have you not wronged me?

Nor. Wronged your majesty!

King H. Yes; have you not, to swell your amor-
ous triumphs,

And make yourself an envied libertine,
Seduced the virtue of our fickle queen?

Nor. Your grace is merry. [*Laughing.*]

King H. Merry! are you mad?

I say it can be proved.

Nor. Proved! Set the hound

That howled this lying folly in your ears
Within the reach of my chastising sword,
And if I send him not to fiery hell,
With his foul tattle warm upon his lips,
Rack me to powder!

King H. Acted to the life!

Nor. O, no, my liege; 't is but the natural heat
That would boil over every English lip,
To hear their queen traduced.

King H. Be calm, Sir Harry.

So much we hold the honor of our realm
Before the vengeance due to private wrongs,
That we have vowed to bury our own grief,
And grant free pardon to whatever man —
Even though he were her fondest paramour —
Will fix the crime upon her guilty head.

Nor. I am not he. I thought, until this hour, —
Ay, and still think, and will, despite report, —
Our queen as loyal to your majesty
As the chaste moon is to her regal sun,
Drinking no other beams. What though she shine
Upon the darkness of our grateful earth,
To cheer the spirits of night-foundered men? —
That which she gives, she borrows from yourself;
Fruitful to her, but, when it falls on us,
The calm, cold splendor of reflected light.

King H. Norris, beware! you carry this too far:
If you confess not, instant, shameful death
Awaits your stubborn spirit.

Nor. Be it so :
I'll rather add a thousand stings to death,
Than give one pang to suffering innocence.

King H. Then be it so, you contumacious boy!
Have I embraced you in my trusting heart,
To be denied when I demand return?

Nor. Ha! do I hear? What saw your majesty,
Even in so poor a man as Henry Norris,
To make you hold me for a supple tool
To work your bloody purpose? You must go
A step below a knight and gentleman,
To find a villain fitted to your wish.

King H. Poh! poh! coy virtue, is it villanous
To show obedience when your king commands?

Nor. Is there no power in every honest breast,
Above the terrors of your threatening will,
'Neath whose fixed look my guilty memory
Shall cower in horror?

King H. You must do this deed. —
Nay, I adjure you.

Nor. O, my gracious liege —

King H. No words, no words!

Nor. Avaunt, damned hypocrite!
I here defy your utmost reach of wrath :
The cruellest death, your wickedness can shape,
Would be a joy to what you offer me.
Stretch your base tortures through all coming time,
And in the end they can but kill my clay ;
But you would turn my hand to impious use,
And make me, like a frantic suicide,
Stab at the life of my eternal soul —
That, by God's blessing, shall outlast your hate,
And reign triumphant when your crown is dross!

King H. Hold, villain, hold! or I will let the
breath

Out of your treacherous body! [*Draws.*]

Nor. Do, my liege,

And join assassination to the crimes

That blot your monstrous heart. — I will not hold:

I see you are bent upon destroying me,

And, as a reckless man, I'll know your worst.

O, woe to England, when this sinful king,

Grown hard in crime, shall reach the fearful height

That evil points him! Then shall —

King H. Brazen traitor!

Dare you invoke our vengeance on your head?

Without, there! (*Reënter OFFICER and GUARD.*) See

your prisoner to the Tower.

If he escape, you'd better hang yourselves

Than live to tell it. Out, malignant traitor!

[*Exit Sir HENRY NORRIS, in custody of the GUARD.*]

O, the ingratitude of fickle man!

The shifting sand that tumbles in the tide,

Taking new form from every wanton surge,

Is not more changeful than his rootless heart.

He is a bark upon an angry sea,

Unballasted, yet ever crowding sail;

Careening now to passion's fiery gust,

Now to the other side prostrated flat

By self-styled reason's icy hurricane;

Yet never sailing on an even keel —

Ever extreme, and no extreme the best.

Who that had seen the favors I have showered,

As thick and prodigal as Spring's warm sun,

Upon the head of that remorseless wretch,

Could have foreknown the desert barrenness

Of his rude heart! — Pah! I am sick of it.

O, the ingratitude of wicked man!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

The Queen's Apartments in the Palace. QUEEN ANNE and MARY WYATT.

Queen Anne. No audience, said you?

Mary Wyatt. None, your highness, none.

Queen A. But are you sure his majesty refused
To read my letter?

Mary W. Very sure; or whence
The new-sprung insolence of every groom?
They passed me by, for nigh a weary hour,
Without observance. When at length I spoke,
Demanding audience in your highness' name,
They almost thrust me from the ante-room,
With taunts and sneers. One knave, a malpert page,
By you presented to his majesty,
Said, with his arms akimbo, in a style
That mimicked the king's bearing, "Mistress Mary,
When we desire to know of blubbering spells,
At your sad corner of our merry house,
We'll come to seek them: — till that time, adieu!"
At this his fellows grinned, like tickled apes,
And winked, and leered at me; till I, abashed —
More that such things were human, than for fear
Of any shame their insults might provoke —
Came sadly here, my mission unachieved.

Queen A. I blame you not: I trusted in your zeal,
Knowing its failure set all hope aside

Save that which harbors in myself. Must I
 Again go begging for his chary love,
 After the public shame he put me to?
 Must I go whimpering like a stricken cur—
 I who am wronged, and should demand redress—
 And pray, in mercy to my feebleness,
 This blow may be the last? Degrading thought!
 Were I the housewife of his lowest clown,
 Caned to obedience by a drunkard's hand,
 My woman's heart has in it pride enough
 To burst ere bear this last humility.

Mary W. If pity move him—

Queen A. Pity! there's a shame,
 More fearful in its furious rebuke,
 That follows threatening on the heels of wrong—
 An earthly hell in which the conscience writhes,
 And lashes round its fiery barrier,
 Till suffering purify the tortured soul;—
 This he must feel, ere meek-eyed Pity's hand
 Will ope the silver gates of penitence,
 And through forgiveness show the way to peace.

Mary W. O, may he feel it!

Queen A. Feel it! he is human.

Mary W. Yes; but before some heavier injury
 Make pity useless.

Queen A. Pray, speak plainly, girl!
 I see your heart is full with mystery.
 What new misfortune is about to fall?

Mary W. None, as I hope.

Queen A. Nay, this is churlishness:
 You have some secret that may profit me.
 If I am ignorant of coming ills,
 How shall I guard me with expedients

Against their wrath? The man by death assailed
Is last to know the danger he is in.

I make no doubt, but half the palace lackeys
Have drawn a surer presage of my fate,
From buzzing rumor, could more truly tell
What will befall me for a year to come,
Than I, with my own lot to outward seeming
Within my grasp, could compass by design.
So hangs our fate upon the breath of all,
That oft a rumor shapes the destiny
Of feeble wills.

Mary W. 'T would but fatigue your ears,
Not profit you, to hear the thousand woes
That fools predict upon your majesty :
But there 's much comfort in the croak of folly.

Queen A. O, merely thus? naught in particular?
Well, let them rail; the gale is adverse now,
I must expect this dash of saucy spray
Full in my face: anon the wind will change;
Then they 'll come tripping to my very heels,
Sparkling with joy, and glad to decorate
My rearward path.

Mary W. Heaven guard your cheerful mind!

Queen A. Actions begun in cheerfulness display
The merry herald that foreruns success.
The smile that lights an earnest countenance
Seems as a gleam from some vast mental fire
That burns within, and ever flashes out,
Like tropic lightning on a summer night;
Harmless, indeed, yet hinting of a power
That, moved to wrath, might shake the seated earth
To sulk at sorrow dulls the edge of will,
And half unfits us for prosperity;

Much more for danger, where each faculty
That gives us sway is needed at its full.

Mary W. When took your highness to philosophy?

Queen A. Ha! you malicious elf! When heavy
griefs

First leaguered my poor heart, through it I found
A path to wander from perplexing fears
That lost in speculation dismal self.
Sorrow makes many a deep philosopher.

Mary W. Great minds may carry a great load
unbowed.

Ah, me! it brings me to my woman's part,
To hear these strains of sweet philosophy
Rise from her injured spirit. (*Aside, weeping.*) Sure
the God

Who suffers mischief to afflict you thus,
Gives you the strength to bear it.

Queen A. Doubtless, doubtless.

(*Enter THOMAS WYATT.*)

Mary W. My brother, please you. [*Retires.*]

Queen A. Ah! good master Wyatt,
What news abroad? Why do you shake your head?
Why wear that funeral face? It seems to me
That all my friends would plunder me of grief.
Came you alone? Where are my other friends?

Wyatt. Gone with the summer flies. The day is
dark;

And they that erewhile revelled in your light,
Now sluggish hide in close obscurity,
And prophesy of falling weather soon.

Queen A. But Rochford? he is true in sun or shade.

Wyatt. Ay, by my soul! And know you not?

Queen A.

Not I.

Wyatt. Indeed? — That I should bear the intelligence!

Queen A. These dread inductions to ill-omened news,

Pitch swift imagination far below

The heaviest fact. Out with it, tender sir!

What ever saw you like a fear in me?

Wyatt. Lodged in the Tower.

Queen A. A prisoner! on what charge?

Wyatt. A charge as common now as larceny, —
High treason.

Queen A. Treason! who is loyal, then?

O! what a shallow matter for arrest!

Poor Rochford! — This is strange. — How bears he it?

Wyatt. As innocence e'er bears calamity, —
Suffering in body, but content at heart.

Queen A. I'll to the king. Are not my wrongs
enough,

But that my foes must vex my kindred too?

For Rochford's sake, I'll quell my stubborn pride,

And ask the justice I deny myself.

Wyatt. Ah! would you might! See you yon sentinel
Who counts his steps along the corridor?

That knave has orders from his majesty,

On no account to let your highness pass.

Queen A. Good sir, what augurs this? I feel it
here —

Here at my heart — a quaking like the step

Of some advancing doom. 'Tis terrible,

To be environed by an enemy

Whose very aims are hidden. Give me light!

O, Wyatt, show me but my coward foes,
 Though they are numberless as Egypt's plagues —
 Let me but see the weapons in their hands,
 Though they can daunt the angry Thunderer,
 And I'll confront them ! But to be assailed
 By arrows that seem raining from the clouds —
 To see my tribe, like Niobe's, cut down,
 Nor know what time my breast may be transfixed —
 To feel myself the cause of all this woe,
 Without the chance of offering stroke for stroke,
 Is next to madness !

Wyatt. All I know is this, —
 Lord Rochford, Norris, Brereton, and Weston,
 As the most noted followers of your highness,
 Have been arrested, charged with secret treason.
 In what particulars their guilt consists,
 Even wakeful rumor has not been informed ;
 Nor are the prisoners wiser than the world.
 That popinjay, Mark Smeaton, too, has had
 Some private hearings in the council-room,
 After a tampering which he underwent
 At Suffolk's house.

Queen A. No more of him ; — he's harmless.
 All these brave hearts to suffer for my sake !
 O ! deadly cowards ! to remove these props,
 Whose sturdy valor might have long upheld
 Even the structure of a tottering cause !

Wyatt. Whatever scheme your enemies have
 formed,
 Is now converted to a state affair :
 Your highness therefore must expect a blow,
 Not from lords Suffolk, Norfolk, and their friends,
 But from the Council.

Queen A. Let them only come!
My heart is aching to begin the fray :
I vow, the conquered shall not fight again !
What of the king ?

Wyatt. His majesty is silent,
Gloomy and sad, and given to muttering ;
Flying at pleasures with an eagerness
That crushes out the dainty soul of joy :
As one a cup of rich, untasted wine
Might crack with furious bacchanalian haste,
And spill its fruity treasures.

Queen A. So I thought :
His love is wrestling with an agony,
By fancied justice thrust upon his mind.
When through this fire of malice I have passed —
Whose purifying ordeal he allows,
Only to prove the temper of my heart —
Look, Wyatt, look to see my enemies,
Drossy with crime, hurled headlong in the flame,
To show the baseness of their earthy souls !
Kings should be just.

Wyatt. Ay, should be just.

Queen A. How now ?
Would you arraign his royal qualities,
Because my foes have led his mind astray
With seeming justice ? Ah ! be careful, sir,
Not to malign him, in your zeal for me !

Wyatt. She hugs her ruin. (*Aside.*) Mistress
Seymour says —

Queen A. Out, wizard, out ! Dare you to
summon up
The horrid phantom that pursues my steps,
And ever shadowy flits before my eyes,

Veiling the sun, and deepening deepest night?
 O! Wyatt, Wyatt, would you mock me too?
 O! would you rend the feeble barrier
 That hides my anguish from the gaping world,
 And show me in my naked wretchedness,
 Without a rag of pride to cover me,
 For prying fools to carp on? Cruel leech,
 To probe this wound, even though my tortured heart
 Might work salvation out of agony!
 Begone, begone!

Wyatt. I meant not —

Queen A. I forgive you.

Go, go, in mercy! If you love my health,
 Never again recall that fearful name! [*Exit WYATT.*]
 'Tis hard, 'tis hard! — but it must be endured.
 O! vanished peace, that with my girlish hours
 Shook hands and parted, as they proudly strode
 Down the dark paths of untried womanhood —
 Return, return! Ah! couldst thou bring again
 Those pleasant days, when at the source of life
 My spirit sat, and heard, with nature's tones,
 The blended music of a higher life
 Mix and flow on in one grand harmony;
 When every sense, content with what it felt,
 Longed not for action, never-ending action,
 That once embraced makes us its slaves till death.
 Death, death! There is more sweetness in that name
 Than I e'er knew of. Does thy pallid hand
 Unite the two extremes of human life,
 Linking our earliest with our latest days,
 In one unbroken circle? Art thou she,
 The meek-faced peace of childhood, changed in name,
 But undistinguished in thy quality,

Come from afar to lead us back again
 From where we started? Ah! I know not now,
 Nor can I till I pass, beyond recall,
 The narrow lintel of the voiceless grave.—
 O God! O God! I am weary of the day!

[*Scene closes.*]

SCENE IV.

Another Room in the Palace. Enter KING HENRY and JANE SEYMOUR.

King Henry. Poh! 't is too late for pity.

Jane Seymour. Pity, sir!

I feel no pity for her wantonness:
 'T is for yourself, so wickedly abused,
 So unsuspecting till the common voice
 Thrust its belief in your reluctant ears.
 The hand of justice is in everything:
 How strange it was our budding love put forth
 Just as her impious crimes had reached their full!
 Showing how Heaven may visit secret guilt
 In an avenging form of innocence,
 That sadly marvels at its own result.

King H. Yes, very strange.

Jane S. What proof can be produced?
 A mind so subtle in committing sin,
 Must be adept in masking stratagems.

King H. That's Norfolk's part. His grace has
 pledged himself
 To bring more evidence before the court—
 Uncircumstantial, downright, stubborn proof—

Than it will hear. And let him look to it :
 For if his charge prove slander to our queen,
 And she escape, untainted in her fame,
 I'll hang him like a thief—by Heaven, I will !

Jane S. Sweet hypocrite ! (*Aside.*) But if his
 charge be proved ?

King H. Our realm has laws ; too much we honor
 them,
 To stand between the culprit and their doom.
 Talk not of this.

Jane S. Here comes the noble duke,
 Sending a smile before his onward path
 To ask a welcome.

(*Enter Duke of NORFOLK.*)

Norfolk. All looks fair, my liege.

King H. Looks foul, I say ! Cannot I teach you,
 sir,
 That this discovered treachery of the queen
 Irks me to credit ? Is it not enough
 That the dear honor of my father's throne
 Is sullied in the eyes of Christendom,
 And I am made the laughing-stock of time,
 Without this giggling at my sorry plight ?

Nor. A virtuous mood ! (*Aside.*) Pardon the
 clownish haste
 That has disturbed your majesty's deep grief.
 You set me to pursue a wily chase ;
 And if I feel the huntsman's eager flush —
 More from pursuit than wish to strike my game —
 The heat of triumph should excuse my air.

King H. Well, well, what news ?

Nor. So ho ! king weathercock !
[*Aside.*]

I fear 't is too much for your majesty
 To hear the worst confirmed.

King H. Ha ! say you so ?
 For to drift on upon a level sea
 Of settled woe, is better than to toss
 Between the heights of my delusive hopes
 And the deep gulfs of bottomless despair.
 Rest, Norfolk, rest from my o'erwhelming thoughts,
 Even in a port of quiet wretchedness,
 Would be a pleasure to this storm-tossed soul.

Nor. I'd give a barony for one free laugh. [*Aside.*]
 There is not a circumstance nor shade of proof,
 By law demanded to convict the queen,
 But I can summon to outface her tongue.
 This is blunt truth, ungarbled by a phrase
 To smooth its meaning in a dainty ear ;
 And though you shrink, your royal dignity
 Calls out for vengeance on her traitorous head.

King H. Be well prepared : your life hangs by a
 thread.

Nor. I see your snares, sceptred duplicity ;
 I am fairly entered, far beyond retreat ;
 I know the issue is her death or mine.
 Thank Heaven, I do not need fear's ragged spur
 To drive me onward in my willing course. [*Aside.*]
 Trust to my zeal ; I hold my sovereign's honor
 Above the selfish dread of common death.

King H. What of this spinnet-player ?

Nor. Ah ! the knave !
 He wavered sadly since his first confession :
 Now he'd confirm the paper which he signed,

And now he'd suffer death ere swear to it.
 When strict imprisonment had cowed his mind,
 I by persuasion won him to my wish.

King H. By what persuasion? Make no promises;

The wretch shall hang.

Nor. O! merely by the rack.

King H. Most delicate inducement!

Nor. Yes, my liege,

It oft unclasps the rigid jaws of guilt.

The pangs of death have many a time disclosed
 The murderer's secret; and the rack can bring
 A dying anguish, without fear of death.

'T is a most potent questioner.

Jane S. My liege,

Pray come away; for I am sick at heart,

Hearing details so awful. Please, your grace,

To keep such horrors for your private thoughts.

Come, Henry, come!

King H. To please you, love. Adieu,

Good Norfolk; slack not in your zealous care.

Nor. Heaven keep your majesties!

Jane S. Pshaw! trifle.

[*Exeunt KING HENRY and JANE SEYMOUR.*]

Nor. "Pshaw!"

But did I tickle you, my demi-queen?

So delicate, so royal in your tastes!

Cannot endure the thoughts of brutal racks;

And yet would kill a queen to wear her shoes!

'Sdeath! when you are crowned, our manly swords
 must rust,

Butchers lose traffic, and your tender court

Browse, like Assyria's king, on bloodless weeds;—

Ay, but our daggers shall be kept on edge,
 To stab our kind! Well, you are happily matched:
 A squeamish king who circumvents two lives,
 To urge his purpose to its bloody end,
 Vowing that justice shall have one of them,
 And a meek queen who shudders at the means,
 Yet at the end grapples with furies' claws.
 You crocodiles can blubber o'er your prey,
 If a stray infant should fall overboard,
 And cry that drowning is a sorry thing,
 Ere you together gorge it! What a life,
 So comforting to conscience, you may lead
 When Hymen yokes you! — Damn hypocrisy!

(*Enter THOMAS WYATT.*)

Wyatt. So say I too, under your grace's oath.

Nor. Ha! ha! Sir Poet, 't was a pious oath.

Wyatt. Of sure fulfilment.

Nor. Pray what brings you here?

Wyatt. A moth to light, a poet to a prince;
 Thus is it ever. I would see the king.

Nor. He just retired.

Wyatt. 'T is but a small affair;
 I'll come again.

Nor. Can I not aid you, sir?

Wyatt. I merely wished to see a prisoned rogue —
 One fellow Smeaton, caged for stealing geese,
 Or some such matter. Has your grace a pass?
 The careless knave had my last madrigal,
 To set for music. 'T is my only copy;
 And if he is hanged, my immortality
 Loses a hope. Now, Reynard, play the fool!

[*Aside.*]

Nor. So, ho! my railer at hypocrisy,
How smooth we lie! (*Aside.*) Confound this gosling
thief!

The king has ordered — why, I cannot say —
That none, except the Council, shall have leave
To see the fellow.

Wyatt. Well, there is little lost.

Nor. O, much, much, much! I honor poesy;
And vow to succor your brave madrigal. —
I'll make especial business of this matter.

Wyatt. As deep as hell! (*Aside.*) Nay, trouble
not yourself;
Perchance the knave, among his prison griefs,
Has lost remembrance of my trifling song.

Nor. I will refresh him. 'T would amaze you, sir,
To know how much I reverence your art.
Each genuine poet, in each poem, forms
What neither he nor any other man,
Though he were equal in capacity,
Can shape again. The moods of poets' minds
Are, like the colors of chameleons,
Seen in the same particulars but once.
That combination of your shifting thoughts,
Which you have pictured in a madrigal,
Should make its due impression on our time.
I would not see your chaplet lose a leaf: —
Believe me, 't is a duty.

Wyatt. Shrewd dissembler,
With what a relish he pursues intrigues! [*Aside.*]
I thank your grace, in poesy's sweet name,
For this regard. Pray, can you tell me, sir,
Upon what charge my friend, Sir Henry Norris,
Will be arraigned?

Nor. On many many, sir.

The gravest, I believe, is robbing goose-ponds :—
He is involved with Smeaton.

Wyatt. Ah! indeed?

'Tis an odd charge! But I observe of late
How our good king takes the most famous geese,
This realm produces, 'neath his royal wing.

Adieu! your grace. [*Going.*]

Nor. Ho! scion of the muse!

I have a little scandal for your ear.

Wyatt. For mine, your grace? [*Returns.*]

Nor. Yes; 'tis a trifling thing, —

No greater in my eyes than songs in yours.

They say you read too many madrigals

In the attentive hearing of the queen.

Look to it, sir: his majesty is loth

His royal consort should give up her time

To so much poetry.

Wyatt. The sneering wretch!

I dare not brave him, for her highness' sake. [*Aside.*]

An idle rumor.

Nor. But it put your songs

In fearful jeopardy. The king nigh swore

To hang all future poems by the neck,

In your good person. He hates poesy.

The royal opposition on this point

Is stranger than the patronage of geese.

Wyatt. 'Sblood! I must burst, if I remain to hear
This cynic's gibes. (*Aside.*) Farewell! once more.

Nor. Remember,

No private readings to her majesty

Of the lost madrigal, when I restore it.

Wyatt. God shield the queen! for human aid is
vain. [*Aside.*] [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE V.

The Queen's Apartments in the Palace. A table spread. QUEEN ANNE, Maids, and Attendants, at the back of the scene.

Queen Anne. (*Advancing.*) Ah, me! what fearful
difference 'tis, to view
The self-same object unattained, and won!
For memories are the shadows of our hopes,
That ever lengthen as our day declines,
Till death's oblivion wraps them both in night.
When, from the lowly vale of common life,
Ambition points us to the sunny tops
Of the great hills of power, whose even sides,
Ascending smoothly through the golden haze,
Appear like stepping-stones from earth to heaven —
Ah! who could tell the peril of the road
That must be braved to reach their eminence?
What stony paths — what thorny barriers —
What humble crawling under threatening rocks —
What dizzy ledges, wooing nerveless fear
To swift forgetfulness — what hungry chasms,
That picture death within their roaring jaws,
And stagger reason on his solid throne —
Must be o'erpassed, ere on the toppling heights,
Amidst the region of perpetual storms,
We stand alone in chill supremacy!

(*Enter THOMAS WYATT.*)

Quick, Wyatt, quick! have my poor friends a hope?

Wyatt. But in the mercy of your enemies,
Or the most tardy justice of the king.

Queen A. Is this your zeal? O, apathetic man!
Can you see Rochford, noble, loyal Rochford —
Your friend, your playmate — one who ever bore
His gathering honors with such humbleness
That my hot pride has chid him — can you see
George Boleyn pining in a dreary cell,
While May's warm sunshine fills the universe?
Bethink you, Wyatt, of those faithful men,
Weston, and Brereton, and Henry Norris,
Whose days, like fetters, gall their manly souls,
In the cramped limits of a prison-house,
While you are slack to free them!

Wyatt. Gracious Heaven! —

Queen A. Deeds would be better, sir, than windy
oaths.

Lend me your manhood for a little day,
And, by my soul, I'll breach their prison doors,
Or light a blaze in England that shall scare
These skulking enemies of theirs and mine
Into a frenzy! Heaven can testify
How much it grieves me that their doleful fate
Seems woven with the tissue of my own!
For, were it not, their wrongs would muster friends,
And Heaven would launch an angry squadron down
To succor virtue such as they possess.
But I — O, God! I stand here all alone,
Shunned by mankind, and tossed by careless chance
To glut the appetite of enmity —
A helpless woman, full of wrongs and grief,
With nothing left me but the conscious power
By which the guiltless bear their martyrdom!

Wyatt. O, woful day!

Queen A. Have you but vain regrets?

Wyatt. Hear me, your highness.

Queen A. Words, and nothing more!

Has innocence no power? has justice fled
The side of right? or is it mere romance,
To prate with poets of a heavenly might
That nerves the weakness of a righteous cause?
Fie! dreamer, fie!

Wyatt. I ask you not to laud
My wakeful labor, day and night bestowed,
Without a thought of safety for myself,
Upon this hopeless matter; all I ask
Is thankless justice for a pure intent.
I grant my efforts were of no avail —
I grant some other and more skilful hand
Might have achieved a work beyond my power;
But yet, believe, all intellectual strength,
All hidden cunning, and all bold resource,
That nature gave me, were employed in vain
Ere I despaired.

Queen A. What was this mighty work?
Had you the labor of a Hercules,
That you so groan? Upon my life, I think
This wondrous malady will heal itself
Without your aid. — Shake not your solemn head.
The king still loves me: — I have faith in love.

Wyatt. Ha! have you faith? then see my very
heart.

My memory reaches not that early day
When I first loved you. Since remembrance threw
The bright reflections of my childish thoughts
Into the gloom of manhood's troubled hours,

There is not a gleam, howe'er remote and dim,
But owes its splendor to my love for you ;
There is not a hope —

Queen A. Hold, traitor, on your life !
Are you conspiring with my subtle foes ?
My maids observe us. — Would you ruin me ?
Is my last friend corrupted ? Dare you, sir,
Prattle this nonsense to your queen ? O, base !
Thus to presume on my defencelessness ;
Implying frailty which, a week ago,
You had better died than barely hinted at !

Wyatt. You thought me lukewarm.

Queen A. No ; I only meant
To whet the edge of blunted zeal. [*Noise without*]

Wyatt. How now ?
Prophetic fear !

(*Enter Duke of NORFOLK, Duke of SUFFOLK, and other Lords of
the Council, with Sir WILLIAM KINGSTON and GUARD.*)

Queen A. Good welcome, gentlemen !
Bear you a message from his majesty ?

[*A long pause.*]

What, not a word ?

Suffolk. We do.

Queen A. Do what, your grace ?

Suf. Bear you a message from the king.

Queen A. Ha ! ha ! [*Laughing.*]

Your answer lagged so far behind my query,
As quite to rupture sense.

Norfolk. Come, Suffolk, come ;
No faltering now ! [*Apart to SUFFOLK.*]

Suf. The king has ordered us
To see the person of her majesty
Placed in your hands, Sir William, until he

Makes such disposeure of her as may suit
His further pleasure.

Queen A. Back, ye urgent tears ;
I'll never pay your tribute to my foes ! [*Aside.*]
If 't is the pleasure of his majesty
To change my present lodgings for the Tower,
Like a true subject, I obey.

Wyatt. Brave, brave !
Nature created thee from royal clay ! [*Aside.*]

Kingston. I will await your highness' preparation

Queen A. I need none, sir.

Nor. Away, away, Sir William !

Queen A. Well said, good uncle.

[*Exeunt all but WYATT.*]

Wyatt. Now, were I a beast,
And Norfolk but another, I would tear
The bitter heart out of his spiteful breast !
But as a man — O, as a gentleman,
A Christian gentleman — I thank his grace
That he allows my littleness to crawl
'Neath God's own light, and fret my weary soul
With gazing on his huge monstrosity !
What next? what next? — Divorce ! And then,
poor queen,
She'll sit her down, like injured Katharine,
And feed her heart with sorrow, till the bane
Of cankering grief has poisoned every spring
That pulses life along her shattered frame ;
And then she'll lapse, by scarce perceived degrees,
Into her grave ; and then — why, then the world
Will roar and scramble o'er her resting-place,
And play the same stale antics which she saw,
And dash its brimming tides of ruddy life

Across her tomb, without a care for her. —
 O, should we laugh or weep at human fate?
 There goes to shame the only mortal thing
 I ever loved, with all a poet's love,
 And I ask that, in mockery of myself! [*Weeps.*]
[*Scene closes.*]

SCENE VI.

Before the Gate of the Tower. Enter QUEEN ANNE, in custody of Sir WILLIAM KINGSTON and GUARD, Duke of NORFOLK, Duke of SUFFOLK, and Lords of the Council.

Queen Anne. Pause here a moment.

Norfolk. Tut, tut! move along!

Queen A. Did you not, sir, insult your queen
 enough,

Before the Council, with unmanly taunts
 And slanders, rivalled in their gross excess
 But by the words in which you uttered them,
 Without disgracing thus your victory?

Nor. It ill beseems my noted chastity
 To hold discourse with ladies of your stamp
 Stop, if you list; I'd rather grant your wish
 Than parley with you.

Queen A. Aid me, gracious Lord,
 To bear unmurmuring! (*Aside.*) Listen, gentlemen.
 'Tis the last time, perchance, that I may stand
 Beneath the open blessings of the sky;
 And here, before the majesty of heaven,
 Gazing unshaken in the face of God,
 I solemnly avow these horrid crimes,
 With which my enemies have vested me,

To be most foul and baseless calumnies ; —
Or God forsake me in my strictest need !

Nor. What monstrous perjury ! I dare not hear
This woman's self-damnation. [*Going.*]

Suffolk. Come, my lords ;
Our part is done. [*Exit with NORFOLK and the Lords.*]

Queen A. Their scorn foreshows my doom :
I am convicted ere the court be met.

Think you I shall have justice ?
Kingston. Without doubt :

The poorest subject of the king has that.

Queen A. Ha ! ha ! poor man ! (*Laughing.*) Loyal
credulity !

O, yes, at last — in heaven. Where go I, sir ? —
Into a dungeon ?

Kings. No, your majesty ;
You lie in the state chambers.

Queen A. In which rooms ?

Kings. Where you were lodged on Coronation-
Day.

Queen A. This is too cruel !

Kings. Is splendor cruelty ?

Queen A. O, you are gracious ! They are far too
good

For such a wretch — so abject, so forlorn,
A prisoned felon ; — were it not that they
Will taunt my memory with a pleasant dream,
That there once practised on my facile hopes,
While reason slept. Alas, alas, for me !
Time, like a mocking showman, turns the picture,
To teach on what coarse stuff my fancy wrought.

Kings. Time may relent, and make all well ere long.
Your slight constraint shall not seem bondage to you.

Queen A. It matters not, if we are prisoners,
Whether our walls be marked by feet or miles :
I may be cramped and tethered in my will,
While my clay roams the starry universe ; —
What but free will is freedom ?

Kings. Shall we enter ?

Queen A. Your pardon, sir, if I have wearied you
With my complaints. But you have heard to-day
Things that might break a prouder heart than mine.
I do confess, my slanderers have wrought
More on my spirits than I once believed
Mere malice could. — Was it not vile ?

Kings. Poor queen, poor queen ! (*Aside.*) I cannot judge, your highness.

Queen A. I should not ask you to o'erstep discretion.

Where is the king ?

Kings. At Whitehall, I believe.

Queen A. Will you convey his majesty a note ?

Kings. I cannot.

Queen A. Cannot ! but a message, then ?
Tell him —

Kings. Indeed, I dare not.

Queen A. Then, good sir,
Pray bear a letter to the Chancellor.

Kings. I am prohibited.

Queen A. Are you a tool ?

Kings. Ay, but a feeling one.

Queen A. Forgive me, pray !
Sir, you are kind, most kind ! My hasty spleen
Must be abated to my present state.
Come, let us in. I may be dull, perchance ;
But, as I live, I cannot realize

That he, the father of my little child,
Could so far banish all regard for me
As to afflict me with deliberate wrong.
No, no ; I have been schooled to fearful thoughts,
But this, this cannot enter Come, set on !

[Exeunt into the Tower.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Room in Whitehall Palace.* KING HENRY and
JANE SEYMOUR.

Jane Seymour. NAY, my sweet Henry, shrink not
for a thought.

Wisdom is Janus-faced, and boldly looks
Not only at dead acts of bygone times,
But, in the very front of coming years,
Stands forth, a prophet, to foretell events.
Why should we dream upon the harmless past,
If not to shape the future of our lives
By its dear-purchased knowledge ?

King Henry. True enough.

Jane S. See then what follows. Should Queen
Anne die,

And no male issue bless your majesty,
Elizabeth, your so-called daughter, reigns. —
So-called, I say ; for where is your warrant
To deem her truer than her faithless dam ?

King H. Right, by my soul ! I'll disinherit her ;
My Parliament shall set her claim aside :
We'll have no bastards on our English throne,
To mock our justice.

Jane S. Ah ! the Parliament !
But what it does, it can undo again.

King H. Ay, ay ; 't were safer to divorce the
queen,

And so, as in our daughter Mary's case,
Cut off Elizabeth.

Jane S. 'T will trouble you,
For many a weary day, if the bold queen
Should stand up stiffly for her royal rights,
Nor yield to you.

King H. Nor yield? — 'ods wounds! she shall!
I'll have each tittle of my liberty,
Ere we break quits. Why, it were monstrous, base,
To offer our good subjects her vile sprout
By way of queen! 'T was rumored, at her birth,
That Bess was not my own.

(*Enter Duke of NORFOLK.*)

In good time, Norfolk —
How proceeds our cause?

Norfolk. Slowly, my liege.

King H. Push on, push on!

Nor. Ha, ha! my royal hound,
Do you scent blood at last? (*Aside.*) Mark Smeaton
now

Will swear to anything beneath the moon;
But all the others are intractable.
When of their common guilt we question them,
Rochford but gives a melancholy smile;
Weston stares at us with his great bright eyes,
As if he doubted of our sanity;
Brereton, scowling, fumbles for his sword;
And Henry Norris has gone virtue-mad:
He raves and swears about his innocence,
And vows he never will accuse the queen,
Whom in his conscience he believes most pure.

King H. Hang him up, hang him up, then!

Nor.

Wonderful!

He grows blood-thirsty. 'T was but yesterday
 He saved a fly from drowning, and so talked,
 And moralized so sweetly on this theme,
 As nigh re-drowned the insect in his tears. [*Aside.*]
 Yes; but before he hangs, could we succeed
 In throwing him, or one of gentle blood,
 Into the balance 'gainst her majesty,
 'T would show her light as air.

Jane S.

You doubt her guilt?

Nor. Not I, my lady; but opinion weighs
 No atom in the jealous scales of law.

King H. We'll suit the triers to the evidence.

She is false, without debate; then wherefore, sir,
 Should we be nice about the means we use?
 A band of angels, sworn upon our side,
 Could not increase her guilt.

Nor.

Doubtless, my liege;

But 't would convict her to the common mind:
 For, as we stand, this base-born, wavering groom
 Is our sole witness; and we lose respect
 By such a tottering basis to our cause.
 The people —

King H. Furies seize them, root and branch

Here comes that bugbear of a timid court,
 That noisy nothing, to assail our ears!
 Sir, I more reverence a flock of geese —
 Being a Roman in that one idea —
 Than all the banded folly of the earth.
 Is there more wisdom in a million fools
 Than one alone? Shall folly gain respect
 By bare addition?

Jane S.

Please your majesty,

His grace but cares for your committed honor
In this regard.

King H. I know his loyalty :
But shall a monarch answer to a mob
For private deeds ? Lord, save their silliness !
'T is scarce a twelvemonth since they howled at us,
“ We 'll have no Nanny Boleyn for our queen ! ”
And now they saint her ! Norfolk, look at them
As on a crowd of human weathercocks,
That ever point right in the teeth of power,
Howe'er it veer. Join me anon, your grace ;
I fain would hit upon some speedy scheme
That may annul my marriage with the queen.
Sweetheart, come walk.

Nor. I will attend your highness.

[*Exeunt KING HENRY and JANE SEYMOUR.*]

So all this pother, all this hanging men,
Divorcing wives, and chopping off of heads,
Is for mere happiness — an endless chase !
As if a man, so stuffed with memories
Of the dark path that led him to his hopes,
Could taste enjoyment if he reached his wish !
Good Lord, a king may be a royal fool !
This outdoes alchemy. — I 'd rather fight
'Gainst nature for the boon of endless life,
And hope to turn God's purpose upside down —
Chase the horizon till I found the spot
Where heaven meets earth, and, with that blissful
kiss,
Rains joy celestial on the duller land —
Run down the rainbow to the golden spring
Of its bright arch — believe a poet's dream —
Do any shallow thing, but set sound wits

Upon a chase for phantom happiness.

Ha, ha! king motley! Give me power, power,
power! [Exit.]

SCENE II.

The State Apartments in the Tower. QUEEN ANNE alone.

Queen Anne. Ye rugged walls, how often have ye
heard

The weary moans of prisoned innocence,
By bondage plundered of its cheerful spirit,
Broken in will, bankrupt in energy;
And when at last thought has so preyed on thought
As to debase the judgment's faculty,
Robbed of that God-sustaining power of right
Which lifts the soul above calamity!
O woe! O woe! shall I become at length
A mental wreck, a chaos of despair,
With scarcely strength in my enervate mind
To see the conscience-drawn dividing line
That marks the boundary between right and wrong?
Alas! I fear it; for I cannot tell
What high prerogative, that once was mine,
I would not barter for mere liberty.

(*Enter, behind, LADY BOLEYN and MRS. COSYNS.*)

Lady Boleyn. Still lost in thoughts.

Mrs. Cosyns. I'll warrant them not good.

Lady B. Then stand aside. If she should utter
aught,

Above a whisper, we can catch its sense.

Mrs. C. Then to his grace, and so unto the king.
 Good luck ! my lady, it is merry, this,
 To be familiar with their majesties —
 To be the very spirit of the words
 That go between them.

Lady B. Hush ! the queen begins.

Queen A. This awful pause — this quivering of the
 beam
 That balances my hesitating fate —
 This watchful agony of rigid sense,
 Bending all faculties in one fixed stare,
 That hangs upon the dial of events,
 And counts the passing moments, without power
 To urge or slacken their relentless course —
 Would make a faith in settled destiny
 Far preferable to chance. Then stolid force
 Might brazen out the frowns of hopeless fate,
 And learn to suffer what it could not change.
 But, O, the thought that we, the rulers born
 Of time and fortune and opposed events,
 Can be so meshed in outward circumstance
 As to lose influence o'er our very lives,
 Gives to adversity its bitterest pangs,
 And takes from will its living soul of hope !

Lady B. That 's rare philosophy, I question not,
 But it is bad religion.

Mrs. C. Terrible !

Queen A. Avenging Heaven, and I deserve it all !

Lady B. That 's broad confession.

Mrs. C. Shameless ! How she dared
 The wrath of Heaven, in her stout impudence !

Queen A. Yes, I deserve it ; but 't is double pain,
 To feel the chastisements of angry Heaven

Meted to me in seeming punishment
For that whereof I am guiltless.

Lady B.

Heard you that?

Mrs. C. Nay, I'm a little deaf.

Queen A.

O Wolsey, Wolsey!

I, whose ambitious footstep thrust aside
Your tottering age — I, who with crafty toil
Climbed to the seat of patient Katharine —
Feel every pang with which I tortured you!
My power is gone; another cunning maid
Plays o'er my part of heartless treachery.
O More and Fisher — blood, blood! — save my
wits! —

If fate like theirs should close my history,
To make Heaven's doom complete! Why shrink at
that?

For 't is but one, among a thousand ways,
Of stepping from the world. And what were life,
Declining by degrees of misery
To chill oblivion? — Queen of yesterday —
The rabble's pity — an old doting crone,
That some fool's grandsire, "Marry, knew as
queen!"

Rattling her toothless jaws in silly prate
About herself — "And how they crowned her once,
With a great crown all full of shining stones;
And what brave velvet farthingales she wore;
And how she reigned; and, well-a-day, how fell!"
Pah! it sets death a-laughing. Gracious Heaven,
But grant my sinfulness one little prayer —
'T is all I ask — drive on the lagging days,
And bring this matter to its fated end;

For there are seeds of madness in my grief
That must o'ertop my reason !

(LADY BOLEYN and MRS. COSYNS advance.)

Mrs. C. Please you, lady.

[To QUEEN ANNE.]

Lady B. Your majesty.

Mrs. C. She hears us not.

Queen A. Well, well !

But Rochford, ay, and all my noble friends,
Crowded together in a general doom ;
As if my enemies had sworn to leave
No vestige of me. Bitter, bitter hate !
My father next —

Mrs. C. Yes, please you, he is well.

Queen A. Who spoke ?

Mrs. C. Your servant.

Queen A. Service without love.

Lady B. You wrong her much.

Queen A. You too, false kinswoman ?

Lady B. Marry, and if your highness had not
held

Such high opinion of familiar friends,
You'd ne'er been here. 'T is a good worldly rule,
As treachery harms more than enmity,
To tell no tales but what we tell our foes.

Queen A. Deep in the world, but shallow in the
heart.

What brings you here ?

Lady B. The welfare of yourself,
And the deliverance of your noble brother,
With all his prisoned friends.

The king intends.— Why, glimmering hopes seem
born

From the sheer blackness of surrounding things,
Like little stars at midnight. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. C. Bless my soul,

Her highness smiles !

Queen A. Why not ?

Lady B. Be still, you fool !

Her subtle mind is twisting in a net

Of its own flimsy thoughts. [*Apart to MRS. COSYNS.*]

Mrs. C. I am not your wench !

What the king orders me, I will perform,

Though all the Lady Boleyns in the land

Cry " Fool, and fool ! " [*Apart to LADY BOLEYN.*]

If it would please your highness,

Now, while this candid mood possesses you,

To make confession to us of the crimes

For which you suffer ; and so spare the king —

Lady B. The loose-tongued idiot ! [*Aside.*]

Queen A. Out ! you heartless wretch !

Are you a woman ? Have you borne a child ?

And would you snatch it from your wolfish breast,

To stamp the bastard on its baby brow ?

Mrs. C. I have no child.

Queen A. Heaven keep you barren, then,

You shameless slanderer of your mother's sex !

Dare you to traffic for my chastity —

The natural patent of all womanhood —

That more becomes my naked innocence

Than the great ring of jewelled royalty ?

O ! had I lost it, I would barter crown,

And queenly dignity — yea, life itself —

To wear it but one hour of agony,

Then hand it spotless to posterity.

Fie ! you are rank, if you have never felt

Your sex's instinct !

Mrs. C. Lady, let us go :

Her majesty so storms —

Lady B. Yes, slink away,

You wretched marplot ! [*Apart to MRS. COSYNS.*]

Queen A. Get to your prayers — go !

Send to your heart each drop of modest blood,

That ever mustered in your virgin cheeks,

At wanton thoughts, to wash away this shame !

Mrs. C. Come, come ; she'll rail again.

[*Exit with LADY BOLEYN.*]

Queen A. This killing doubt !

What can it mean ? — where am I ? — is it real ?

For I have read how some have seemingly

Passed ages in a dream ; have died and risen ;

Have wandered on through shadows limitless,

And passed the radiant gates of Paradise,

To dwell for days unnumbered with the Saints ;

Have woke at last, and found the blazing sun,

That shaped the fancies of their lengthened vision,

Just peeping from the east. Is life a dream ?

Is time a mere illusion of the mind ?

And shall we waken from our restless sleep,

To see the glory-beaming face of God

Smile in our eyes a summons to that life

Where all is real ? What to my endless soul

Is this flat pageantry of days and years ?

Events, not hours, are measurers of our lives,

And I in deeds have far outlived my term ;

While sorrows, heavier than three-score and ten

May often totter under, bow my head,

That only needs the hoary badge of time
 To make old age complete. Why should I stand
 And dally thus with my kind landlord, Death,
 Upon the threshold of his narrow house,
 While all without is dark and shelterless,
 And all so bright within? Why fear to leave
 The fickle favors that mankind bestow,
 For the sure bounties of Omnipotence?
 O God, I know not! but my startled heart
 Rises in loud rebellion at the hint
 Of that chill power whose torpid tyranny
 Shall still its play forever. Love, fame, power —
 Ay, all, all, everything, the uttermost! —
 Have vanished in the shadow of my wrongs;
 And yet I gripe life's load of misery,
 As if there were a hope beyond my loss! [Exit.]

SCENE III.

The Gate of the Tower, surrounded by a crowd of Citizens, endeavoring to enter, who are kept back by a guard of men-at-arms. Enter, from the Tower, FIRST CITIZEN.

Citizens. What news, what news?

First Citizen. What news can you expect?

Second Citizen. The queen's deliverance.

First C. Nonsense! where the king

Is chief accuser?

Third Citizen. Ay; but justice, sir.

First C. Speak not so loud; the lords might
 overhear,

And lose their loyalty.

Third C. What mean you, friend?

First C. Her highness is prejudged, and, save
in form,
Doomed ere her cause be heard.

Second C. Made she defence?

First C. O yes, most eloquent and strongly knit:
Beauty and truth came hand in hand together,
To breathe their essence in each modest word.—
But what avails an angel's purity
Where devils judge? 'T is a bare legal form,
This solemn meeting of her enemies,
Disguising hate in ermined justice' gown.

Second C. This is blunt talk.

First C.

But true.

Third C.

But dangerous,

To speak and hear.

First C. What are state trials now,
More than the whetting of the headsman's axe?
We English people have forgot the rights
Which God and nature give to every man:
Our common justice is a common drab —
A pliant doxy, openly deboshed —
That winks beneath her twisted blind at lords,
Doffs it for kings —

Citizens. Forbear, forbear!

First C.

Pshaw, sirs!

I am a careless, melancholy man,
Who would not change a notion for my life.
I sought this trial of her majesty
To escape myself for a brief interval;
But, as I live, it crowded in such thoughts
Upon my proper griefs, that I would rather
Be damned to wear the memory of a fiend,
Than witness such another.

Third C. Friends, away!
This man is vile, upon his own confession.

Lord, sirs, what words were these!

First C. Slink, cowards, slink!
Get to your slavish homes! Brush up your caps!
Practise your loyal lungs! Make ready all
To startle Heaven, when good Queen Anne dies,
With "God preserve Queen Jane!"

Third C. This man is mad.

Second C. Nay, sirs, but simple.

First C. O! that all of you,
Two-legged crawlers to ignoble graves,
Were half so mad as I! [Exit.]

Third C. Poor soul, poor soul!
Where is his keeper? He may come to harm.

Second C. Let us take the fool's advice, and hurry
home;
For there's no chance of entrance to the Tower.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.

The Great Hall of the Tower, arranged for the Queen's trial. On one side are seated Dukes of NORFOLK, SUFFOLK, and RICHMOND, Marquis of EXETER, Earl of ARUNDEL, and other Peers, as Lords Triers, with Officers, &c.; on the other, QUEEN ANNE, in the custody of Sir WILLIAM KINGSTON, Ladies, Attendants, Guards, &c.

Norfolk. Are we agreed? [To the Lords.]

Suffolk. Here is our verdict, sir.
[Hands a paper.]

(RICHMOND and SUFFOLK talk apart.)

Richmond. I hope, your grace, I have damned my
soul enough

To please the most fastidious father.

Suf. Stuff!

Rich. Yes, "stuff!" substantial, downright
villany,

That I shall bear upon my aching heart
Till death unload it.

Suf. Come, be cheerful, sir.

It ill becomes heroic minds to shrink
From the first blood of triumph. You are young
And dainty-minded; time will strengthen you.

Rich. Courage but adds deformity to crime.
A wicked heart, though placid as a lake,
Girt and controlled by rigid barriers,
Can but reflect each blessing of sweet heaven,
And every bordering virtue of our earth,
All topsy-turvy. I am hardened, sir;
If not by years, at least by sinfulness,
That wrinkled register of ill-spent days,
Who scars his moments on the erring heart,
While yet the brow is smooth!

Suf. The saints look down!

This pretty sermon must have washed you clean.
Hist! hear the sentence.

Nor. Lady Anne Boleyn,
Marchioness of Pembroke, sometime England's
queen —

Though most unworthily, as the strict course
Of equal justice has so clearly proved —

Arise. (*The QUEEN rises.*) Lay off your crown and
vestured marks

Of royal dignity, to hear from me
The solemn finding of this high tribunal.

(*QUEEN ANNE puts off her crown and robe of state.*)

Queen Anne. Your grace's first commands, though
harshly meant,
Are merciful indeed.

Nor. Be silent, madam !
Upon each several charge, whereon you stand
Indicted by the law, we do pronounce
Your guilt most clear ; and therefore do condemn you,
At such time as his majesty may name,
To suffer death by burning at the stake,
Or by beheading, as may please the king. —
God give you patience to endure your doom !

Queen A. I doubt it not. O Father, O Creator,
Who art the way, the life, the truth, Thou know'st
If I deserve this death !

Rich. O ! base, base, base !
This pardons Herod in the eye of Heaven. [*Aside.*]

Nor. Marchioness of Pembroke, have you aught
to say
Touching the judgment of this court ?

Queen A. My lords,
I will not say your sentence is unjust —
Presuming that my reasons can prevail
Against your firm convictions ; — I would rather
Believe that you have reasons for your acts,
Of ample power to vindicate your fames ;
But, then, they must be other than the court
Has heard produced : for by the evidence
I have been cleared, to all unbiassed minds,
Of each offence 'gainst which that proof was brought.

I have been ever to his majesty
 A faithful wife : O ! could I say as truly
 That I have shown him the humility
 His goodness, and the honor he conferred,
 Deserved from me ! I have, I do confess,
 Had jealous fancies and suspicious thoughts —
 In which, perchance, I wronged him — that had I
 Been more discreet and anxious to conceal,
 I had been more the queen, but less the wife.
 God is my witness, that in no way else
 Have I e'er sinned against him.
 Think not, my lords, I say this to prolong
 My heavy life ; for God has fortified
 My trust in Him, and taught me how to die.
 Think me not so bewildered in my mind,
 As not to lay my chastity to heart,
 Now in my last extremity ; for I
 Have held its honor far above my crown,
 And have maintained no queenly dignity
 More pure from vulgar stain. I know my words
 Can naught avail me, save to justify
 My chastity, so perilled by your doom.
 As for my brother, and those constant friends
 With me unjustly sentenced, I would die
 A thousand deaths to save their guiltless lives :
 But since it has so pleased his majesty,
 I will accompany them, most willingly,
 Through death to heaven, through pain to endless
 peace.

I have said all.

Nor. Remove the prisoner.

(*QUEEN ANNE bows to the Court, and is led off by Sir WILLIAM KINGSTON. Then exeunt all but the Lords Triers.*)

Rich. We are damned forever!

Nor. Poh, poh! saved, I think.

While she held power heads flew like tennis-balls.

Arundel. Why did she touch so lightly on the king?

Exeter. 'T was for a cause no deeper than the
heart, —

She loves him yet.

Arund. The sentimental fool!

Rich. Have you no grosser phrases? “Fool,”
forsooth!

There 's the last blow to greatness! — Arundel
Claims her as kindred!

Nor. Gentlemen, away!

Our sun of power is burning in mid air;

We waste the daylight. Come, let us seek the king.

Hug every Seymour that you chance to meet!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

The State Apartments in the Tower. QUEEN ANNE alone.

Queen Anne There 's not a pang remains; there 's
not a wound,

That hate can give, at which my nerveless heart
Would shrink appalled The storm of life has blown,

And rent my prospect into countless shreds,

Chaotic, undistinguished, featureless —

Without a point, before me or behind,

On which a once familiar eye may rest —

And all is calm again. Calm, very calm, —

An utter desolation fixed and grim,

And barren as the sand. No queen, no wife —

Ebb'd to the lowest. O Elizabeth,
 My helpless child, whose rights were all in me,
 How could a mother blast her memory,
 Even in thy eyes, by yielding to her foes
 Thy royal heritage? Thou 'lt hate me, love;
 Thou 'lt say thy mother wronged thee, eking out
 Her worthless days with treasures stolen from thee;
 Unweeting how thy uncle and my friends
 Owed life to thee. Why must I wander down
 All coming time to pick new sorrows out? —

(*A bell tolls. QUEEN ANNE rushes to the door.*)

Whose knell is that?

Sentinel. (*Without.*) Lord Rochford's.

Queen A.

Duped, duped, duped!

O God! my brother! — Is there such a one
 As an avenging God to look on this,
 And not launch fire like rain? O! shameless men! —
 Men with God's raiment on their placid limbs —
 Who almost swore his life should be preserved,
 If I opposed not this divorce. O nature! —
 Thou who dost send the harmless race of flowers,
 And dews, and sunshine, and all gracious things —
 What creatures hast thou sent to people earth,
 And blot thy fair creation? Cut them down!
 Or make this globe a dusty wilderness,
 Fit for their habitation! Man, O man!
 Thou art the only thing in nature's scheme
 That seems disjointed from the harmony, —
 The latest thought and worst!

(*Enter MARY WYATT.*)

Mary Wyatt

Your majesty —

Queen A. I prithee mock me not. I am no queen,
Nor wife, nor maid — I know not what I am !

Mary W. What has disturbed you ?

Queen A. Did you hear that bell ?

Mary W. Pray, pray forgive me ! [*Kneels, weeping.*]

Queen A. Nay, I'll kneel to you,
If I have vexed you. [*A distant shot is heard.*]

Rochford ! [*Another shot.*]

Norris ! [*Another shot.*]

Weston ! [*Another shot.*]

And Brereton ! Why stop your cannon ? Shoot ! —
Shoot on, till half the world shall suffer death ;
For you have slain the noblest part ! No, no ;
The next shall be my own !

Mary W. Alas ! alas ! [*Weeping.*]

Queen A. Why weep you, girl ? My brother was
in heaven,
Ere you could hear the noisy cannon-shot
Tell his departure.

Mary W. Would your highness fly,
If I could ope these hideous prison-doors ?

Queen A. Not for the world.

Mary W. My brother has a plan
To raise the common people in revolt —

Queen A. Hold, if you'd live ! I yet am so much
queen

As to protect my realm from traitor's arts.
How dare you plot these treasonable designs
Against the safety of his majesty ?
Name it again, and, as I live, the king
Shall know your thoughts !

Mary W. 'T was but our love for you —

Queen A. How! love for me, and plotting 'gainst
the king!

Mary W. Strange, very strange! [*Aside.*]

(*Enter Sir WILLIAM KINGSTON and Guard.*)

Queen A. My time has come, Sir William?
Kingston. It has, my lady.

Queen A. You delayed my death:
I should have died some hours ago. 'Tis cruel
To dally with my life.

Kings. 'T was not my fault.
The Council feared a rising of the commons,
And therefore changed the hour.

Queen A. Ha! ha! how weak! [*Laughing.*]
Who cares about my death? Is Smeaton dead?

Kings. He is.

Queen A. And made he no amends to me?
Did he not own his monstrous perjuries?

Kings. Not that I heard.

Queen A. The impious, heartless wretch!
To dare o'erleap the doubtful gulf of death,
With such a fearful load!

Mary W. His death was just,
Even had he done no wrong, — the inborn felon!

Queen A. Nay, Mary, chide no more. Alas! poor
Mark,
I fear thy soul is suffering for thy tongue.

Can I not see my daughter?

Kings. 'T is forbidden.

Queen A. Well, I suppose the human frame can
bear

More than I suffer — very little more!

Kings. My lady. [*Bell tolls.*]

Queen A. That speaks plainer, sir. I am ready
I hope 't will be but death, not butchery.

Kings. The pain is short.

Queen A. They call the headsman skilled ;
And I — ha ! ha ! — see, good Sir William, see —

[*Laughing.*]

I have a little neck !

[*Clasps her neck.*]

Kings.

Why, is she mad ?

I in my time I have seen full many die,

But ne'er before saw one who laughed outright

At the mere thought of death.

[*Aside.*]

(*Bell tolls.*)

Queen A.

Come, Mary, come :

We keep death waiting.

Mary W. Heaven preserve her mind ! [*Aside.*]

Queen A. Set on, Sir William ! You shall see, ere
long,

How, like a bride, I 'll meet this ugly death,

And make a triumph of my funeral !

Pray tell his majesty, in my behalf,

How much I thank him for his many favors.

He from a lady made me marchioness ;

And from a marchioness he raised me up

To the full top of earthly power, a queen :

And last, his graces overrunning life,

He crowns my innocence with martyrdom.

My name is set above the reach of time,

A mark for men to carp and wonder at ;

And some hereafter will believe me false,

Some think me true ; bear witness, sir,

That with my latest breath I still declare

My perfect purity. (*Bell tolls.*) Set on, set on !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

The Tower Green At the back of the stage is a scaffold, hung with black, on which are the block, Headsman, Attendants, Guard, etc. The citizens gradually assemble in front of the scaffold. A bell tolls at long intervals.

First Citizen. I'll watch all day, but what I'll see her die. —

Let them change hours, I care not. Come along.

Second Citizen. Here's a good stand.

Third Citizen. Yes; if 't is good to stand,
And see our poor queen mangled.

First C. "Poor queen," sooth!

Second C. You are a scholar, neighbor Marma-
duke;

I pray you, was there e'er a queen before
Who graced a scaffold?

Third C. Ne'er before in England
Did monarch dare so try his people's patience.

First C. We are in luck.

Third C. Fie! fie! you bloody knave!

First C. Marry, and if a king cannot behead
His own liege wife, whom can he?

Third C. Monstrous dolt!

First C. What were the good of treason, then,
if we

Could have no executions? — Mistress Maud, —
Hey, hey! you brought the children?

[To a woman.]

Woman. Yes, indeed;

They cannot see a queen die every day.

Third C. You tiger-hearted woman, do you
love

The sight of blood ?

Woman. Nay ; the example, sir.

Third C. Lord, Lord ! who ever caught a woman
yet

Without pretexts in thousands !

First C. 'T is a shame

To keep us honest people waiting so.

Citizens. (*Without.*) The queen ! the queen !

First C. Move nearer.

Citizens. Make way there !

Solemn music. Enter Duke of NORFOLK, Duke of SUFFOLK, and other Noblemen ; QUEEN ANNE in custody of Sir WILLIAM KINGSTON ; MARY WYATT, and other Maids of Honor ; Guards, Attendants, etc. They mount the scaffold. Then enter, below THOMAS WYATT.

Wyatt. One look, no more. O ! wondrous, wondrous fair !

Death has made treaty with thy loveliness,

To hide the horrors that invest his state.

These spiteful clouds of earth-born misery

But add a glory to thy going down.

Slander, disgrace, fraud, legal infamy,

Imprisonment, this hideous form of death,

Each gains a splendor from its touch of thee

That robs regret of tears. How bright, how calm !

There is a voiceless sermon in that face,

To cheer the lonely heart of martyrdom,

And make it court its fate. O, Anne, Anne !

The world may banish all regard for thee,

Mewing thy fame in frigid chronicles,

But every memory that haunts my mind
 Shall cluster round thee still. I'll hide thy name
 Under the coverture of even lines,
 I'll hint it darkly in familiar songs,
 I'll mix each melancholy thought of thee
 Through all my numbers: so that heedless men
 Shall hold my love for thee within their hearts,
 Not knowing of the treasure. 'T would be sin
 To keep so fair a flower from paradise, —
 That, in the very flush of earthly bloom,
 Felt mildew blown on every ruffian wind,
 And canker at the heart. Go, go, — farewell!
 The sun that seems departing, to our eyes,
 Is but arising on another land;
 Thy death to us is the short, painful birth
 That ushers in thy taintless soul to heaven. —
 Go, go! I would not raise a hand to keep thee here.

[Exit.]

Third C. Be silent! Hear her majesty.

Citizens.

Hush, hush!

Queen Anne. Good Christian people, I am come
 to die,

According to the judgment of the law;
 And therefore it would ill become me now,
 After my doom is past, to censure it.
 I am come hither to accuse no man,
 Nor to say aught upon the many things
 Whereof I am accused: for well I know
 That my defence doth not pertain to you,
 Nor from your favor could I hope for grace.
 I am come here to die, to yield myself
 To the king's will, with all humility.
 I pray God save him, and extend his reign;

For he has been a gracious prince to you :
 To me — I doubt not but his goodness went
 Beyond my slender merit. I but ask,
 Should you hereafter judge my luckless cause,
 The best of each man's judgment. Now, farewell,
 To you and to the world ! Forget me not,
 In the still places of your earnest prayers
 Attend me, maidens.

Mary Wyatt. O ! not yet, not yet ! [*Weeping.*]

Queen A. Well, I have played the waiting-maid
 before,

In happier hours. Alas ! poor head, thou 'lt roll
 In a brief time amid this scaffold's dust ;
 As thou in life didst not deserve a crown,
 So by thy doom is justice satisfied,
 And her great beam repoised.

[*Removing her collar and coifs.*]

And ye, my damsels,

Who whilst I lived did ever show yourselves
 So diligent in service, and are now
 To be here present in my latest hour
 Of mortal agony, — as in good times
 Ye were most trustworthy, even so in this,
 My miserable death, ye leave me not.
 As a poor recompense for your rich love,
 I pray you to take comfort for my loss —
 And yet forget me not. To the king's grace,
 And to the happier one whom you may serve
 In place of me, be faithful as to me.
 Learn from this scene, the triumph of my fate,
 To hold your honors far above your lives.
 When you are praying to the martyred Christ,
 Remember me, who, as my weakness could,

Faltered afar behind His shining steps,
And died for truth, forgiving all mankind.
The Lord have pity on my helpless soul!

[*Kneels at the block.*]

(*As the curtain falls, a peal of ordnance announces the death of*
QUEEN ANNE.)

LEONOR DE GUZMAN:

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

- DON PEDRO, *King of Castile and Leon.*
DON ENRIQUÉ, CONDÉ DE TRASTAMARA, *Eldest son to Doña Leonor.*
DON FADRIQUÉ, MASTER OF SANTIAGO, *Twin brother to Don Enrique.*
DON TELLO, *Another son to Doña Leonor.*
DON JUAN ALONSO DE ALBURQUERQUÉ, *Prime Minister to Don Pedro.*
DON JUAN NUÑEZ DE LARA, *Lord of Biscay : a presumptive heir to the crown.*
DON FERNANDO MANUEL DE VILLENA, *His nephew, brother to Doña Juana.*
ALONSO CORONEL, *Governor of Medina Sidonia.*
CAÑEDO, *His liegeman and friend.*
PRIEST, *Chaplain to Doña Leonor.*
AMBASSADOR, *From the rebel Don Juan Manuel.*
PAGE, *Attending on Don Pedro.*
DOÑA MARIA DE PORTUGAL, *Mother to Don Pedro.*
DOÑA LEONOR DE GUZMAN, *Mistress to King Alfonso.*
DOÑA JUANA MANUEL DE VILLENA, . *Sister to Don Fernando.*

Courtiers, Ladies, Knights, Soldiers, Citizens, Attendants, &c.

SCENE, Several parts of Castile.

TIME, A. D. 1350 and 1351.

LEONOR DE GUZMAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Medina Sidonia. Before the Gates of the Castle. Sentinels on duty. The morning drum is heard, and the ceremony of relieving guard passes; then enter, from the Castle, CORONEL and CAÑEDO. The Sentinels salute them.*

Coronel. THE saints relieve me from my governorship!

My honors hang about me like wide clothes
Upon a shrunken body; I scarce move
Without some awkward stumble, plainly showing
My great unfitness for my great command.
I'll never make a courtier. Look, Cañedo,
How do these silken slops become a frame
Worn gaunt in armor? Does this feathered cap
Droop o'er the ugly line my helmet fretted
Round my bald forehead? Can this chain and key
Cover my gashes? Or this slender staff
Bear the huge weight of my uncourtly limp
Through bows and cringes? Bah! I spat at fortune
When I forsook the wars.

Cañedo.

Despite thy "bah,"

One sees the wolf's teeth grinning plain enough
Through the sheep's fleece.

Cor. Ay, there 's the curse of it!
But yesterday I had a boon to ask, —
I vow I asked it in my smoothest phrase, —
When, to my horror, Doña Leonor
Laughed in my face, and said, in her mild way,
“Out with your dagger, Coronel! The act
Would fit the voice.”

Cañ. And thou?

Cor. And I! I ran —
Broke through her maidens, like a hurricane
Through the rose-gardens of Granada — ran
To find a mandolin, and pitch my voice
Down to its finest note. Pray, hear me now,
In the sharp treble of my lady's page:
“*Par Dieu,*” — they say that 's French, — “I've
found a band,
A pretty band of silk — *par Dieu!* I have;
And I have vowed to Mary and Saint James
To bind it on its ravishing abode,
Or die in treasuring it — *par Dieu!* I have!”
Which means, in simple speaking, I have found
A wench's garter, and would tie it on.
Fie! fie! it turns my stomach inside out,
To hear their lady-talk.

Cañ. Such blows on hand,
While we are rusting here without a rub!
Moors flying pell-mell — Don Alfonso's spears
Combing their horse-tails out upon the wind —
Gibraltar's garrison with all its eyes
Fixed upon Africa, as on a goal —

The plague afoot too — Heaven at work with man —
Why death must caper like a harlequin !

Cor. Ay, how I long to have my iron out !

Cañedo, just hold still, and be my Moor,
Until I break this stick across thy sconce.

[*Breaks his wand over CAÑEDO'S head.*]

Cañ. Thou dost not strike with the old force.

Cor. I fear it.

Did I not hurt thee ?

Cañ. Not a whit.

Cor. That 's sad !

Had I my great Toledo, thou shouldst dance.

Cañ. But had I mine ? —

Cor. What then ?

Cañ. I 'd dance thee to

Much the same music.

Cor. If thy sword agreed,

In length or temper, with that tongue of thine,

The Cid would shoulder over in his tomb,

To give thee room beside him.

Cañ. Hold thy prate,

Or I may choke thee with thy governor's chain !

Cor. Not till I 'd thumped thy mazzard with its
key.

Cañ. Saint Jago ! but I 'll teach thee —

Cor. All thou know'st,

And after dub me fool.

Cañ. Here 's sharper wit. [*Drawing.*]

Cor. It draws as sharp reply. [*Drawing.*]

Cañ. Now keep thy ward.

First Sentinel. Good gentlemen ! [*Advancing.*]

Second Sentinel. Keep back ! the blood they shed
I 'll catch in a tailor's thimble.

Cañ. Art thou ready ?

Cor. For what ?

Cañ. To have thy throat cut.

Cor. As thou art.

First S. Are they not brave ?

Second S. Ay, as twin lions, boy :
They live to wrangle ; they 'll ne'er die for it.

(CORONEL and CAÑEDO fight.)

Cor. Cañedo, hist ! look there. [*Drops his sword.*]

Cañ. Where ?

Cor. O'er the hill.

Cañ. I am no hawk. What seest thou ?

Cor. An armed band

Topping the hill — a mass of moving steel —
The fore-guard of an army, if I know
A bodkin from a sword. Ho ! ho ! Cañedo,
Throw up thy cap ! Gibraltar has been won,
And here comes King Alfonso with the spoils !
Turn out the guard, and saddle my dun horse ;
I 'll meet our sovereign on the way. Ho, there !
Shake out the yellow silk of old Castile !
Run to the outer wall, and make it blaze
With our bright hauberks and our lifted spears,
Until the very stones appear on fire,
While our bold trumpets ring in heaven's glad ear,
Its soldier has returned with victory !

[*Drums. Exit Guard.*]

Cañ. Hast thou the plague ?

Cor. Ever, when thou art near.

Thou ugly budget of mortality,

Throw up thy cap ! or, by the saints, I 'll make

Thy cap and thee a fixture in the air,
By hanging thee for treason!

Cañ.

Well, hurra!

[*Throwing up his cap.*]

Behold thy sign in heaven, — an empty cap,
As thine is always.

Cor.

Hum! thy hair-patch fills it
With anything but wit. Go take the news
Of yonder march — for I'm in desperate haste —
To Doña Leonor.

Cañ.

I see thy drift:

Thou wouldst evade thy duties, governor.
O, fie! do courtesy by deputy?

Cor. Now, my dear friend —

Cañ.

I'll face the devil first!

I hate a woman.

Cor.

They are quits with thee.
She may discover it as best she can.

I'll not be jeered at. There shall be no more
“Out with your dagger, Coronel,” to please
All the best dames of love within the land.
And yet I fear —

Cañ.

By Jupiter, thou'rt right!
A peasant's honest drudge takes rank with me
Before the wanton of an emperor.

Cor. Go in to thy command, and man the walls:
I'll mount, and gallop forth to meet the king.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

The Same. The Great Hall of the Castle. LEONOR DE GUZMAN discovered seated in state, surrounded by DON JUAN DE LARA, DON FERNANDO DE VILLENA, DON TELLO, Courtiers, Knights, Ladies, Men-at-Arms, &c. DON JUAN DE LARA is in the act of investing DON TELLO with a crimson Scarf, the order of "La Banda."

Lara. Arise, Don Tello, of the crimson band,
A noble knight, and brother in our arms !
I thus salute thee. [Embraces him.]

Leonor. And, I pledge my faith,
He shall prove worthy of the dignity.
I pray you, gentlemen, make way for me :
[Advancing.]

A mother's kiss should not be last to greet
The honors of a son. (*Kisses DON TELLO.*) Don Tello,
know

This order was bestowed to spur thee on
To actions that may make thy worth appear
Equal with our bestowing. This fair badge
Is not an ornament for festal days,
A ribbon to enrich thy vanity,
But the illustrious mark by which Castile
Knows her great children, and can turn to them
With confident assurance of such deeds
As raised her glory to its present height.
Thy breast is girt as with a ring of fire :
An evil act within its circle looks
Prodigious to beholders, and draws all
To fix their concentrated eyes upon
The splendid criminal. Small flames on heights
Show further than great fires in humbler spots ;

And they who see them from the vale below
Oft take a candle for a meteor.

Remember this ; and fear thy slightest fault
May spread corruption through an empery.

Lara. (*Apart to VILLENA.*) Right royal that, and to
the purpose, too :

Some one has told her of Don Tello's slips.

Villena. (*Apart to LARA.*) Ay, if a lance-head ever
fray that band,

Charge me with scandal.

Lara. Hark ! there's more to come.

Leo. Don Tello, thy renown lies next my heart,
Close to thy father's. I have much to say ;—
But no, — not here. A mother's privilege
Borders too near the sanctity of prayer
For public ears. Call the ambassador.

[*Resumes her state.*]

Flourish. *Enter the Ambassador from the Rebel, DON JUAN MANUEL, with Gentlemen, Soldiers, Attendants, &c., bearing sumptuous presents.*

Ambassador. (*Kissing DOÑA LEONOR's hand.*) Lady, my
lord salutes you with these gifts,
Rather as evidence of his good will,
Than as fit offering to your deserts.
The gods, who scorned the shepherd's sacrifice
Of curds, and wine, and bleeding throats of lambs,
Looked not unkindly on the worshipper,
Despite the simple service of his hands. —

Leo. Pray you, end there. To offer mortal ears
That which becomes divinity alone,
Insults its majesty and our plain sense.
The power I hold is delegated trust

From the true centre of all power, the king.
 If you have business that concerns the state,
 I'll hear with patience ; if you 'd deal with Heaven,
 Carry your incense to the nearest church.

Lara. (*Apart to VILLENA.*) Mark the ambassador!
 That lofty stride

Tripped up his earthly progress.

Vil. How he burns !

His throat is full of thistles.

Leo. Is there aught,
 Between Don Manuel and his majesty,
 That our discourse may further ?

Am. Much, your grace,
 But not intended for publicity.

Leo. Speak out. The government deserves dis-
 trust

That stops the people's ears while it debates.

Am. Your wishes are commands. Don Manuel,
 Some time in arms against his sovereign,
 Proffers his fealty to you, and swears
 To be your liegeman on a single term.

Leo. Name it. The king would stretch his clem-
 ency,
 To make a friend of his illustrious foe.

Am. 'T is a condition pleasant to the king —
 Or rumor lies for once in good report —
 And honorable to her for whom 't is urged :
 Simply, that Don Alfonso should divorce
 That hag of Portugal —

Leo. Sir, let me say,
 That is no title in Castilian ears
 To know their queen by. How now, gentlemen,
 Is there no gauntlet down upon the word ?

You downcast men, do you not blush to see
The spurs of chivalry upon your heels ?

(LARA, VILLENA, and other Knights, throw their gauntlets before
the Ambassador.)

There, on my faith, you see 't is raining steel !
Thou backward, Tello ! [*He throws down his gauntlet.*]

And, to crown them all,

Behold a prince's glove upon the heap !
Bear our defiance to Don Manuel ;
And say, a word of treason is a spell,
To conjure up such loyal storms as this,
In our Castilian air. Your pardon, sir :
We check your lord, not his ambassador.
What follows this ?

Am. Your coronation, lady.
After divorcement of the queen, my lord
Would see the imperfect throne made whole by you.

Leo. What say you, sirs ? My lord of Lara,
speak.

Lara. I only may repeat the general voice,
Strengthened by sanction from the king himself.
Accept the offer, not as his alone,
But as the constant wish of all Castile.

Leo. Speak, Don Fernando.

Vil. Lara's choice is mine.

Leo. My son, Don Tello ?

Tello. If they make me royal,
I'll fill my office with what grace I can.
Certes, if one held out a crown to me,
I should not put my hands behind my back.

Leo. Thou art the frankest speaker of them all.
Ah, gentlemen, it is your private hopes

Of what may follow to yourselves, through me,
That hurries this advancement.

Lara. You mistake,

At least in me, the object of our hopes.
Through you Castile would flourish —

Leo. Has it not ?

If naught 's accomplished, nothing can I do.
I found this land an arméd wilderness,
A chain of citadels, and all between
Was desolation trampled into dust
By a fierce soldiery, who only brooked
The fiercer orders of their savage chiefs.
So, in the midst, I built a house of peace,
An unwall'd palace, full of open doors ;
And round about I spread a garden-plot,
Hedged it with flowers, and from its sculptured urns
I sent the streams back to their native heaven,
Returned in music. No defence was mine,
Save the imploring weakness of the flowers,
The scented dews my fountains scattered out,
And the light blushes of my garrison.
Yet at my gate War laid aside his spear,
And vines ran round it, from the hand-worn grasp
Up to the steely point, whence blossoms hung
Trembling with horror. Ay, the rugged god
Doffed his grim casque, and sat beside my feet,
Until I schooled him with the mandolin ;
Or taught his awkward limbs to move apace
In other measures than the martial tread.
Are these things naught ? These are my conquests,
sirs ;
And she who steps beyond her threshold's dust,
To play Achilles in her woman's gear,

Shall find the sword-hilt frets her dainty hand,
And the great helmet makes her forehead ache.

Lara. Yet there are other duties of a queen, —
Calm government, the sway of useful days,
Bent on a nation's welfare.

Leo. Ah! the hand
That takes a sceptre up, knows not how soon
The royal symbol must become a sword.

Am. But, lady —

Leo. Ay, sir, so much for myself;
Now for the weightier matters of the realm.
What are your master's ends in this affair?

Am. I am his spokesman, not his confidant.

Leo. Mark, how much nearer to his heart am I.
Don Manuel fears Castile's advancing power
May crush the Moor, and win a general peace:
In which conjuncture, rebels like himself
Could ill abide our undistracted arms.
His safety hangs upon our foreign wars.
Divorce the queen, and on our western skirts,
Instant, insulted Portugal uprears
His warlike standard, in the queen's behalf;
While, from the south, the hordes of Africa
Again win footing on our weakened lines.
Then our new liegeman puts his oath aside,
With the same readiness he put it on,
And rises in our midst a dangerous foe,
Made more audacious by his treachery.
Say to your master that my lord, the king,
Treats with his rebels at the lance's point,
Nor ever recognized, nor ever will,
Don Manuel's right to treat by embassy.
Take back the trinkets you designed for me —

Don Manuel's needs will shortly ask for them ;
 And tell him, Leonor de Guzman loves
 No title in the spacious gift of man,
 Above the welfare of her native land.

Am. Must this be final ?

Leo. Yes, sir ; 't is the fruit
 Of many a painful hour of solemn thought, —
 Of many a struggle with a treacherous heart,
 Whose passions threatened to be paramount.

Am. Lady, with your reply my functions cease.
 Now, as a gentleman of Spain, I say
 That your refusal of this proffered crown
 Rivals in splendor the ambitious gift,
 And dims its jewels with your eloquent breath.
 She who next wears the honors you put by
 Must sit beneath you in real dignity.
 Humbly I take my leave.

[*Kisses her hand, and exit with his suite.*]

(*Solemn music, tolling of bells, and cries of grief, are heard.*)

Leo. What sounds are these
 That so appal me, like the uplifted voice
 Of direful prophecy ?

(*Enter DON ENRIQUE and DON FADRIQUE, followed by CORONEL
 and CAÑEDO.*)

Enrique. Mother !

Leo. My son ! —
 And thou, twin brother to my eldest born !
 The hour that made your difference in birth,
 Makes none within my heart.

En.

Mother !

Fadrique.

Alas !

En. O God! be doubly dear to us a while,
Or fate will crush us!

Leo. Sons — Enrique — speak!
What is this mystery?

En. Mystery! Would 't were so,
And not so plain before my shrinking soul!
Tell her, good brother.

Fad. Didst thou speak to me?

Leo. This cruelty is not usual with you, sons. —
The king, the king! — Where is your father?

En. Look,
Through the wide casement, on yon mournful
host! —

The trailing pikes — the furled emblazonry
Of our victorious standards — the bowed heads
Of veterans, who behold each other's scars
Channels for running tears, without surprise —
The empty saddle —

Leo. 'T is thy father's steed,
Roderick, the last of the old Gothic strain;
Oft have I held him by his golden bit,
Against Alfonso's spurring. —

En. Mother, mother,
Thou dreamest, mother. Wake! the king —

Leo. The king?
Well, well, the king is ill? — is wounded? — Ha!
Where is the king?

En. He 's dead!

Leo. No, no! [Faints.]

All. Dead! dead!

En. Fadrique, loose her collar. She revives.
O, bitter waking to a world of woe!

Leo. Some one — thou, thou, Enrique, was it not? —

Brought me a message from my lord the king.

En. Many. —

Leo. Thou dar'st not tell me he is dead? Thou wouldst behold a helpless woman quake? Such words are treason while the sovereign lives.

En. Alas!

Leo. And thou believ'st it?

En. From these arms —
For there were few who dared confront the plague —
That mighty champion of Christendom
Took flight for heaven.

Leo. Dear Lord! and is it so?
I feel somewhat bewildered in my mind,
And what I see is hardly in clear view,
Though I see much — much — much —

[*Walks about wildly.*]

En. Awake, poor heart!
Nay, slumber on. Her smitten sense is numb,
And reason sits not upright on his throne.
But we, Fadrique, have beheld such things,
As might parch up the tearful eyes of grief
With flaming anger.

Fad. Yes; and 't is no time
To stand before our fate with idle hands.
Mother, the liberty and lives of all
Whom thou call'st children are in jeopardy:
Inaction will undo us.

En. Speak to us!
Dear mother, thou hast sorrows that pass cure,
But there are other wounds that need thy aid.

Leo. What said your grace?

Fad. The king is dead, good mother.

Leo. Ay, I know that.

En. And all the smothered hate
Of Albuquerque, and the wolfish queen,
Begins to darken in each face we see.

Leo. Where is the king?

Fad. Dead.

Leo. Then what help have we?
Or what worse fortune can befall? Why, we
May sit and laugh, like beggars, in our rags,
At the rich trappings which men fear to lose.

En. Such desperation would disgrace a man,
Yet it shows sweetly in thee, mother. I,
Who hold the duties of an eldest son,
Must not so far forget the blood I bear,
As to sit sobbing o'er my father's corpse,
While ruin seizes on his heritage.
Fly to thy order, brother. I believe
Santiago's banner can protect its master,
Until I rally our undoubted friends.
Tello, take horse — I need not bid thee spur —
And bear Fadrique company. Away!

Fad. Thy blessing, mother.

Leo. God protect you both!
[*Exeunt FADRIQUE and TELLO.*]

Enrique, thou misjudgest: I am patient —
Quite patient — ready to be ruled by thee;
Only ask nothing may proceed from me;
Do with me as thou wilt.

(*Solemn music. Enter Soldiers with the bier of KING ALFONSO.*)

O heaven! my — sovereign!
Husband, I nearly said: but I'm a widow, —

Or was years since, before Alfonso's day,—
 And the old term comes easily to my lips.
 Besides, Alfonso loved that name from me,
 When we were jesting.—Ay, that corpse could jest:
 You would not think it, now, to look at him.
 Forgive me, friends, for slandering your king.

En. O mother, mother, put these toys away,
 And bless the swords that must be drawn for thee.

Leo. No swords for me. — Yet, dear Enrique, do
 That which seems best, without a thought of me.
 My lord of Lara, you were guardian,
 Under the gracious orders of the king,
 Of my poor person; — what would you advise?

Lara. Shut up the castle. You have power enough
 To bide a two-years' siege from half Castile.

En. I like the counsel.

Leo. Governor Coronel,
 Shut up our castle.

Coronel. Not till I am forth.
 I have some pressing business in Seville.

Cañedo. The only sane reply thou ever madest!

[*Apart to CORONEL.*]

En. Now, thou ungrateful traitor, were it not
 For the most sacred presence of the dead,
 I'd buffet thee!

Cor. Peace, bastard! you may have
 Some fair occasion in an open field.

[*Throws down his key of office, and exit, with CAÑEDO.*]

Leo. Our friends fall off with little shaking, son.
 My lord of Lara, as our deputy, [*Offering the key.*]
 We here present our castle's key to you.

Lara. Forgive me, lady: a neglected order,

Urging my instant presence at Seville,
Is two days old with me. [Exit with VILLENA.]

En. Return, false Lara,
And, on my father's bier, I'll offer up
Thy faithless body to his angry ghost!

(*The Courtiers, Knights &c., gradually drop out, talking eagerly, and leave LEONOR, ENRIQUE, and the soldiers, with the body.*)

You skulking villains, cannot you remain?

First Courtier. I'm most obnoxious to the plague,
my lord;—

My father died of it. [Exit.]

Second Courtier. And mine. [Exit.]

Third Courtier. And mine. [Exit.]

En. Yet left the plague-spot in your very souls,
You nest of sickly cowards! Shame, sir knight!
I saw you win those rowels, that so ring
Disgrace behind you, in a battle-field!

Knight. But not to lose them in a broil. [Exit.]

Leo. (*Approaching the bier.*) Alack!

Blame not the leaves for falling with the trunk.
Here lies in death the noble tree from which
Castilian honor drew its only sap.
Alas! thy branches sheltered noisome weeds,
That sucked their living from thy generous roots;
And thou didst drop o'er them thy healthful dews,
And smiled, as if thou'dst nurtured gentle flowers.
When such as he o'erturn, the world around
Is strewn with ruin. Son, depart at once:
Gather thy friends; or, shouldst thou fail, perchance,
Then, join me in Seville. My mind is clear,
And wholesome blood runs through my veins again.

En. Mother, I'll keep with thee: there's time
enough.

Leo. Where goes the body, friend?

Soldier. Towards Seville.

Leo. Thither go I. Alfonso, love like mine
Ne'er takes a parting e'er the shroud is on.
Faithful to thee, I followed thee through life—
Faithful, I follow through the shades of death!

(*Solemn music. Exeunt Soldiers with the body, followed by
LEONOR and ENRIQUE.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Street in Seville. Enter a knot of Citizens.*

First Citizen. HER grand-aunt was a conjurer, and made—

Second Citizen. An ass of you. I see no witchcraft there.

First C. Why, you—

Third Citizen. Be civil. Fair words are fair gifts.

First C. I say, her grand-aunt was a conjurer—

Second C. So are not you.

Third C. Well, patience hears long tales :
But let us listen.

First C. And she made, they say,
A magic girdle—

Second C. Girth for her said ass—
Being a stumbling beast ; and to the girth
She fixed a bladder full of solid lies,
That rattle, like the coxcomb of a fool,
Whene'er the said ass jogs.

Third C. O ! neighbors, neighbors,
Wit is a sword, and wrangling feeds the leech.

First C. I heed him not.

Second C. 'Tis not for lack of ears.
You are a foul kind of chameleon,
Who live upon the floating breath of slander ;
You 'd go a journey to bring home a lie,
And be so fattened on it, e'er you came,

Your wife would scarcely know you. You pass life
 In raking up such shreds of calumny
 As none will own, things men cast out of doors,
 With stealthy blushes : yet you treasure them,
 And hang your filthy garbage in our sight,
 As if the saints had worn it. Give report
 Stamp base enough, and 't is your current coin ;
 While honest gold you smell at, and return.
 You 'd believe Judas when he spoke in jest,
 Yet doubt the true Apostles on their oaths.
 If you had any seeds of goodness in you,
 I 'd rake you over, but I 'd make them sprout !

First C. Pray, have you done, or are you out of
 breath ?

Third C. Let Satan give instruction to his own.
 An angry teacher trains a stupid school ;
 And so, farewell ! Short partings give short pains.

[*Going.*]

Second C. Well said, brown wisdom ! I will give
 him o'er,
 If you 'll return. I 'll miss your sentences ;
 They come like texts into a dull discourse,
 Seasoning the matter with a taste of heaven.

Third C. Thank you 's soon said. Our gossip 's
 patient, too,
 And that moves mountains.

Fourth Citizen. Let us have the tale.

First C. Nay, if he snub me —

Second C. I will not, in faith.

Lie on, — I 'll listen, if I can't believe.

First C. Well, the grand aunt of Doña Leonor
 Was an enchantress, and could make the stars
 Go backward in their orbits. —

Second C. Did she ever ?

First C. I know not ; but she could.

Second C. I 'd have the proof.

Third C. Apt swearers are apt liars.

Second C. True, indeed ;

I break my promise.

First C. So, one night, she made

A wondrous girdle, from the inner skin

Of maiden's hearts that broken were of love. —

Second C. A rare material !

First C. Then she took the belt,

And held it o'er the infernal fumes, until —

Second C. She sneezed, and dropped it in ?

First C. No, no, indeed ;

Till it became invisible to all —

Second C. That I believe.

First C. Save her who wears it. And this girdle
she,

In a dark hour, gave Doña Leonor ;

Saying, its magic had the power to hold

In abject love whatever man she willed.

She chose Alfonso. —

Second C. She struck high at once.

But why not choose him, ere he chose the queen ?

First C. The belt was not then fashioned.

Second C. And they say --

Let me take up your story — that at times,

In the full moon, when fools are very rife,

This magic girdle presses her about,

And doth so burn her with infernal flames,

That she cries out, in direful agony —

Curses her aunt, as if she were no kin,

And says — [*Pauses.*]

All. O, Lord! what says she?

Second C. Things like this —
 “I can tell asses, if I hear them bray!”
 Who shall want audience for a silly tale?
 The loveliest woman on Castilian earth,
 The gentlest dame that ever drew our air —
 She, the epitome of excellence,
 The flowering top and glory of her sex —
 She to be rated as a sorceress,
 By filthy rascals whose best breath would be
 An insult to her presence! Get you home,
 And grind your knee-balls to the very bones,
 In thanks to her, and prayers for your base selves! —
 Foh! you are odious. [*Exit.*]

First C. There's a fellow for you! —
 A very infidel, who scarce believes
 In sorcery itself. The rude-tongued fool!
 Would I had throttled him! This comes, I trow,
 Of home-bred ignorance. I've been to Rome —
 Ay, and to Paris — where I've seen more witches —
 Real sturdy witches, young and old, forsooth —
 Burnt at the stake, upon a holiday,
 Than I have fingers to these fellow hands.
 I tell you, one time —

(*Enter a Citizen hastily.*)

Fourth C. What's the news, good friend?

Fifth Citizen. Gibraltar is surrounded by the king,
 And must surrender ere another week.
 The plague has broken out —

All. The plague! the plague!

Third C. Who told you so?

Fifth C. One from Gibraltar.

All. (*Running from him.*) Ha!

First C. Out of our sight! thou villain, as thou art,
To speak with clean men! Take thy plague away,
Or we'll fall on thee!

Fifth C. I am sound.

First C. Thou liest!

Thou'rt one great sore.

Fifth C. Indeed, I feel not well.

Third C. Caution's a famous doctor: I'll be off.
Better go laughing, than remain to weep. [*Exit.*]

Fifth C. Pray, friends, assist me! I've a burning
pain

Across the temples, and —

All. The plague! the plague!

First C. Thou desperate wretch, to issue from thy
house

In this condition! Bear thy malady
Back to thy wife and children, like a Christian.
Nay, if thou'lt not be going, I'll away.

[*Exit with the others.*]

(*Reënter Second Citizen.*)

Fifth C. O! I shall perish! [*Lies down.*]

Second Citizen. What's the matter here?

Ill, and no creature nigh! What is it, friend?

Fifth C. I tell you frankly, sir, because you speak
From a kind heart, I have the plague.

Second C. Poh, poh!

You're clean as snow. I feel no fever here. —

Fifth C. 'Sdeath! do not touch me!

Second C. What an eye you have!

Clear as a sunbeam. Let me see your tongue.
Thou move compassion by thy false disease —

Stir a man's heart to pity by thy groans !
 Thou arrant beggar, art thou not ashamed
 To face detection ?

Fifth C. On my life, I feel
 A deal improved by your encouragement. [Rises.]
 The pain has left my head. —

Second C. Not yet a while ;
 Thou 'lt feel it shortly. (*Strikes him.*) Has the fit
 returned ?

Impostor — counterfeit — sham plague ! [*Beating him.*]

Fifth C. O ! — O !

Second C. I'll teach thee to act Lazarus in the
 streets,
 For my annoyance ! Get thee to thy home,
 And play thy pranks before thy intimates ;
 Or I will cudgel all the flesh from thee,
 And drive thee homeward in thy naked bones !
 Out, thou flea-bitten, verminating rogue !
 [*Exit, beating him out.*]

SCENE II.

The Same. The Throne-Room in the Alcazar, meanly furnished.

Enter DON PEDRO and his PAGE, in poor attire.

Don Pedro. Offered thee alms !

Page. Fair alms, a silver crown,
 As I was standing at the palace-gate,
 Sunning my rags. It would have moved your mirth,
 To have seen the dews on Leonor's long lashes,
 As she held out the coin, and murmured forth —
 "Poor boy !"

Don P. But when was this ?

Page. A month ago,
Ere she departed.

Don P. What was your reply ?

Page. A simple bow. For, seeing my best hose
Was somewhat airy, and my doublet's sleeve
Needed a patch, to keep my elbow in,
My cap a roof, to keep the weather out,—
Seeing that crowns, with us, are not so rife
As figs in August,—seeing no one saw,—
I made my bow, and slipped the silver piece
Into my bottomless pocket ; whence it slid
Down my rent stocking, without accident,
And firmly settled in my tattered shoe,
From which I drew it.

Don P. By this merry light,
I'm followed by a beggar !

Page. Please your grace,
I am the only beggar fool enough
To do such following.

Don P. Marry, that is truth !
No lighter, though, because it turns a jest.

Page. If nothing happen, master, we shall starve
Before we reach another crown.

Don P. In sooth,
I am sick of jesting. Let us fly my hawk.

Page. The ragged tercel that takes all our wealth—
My rent-roll and your princely revenue —
To keep in sparrows ? Master, we'll retrench ;
Sell our gray hawk, and buy a hobby-horse.
I'll dance the morrice, and you'll ride the horse,
With an alms-pipkin at your saddle-bow.
Why, come, this looks like living !

Don P. Leave thy jests,
Or I will fit thee with a cap and bells !

Page. 'T would puzzle you. Besides, I like your offer ;

The coxcomb covers many a better head ;
And 't is my right. Am I not jester, cousin,
Page, Chamberlain, grand Usher of both wands,
Master of hawks, and Keeper of the robes,
Purveyor of the forests and the floods,
Lord Treasurer, chief Cup-bearer, the Guard —
Captain and soldiers — navy, and what not,
All crammed in one, and salaried at two pence,
In legal coinage of our father's realm ; —
Both pennies payable — when I can get them ?
Answer that question.

Don P. Thou 'rt a silly boy ;
And I scarce better, for indulging thee.
Here comes the queen, my mother. Look, your
tongue

Be on its guard, or you may lose its use.

Page. And Alburquerque, with his ugly head
Scheming and plotting for the sorry body
That cannot hold it upright. There 's a man
Who 'll crawl in hell, if he may strut on earth ;
Who sees our nature through his darkened soul,
And charges mankind with more infamy
Than priests impose on Satan. Mark, your grace,
Here 's Alburquerque to the life. (*Mimics him.*) Don
Pedro,

Go not abroad ; there 's danger in the wind.
Lie not abed ; sleep leagues with murderers.
Eat not, nor drink ; for so is poison taken.
Smell not a rose ; I 've known them venomous.

Stay here with me ; and let me tutor you
That all God's blessings really are but curses,
In pleasant masquerade ; and that —

(Enter DOÑA MARIA and ALBURQUERQUE, behind.)

Alburquerque. Well, boy !

Page. Well, man !

Alb. Go to ! you're pert.

Page. Not I, my lord :

I only told my master what a world
You and the devil would have made of this,
Had you but shaped it, and not heavenly art.

Alb. Sirrah ! —

Doña Maria. My lord, leave Pedro to his page :
My son has spoilt him.

Alb. I'll remember though.

Conspiracy doth cackle in that egg ;
'T will walk full-feathered shortly.

Doña M. If the king —

Alb. Beseech you, madam, walk aside a step ;
The page may overhear us.

Doña M. No, my lord !

About my wrongs I will be loud enough,
For heaven cries with me. Would that all Castile
Might turn its ear upon its queen's distress,
Till silence, horrified at what it hid,
Found tongues to echo me ! Look round you, here :
Know who I am, Queen of Castile and Leon —
Wife to a king, and daughter to a king —
Whose earliest hours knew naught but royal state,
Whose toys were crowns and sceptres, whose young
feet
Tottered along the carpet of a throne,

Or slept among its pillows ; who was taught
 To hold myself a sacred thing, apart
 From the pollution of humanity —
 A something, stationed between God and man,
 Nearer divinity than dust ; — then say,
 This fiction of a crown, this dearth of power,
 This squalid court, this cold neglect, this want
 Of the surroundings that belong to me,
 Fit the bare title which is mine by right
 Of Heaven's bestowing, by my royal birth,
 By marriage, and by general consent !

Alb. Madam, I do not.

Doña M. No, nor this alone.

Forget my rank, and call me only wife
 To a Castilian gentleman ; then judge
 If there's a hind, within the scope of Spain,
 Whose amours match the shameless insolence
 Of Don Alfonso's ! Sins like his are done
 Under the wicked covering of night,
 Or hid in caves and dens from blushing day ;
 But he — he puts his crown upon his guilt,
 And makes it pompous in his regal robes,
 Sets up its statue in the market-place,
 And calls the world to witness ! These things glare ;
 They are not sobered with a mere regret.
 He ranks his haughty bastards in my sight,
 Beggars the state to give them revenues,
 Commands and titles ; while the sole command
 He lays on Pedro is to call them brothers !
 You, sir, are learned in vices ; tell me, now,
 Is there his mate in all your histories ?

Alb. Your grace, the actions of a sovereign
 Look not to history for precedent,

Nor recognize the rules of private men.

A king —

Doña M. May turn mankind to hypocrites,
Throw down the barriers between right and wrong,
And root heaven's kingdom from the earth!

Alb. O, no!

The Church has virtues —

Doña M. Which it keeps at home,
For fear their fashion has run out of date!
When has the Church took cognizance of this,
Or crooked its finger at the king or her?
That witch of Guzman — pah! it scalds my tongue
To spit her name out — has kept open court,
More dazzling than the Persian's brightest dream,
Crowded with suitors, over-run with wealth:
A place where honor brought his golden spurs, —
Naught valued till they glittered in her eyes, —
Where poets sang, where orators discoursed,
Where learning trimmed and lit his patient lamp,
Where art drew inspiration from fair lips,
Where warriors showed their scars, where gentle
peace

Nestled in luxury, where Fame, herself,
Stood, as upon the summit of a hill,
And thence took flight towards heaven. Ah! sir,
't was here

The Church so placidly laid by its cross,
Its austere brow, its awful book of laws,
And entered, gambolling like a reveller,
With looser jests than it could find within.
Thou hear'st this, Pedro?

Don P. Yes, with sorrow, mother.

Doña M. No, no; with fury! for thy mother's
blood

Burns hot in thee; and all the memories
Of twenty years are smouldering in thy veins,
Against the day of reckoning. When thou'rt king,
Dole out thy mercies like the summer's dew,
But pour thy vengeance like the winter's hail;
And on these bastards, and their hated dam,
Fall in consuming fire!

Page. There's good advice!
Quite motherly and queenly, and designed,
No doubt, for furtherance of the general good.
Would I were old! The coming generation
Have more before them than they reckon on. [*Aside.*]

Doña M. Speak, Pedro, speak!

Don P. I may do wrong, perhaps,
Out of the nature which belongs to me;
But, on my soul, I will not meditate
My crimes beforehand.

Doña M. Art thou son of mine?

Alb. Beware! you tamper with a brand of fire;
Look, at which end you grasp it.

Doña M. [*Apart to DOÑA MARIA.*]
True, in faith!

The fruit must ripen ere we press its juice. [*Aside.*]
My lord, you had some tidings of the king;
Lay them before us. Lo! I take my state,
Queen of Castile and Leon! (*Sits upon a low stool.*) Is
it well,

Ha, Pedro? Gentlemen, keep back the press!
Our loyal people crowd so thickly on us,
We have scant breathing-room! Ha! ha! 'fore
Heaven,

I can be merry with my misery ! *[Laughing.]*
Say on, Don Juan.

Alb. The old news renewed :
Battles and Moors, but always victory.
The infidel holds Spain by one bare rock,
And that seems shaking. Ere the week be out,
We may have tidings of Gibraltar's fall.
There's little fighting ; for the plague has raised
His spotted banner 'twixt the hostile camps,
And both stand still before him, all aghast,
Owning the coward.

Doña M. Should the plague — Well, well,
I trust the king is — well ?

Page. 'T was uttered ill. *[Aside.]*

Alb. Quite well, and confident of victory.

Don P. Would I were by his side !

Doña M. Thou, thou, indeed,
A lawfully-begotten son of mine !
Thy birth doth lack the charming quality
Of sinful love. Wert thou a bastard, now,
A brat of Guzman, thou shouldst bear a sword,
And buckle thee in steel, and back a steed ; —
Haply, to knock thy legal brother's brains
Out of his crown, some day !

Don P. O, mother, cease !
This heartless jesting is beneath thy rank.
Come, comrade, let us to the fields again ;
The fields have better counsel than the court.
God's breath comes to us on the straying gales,
And whispers peaceful love to us, and all.
There's something wrong, something at war with
Heaven,

In man's society : I know not why,
But still I feel it.

Page. I could weep a year.
My jests are over, for to-day at least.

(*As they are about going, enter a Messenger, hastily. DON PEDRO and the PAGE return.*)

Alb. What news? — what news?

Messenger. The king is dead.

Doña M. (*Starts up.*) Ha! ha! [*Laughing.*]
My hour has come, at last!

Don P. O, heavens! [*Weeps.*]

Page. Kind saints!
Is that the way our wives receive our deaths?
[*Aside.*]

Doña M. Ha! ha! [*Laughing.*]

Alb. Dear madam! —

Doña M. Shall I not laugh out?
This is the hour I've waited on for years.
For this I bore his insults, and the mock
Of public pity. 'T was for this I bore
My lady Leonor's magnificence,
Her smiles, her nods, her very company —
And did not send my dagger through her heart!
I knew just Heaven would grant it in good time, —
I prayed for it, — and it has come at last!
Shall I not laugh? [*Laughing.*]

Page. Does not the devil too? [*Aside.*]

Doña M. Pedro, my son, awake!

Don P. I am an orphan!

Doña M. So are the bastards! let that comfort
thee.

There's not a cobweb 'twixt us and our foes.

Now strike! while they are stunned with feeble.
grief;

And let the blow that blinds them, clear thy sight.

Alb. Madam, I pray you, leave the king to me;
I'll bend, but you will break him. [*Apart to her.*]

Doña M. Yes, the king—
All hail, King Pedro! Thank you for the word!—
I shall go crazy! [*Walks about.*]

Page. Here's a pretty school
To put a child to! [*Aside.*]

Alb. Please, your majesty—

Don P. The king is dead! [*Weeping.*]

Alb. The office never dies:
And it behooves your grace to look abroad,
And see what ground your kingdom stands upon.
I would not urge it, at a time like this,
Were not your kingdom's peace embraced in it.
The sons of Leonor have great estates,
Peopled with warlike vassals, and their mother
Is of a subtle wit, and used to rule.
They'll not go down without a sturdy tug;
And down they must go, or you cannot reign.

Doña M. Listen, my son.

Don P. I hear. Let me begin
My novel sway by striking close at hand.
Madam, I charge you, on your loyalty,
To hold my father's memory in respect.

Doña M. He never loved thee, Pedro.

Don P. The more cause
Have I to mourn his early taking off:
Time and good actions might have won his love.
Mother, be decent in thy widowhood,
Or I may grieve thee.

Doña M. Pedro, speak not thus,
 With knitted brows and gloomy threats, to me.
 Thou art the only thing I truly love.
 Through all the sorrows I have passed, thy voice
 Was solace to me, and thy growing form
 Consoled the dwarfish aspect of my fate.
 Thou canst not tell what I endured, to reach
 The triumph of the hour that makes thee king —
 What anxious days, and what unslumbering nights!
 But with my love for thee, another passion —
 Sustained by all I saw, or heard, or thought —
 Grew side by side; a deadly, blasting hate
 For Leonor de Guzman and her brood
 Of upstart bastards! Render them to me —
 'Tis the sole boon I'll ever claim from thee;
 Make me their destiny, as they have made
 Thy mother their chief victim.

Don P. Madam, no!
 Her children are my brothers, and her fate
 Rests on the future actions of her life.

[*Walks up with ALBURQUERQUE.*]

Doña M. Curse him, just Heaven, and make his
 mercy turn
 To ceaseless torment! May his brothers be
 Traitors to him, as he has been to me! —
 Gall in his goblet, nightmares in his sleep,
 Goads to his crimes, and clogs to his good deeds;
 Till restless anguish arm his desperate hand
 With fratricidal fury! Grant it, Heaven! —
 Nay, gracious saints, undo my impious curse!
 My wrongs have maddened me. O, Pedro, Pedro,
 Fate chose my bitterest moment from this hour!

Don P. (*Advancing with ALBURQUERQUE.*) If 't is your thought that Doña Leonor
May raise the horrors of a civil strife,
'T were prudent you restrained her liberty,
With due respect.

Alb. O, yes, your majesty,
With due respect. [*Laughs aside*]

Doña M. Will she to prison then?

Alb. (*Drawing DON PEDRO aside.*) Besides, I could not answer for her care,

Were she at large. The queen will now have friends,
And friends have daggers, and —

Don P. No more of this.
Take you her guardianship.

Alb. As for her sons,
They may be trusted till they show their teeth.
I'll have my spies about them. 'T were not well
To start with too much rigor, till we know
What power we wield. For harshness, please your
grace,

Might swell the faction 'gainst yourself, by those
Who now stand neutral, balanced either way,
And easily won by clemency. The mass,
In all great kingdoms, is composed of such;
And parties feel it, when it wills to throw
Its mighty weight into the doubtful scale.

[*DON PEDRO yawns.*]

I weary you? — I see I do, your grace —
Pray, do I not? — I tire you with these things?
If I do not, I miss my own design. [*Aside.*]

Don P. 'T will be your interest to uphold the
throne
Through which you rule; therefore, I trust to you.

Alb. (*Bowing.*) Sage boy! [*Aside.*]

Don P. Retain the powers my father gave,
Yet breathe my childish mercy through your acts.
I seem to be the only mourner here;
Let me go grieve. [*Walks apart.*]

Doña M. She will to prison then?
O, bless my fortune, that had this in store!

Alb. Ay, and forever. See how policy
Wins, piece by piece, that which your heady force
Could never compass. Madam, you must be
More circumspect and gentle with your son.
I know his nature, and can mould its wax
To any shape you purpose. But take heed
Of sudden passions, and displays of wrath.

(*Enter CORONEL and CAÑEDO.*)

Doña M. Whom have we here?

Alb. Alonzo Coronel,
Welcome! What brings you to Seville?

Coronel. My lord,
I come to be enrolled among your friends.

Alb. The tide has turned. (*Apart to MARIA.*) Sir,
your alacrity

Is your best commendation. Were you not,
Some time, the Guzman's governor?

Cor. I was,
Till duty taught me where allegiance lay.

Cañedo. Poh! how you talk! 'T was simply thus,
my lord:

He flung his key at Doña Leonor,
Called Don Enrique bastard, and ran off.

There's a short story!

Alb. Its reward shall come.

We here create you lord of Aguilar,
Giving the flag and cauldron of a Don,
With all the privileges of Rico Hombre. [*To CORONEL.*]

Cor. Cañedo, this o'ertops the Guzman's wall.

[*Apart to him.*]

I brought my friend, too — an unsightly thing ;
But, then, my lord, I brought him not for show —
As my best offering. He can bite and hold,
A very wolf in battle.

Cañ. If that be

The character you give before my face,
Heaven save my back, Alonzo !

Alb. I accept him,

At your good word, and will provide for him.

Who's governor now ?

Cor. Lara refused the charge.

Alb. Ha ! Lara ? This is golden news !

Cor. And mark,

The lord of Lara following its report.

(*Enter LARA and VILLENA.*)

Alb. Welcome to both ! Good gentlemen, your
speed

Is cheerful notice of your fair intents.

(*A number of Courtiers, Knights, &c., assemble at the back of
the scene.*)

Madam, the bees are swarming. (*Apart to MARIA.*) We
have need

Of faithful men to fill our offices.

We take it as an honor that such names

As Lara and Villena can be placed

Topmost upon the ranks of government.

Lara. Thanks, Albuquerque! Though our motives be,

As you may rate them, selfish at the base;
Yet while your government has power to stand,
By our joint efforts, we shall not fall off.

Alb. Your candor pleases me. Madam, behold,
How one short hour has changed the face of things!
These moths, that flutter round our brightening lamp,
Are, singly, little but mere silk-spinners;
Yet, by a skilful knitting of their work,
I'll form a cable that shall hold Castile
Fast at our anchor. Smile, for Heaven's sake, smile!
Sunshine costs nothing, and its gift may bring
Abundant harvest. [*Apart to MARIA.*]

Doña M. Smile on these, too, sir?

(*Enter LEONOR DE GUZMAN and DON ENRIQUE.*)

Would that my eyes had venom in their light,
And every glance had power to slay a host!
You should not lesson me in smiling, then,
Even on these. How now, thou sorceress,
Has witchcraft failed thee? Dar'st thou set thy foot,
Insolent minion, in our very court?

Enrique. Madam! —

Leonor. Enrique, give me leave to speak.

Doña M. What, thou wouldst whine of love to
King Alfonso,

Gloss o'er thy sins with lying rhetoric,
And set heaven blushing at the gifts it gave!

Leo. No, madam, no: though something might
be said,

Of how the holy law of mutual love
May wipe the slander from a life like mine.

Not for myself I come. The fatal day
 That took Alfonso turned my eyes from life,
 And the tame hum and bustle of the world.
 The hours that lie between me and my grave
 I count, as one who waits some great event
 Beside a dial, and would urge the shade
 That towards his hope creeps tardily along.
 Doña Maria, it is not with you
 I would discourse, but with his grace, the king.

Doña M. Doubtless, thou crafty trickster, not with
 me, —

Who traced thy winding courses, year by year,
 Marking each footstep with some wrong of mine, —
 But with the king, whose unsuspecting mind
 Needs my sad talisman against thy arts.
 Thus, as his mother, I arise between
 Thy guilty purpose and his gentle heart!

Leo. I have no purpose but to intercede
 For King Alfonso's children; and the voice
 Of nature, pleading louder than my own,
 Shall win Don Pedro to his brothers. —

Doña M. Shame!

Hast thou the impudence to call thy crew
 Of vipers brothers to my son?

Leo. Ay, madam,
 Haply, if you were honest with the king.

Doña M. Ha! lady, art thou of so keen a wit?
 Arrest her!

En. (Drawing.) He who touches but her garb,
 I'll hew to atoms!

Alb. Folly has run mad.
 Madam, your —

Doña M. Treason! Cut the bastard down!

(ALBURQUERQUE rushes back to DON PEDRO. The Courtiers draw and advance on LEONOR and ENRIQUE.)

Don P. (Mounting the throne.) Forbear! I am the sovereign in Castile!

And till your treason root me from my seat,
You who thus jet shall flourish under me!

(Courtiers uncover, and fall back.)

Alb. (To MARIA.) Here is a sermon on my text,
your grace.

This headlong course will run you out of breath:
Excessive anger is the blindest thing
That e'er sought vengeance. Patience, patience,
madam!

Wait till the reins are fairly in our hands,
And the state ambling gently under us;
I'll show you tricks, then, when the king's not by.
I'll strip these Guzmans for you, root and branch.
But you must smile — a very heavenly smile —
Or shed a tear or two, perhaps, while they
Lie at your feet, and wither in your hate.
Begin, begin!

Doña M. Don Pedro, pardon me.

The open insult of my fellow-queen —
She who was reigning while I staid at home,
To rock your cradle, and to suckle you —
Moved me a little. And besides, my liege,
There are some years of suffering on my brow, —
Pray, mark my lady's, it is very smooth, —
And some harsh lines of silver in my hair,
While hers is glossy with untroubled ease.

The rose has burned to ashes on my face ; —
 Yet lives again in her transparent cheek.
 She can go through her fingers, and record
 A loving child upon each dainty tip ; —
 I have but one, and he forgets to love !

Don P. Mother, thou wrong'st me. For the love
 of grace,

I prithee lay this bitterness aside,
 Sweetening thy nature with more holy thoughts.
 Enrique, brother, I will not suppose
 You are unmindful of the love we shared
 In great Alfonso's heart ; nor that one grief,
 For his untimely loss, together binds us.
 While you preserve allegiance to the king,
 You shall not suffer for the brother's love.

Leo. I humbly thank your grace ; and to your
 care

Commit your father's children.

Doña M. (*Apart to ALBURQUERQUE.*) Shall she triumph ?

Alb. Can she stop time, or stretch this lucky hour
 Out into doomsday ? [*Apart to MARIA.*]

Don P. My lord Chancellor,
 To your safe-keeping we confide the person
 Of Doña Leonor. And see no harm
 Come to the lady, in whatever shape,
 On pain of our displeasure ; nor such rights,
 As by the law have been allowed to her,
 Be now denied her.

En. How is this, my lord ?

Alb. Reasons of state forbid the liberty —
 At least, the perfect liberty, I own —
 Of Doña Leonor. His majesty
 Fears somewhat for his mother's jealousy, —

Sir, there are knives and poison in the land,—

[*Whispers.*]

And, therefore, gives her to my custody.

En. I can protect her, if 't is that you fear.
I like it not. Don Pedro, you undo
Your royal mercy.

Alb. Condé, be content ;
You shall be free to come and go to her.
We do not mean this for imprisonment.

En. And so you gild the cage ! Ah ! sir —

Leo. My son,
Bow with obedience to thy king's command.
It matters little where I dwell to me,
Still less to all the world. Thy liberty
Is warrant for my safety.

En. Let but a hair —
Look, Alburquerque, what I say to you —
Let but a hair be rent from that fair head,
And I will —

Leo. Thou art passionate. My lord,
I must intrust my person to your charge ; —
For, to be frank, I see no fair escape.
Lord Alburquerque, we are not new friends,
We have met often ; and I understand
Your wily policy and cunning turns,
Almost as well as you who practise them.

Alb. Ward, this is somewhat bluff.

Leo. But true, my lord.
My children's welfare rests upon my hands,
And I must rise, with all my weight of grief,
To wait upon their fortunes. Be but true,
And I will meet your candor with like truth ;
But should you practise on me, art for art,

And scheme for scheme, shall meet you everywhere.
I shall be jealous of your guardianship,
And give the king a fair account of it,
By ways you cannot see.

Alb. (Aside.) Ha! ha! my lady,
This looks like brisk employment! Brain to brain
We'll fight our battle: I'll outwit you, though; —
Trust me for that.

Leo. Don Pedro, many thanks,
For the great kindness you have shown to me,
Now, in my ebb of fortune. Let me be
Among the first to hail you on the throne. —
Long live Don Pedro, King of fair Castile!

All. Long live the King of Leon and Castile!

[*Flourish.*]

A C T I I I .

SCENE I. *The Same. A State-Apartment in the same. Enter DOÑA MARIA and ALBURQUERQUE.*

Doña Maria. SCHOOL me to patience! Make me one of those

Who pander to the Guzmans' growing power!
My lord, you promised me their overthrow;
And while your promise kept its aspect fresh,
I waited — none more patiently — till time
Should fill the crescent which I kept in view.

What have you done? — Heaped wealth unlimited,
New offices, new honors, new commands,
Upon my foes; until the blazonry
Of your additions has so charged their shields,
As almost to conceal the left-hand bar.

This is your work, and this 'is my revenge!

Alburquerque. 'Tis the beginning. You have seen a hawk

Mounting the heavens, to strike his rising prey;
When does he wheel, and make the fatal stoop?
Not while his quarry towers above his head,
But when his wing has won the upper place;
And the tired heron, shuddering with affright,
Sees the sharp beak and talons of his foe
Poising between him and the blue of heaven.
The Guzmans rise, but we rise faster, madam,
To overtop them in their venturous flight.

Doña M. Words, words ! you give me naught but
pretty words,
And I ask deeds.

Alb. You 'll have them ere you think.
Look at the state in which I found Castile ! —
A kingdom veined and arteried with plots,
Flowing and ebbing, crossing and recrossing,
Through every corner of her wide domain.
Here Lara, whispering of the royal blood
That came to him from the tenth king Alfonso ;
There Aragon, full of the sweeping claim
Of its Infanté, nephew to the king,
Your former husband. — Here was cause for strife !
But add to this, a hundred haughty lords,
Shut up in towns and castles, with demands
Upon the crown that grew as days went by. —
Not to forget the Moorish war, bequeathed
By your great husband to his only son.
Madam, this net-work cramped me, hand and foot,
Till I burst through it. And I tell you now —
Even while I hold these elements in check —
That if King Pedro die, or I but slack
My rigid grasp, Castile shall see a storm,
To which mere chaos would be harmony.
Why, let the boys of Doña Leonor
Strut, fume, and threaten, if they do no more.
I'll be the first to find them gilded coats,
Until I choose to strip them to the bone !

Doña M. There seems some reason in your policy.
And yet my —

Alb. Reason ! good lady, were that all !
If plain, blunt sense could compass my designs,
I'd go to bed at noonday. But the king,

He must be pleased with hunting-shows and games,
 Or vexed with tangled matters of the state,—
 Talked with and mystified ; until for love
 Of present pleasure, or disgust with rule,
 He flings his crown into my ready hands.
 Then, Don Enrique must be found new toys,
 Before the old ones weary. Even now
 He scours the country, drumming up old friends,
 And mustering new allies. And I — poor I —
 Must rack my brain for some fresh dancing-jack,
 To keep him quiet.

Doña M. And the mother, sir ?

Alb. Ay, ay ; I know not what her grace is at.
 The marriage of her eldest son, I hear,
 With Don Fernando's sister.

Doña M. So, indeed ?

Juana shares her prison, and Enrique
 Visits it daily.

Alb. I must look to that.

The Guzman is Juana's guardian,
 By King Alfonso's order, and Biscay
 The ward's fair portion. Hum ! Biscay — Biscay ! —
 A dangerous foe, and a fast friend. That land
 Breeds natural warriors ; the children, there,
 Teeth on a sword-hilt. I have only given
 Titles and gewgaws, no effective power ;
 But this Biscay is very solid stuff. —
 They shall not have it. Here is more to do :
 Wheedle Fernando, threaten Leonor,
 And gain possession of Juana. Gods !
 I am both minister and harlequin, —
 Head to the state, and jester to the court !

Did not the king, Alfonso, pre-contract
Enrique with Juana ?

Doña M. Surely, sir :

There was some stir when he betrothed the two.

Alb. I had forgotten.

Doña M. I have not. 'T is one
Of the grave matters in my long account
Against the Guzman. 'T was a holiday,
By the king's order, when the deed was sealed ;
'T will be a fast-day ere 't is ratified !

Alb. Right, right ! Here is Fernando — Lara too.

(*Enter LARA and VILLENA. MARIA retires.*)

Well met, my lords ! Lara, a word with you.

[*Takes him apart.*]

There 's a new faction making head, they say,
With claims no humbler than the crown itself —
Your crown, perchance — the crown which you may
wear,

If Pedro die without an heir. In sooth,
The king is sickly ; and Castile, I trow,
Would ne'er accept a king from Aragon.
Look to it, Lara.

Lara. What new plot is this ?

Alb. The Guzmans'. Trastamara and Fadrique
Are busy marshalling their chiefest friends,
And spreading rumors, that Alfonso willed
The crown to them, among the multitude.

Lara. Upstarts !

Alb. Yet powerful. Would it not be well
To counterplot among their friends, and crush
The seeds of treason ere they take firm root ?

Lara. It would, indeed. I will about it straight.

[*Going.*]

Alb. I'll tell you more, anon.

Lara. Thanks, thanks! [*Exit.*]

Alb. That bee

Will buzz in Lara's brain for many a day.

He and the Guzmans will have merry times,

Among themselves, while I look on and laugh. [*Aside.*]

Ah! Don Fernando, 'tis a joy to me

To see your smiling features in the court.

Your sister favors you — and, by the by,

Where is that lady? [*Taking him apart.*]

Villena. With her guardian.

Alb. Her guardian? — who, sir?

Vil. Doña Leonor.

Her dismal prison, to my sister's eyes,

Is the bright spot of Spain.

Alb. It is a pity —

A grievous pity! For the king should see

Those charms, the churlish maiden hides from him.

He must be married. — Well, well! —

Vil. Did you say

The king designs to marry?

Alb. Not to-day.

Vil. My sister is betrothed to Don Enrique.

Alb. A very grievous pity!

Vil. Why, my lord?

Alb. His star seems waning. He will scarce out-
live

The many schemes he is so apt at framing,—

Rebellions, murders, and what not.

Vil. Good Heaven!

Is he a traitor?

Alb. 'Tis a pity, though !

I chose your sister as a proper maid
To bring beneath the notice of Don Pedro.
In sooth, I might have pushed her excellence
Some steps before the others. Well, you say
She is betrothed ; of course, that ends it all.

Vil. My lord —

Alb. I'll not detain you.

Vil. If you mean

Your choice fell on Juana, as our queen,
I see no obstacle —

Alb. Nor I, forsooth :

Who could be worthier ?

Vil. She shall come to court.

Alb. That would require a deal of management :
For Doña Leonor can keep her ward,
By the Castilian laws, against us all.
Ask the king's warrant.

Vil. That I will !

Alb. And, lo !

Here comes his grace to grant it.

(*Enter DON PEDRO from hawking, with a bird upon his fist ; accompanied by ENRIQUE, Courtiers, Falconers with hawks, &c.*)

Don Pedro.

Pray you, brother,

Give me your hawk. He is a gallant bird ;
How close his feathers lie ! and what a spread
Of wing he makes in his audacious flight !
There is a head becomes its feathery crest
More than black Edward's ; and his sinewy neck,
Lithe as a serpent's, joins his arching chest
Without a break. Mark, how assured a grip
His talons take upon my glove ! Your hand,

Cased in a gauntlet, could not pinch me thus.
Give me the bird.

Enrique. It flatters me, to think
I can bestow a favor on your grace.
'T is only quittance too.

Don P. O! marry, yes;
He slew my falcon. Alburquerque, hark!

Alb. Your grace?

Don P. Your gift, the great Burgundian hawk,
Was but a haggard, after all your praise.
This is my brother's bird. I'll tell you, now,
How your Burgundian suffered. For a wager,
As to which hawk could strike the quarry first —
Mine or Enrique's — we both cast them off.
But the shrewd heron slipped between the two,
Dropped like a stone, and left the rivals there,
Facing each other, in their topmost flight.
A while they paused, and then, 'gainst nature,
rushed
Grappling together. 'T would have moved your
blood,

Had you but seen the feathered warriors tilt!
Beak threatening beak, and talon locked in talon,
Wheeling and darting, striking and retreating,
Like two brave jousts at a course of spears,
While through the air their riven armor fell
In feathery clouds. Now, your Burgundian hawk
Waged battle nobly; then, anon, he turned,
Turned like a craven — had he flown to me,
I would have wrung his head off — turned and fled!
But Don Enrique's falcon closed, and struck,
Straight through the coward's gorge, a deadly blow!

“Foul!” cried I; “Fair!” Enrique cried; and
while

We stood there wrangling, down fell Burgundy,
Headlong, to earth!

[Laughs.]

Alb. A battle royal, sire!

Worthy the great spectators.

Don P. Tell me, now —

You store your beauty in your country house —
Who was the fair one that reclined upon
Your window-ledge, as we rode forth to-day?

Par Dieu! I heard strange music in the air,
And smelt new odors, as I gazed upon
That wonder, sitting in a haze of light,
Which seemed to eddy with my whirling brain,
And bring a most delicious sickness o'er me.

Alb. Unless your grace may mean my grand-
mother,
Who thinks her charms but ripen with her years,
I have no other female, save my ward,
Maria de Padilla, — a fair girl,
As women go in this world.

Don P. Wondrous fair!

Alb. (*Aside.*) Nibbling already! When the time
is come

That I must look you up a lady-love,
To keep your grace from ogling my Castile,
Maria shall succeed the hawks and dogs:
But hawks and dogs must serve you yet a while.

Vil. Your grace, a boon! I ask my sister —

Alb. (*Aside to him.*) Hist!

Wait till Enrique goes.

Don P. Your sister, how?

Vil. I must reply. (*Aside to ALBUQUERQUE.*) She is
 the ward, your grace,
 Of Doña Leonor, a prisoner now,
 And, therefore, not a guardian capable
 To fill her duties. I demand Juana,
 Both as her brother, and by right of law.

Don P. These are high words.

Alb. (*Aside to VILLENA.*) Shrink, shrink, or lose your
 suit!

Don P. Is not Juana de Villena free
 To come and go, without restraint or dread?

En. Brother —

Vil. Your grace —

Alb. Your highness —

Don P. Gentlemen,

This may be zeal, but 't is not courtesy.
 Enrique, speak.

En. He has a brother's eye
 To some rich lordships in Biscay.

Vil. And thou —

Don P. Now, by the light of heaven, you quarrel
 here,
 Here, in our presence! Don Fernando, think
 Where you are standing; and remember, too,
 He whom you "thou," with impudent contempt,
 Is brother to your king!

Vil. I pray your grace —

Don P. No more! There's many a door to the
 Alcazar,
 And till your sister may see fit to walk
 Through one of them, she's welcome to remain.

En. I thank you, brother.

Don P. Thank Castilian law,

To which we bow, with the same reverence
As does the poorest subject in our realm.

Alb. Abandon all, and trust your cause to me.

[*Apart to VILLENA.*]

Vil. Needs must, — and so forth. [Aside.]

Don P. Ho! break up the court!

This scene distempers me. Your arm, Enrique.

I am not well.

Alb. Room, for the king — room, room!

[*Exit DON PEDRO, supported by ENRIQUE, with all the others
except DOÑA MARIA and ALBURQUERQUE.*]

Doña Maria. You'll never govern him. My son
complained,

And I must follow.

[*Exit.*]

Alb. A headstrong colt, I own —

A very devil to resist the spur;

And yet he may be managed by a hand

That feels the bit with caution, and applies

His rages to his rider's furtherance.

Yes, I can ride him; for one simple reason,—

He cannot find his way unless I guide. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

The Same. A Prison-Room in the same. LEONOR DE GUZMAN
alone.

Leonor. A change from my gay court, a sorry
change!

Yet what is life but changes? And would not

Life's sweetness cloy, without its bitterness?

The ebbs and flows of being keep its tides

Jua. Madam, the heart is sorrowing that the hand
Cannot keep faith.

Leo. Thou 'rt melancholy then?
Thou lov'st the Condé? — thou would'st marry him?

Jua. I said so once, with all my strength of
soul, —
I have not altered since.

Leo. Then get thee ready;
Thou shalt be married ere the sun go down.

Jua. I doubt.— How can I doubt? Your uttered
word
Has ever carried the command of fate.

Leo. I am quite serious. See, Enrique comes!
In faith, I feel a mother's jealousy;
I never know to which of us he comes.

(*Enter ENRIQUE.*)

Enrique. Mother! [Embraces her.]

Leo. Here 's one who has a sweeter claim.

En. Forgive me, dear Juana! I have much
That will concern you both. Your brother vows
To tear you from us, dearest.

Leo. And the king? —

En. Will not consent.

Leo. Then she shall not go hence.

En. The king is ill. A sudden malady,
Of swift and dangerous seeming, struck him down
As he gave audience. All is in confusion,
And each man speculates upon his death.
The rival claimants for the doubtful crown —
Parties of Lara and of Aragon —
With factious haste, are almost up in arms.
Let them get up, and we 'll begin to stir.

Leo. Heaven spare Don Pedro!

En. Frankly, so say I.

Just now, our friends are scantily prepared
To push our fortunes. Fight or fall we must,
Should Pedro leave us.

Leo. True. He stood our friend —
Who had most cause to fear us — with a strength
That made his boyish port heroic,
When the whole court was thirsting for our blood.
Heaven save Don Pedro, therefore! Now, my son,
Should the king die, before thy marriage-rites
With fair Juana have been solemnized,
Thou 'dst miss thy bride.

Jua. Let me retire. [*Going.*]

Leo. Come back,
Thou arrant runaway!

Jua. Indeed — indeed —

Leo. Indeed, indeed, thou art a very woman!

[*Laughing.*]

En. Gentle Juana, do I frighten thee?

Jua. O! no, my Lord.

En. Why dost thou fly me, then?

Jua. I do not know.

Leo. I do. Nay, tremble not;
Our sex's secrets are quite safe with me.
But, to be plain, your nuptials are in peril,
And, with all secrecy, must be performed
Before the day be older. Fashion it
To suit yourselves. [*Exit.*]

Jua. Nay, now, do you come back.

En. She's gone, and left thee to thy direful fate,—
Alone with one who loves thee! Sweet Juana,
How does my mother's purpose seem to thee?

Jua. To me? How seems it to your lordship?

En. Nay,

How seems it to your ladyship? A sigh!

It seems to me the summit of my fate,

The spot from whence I look on happiness,

As on a pleasant land, from some great hill;

Just when the Spring is freshest, ere a leaf

Curled with the yellowing Summer; while the fruit

Is folded in the blossom, and a sun,

Rich with the humid promise of the year,

Looks through the hazy air, and wraps the whole

In dreamy quiet. Dearest, if our lives

Assume no brightness from this point of view,

Let us turn atheists; for love was given

As a foretaste of what the saints enjoy.

Jua. More than my ear finds rapture in your words.

Ah! sir, this eloquence may tire some day,

Or the sweet lips that utter it for me

May keep it for another.

En. Dost thou croak?

Has the mild dove changed voices with the raven?

Here 's that at which my lips will never tire.

[*Kisses her.*]

(*Enter ALBURQUERQUE and VILLENA, with Attendants.*)

Alburquerque. Caught in the act!

En. Ha! sir, do even you

Break on my mother's privacy without

A customary warning?

Alb. I'm short-sighted,

But, pray, is that your mother? What a blush!

[*Laughing.*]

En. Is it a privilege of prime ministers,
To offer insult wheresoe'er they please?

Alb. Forgive me, Condé, I am somewhat gay;
'T would be self-cruelty to stop my humor.
Doña Juana, you must come with us.

Jua. Why should I come?

Alb. (*Shaking a paper.*) I've warrant why you should.

En. Don Pedro's order?

Alb. Ay, sir.

Villena. Sister, come:
You should not harbor with this base-born tribe.

En. You are her brother, and may wag your
tongue
Without my notice.

Jua. Dear Enrique, no!
I will not leave for all the kings on earth.
As my betrothed, and a Castilian knight,
I charge you to protect me from these men!

En. While I have life. Without there!

[*Draws.*]

(*Enter armed Attendants.*)

Gentlemen,

The odds are not so great.

Alb. Arrest them both!
In the king's name, I order it! [*His party advance.*]

En. Stand back!
You that come on so lightly, beat retreat,
Or we will drive you!

Alb. Forward, for the king! [*Draws.*]

(*As the two parties engage, enter between them LEONOR DE
GUZMAN.*)

Lenor. What means this clamor? In my lodg-
ings too!

Do you, sirs, claim to be half civilized,
 Or are ye but a pack of wolves? Put up!
 Think ye I ne'er saw weapons bare before,
 That you would daunt me? What, Lord Chancellor,
 Are you the foremost in your own disgrace?
 For honor's sake, explain!

Alb. I have a warrant —

Leo. First let me read it; then I'll understand
 Your motive in this most disgraceful brawl.

Alb. I have a warrant from Don Pedro, madam,
 To claim the person of your ward, Juana.

Leo. And I would read it.

Alb. An hidalgo's word
 Is proof enough.

Leo. That very much depends
 On the hidalgo.

Alb. (*Asile to VILLENA.*) Damn her cunning!
 'Sdeath!

We're trapped already. Understand, I said
 I'll have a warrant —

Leo. Get your warrant first,
 And take the lady after. Sir, I know
 Each turning in that crooked brain of yours;
 There's not a labyrinth so full of guile,
 In all your mind, but I have tracked it out,
 From its least issue to its turbid source.
 Give up your treachery, at least with me,
 And take to downright violence at once.
 Here I, a guardian by Castilian law,
 Stand on my rights as a Castilian dame:
 Now let the proudest lord within the land,
 Unbacked by orders from the throne itself,
 Abide the conflict! On this outraged spot,

I 'll see my household butchered, one by one,
Ere I will yield a tittle of my rights !

Alb. We are dismissed. 'T were best to go at
once. [*Aside to VILLENA.*]

[*Going, he turns back.*]

I 'll have the warrant, though, or lose my head,—
Ay, and die talking !

Leo. Of all things but heaven.

Ah ! you shrewd schemer of iniquity,
Look that the prodigal plots you send abroad
Do not return from feeding with the swine,
On husks and offal, to offend their father,
While he is sitting in prosperity
Among his kindred !

Alb. Look you, I will have
The warrant !

Leo. You shall have the lady, then.

Alb. Heaven speed you ! We are entered in a
race ;

One or the other shall trip up ere long.

[*Exit, with VILLENA and Attendants.*]

Leo. Now for your marriage ! There is not a
moment

So small, within our reckoning of time,
That is not crowded with a thousand checks
To us and our design. Some one of you,
Seek out my chaplain, with your greatest speed

[*Exit an Attendant.*]

Enrique and Juana, deck yourselves
For the blessed rites. I will forgive the haste
Your toilets may betray. Speed, speed, my loves,
And not fine raiment, is our great need now !

[*Exeunt.*]

A C T I V.

SCENE I. *Seville. The Plaza Real. Parties of Soldiers and armed Citizens cross the stage; some crying "Lara!" some "Fernando of Aragon!" others "Trastamara!" Enter CORONEL and CAÑEDO.*

Cañedo. HEAVENS! what a hubbub!

Coronel. I have stood in breaches
 When the air hissed with shafts and javelins,
 And rang with voices of the engineers
 Cheering their comrades at the thundering rams —
 When furious swords were hammering horrid din
 On shield, and helm, and hauberk — when great
 walls
 And lofty turrets, with incessant crash,
 Strewed shuddering earth with ruin, far and near; —
 I've heard the thunder-clouds, among the hills,
 Roll as if some Titanic monster drove
 His ponderous car across their rocky tops; —
 I've heard the bellowing ocean send his tides,
 Goaded to madness by the hurricane,
 Full forty fathom up the groaning cliffs,
 Until his spray salted the stooping clouds; —
 I've heard a woman scold — heard thee blaspheme —
 Have dreamed of hell, and chaos, and such things; —
 But never, since I pricked an ear at sound,
 Heard I the clamor of this frantic town!

[*Shouts within.*]

Cañ. I'll be as crazy as the best of them.
Castile for Lara!

Cor. Ho! for Lara, ho!
Yell, yell, Cañedo — yell him to the throne!

Cañ. Now, for my part, I like a quiet fight;
I'd rather split a head than split my lungs.

[*Shouts within.*]

Cor. Hear how they roar! (*Enter a Soldier.*) The
newest news, good friend?

Soldier. The king is dead. [*Exit, hastily.*]

Cor. That all? I thought the devil
Was dead and buried, and his fry broke loose.

Cañ. I'll bet he lies.

Cor. Doubtless. The knave's too wise
To speak the truth without some provocation.
Yet, for all that, die young Don Pedro must,
If death's grave heralds, the Sevillian doctors,
Are to be trusted in their mystery.

Cañ. Our side is best.

Cor. For once thou'rt in the right.
Lara is nearer to the crown than they
Who start their adverse claims.

Citizens and Soldiers. (*Within.*) Ho! Lara! Lara!
(*Enter LARA and VILLENA, followed by a crowd of Citizens and Soldiers.*)

Lara. O, curse his treachery! That faithless
wretch,
Sly Albuquerque, has deserted me,
And sides with Aragon.

Villena. His reason's plain;
You're in Seville, and Aragon at home.
'T is time the traitor wants — time, only time.

Lara. Curse, curse his baseness !

Cañ. Lara for Castile !

Cor. Leave off thy yells, and take to curses,
friend ;

Thou seest 't is the new fashion. Curse Don Juan
Alonso de Albuquerque, by each name
He got at baptism !

Cañ. Ay, ten million curses
Hunt him to death, and make him peaceable !
I 'll swear his present life has little ease.

Cor. Is the king dead ?

Vil. Not dead, but dying fast.

Cor. Lara for king !

Lara. You side with us, brave sir ?

What shall we do ?

Cor. Seize on the crown, of course ;
And when you have it on, let Aragon
But reach to pull it off.

Vil. Sound counsel, uncle ;
For were the crown in hand, we 'd strain a while
Ere you should lose it.

Cañ. To the palace, then !
Long live King Lara ! What 's his christian name ?

[*To CORONEL.*]

Cor. Juan — thou block !

Cañ. Long live King Juan ! Shout !

All. Long live King Juan !

(*Enter a crowd crying, "Aragon !"*)

Cañ. Let 's begin our work
By cutting these knaves' throats.

Cor. Well thought of, faith !
Room for the king, or we will tread you down !

(*The crowd shouts, "Castile for Aragon !"*)

Cañ. Ho! forward, then! [Draws.]

Cor. Long live King Juan! On!
[All draw.]

(As the opposing parties are about to engage, enter DON PEDRO, supported between ALBURQUERQUE and another Nobleman, followed by Knights, Attendants, Guards, &c.)

Alburquerque. Back! you who hold allegiance to the king!

All. (Uncovering.) The king! the king!
[They fall back.]

Don Pedro. What shouts were those we heard? Who cried, "King Juan,"—who cried, "Aragon,"—While I, King Pedro, reign? [Staggers.]

Alb. (Supporting him.) It was not you, My lord of Lara, certainly not you? You are too modest — if I know your lordship — To bellow treason in your own behalf.

Lara. It was not I.

Alb. Nor Don Fernando, either; His head is too well set upon his neck, To wish it off. Hey, Coronel?

Cor. 'T was I.

Cañ. And I, so please you.

Cor. (Aside to him.) Hush thy stupid noise! Keep thy thick tongue away from my affairs! Hearing his grace was dead, and loving so The kingly office, for his royal sake,— As widows who lament a husband's loss By marrying another,—we bethought us That 't was high time to have another king. Finding the lord of Lara close at hand, We, boiling over with our loyal mood, Cried him for king, with the best lungs we have — Much in the fishwives' manner.

Were to knock out the asker's brains. Away! —
Gently ; forget not, in your haste, you bear
All Alburquerque's treasure in your arms.

[*Exeunt with DON PEDRO all but ALBURQUERQUE.*]

What a brave tool is that young king of mine !
How he rends treason, when my hand directs !
There 's Lara over, spite of all his noise ;
The other curs, that only barked at him,
Have slunk away before my bolder tread,
And peace is slumbering o'er the quiet town,
Dreaming of bright to-morrow. Dreams and hopes,
That steal away the life of silly man —
The sleeping and the waking vision — which
Is idler, falser, and less oft fulfilled ?
Now brooding Night has turned the downy side
Of her dark wing upon this peaceful hour,
And all the world seems drowsy for repose.
Perhaps, to-night, even prime ministers
May sleep their time out. I will home, and try.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

The Same. A Room in the Alcazar. Enter DOÑA MARIA.

Doña Maria. Must the whole purpose of my life
be lost,

Because a wilful boy is obstinate ?
Must all the passions which my wrongs evoked,
To shape my destiny, subside again
Without their natural issue ? I am naught,
There is no leading motive to prolong
My aimless days, unless I find revenge.
No heart-struck wight so ached to bless his eyes

With the fair creature who bewildered him,
 As I to see the justice which is mine
 Rush to its consummation. I have gazed
 Upon revenge, until it seems a thing
 Holy as thoughts of heaven ; and sure it is
 Justice, not vengeance, to the eyes above.
 Suppose I kill her ? with my own true hand
 Sweep her from earth ? What could Don Pedro do ?
 Murder his mother ? Well, and what of that ?
 He could not call the Guzman back to life ;
 And I 'd die laughing. Ha ! 't is a new thought,
 Yet good and tempting. Could I reach her, now,—
 Find some occasion. The Alcazar's doors
 Are shut against me. I must think of this.
 Ha ! ha ! it would be rare !— with my own hand !

[*Laughing.*]

(*Enter ALBURQUERQUE.*)

Alburquerque. There, madam, that 's the courtly
 face I like !

How well a smile becomes you !

Doña M. But you, sir,
 Are not the blest occasion of my smile,
 Your heart must tell you.

Alb. At the Guzmans still !

Doña M. No, no ; a happy train of gay ideas
 Gathered in one, and burst into a smile.
 Had you your enemy beneath your foot,
 Feeling with one hand where his heart beat most,
 While in the other gleamed your naked brand,
 Quivering with eagerness to end the deed,—
 Would you not smile ?

Alb. Most likely.

Doña M. Ay, you 'd grin
With all the beauty of a tickled fiend.

Alb. My beauty thanks you.

Doña M. When will you bestow
The vengeance I demand, not as a grace,
But as a sacred right?

Alb. Patience, a while.

Doña M. Patience forever! thus you put me off.

Alb. These Guzmans — by the by, well thought!
I'll get my warrant. Sickness has destroyed
Don Pedro's power to battle with my voice.
I talk him mad. He 'd give the whole broad earth —
Throwing Castile in, as of no account —
For one short hour of peace. I'll get my warrant.

Doña M. What warrant?

Alb. To remove the Guzman's ward
Here date the birth, too, of your own revenge.
Don Pedro mends. A month will see our power
Flooding Castile; and as we rise in height,
We drain the Guzmans dry. Another month,
And I will force them to rebellious acts, —
To open treason, and defiant arms.
Another still, shall see them at my feet,
Grovvelling, and spurned! I hate her with a hate
You cannot add to, nor abate, one jot.
Your hate is honest, therefore harmless, lady;
But mine is deadly, and would crawl and crawl,
Through patient centuries, so that, at last,
It might bound up and sting! There's my whole
heart;

Make what you please of it.

Doña M. You 'd rival me
In my dear purpose? She is mine, I say,

And I will have her! See you keep your hands
 From scorching, by this meddling in my fires!
 Sir, you presume to take upon yourself
 The part of principal, whom I designed
 Only as instrument. Could I suppose
 That there were one to share my hate with me,
 To take my vengeance from my rightful hands,
 Feel all my triumph, — by yon heavenly light,
 I'd turn to loving Leonor, and stand
 A shield and falchion between her and harm!

Alb. Are you quite sane?

Doña M. I know not that I am;
 But this I know, I'm jealous in revenge,
 And I will overreach you. Look you, sir,
 If she must die, to glut an enmity,
 'T is for my cause alone.

Alb. Forgive my zeal.
 I thought my hatred to your life-long foe
 Would please you well.

Doña M. It does not please. You raise
 A puny cause, and equal it with mine.

Alb. 'T is very strange!

Doña M. Hate with a heart like mine,
 And 't will be strange no longer.

Alb. Hatred, then,
 Has jealousies like love.

Doña M. Like everything
 That takes a sole possession of the heart.
 While you were working towards my private ends,
 I trusted you — nay, urged you to the task;
 But, now, you rise and call the thing your own: —
 Hence, I abjure you!

Alb. 'T is a curious light,

Thrown on the morbid passions of the mad :
 For that the wearing process of her wrongs
 Has driven her mad, I see no way to doubt. [*Aside.*]
 Well, madam, take her — I concede to you
 All right and title in your Leonor —
 Take her, God bless you, and be happy !

Doña M.

Ha !

You 'd cozen me ? I see it in your smirk.
 You think me crazy ? I am sane, good sir, —
 Quite sane enough to counterplot your snares.
 I 'll make you own, Lord Chancellor, ere long,
 That all the craft of statesmanship falls short,
 When its divided interests must contend
 With one lone passion of a woman's heart.
 Farewell ! I ask no counsel, seek no aid :
 One of us twain shall have a laugh at this ! [*Exit.*]

Alb. She 's raving mad, I 'll swear it on the mass !
 Another wild enthusiast to watch —
 Another human thing to check and turn,
 And hold and loosen, and so overthrow.
 The Guzman 's mine ! — Why, I 'm as mad as she !
 There 's something solid in her lunacy,
 Something that finds an echo in my heart.

The Guzman 's mine, for all. Well, well — (*Enter*

CORONEL.) How now ?

Coronel. My lord —

Alb. Why, so was Lara yesterday.

Cor. He 's dead.

Alb. Thank God !

Cor. Villena, too.

Alb. More thanks !

You see how Heaven is fighting for Castile !

Cor. Their deaths were sudden.

Alb. The less pain.

Cor. Some say —

Alb. I poisoned them?

Cor. 'T is said.

Alb. They wrong my office ;

Now I am minister, I use the axe.

Your news is better than your scandal, sir :

For it I 'll make you the king's Cup-bearer :

More such, and I 'll divide my place with you.

Cor. I 'm not ambitious for a crown of thorns.

Alb. (*Starting.*) Right! you are strangely right!

The crown is mine,

The glory mine, — perhaps, the shameful death.

Right, Coronel! — You heard?

Cor. Nothing, my lord.

Alb. 'T were wiser you did not. Thank Heaven,
again,

For all its bounties to our fair Castile!

Cor. (*Aside.*) I mar these sweet devotions. Ha!

ha! ha!

[*Laughing.*]

That holy thought keeps wretched company.

Alb. What said you, Coronel? — a crown of
thorns?

You are chief Cup-bearer — remember that.

I must go watch the Guzmans. Farewell, sir.

[*Exit CORONEL.*]

A crown of thorns! — Right, very right, indeed!

[*Exit slowly.*]

SCENE III.

The Same. A large Hall in the Same. LEONOR DE GUZMAN and ENRIQUE discovered. Enter an Attendant.

Leonor. No tidings of my chaplain ?

Attendant. None, your grace.

Enrique. To catch priests, mother, thou must fish
with bait, —

Fat livings, or fair maidens —

Leo. Shame ! for shame !

Thou takest old scandals for new truths, Enrique.

It is too much the fashion of our age :

But, son, remember, he who jests at things

Held sacred by the body of mankind,

Insults the dignity of man, and sets

His flashy jokes above our grandest thoughts.

En. I meant but little.

Leo. Doubtless : yet thou 'dst claim

A place in wisdom over all thy race, —

Past, present, and to come. Go forth again,

And push your search with busy secrecy.

[*Exit Attendant.*]

Perhaps the chaplain keeps away through fear.

I've spent a goodly time in argument,

To overcome his scruples at the rites.

Naught but the contract, with the royal seal,

Will satisfy him : that I have mislaid.

En. 'T is the first mention thou hast made of it :
I have it, mother.

Leo. Heaven be praised ! where, where ?

En. Close, at my lodgings.

Leo. Fly, and bring it here.

How blind was I, not to have questioned thee !

Time has slipped by — most precious, precious time —
While I consulted with myself. — O, fly !

[*Exit ENRIQUE.*]

And so Enrique had it all the while !
This comes from self-dependence. Over-trust
In our own knowledge is an ignorance
More perilous than modest diffidence,
That doubts and asks, and from a child, perchance,
May hear replies that daunt philosophers.
I searched the world for that which lay at home,
Formed secret plans to ferret out this deed,
When a mere opening of my thought-pinch'd lips
Was all I needed. We consume in thoughts
That are the tattle of the market-place ;
And our best wisdom, after all our toil,
Is but the world's, in rounded sentences.
Who 'd thought Enrique — Well, I 'm wiser now ;
An open heart is a sage counsellor.
Juana !

(*Enter JUANA DE VILLENA.*)

Juana. Madam !

Leo. It has come, at last, —
The wedding-day, I promised long ago.

Jua. And every day since then.

Leo. Thou 'rt peevisish.

Jua. No :

'T is the first pledge you ever left unfilled.
Madam, I love you, and can pardon more
Than that which lies not in your power to give.
Yet if I doubt the baffled promise now,
I blame this prison more than you, dear lady.

Leo. (*Kissing her.*) Thou 'rt a sweet maiden ! but
we 'll see, we 'll see.

This prison — true, it has perplexed my will ;
Yet even those doors can never shut out hope.
I keep the freshness of my mind untouched,
Fill these close chambers with my smiles, and wake
A ready music in the vaulted roofs
With pardonable laughter. Dear Juana,
Had they not prisoned me, I should have sunk
Beneath Alfonso's death ; but sufferings,
That were disjointed from my deeper grief,
Roused all my strength to beat them back again.
I thank my enemies for this, at least.

(*Reënter ENRIQUE.*)

Enrique. Here is the parchment.

Leo. (*Reading.*) All in proper form.
In to my heart, and nestle in its warmth !
Once more, Juana, don thy wedding-clothes,
And wait my call within. Enrique, thou
Stand on a moment's warning to come forth.

En. We have observed this form for many a day ;
Yet, as it pleases, we will play it o'er.

Leo. To-day my heart is whispering success.

(*Enter Attendant.*)

Attendant. Your chaplain, madam. [*Exit.*]

Leo. Ha ! In, in, my loves !
The sun is shining on your brightest day !

(*Exeunt ENRIQUE and JUANA. Enter the CHAPLAIN.*)

Do not prepare thyself with shrugs, and frowns,
And signals of distress. Good father, look,

Here is the deed! 'T is signed by King Alfonso,
 Witnessed by all the ministers, and sealed
 With the armorial castles of the realm.
 Thou doubt'st? Hast thou betrayed me?

Chaplain. Daughter, no:
 Yet there are fears, not only for the Church,
 But thee, who 'll be the chiefest sufferer
 By this concealed affair.

Leo. Think not of me.
 If by this deed I made a sacrifice
 Of the few days which Heaven designs for me,
 Think'st thou not, father, I would through with it,
 Though every step were nearer to the grave?

Chap. Indeed, I fear —

Leo. Fears are no guests of mine.

Chap. Yet for thyself.

Leo. My children are myself:
 I have no care beyond my family.
 I know the weight and moment of this deed;
 It may exalt Enrique to a crown —
 Ay, even to a crown: and as for me,
 Father, it can but kill; and if I feel
 No fear of death, his common sting is gone.

Chap. I will consent.

Leo. O, bless thee! — Hark! I hear
 A cat-like foot-fall in the corridor. [*Drops on her knees.*]
 Father, I do confess, I have much wronged,

(*Enter ALBURQUERQUE.*)

In spirit, that good man, Lord Alburquerque.
 I do confess —

Alburquerque. What farce is this?

Leo. My lord,
You see me at confession. Pardon me ;
My sins are heavy.

Alb. I can witness that.

Leo. Your evidence will never reach the court
I shall be tried by. In a moment, sir,
I'll be at leisure.

Alb. Here 's some villany !
I'll try her, though.

[*Aside and exit, dropping his handkerchief.*]

Chap. Daughter, arise ! he 's gone.

Leo. A moment, father,—bear with me a while.
I do confess, I've had suspicious thoughts
Of good Lord Alburquerque —

(*Reënter ALBURQUERQUE suddenly.*)

Ah ! I knew it ! [*Aside.*]

Alb. I dropped my — [*Looks around.*]

Leo. Wits, my lord ?

Alb. Hum ! Still on her knees :
A pious sight ! (*Aside.*) My precious handkerchief :
A love-gift, madam.

[*Picks it up, and abstractedly begins tearing it.*]

Leo. And you treat it thus !

Alb. 'Fore Heaven ! you 'd best not mock me !
[*Going.*]

Leo. Mock you, sir ?
Do I offend ? — Nay, stay, my lord. Have you,
Or any of the courtiers, seen my son ?
Pray send Enrique to me.

Alb. (*Aside.*) So it seems
I have outrun suspicion. Should I see
The Condé, madam, I will be your page.

Something is wrong here. Could I trust my nose,
I'd say that I smelt treachery in the air.
I'll not neglect you long, — be sure of that.

[*Aside and exit.*]

Leo. (*Springing up.*) Now, father, haste! Juana
and Enrique,
Come forth! My promise is well-nigh fulfilled.

(*Reënter JUANA and ENRIQUE.*)

On, to the chapel!

Chap. For thy sake alone,
I made my opposition.

Leo. Say no more,
But get about thy duties. I'll stand guard.
Gather my household, as you go along,
And take them in as witnesses. No words;
Words are the clogs of action. [*Exeunt all but LEONOR.*]

Ha, ha, ha! [*Laughing.*]

Good Alburquerque, if you knew of this!
O, gracious Heaven, what if they murder me!
Why, let them strike! I've done a deed to-day,
With which Castile shall ring for years to come.
What is my life to my Enrique's love,
And blessed tears upon my memory?
Already, in my fancy, I can see
A shadowy crown that binds his regal brows,
And deepens, slowly, till its form becomes
Substantial matter, blazing with great gems,
And all the royal symbols of Castile! —

(*Reënter ALBURQUERQUE.*)

Ha! vulture!

Alburquerque. Fresh from the confessional,

You re-begin your naughtiness. Alas!
 Continued penitence must pre-suppose
 Continued sin. I fear such penitence
 Is Satan's stale temptation to new guilt.
 Ward, I must keep your soul in stricter charge.

Leo. A man may enter the infernal gates
 With proverbs on his lips. You are a bee
 That hives its honey for another's use.
 My lord, is Don Enrique found?

Alb. He's here.

Leo. Indeed? I see him not. [*Laughing.*]

Alb. O, fie! my lady,
 Is childish trifling the best wit you bring,
 To meet at our joined issue? For my part,
 Being no ready jester with my tongue,
 I put my jokes in writing. Look you, now,
 [*Shows a paper.*]

Here is the substance of my thoughts, — the war-
 rant,

Signed by Don Pedro, which I promised you.

Leo. (*Reading.*) Did the king sign this?
 And must Juana be withdrawn from me?
 You use me harshly. Must she go to-day?

Alb. Upon the instant. For Don Pedro thinks
 Such wide possessions as Juana holds
 Are dangerous wardships in a subject's hands.
 A treacherous guardian might employ her wealth
 For private objects, without fear of loss, —
 In treasons, plots. — I see you understand.

Leo. The king thinks thus?

Alb. And, therefore, has resolved.

Leo. A wise young king! — both wise and reso-
 lute!

They say his wisdom's at his elbow ever,
Not in his brain, where common wit abides.

Alb. Where is Juana?

Leo. At her prayers, my lord.

Alb. This is a prayerful house.

Leo. I'll summon her.

Alb. Yes, and at once. For since her brother's
death —

Leo. Her brother's death! Poor soul! she knows
it not.

How fell it, sir?

Alb. Through lack of life, they say.

Bring her, and you shall hear.

Leo. Miguél!

(Enter an Attendant.)

Alb. I'll go. [*Going.*]

Leo. (*Preventing him.*) Nay, nay, my lord, you'll
keep me company.

Miguél, you'll find my ward, engaged in prayer,
Within the chapel. After she has done —

You understand me? — after she has done,

His lordship fain would greet her. As you go,

Close all the doors, and make their fastenings tight.

[*Aside to him.*]

(Exit Attendant, closing the doors.)

So much I hold the church's offices

In my respect —

[*Noise without.*]

Alb. (*Starting.*) I heard a bolt shoot.

Leo. — That,

Taking the liberty —

Alb. You talk for time :

Your face betrays you. Cope with me, forsooth!

There 's some vile plot afoot within this house !
The air is black with it ! — Ho ! there, my guard !

(*Enter Soldiers.*)

Search the Alcazar !

Leo. (*Aside.*) Now, they 're at the rites !
Maritum juxta ritum sanctæ. — Now,
Juana answers, *Volo !* — Now, the ring
Is blessed, is sliding on her finger — I
Was married once. — *Oremus*, says the priest :
And now, the benediction ! — Hold, my lord ! —

[*Aloud.*]

Per Christum Dominum — *Amen !* I cry, —
Ha ! ha ! my lord, you are an age too late !

[*Laughing.*]

Alb. Are all the women in the kingdom mad ?
Ha ! madam, are your glances all that way ? —
In, to the chapel !

Guard. (*Trying the door.*) It is barred, my lord.

Alb. I did not ask you if the door were barred,
I ordered you to pass it. Find a way, [*Drawing.*]
Or, by the saints, I 'll drive you through it ! — On !

[*Soldiers attempt to force the door.*]

Leo. Stand, thou firm oak !

Alb. It yields ! Let me assist.

Leo. (*Holding him.*) My lord, you shall not ! — nay,
beseech you, sir ! —

There 's naught within.

Alb. (*Struggling with her.*) Thou liest ! Unhand me,
fool !

I would not do thee violence. — Off ! off !

[*Flings her off.*]

(*A burst of organ-music is heard.*)

Leo. 'Tis done ! 'tis done ! Now tear the prison
down,
And make its ruins monuments for me !

(*Organ-music. The door gives way. The CHAPLAIN, followed by ENRIQUE, JUANA, and a bridal-train, are discovered within the doorway, and slowly enter.*)

Alb. What means this mummerly ?

Leo. A marriage masque —
No more, my lord — a masque, a merry sham.
You're welcome to our bridal !

Alb. Are they wed ?

Chaplain. They are, my lord.

Alb. Sir priest, your shaven crown
Shall ache for this !

Chap. (*Offering the parchment.*) Here's my commis-
sion : Read.

Alb. Curse thee and thy commission ! Some one
— Guard,

Drag down that sorceress to a dungeon ! Wretch,
I'll make you wish this wedding-day of yours
Were blotted from the calendar !

Leo. And I —

I kept my promise, Alburquerque. Mark,
I have outdone you in your own bad trade !
O, Heaven ! — I cannot reach thee, dear Juana ;

[*Staggers towards her.*]

But bless thee, daughter ! I am sick with joy.
My lord, pray kiss the bride for me — O ! O !

[*Faints*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A Street in Talavera. The houses hung with banners, garlands, etc. The street spanned by triumphal arches, and strewn with flowers. Music, bells, shouts, etc., are heard. Enter a crowd of Citizens.*

First Citizen. HAS the procession passed?

Second Citizen.

Not yet.

Third Citizen.

Keep back!

Your bushy-head is stuck before my eyes:

I would not see the progress in your hair.

Fourth Citizen. You're coarse.

Third C.

But honest.

First C.

Have you seen the king?

Second C. Often.

First C.

What looks he like?

Second C.

A well-grown boy:

He favors your cub, Pablo.

First C.

So, indeed?

Second C. Ay, he's but human; has your aches
and ails, —

Sweats when he's hot, and shivers when he's cold, —

Eats when he's hungry, drinks when he is dry, —

Will die, sans question, if he catch the plague,

And go to dust the same as any here.

First C. That's odd! He wears a crown?

Second C.

Not always, friend;

'T would make his own crown ache.

First C.

You're passing dry.

Citizens. (Within.) Long live King Pedro !

All. Ho ! long live the king !

(Ladies throw garlands and flowers from the balconies and windows. Musi., ringing of bells, etc. Enter, in triumphal procession, Noblemen, Knights, Gentlemen, Priests, Pages, Soldiers, etc., with banners, arms, crosses, etc.; then, CORONEL, bearing a great cup.)

First C. Who's that ?

Second C. Alonso Coronel, by trade

A traitor : he shifts his lieges with his coats.

First C. He's the king's poisoner ; for, see his cup.

Second C. That is a private office.

(Shouts. As CORONEL and the rest pass off, enter the Grand Standard-bearer, the Lieutenant-general of Castile, the Lord High Chamberlain, the Captain of the Guard, and others of the royal household, in their robes, and bearing the insignia of their offices.)

First C. Look, look, sir !

There goes the king, carrying his golden crown

Upon a cushion, for his better ease.

Second C. The saints forgive ! That is the Lord Lieutenant.

First C. He must be honest, to be trusted thus.

Now, never tell me that's not the king's headsman ; I see the sword. How grim the villain looks !

Second C. Why, neighbor, he is the Lord Chamberlain.

First C. Is that the king's sword ?

Second C. Ay.

First C. Were I the king,

I'd keep my sword and jewels to myself ;

For fear they 'd knock my brains out with the one,
To steal the other.

(*Enter DON PEDRO, ALBURQUERQUE, DOÑA MARIA, Ladies, &c.*)

Who is he that smiles? —
The ugly fellow with the seals and key? —
The king's clerk, ha?

Second C. The greatest Don in Spain,
Lord Chancellor, and Treasurer of the realm,
Juan de Alburquerque.

First C. By the saints!
I'll keep my body from his clutches. Lord!
Had ever man such wicked eyes as his!

Third C. And brains to back them.

[ALBURQUERQUE smiles and bows to the people.]

All. Ho! King Pedro! ho! [DON PEDRO bows.]

First C. What little boy is that who bows his
head?

Second C. That is the king.

First C. The Lord forgive me, friend!
I took him for the seal-and-key man's knave,
Aping his master.

Third C. You might shoot more wide.

All. Hush! hush!

First C. The king would speak.

Third C. The king, indeed!
Wait till the Chancellor has cleared his throat.

(*Shouts. ALBURQUERQUE ascends a stand, smiling and bowing.*)

Alburquerque. Loyal Castilians, in the king's be-
half,

I thank your noble spirits for this cheer.
His grace has pleased to make me orator,
More from affection than my own deserts;

And if my speech sound roughly in your ears,
Blame not the king, but say the instrument
Fits not his purpose.

First C. That is sweet enough.

Third C. Soft as the velvet on a tiger's paw.

Alb. I do not pause for want of matter, friends,
But from a flood of it. 'T were tedious,
Even in your faithful hearing, to recount
The many glories of King Pedro's reign.
You who affect your country — as I trust
All do, within the compass of my voice —
Can call to mind the doleful days she passed
Ere the young king was firmly in his seat.
Which one of you could leave his cottage-door,
With full assurance of a safe return?
Whose wife was sacred? Whose fair daughter kept
Her chastity inviolate? Or who
Had heart to lay up wealth, or gather flocks,
Or plant a vineyard, or plough up a field,
Or do the lightest labor, that reposed
Upon the future for its just reward?
And why? Because the land was faction's prey.
Because the cottage looked askance, in dread,
Upon the neighboring castle. Because law —
That equal arbiter 'twixt high and low —
Was but a word. Because your pleasant fields
Were trodden by the bloody foot of war.
Because your wives were ravished 'neath your eyes,
By shameless ruffians, and your daughters led
Into a servitude more infamous
Than old Egyptian bondage. — Ay, and you
Were scoffed, insulted, scourged, — nay, slain out-
right, —

If your poor tongues arose in mutiny
 Against your savage masters. Scarce a year,
 And all these horrors were familiar things.
 O, what a change — O, what a blessed change —
 Has fallen upon Castile! I've tamed — I mean,
 The king has tamed his lords, destroyed their dens,
 Scattered their servile troops, avenged your wrongs;
 And turned his nobles to a better use
 Than plundering, torturing, and murdering you.
 Can you ask more, who have security
 For house and household, faith in property,
 Equal and proper justice unto all,
 And the mild triumphs of a settled peace?

All. No, no! Long live King Pedro!

Alb.

It assures

His royal mind, to hear you answer thus,
 And ratifies his future policy.
 There may be some who murmur at the king,
 Even while his gentle goodness shelters them:
 To them I say, that perfect government
 Is not the offspring of a single day;
 But, like the greater creatures of the earth,
 Is rounded slowly in the womb of time,
 And brought to light with more extended pains
 Than the less bulky matters of the world.
 Once more, I thank you for his majesty;
 Who, when he's hence, would ask your memories
 To hold no thoughts of him that are not warmed
 By the dear currents of your grateful hearts.
 Therefore, his grace has ordered me to give
 A royal largess to the suffering poor;
 Found a new chapel in Saint Pedro's name;

Rebuild your bridges, open up your roads,
And make your fountains spout with wine to-day.

All. Long live King Pedro!—God protect the
king!

[*Exeunt DON PEDRO and ALBURQUERQUE, bowing, DOÑA MARIA,
and the others.*]

First C. 'T was a grand speech!

Third C. You understood it, then?

First C. O, yes; about the womb of government
Producing monsters, and the like. But, then,
The largess was the thing!

Third C. He but returns
A piece of what the taxes wrung from us:
He's liberal in our pockets.

First C. Friends, come on!
There'll be more speeches, and more largess, too.
What a sweet gentleman the Treasurer is!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

*The Same. A Dungeon in the Castle. The music of DON PEDRO'S
progress, the shouts of the people, &c., are occasionally heard
without. Enter LEONOR DE GUZMAN.*

Leonor. Shout on, good people!—ring, ye merry
bells!—

Ye jocund instruments of harmony,
Breathe your glad music to the breathless heavens!
That he who sitteth in eternal joy,
Amid angelic minstrelsy, may smile
To see his happy children mimic him!
I am glad the world rejoices; for poor I,
Who sit amid the embers of my life,

Turning its dying fancies o'er and o'er,
 Had almost lost my faith in happiness.
 My sorrows cast a shadow either way,
 Darkening the past, and glooming towards the
 future. —

This is not just. Misfortunes I have known,
 Cares, troubles, dangers; yet some touch of light
 Has gilt the summits of my drearest fate,
 Just as the hour seemed darkest. I have known
 Long days of rapture, nights of sweet content,
 Lit by prophetic dreams of coming cheer,
 And memories of forgotten happiness.
 I have no right to murmur. Born to naught,
 I lived a queen; unwedded, I was loved;
 Loved, I brought forth a numerous progeny;
 And they, though base-born, only less than kings.
 My deeds have given my country history;
 My virtues live in many a grateful heart
 That knew their bounty; and my fate shall draw
 The drooping eyelid o'er full many a tear
 That falls upon the silence of the past: —
 I am immortal in man's memory. [*Shouts, music, &c.*]
 Therefore, rejoice, good people of Castile,
 And give dumb instruments a voice of joy!
 You share a cheerfulness which once was mine.

(*Enter JUANA and the CHAPLAIN.*)

Juana. Joy, mother, joy! — Yet this is cruel in
 me,
 To bring my merriment to your abode.
 Forgive my folly!

Leo. Joy, Juana, joy!
 Shall I who love thee, to the point of pain,

Not make my dwelling echo with thy joy?
 See, I can laugh, and sing, and play the fool,
 As well as any in the sunny fields! [*Laughs and sings.*]

False lover, if thou 'lt not love me,
 Then, sure, I 'll be another's;
 For, ha! ha! ha! the world is wide,
 And man has many brothers.

For, ha! ha! ha! the fields are green,
 When love shines bright above me;
 But other fields may seem as green,
 When other hearts may love me.

If thou wilt not divide thy joy with me,
 Why, then, I 'll weep, indeed.

Jua. Enrique — O,
 Mere rapture makes me stumble in my speech —
 Enrique has escaped, and sheltered him
 In the Asturias.

Leo. Now, be praise to Heaven!
 A while ago, I almost did repine,
 Because these walls were dark, and yon small grate
 Was chary of the sunlight, and the drops
 Of chilling water, from these sweating vaults,
 Seemed to be falling on my lonely heart.
 But, now, the walls are windows, and the grate
 Glows, as if burning in the central sun,
 And every drop falls from the blue above,
 Like rich celestial dew. (*Shouts, &c., without.*) **Ay,**
 shout again,
 Shout, ye blind multitudes! for I desire
 A nation's voice to tell my gratitude!
 I knew the springs of mercy were not dry,

I knew God's hand sowed blessings through the
world,

I knew this dungeon hid me not from him,
And yet I dared repine !

Chaplain. Daughter, thy words
Are fervent with the essence of true grace.
Hast thou repented of the sinful tie
That bound thee to Alfonso ?

Leo. Father, no ;
Frankly, I tell thee, it is there my heart
Fights with thy holy teachings. I repent
The wrong our union did the hapless queen,
The public scandal of a life like ours,
The charter which we gave to those who sought
Excuses in example ; but the tie —
The pure connection of two faithful hearts,
Through the mysterious avenues of love —
Seems something holier, something nearer heaven,
Than aught the Church has gathered from above.
There is no creed for this, no law, I own,
Save that which nature whispers in our ears ;
And, in her whisper, pardon if I thought
I heard the still small voice.

Chap. Ah ! daughter, daughter,
This mars thy faith, and makes it incomplete.
Thy stubborn clinging to one darling sin
Will lose thee heaven.

Leo. Heaven judge me ! I have judged
According to the light within my soul.
If there was better light, as thou dost urge,
It never shone for me. — No more of this.

Chap. Thou 'st never felt the guilt of thy misdeed ?

Leo. Never, so help me Heaven! Now, if thou wilt,
 Heal o'er the other wounds within my soul;
 But leave this bare to God's anointing eye.
 My task on earth is finished. Father, come,
 And get me ready for a higher life. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

The Same. A State Apartment in the same. DON PEDRO, DOÑA MARIA, and ALBURQUERQUE discovered.

Don Pedro. Now that our rule is settled in Castile,
 And we the darlings of the people's hearts,
 Were it not well, amid our happiness,
 To cast an eye on mercy, and declare
 A general amnesty?

Alburquerque. Methinks, your grace
 Has simply turned the matter upside down.
 For, by your favor, as your arm is strong,
 And able to bear out your royal will,
 Now is the time most fit for punishment.
 Now weed the kingdom of your enemies,
 By their decay enriching your tried friends;
 And if the vassals murmur for their lords,
 Give them grand bull-fights, at the dead lords' cost.
 Thus says my almanac.

Don P. My lord, you're wise;
 And to your hands we trust our government,
 With good assurance of prosperity.
 Yet, surely, there are some, now prisoners—
 For I have heard our castles groan with them—
 Whose liberation would not harm the state.

'T was but to-day Fadrique pressed a suit
To free his mother, Doña Leonor.
And so far as my unripe wit may go,
I see no reason —

Alb. But I see a thousand
Why you should chop her head off!

Doña Maria. (*Laughing.*) Pardon me :
Was it because she over-reached your skill
In Don Enrique's marriage ?

Alb. That will do, —
Out of a thousand reasons, that's enough.
I freely own, she circumvented me.

Doña M. Which only proves — [*Pauses.*]

Alb. Well, what ?

Doña M. That you were gulled
Less by her skill than by your want of it.

Alb. Show me so deep a woman. —

Doña M. (*Aside to him.*) Here, sir. [*Curtseys.*]

Alb. Pish !

Your highness should do one of these two things ·
Either put Doña Leonor to death,
Or make her your prime minister.

Don P. (*Laughing.*) You jest.

Alb. The saints forbid ! for, ere the year be up,
Castile will be alone with one of us.
In soberness, I would advise your grace
To give me warrant for that woman's death.
I'll execute it in a private way,
With little noise —

Doña M. And little pain to her.
How feeling in your lordship ! what a care
To make death comfortable ! Please, your grace,
I, as a woman, cry against an act

That would disgrace the honor of your sex ;
 One whose sole motive and excuse would be
 Your victim's weakness.

Don P. You forget your wrongs.

Doña M. Ay, in the presence of so foul a wish,
 I blush to know my thoughts were kindred once.
 Time and her sufferings have so moved my heart,
 That I would greet her with a sister's kiss,
 Rather than render her to that bad man,
 Who 'd stain your ermine for a private pique.

Don P. Mother, this mercy shows —

Alb. Ay, shows, your grace —
 Nothing but shows — you hit the very word !
 Her mercy is not real, 't is counterfeit,
 It has to me a hollow-hearted sound ;
 And yet she 'd palm it —

Don P. Recollect yourself !

Your spleen breaks in upon your sovereign's speech,
 To vilify his mother. Have a care,
 Or even you may carry it too far.
 Must I deny the virtue I behold,
 To trust the secret guilt your words betray ?
 You cover your revenge in robes of state,
 And ask my voice to sanction the vile hag ;
 While naked mercy must be shuffled by,
 To give your harlot room. Beware, my lord,
 Lest these instructions in cruel policy
 Be not too well remembered, — lest the spring
 Of impious knowledge, opened in my mind,
 Some day, o'erwhelm the opener !

Alb. 'T was my haste :

Yet I can show the motives — Sire, you frown —
 You frown upon your faithful counsellor !

By skill and grace, if not by honesty.

[Lays down the seals and key.]

Lie there — until I pick ye up again. [Aside and exit.]

Don P. My lord!

Doña M. He's gone. Alas! dear gentleman,
He was sincere, no doubt, in his intent;
But Leonor, poor creature, must not die:
She is the mother of thy father's sons.

Thou 'lt free her soon?

Don P. Not yet.

Doña M. Thou 'lt give her hope?

Don P. Yes, if the Chancellor consent.

Doña M. But, Pedro,
Thou art the king, and can do anything.

Don P. I'm not so sure of that. Too well I know,
I cannot govern this Castile of mine,
Without Lord Alburquerque. Mother, send,
Send to his palace, bid him come to me;
And say, his seals are lying at my feet,
Awaiting his return.

Doña M. I'll go myself,
In secrecy and silence. 'T were not well
To have this business noised abroad. True, true,
We cannot do without the Chancellor.
Farewell! — Pray, trust thy signet-ring to me,
And let me bear a little ray of hope
To Leonor. 'T is an odd fancy, ha?
Yet words of hope and comfort, from my mouth,
Would move her strangely.

[Drawing the ring from his finger.]

Don P. 'T is as well, perhaps,
To grant her wish; for Leonor must die. [Aside.]
Thou must not leave ere you are reconciled.

Forgive some rudeness from her natural pride,
 And say I pity her. But, then, the state,
 Or Alburquerque, or whate'er it is,
 Will murder her! (*Aside.*) Well, take my signet-
 ring —

The Chancellor would rage to see it go — [*Aside.*]
 Would it were always used in such fair deeds!
 Juana keeps with her — she owes me that;
 I gave Fadrique leave to see her, too;
 Another kindness which she'll thank me for.
 But, then, the state — O! mother —

[*Walks up the stage.*]

Doña M.

Farewell, son!

(*As she is going, reënter ALBURQUERQUE, with a bundle of papers.*
He regards her fixedly — she returns his look.)

Alburquerque. Well, what now?

Doña M. Nothing, my good lord.

Alb. Hum! hum!

Nothing, indeed? You have a conquering look.

Doña M. I have been pleading with the king for
 you.

For — hark you, sir — I have resolved to drop
 My hate to Leonor within your hands.

I am but weak, and see I must abide
 Your lordship's pleasure; play a second part,
 And leave the stage to you. But swear to me
 Not to give up your purpose till the king
 Sign her death-warrant. This, at least, I'll have.

Alb. You shall. But I will have the Guzman, hey?
 That, too, I purposed. Ha! ha! ha! she's mine!

[*Laughing.*]

Doña M. You are not generous.

Alb. (*Laughing.*) Ha! ha! why, no:
I like a triumph.

Doña M. Pray, address the king:
He 's ripe to welcome you.

Alb. (*Laughing.*) Ha! ha! 't was rare!
A woman rival me! [*Turns towards DON PEDRO.*]

Doña M. (*Aside.*) And conquer you!
Now for my swoop of vengeance!

(*As ALBURQUERQUE slowly approaches DON PEDRO, DOÑA MARIA steals off.*)

Don P. Welcome! Nay,
Do not hold off, but take your seals again.

Alb. My liege, you misconceive me. I have
brought

The papers, of most pressing consequence,
Which lay beneath the judgment of my eye.

The man who holds my place as minister

Will get some headaches over these, I trow!

They are of urgent moment — though I have

A wain-load waiting at the palace-gate —

And so I brought them first. For, notice, sire,

[*Going over the papers rapidly.*]

This is a plan for rating the poll-tax.

This is a paper on the custom-dues

Established by Navarre. This, from Biscay,

Begging their English league may be confirmed.

Here 's a petition from the clergymen —

Long articles, in number twenty-one —

A most involved and cunning document.

Here 's one on criminal procedure; this

Needs instant reformation. Here, the salt-pits,—

A question to be managed dexterously.

Hum! — wool — wine — taxes — taxes — taxes. —

This

Is the projected treaty with Navarre.

Ah! here is business — here is food for thought!

For, sire, I hold that Aragon —

Don P.

Good heavens!

I nothing know of this!

Alb.

Let me explain.

The Cortes that will meet —

Don P.

Forbear, forbear!

On your allegiance, I command you, hold!

You drive me frantic with the catalogue;

Spare me the explanation. Take your seals,

And end these matters in your own good way.

Alb. Forgive me, sire.

Don P.

You do not love me.

Alb.

Yes,

Most dearly, sire; but Leonor, my foe,

Has got between me and your confidence.

Don P. In Heaven's name, take her, and perform
your will;

But, pray, take up your seals and treasury-key!

Alb. (*Running over the papers.*) Ay, here 's the war-
rant. Sign, your grace.

[*Puts a pen in his hand.*]

Don P. (*Writing.*)

'T is done.

Alb. And I resume my seals and key. (*Picks them
up.*) My liege,

Lend me your signet: 't is a private warrant.

Don P. I have it not.

Alb.

Indeed? I cautioned you

Never to part with it, except to me.

Who has it, sire?

Don P. My mother.

Alb. Horrible!

The devil's rampant in Castile, I think!

That ring bears absolute command with it.

O! sire, you sealed the fate of Doña Leonor

An hour before you thought. [Going.]

Don P. Stay, Chancellor!

Where are you going?

Alb. To the Guzman's cell.

Heaven grant I be in time!

Don P. For what, my lord?

Alb. To stay your mother's hand, before it reeks
With Leonor de Guzman's blood.

Don P. O! O! —

O! terrible conjecture! Dare not think —

Alb. Abide the issue, and you'll think with me.

The subtle monster! how she smiled and bowed,

And begged revenge from me, and stole away,

With the damned purpose packing her hot heart

Until it almost burst! O! women, women!

Turn you to devils, and the ancient fiends

Shall stand aghast with horror! 'Sdeath! I dream,

I dream, while she's at work. (*Aside.*) Farewell,

your grace!

The woman has cajoled me, as I live!

[*Aside and exit.*]

Don P. I'll not believe it, till the frightful deed

Make her as odious as the thought of it.

Never! 'tis monstrous! And the Chancellor

Outdoes suspicion in suspecting it.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

The Same. A Dungeon in the Same. LEONOR DE GUZMAN discovered.

Leonor. I cannot master them: these gloomy thoughts
Crowd and bewilder reason. If a voice
Had cried from heaven, Thy latest hour has come,
I could not more believe it. Can the soul
Warn its dear body of their sad divorce,
Ere death confront them? Or am I the fool
Of dreadful fancies, nourished in the dark
Of this detested prison? Bounteous Heaven,
If yonder sun, that, like a traveller,
Pauses upon the boundaries of his land,
To take a survey of the things he loves,
Shall ne'er return to me,—grant one last boon!
That I may calmly lapse into thy arms,
With time to think of thy beneficence;
And not be hurried to the judgment-seat,
By thy grim officer, appalling Death,
Crying against the justice of my doom.
I fear thee not, O Death! The grave, the worm,
The noisome process of a slow decay,
Were naught to me, if being ended there,
And peace closed up the dying lids for aye.
But, O! the terrors that a sinful soul,
Bursting its slumber at the Archangel's trump,
Must feel when it remembers its last act,
Ere it lay down to sleep, was guilty fear,
That tugged and wrestled with its Maker's will!
O watchful Heaven, if my poor destiny

Have e'er engaged the service of thy thoughts,
 Grant me my prayer! And, as my latter days
 Are full of frowns and dreadful threatenings,
 Smile at the last, and round my closing hours
 With all the bounties thou 'st withheld so long!
 I do not murmur, Lord, — I do not ask,
 While all are taken, I alone should stay;
 I would but choose my way of going hence,
 Not as a voyager, as a suppliant.

(*Enter JUANA and FADRIQUE.*)

Fadrique. Mother! [*Embraces her.*]

Leo. My son! Sure Heaven has re-begun
 Its broken blessings. But how cam'st thou here?
 Where is Enrique? — hast thou heard from him?
 They tell me he has fled to Portugal.
 And Tello, too? — and all the little ones
 Who call me mother? Stay, Fadrique, stay!
 Answer no questions till I look at thee.
 How thou hast grown! — Juana, has he not? —
 An inch or more. Much like thy father, too:
 His breadth of shoulder, and his girth of chest,
 And the fixed eye that looked through coming years,
 So like a prophet's. Now, the news, the news!
 Thou seest they keep me from it in this cell.
 Here time is stagnant; the vast tides of life
 Flow by yon loop-hole, yet no ripple comes
 To break the calm in which I idly sleep.
 I am a foolish woman, for I think
 That I am weeping. [*Weeps.*]

Fad. Mother, do not grieve!

Enrique, and my brothers, are quite safe;
 And, as for me, I blush to recollect,

How kind thy enemies have been to me.
 Be of good cheer : I saw the king to-day,
 And found his spirit was inclined to be
 Most kindly towards thee. He, by special grace,
 Sends me, as earnest for his good intents.

Juana. Your hard imprisonment is well-nigh o'er.

Leo. I know it, dear Juana. Days ago —
 But more to-day than any former time —
 I had undoubted notice.

Jua. That is strange !
 And yet you told me not.

Leo. I could not then.
 The words seemed doubtful. They are plainer
 now, —

Plainer and plainer, as the moments fly.

Fad. What mean'st thou, mother ?

Leo. This : if one should say —
 One of the playmates of my childhood — Why,
 Why do my thoughts run backward to their source,
 Keeping my childhood ever in my sight ?

Fad. I really know not. Thou began'st to say ? —

Leo. O, yes. If one should ask me, " Leonor,
 Where wilt thou be to-morrow ? " I'd reply,
 In heaven, beloved ; and feel I spoke strict truth.

Fad. Confinement has unstrung thy mind. Alas !
 Who put these dreary notions in thy head ?

Leo. Why, so I ask ; and shake my heavy brain,
 And look around for comfort. Naught replies ;
 And once again my lonely spirit sinks
 Beneath the pressure of a dismal doom.

Fad. 'Tis the dark hour before the morning
 breaks.

Leo. Ay, and the morning breaks in heaven.

(DOÑA MARIA appears at the door, looks in, and retires.)

My son,

Dost thou believe the spirit can detect
The presence of things hurtful? For, just now,
I felt as if the shadow of death's wing
Passed over me, and chilled me to the soul.

[*Shudders.*]

Fad. Dear mother, hear —

(*Enter an Attendant.*)

Attendant. My lord, the king desires
Your instant presence.

Fad. But a moment more.

Att. My orders bade you speed.

Leo. Kings never wait.

Go, my Fadrique; it may mar you else.

Fad. Let it; I care not.

Leo. But I do, my son.

I may behold thee, though thou seest not me,
Looking adown the sunny depth of heaven
Upon this troubled earth. A last farewell!
And tell Enrique, when he's king —

Fad. He's king!

Leo. I had it in a vision, and 't will be.

Fad. Thou art the plaything of thy fantasy.
Farewell! — Yet stay a moment. —

Doña Maria. (*Without.*) Don Fadrique!

Fad. 'T is the king's voice.

Leo. Or one that mimics it:
Yet go. — That voice was terrible to me. [*Aside.*]

Fad. Farewell! until we meet.

Leo. In heaven.

[*Embraces him.*]

Fad. Farewell! [*Exit.*]

Leo. I've looked my last upon him! Gentle
Heaven,

Withhold the blow no longer! — Strike, at once,
Before my coward fancies make me rave!

Jua. Dear mother, thou art ill.

(*Enter DOÑA MARIA, masked and cloaked, with Attendants, also disguised.*)

Leo. My prayer is answered.

Jua. Who are these masks?

Doña Maria. Leonor de Guzman, hark!

Leo. Maria de Portugal, I listen.

Doña M. Ha!

Thou know'st me, then?

Leo. I pray you, drop your mask;
It frightens me, yet does not hide your face.

Doña M. Behold my face, and let it drive thee
mad! [*Unmasking.*]

Seest thou these furrows on my youthful brow,
This net-work web of scars and crooked lines?
Seest thou these grizzled locks — these withered
hands,

Pinched by the grip of misery — this low stoop,
That bears the burden of a thousand cares —
These tear-scorched eyes — this breast, a home for
sighs

And quivering inspirations? — Dost thou know
The heart within, the lonely heart, that aches
At each pulsation? This is all thy work,
And thou shouldst know it!

Leo. Had you loved the king —

Doña M. Hadst thou not lied, as thou art lying
now,

He might have loved me. Love him! Did I not?
With passions to have burst thy puny heart,
Hadst thou but felt them. If they turned to gall,
And poisoned heart and brain, who was to blame —
I, or thou, wanton? Men have called thee fair,
Blaspheming sense, by saying thou wert born
To prove how plain the touch of heaven might show
In earthly clay; and they have said thy form
Was a poor casket for thy richer mind:
Now, in thy wisdom, why have I come here?

Leo. Perhaps, to slay me.

Doña M. Thou hast hit the mark
With thy first shaft.

Jua. (*Kneeling to Doña MARIA.*) O, madam — please
your grace! —

Doña M. Back, bastard's drudge! Prepare to die.

Leo. I have:

My life has been one act of preparation.

Doña M. Thou sweet-faced hypocrite — thou who
has been

The minion of man's passions — thou prepare,
By such a life, to brazen heavenly wrath!
What dost thou fancy heaven?

Leo. A blessed place,
Where the sincerely penitent may dwell,
Quite purified through mercy.

Doña M. Purified!

Hadst thou repented?

Leo. You have given me time,
Here, in my prison, through the long, long nights,

To be alone with Heaven. I thank you, madam ;
For, through your darkest clouds, grace dawned on
me.

Doña M. Fool that I was ! Feel'st thou secure
of grace ?

Leo. As far as mortal may.

Doña M. Dost thou repent
Thy wrongs to me ?

Leo. I do, sincerely, madam,
With all the mischief my example did,
And pray your pardon heartily. [*Kneels.*]

Doña M. Thou dost ?
I'd add new fuel to the flames of woe,
Ere I'd do this for thee. Dost thou repent
Thy sorceries, — the devilish arts employed
On me and Pedro, to o'ercome our lives,
While we lay, weakly, in one painful bed ?

Leo. I never practised them.

Doña M. 'T is false !

Leo. Indeed,
I ne'er had cause to pray to Heaven for that.

Doña M. Dost thou repent the shameless life
thou'st led
With King Alfonso, — the bold, guilty love ?

Leo. The life, perhaps, I do regret ; the love
Never, O never !

Doña M. (*Laughing.*) Ha ! there's still one spot —
There's still one damned spot upon thy soul —
Which the infernal flames shall kindle to ! [*Seizes her.*]

Jua. O murder ! — murder ! —

Doña M. Stop that screech-owl's breath !

[*Attendants seize JUANA.*]

Leo. Spare me — be merciful — O let me go !

[*Struggling with her.*]

I am a woman — not a heroine —

One of thy sex! I would not use thee thus!

Jua. Help! — murder! — murder! — Hark!

[*Noise without.*]

Leo.

O, pardon me!

I loved Alfonso — that is my excuse!

Doña M. And that my retribution! [*Stabs her.*]

Leo.

It is well!

God's purpose, and I bow to it.

[*Falls.*]

(*JUANA rushes forward and raises her.*)

Alburquerque. (*Without.*) Stand by!

Sentinel. (*Without.*) The queen commanded —

Alb. (*Without.*) Curse the queen's command!

(*Hurls the Sentinel through the door, and enters, followed by armed Attendants.*)

Ho! Leonor de Guzman; wake, look up!

I've brought another — surer than the first —

Another warrant — try to gull me now —

Strangle that woman!

[*His Attendants advance towards LEONOR.*]

Doña M. (*Interposing.*) Murderers, back! or I
Will strike you with my poniard!

Alb.

Murderers, hey?

By what new title have you dubbed yourself?

Doña M. Avenger, and not murderer. No, my
lord,

You shall not harm a single hair of her.

She's all my own, by virtue of my wrongs.

Alb. And mine, by virtue of my rights.

Jua.

Peace, peace!

A little quiet for a parting soul!

Leo. Let the wolves rage, according to their kind.
 I am content with Heaven's decree. If fate
 Were in our hands, we 'd make but sorry work.
 O, hapless queen ! the tears you 'll shed for this
 Cannot be numbered by a count of years.
 Forlorn, heart-broken, lonely, cast aside
 By him, your son, the only soul you love,
 You shall drag on a train of painful days,
 Darker and longer than the arctic nights.
 Despised by all, pitied by none, you 'll die
 A death as sudden as my own !

Alb. And I? —

Now, while the gift of prophecy is strong,
 A word for me ; for I deserve your care ; —
 My fate ?

Leo. Dead, in Enrique's cause ; and then —

Alb. The sky will fall, and we 'll catch larks ! —
 Amen !

Leo. Scoffer, your jeers fall blunted on my ear ;
 The shield of death is spread above my head,
 And mocks are useless.

Alb. Prophetess, what then ?
 We 'll pry fate's doors a little wider ; speak !

Leo. Your carrion shall be borne before a host,
 Till it offend the decency of sense.
 Living, you made Castile your foul abode —
 Dying, you 'll make it loathsome ! Wretched man,
 The hand you 've raised shall crush you to the
 earth ;
 The snares you lay shall tangle your own feet ;
 The friends you 've made shall make themselves
 your foes ;
 The foes you 've made shall be your only friends !

And, in the sight of triumph, murderous death
Shall snatch you suddenly !

Alb. Hey ! Coronel —

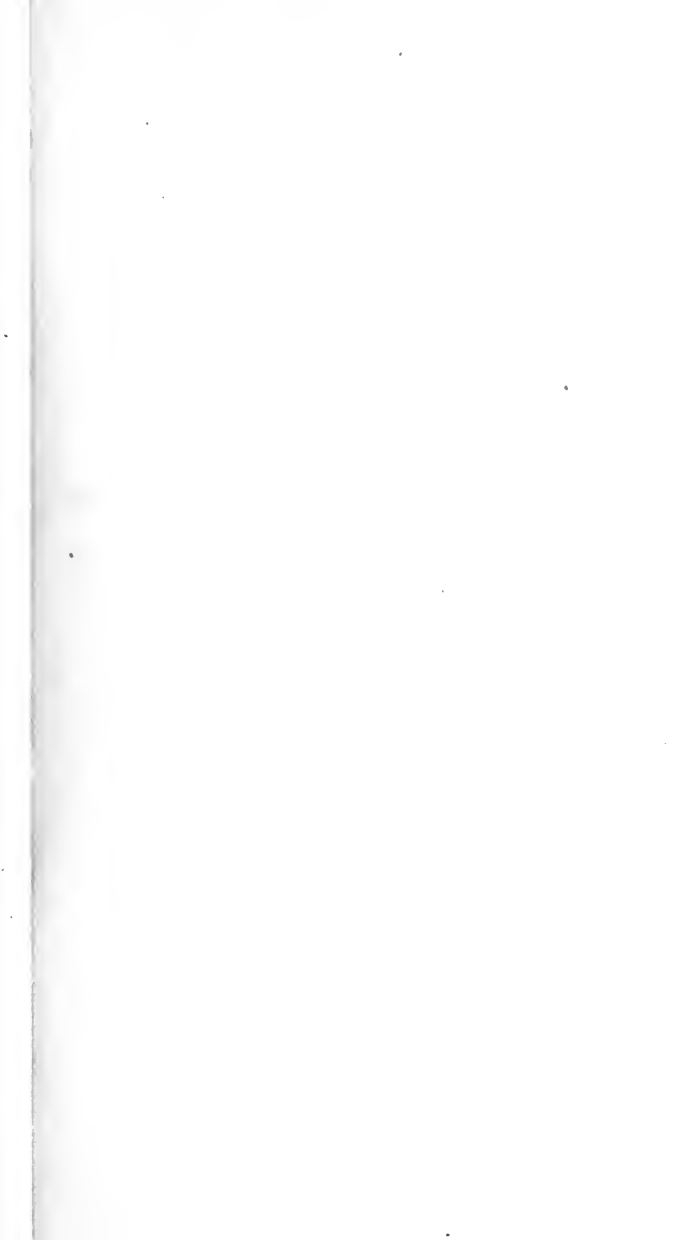
What was it, Coronel ? — a crown of thorns ?
Right, strangely right ! — a crown of thorns, indeed !
Methinks, I feel them sting ! [*Exit slowly.*]

Leo. Juana, daughter,

'T is sweet to die within thy loving arms ;
But take thy hand away ; thou hold'st me back —
Remove thy hand, and let the wound alone —
Thou hold'st me back from heaven. That's kindly
done !

See, how the little river steals away !
On that I'll float to heaven. Forgive the queen ;
And say good-night to all, for Leonor.
When thy Enrique's king — Pray, trim the lights —
I faint with thirst — some drink — Alfonso — O !
[*Dies.*]

Doña M. I know not that I am avenged, at last.



FRANCESCA DA RIMINI:

A TRAGEDY.

Francesca, i tuoi martiri
A lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.

DANTE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MALATESTA, *Lord of Rimini.*
GUIDO DA POLENTA, *Lord of Ravenna.*
LANCIOTTO, *Malatesta's son.*
PAOLO, *His brother.*
PEPÉ, *Malatesta's jester*
CARDINAL, *Friend to Guido.*
RENÉ, *A troubadour.*

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI, *Guido's daughter.*
RITTA, *Her maid.*

Lords, Ladies, Knights, Priests, Soldiers, Pages, Attendants, &c.

SCENE, Rimini, Ravenna, and the neighborhood.

TIME, about 1300 A. D.

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Rimini. The Garden of the Palace. PAOLO and a number of noblemen are discovered, seated under an arbor, surrounded by RENE, and other Troubadours, attendants, &c.*

Paolo. I PRITHEE, Rene, charm our ears again
With the same song you sang me yesterday.
Here are fresh listeners.

Rene. Really, my good lord,
My voice is out of joint. A grievous cold— [*Coughs.*]

Paolo. A very grievous, but convenient cold,
Which always racks you when you would not sing.

Rene. O, no, my lord! Besides, I hoped to hear
My ditty warbled into fairer ears,
By your own lips; to better purpose, too.

[*The Noblemen all laugh.*]

First Nobleman. Rene has hit it. Music runs to
waste
In ears like ours.

Second Nobleman. Nay, nay; chaunt on, sweet
Count.

Paolo. (*Coughing.*) Alack! you hear, I've caught
poor Rene's cough.

First N. That would not be, if we wore petticoats.

[*The others laugh.*]

Paolo. O, fie!

First N. So runs the scandal to our ears.

Second N. Confirmed by all our other senses,
Count.

First N. Witnessed by many a doleful sigh, poured
out

By many a breaking heart in Rimini.

Second N. Poor girls!

First N. (*Mimicking a lady.*) Sweet Count! sweet
Count Paolo! O!

Plant early violets upon my grave!

Thus go a thousand voices to one tune.

[*The others laugh.*]

Paolo. 'Ods mercy! gentlemen, you do me wrong.

First N. And by how many hundred, more or less?

Paolo. Ah! rogues, you 'd shift your sins upon my
shoulders.

Second N. You 'd bear them stoutly.

First N. It were vain to give

Drops to god Neptune. You're the sea of love
That swallows all things.

Second N. We the little fish
That meanly scull about within your depths.

Paolo. Go on, go on! Talk yourselves fairly out.

[*PEPE laughs without.*]

But, hark! here comes the fool. Fit company
For this most noble company of wits!

(*Enter PEPE, laughing violently.*)

Why do you laugh?

Pepe. I'm laughing at the world.

It has laughed long enough at me; and so

I'll turn the tables. Ho! ho! ho! I've heard
 A better joke of Uncle Malatesta's
 Than any I e'er uttered. [Laughing.]

All. Tell it, fool.

Pepe. Why, do you know—upon my life, the
 best

And most original idea on earth:
 A joke to put in practice, too. By Jove!
 I'll bet my wit 'gainst the stupidity
 Of the best gentleman among you all,
 You cannot guess it.

All. Tell us, tell us, fool.

Pepe. Guess it, guess it, fools.

Paolo. Come, disclose, disclose!

Pepe. He has a match afoot.—

All. A match!

Pepe. A marriage.

All. Who?—who?

Pepe. A marriage in his family.

All. But, who?

Pepe. Ah! there's the point.

All. Paolo?

Pepe. No.

First N. The others are well wived. Shall we
 turn Turks?

Pepe. Why, there's the summit of his joke, good
 sirs.

By all the sacred symbols of my art—

By cap and bauble, by my tinkling bell—

He means to marry Lanciotto! [Laughs violently.]

All. (Laughing.) Ho!—

Paolo. Peace! peace! What tongue dare echo
 yon fool's laugh?

Nay, never raise your hands in wonderment :
 I'll strike the dearest friend among ye all
 Beneath my feet, as if he were a slave,
 Who dares insult my brother with a laugh !

Pepe. By Jove ! ye're sad enough. Here's
 mirth's quick cure !

Pretty Paolo has a heavy fist,
 I warn you, sirs. Ho ! ho ! I trapped them all ;
[*Laughing.*]

Now I'll go mar old Malatesta's message. [*Aside.*]
[*Exit.*]

Paolo. Shame on ye, sirs ! I have mistaken you.
 I thought I harbored better friends. Poor fops,
 Who've slept in down and satin all your years,
 Within the circle Lanciotto charmed
 Round Rimini with his most potent sword ! —
 Fellows whose brows would melt beneath a casque,
 Whose hands would fray to grasp a brand's rough
 hilt,
 Who ne'er launched more than braggart threats at
 foes ! —

Girlish companions of luxurious girls ! —
 Danglers round troubadours and wine-cups ! — Men
 Whose best parts are their clothes ! bundles of silk,
 Scented like summer ! rag-men, nothing more ! —
 Creatures as generous as monkeys — brave
 As hunted hares — courteous as grinning apes —
 Grateful as serpents — useful as lap-dogs —

[*During this, the Noblemen, &c., steal off.*]
 Ha !

I am alone at last ! So let me be,
 Till Lanciotto fill the vacant room
 Of these mean knaves, whose friendship is but breath.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

The Same. A Hall in the Castle. Enter MALATESTA and LANCIOTTO.

Malatesta. Guido, ay, Guido of Ravenna, son —
Down on his knees, as full of abject prayers
For peace and mercy as a penitent.

Lanciotto. His old trick, father. While his wearied
arm
Is raised in seeming prayer, it only rests.
Anon, he'll deal you such a staggering blow,
With its recovered strength, as shall convert
You, and not him, into a penitent.

Mal. No, no; your last bout levelled him. He
reeled
Into Ravenna, from the battle-field,
Like a stripped drunkard, and there headlong fell —
A mass of squalid misery, a thing
To draw the jeering urchins. I have this
From faithful spies. There's not a hope remains
To break the shock of his great overthrow.
I pity Guido.

Lan. 'Sdeath! go comfort him!
I pity those who fought, and bled, and died,
Before the armies of this Ghibelin.
I pity those who halted home with wounds
Dealt by his hand. I pity widowed eyes
That he set running; maiden hearts that turn,
Sick with despair, from ranks thinned down by him;
Mothers that shriek, as the last stragglers fling
Their feverish bodies by the fountain-side,
Dumb with mere thirst, and faintly point to him,

Answering the dame's quick questions. I have seen
 Unburied bones, and skulls — that seemed to ask,
 From their blank eye-holes, vengeance at my hand —
 Shine in the moonlight on old battle-fields ;
 And even these — the happy dead, my lord —
 I pity more than Guido of Ravenna !

Mal. What would you have ?

Lan. I'd see Ravenna burn,
 Flame into heaven, and scorch the flying clouds ;
 I'd choke her streets with ruined palaces ;
 I'd hear her women scream with fear and grief,
 As I have heard the maids of Rimini.
 All this I'd sprinkle with old Guido's blood,
 And bless the baptism.

Mal. You are cruel.

Lan. Not I ;
 But these things ache within my fretting brain.
 The sight I first beheld was from the arms
 Of my wild nurse, her husband hacked to death
 By the fierce edges of these Ghibelins.
 One cut across the neck — I see it now,
 Ay, and have mimicked it a thousand times,
 Just as I saw it, on our enemies. —
 Why, that cut seemed as if it meant to bleed
 On till the judgment. My distracted nurse
 Stooped down, and paddled in the running gore
 With her poor fingers ; then a prophetic,
 Pale with the inspiration of the god,
 She towered aloft, and with her dripping hand
 Three times she signed me with the holy cross.
 'Tis all as plain as noon-day. Thus she spake, —
 " May this spot stand till Guido's dearest blood
 Be mingled with thy own ! " The soldiers say,

In the close battle, when my wrath is up,
 The dead man's blood flames on my vengeful brow
 Like a red planet ; and when war is o'er,
 It shrinks into my brain, defiling all
 My better nature with its slaughterous lusts.
 Howe'er it be, it shaped my earliest thought,
 And it will shape my last.

Mal. You moody churl !

You dismal knot of superstitious dreams !
 Do you not blush to empty such a head
 Before a sober man ? Why, son, the world
 Has not given o'er its laughing humor yet,
 That you should try it with such vagaries. — Poh !
 I'll get a wife to teach you common sense.

Lan. A wife for me ! [*Laughing.*]

Mal. Ay, sir, a wife for you.

You shall be married, to insure your wits.

Lan. 'T is not your wont to mock me.

Mal. How now, son !

I am not given to jesting. I have chosen
 The fairest wife in Italy for you.
 You won her bravely, as a soldier should :
 And when you 'd woo her, stretch your gauntlet out,
 And crush her fingers in its steely grip.
 If you will plead, I ween, she dare not say —
 No, by your leave. Should she refuse, howe'er,
 With that same iron hand you shall go knock
 Upon Ravenna's gates, till all the town
 Ring with your courtship. I have made her hand
 The price and pledge of Guido's future peace.

Lan. All this is done !

Mal. Done, out of hand ; and now
 I wait a formal answer, nothing more.

Guido dare not decline. No, by the saints,
He'd send Ravenna's virgins here in droves,
To buy a ten days' truce.

Lan. Sir, let me say,
You stretch paternal privilege too far,
To pledge my hand without my own consent.
Am I a portion of your household stuff,
That you should trade me off to Guido thus?
Who is the lady I am bartered for?

Mal. Francesca, Guido's daughter.—Never frown;
It shall be so!

Lan. By heaven, it shall not be!
My blood shall never mingle with his race.

Mal. According to your nurse's prophecy,
Fate orders it.

Lan. Ha!

Mal. Now, then, I have struck
The chord that answers to your gloomy thoughts.
Bah! on your sibyl and her prophecy!
Put Guido's blood aside, and yet, I say,
Marry you shall.

Lan. 'Tis most distasteful, sir.

Mal. Lanciotto, look ye! You brave gentlemen,
So fond of knocking out poor people's brains,
In time must come to have your own knocked out:
What, then, if you bequeath us no new hands,
To carry on your business, and our house
Die out for lack of princes?

Lan. Wed my brothers:
They'll rear you sons, I'll slay you enemies.
Paolo and Francesca! Note their names;
They chime together like sweet marriage-bells.
A proper match. 'Tis said she's beautiful;

And he is the delight of Rimini, —
 The pride and conscious centre of all eyes,
 The theme of poets, the ideal of art,
 The earthly treasury of Heaven's best gifts !
 I am a soldier ; from my very birth,
 Heaven cut me out for terror, not for love.
 I had such fancies once, but now —

Mal. Pshaw ! son,
 My faith is bound to Guido ; and if you
 Do not throw off your duty, and defy,
 Through sickly scruples, my express commands,
 You 'll yield at once. . No more : I 'll have it so !

[*Exit.*]

Lan. Curses upon my destiny ! What, I —
 Ho ! I have found my use at last — What, I,
 I, the great twisted monster of the wars,
 The brawny cripple, the herculean dwarf,
 The spur of panic, and the butt of scorn —
 I be a bridegroom ! Heaven, was I not cursed.
 More than enough, when thou didst fashion me
 To be a type of ugliness, — a thing
 By whose comparison all Rimini
 Holds itself beautiful ? Lo ! here I stand,
 A gnarléd, blighted trunk ! There 's not a knave
 So spindle-shanked, so wry-faced, so infirm,
 Who looks at me, and smiles not on himself.
 And I have friends to pity me — great Heaven !
 One has a favorite leg that he bewails, —
 Another sees my hip with doleful plaints, —
 A third is sorry o'er my huge swart arms, —
 A fourth aspires to mount my very hump,
 And thence harangue his weeping brotherhood !

Pah! it is nauseous! Must I further bear
 The sidelong shuddering glances of a wife?
 The degradation of a showy love,
 That over-acts, and proves the mummer's craft
 Untouched by nature? And a fair wife, too!—
 Francesca, whom the minstrels sing about!
 Though, by my side, what woman were not fair?
 Circe looked well among her swine, no doubt;
 Next me, she'd pass for Venus. Ho! ho! ho!

[*Laughing.*]

Would there were something merry in my laugh!
 Now, in the battle, if a Ghibelin
 Cry, "Wry-hip! hunchback!" I can trample him
 Under my stallion's hoofs; or haggie him
 Into a monstrous likeness of myself:
 But to be pitied, — to endure a sting
 Thrust in by kindness, with a sort of smile! —
 'Sdeath! it is miserable!

(*Enter PEPE.*)

Pepe. My lord —

Lan. My fool!

Pepe. We'll change our titles when your bride's
 bells ring —

Ha, cousin?

Lan. Even this poor fool has eyes,
 To see the wretched plight in which I stand. [*Aside.*]
 How, gossip, how?

Pepe. I, being the court-fool,
 Am lord of fools by my prerogative.

Lan. Who told you of my marriage?

Pepe. Rimini!

A frightful liar; but true for once, I fear.

The messenger from Guido has returned,
 And the whole town is wailing over him.
 Some pity you, and some the bride ; but I,
 Being more catholic, I pity both.

Lan. Still, pity, pity ! (*Aside. Bells toll.*) Ha ! whose
 knell is that ?

Pepe. Lord Malatesta sent me to the tower,
 To have the bells rung for your marriage-news.
 How, he said not ; so I, as I thought fit,
 Told the deaf sexton to ring out a knell. [*Bells toll.*]
 How do you like it ?

Lan. Varlet, have you bones,
 To risk their breaking ? I have half a mind
 To thresh you from your motley coat ! [*Seizes him.*]

Pepe. Pardee !
 Respect my coxcomb, cousin. Hark ! ha, ha !
 [*Laughing.*]

(*Bells ring a joyful peal.*)

Some one has changed my music. Heaven defend !
 How the bells jangle ! Yonder graybeard, now,
 Rings a peal vilely. He 's more used to knells,
 And sounds them grandly. Only give him time,
 And, I 'll be sworn, he 'll ring your knell out yet.

Lan. Pepe, you are but half a fool.

Pepe. My lord,
 I can return the compliment in full.

Lan. So, you are ready.

Pepe. Truth is always so.

Lan. I shook you rudely ; here 's a florin.

[*Offers money.*]

Pepe. No :

My wit is merchandise, but not my honor.

Lan. Your honor, sirrah!

Pepe. Why not? You great lords
Have something you call lordly honor; pray,
May not a fool have foolish honor too?
Cousin, you laid your hand upon my coat —
'T was the first sacrilege it ever knew —
And you shall pay it. Mark! I promise you.

Lan. (*Laughing.*) Ha, ha! you bluster well. Upon
my life,
You have the tilt-yard jargon to a breath.
Pepe, if I should smite you on the cheek —
Thus, gossip, thus — (*Strikes him.*) what would you
then demand?

Pepe. Your life!

Lan. (*Laughing.*) Ha, ha! there is the camp-style
too —

A very cut-throat air! How this shrewd fool
Makes the punctilio of honor show!
Change helmets into coxcombs, swords to baubles,
And what a figure is poor chivalry!
Thanks for your lesson, Pepe! [*Exit.*]

Pepe. Ere I'm done,
You'll curse as heartily, you limping beast!
Ha! so we go — Lord Lanciotto, look!

[*Walks about, mimicking him.*]

Here is a leg and camel-back, forsooth,
To match your honor and nobility!
You miscreated scarecrow, dare you shake,
Or strike in jest, a natural man like me? —
You curséd lump, you chaos of a man,
To buffet one whom Heaven pronounces good!

[*Bells ring.*]

There go the bells rejoicing over you:

I'll change them back to the old knell again.
 You marry, faugh! Beget a race of elves;
 Wed a she-crocodile, and keep within
 The limits of your nature! Here we go,
 Tripping along to meet our promised bride,
 Like a rheumatic elephant! —ha, ha! [Laughing.]
 [Exit, mimicking LANCIOTTO.]

SCENE III.

The Same. A Room in the Same. Enter LANCIOTTO, hastily.

Lanciotto. Why do these prodigies environ me?
 In ancient Rome, the words a fool might drop,
 From the confusion of his vagrant thoughts,
 Were held as omens, prophecies; and men
 Who made earth tremble with majestic deeds,
 Trembled themselves at fortune's lightest threat.
 I like it not. My father named this match
 While I boiled over with vindictive wrath
 Towards Guido and Ravenna. Straight my heart
 Sank down like lead; a weakness seized on me,
 A dismal gloom that I could not resist;
 I lacked the power to take my stand, and say —
 Bluntly, I will not! Am I in the toils?
 Has fate so weakened me, to work its end?
 There seems a fascination in it, too, —
 A morbid craving to pursue a thing
 Whose issue may be fatal. Would that I
 Were in the wars again! These mental weeds
 Grow on the surface of inactive peace.
 I'm haunted by myself. Thought preys on thought

My mind seems crowded in the hideous mould
 That shaped my body. What a fool am I
 To bear the burden of my wretched life,
 To sweat and toil under the world's broad eye,
 Climb into fame, and find myself — O, what? —
 A most conspicuous monster! Crown my head,
 Pile Cæsar's purple on me — and what then?
 My hump shall shorten the imperial robe,
 My leg peep out beneath the scanty hem,
 My broken hip shall twist the gown awry;
 And pomp, instead of dignifying me,
 Shall be by me made quite ridiculous.
 The faintest coward would not bear all this:
 Prodigious courage must be mine, to live;
 To die asks nothing but weak will, and I
 Feel like a craven. Let me skulk away
 Ere life o'ertask me. [Offers to stab himself.]

(Enter PAOLO.)

Paolo. (Seizing his hand.) Brother! what is this?
 Lanciotto, are you mad? Kind Heaven! look here —
 Straight in my eyes. Now answer, do you know
 How near you were to murder? Dare you bend
 Your wicked hand against a heart I love?
 Were it for you to mourn your wilful death,
 With such a bitterness as would be ours,
 The wish would ne'er have crossed you. While
 we're bound
 Life into life, a chain of loving hearts,
 Were it not base in you, the middle link,
 To snap, and scatter all? Shame, brother, shame!
 I thought you better metal.

Lan.

Spare your words.

I know the seasons of our human grief,
 And can predict them without almanac.
 A few sobs o'er the body, and a few
 Over the coffin; then a sigh or two,
 Whose windy passage dries the hanging tear;
 Perchance, some wandering memories, some regrets;
 Then a vast influx of consoling thoughts —
 Based on the trials of the sadder days
 Which the dead missed; and then a smiling face
 Turned on to-morrow. Such is mortal grief.
 It writes its histories within a span,
 And never lives to read them.

Paolo.

Lanciotto,

I heard the bells of Rimini, just now,
 Exulting o'er your coming marriage-day,
 While you conspired to teach them gloomier sounds.
 Why are you sad?

Lan.

Paolo, I am wretched;

Sad's a faint word. But of my marriage-bells —
 Heard you the knell that Pepe rang?

Paolo.

'T was strange:

A sullen antic of his crabbed wit.

Lan. It was portentous. All dumb things find
 tongues

Against this marriage. As I passed the hall,
 My armor glittered on the wall, and I
 Paused by the harness, as before a friend
 Whose well-known features slack our hurried gait;
 Francesca's name was fresh upon my mind,
 So I half-uttered it. Instant, my sword
 Leaped from its scabbard, as with sudden life,
 Plunged down and pierced into the oaken floor,
 Shivering with fear! Lo! while I gazed upon it —

Doubting the nature of the accident —
 Around the point appeared a spot of blood,
 Oozing upon the floor, that spread and spread —
 As I stood gasping by in speechless horror —
 Ring beyond ring, until the odious tide
 Crawled to my feet, and lapped them, like the
 tongues

Of angry serpents! O, my God! I fled
 At the first touch of the infernal stain!
 Go — you may see — go to the hall!

Paolo.

Fie! man,

You have been ever played on in this sort
 By your wild fancies. When your heart is high,
 You make them playthings; but in lower moods,
 They seem to sap the essence of your soul,
 And drain your manhood to its poorest dregs.

Lan. Go look, go look!

Paolo. (*Goes to the door, and returns.*) There sticks the
 sword, indeed,

Just as your tread detached it from its sheath;
 Looking more like a blessed cross, I think,
 Than a bad omen. As for blood — Ha, ha!

[*Laughing.*]

It sets mine dancing. Pshaw! away with this!
 Deck up your face with smiles. Go trim yourself
 For the young bride. New velvet, gold, and gems,
 Do wonders for us. Brother, come; I'll be
 Your tiring-man, for once.

Lan.

Array this lump —

Paolo, hark! There are some human thoughts
 Best left imprisoned in the aching heart,
 Lest the freed malefactors should dispread
 Infamous ruin with their liberty.

There 's not a man — the fairest of ye all —
 Who is not fouler than he seems. This life
 Is one unending struggle to conceal
 Our baseness from our fellows. Here stands one
 In vestal whiteness with a lecher's lust ; —
 There sits a judge, holding law's scales in hands
 That itch to take the bribe he dare not touch ; —
 Here goes a priest, with heavenward eyes, whose
 soul

Is Satan's council-chamber ; — there a doctor,
 With nature's secrets wrinkled round a brow
 Guilty with conscious ignorance ; — and here
 A soldier rivals Hector's bloody deeds —
 Out-does the devil in audacity —
 With craven longings fluttering in a heart
 That dares do aught but fly ! Thus are we all
 Mere slaves and alms-men to a scornful world,
 That takes us at our seeming.

Paolo.

Say 't is true ;

What do you drive at ?

Lan.

At myself, full tilt.

I, like the others, am not what I seem.
 Men call me gentle, courteous, brave. — They lie !
 I 'm harsh, rude, and a coward. Had I nerve
 To cast my devils out upon the earth,
 I 'd show this laughing planet what a hell
 Of envy, malice, cruelty, and scorn,
 It has forced back to canker in the heart
 Of one poor cripple !

Paolo.

Ha !

Lan.

Ay, now 't is out !

A word I never breathed to man before.
 Can you, who are a miracle of grace,

Feel what it is to be a wreck like me?
 Paolo, look at me. Is there a line,
 In my whole bulk of wretched contraries,
 That nature in a nightmare ever used
 Upon her shapes till now? Find me the man,
 Or beast, or tree, or rock, or nameless thing,
 So out of harmony with all things else,
 And I'll go raving with bare happiness, —
 Ay, and I'll marry Helena of Greece,
 And swear I do her honor!

Paolo. Lanciotto,

I, who have known you from a stripling up,
 Never observed, or, if I did, ne'er weighed
 Your special difference from the rest of men.
 You're not Apollo —

Lan. No!

Paolo. Nor yet are you

A second Pluto. Could I change with you —
 My graces for your nobler qualities —
 Your strength, your courage, your renown -- by
 heaven,

We'd e'en change persons, to the finest hair.

Lan. You should be flatterer to an emperor.

Paolo. I am but just. Let me beseech you,
 brother,

To look with greater favor on yourself;
 Nor suffer misty phantoms of your brain
 To take the place of sound realities.
 Go to Ravenna, wed your bride, and lull
 Your cruel delusions in domestic peace.
 Ghosts fly a fireside: 't is their wont to stalk
 Through empty houses, and through empty hearts.
 I know Francesca will be proud of you.

Women admire you heroes. Rusty sages,
Pale poets, and scarred warriors, have been
Their idols ever ; while we fair plump fools
Are elbowed to the wall, or only used
For vacant pastime.

Lan. To Ravenna ? — no !
In Rimini they know me ; at Ravenna
I 'd be a new-come monster, and exposed
To curious wonder. There will be parade
Of all the usual follies of the state ;
Fellows with trumpets, tinselled coats, and wands,
Would strut before me, like vain mountebanks
Before their monkeys. Then, I should be stared
Out of my modesty ; and when they look,
How can I tell if 't is the bridegroom's face
Or hump that draws their eyes ? I will not go.
To please you all, I 'll marry ; but to please
The wonder-mongers of Ravenna — Ha !
Paolo, now I have it. You shall go,
To bring Francesca ; and you 'll speak of me,
Not as I ought to be, but as I am.
If she draw backward, give her rein ; and say
That neither Guido nor herself shall feel
The weight of my displeasure. You may say,
I pity her —

Paolo. For what ?

Lan. For wedding me.
In sooth, she 'll need it. Say —

Paolo. Nay, Lanciotto,
I 'll be a better orator in your behalf,
Without your promptings.

Lan. She is fair, 't is said ;
And, dear Paolo, if she please your eye,

And move your heart to anything like love,
Wed her yourself. The peace would stand as firm
By such a match.

Paolo. (*Laughing.*) Ha! that is right: be gay!
Ply me with jokes! I'd rather see you smile
Than see the sun shine.

Lan. I am serious.
I'll find another wife, less beautiful,
More on my level, and —

Paolo. An empress, brother,
Were honored by your hand. You are by much
Too humble in your reckoning of yourself.
I can count virtues in you, to supply
Half Italy, if they were parcelled out.
Look up!

Lan. I cannot: Heaven has bent me down.
To you, Paolo, I could look, however,
Were my hump made a mountain. Bless him, God!
Pour everlasting bounties on his head!
Make Cræsus jealous of his treasury,
Achilles of his arms, Endymion
Of his fresh beauties, — though the coy one lay,
Blushing beneath Diana's earliest kiss,
On grassy Latmos; and may every good,
Beyond man's sight, though in the ken of Heaven,
Round his fair fortune to a perfect end!
O, you have dried the sorrow of my eyes;
My heart is beating with a lighter pulse;
The air is musical; the total earth
Puts on new beauty, and within the arms
Of girding ocean dreams her time away,
And visions bright to-morrows!

(Enter MALATESTA and PEPE.)

Malatesta. Mount, to horse!

Pepe. (*Aside.*) Good Lord! he's smiling! What's the matter now?

Has anybody broken a leg or back?

Has a more monstrous monster come to life?

Is hell burst open? — heaven burnt up? What, what

Can make yon eyesore grin? — I say, my lord,

What cow has calved?

Paolo. Your mother, by the bleat.

Pepe. Right fairly answered — for a gentleman!

When did you take my trade up?

Paolo. When your wit

Went begging, sirrah.

Pepe. Well again! My lord,

I think he'll do.

Mal. For what?

Pepe. To take my place.

Once fools were rare, and then my office sped;

But now the world is overrun with them:

One gets one's fool in one's own family,

Without much searching.

Mal. Pepe, gently now.

Lanciotto, you are waited for. The train

Has passed the gate, and halted there for you.

Lan. I go not to Ravenna.

Mal. Hey! why not?

Paolo. For weighty reasons, father. Will you trust

Your greatest captain, hope of all the Guelfs,

With crafty Guido? Should the Ghibelins

Break faith, and shut Lanciotto in their walls —
 Sure the temptation would be great enough —
 What would you do ?

Mal. I'd eat Ravenna up !

Pepe. Lord ! what an appetite !

Paolo. But Lanciotto

Would be a precious hostage.

Mal. True ; you're wise ;

Guido's a fox. Well, have it your own way.

What is your plan ?

Paolo. I go there in his place.

Mal. Good ! I will send a letter with the news.

Lan. I thank you, brother. [*Apart to PAOLO.*]

Pepe. Ha ! ha ! ha ! — O ! O ! [*Laughing.*]

Mal. Pepe, what now ?

Pepe. O ! lord, O ! — ho ! ho ! ho ! [*Laughing.*]

Paolo. Well, giggler ?

Pepe. Hear my fable, uncle.

Mal. Ay.

Pepe. Once on a time, Vulcan sent Mercury
 To fetch dame Venus from a romp in heaven.
 Well, they were long in coming, as he thought ;
 And so the god of spits and gridirons
 Railed like himself — the devil. But — now mark —
 Here comes the moral. In a little while,
 Vulcan grew proud, because he saw plain signs
 That he should be a father ; and so he
 Strutted through hell, and pushed the devils by,
 Like a magnifico of Venice. Ere long,
 His heir was born ; but then — ho ! ho ! — the brat
 Had wings upon his heels, and thievish ways,
 And a vile squint, like errant Mercury's,

Which honest Vulcan could not understand ; —
Can you ?

Paolo. 'Sdeath ! fool, I'll have you in the stocks.
Father, your fool exceeds his privilege.

Pepe. (*Apart to PAOLO.*) Keep your own bounds,
Paolo. In the stocks

I'd tell more fables than you'd wish to hear.
And so ride forth. But, cousin, don't forget
To take Lanciotto's picture to the bride.
Ask her to choose between it and yourself.
I'll count the moments, while she hesitates,
And not grow gray at it.

Paolo. Peace, varlet, peace !

Pepe. (*Apart to him.*) Ah ! now I have it. There's
an elephant

Upon the scutcheon ; show her that, and say —
Hère's Lanciotto in our heraldry !

Paolo. Here's for your counsel !

[*Strikes PEPE, who runs behind MALATESTA.*]

Mal. Son, son, have a care !

We who keep pets must bear their pecks sometimes.
Poor knave ! Ha ! ha ! thou'rt growing villanous !

[*Laughs and pats PEPE.*]

Pepe. Another blow ! another life for that !

[*Aside.*]

Paolo. Farewell, Lanciotto. You are dull again.

Lan. Nature will rule.

Mal. Come, come !

Lan. God speed you, brother !

I am too sad ; my smiles all turn to sighs.

Paolo. More cause to haste me on my happy
work. [Exit with MALATESTA.]

Pepe. I'm going, cousin.

Lan. Go.

Pepe. Pray, ask me where.

Lan. Where, then?

Pepe. To have my jewel carried home :
And, as I'm wise, the carrier shall be
A thief, a thief, by Jove ! The fashion's new.

[*Exit.*]

Lan. In truth, I am too gloomy and irrational.
Paolo must be right. I always had
These moody hours and dark presentiments,
Without mischances following after them.
The camp is my abode. A neighing steed,
A fiery onset, and a stubborn fight,
Rouse my dull blood, and tire my body down
To quiet slumbers when the day is o'er,
And night above me spreads her spangled tent,
Lit by the dying cresset of the moon.
Ay, that is it ; I'm homesick for the camp. [*Exit.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Ravenna. A Room in Guido's Palace. Enter
GUIDO and a CARDINAL.*

Cardinal. I WARN thee, Count.

Guido. I'll take the warning, father,
On one condition: show me but a way
For safe escape.

Car. I cannot.

Gui. There's the point:
We Ghibelins are fettered hand and foot.
There's not a florin in my treasury;
Not a lame soldier, I can lead to war;
Not one to man the walls. A present siege,
Pushed with the wonted heat of Lanciotto,
Would deal Ravenna such a mortal blow
As ages could not mend. Give me but time
To fill the drainéd arteries of the land.
The Guelfs are masters, we their slaves; and we
Were wiser to confess it, ere the lash
Teach it too sternly. It is well for you
To say you love Francesca. So do I;
But neither you nor I have any voice
For or against this marriage.

Car. 'T is too true.

Gui. Say we refuse: Why, then, before a week,
We'll hear Lanciotto rapping at our door,
With twenty hundred ruffians at his back.
What's to say then? My lord, we waste our breath.

Let us look fortune in the face, and draw
Such comfort from the wanton as we may.

Car. And yet I fear —

Gui. You fear! and so do I.
I fear Lanciotto as a soldier, though,
More than a son-in-law.

Car. But have you seen him?

Gui. Ay, ay, and felt him, too. I've seen him ride
The best battalions of my horse and foot
Down like mere stubble: I have seen his sword
Hollow a square of pikemen, with the ease
You'd scoop a melon out.

Car. Report declares him
A prodigy of strength and ugliness.

Gui. Were he the devil — But why talk of this? —
Here comes Francesca.

Car. Ah! unhappy child!

Gui. Look you, my lord! you'll make the best
of it;

You will not whimper. Add your voice to mine,
Or woe to poor Ravenna!

(*Enter FRANCESCA and RITTA.*)

Francesca. Ha! my lord —
And you, my father! — But do I intrude
Upon your counsels? How severe you look!
Shall I retire?

Gui. No, no.

Fran. You moody men
Seem leagued against me. As I passed the hall,
I met your solemn Dante, with huge strides
Pacing in measure to his stately verse.
The sweeping sleeves of his broad scarlet robe

Blew out behind, like wide-expanded wings,
 And seemed to buoy him in his level flight.
 Thinking to pass, without disturbing him,
 I stole on tip-toe ; but the poet paused,
 Subsiding into man, and steadily
 Bent on my face the lustre of his eyes.
 Then, taking both my trembling hands in his —
 You know how his God-troubled forehead awes —
 He looked into my eyes, and shook his head,
 As if he dared not speak of what he saw ;
 Then muttered, sighed, and slowly turned away
 The weight of his intolerable brow.
 When I glanced back, I saw him, as before,
 Sailing adown the hall on out-spread wings.
 Indeed, my lord, he should not do these things :
 They strain the weakness of mortality
 A jot too far. As for poor Ritta, she
 Fled like a doe, the truant.

Ritta. Yes, forsooth :

There 's something terrible about the man.
 Ugh ! if he touched me, I should turn to ice.
 I wonder if Count Lanciotto looks —

Gui. Ritta, come here. [Takes her apart.]

Rit. My lord.

Gui. 'T was my command,
 You should say nothing of Count Lanciotto.

Rit. Nothing, my lord.

Gui. You have said nothing, then ?

Rit. Indeed, my lord.

Gui. 'T is well. Some years ago,
 My daughter had a very silly maid,
 Who told her sillier stories. So, one day,
 This maiden whispered something I forbade —

In strictest confidence, for she was sly :
What happened, think you ?

Rit. I know not, my lord.

Gui. I boiled her in a pot.

Rit. Good heaven ! my lord.

Gui. She did not like it. I shall keep that pot
Ready for the next boiling. [*Walks back to the others.*]

Rit. Saints above !

I wonder if he ate her ! Boil me — me !
I'll roast or stew with pleasure ; but to boil
Implies a want of tenderness, — or rather
A downright toughness — in the matter boiled,
That's slanderous to a maiden. What, boil me —
Boil me ! O ! mercy, how ridiculous !

[*Retires, laughing.*]

(*Enter a Messenger.*)

Messenger. Letters, my lord, from great Prince
Malatesta. [*Presents them, and exit.*]

Gui. (*Aside.*) Hear him, ye gods ! — “ from great
Prince Malatesta ! ”

Greeting, no doubt, his little cousin Guido.

Well, well, just so we see-saw up and down.

[*Reads.*]

“ *Fearing our treachery,* ” — by heaven, that's blunt,
And Malatesta-like ! — “ *he will not send*

His son, Lanciotto, to Ravenna, but ” —

But what ? — a groom, a porter ? or will he
Have his prey sent him in an iron cage ?

By Jove, he shall not have her ! O ! no, no ;

“ *He sends his younger son, the Count Paolo,
To fetch Francesca back to Rimini.* ”

That's well, if he had left his reasons out.

And, in a postscript — by the saints, 't is droll ! —

“ ’Twould not be worth your lordship’s while, to shut
Paolo in a prison ; for, my lord,

I’ll only pay his ransom in plain steel :

Besides, he’s not worth having.” Is there one,

Save this ignoble offshoot of the Goths,

Who’d write such garbage to a gentleman ?

Take that, and read it. [Gives letter to CARDINAL.]

Car. I have done the most.

She seems suspicious.

Gui. Ritta’s work.

Car. Farewell ! [Exit.]

Fran. Father, you seem distempered.

Gui. No, my child,

I am but vexed. Your husband’s on the road,

Close to Ravenna. What’s the time of day ?

Fran. Past noon, my lord.

Gui. We must be stirring, then.

Fran. I do not like this marriage.

Gui. But I do.

Fran. But I do not. Poh ! to be given away,
Like a fine horse or falcon, to a man
Whose face I never saw !

Rit. That’s it, my lady.

Gui. Ritta, run down, and see if my great pot
Boils to your liking.

Rit. (Aside.) O ! that pot again !

My lord, my heart betrays me ; but you know
How true ’tis to my lady. [Exit.]

Fran. What ails Ritta ?

Gui. The ailing of your sex, a running tongue.
Francesca, ’t is too late to beat retreat :
Old Malatesta has me — you, too, child —
Safe in his clutch. If you are not content,

I must uncloze Ravenna, and allow
 His son to take you. Poh, poh! have a soul
 Equal with your estate. A prince's child
 Cannot choose husbands. Her desires must aim,
 Not at herself, but at the public good.
 Both as your prince and father, I command ;
 As subject and good daughter, you 'll obey.

Fran. I knew that it must be my destiny,
 Some day, to give my hand without my heart ;
 But —

Gui. But, and I will but you back again !
 When Guido da Polenta says to you,
 Daughter, you must be married, — what were best ?

Fran. 'T were best Francesca, of the self-same
 name,
 Made herself bridal-garments. [*Laughing.*]

Gui. Right !

Fran. My lord,
 Is Lanciotto handsome — ugly — fair —
 Black — sallow — crabbed — kind — or what is he ?

Gui. You 'll know ere long. I could not alter him,
 To please your taste.

Fran. You always put me off ;
 You never have a whisper in his praise.

Gui. The world reports it. — Count my soldiers'
 scars,
 And you may sum Lanciotto's glories up.

Fran. I shall be dutiful, to please you, father.
 If aught befall me through my blind submission,
 Though I may suffer, you must bear the sin.
 Beware, my lord, for your own peace of mind !
 My part has been obedience ; and now
 I play it over to complete my task ;

And it shall be with smiles upon my lips, —
 Heaven only knows with what a sinking heart!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The Same. Before the Gates of the City. The walls hung with banners, flowesr, &c., and crowded with citizens. At the side of the scene is a canopied dais, with chairs of state upon it. Music, bells, shouts, and other sounds of rejoicing, are occasionally heard. Enter GUIDO, the CARDINAL, Noblemen, Knights, Guards, &c., with banners, arms, &c.

Guido. My lord, I'll have it so. You talk in vain.
 Paolo is a marvel in his way :
 I've seen him often. If Francesca take
 A fancy to his beauty, all the better ;
 For she may think that he and Lanciotto-
 Are like as blossoms of one parent branch.
 In truth, they are, so far as features go —
 Heaven help the rest ! Get her to Rimini,
 By any means, and I shall be content.
 The fraud cannot last long ; but long enough
 To win her favor to the family.

Cardinal. 'T is a dull trick. Thou hast not dealt
 with her
 Wisely nor kindly, and I dread the end.
 If, when this marriage was enjoined on thee,
 Thou hadst informed Francesca of the truth,
 And said, Now, daughter, choose between
 Thy peace and all Ravenna's ; who that knows
 The constant nature of her noble heart
 Could doubt the issue ? There'd have been some
 tears,

Some frightful fancies of her husband's looks ;
 And then she 'd calmly walk up to her fate,
 And bear it bravely. Afterwards, perchance,
 Lanciotto might prove better than her fears, —
 No one denies him many an excellence, —
 And all go happily. But, as thou wouldst plot,
 She 'll be prepared to see a paragon,
 And find a satyr. It is dangerous.
 Treachery with enemies is bad enough,
 With friends 't is fatal.

Gui. Has your lordship done ?

Car. Never, Count Guido, with so good a text.
 Do not stand looking sideways at the truth ;
 Craft has become thy nature. Go to her.

Gui. I have not heart.

Car. I have. [Going.]

Gui. Hold, Cardinal !

My plan is better. Get her off my hands,
 And I care not.

Car. What will she say of thee,
 In Rimini, when she detects the cheat ?

Gui. I 'll stop my ears up.

Car. Guido, thou art weak,
 And lack the common fortitude of man.

Gui. And you abuse the license of your garb,
 To lesson me. My lord, I do not dare
 To move a finger in these marriage-rites.
 Francesca is a sacrifice, I know, —
 A limb delivered to the surgeon's knife,
 To save our general health. A truce to this.
 Paolo has the business in his hands :
 Let him arrange it as he will ; for I

Will give Count Malatesta no pretext
To recommence the war.

Car. Farewell, my lord.

I'll neither help nor countenance a fraud.

You crafty men take comfort to yourselves,
Saying, deceit dies with discovery.

'T is false; each wicked action spawns a brood,
And lives in its succession. You, who shake
Man's moral nature into storm, should know
That the last wave which passes from your sight
Rolls in and breaks upon eternity! [Exit.]

Gui. Why, that's a very grand and solemn
thought:

I'll mention it to Dante. Gentlemen,
What see they from the wall?

Nobleman The train, my lord.

Gui. Inform my daughter.

Nob. She is here, my lord.

(Enter FRANCESCA, RITTA, Ladies, Attendants, &c.)

Francesca. See, father, what a merry face I have,
And how my ladies glisten! I will try
To do my utmost, in my love for you
And the good people of Ravenna. Now,
As the first shock is over, I expect
To feel quite happy. I will wed the Count,
Be he whate'er he may. I do not speak
In giddy recklessness. I've weighed it all, —
'T wixt hope and fear, knowledge and ignorance, —
And reasoned out my duty to your wish.
I have no yearnings towards another love:
So, if I show my husband a desire
To fill the place with which he honors me,

According to its duties, even he —
 Were he less noble than Count Lanciotto —
 Must smile upon my efforts, and reward
 Good will with willing grace. One pang remains.
 Parting from home and kindred is a thing
 None but the heartless, or the miserable,
 Can do without a tear. This home of mine
 Has filled my heart with two-fold happiness,
 Taking and giving love abundantly.
 Farewell, Ravenna! If I bless thee not,
 'Tis that thou seem'st too blessed; and 't were
 strange
 In me to offer what thou 'st always given.

Gui. (*Aside.*) This is too much! If she would
 rail a while

At me and fortune, it could be endured.

[*Shouts, music, &c. within.*]

Fran. Ha! there's the van just breaking through
 the wood!

Music! that's well; a welcome forerunner.
 Now, Ritta — here — come talk to me. Alas!
 How my heart trembles! What a world to me
 Lies 'neath the glitter of yon cavalcade!
 Is that the Count?

Ritta. Upon the dapple-gray?

Fran. Yes, yes.

Rit. No; that's his —

Gui. (*Apart to her.*) Ritta!

Rit. Ay; that's — that's —

Gui. Ritta, the pot! [*Apart to her.*]

Rit. O! but this lying chokes! [*Aside.*]

Ay, that's Count Somebody, from Rimini.

Fran. I knew it was. Is that not glorious?

Rit. My lady, what ?

Fran. To see a cavalier
Sit on his steed with such familiar grace.

Rit. To see a man astraddle on a horse !
It don't seem much to me.

Fran. Fie ! stupid girl !
But mark the minstrels thronging round the Count ;
Ah ! that is more than gallant horsemanship.
The soul that feeds itself on poesy,
Is of a quality more fine and rare
Than Heaven allows the ruder multitude.
I tell you, Ritta, when you see a man
Beloved by poets, made the theme of song,
And chaunted down to ages, as a gift
Fit for the rich embalmment of their verse,
There 's more about him than the patron's gold.
If that 's the gentleman my father chose,
He must have picked him out from all the world.
The Count alights. Why, what a noble grace
Runs through his slightest action ! Are you sad ?
You too, my father ? Have I given you cause ?
I am content. If Lanciotto's mind
Bear any impress of his fair outside,
We shall not quarrel ere our marriage-day.
Can I say more ? My blushes speak for me :
Interpret them as modesty's excuse
For the short-comings of a maiden's speech.

Rit. Alas ! dear lady ! [*Aside.*]

Gui. (*Aside.*) 'Sdeath ! my plot has failed,
By overworking its design. Come, come ;
Get to your places. See, the Count draws nigh.

(GUIDO and FRANCESCA seat themselves upon the dais, surrounded
by RITTA, Ladies, Attendants, Guards, &c., Music. shouts,

ringing of bells, &c. Enter Men-at arms, with banners, &c. ; Pages bearing costly presents on cushions ; then PAOLO, surrounded by Noblemen, Knights, Minstrels, &c., and followed by other Men-at-arms. They range themselves opposite the dais.)

Gui. Ravenna welcomes you, my lord, and I
Add my best greeting to the general voice.
This peaceful show of arms from Rimini
Is a new pleasure, stranger to our sense
Than if the East blew zephyrs, or the balm
Of Summer loaded rough December's gales,
And turned his snows to roses.

Paolo. Noble sir,
We looked for welcome from your courtesy,
Not from your love ; but this unhop'd for sight
Of smiling faces, and the gentle tone
In which you greet us, leave us naught to win
Within your hearts. I need not ask, my lord,
Where bides the precious object of my search ;
For I was sent to find the fairest maid
Ravenna boasts, among her many fair.
I might extend my travel many a league,
And yet return, to take her from your side.
I blush to bear so rich a treasure home,
As pledge and hostage of a sluggish peace ;
For beauty such as hers was meant by Heaven
To spur our race to gallant enterprise,
And draw contending deities around
The dubious battles of a second Troy.

Gui. Sir Count, you please to lavish on my child
The high-strained courtesy of chivalry ;
Yet she has homely virtues that, I hope,
May take a deeper hold in Rimini,

After the fleeting beauty of her face
Is spoiled by time, or faded to the eye
By its familiar usage.

Paolo. As a man
Who ever sees Heaven's purpose in its works,
I must suppose so rare a tabernacle
Was framed for rarest virtues. Pardon me
My public admiration. If my praise
Clash with propriety, and bare my words
To cooler judgment, 't is not that I wish
To win a flatterer's grudged recompense,
And gain by falsehood what I'd win through love.
When I have brushed my travel from my garb,
I'll pay my court in more befitting style.

(*Music. Exit with his train.*)

Gui. (Advancing.) Now, by the saints, Lanciotto's
deputy
Stands in this business with a proper grace,
Stretching his lord's instructions till they crack.
A zealous envoy! Not a word said he
Of Lanciotto — not a single word;
But stood there, staring in Francesca's face
With his devouring eyes. — By Jupiter,
I but half like it!

Fran. (Advancing.) Father?

Gui. Well, my child.

Fran. How do you like —

Gui. The coxcomb! I've done well!

Fran. No, no; Count Lanciotto?

Gui. Well enough.

But hang this fellow — hang your deputies!
I'll never woo by proxy.

Fran. Deputies!

And woo by proxy!

Gui. Come to me anon.

I'll strip this cuckoo of his gallantry!

[*Exit with Guards, &c.*]

Fran. Ritta, my father has strange ways of late.

Rit. I wonder not.

Fran. You wonder not?

Rit. No, lady:

He is so used to playing double games,

That even you must come in for your share.

Plague on his boiling! I will out with it. [*Aside.*]

Lady, the gentleman who passed the gates —

Fran. Count Lanciotto? As I hope for grace,
A gallant gentleman! How well he spoke!

With what sincere and earnest courtesy

The rounded phrases glided from his lips!

He spoke in compliments that seemed like truth.

Methinks I'd listen through a summer's day,

To hear him woo.— And he must woo to me —

I'll have our privilege — he must woo a space,

Ere I'll be won, I promise.

Rit. But, my lady,

He'll woo you for another.

Fran. He?— ha! ha! [*Laughing.*]

I should not think it from the prologue, Ritta.

Rit. Nor I.

Fran. Nor any one.

Rit. 'Tis not the Count —

'Tis not Count Lanciotto.

Fran. Gracious saints!

Have you gone crazy? Ritta, speak again,

Before I chide you.

Rit. 'T is the solemn truth.
That gentleman is Count Paolo, lady,
Brother to Lanciotto, and no more
Like him than — than —

Fran. Than what?

Rit. Count Guido's pot,
For boiling waiting-maids, is like the bath
Of Venus on the arras.

Fran. Are you mad, —
Quite mad, poor Ritta?

Rit. Yes; perhaps I am.
Perhaps Lanciotto is a proper man —
Perhaps I lie — perhaps I speak the truth —
Perhaps I gabble like a fool. O! heavens,
That dreadful pot!

Fran. Dear Ritta! —

Rit. By the mass,
They shall not cozen you, my gentle mistress!
If my lord Guido boiled me, do you think
I should be served up to the garrison,
By way of pottage? Surely they would not waste
me.

Fran. You are an idle talker. Pranks like these
Fit your companions. You forget yourself.

Rit. Not you, though, lady. Boldly I repeat,
That he who looked so fair, and talked so sweet,
Who rode from Rimini upon a horse
Of dapple-gray, and walked through yonder gate,
Is not Count Lanciotto.

Fran. This you mean?

Rit. I do, indeed!

Fran. Then I am more abused —
More tricked, more trifled with, more played upon —

By him, my father, and by all of you,
Than anything, suspected of a heart,
Was ever yet!

Rit. In Count Paolo, lady,
Perchance there was no meditated fraud.

Fran. How, dare you plead for him?

Rit. I but suppose:
Though in your father — O! I dare not say.

Fran. I dare. It was ill usage, gross abuse,
Treason to duty, meanness, craft — dishonor!
What if I'd thrown my heart before the feet
Of this sham husband! cast my love away
Upon a counterfeit! I was prepared
To force affection upon any man
Called Lanciotto. Anything of silk,
Tinsel, and gewgaws, if he bore that name,
Might have received me for the asking. Yes,
I was inclined to venture more than half
In this base business — shame upon my thoughts! —
All for my father's peace and poor Ravenna's.
And this Paolo, with his cavalcade,
His minstrels, music, and his pretty airs,
His showy person, and his fulsome talk,
Almost made me contented with my lot.
O! what a fool! — in faith, I merit it —
Trapped by mere glitter! What an easy fool!
Ha! ha! I'm glad it went no further, girl;

[*Laughing.*]

I'm glad I kept my heart safe, after all.
There was my cunning. I have paid them back,
I warrant you! I'll marry Lanciotto;
I'll seem to shuffle by this treachery. No!
I'll seek my father, put him face to face

With his own falsehood ; and I 'll stand between,
 Awful as justice, meting out to him
 Heaven's dreadful canons 'gainst his conscious guilt.
 I 'll marry Lanciotto. On my faith,
 I would not live another wicked day
 Here, in Ravenna, only for the fear
 That I should take to lying, with the rest.
 Ha ! ha ! it makes me merry, when I think
 How safe I kept this little heart of mine ! [*Laughing.*]
 [*Exit, with Attendants, &c.*]

Rit. So, 'tis all ended — all except my boiling,
 And that will make a holiday for some.
 Perhaps I 'm selfish. Fagot, axe, and gallows,
 They have their uses, after all. They give
 The lookers-on a deal of harmless sport.
 Though one may suffer, twenty hundred laugh ;
 And that 's a point gained. I have seen a man —
 Poor Dora's uncle — shake himself with glee,
 At the bare thought of the ridiculous style
 In which some villain died. “ Dancing,” quoth he,
 “ To the poor music of a single string !
 Biting,” quoth he, “ after his head was off !
 What use of that ? ” Or, “ Shivering,” quoth he,
 “ As from an ague, with his beard afire ! ”
 • And then he 'd roar until his ugly mouth
 Split at the corners. But to see me boil —
 O ! that will be the queerest thing of all !
 I wonder if they 'll put me in a bag,
 Like a great suet-ball ? I 'll go, and tell
 Count Guido, on the instant. How he 'll laugh
 To think his pot has got an occupant !
 I wonder if he really takes delight
 In such amusements ? Nay, I have kept faith :

I only said the man was not Lanciotto ;
 No word of Lanciotto's ugliness.
 I may escape the pot, for all. Pardee !
 I wonder if they 'll put me in a bag !

[*Exit, laughing.*]

SCENE III.

The Same. A Room in Guido's Palace. Enter GUIDO and RITTA.

Ritta. There now, my lord, that is the whole of it :
 I love my mistress more than I fear you.
 If I could save her finger from the axe,
 I 'd give my head to do it. So, my lord,
 I am prepared to stew.

Guido. Boil, Ritta, boil.

Rit. No ; I prefer to stew.

Gui. And I to boil.

Rit. 'Tis very hard, my lord, I cannot choose
 My way of cooking. I shall laugh, I vow,
 In the grim headsman's face, when I remember
 That I am dying for my lady's love.
 I leave no one to shed a tear for me ;
 Father nor mother, kith nor kin, have I,
 To say, " Poor Ritta ! " o'er my lifeless clay.
 They all have gone before me, and 't were well
 If I could hurry after them.

Gui. Poor child ! [*Aside*

But, baggage, said you aught of Lanciotto ?

Rit. No, not a word ; and he 's so ugly, too !

Gui. Is he so ugly ?

Rit. Ugly ! he is worse
Than Pilate on the hangings.

Gui. Hold your tongue
Here, and at Rimini, about the Count,
And you shall prosper.

Rit. Am I not to boil ?

Gui. No, child. But be discreet at Rimini.
Old Malatesta is a dreadful man —
Far worse than I — he bakes his people, Ritta ;
Lards them, like geese, and bakes them in an oven.

Rit. Fire is my fate, I see that.

Gui. Have a care
It do not follow you beyond this world.
Where is your mistress ?

Rit. In her room, my lord.
After I told her of the Count Paolo,
She flew to have an interview with you ;
But on the way — I know not why it was —
She darted to her chamber, and there stays
Weeping in silence. It would do you good —
More than a hundred sermons — just to see
A single tear, indeed it would, my lord.

Gui. Ha ! you are saucy. I have humored you
Past prudence, malpert ! Get you to your room !

[*Exit RITTA.*]

More of my blood runs in yon damsel's veins
Than the world knows. Her mother to a shade ;
The same high spirit, and strange martyr-wish
To sacrifice herself, body and soul,
For some loved end. All that she did for me ;
And yet I loved her not. O ! memory !
The darkest future has a ray of hope,
But thou art blacker than the sepulchre !

Thy horrid shapes lie round, like scattered bones,
 Hopeless forever! I am sick at heart.

The past crowds on the present: as I sowed,
 So am I reaping. Shadows from myself
 Fall on the picture, as I trace anew
 These rising spectres of my early life,
 And add their gloom to what was dark before.

O! memory, memory! How my temples throb!

[Sits.]

(Enter FRANCESCA, hastily.)

Francesca. My lord, this outrage—(He looks up.)
 Father, are you ill?

You seem unhappy. Have I troubled you?
 You heard how passionate and bad I was,
 When Ritta told me of the Count Paolo.
 Dear father, calm yourself; and let me ask
 A child's forgiveness. 'T was undutiful
 To doubt your wisdom. It is over now.
 I only thought you might have trusted me
 With any counsel.

Gui. (Aside.) Would I had!

Fran. Ah! well,

I understand it all, and you were right.
 Only the danger of it. Think, my lord,
 If I had loved this man at the first sight:
 We all have heard of such things. Think, again,
 If I had loved him—as I then supposed
 You wished me to—'t would have been very sad.
 But no, dear sir, I kept my heart secure,
 Nor will I loose it till you give the word.
 I'm wiser than you thought me, you perceive.

But when we saw him, face to face, together,
Surely you might have told me then.

Gui.

Francesca,

My eyes are old — I did not clearly see —
Faith, it escaped my thoughts. Some other things
Came in my head. I was as ignorant
Of Count Paolo's coming as yourself.
The brothers are so like.

Fran.

Indeed?

Gui.

Yes, yes.

One is the other's counterpart, in fact;
And even now it may not be — O! shame!
I lie by habit. [*Aside.*]

Fran. Then there is a hope?

He may be Lanciotto, after all?

O! joy —

(*Enter a Servant.*)

Servant. The Count Paolo.

[*Exit.*]

Fran.

Misery!

That name was not Lanciotto!

Gui.

Farewell, child.

I'll leave you with the Count: he'll make it plain.

It seems 't was Count Paolo.

[*Going.*]

Fran.

Father!

Gui.

Well.

Fran. You knew it from the first! (*Exit GUIDO.*)

Let me begone:

I could not look him in the face again
With the old faith. Besides, 't would anger him
To have a living witness of his fraud
Ever before him; and I could not trust —
Strive as I might — my happiness to him,

As once I did. I could not lay my hand
 Upon his shoulder, and look up to him,
 Saying, Dear father, pilot me along
 Past this dread rock, through yonder narrow strait.
 Saints, no! The gold that gave my life away
 Might, even then, be rattling in his purse,
 Warm from the buyer's hand. Look on me, Heaven!
 Him thou didst sanctify before my eyes,
 Him thou didst charge, as thy great deputy,
 With guardianship of a weak orphan girl,
 Has fallen from grace, has paltered with his trust;
 I have no mother to receive thy charge, —
 O! take it on thyself; and when I err,
 Through mortal blindness, Heaven, be thou my guide!
 Worse cannot fall me. Though my husband lack
 A parent's tenderness, he yet may have
 Faith, truth, and honor — the immortal bonds
 That knit together honest hearts as one.
 Let me away to Rimini. Alas!
 It wrings my heart to have outlived the day
 That I can leave my home with no regret! [*Weeps.*]

(*Enter PAOLO.*)

Paolo. Pray, pardon me. [*Going.*]

Fran. You are quite welcome, Count
 A foolish tear, a weakness, nothing more:
 But present weeping clears our future sight.
 They tell me you are love's commissioner,
 A kind of broker in the trade of hearts:
 Is it your usual business? or may I
 Flatter myself, by claiming this essay
 As your first effort?

Paolo. Lady, I believed

My post, at starting, one of weight and trust ;
 When I beheld you, I concluded it
 A charge of honor and high dignity.
 I did not think to hear you underrate
 Your own importance, by dishonoring me.

Fran. You are severe, my lord.

Paolo. No, not severe ;
 Say candid, rather. I am somewhat hurt
 By my reception. If I feel the wound,
 'T is not because I suffer from the jest,
 But that your lips should deal it.

Fran. Compliments
 Appear to be the staple of your speech.
 You ravish one with courtesy, you pour
 Fine words upon one, till the listening head
 Is bowed with sweetness. Sir, your talk is drugged ;
 There 's secret poppy in your sugared phrase :
 I 'll taste before I take it.

Paolo. Gentle lady —

Fran. I am not gentle, or I missed my aim.
 I am no hawk to fly at every lure.
 You courtly gentlemen draw one broad rule —
 All girls are fools. It may be so, in truth,
 Yet so I 'll not be treated.

Paolo. Have you been ?
 If I implied such slander by my words,
 They wrong my purpose. If I compliment,
 'T is not from habit, but because I thought
 Your face deserved my homage as its due.
 When I have clearer insight, and you spread
 Your inner nature o'er your lineaments,
 Even that face may darken in the shades
 Of my opinion. For mere loveliness

Needs inward light to keep it always bright.
 All things look badly to unfriendly eyes.
 I spoke my first impression; cooler thought
 May work strange changes.

Fran. Ah! Sir Count, at length
 There's matter in your words.

Paolo. Unpleasant stuff,
 To judge by your dark brows. I have essayed
 Kindness and coldness, yet you are not pleased.

Fran. How can I be?

Paolo. How, lady?

Fran. Ay, sir, how?
 Your brother — my good lord that is to be —
 Stings me with his neglect; and in the place
 He should have filled, he sends a go-between,
 A common carrier of others' love;
 How can the sender, or the person sent,
 Please overmuch? Now, were I such as you,
 I'd be too proud to travel round the land
 With other peoples' feelings in my heart;
 Even to fill the void which you confess
 By such employment.

Paolo. Lady, 't is your wish
 To nettle me, to break my breeding down,
 And see what natural passions I have hidden
 Behind the outworks of my etiquette.
 I neither own nor feel the want of heart
 With which you charge me. You are more than
 cruel;
 You rouse my nerves until they ache with life,
 And then pour fire upon them. For myself
 I would not speak, unless you had compelled.
 My task is odious to me. Since I came,

Heaven bear me witness how my traitor heart
 Has fought against my duty ; and how oft
 I wished myself in Lanciotto's place,
 Or him in mine.

Fran. You riddle.

Paolo. Do I? Well,
 Let it remain unguessed.

Fran. You wished yourself
 At Rimini, or Lanciotto here?
 You may have reasons.

Paolo. Well interpreted!
 The Sphinx were simple in your skilful hands!

Fran. It has become your turn to sneer.

Paolo. But I
 Have gall to feed my bitterness, while you
 Jest in the wanton ease of happiness.
 Stop! there is peril in our talk.

Fran. As how?

Paolo. 'T is dangerous to talk about one's self;
 It panders selfishness. My duty waits.

Fran. My future lord's affairs? I quite forgot
 Count Lanciotto.

Paolo. I, too, shame upon me! [*Aside.*]

Fran. Does he resemble you?

Paolo. Pray drop me, lady.

Fran. Nay, answer me.

Paolo. Somewhat — in feature.

Fran. Ha!

Is he so fair?

Paolo. No, darker. He was tanned
 In long campaigns, and battles hotly fought,
 While I lounged idly with the troubadours,
 Under the shadow of his watchful sword.

Fran. In person ?

Paolo. He is shorter, I believe,
But broader, stronger, more compactly knit.

Fran. What of his mind ?

Paolo Ah ! now you strike the key !
A mind just fitted to his history,
An equal balance 'twixt desert and fame.
No future chronicler shall say of him,
His fame outran his merit ; or his merit
Halted behind some adverse circumstance,
And never won the glory it deserved.
My love might weary you, if I rehearsed
The simple beauty of his character ;
His grandeur and his gentleness of heart,
His warlike fire and peaceful love, his faith,
His courtesy, his truth. I 'll not deny
Some human weakness, to attract our love,
Harbors in him, as in the rest of us.
Sometimes against our city's enemies
He thunders in the distance, and devotes
Their homes to ruin. When the brand has fallen,
He ever follows with a healing rain,
And in his pity shoulders by revenge.
A thorough soldier, lady. He grasps crowns,
While I pick at the laurel.

Fran. Stay, my lord !
I asked your brother's value, with no wish
To hear you underrate yourself. Your worth
May rise in passing through another's lips.
Lanciotto is perfection, then ?

Paolo. To me :
Others may think my brother over-nice
Upon the point of honor ; over-keen

To take offence where no offence is meant ;
 A thought too prodigal of human life,
 Holding it naught when weighed against a wrong ;
 Suspicious of the motives of his friends ;
 Distrustful of his own high excellence ;
 And with a certain gloom of temperament,
 When thus disturbed, that makes him terrible
 And rash in action. I have heard of this ;
 I never felt it. I distress you, lady ?
 Perhaps I throw these points too much in shade,
 By catching at an enemy's report.
 But, then, Lanciotto said, " You 'll speak of me,
 Not as I ought to be, but as I am."
 He loathes deceit.

Fran. That 's noble ! Have you done ?
 I have observed a strange reserve, at times,
 An over-carefulness in choosing words,
 Both in my father and his nearest friends,
 When speaking of your brother ; as if they
 Picked their way slowly over rocky ground,
 Fearing to stumble. Ritta, too, my maid,
 When her tongue rattles on in full career,
 Stops at your brother's name, and with a sigh
 Settles herself to dismal silence. Count,
 These things have troubled me. From you I look
 For perfect frankness. Is there naught withheld ?

Paolo. (Aside.) O, base temptation ! What if I
 betray
 His crippled person — imitate his limp —
 Laugh at his hip, his back, his sullen moods
 Of childish superstition ? — tread his heart
 Under my feet, to climb into his place ? —
 Use his own warrant 'gainst himself ; and say,

Because I loved her, and misjudged your jest,
Therefore I stole her? Why, a common thief
Would hang for just such thinking! Ha! ha! ha!
[*Laughing.*]

I reckon on her love, as if I held
The counsels of her bosom. No, I swear,
Francesca would despise so mean a deed.
Have I no honor either? Are my thoughts
All bound by her opinion?

Fran. This is strange!

Is Lanciotto's name a spell to all?
I ask a simple question, and straight you
Start to one side, and mutter to yourself,
And laugh, and groan, and play the lunatic,
In such a style that you astound me more
Than all the others. It appears to me
I have been singled as a common dupe
By every one. What mystery is this
Surrounds Count Lanciotto? If there be
A single creature in the universe
Who has a right to know him as he is,
I am that one.

Paolo. I grant it. You shall see,
And shape your judgment by your own remark.
All that my honor calls for I have said.

Fran. I am content. Unless I greatly err,
Heaven made your breast the seat of honest
thoughts.

You know, my lord, that, once at Rimini,
There can be no retreat for me. By you,
Here at Ravenna, in your brother's name,
I shall be solemnly betrothed. And now
I thus extend my maiden hand to you;

If you are conscious of no secret guilt,
Take it.

Paolo. I do. [Takes her hand.]

Fran. You tremble!

Paolo. With the hand,
Not with the obligation.

Fran. Farewell, Count!

'T were cruel to tax your stock of compliments,
That waste their sweets upon a trammelled heart;
Go fly your fancies at some freer game. [Exit.]

Paolo. O, heaven, if I have faltered and am weak,
'T is from my nature! Fancies, more accursed
Than haunt a murderer's bedside, throng my
brain —

Temptations, such as mortal never bore
Since Satan whispered in the ear of Eve,
Sing in my ear — and all, all are accursed!
At heart I have betrayed my brother's trust,
Francesca's openly. Turn where I will,
As if enclosed within a mirrored hall,
I see a traitor. Now to stand erect,
Firm on my base of manly constancy;
Or, if I stagger, let me never quit
The homely path of duty, for the ways
That bloom and glitter with seductive sin! [Exit.]

A C T I I I .

SCENE I. *Rimini. A Room in the Castle.* LANCIOTTO *discovered reading.*

Lanciotto. O ! fie, philosophy ! This Seneca
Revels in wealth, and whines about the poor !
Talks of starvation while his banquet waits,
And fancies that a two hours' appetite
Throws light on famine ! Doubtless he can tell,
As he skips nimbly through his dancing-girls,
How sad it is to limp about the world
A sightless cripple ! Let him feel the crutch
Wearing against his heart, and then I 'd hear
This sage talk glibly ; or provide a pad,
Stuffed with his soft philosophy, to ease
His aching shoulder. Pshaw ! he never felt,
Or pain would choke his frothy utterance.
'T is easy for the doctor to compound
His nauseous simples for a sick man's health ;
But let him swallow them, for his disease,
Without wry faces. Ah ! the tug is there.
Show me philosophy in rags, in want,
Sick of a fever, with a back like mine,
Creeping to wisdom on these legs, and I
Will drink its comforts. Out ! away with you !
There 's no such thing as real philosophy !

[*Throws down the book.*]

(*Enter PEPE.*)

Here is a sage who 'll teach a courtier

The laws of etiquette, a statesman rule,
 A soldier discipline, a poet verse,
 And each mechanic his distinctive trade ;
 Yet bring him to his motley, and how wide
 He shoots from reason ! We can understand
 All business but our own, and thrust advice
 In every gaping cranny of the world ;
 While habit shapes us to our own dull work,
 And reason nods above his proper task.
 Just so philosophy would rectify
 All things abroad, and be a jade at home.
 Pepe, what think you of the Emperor's aim
 Towards Hungary ?

Pepe. A most unwise design ;
 For mark, my lord —

Lan. Why, there ! the fact cries out.
 Here 's motley thinking for a diadem ! —
 Ay, and more wisely in his own regard.

Pepe. You flout me, cousin.

Lan. Have you aught that 's new ? —
 Some witty trifle, some absurd conceit ?

Pepe. Troth, no.

Lan. Why not give up the Emperor,
 And bend your wisdom on your duties, Pepe ?

Pepe. Because the Emperor has more need of
 wisdom
 Than the most barren fool of wit.

Lan. Well said !
 Mere habit brings the fool back to his art.
 This jester is a rare philosopher.
 Teach me philosophy, good fool.

Pepe. No need.

You 'll get a teacher when you take a wife.
 If she do not instruct you in more arts
 Than Aristotle ever thought upon,
 The good old race of woman has declined
 Into a sort of male stupidity.
 I had a sweetheart once, she lectured grandly ;
 No matter on what subject she might hit,
 'T was all the same, she could talk and she would.
 She had no silly modesty ; she dashed
 Straight in the teeth of any argument,
 And talked you deaf, dumb, blind. Whatever struck
 Upon her ear, by some machinery,
 Set her tongue wagging. Thank the Lord, she
 died ! — 7

Dropped in the middle of a fierce harangue,
 Like a spent horse. It was an even thing,
 Whether she talked herself or me to death.
 The latest sign of life was in her tongue ;
 It wagged till sundown, like a serpent's tail,
 Long after all the rest of her was cold.
 Alas ! poor Zippa !

Lan. Were you married, fool ?

Pepe. Married ! Have I the scars upon me ?

No ;

I fell in love ; and that was bad enough,
 And far enough for a mere fool to go.
 Married ! why, marriage is love's purgatory,
 Without a heaven beyond.

Lan. Fie, atheist !

Would you abolish marriage ?

Pepe. Yes.

Lan. What ?

Pepe. Yes.

Lan. Depopulate the world?

Pepe. No fear of that.

I'd have no families, no Malatesti,
 Strutting about the land, with pedigrees
 And claims bequeathed them by their ancestors ;
 No fellows vamping of their royal blood ;
 No one to seize a whole inheritance,
 And rob the other children of the earth.
 By Jove ! you should not know your fathers, even !
 I'd have you spring, like toadstools, from the soil —
 Mere sons of women — nothing more nor less —
 All base-born, and all equal. There, my lord,
 There is a simple commonwealth for you !
 In which aspiring merit takes the lead,
 And birth goes begging.

Lan. It is so, in truth ;
 And by the simplest means I ever heard.

Pepe. Think of it, cousin. Tell it to your friends,
 The statesmen, soldiers, and philosophers ;
 Noise it about the earth, and let it stir
 The sluggish spirits of the multitudes.
 Pursue the thought, scan it, from end to end,
 Through all its latent possibilities.
 It is a great seed dropped, I promise you,
 And it must sprout. Thought never wholly dies ;
 It only wants a name — a hard Greek name —
 Some few apostles, who may live on it —
 A crowd of listeners, with the average dulness
 That man possesses — and we organize ;
 Spread our new doctrine, like a general plague ;
 Talk of man's progress and development,
 Wrongs of society, the march of mind,
 The Devil, Doctor Faustus, and what not ;

And, lo ! this pretty world turns upside down,
All with a fool's idea !

Lan.

By Jupiter,

You hit our modern teachers to a hair !

I knew this fool was a philosopher.

Pepe is right. Mechanic means advance ;

Nature bows down to science' haughty tread,

And turns the wheel of smutty artifice ;

New governments arise, dilate, decay,

And foster creeds and churches to their tastes :

At each advance, we cry, " Behold, the end ! "

Till some fresh wonder breaks upon the age.

But man, the moral creature, midst it all

Stands still unchanged ; nor moves towards virtue
more,

Nor comprehends the mysteries in himself,

More than when Plato taught academies,

Or Zeno thundered from his Attic porch.

Pepe. I know not that ; I only want my scheme
Tried for a while. I am a politician,

A wrongs-of-man man. Hang philosophy !

Let metaphysics swallow, at a gulp,

Its last two syllables, and purge itself

Clean of its filthy humors ! I am one

Ready for martyrdom, for stake and fire,

If I can make my great idea take root !

Zounds ! cousin, if I had an audience,

I'd make you shudder at my eloquence !

I have an itching to reform the world.

Lan. Begin at home, then.

Pepe.

Home is not my sphere ;

Heaven picked me out to teach my fellow-men.

I am a very firebrand of truth —

A self-consuming, doomed, devoted brand—
That burn to ashes while I light the world !
I feel it in me. I am moved, inspired,
Stirred into utterance, by some mystic power
Of which I am the humble instrument.

Lan. A bad digestion, sage, a bilious turn,
A gnawing stomach, or a pinching shoe.

Pepe. O ! hear, but spare the scoffer ! Spare the
wretch

Who sneers at the anointed man of truth !
When we reached that, I and my followers
Would rend you limb from limb. There !— ha ! ha !
ha !

[*Laughing.*]
Have I not caught the slang these fellows preach ;
A grand, original idea, to back it ;
And all the stock in trade of a reformer ?

Lan. You have indeed ; nor do I wonder, Pepe.
Fool as you are, I promise you success
In your new calling, if you 'll set it up.
The thing is far too simple. [*Trumpet sounds within.*]

Pepe. Hist ! my lord.

Lan. That calls me to myself.

Pepe. At that alarm,

All Rimini leaped up upon its feet.
Cousin, your bridal-train. You groan ! 'Ods wounds !
Here is the bridegroom sorely malcontent—
The sole sad face in Rimini. Since morn,
A quiet man could hardly walk the streets,
For flowers and streamers. All the town is gay.
Perhaps 't is merry o'er your misery.

Lan. Perhaps ; but that it knows not.

Pepe. Yes, it does :

It knows that when a man 's about to wed,

He's ripe to laugh at. Cousin, tell me, now,
Why is Paolo on the way so long?
Ravenna's but eight leagues from Rimini —

Lan. That's just the measure of your tongue,
good fool.

You trouble me. I've had enough of you —
Begone!

Pepe. I'm going; but you see I limp.
Have pity on a cripple, gentle Count. [*Limps.*]

Lan. Pepe!

Pepe. A miracle, a miracle!
See, see, my lord, at Pepe's saintly name
The lame jog on.

Malatesta. (*Without.*) Come, Lanciotto!

Lan. Hark!

My father calls.

Pepe. If he were mine, I'd go —
That's a good boy! [*Pats LANCIO'TTO'S back.*]

Lan. (*Starting.*) Hands off! you'll rue it else!
[*Exit.*]

Pepe. (*Laughing.*) Ha! ha! I laid my hand upon
his hump!

Heavens, how he squirmed! And what a wish I had
To cry, Ho! camel! leap upon his back,
And ride him to the devil! So, we've had
A pleasant flitting round philosophy!
The Count and Fool bumped heads, and struck ideas
Out by the contact! Quite a pleasant talk —
A friendly conversation, nothing more —
'Twixt nobleman and jester. Ho! my bird,
I can toss lures as high as any man.
So, I amuse you with my harmless wit?
Pepe's your friend now — you can trust in him —

An honest, simple fool! Just try it once,
 You ugly, misbegotten clod of dirt!
 Ay, but the hump — the touch upon the hump —
 The start and wriggle — that was rare! Ha! ha!

[*Exit, laughing.*]

SCENE II.

The Same. The Grand Square before the Castle. Soldiers on guard, with banners, &c. Citizens, in holiday dresses, cross the scene. The houses are hung with trophies, banners, garlands, &c. Enter MALATESTA, with guards, attendants, &c.

Malatesta. Captain, take care the streets be not
 choked up
 By the rude rabble. Send to Cæsar's bridge
 A strong detachment of your men, and clear
 The way before them. See that nothing check
 The bride's first entrance into Rimini.
 Station your veterans in the front. Count Guido
 Comes with his daughter, and his eyes are sharp.
 Keep up a show of strength before him, sir;
 And set some laborers to work upon
 The broken bastion. Make all things look bright;
 As if we stood in eager readiness,
 And high condition, to begin a war.

Captain. I will, my lord.

Mal. Keep Guido in your eye;
 And if you see him looking over-long
 On any weakness of our walls, just file
 Your bulkiest fellows round him; or get up
 A scuffle with the people; anything —
 Even if you break a head or two — to draw

His vision off. But where our strength is great,
Take heed to make him see it. You conceive?

Capt. Trust me, my lord. [Exit with guards.]

(Enter PEPE.)

Pepe. Room, room! A hall, a hall!
I pray you, good man, has the funeral passed?

Mal. Who is it asks?

Pepe. Pepe of Padua,
A learned doctor of uncivil law.

Mal. But how a funeral?

Pepe. You are weak of wit.
Francesca of Ravenna's borne to church,
And never issues thence.

Mal. How, doctor, pray?

Pepe. Now, for a citizen of Rimini,
You're sadly dull. Does she not issue thence
Fanny of Rimini? A glorious change,—
A kind of resurrection in the flesh!

Mal. (Laughing.) Ha! ha! thou cunning villain!
I was caught.
I own it, doctor.

Pepe. (Aside.) This old fool would laugh
To see me break a straw, because the bits
Were of unequal lengths. My character
Carries more dulness, in the guise of wit,
Than would suffice to break an ass's back.

(Distant shouts, music, &c.)

Hark! here comes Jephtha's daughter, jogging on
With timbrels and with dances.

Mal. Jephtha's daughter!
How so?

Pepe. Her father's sacrifice.

Mal. (*Laughing.*) Ho! ho!

You'll burst my belt! O! you outrageous wretch,
To jest at Scripture!

Pepe. You outlandish heathen,
'Tis not in Scripture!

Mal. Is it not?

Pepe. No more

Than you are in heaven. Mere Hebrew history.

She went up to the mountains, to bewail

The too-long keeping of her honesty.

There's woman for you! there's a character!

What man would ever think of such a thing?

Ah! we of Rimini have little cause

For such a sorrow. Would she'd been my wife!

I'll marry any woman in her case.

Mal. Why, Pepe?

Pepe. Why? because, in two months' time,
Along comes father Jephtha with his knife,

And there's an end. Where is your sacrifice?

Where's Isaac, Abraham? Build your altar up:

One pile will do for both.

Mal. That's Scripture, sure.

Pepe. Then I'm a ram, and you may slaughter me
In Isaac's stead.

Mal. Here comes the vanguard. Where,
Where is that laggard?

Pepe. At the mirror, uncle,
Making himself look beautiful. He comes,

[*Looking out.*]

Fresh as a bridegroom! Mark his doublet's fit

Across the shoulders, and his hose!—

By Jove, he nearly looks like any other man!

Mal. You'd best not let him hear you. Sirrah,
knave,

I have a mind to swinge you! [Seizes his ear.]

Pepe. Loose my ear!

You've got the wrong sow, swincherd! You're unjust.

Being his father, I was fool sufficient
To think you fashioned him to suit yourself,
By way of a variety. The thought
Was good enough, the practice damnable.

Mal. Hush! or I'll clap you in the pillory.

(Enter LANCIOTTO.)

Pepe. (*Sings.*) Ho, ho, ho, ho! — old Time has wings —

We're born, we mourn, we wed, we bed,

We have a devilish aching head;

So down we lie,

And die, and fry;

And there's a merry end of things!

(*Music, &c., within.*)

Here come Ravenna's eagles for a roost
In Rimini! The air is black with them.
When go they hence? Wherever you bird builds,
The nest remains for ages. Have an eye,
Or Malatesta's elephant may feel
The eagle's talons.

Lanciotto. You're a raven, croaker.

Pepe. And you no white crow, to insure us luck.

Mal. There's matter in his croak.

Pepe. There always is;

But men lack ears.

Mal. Then eyes must do our work.
Old Guido shall be looked to. If his force
Appear too great, I'll camp him out of town.

Lan. Father, you are a sorry host.

Mal. Well, well,
I'm a good landlord, though. I do not like
This flight of eagles more than Pepe. 'Sdeath!
Guido was ever treacherous.

Lan. My lord,
You mar my holiday by such a thought.
My holiday! Dear saints! it seems to me
That all of you are mocking me.

Pepe. So — so —
Guido was ever treacherous? — so — so!

Mal. So — so! How so?

Pepe. What if this treachery
Run in the blood? We'll tap a vein then — so!

Mal. Sew up your mouth, and mind your fooling,
fool!

Pepe. Am I not fooling? Why, my lord, I thought
The fooling exquisite.

Lan. (*Aside.*) This thoughtless knave
Hits near us sometimes with his random shafts.
Marriage for me! I cannot comprehend,
I cannot take it to my heart; the thing
Seems gross, absurd, ridiculous. Ah! well,
My father bears the folly of it all;
I'm but an actor in his comedy.
My part is bad, but I must through with it.

[*Retires.*]

(*Shouts, music, &c., within.*)

Pepe. Look! here's the whole parade! Mark,
yonder knave —

The head one with the standard. Nature, nature!
 Hadst thou a hand in such a botch-work? Why,
 A forest of his legs would scarcely make
 A bunch of fagots. Mark old Guido, too!
 He looks like Judas with his silver. Ho!
 Here's news from sweet Ravenna!

Mal. (*Laughing.*) Ha! ha! ha!

Pepe. Ah! now the bride! — that's something —
 she is toothsome.

Look you, my lord — now, while the progress halts —
 Cousin Paolo, has he got the dumps?

Mercy! to see him, one might almost think
 'T was his own marriage. What a doleful face!

The boy is ill. He caught a fever, uncle,
 Travelling across the marshes. Physic! physic!

If he be really dying, get a doctor,

And cut the matter short. 'T were merciful.

Mal. For heaven's sake, cease your clamor! I
 shall have

No face to meet them else. 'T is strange, for all:
 What ails Paolo?

Pepe. Dying, by this hand!

Mal. Then I will hang you.

Pepe. Don't take up my craft.

Wit's such a stranger in your brain that I
 Scarce knew my lodger venturing from your mouth.
 Now they come on again.

Mal. Stand back!

Pepe. (*Looking round.*) The bridegroom?
 He flies betimes, before the bride shows fight.

[*Walks back, looking for LANCOTTRO.*]

(*Music, shouts, ringing of bells, &c.* Enter Men-at-arms, with
 banners, &c., GUIDO, Cardinal, Knights, Attendants, &c.;

then PAOLO, conducting FRANCESCA, followed by RITTA, Ladies, Pages, &c., and other Men-at-arms. They file around the stage, and halt.)

Mal. Welcome, to Rimini, Count Guido! Welcome,
And fair impressions of our poor abode,
To you, my daughter! You are well returned,
My son, Paolo! Let me bless you, son.

[PAOLO approaches.]

How many spears are in old Guido's train?

[Apart to PAOLO.]

Paolo. Some ten-score.

Mal. Footmen?

Paolo. Double that.

Mal. 'T is well.

Again I bid you welcome! Make no show
Of useless ceremony with us. Friends
Have closer titles than the empty name.
We have provided entertainment, Count,
For all your followers, in the midst of us.
We trust the veterans of Rimini
May prove your soldiers that our courtesy
Does not lag far behind their warlike zeal.
Let us drop Guelf and Ghibelin henceforth,
Coupling the names of Rimini and Ravenna
As bridegroom's to his bride's.

Guido. Count Malatesta,

I am no rhetorician, or my words
Might keep more even with the love I feel:
Simply, I thank you. With an honest hand
I take the hand which you extend to me,
And hope our grasp may never lose its warmth.—
You marked the bastion by the water-side?
Weak as a bulrush.

[Apart to a Knight.]

Knight. Tottering weak, my lord.

Gui. Remember it; and when you're private, sir,
Draw me a plan.

Knight. I will, my lord.

Gui. How's this?

I do not see my future son-in-law.

Mal. Lanciotto!

Lan. (*Advancing.*) I am here, my lord.

Francesca. (*Starting.*) O! heaven!

Is that my husband, Count Paolo? You,
You then, among the rest, have played me false!

He is — [*Apart to PAOLO.*]

Paolo. My brother.

Lan. (*Aside.*) Ha! she turns from me.

Pepe. (*Approaching LANCIOTTO, sings.*)

Around, around the lady turned,
She turned not to her lord;
She turned around to a gallant, gallant knight,
Who ate at his father's board.

A pretty ballad! all on one string though.

Lan. Pepe, go hence! (*PEPE retires.*)

(*Aside.*) I saw her start and pale,
Turn off with horror; as if she had seen —
What? — simply me. For, am I not enough,
And something over, to make ladies quail,
Start, hide their faces, whisper to their friends,
Point at me — dare she? — and perform such tricks
As women will when monsters blast their sight?
O! saints above me, have I come so low?
You damsel of Ravenna shall bewail
That start and shudder. I am mad, mad, mad!
I must be patient. They have trifled with her:

Lied to her, lied! There's half the misery
 Of this broad earth, all crowded in one word.
 Lied, lied! — Who has not suffered from a lie?
 They're all aghast — all looking at me too.
 Francesca's whiter than the brow of fear:
 Paolo talks. — Brother, is that well meant?
 What if I draw my sword, and fight my way
 Out of this cursed town? 'T would be relief.
 Has shame no hiding-place? I've touched the depth
 Of human infamy, and there I rest.
 By heaven, I'll brave this business out! Shall they
 Say at Ravenna that Count Lanciotto,
 Who's driven their shivering squadrons to their
 homes,

Haggard with terror, turned before their eyes
 And slunk away? They'll look me from the field,
 When we encounter next. Why should not I
 Strut with my shapeless body, as old Guido
 Struts with his shapeless heart? I'll do it! (*Offers,*
but shrinks back.) 'Sdeath!

Am I so false as to forswear myself?

Lady Francesca! [*Approaches FRANCESCA.*]

Fran. Sir — my lord —

Lan. Dear lady,

I have a share in your embarrassment,
 And know the feelings that possess you now.

Fran. O! you do not.

Paolo. (*Advancing.*) My lady —

Lan. Gentle brother,

Leave this to me. [*PAOLO retires.*]

Fran. Pray do not send him off.

Lan. 'T is fitter so.

Fran. He comforts me.

Lan.

Indeed?

Do you need comfort?

Fran.

No, no — pardon me!

But then — he is — you are —

Lan.

Take breath, and speak.

Fran. I am confused, 't is true. But, then, my
lord,

You are a stranger to me; and Paolo
I've known so long!

Lan.

Since yesterday.

Fran.

Ah! well:

But the relationship between us two
Is of so close a nature, while the knowledge,
That each may have of each, so slender is
That the two jar. Besides, Paolo is
Nothing to me, while you are everything.
Can I not act? [*Aside.*]

Lan.

I scarcely understand.

You say your knowledge of me, till to-day,
Was incomplete. Has naught been said of me
By Count Paolo or your father?

Fran.

Yes;

But nothing definite.

Lan.

Perchance, no hint

As to my ways, my feelings, manners, or —
Or — or — as I was saying — ha! ha! — or —

[*Laughing*]

As to my person?

Fran.

Nothing, as to that.

Lan. To what?

Fran.

Your — person.

Lan.

That's the least of all. [*Turns aside.*]

Now, had I Guido of Ravenna's head

Under this heel, I'd grind it into dust!
 False villain, to betray his simple child!
 And thou, Paolo — not a whit behind —
 Helping his craft with inconsiderate love! —
 Lady Francesca, when my brother left,
 I charged him, as he loved me, to conceal
 Nothing from you that bore on me: and now
 That you have seen me, and conversed with me,
 If you object to anything in me, —
 Go, I release you.

Fran. But Ravenna's peace?

Lan. Shall not be perilled.

Gui. (*Coming behind, whispers her.*) Trust him not,
 my child;

I know his ways; he'd rather fight than wed.
 'Tis but a wish to have the war afoot.
 Stand firm for poor Ravenna!

Lan. Well, my lady,

Shall we conclude a lasting peace between us
 By truce or marriage rites?

Gui. (*Whispers her.*) The devil tempts thee:
 Think of Ravenna, think of me!

Lan. My lord,

I see my father waits you. [GUIDO retires.]

Fran. Gentle sir,

You do me little honor in the choice.

Lan. My aim is justice.

Fran. Would you cast me off?

Lan. Not for the world, if honestly obtained;
 Not for the world would I obtain you falsely.

Fran. The rites were half concluded ere we met.

Lan. Meeting, would you withdraw?

Fran. No. Bitter word! [Aside.]

Lan. No! Are you dealing fairly?

Fran.

I have said.

Lan. O! rapture, rapture! Can it be that I —
 Now I'll speak plainly; for a choice like thine
 Implies such love as woman never felt.
 Love me! Then monsters beget miracles,
 And Heaven provides where human means fall short.
 Lady, I'll worship thee! I'll line thy path
 With suppliant kings! Thy waiting-maids shall be
 Unransomed princesses! Mankind shall bow
 One neck to thee, as Persia's multitudes
 Before the rising sun! From this small town,
 This centre of my conquests, I will spread
 An empire touching the extremes of earth!
 I'll raise once more the name of ancient Rome;
 And what she swayed she shall reclaim again!
 If I grow mad because you smile on me,
 Think of the glory of thy love; and know
 How hard it is, for such a one as I,
 To gaze unshaken on divinity!
 There's no such love as mine alive in man.
 From every corner of the frowning earth,
 It has been crowded back into my heart.
 Now, take it all! If that be not enough,
 Ask, and thy wish shall be omnipotent!
 Your hand. (*Takes her hand.*) It wavers.

Fran.

So does not my heart.

Lan. Brave! Thou art every way a soldier's
 wife;

Thou shouldst have been a Cæsar's! Father, hark!
 I blamed your judgment, only to perceive
 The weakness of my own.

Mal.

What means all this?

Lan. It means that this fair lady — though I gave
Release to her, and to Ravenna — placed
The liberal hand, which I restored to her,
Back in my own, of her own free good-will.
Is it not wonderful ?

Mal. How so ?

Lan. How so !

Paolo. Alas ! ' tis as I feared ! [*Aside.*]

Mal. You 're humble ? — How ?

Lan. Now shall I cry aloud to all the world,
Make my deformity my pride, and say,
Because she loves me, I may boast of it ? [*Aside.*]
No matter, father, I am happy ; you,
As the blessed cause, shall share my happiness.
Let us be moving. Revels, dashed with wine,
Shall multiply the joys of this sweet day !
There 's not a blessing in the cup of life
I have not tasted of within an hour !

Fran. (*Aside.*) Thus I begin the practice of deceit,
Taught by deceivers, at a fearful cost.
The bankrupt gambler has become the cheat,
And lives by arts that erewhile ruined me.
Where it will end, Heaven knows ; but I —
I have betrayed the noblest heart of all !

Lan. Draw down thy dusky vapors, sullen night —
Refuse, ye stars, to shine upon the world —
Let everlasting blackness wrap the sun,
And whisper terror to the universe !
We need ye not ! we 'll blind ye, if ye dare
Peer with lack-lustre on our revelry !
I have at heart a passion, that would make
All nature blaze with recreated light ! [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Same. An Apartment in the Castle. Enter LANCIOTTO.*

Lanciotto. It cannot be that I have duped myself,
That my desire has played into the hand
Of my belief; yet such a thing might be.
We palm more frauds upon our simple selves
Than knavery puts upon us. Could I trust
The open candor of an angel's brow,
I must believe Francesca's. But the tongue
Should consummate the proof upon the brow,
And give the truth its word. The fault lies there.
I've tried her. Press her as I may to it,
She will not utter those three little words —
"I love thee." She will say, "I'll marry you; —
I'll be your duteous wife; — I'll cheer your days; —
I'll do whate'er I can." But at the point
Of present love, she ever shifts the ground,
Winds round the word, laughs, calls me "Infidel! —
How can I doubt?" So, on and on. But yet,
For all her dainty ways, she never says,
Frankly, I love thee. I am jealous — true!
Suspicious — true! distrustful of myself; —
She knows all that. Ay, and she likewise knows,
A single waking of her morning breath
Would blow these vapors off. I would not take
The barren offer of a heartless hand,

If all the Indies covered under it.
 Perhaps she loves another? No; she said,
 "I love you, Count, as well as any man;"
 And laughed, as if she thought that precious wit.
 I turn her nonsense into argument,
 And think I reason. Shall I give her up?
 Rail at her heartlessness, and bid her go
 Back to Ravenna? But she clings to me,
 At the least hint of parting. Ah! 't is sweet,
 Sweeter than slumber to the lids of pain,
 To fancy that a shadow of true love
 May fall on this God-stricken mould of woe,
 From so serene a nature. Beautiful
 Is the first vision of a desert brook,
 Shining beneath its palmy garniture,
 To one who travels on his easy way;
 What is it to the blood-shot, aching eye
 Of some poor wight who crawls with gory feet,
 In famished madness, to its very brink;
 And throws his sun-scorched limbs upon the cool
 And humid margin of its shady strand,
 To suck up life at every eager gasp?
 Such seems Francesca to my thirsting soul;
 Shall I turn off and die?

(*Enter PEPE.*)

Pepe. Good-morning, cousin!

Lan. Good-morning to your foolish majesty!

Pepe. The same to your majestic foolery!

Lan. You compliment!

Pepe. I am a troubadour,

A ballad-monger of fine mongrel ballads,

And therefore running o'er with elegance.

Wilt hear my verse?

Lan. With patience ?

Pepe. No, with rapture.

You must go mad — weep, rend your clothes, and
roll

Over and over, like the ancient Greeks,

When listening to Iliad.

Lan. Sing, then, sing !

And if you equal Homer in your song,

Why, roll I must, by sheer compulsion.

Pepe. Nay,

You lack the temper of the fine-eared Greek.

You will not roll ; but that shall not disgrace

My gallant ballad, fallen on evil times. [Sings.]

My father had a blue-black head,

My uncle's head was reddish — maybe,

My mother's hair was nowadays red,

Sing high ho ! the pretty baby !

Mark the simplicity of that ! 'T is called
"The Babe's Confession," spoken just before
His father strangled him.

Lan. Most marvellous !

You struggle with a legend worth your art.

Pepe. Now to the second stanza. Note the hint
I drop about the baby's parentage :

So delicately too ! A maid might sing,

And never blush at it. Girls love these songs

Of sugared wickedness. They'll go miles about,

To say a foul thing in a cleanly way.

A decent immorality, my lord,

Is art's specific. Get the passions up,

But never wring the stomach.

Lan. Triumphant art !

Pepe. (*Sings.*)

My father combed his blue-black head,
 My uncle combed his red head — maybe,
 My mother combed my head, and said,
 Sing high ho! my red-haired baby!

Lan. Fie, fie! go comb your hair in private.

Pepe. What!

Will you not hear? Now comes the tragedy. [*Sings.*]

My father tore my red, red head,
 My uncle tore my father's — maybe,
 My mother tore both till they bled —
 Sing high ho! your brother's baby!

Lan. Why, what a hair-rending!

Pepe. Thence wigs arose;

A striking epoch in man's history.

But did you notice the concluding line,

Sung by the victim's mother? There's a hit!

“Sing high ho! your brother's baby!”

Which brother's, pray you? That's the mystery,
 The adumbration of poetic art,

And there I leave it to perplex mankind.

It has a moral, fathers should regard, —

A black-haired dog breeds not a red-haired cur.

Treasure this knowledge: you're about to wive;

And no one knows what accident —

Lan. Peace, fool!

So all this cunning thing was wound about,

To cast a jibe at my deformity? [*Tears off PEPE'S cap.*]

There lies your cap, the emblem that protects

Your head from chastisement. Now, Pepe, hark!

Of late you've taken to reviling me ;
 Under your motley, you have dared to jest
 At God's inflictions. Let me tell you, fool,
 No man e'er lived, to make a second jest
 At me, before your time !

Pepe. Boo ! bloody-bones !
 If you're a coward — which I hardly think —
 You'll have me flogged, or put into a cell,
 Or fed to wolves. If you are bold of heart,
 You'll let me run. Do not ; I'll work you harm !
 I, Beppo Pepe, standing as a man,
 Without my motley, tell you, in plain terms,
 I'll work you harm — I'll do you mischief, man !

Lan. I, Lanciotto, Count of Rimini,
 Will hang you, then. Put on your jingling cap ;
 You please my father. But remember, fool,
 No jests at me !

Pepe. I will try earnest next.

Lan. And I the gallows.

Pepe. Well, cry quits, cry quits !
 I'll stretch your heart, and you my neck — quits,
 quits !

Lan. Go, fool ! Your weakness bounds your
 malice.

Pepe. Yes :

So you all think, you savage gentlemen,
 Until you feel my sting. Hang, hang away !
 It is an airy, wholesome sort of death,
 Much to my liking. When I hang, my friend,
 You'll be chief mourner, I can promise you.
 Hang me ! I've quite a notion to be hung :
 I'll do my utmost to deserve it. — Hang ! [*Exit.*]

Lan. I am bemocked on all sides. My sad state

Has given the licensed and unlicensed fool
 Charter to challenge me at every turn.
 The jester's laughing bauble blunts my sword,
 His gibes cut deeper than its fearful edge ;
 And I, a man, a soldier, and a prince,
 Before this motley patchwork of a man,
 Stand all appalled, as if he were a glass
 Wherein I saw my own deformity.
 O Heaven ! a tear — one little tear — to wash
 This aching dryness of the heart away !

(*Enter PAOLO.*)

Paolo. What ails the fool ? He passed me, mut-
 tering

The strangest garbage in the fiercest tone.
 "Ha ! ha !" cried he, "they made a fool of me —
 A motley man, a slave ; as if I felt
 No stir in me of manly dignity !
 Ha ! ha ! a fool — a painted plaything, toy —
 For men to kick about this dirty world ! —
 My world as well as theirs. — God's world, I trow !
 I will get even with them yet — ha ! ha !
 In the democracy of death we 'll square.
 I 'll crawl and lie beside a king's own son ;
 Kiss a young princess, dead lip to dead lip ;
 Pull the Pope's nose ; and kick down Charlemagne,
 Throne, crown, and all, where the old idiot sprawls,
 Safe as he thinks, rotting in royal state !"
 And then he laughed and gibbered, as if drunk
 With some infernal ecstasy.

Lan. Poor fool !

That is the groundwork of his malice, then, —
 His conscious difference from the rest of men ?

I, of all men, should pity him the most.
 Poor Pepe! I'll be kinder. I have wronged
 A feeling heart. Poor Pepe!

Paolo. Sad again!

Where has the rapture gone of yesterday?

Lan. Where are the leaves of Summer? Where
 the snows

Of last year's Winter? Where the joys and griefs
 That shut our eyes to yesternight's repose,
 And woke not on the morrow? Joys and griefs,
 Huntsmen and hounds, ye follow us as game,
 Poor panting outcasts of your forest-law!
 Each cheers the others, — one with wild halloos,
 And one with whines and howls. — A dreadful chase,
 That only closes when horns sound *amort!*

Paolo. Thus ever up and down! Arouse yourself,
 Balance your mind more evenly, and hunt
 For honey in the wormwood.

Lan. Or find gall

hid in the hanging chalice of the rose:
 Which think you better? If my mood offend,
 We'll turn to business, — to the empty cares
 That make such pother in our feverish life.
 When at Ravenna, did you ever hear
 Of any romance in Francesca's life?
 A love-tilt, gallantry, or anything
 That might have touched her heart?

Paolo. Not lightly even.

I think her heart as virgin as her hand.

Lan. Then there is hope.

Paolo. Of what?

Lan. Of winning her.

Paolo. Grammercy! Lanciotto, are you sane?
You boasted yesterday —

Lan. And changed to-day.
Is that so strange? I always mend the fault
Of yesterday with wisdom of to-day.
She does not love me.

Paolo. Pshaw! she marries you:
'T were proof enough for me.

Lan. Perhaps, she loves you.

Paolo. Me, Lanciotto, me! For mercy's sake,
Blot out such thoughts — they madden me! What,
love —

She love — yet marry you!

Lan. It moves you much.

'T was but a fleeting fancy, nothing more.

Paolo. You have such wild conjectures!

Lan. Well, to me

They seem quite tame; they are my bed-fellows.

Think, to a modest woman, what must be

The loathsome kisses of an unloved man —

A gross, coarse ruffian!

Paolo. O! good heavens, forbear!

Lan. What shocks you so?

Paolo. The picture which you draw,
Wronging yourself by horrid images.

Lan. Until she love me, till I know, beyond
The cavil of a doubt, that she is mine —

Wholly, past question — do you think that I
Could so afflict the woman whom I love?

Paolo. You love her, Lanciotto!

Lan. Next to you,
Dearer than anything in nature's scope.

Paolo. (Aside.) O! Heaven, that I must bear this!

Yes, and more, —

More torture than I dare to think upon,
Spreads out before me with the coming years,
And holds a record blotted with my tears,
As that which I must suffer!

Lan.

Come, Paolo,

Come help me woo. I need your guiding eye,
To signal me, if I should sail astray.

Paolo. O! torture, torture! [*Aside.*]

Lan.

You and I, perchance,

Joining our forces, may prevail at last.
They call love like a battle. As for me,
I'm not a soldier equal to such wars,
Despite my arduous schooling. Tutor me
In the best arts of amorous strategy.
I am quite raw, Paolo. Glances, sighs,
Sweets of the lip, and arrows of the eye,
Shrugs, cringes, compliments, are new to me;
And I shall handle them with little art.
Will you instruct me?

Paolo.

Conquer for yourself.

Two captains share one honor: keep it all.
What if I ask to share the spoils?

Lan. (Laughing.)

Ha! ha!

I'll trust you, brother. Let us go to her:
Francesca is neglected while we jest.
I know not how it is, but your fair face,
And noble figure, always cheer me up,
More than your words; there's healing in them, too,
For my worst griefs. Dear brother, let us in.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

*The Same. A Chamber in the Same. FRANCESCA and RITTA
discovered at the bridal toilet.*

Ritta. (Sings.)

Ring high, ring high ! to earth and sky ;
A lady goes a-wedding ;
The people shout, the show draws out,
And smiles the bride is shedding.

No bell for you, ye ragged few ;
A beggar goes a-wedding ;
The people sneer, the thing's so queer,
And tears the bride is shedding.

Ring low, ring low ! dull bell of woe,
One tone will do for either ;
The lady glad, and beggar sad,
Have both lain down together.

Francesca. A mournful ballad !

Ritta. I scarce knew I sang.
I'm weary of this wreath. These orange-flowers
Will never be adjusted to my taste :
Strive as I will, they ever look awry.
My fingers ache !

Fran. Not more than my poor head.
There, leave them so.

Rit. That's better, yet not well.

*Fran. They are but fading things, not worth your
pains :*

They 'll scarce outlive the marriage merriment.
 Ritta, these flowers are hypocrites ; they show
 An outside gayety, yet die within,
 Minute by minute. You shall see them fall,
 Black with decay, before the rites are o'er.

Rit. How beautiful you are !

Fran. Fie, flatterer !

White silk and laces, pearls and orange-flowers,
 Would do as much for any one.

Rit. No, no !

You give them grace, they nothing give to you.
 Why, after all, you make the wreath look well ;
 But somewhat dingy, where it lies against
 Your pulsing temple, sullen with disgrace.
 Ah ! well, your Count should be the proudest man
 That ever led a lady into church,
 Were he a modern Alexander. Poh !

What are his trophies to a face like that ?

Fran. I seem to please you, Ritta.

Rit. Please yourself,

And you will please me better. You are sad :
 I marked it ever since you saw the Count.
 I fear the splendor of his victories,
 And his sweet grace of manner — for, in faith,
 His is the gentlest, grandest character,
 Despite his —

Fran. Well ?

Rit. Despite his —

Fran. Ritta, What ?

Rit. Despite his difference from Count Paolo.—

[FRANCESCA staggers.]

What is the matter ?

[Supporting her.]

Fran. Nothing ; mere fatigue.

Hand me my kerchief. I am better now.

What were you saying?

Rit. That I fear the Count

Has won your love.

Fran. Would that be cause for fear? ✓

[*Laughing.*]

Rit. O! yes, indeed! Once — long ago — I was
 Just fool enough to tangle up my heart
 With one of these same men. 'T was terrible!
 Morning or evening, waking or asleep,
 I had no peace. Sighs, groans, and standing tears,
 Counted my moments through the blessed day.
 And then to this there was a dull, strange ache
 Forever sleeping in my breast, — a numbing pain,
 That would not for an instant be forgot.
 O! but I loved him so, that very feeling
 Became intolerable. And I believed
 This false Giuseppe, too, for all the sneers,
 The shrugs and glances, of my intimates.
 They slandered me and him, yet I believed.
 He was a noble, and his love to me
 Was a reproach, a shame, yet I believed.
 He wearied of me, tried to shake me off,
 Grew cold and formal, yet I would not doubt.
 O! lady, I was true! Nor till I saw
 Giuseppe walk through the cathedral door
 With Dora, the rich usurer's niece, upon
 The very arm to which I clung so oft,
 Did I so much as doubt him. Even then —
 More is my shame — I made excuses for him.
 "Just this or that had forced him to the course:
 Perhaps, he loved me yet — a little yet.
 His fortune, or his family, had driven

My poor Giuseppe thus against his heart.
 The low are sorry judges for the great.
 Yes, yes, Giuseppe loved me!" But at last
 I did awake. It might have been with less:
 There was no need of crushing me, to break
 My silly dream up. In the street, it chanced,
 Dora and he went by me, and he laughed —
 A bold, bad laugh — right in my poor pale face,
 And turned and whispered Dora, and she laughed.
 Ah! then I saw it all. I've been awake,
 Ever since then, I warrant you. And now
 I only pray for him sometimes, when friends
 Tell his base actions towards his hapless wife.—
 O! I am lying — I pray every night! [Weeps.]

Fran. Poor Ritta! [Weeping.]

Rit. No! blest Ritta! Thank kind Heaven,
 That kept me spotless when he tempted me,
 And my weak heart was pleading with his tongue.
 Pray, do not weep. You spoil your eyes for me.
 But neyer love; O! it is terrible!

Fran. I'll strive against it.

Rit. Do: because, my lady,
 Even a husband may be false, you know;
 Ay, even to so sweet a wife as you.
 Men have odd tastes. They'll surfeit on the charms
 Of Cleopatra, and then turn aside
 To woo her blackamoor. 'T is so, in faith;
 Or Dora's uncle's gold had ne'er outbid
 The boundless measure of a love like mine.
 Think of it, lady, to weigh love with gold!
 What could be meaner?

Fran. Nothing, nothing, Ritta.
 Though gold's the standard measure of the world,

I have been troubled with a sleepless night.
 My brain is wild. I know not what I say.
 Pray, do not call me sister : it is cold.
 I never had a brother, and the name
 Sounds harshly to me. When you speak to me,
 Call me Francesca.

Paolo. You shall be obeyed.

Fran. I would not be obeyed. I'd have you
 do it

Because — because you love me — as a sister —
 And of your own good-will, not my command,
 Would please me. — Do you understand ?

Paolo. Too well ! [*Aside.*]

'Tis a nice difference.

Fran. Yet you understand ?

Say that you do.

Paolo. I do.

Fran. That pleases me.

'Tis flattering if our — friends appreciate
 Our nicer feelings.

Paolo. I await you, lady.

Fran. Ritta, my gloves. — Ah ! yes, I have them
 on ;

Though I'm not quite prepared. Arrange my veil ;
 It folds too closely. That will do ; retire.

[*RITTA retires.*]

So, Count Paolo, you have come, hot haste,
 To lead me to the church, — to have your share
 In my undoing ? And you came, in sooth,
 Because they sent you ? You are very tame !
 And if they sent, was it for you to come ?

Paolo. Lady, I do not understand this scorn.
 I came, as is my duty, to escort

My brother's bride to him. When next you're called,
I'll send a lackey.

Fran. I have angered you.

Paolo. With reason: I would not appear to you
Low or contemptible.

Fran. Why not to me?

Paolo. Lady, I'll not be catechized.

Fran. Ha! Count!

Paolo. No! if you press me further, I will say
A word to madden you. — Stand still! You stray
Around the margin of a precipice.

I know what pleasure 't is to pluck the flowers
That hang above destruction, and to gaze
Into the dread abyss, to see such things
As may be safely seen. 'T is perilous:
The eye grows dizzy as we gaze below,
And a wild wish possesses us to spring
Into the vacant air. Beware, beware!
Lest this unholy fascination grow
Too strong to conquer!

Fran. You talk wildly, Count;
There's not a gleam of sense in what you say;
I cannot hit your meaning.

Paolo. Lady, come!

Fran. Count, you are cruel! [Weeps.]

Paolo. O! no; I would be kind.

But now, while reason over-rides my heart,
And seeming anger plays its braggart part —
In heaven's name, come!

Fran. One word — one question more:
Is it your wish this marriage should proceed?

Paolo. It is.

Fran. Come on! You shall not take my hand:
I'll walk alone — now, and forever!

Paolo. (*Taking her hand.*) Sister!

[*Exeunt PAOLO and FRANCESCA, with Pages.*]

Ritta. O! misery, misery! — it is plain as day —
She loves Paolo! Why will those I love
Forever get themselves ensnared, and heaven
Forever call on me to succor them?
Here was the mystery, then — the sighs and tears,
The troubled slumbers, and the waking dreams!
And now she's walking through the chapel-door,
Her bridal robe above an aching heart,
Dressed up for sacrifice. 'T is terrible!
And yet she'll smile and do it. Smile, for years,
Until her heart breaks; and the nurses ask
The doctor of the cause. He'll answer too,
In hard thick Latin, and believe himself.
O! my dear mistress! Heaven, pray torture me!
Send back Giuseppe, let him ruin me,
And scorn me after; but, sweet heaven, spare her!
I'll follow her. O! what a world is this! [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

The Same. Interior of the Cathedral. LANCIOTTO, FRANCESCA,
PAOLO, MALATESTA, GUIDO, RITTA, PEPE, *Lords, Knights,*
Priests, Pages, a bridal-train of Ladies, Soldiers, Citizens,
Attendants, &c., discovered before the High Altar. Organ music.
The rites being over, they advance.

Malatesta. By heaven —

Pepe. O! uncle, uncle, you're in church!

Mal. I'll break your head, knave!

Pepe. I claim sanctuary.

Mal. Why, bridegroom, will you never kiss the bride?

We all are mad to follow you.

Pepe. Yes, yes;

Here was Paolo wetting his red lips

For the last minute. Kiss, and give him room.

Mal. You heaven-forsaken imp, be quiet now!

Pepe. Then there 'd be naught worth hearing.

Mal. Bridegroom, come!

Pepe. Lord! he don't like it! Hey!—I told you so—

He backs at the first step. Does he not know
His trouble's just begun?

Lanciotto. Gentle Francesca,

Custom imposes somewhat on thy lips:

I'll make my levy. [*Kisses her. The others follow.*]

(*Aside.*) Ha! she shrank! I felt

Her body tremble, and her quivering lips

Seemed dying under mine! I heard a sigh,

Such as breaks hearts—O! no, a very groan;

And then she turned a sickly, miserable look

On pale Paolo, and he shivered too!

There is a mystery hangs around her,—ay,

Paolo knows it too.—By all the saints,

I'll make him tell it, at the dagger's point!

Paolo!—here! I do adjure you, brother,

By the great love I bear you, to reveal

The secret of Francesca's grief.

Paolo. I cannot.

Lan. She told you nothing?

Paolo. Nothing.

Lan. Not a word?

Paolo. Not one.

Lan. What heard you at Ravenna, then ?

Paolo. Nothing

Lan. Here ?

Paolo. Nothing.

Lan. Not the slightest hint ? —

Don't stammer, man ! Speak quick ! I am in haste.

Paolo. Never.

Lan. What know you ?

Paolo. Nothing that concerns
Your happiness, Lanciotto. If I did,
Would I not tell unquestioned ?

Lan. Would you not ?
You ask a question for me : answer it.

Paolo. I have.

Lan. You juggle, you turn deadly pale,
Fumble your dagger, stand with head half round,
Tapping your feet. — You dare not look at me !
By Satan ! Count Paolo, let me say,
You look much like a full-convicted thief !

Paolo. Brother ! —

Lan. Pshaw ! brother ! You deceive me, sir :
You and that lady have a devil's league,
To keep a devil's secret. Is it thus
You deal with me ? Now, by the light above,
I'd give a dukedom for some fair pretext
To fly you all ! She does not love me ? Well,
I could bear that, and live away from her.
Love would be sweet, but want of it becomes
An early habit to such men as I.
But you — ah ! there's the sorrow — whom I loved
An infant in your cradle ; you who grew
Up in my heart, with every inch you gained ;

You whom I loved for every quality,
 Good, bad, and common, in your natural stock ;
 Ay, for your very beauty ! It is strange, you 'll say,
 For such a crippled horror to do that,
 Against the custom of his kind ! O ! yes,
 I love, and you betray me !

Paolo. Lanciotto,
 This is sheer frenzy. Join your bride.

Lan. I 'll not !
 What, go to her, to feel her very flesh
 Crawl from my touch ? — to hear her sigh and moan,
 As if God plagued her ? Must I come to that ?
 Must I endure your hellish mystery
 With my own wife, and roll my eyes away
 In sentimental bliss ? No, no ! until
 I go to her, with confident belief
 In her integrity and candid love,
 I 'll shun her as a leper ! [Alarm-bells toll.]

Mal. What is that ?

(Enter, hastily, a Messenger in disorder.)

Messenger. My lord, the Ghibelins are up —

Lan. And I
 Will put them down again ! I thank thee, Heaven,
 For this unlooked-for aid ! [Aside.]

Mal. What force have they ?

Lan. It matters not, — nor yet the time, place,
 cause,
 Of their rebellion. I would throttle it,
 Were it a riot, or a drunken brawl !

Mal. Nay, son, your bride —

Lan. My bride will pardon me ;
 Bless me, perhaps, as I am going forth ; —

Thank me, perhaps, if I should ne'er return. [*Aside.*]
A soldier's duty has no bridals in it.

Paolo. Lanciotto, this is folly. Let me take
Your usual place of honor.

Lan. (*Laughing.*) Ha! ha! ha!
What! thou, a tilt-yard soldier, lead my troops!
My wife will ask it shortly. Not a word
Of opposition from the new-made bride?
Nay, she looks happier. O! accursed day,
That I was mated to an empty heart! [*Aside.*]

Mal. But, son —

Lan. Well, father?

Pepe. Uncle, let him go.
He 'll find it cooler on a battle-field
Than in his —

Lan. Hark! the fool speaks oracles.
You, soldiers, who are used to follow me,
And front our charges, emulous to bear
The shock of battle on your forward arms,—
Why stand ye in amazement? Do your swords
Stick to their scabbards with inglorious rust?
Or has repose so weakened your big hearts,
That you can dream with trumpets at your ears?
Out with your steel! It shames me to behold
Such tardy welcome to my war-worn blade! [*Draws.*]

(*The Knights and Soldiers draw.*)

Ho! draw our forces out! Strike camp, sound
drums,
And set us on our marches! As I live,
I pity the next foeman who relies

On me for mercy! Farewell! to you all —
To all alike — a soldier's short farewell! [Going.]

(PAOLO stands before him.)

Out of my way, thou juggler! [Exit.]
Paolo. He is gone!

ACT V.

SCENE I. *The Same. The Garden of the Castle. Enter PEPE, singing.*

Pepe. 'T is jolly to walk in the shady greenwood
 With a damsel by your side ;
 'T is jolly to walk from the chapel-door,
 With the hand of your pretty bride ;
 'T is jolly to rest your weary head,
 When life runs low and hope is fled,
 On the heart where you confide :
 'T is jolly, jolly, jolly, they say,
 They say — but I never tried.

Nor shall I ever till they dress their girls
 In motley suits, and pair us, to increase
 The race of fools. 'T would be a noble thing,
 A motley woman, had she wit enough
 To bear the bell. But there 's the misery :
 You may make princes out of any stuff ;
 Fools come by nature. She 'll make fifty kings —
 Good, hearty tyrants, sound, cruel governors —
 For one fine fool. There is Paolo, now,
 A sweet-faced fellow with a wicked heart —
 Talk of a flea, and you begin to scratch.
 Lo ! here he comes. And there 's fierce crook-back's
 bride
 Walking beside him — O, how gingerly !

Take care, my love! that is the very pace
 We trip to hell with. Hunchback is away —
 That was a fair escape for you; but, then,
 The devil's ever with us, and that's worse.
 See, the Ravenna giglet, Mistress Ritta,
 And melancholy as a cow. — How's this?
 I'll step aside, and watch you, pretty folks.

[Hides behind the bushes.]

(Enter PAOLO and FRANCESCA, followed by RITTA. He seats himself in an arbor, and reads. RITTA and FRANCESCA advance.)

Francesca. Ritta.

Ritta. My lady.

Fran. You look tired.

Rit. I'm not.

Fran. Go to your chamber.

Rit. I would rather stay,

If it may please you. I require a walk
 And the fresh atmosphere of breathing flowers,
 To stir my blood. I am not very well.

Fran. I knew it, child. Go to your chamber, dear.
 Paolo has a book to read to me.

Rit. What, the romance? I should so love to
 hear!

I dote on poetry; and Count Paolo
 Sweetens the Tuscan with his mellow voice.
 I'm weary now, quite weary, and would rest.

Fran. Just now you wished to walk.

Rit. Ah! did I so?

Walking, or resting, I would stay with you.

Fran. The Count objects. He told me, yesterday,
 That you were restless while he read to me;

And stirred your feet amid the grass, and sighed,
And yawned, until he almost paused.

Rit. Indeed

I will be quiet.

Fran. But he will not read.

Rit. Let me go ask him. [Runs towards PAOLO.]

Fran. Stop! Come hither, Ritta.
[She returns.]

I saw your new embroidery in the hall, —
The needle in the midst of Argus' eyes;
It should be finished.

Rit. I will bring it here. —

O no! my finger's sore; I cannot work.

Fran. Go to your room.

Rit. Let me remain, I pray.

'T is better, lady; you may wish for me:

I know you will be sorry if I go.

Fran. I shall not, girl. Do as I order you.

Will you be headstrong?

Rit. Do you wish it, then?

Fran. Yes, Ritta.

Rit. Yet you made pretexts enough,

Before you ordered.

Fran. You are insolent.

Will you remain against my will?

Rit. Yes, lady;

Rather than not remain.

Fran. Ha! impudent!

Rit. You wrong me, gentle mistress. Love like
mine

Does not ask questions of propriety,

Nor stand on manners. I would do you good,

Even while you smote me; I would push you back,

With my last effort, from the crumbling edge
Of some high rock o'er which you toppled me.

Fran. What do you mean?

Rit. I know.

Fran. Know what?

Rit. Too much.

Pray, do not ask me.

Fran. Speak!

Rit. I know — dear lady,

Be not offended —

Fran. Tell me, simpleton!

Rit. You know I worship you; you know I'd
walk

Straight into ruin for a whim of yours;

You know —

Fran. I know you act the fool. Talk sense!

Rit. I know Paolo loves you.

Fran. Should he not?

He is my brother.

Rit. More than brother should.

Fran. Ha! are you certain?

Rit. Yes, of more than that.

Fran. Of more?

Rit. Yes, lady; for you love him too.

I've said it! Fling me to the carrion crows,

Kill me by inches, boil me in the pot

Count Guido promised me, — but, O, beware!

Back, while you may! Make me the sufferer,

But save yourself!

Fran. Now, are you not ashamed,
To look me in the face with that bold brow?

I am amazed!

Rit. I am a woman, lady;

I too have been in love ; I know its ways,
 Its arts, and its deceits. Your frowning face,
 And seeming indignation, do not cheat.
 Your heart is in my hand.

Paolo. (*Calls.*) Francesca !

Fran. Hence,

Thou wanton-hearted minion ! hence, I say ! —
 And never look me in the face again ! —
 Hence, thou insulting slave !

Rit. (*Clinging to her.*) O lady, lady —

Fran. Begone ! [*Throws her off.*]

Rit. I have no friends — no one to love —
 O, spare me !

Fran. Hence !

Rit. Was it for this I loved —
 Cared for you more than my own happiness —
 Ever at heart your slave — without a wish
 For greater recompense than your stray smiles ?

Paolo. (*Calls.*) Francesca !

Fran. Hurry !

Rit. I am gone. Alas !
 God bless you, lady ! God take care of you,
 When I am far away ! Alas, alas ! [*Exit weeping.*]

Fran. Poor girl ! — but were she all the world to
 me,

And held my future in her tender grasp,
 I 'd cast her off, without a second thought,
 To savage death, for dear Paolo's sake !
 Paolo, hither ! Now he comes to me ;
 I feel his presence, though I see him not,
 Stealing upon me like the fervid glow
 Of morning sunshine. Now he comes too near —
 He touches me — O Heaven !

Paolo. Our poem waits.
I have been reading while you talked with Ritta.
How did you get her off?

Fran. By some device.
She will not come again.

Paolo. I hate the girl :
She seems to stand between me and the light.
And now for the romance. Where left we off?

Fran. Where Lancelot and Queen Guenevra
strayed
Along the forest, in the youth of May.
You marked the figure of the birds that sang
Their melancholy farewell to the sun —
Rich in his loss, their sorrow glorified —
Like gentle mourners o'er a great man's grave.
Was it not there? No, no; 't was where they sat
Down on the bank, by one impulsive wish
That neither uttered.

Paolo. (*Turning over the book.*) Here it is. (*Reads.*)
"So sat
Guenevra and Sir Lancelot" — 'T were well
To follow them in that. [*They sit upon a bank.*]

Fran. I listen : read.
Nay, do not; I can wait, if you desire.

Paolo. My dagger frets me; let me take it off.
[*Rises.*]
In thoughts of love, we'll lay our weapons by.
[*Lays aside his dagger, and sits again.*]
Draw closer: I am weak in voice to-day. [*Reads.*]

"So sat Guenevra and Sir Lancelot,
Under the blaze of the descending sun,
But all his cloudy splendors were forgot.
Each bore a thought, the only secret one,

Which each had hidden from the other's heart,
Both with sweet mystery well-nigh overrun.

Anon, Sir Lancelot, with gentle start,

Put by the ripples of her golden hair,

Gazing upon her with his lips apart.

He marvelled human thing could be so fair;
Essayed to speak; but, in the very deed,

His words expired of self-betrayed despair.

Little she helped him, at his direst need,

Roving her eyes o'er hill, and wood, and sky,
Peering intently at the meanest weed;

Ay, doing aught but look in Lancelot's eye.

Then, with the small pique of her velvet shoe,

Uprooted she each herb that blossomed nigh;

Or strange wild figures in the dust she drew;

Until she felt Sir Lancelot's arm around

Her waist, upon her cheek his breath like dew.

While through his fingers timidly he wound
Her shining locks; and, haply, when he brushed

Her ivory skin, Guenevra nearly swound:

For where he touched, the quivering surface blushed,

Firing her blood with most contagious heat,

Till brow, cheek, neck, and bosom, all were flushed.

Each heart was listening to the other beat.

As twin-born lilies on one golden stalk,

Drooping with Summer, in warm languor meet,

So met their faces. Down the forest walk

Sir Lancelot looked — he looked east, west, north,
south —

No soul was nigh, his dearest wish to balk:

She smiled; he kissed her full upon the mouth."

[*Kisses* FRANCESCA]

I'll read no more!

[*Starts up, dashing down the book.*]

Fran. Paolo !

Paolo. I am mad !

The torture of unnumbered hours is o'er,
 The straining cord has broken, and my heart
 Riots in free delirium ! O, Heaven !
 I struggled with it, but it mastered me !
 I fought against it, but it beat me down !
 I prayed, I wept, but Heaven was deaf to me ;
 And every tear rolled backward on my heart,
 To blight and poison !

Fran. And dost thou regret ?

Paolo. The love ? No, no ! I'd dare it all again,
 Its direst agonies and meanest fears,
 For that one kiss. Away with fond remorse !
 Here, on the brink of ruin, we two stand ;
 Lock hands with me, and brave the fearful plunge !
 Thou canst not name a terror so profound
 That I will look or falter from. Be bold !
 I know thy love — I knew it long ago —
 Trembled and fled from it. But now I clasp
 The peril to my breast, and ask of thee
 A kindred desperation.

Fran. (*Throwing herself into his arms.*) Take me all, —
 Body and soul ! The women of our clime
 Do never give away but half a heart :
 I have not part to give, part to withhold,
 In selfish safety. When I saw thee first,
 Riding alone amid a thousand men,
 Sole in the lustre of thy majesty,
 And Guido da Polenta said to me,
 " Daughter, behold thy husband ! " with a bound
 My heart went forth to meet thee. He deceived,
 He lied to me — ah ! that 's the aptest word —

And I believed. Shall I not turn again,
 And meet him, craft with craft? Paolo, love,
 Thou 'rt dull — thou 'rt dying like a feeble fire
 Before the sunshine. Was it but a blaze,
 A flash of glory, and a long, long night?

Paolo. No, darling, no! You could not bend me
 back;

My course is onward; but my heart is sick
 With coming fears.

Fran. Away with them! Must I
 Teach thee to love? and reïnform the ear
 Of thy spent passion with some sorcery
 To raise the chilly dead?

Paolo. Thy lips have not
 A sorcery to rouse me as this spell. [Kisses her.]

Fran. I give thy kisses back to thee again:
 And, like a spendthrift, only ask of thee
 To take while I can give.

Paolo. Give, give forever!
 Have we not touched the height of human bliss?
 And if the sharp rebound may hurl us back
 Among the prostrate, did we not soar once? —
 Taste heavenly nectar, banquet with the gods
 On high Olympus? If they cast us, now,
 Amid the furies, shall we not go down
 With rich ambrosia clinging to our lips,
 And richer memories settled in our hearts?
 Francesca.

Fran. Love?

Paolo. The sun is sinking low
 Upon the ashes of his fading pyre,
 And gray possesses the eternal blue;
 The evening star is stealing after him,

(PEPE steals from behind the bushes.)

Pepe. O, brother Lanciotto! — O, my stars! —
If this thing lasts, I simply shall go mad!

[Laughs, and rolls on the ground.]

O Lord! to think my pretty lady puss

Had tricks like this, and we ne'er know of it!

I tell you, Lanciotto, you and I

Must have a patent for our foolery!

“She smiled; he kissed her full upon the mouth!” —

There's the beginning; where's the end of it?

O poesy! debauch thee only once,

And thou'rt the greatest wanton in the world!

O cousin Lanciotto — ho, ho, ho! [Laughing.]

Can a man die of laughter? Here we sat;

Mistress Francesca so demure and calm;

Paolo grand, poetical, sublime! —

Eh! what is this? Paolo's dagger? Good!

Here is more proof, sweet cousin Broken-back.

“In thoughts of love, we'll lay our weapons by!”

[Mimicking PAOLO.]

That's very pretty! Here's its counterpart:

In thoughts of hate, we'll pick them up again!

[Takes the dagger.]

Now for my soldier, now for crook-backed Mars!

Ere long all Rimini will be ablaze.

He'll kill me? Yes: what then? That's nothing

new,

Except to me; I'll bear for custom's sake.

More blood will follow; like the royal sun,

I shall go down in purple. Fools for luck;

The proverb holds like iron. I must run,

Ere laughter smother me. — O, ho, ho, ho!

[Exit, laughing.]

SCENE II.

A Camp among the Hills. Before LANCIOTTO's tent. Enter, from the tent, LANCIOTTO.

Lanciotto. The camp is strangely quiet. Not a sound

Breaks nature's high solemnity. The sun
Repeats again his every-day decline ;
Yet all the world looks sadly after him,
As if the customary sight were new.
Yon moody sentinel goes slowly by,
Through the thick mists of evening, with his spear
Trailed at a funeral hold. Long shadows creep,
From things beyond the furthest range of sight,
Up to my very feet. These mystic shades
Are of the earth ; the light that causes them,
And teaches us the quick comparison,
Is all from heaven. Ah ! restless man might crawl
With patience through his shadowy destiny,
If he were senseless to the higher light
Towards which his soul aspires. How grand and
vast

Is yonder show of heavenly pageantry !
How mean and narrow is the earthly stand
From which we gaze on it ! Magnificent,
O God, art thou amid the sunsets ! Ah !
What heart in Rimini is softened now,
Towards my defects, by this grand spectacle ?
Perchance, Paolo now forgives the wrong
Of my hot spleen. Perchance, Francesca now
Wishes me back, and turns a tenderer eye
On my poor person and ill-mannered ways ;

Fashions excuses for me, schools her heart
 Through duty into love, and ponders o'er
 The sacred meaning in the name of wife.
 Dreams, dreams! Poor fools, we squander love
 away

On thankless borrowers ; when bankrupt quite,
 We sit and wonder of their honesty.
 Love, take a lesson from the usurer,
 And never lend but on security.
 Captain!

(*Enter a CAPTAIN.*)

Captain. My lord.

Lan. They worsted us to-day.

Capt. Not much, my lord.

Lan. With little loss, indeed.

Their strength is in position. Mark you, sir.

[*Draws on the ground with his sword.*]

Here is the pass ; it opens towards the plain,
 With gradual widening, like a lady's fan.
 The hills protect their flanks on either hand ;
 And, as you see, we cannot show more front
 Than their advance may give us. Then, the rocks
 Are sorry footing for our horse. Just here,
 Close in against the left-hand hills, I marked
 A strip of wood, extending down the gorge :
 Behind that wood dispose your force ere dawn.
 I shall begin the onset, then give ground,
 And draw them out ; while you, behind the wood,
 Must steal along, until their flank and rear
 Oppose your column. Then set up a shout,
 Burst from the wood, and drive them on our spears.
 They have no outpost in the wood, I know ;
 'Tis too far from their centre. On the morrow,

When they are flushed with seeming victory,
 And think my whole division in full rout,
 They will not pause to scrutinize the wood ;
 So you may enter boldly. We will use
 The heart to-day's repulse has given to them,
 For our advantage. Do you understand ?

Capt. Clearly, my lord.

Lan. If they discover you,
 Before you gain your point, wheel, and retreat
 Upon my rear. If your attack should fail
 To strike them with a panic, and they turn
 In too great numbers on your small command,
 Scatter your soldiers through the wood :
 Let each seek safety for himself.

Capt. I see.

Lan. Have Pluto shod ; he cast a shoe to-day :
 Let it be done at once. My helmet, too,
 Is worn about the lacing ; look to that.
 Where is my armorer ?

Capt. At his forge.

Lan. Your charge
 Must be at sunrise — just at sunrise, sir —
 Neither before nor after. You must march
 At moonset, then, to gain the point ere dawn.
 That is enough.

Capt. Good-even ! [*Going.*]

Lan. Stay, stay, stay !
 My sword-hilt feels uneasy in my grasp ;
[*Gives his sword.*]
 Have it repaired ; and grind the point. Strike hard !
 I'll teach these Ghibelins a lesson.

[*Loud laughter within.*]

Ha!

What is that clamor?

*(Enter hastily PEPE, tattered and travel-stained.)**Pepe.* News from Rimini! [*Falls exhausted.*]*Lan.* Is that you, Pepe? Captain, a good-night!
[*Exit CAPTAIN.*]

I never saw you in such straits before.

Wit without words!

Pepe. That's better than — O! — O! — [*Panting.*]

Words without wit.

Lan. (*Laughing.*) You'll die a jester, Pepe.*Pepe.* If so, I'll leave the needy all my wit.

You, you shall have it, cousin. — O! O! O!

[*Panting.*]

Those devils in the hills, the Ghibelins,

Ran me almost to death. My lord — ha! ha!

[*Laughing.*]

It all comes back to me — O! Lord 'a mercy! —

The garden, and the lady, and the Count!

Not to forget the poetry — ho! ho! [*Laughing.*]

O! cousin Lanciotto, such a wife,

And such a brother! Hear me, ere I burst!

Lan. You're pleasant, Pepe!*Pepe.* Am I? — Ho! ho! ho! [*Laughing.*]

You ought to be; your wife's a —

Lan. What?*Pepe.* A lady —

A lady, I suppose, like all the rest.

I am not in their secrets. Such a fellow

As Count Paolo is your man for that.

I'll tell you something, if you'll swear a bit.

Lan. Swear what?*Pepe.* First, swear to listen till the end. —

O! you may rave, curse, howl, and tear your hair;
But you must listen.

Lan. For your jest's sake? Well.

Pepe. You swear?

Lan. I do.

Pepe. Next, swear to know the truth.

Lan. The truth of a fool's story!

Pepe. You mistake.

Now, look you, cousin! You have often marked—
I know, for I have seen—strange glances pass
Between Paolo and your lady wife.—

Lan. Ha! Pepe!

Pepe. Now I touch you to the quick.

I know the reason of those glances.

Lan. Ha!

Speak! or I'll throttle you! [Seizes him.]

Pepe. Your way is odd.

Let go my gullet, and I'll talk you deaf.

Swear my last oath: only to know the truth.

Lan. But that may trouble me.

Pepe. Your honor lies—

Your precious honor, cousin Chivalry—

Lies bleeding with a terrible great gash,

Without its knowledge. Swear!

Lan. My honor? Speak!

Pepe. You swear?

Lan. I swear. Your news is ill, perchance?

Pepe. Ill! would I bring it else? Am I inclined
To run ten leagues with happy news for you?
O, Lord! that's jolly!

Lan. You infernal imp,
Out with your story, ere I strangle you!

Pepe. Then take a fast hold on your two great oaths,
To steady tottering manhood, and attend.
Last eve, about this hour, I took a stroll
Into the garden. — Are you listening, cousin?

Lan. I am all ears.

Pepe. Why, so an ass might say.

Lan. Will you be serious?

Pepe. Wait a while, and we
Will both be graver than a church-yard. Well,
Down the long walk, towards me, came your wife,
With Count Paolo walking at her side.
It was a pretty sight, and so I stepped
Into the bushes. Ritta came with them;
And Lady Fanny had a grievous time
To get her off. That made me curious.
Anon, the pair sat down upon a bank,
To read a poem; — the tenderest romance,
All about Lancelot and Queen Guenevra.
The Count read well — I'll say that much for him —
Only he stuck too closely to the text,
Got too much wrapped up in the poesy,
And played Sir Lancelot's actions, out and out,
On Queen Francesca. Nor in royal parts
Was she so backward. When he struck the line —
“She smiled; he kissed her full upon the mouth;”
Your lady smiled, and, by the saints above,
Paolo carried out the sentiment!
Can I not move you?

Lan. With such trash as this?
And so you ran ten leagues to tell a lie? —
Run home again.

Pepe. I am not ready yet.

After the kiss, up springs our amorous Count,
 Flings Queen Guenevra and Sir Lancelot
 Straight to the devil ; growls and snaps his teeth,
 Laughs, weeps, howls, dances ; talks about his love,
 His madness, suffering, and the Lord knows what,
 Bullying the lady like a thief. But she,
 All this hot time, looked cool and mischievous ;
 Gave him his halter to the very end ;
 And when he calmed a little, up she steps
 And takes him by the hand. You should have seen
 How tame the furious fellow was at once !
 How he came down, snivelled, and cowed to her,
 And fell to kissing her again ! It was
 A perfect female triumph ! Such a scene
 A man might pass through life and never see.
 More sentiment then followed, — buckets full
 Of washy words, not worth my memory.
 But all the while she wound his Countship up,
 Closer and closer ; till at last — tu ! — wit ! —
 She scoops him up, and off she carries him,
 Fish for her table ! Follow, if you can ;
 ✓ My fancy fails me. All this time you smile !

Lan. You should have been a poet, not a fool.

Pepe. I might be both.

Lan. You made no record, then ?

Must this fine story die for want of ink ?

Left you no trace in writing ?

Pepe. None.

Lan. Alas !

Then you have told it ? 'Tis but stale, my boy ;

I'm second hearer.

Pepe. You are first, in faith.

Lan. In truth ?

Pepe. In sadness. You have got it fresh.
I had no time ; I itched to reach your ear.
Now go to Rimini, and see yourself.
You 'll find them in the garden. Lovers are
Like walking ghosts, they always haunt the spot
Of their misdeeds.

Lan. But have I heard you out ?
You told me all ?

Pepe. All ; I have nothing left.

Lan. Why, you brain-stricken idiot, to trust
Your story and your body in my grasp ! [*Seizes him.*]

Pepe. Unhand me, cousin !

Lan. When I drop you, Pepe,
You 'll be at rest.

Pepe. I will betray you — O !

Lan. Not till the judgment day. [*They struggle.*]

Pepe. (*Drawing PAOLO's dagger.*) Take that !

Lan. (*Wresting the dagger from him.*) Well meant,
But poorly done ! Here 's my return. [*Stabs him.*]

Pepe. O ! beast ! [*Falls.*]
This I expected ; it is naught — Ha ! ha ! [*Laughing.*]
I 'll go to sleep ; but you — what you will bear !
Hunchback, come here !

Lan. Fie ! say your prayers.

Pepe. Hark, hark !
Paolo hired me, swine, to murder you.

Lan. That is a lie ; you never cared for gold.

Pepe. He did, I say ! I 'll swear to it, by heaven !
Do you believe me ?

Lan. No !

Pepe. You lie ! you lie !
Look at the dagger, cousin — Ugh ! — good-night !

[*Dies.*]

Lan. O! horrible! It was a gift of mine —
 He never laid it by. Speak, speak, fool, speak!
[Shakes the body.]
 How didst thou get it? — speak! Thou 'rt warm —
 not dead —
 Thou hast a tongue — O! speak! Come, come, a
 jest —

Another jest from those thin mocking lips!
 Call me a cripple — hunchback — what thou wilt;
 But speak to me! He cannot. Now, by heaven,
 I'll stir this business till I find the truth!
 Am I a fool? It is a silly lie,
 Coined by yon villain with his last base breath.
 What ho! without there!

(Enter CAPTAIN and Soldiers.)

Captain. Did you call, my lord?

Lan. Did Heaven thunder? Are you deaf, you
 louts?

Saddle my horse! What are you staring at?
 Is it your first look at a dead man? Well,
 Then look your fill. Saddle my horse, I say!
 Black Pluto — stir! Bear that assassin hence.
 Chop him to pieces, if he move. My horse!

Capt. My lord, he's shoeing.

Lan. Did I ask for shoes?
 I want my horse. Run, fellow, run! Unbarbed —
 My lightest harness on his back. Fly, fly!

[Exit a Soldier.]

[The others pick up the body.]

Ask him, I pray you, if he did not lie!

Capt. The man is dead, my lord.

Lan. (*Laughing.*) Then do not ask him!

[*Exeunt Soldiers with the body.*]

By Jupiter, I shall go mad, I think! [*Walks about.*]

Capt. Something disturbs him. Do you mark the spot

Of purple on his brow? [*Apart to a Soldier.*]

Soldier. Then blood must flow.

Lan. Boy, boy! (*Enter a Page.*) My cloak and riding-staff. Quick, quick!

How you all lag! (*Exit Page.*) I ride to Rimini.

Skirmish to-morrow. Wait till my return —

I shall be back at sundown. You shall see

What slaughter is then!

Capt. Ho! turn out a guard! —

Lan. I wish no guard; I ride alone.

[*Reënter Page, with a cloak and staff.*]

[*Taking them.*] Well done!

Thou art a pretty boy. — And now my horse!

(*Enter a Soldier.*)

Soldier. Pluto is saddled —

Lan. 'T is a damned black lie!

Sol. Indeed, my lord —

Lan. O! comrade, pardon me:

I talk at random. What, Paolo too, —

A boy whom I have trotted on my knee!

Poh! I abuse myself by such a thought.

Francesca may not love me, may love him —

Indeed she ought; but when an angel comes

To play the wanton on this filthy earth,

Then I'll believe her guilty. Look you, sir!

Am I quite calm?

Capt. Quite calm, my lord.

Lan. You see
 No trace of passion on my face? — No sign
 Of ugly humors, doubts, or fears, or aught
 That may disfigure God's intelligence?
 I have a grievous charge against you, sir,
 That may involve your life; and if you doubt
 The candor of my judgment, choose your time:
 Shall I arraign you now?

Capt. Now, if you please.
 I'll trust my cause to you and innocence
 At any time. I am not conscious —

Lan. Pshaw!
 I try myself, not you. . And I am calm —
 That is your verdict — and dispassionate?

Capt. So far as I can judge.

Lan. 'Tis well, 't is well!
 Then I will ride to Rimini. Good-night! [*Exit.*]
 [*The others look after him, amazedly, and exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Rimini. The Garden of the Castle. Enter PAOLO and FRANCESCA.

Francesca. Thou hast resolved?

Paolo. I've sworn it.

Fran. Ah! you men

Can talk of love and duty in a breath;
 Love while you like, forget when you are tired,
 And salve your falsehood with some wholesome saw;
 But we, poor women, when we give our hearts,
 Give all, lose all, and never ask it back.

Paolo. What couldst thou ask for that I have not given?

With love I gave thee manly probity,
 Innocence, honor, self-respect, and peace.
 Lanciotto will return, and how shall I —
 O! shame, to think of it! — how shall I look
 My brother in the face? take his frank hand?
 Return his tender glances? I should blaze
 With guilty blushes.

Fran. Thou canst forsake me, then,
 To spare thyself a little bashful pain?
 Paolo, dost thou know what 't is for me,
 A woman — nay, a dame of highest rank —
 To lose my purity? to walk a path
 Whose slightest slip may fill my ear with sounds
 That hiss me out to infamy and death?
 Have I no secret pangs, no self-respect,
 No husband's look to bear? O! worse than these,
 I must endure his loathsome touch; be kind
 When he would dally with his wife, and smile
 To see him play thy part. Pah! sickening thought!
 From that thou art exempt. Thou shalt not go!
 Thou dost not love me!

Paolo. Love thee! Standing here,
 With countless miseries upon my head,
 I say, my love for thee grows day by day.
 It palter with my conscience, blurs my thoughts
 Of duty, and confuses my ideas
 Of right and wrong. Ere long, it will persuade
 My shaking manhood that all this is just.

Fran. Let it! I'll blazon it to all the world,
 Ere I will lose thee. Nay, if I had choice,
 Between our love and my lost innocence,

I tell thee calmly, I would dare again
 The deed which we have done. O! thou art cruel
 To fly me, like a coward, for thy ease.
 When thou art gone, thou 'lt flatter thy weak heart
 With hopes and speculations; and thou 'lt swear
 I suffer naught, because thou dost not see.
 I will not live to bear it!

Paolo. Die, — 't were best;

'T is the last desperate comfort of our sin.

Fran. I 'll kill myself!

Paolo. And so would I, with joy;

But crime has made a craven of me. O!
 For some good cause to perish in! Something
 A man might die for, looking in God's face;
 Not slinking out of life with guilt like mine
 Piled on the shoulders of a suicide!

Fran. Where wilt thou go?

Paolo. I care not; anywhere

Out of this Rimini. The very things
 That made the pleasures of my innocence
 Have turned against me. There is not a tree,
 Nor house, nor church, nor monument, whose face
 Took hold upon my thoughts, that does not frown
 Balefully on me. From their marble tombs
 My ancestors scowl at me; and the night
 Thickens to hear their hisses. I would pray,
 But heaven jeers at it. Turn where'er I will,
 A curse pursues me.

Fran. Heavens! O, say not so!

I never cursed thee, love; I never moved
 My little finger, ere I looked to thee
 For my instruction.

Paolo. But thy gentleness

Seems to reproach me ; and, instead of joy,
It whispers horror !

Fran. Cease ! cease !

Paolo. I must go.

Fran. And I must follow. All that I call life
Is bound in thee. I could endure for thee
More agonies than thou canst catalogue —
For thy sake, love — bearing the ill for thee !
With thee, the devils could not so contrive
That I would blench or falter from my love !
Without thee, heaven were torture !

Paolo. I must go. [*Going*]

Fran. O ! no — Paolo — dearest ! —

[*Clinging to him.*]

Paolo. Loose thy hold !

'Tis for thy sake, and Lanciotto's ; I
Am as a cipher in the reckoning.
I have resolved. Thou canst but stretch the time.
Keep me to-day, and I will fly to-morrow —
Steal from thee like a thief. [*Struggles with her.*]

Fran. Paolo — love —

Indeed, you hurt me ! — Do not use me thus !
Kill me, but do not leave me. I will laugh —
A long, gay, ringing laugh — if thou wilt draw
Thy pitying sword, and stab me to the heart !

(*Enter LANCIOTTO behind.*)

Nay, then, one kiss !

Lanciotto. (*Advancing between them*) Take it : 't will
be the last.

Paolo. Lo ! Heaven is just !

Fran. The last ! so be it. [*Kisses PAOLO.*]

Lan. Ha !

Dare you these tricks before my very face ?

Fran. Why not? I've kissed him in the sight of heaven;

Are you above it?

Paolo. Peace, Francesca, peace!

Lan. Paolo — why, thou sad and downcast man, Look up! I have some words to speak with thee. Thou art not guilty?

Paolo. Yes, I am. But she Has been betrayed; so she is innocent. Her father tampered with her. I —

Fran. 'Tis false!
The guilt is mine. Paolo was entrapped
By love and cunning. I am shrewder far
Than you suspect.

Paolo. Lanciotto, shut thy ears;
She would deceive thee.

Lan. Silence, both of you!
Is guilt so talkative in its defence?
Then, let me make you judge and advocate
In your own cause. You are not guilty?

Paolo. Yes.

Lan. Deny it — but a word — say no. Lie, lie!
And I'll believe.

Paolo. I dare not.

Lan. Lady, you?

Fran. If I might speak for him —

Lan. It cannot be:

Speak for yourself. Do you deny your guilt?

Fran. No! I assert it; but —

Lan. In heaven's name, hold!
Will neither of you answer no to me?
A nod, a hint, a sign, for your escape.
Bethink you, life is centred in this thing.

Speak ! I will credit either. No reply ?
 What does your crime deserve ?

Paolo. Death.

Fran. Death to both

Lan. Well said ! You speak the law of Italy ;
 And by the dagger you designed for me,
 In Pepe's hand, — your bravo ?

Paolo. It is false !

If you received my dagger from his hand,
 He stole it.

Lan. There, sweet heaven, I knew ! And now
 You will deny the rest ? You see, my friends,
 How easy of belief I have become ! —
 How easy 't were to cheat me !

Paolo. No ; enough !

I will not load my groaning spirit more ;
 A lie would crush it.

Lan. Brother, once you gave
 Life to this wretched piece of workmanship,
 When my own hand resolved its overthrow.
 Revoke the gift. [*Offers to stab himself.*]

Paolo. (*Preventing him.*) Hold, homicide !

Lan. But think,

You and Francesca may live happily,
 After my death, as only lovers can.

Paolo. Live happily, after a deed like this !

Lan. Now, look ye ! there is not one hour of life
 Among us three. Paolo, you are armed —
 You have a sword, I but a dagger : see !
 I mean to kill you.

Fran. (*Whispers PAOLO.*) Give thy sword to me.

Paolo. Away ! thou 'rt frantic ! I will never lift
 This wicked hand against thee.

Lan. Coward, slave!

Art thou so faint? Does Malatesta's blood
Run in thy puny veins? Take that! [*Strikes him.*]

Paolo. And more:

Thou canst not offer more than I will bear.

Lan. Paolo, what a craven has thy guilt
Transformed thee to! Why, I have seen the time
When thou'dst have struck at heaven for such a
thing!

Art thou afraid?

Paolo. I am.

Lan. O! infamy!

Can man sink lower? I will wake thee, though:—
Thou shalt not die a coward. See! look here!

[*Stabs FRANCESCA.*]

Fran. O!—O!— [*Falls.*]

Paolo. Remorseless man, dare you do this,
And hope to live? Die, murderer!

[*Draws, rushes at him, but pauses.*]

Lan. Strike, strike!

Ere thy heart fail.

Paolo. I cannot. [*Throws away his sword.*]

Lan. Dost thou see

Yon bloated spider—hideous as myself—
Climbing aloft, to reach that wavering twig?

When he has touched it, one of us must die.

Here is the dagger.—Look at me, I say!

Keep your eyes from that woman! Look, think,
choose!—

Turn here to me: thou shalt not look at her!

Paolo. O, heaven!

Lan. 'Tis done!

Paolo. (*Struggling with him.*) O! Lanciotto, hold!
Hold, for thy sake! Thou wilt repent this deed.

Lan. I know it.

Fran. (*Rising.*) Help! — O! murder! — help, help,
help! [*She totters towards them, and falls.*]

Lan. Our honor, boy! [*Stabs PAOLO, he falls.*]

Fran. Paolo!

Paolo. Hark! she calls.

I pray thee, brother, help me to her side.

[LANCIOTTO helps him to FRANCESCA.]

Lan. Why, there!

Paolo. God bless thee!

Lan. Have I not done well?

What were the honor of the Malatesti,

With such a living slander fixed to it?

Cripple! that's something — cuckold! that is
damned!

You blame me?

Paolo. No.

Lan. You, lady?

Fran. No, my lord.

Lan. May God forgive you! We are even now:
Your blood has cleared my honor, and our name
Shines to the world as ever.

Paolo. O! — O! —

Fran. Love,

Art suffering?

Paolo. But for thee.

Fran. Here, rest thy head

Upon my bosom. Fie upon my blood!

It stains thy ringlets. Ha! he dies! Kind saints,

I was first struck, why cannot I die first?

Paolo, wake! — God's mercy! wilt thou go

Alone — without me? Prithee, strike again!

Nay, I am better — love — now — O! [Dies.]

Lan. (*Sinks upon his knees.*) Great heaven!

Malatesta. (*Without.*) This way, I heard the cries.

(*Enter, with GUIDO, Attendants, etc.*)

Guido. O! horrible!

Mal. O! bloody spectacle! Where is thy brother?

Lan. So Cain was asked. Come here, old men!

You shrink

From two dead bodies and a pool of blood —

You soldiers, too! Come here!

[*Drags MALATESTA and GUIDO forward.*]

Mal. O! — O! —

Lan. You groan!

What must I do, then? Father, here it is, —

The blood of Guido mingled with our own,

As my old nurse predicted. And the spot

Of her infernal baptism burns my brain

Till reason shudders! Down, upon your knees!

Ay, shake them harder, and perchance they'll wake.

Keep still! Kneel, kneel! You fear them? I shall

prowl

About these bodies till the day of doom.

Mal. What hast thou done?

Gui. Francesca! — O! my child!

Lan. Can howling make this sight more terrible?

Peace! You disturb the angels up in heaven,

While they are hiding from this ugly earth.

Be satisfied with what you see. You two

Began this tragedy, I finished it.

Here, by these bodies, let us reckon up

Our crimes together. Why, how still they lie!

A moment since, they walked, and talked, and kissed!

Defied me to my face, dishonored me !
They had the power to do it then ; but now,
Poor souls, who 'll shield them in eternity ?
Father, the honor of our house is safe :
I have the secret. I will to the wars,
And do more murders, to eclipse this one.
Back to the battles ; there I breathe in peace ;
And I will take a soldier's honor back. —
Honor ! what 's that to me now ? Ha ! ha ! ha !

[*Laughing.*]

A great thing, father ! I am very ill.
I killed thy son for honor : thou mayst chide.
O God ! I cannot cheat myself with words !
I loved him more than honor — more than life —
This man, Paolo — this stark, bleeding corpse !
Here let me rest, till God awake us all !

[*Falls on PAOLO'S body.*]



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