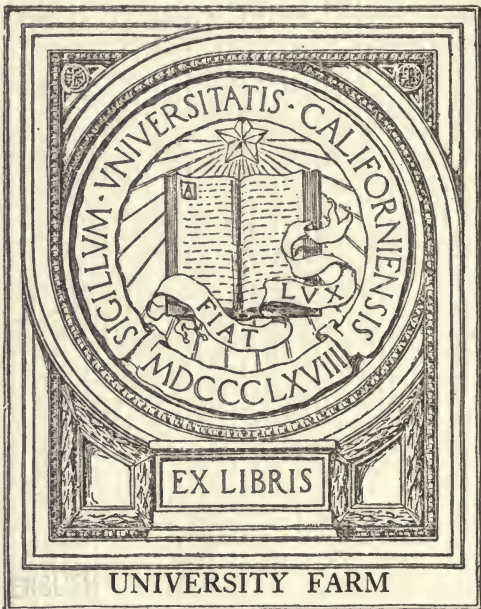
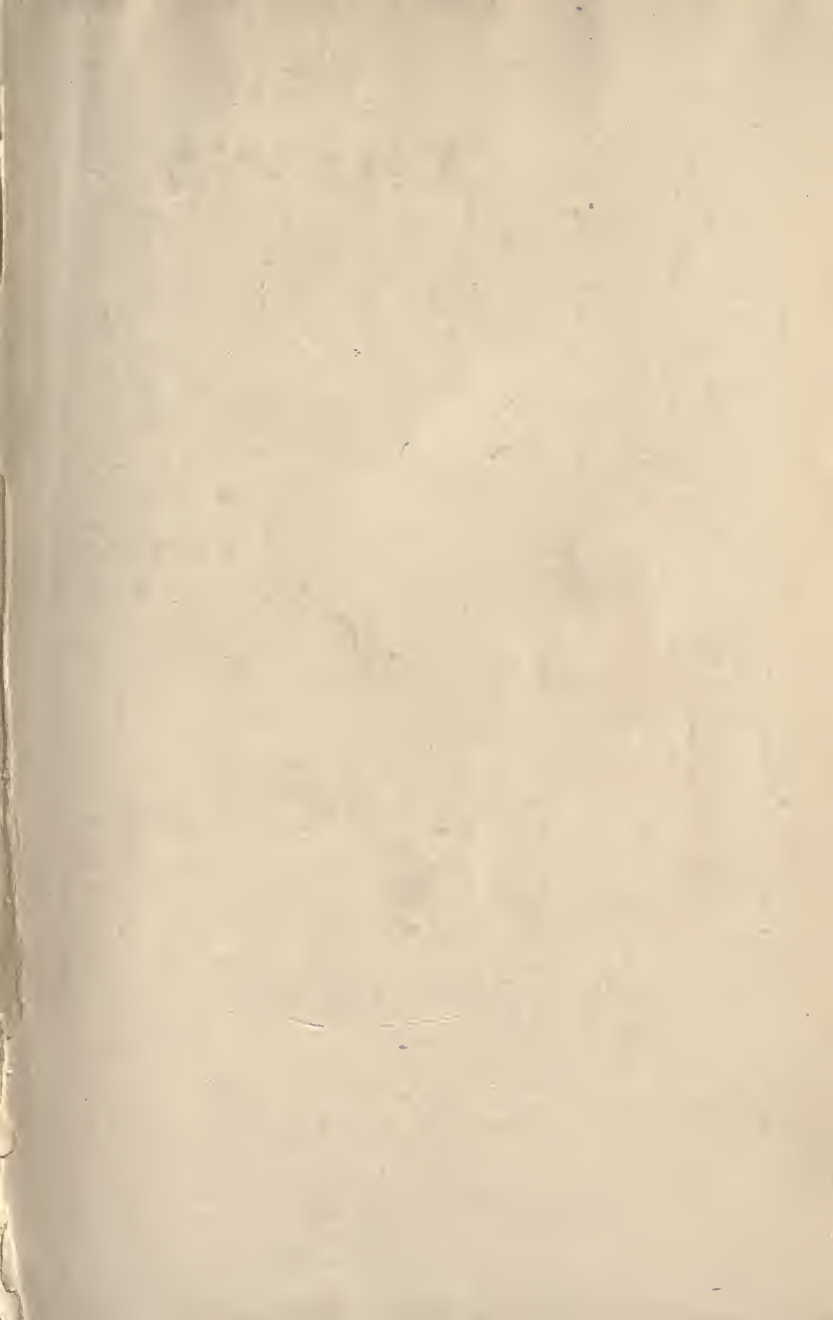


PLAYS
MACKAYE



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POEMS AND PLAYS

BY

PERCY MACKAYE

PLAYS

WORKS BY PERCY MACKAYE

DRAMAS

- THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS. A COMEDY.
JEANNE D'ARC. A TRAGEDY.
SAPPHO AND PHAON. A TRAGEDY.
FENRIS THE WOLF. A TRAGEDY.
A GARLAND TO SYLVIA. A DRAMATIC
REVERIE.
THE SCARECROW. A TRAGEDY OF THE
LUDICROUS.
YANKEE FANTASIES. FIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS.
MATER. AN AMERICAN STUDY IN COMEDY.
ANTI-MATRIMONY. A SATIRICAL COMEDY.
TO-MORROW. A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.
A THOUSAND YEARS AGO. A ROMANCE OF
THE ORIENT.
THE IMMIGRANTS. A LYRIC DRAMA.

MASQUES

- SAINT LOUIS. A CIVIC MASQUE.
SANCTUARY. A BIRD MASQUE.
THE NEW CITIZENSHIP. A CIVIC RITUAL.
CALIBAN. A SHAKESPEARE MASQUE.

POEMS

- THE SISTINE EVE, AND OTHER POEMS.
URIEL, AND OTHER POEMS.
LINCOLN. A CENTENARY ODE.
THE PRESENT HOUR.

ESSAYS

- THE PLAYHOUSE AND THE PLAY.
THE CIVIC THEATRE.
A SUBSTITUTE FOR WAR.
-

AT ALL BOOKSELLERS



SCENE FOR JEANNE D'ARC ACT I (DESIGN BY BARRY FAULKNER)

POEMS AND PLAYS

BY

PERCY MACKAYE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II

PLAYS



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1916

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NOTE FOR THIS EDITION

Of the author's separately published dramatic works, the five plays included in this volume have been selected to represent, in verse and prose, his dramatic work in comedy, tragedy, and satire, on themes historical and modern.

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THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

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THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

A COMEDY

To
E. H. Sothorn
In Friendship

“ O KINDLY Muse ! let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety and of their glee ;
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul ; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.”

[KEATS: *Endymion*.]



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

I. CHARACTERS BASED ON "THE CANTERBURY TALES."

MEN

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, Poet at King Richard's Court, and Knight of the Shire for Kent.

The KNIGHT (*Dan Roderigo d'Algezir*).

The SQUIRE (*Aubrey*), his son.

The YEOMAN, his servant.

The MONK.

The FRIAR (*Huberd*).

The MERCHANT.

The CLERK.

The MAN-OF-LAW.

The FRANKLIN.

The HABERDASHER,

The CARPENTER,

The WEAVER,

The DYER,

The TAPICER,

The COOK (*Roger Hogge*).

The SHIPMAN (*Jack*).

The DOCTOR.

The PARSON (*Jankin*).

The PLOUGHMAN.

The MILLER (*Bob or Robin*).

The MANCIPLÉ.

The REEVE.

The SUMMONER.

The PARDONER.

} Members of a Guild.

The HOST (*Herry Bailey*).

The CANON'S YEOMAN.

JOANNES, }
 MARCUS, } The Prioress's Priests.
 PAULUS, }

WOMEN

The WIFE OF BATH (*Alisoun*).

The PRIORESS (*Madame Eglantine*).

A NUN, her attendant.

MISTRESS BAILEY, of the Tabard Inn.

II. CHARACTERS NOT BASED ON "THE CANTERBURY TALES."

MEN

RICHARD II, King of England.

JOHN OF GAUNT, Duke of Lancaster, uncle of the King, brother-in-law
 of Chaucer, and patron of Wycliffe.

The DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, his brother.

DE VERE, Duke of Ireland, Richard's favourite.

The ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY.

JOHN WYCLIFFE, the religious reformer, founder of the "Lollards."

BOTTLEJOHN, Host of the One Nine-pin inn, at Bob-up-and-down.

HIS PRENTICES (*Ned and Dick*).

A KITCHEN-BOY.

A VENDER OF RELICS.

ANOTHER VENDER.

A BLACK FRIAR.

A GREY FRIAR.

A PRIEST OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

HERALDS.

CHÓIR-BOYS.

WOMEN

JOHANNA, Marchioness of Kent.

CANTERBURY BROOCH-GIRLS.

SERVING-MAIDS.

NOTE. — Those designated as Alisoun's "Swains" are the Friar, Cook, Shipman, Miller, Manciple, Summoner, Pardoner.

ACT FIRST

“BIFEL that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury, with ful devout corage,
At night was come in-to that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye
Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.”

ACT I

TIME: April 16th, 1387. Late afternoon.

SCENE: The Tabard Inn at Southwark, near London.

When the scene opens, about half of the PILGRIMS have arrived; the others come in during the first part of the act. Those already arrived are the MILLER, SHIPMAN, COOK, PARSON, PLOUGHMAN, FRANKLIN, DOCTOR, FRIAR, HABERDASHER, CARPENTER, WEAVER, DYER, TAPICER, CLERK, and CHAUCER.

At rise of curtain, the HOST is just moving to receive the KNIGHT, SQUIRE, and YEOMAN at the door, back. Chaucer sits with a big volume on his knee in the corner by the fireplace, left; right front, the Miller and the Cook are wrestling, while those near look on.

COOK

Now, masters, see a miller eat bran!

MILLER

Corpus!

I'd liever wrastle with a butterfly.

SHIPMAN

Tackle him aft.

FRANKLIN

Grip, mon.

[*They clutch each other.*]

A SERVING-MAID

[*Aside to Friar.*]

A diamond pin?

FRIAR

[*Lisps slightly.*]

One of thy glances stickéd through my heart!

[*Offers her the pin.*]

SERVING-MAID

The Master is not looking now.

FRIAR

A bargain?

[*Maid nods, takes the pin, and hurries off to serve at table.
Friar follows.*]

HOST

Welcome, Sir Knight!

KNIGHT

Is this the Tabard Inn?

HOST

[*Points through the open door to his swinging sign.*]

Lo yonder, sir, is Herry Bailey's shirt
Flappeth in the wind; and this is Herry himself.

[*Claps his hands for a serving-boy.*]

Knave!

WEAVER

[*Pounds on the table with a jug, while Carpenter tosses dice.*]

Ale, here! Ale!

[*A shout from the pilgrims, front.*]

MILLER

[*Throwing the Cook.*]

Down!

SHIPMAN

Jolly chuck!

COOK

[*Getting to his feet with a bloody nose and fisting.*]

'Sblood! Thou —

FRANKLIN

Hold, Master Cook, sith thou hast licked the platter,
Go now and wash the gravy off thy nose.
Look to him, doctor.

DOCTOR

Here!

FRANKLIN

[*To the Miller.*]

And thou shalt eat
A sop of wine with me. By God, thy hand!

PARSON

[*To Ploughman, drawing him away.*]

He sweareth like Sathanas. Come!

PLOUGHMAN

Toot, brother!

A little swearing saveth from the gallows.

MILLER

[*Laughing at the Cook.*]

His nose is like a tart.

CLERK

[*To Chaucer, feasting his eyes on his book.*]

Grant pardon, sir.

In vanitate humanorum rerum,

I' the world's uproar, 'tis sweet to find a scholar.

CHAUCER

A book's a mistress all the world may love
And none be jilted.

CLERK

Then am I in love.

What is the book?

CHAUCER

A medley, like its master,
Containing many divers characters,
Bound in one hide. Whoso shall read it through
He shall behold Troilus and Launcelot
Sighing in Cæsar's face, and Scaramouche
Painting with grins the back of Aristotle.

CLERK

[*Sparkling.*]

What! — Aristotle?

CHAUCER

[*Rising, hands him the volume.*]

I prithee look it through.

CLERK

Grammercy — somewhat farther from the piping.

[*Draws farther away from the Squire, who is beginning to play a few strains on his flute, in front of the fire.*]

MAN OF LAW

[*Entering with MERCHANT.*]

For this recognisance —

MERCHANT

The ship was wrecked.

MAN OF LAW

Depardieux! Then your property is flotsam
And liable to salvage. Therefore you
Will need me as your man of law.

KNIGHT

[*To Chaucer.*]

I knew
You were a soldier by your bearing, sir.
You were at Cressy?

CHAUCER

Nay, Sir Knight, I played
 With tin swords then. Though I have often fought
 At Frenchmen's heels, I was but six years old
 When our Black Edward won his spurs.

KNIGHT

Runs time
 So swiftly? — One and forty years ago!

HOST

[*To a serving-maid.*]

Belive, wench!

FRIAR

[*Stealing a kiss from her.*]

In principio —

HOST

What's here?

MAID

The gentle friar!

HOST

Gentle flower-de-luce!

[*Makes after Friar, who dodges behind MISTRESS BAILEY.*]

MISTRESS BAILEY

[*Shrewishly.*]

Hold, goodman Herry! 'Tis a friend of mine.

[*Host retires; Friar mocks him.*]

KNIGHT

I am returning from the Holy Land
 And go to pay my vows at Canterbury.
 This is my son.

CHAUCER

Go you to Canterbury
 As well, Sir Squire?

[*The Squire, putting down his flute, sighs deeply.*]

KNIGHT

My son, the gentleman
 Accosts thee!

SQUIRE

Noble gentleman — Ah me!

[*He turns away.*]

CHAUCER

[*Follows him.*]

My dearest heart and best beloved foe,
 Why liketh you to do me all this woe?
 What have I done that grieveth you, or said,
 Save that I love and serve you, high and low?
 And whilst I live I will do ever so.
 Wherefore, my sweet, do not that I be dead;
 For good and fair and gentle as ye be,
 It were great wonder if but that ye had
 A thousand thousand servants, good and bad:
 The most unworthiest servant — I am he!

SQUIRE

Sir, by my lady's grace, you are a poet
 And lover, like myself. We shall be brothers.
 But pardon, sir, those verses are not yours.
 Dan Chaucer wrote them. Ah, sir, know you Chaucer?

CHAUCER

Twelve stone of him!

SQUIRE

Would I did! Is he not
 An amorous divinity? Looks he
 Like pale Leander, or some ancient god?

CHAUCER

Sooth, he is like old Bacchus round the middle.

SQUIRE

How acts he when in love? What feathers wears he?
 Doth he sigh oft? What lady doth he serve?
 Oh!

*[At a smile from Chaucer, he starts back and looks at him
 in awe; then hurries to the Knight. Chaucer walks
 among the pilgrims, talking with them severally.]*

MILLER

[To Franklin.]

Ten gallon ale? God's arms! I take thee.

MAN OF LAW

The wager?

What's

FRANKLIN

Yonder door ; this miller here
Shall break it, at a running, with his head.
The door is oak. The stakes ten gallon ale.

SHIPMAN

Ho, then, I bet the miller shall be drunk.

MERCHANT

What bet ?

SHIPMAN

Twelve crown upon the miller.

MERCHANT

Done.

[*At the door appears the Prioress, accompanied by a Nun
and her three Priests, one of whom, Joannes, carries a
little pup. The Host hurries up with a reverence.*]

HOST

Welcome, my lady dear. Vouchsafe to enter
Poor Herry Bailey's inn.

PRIORESS

Merci.

HOST

[*To a serving-boy.*]

Knave, show

My lady Prioress to the blue chamber
Where His Majesty, King Richard, slept.

PRIORESS

Mark, Paulus, stay! have you the little hound
Safe? Joannes,

JOANNES

Yes, my lady.

PRIORESS

Carry him before,
But carefully.

MILLER

[*To Yeoman.*]

Here, nut-head, hold my hood.

YEOMAN

Wilt try bareheaded?

FRIAR

'Mass!

FRANKLIN

Ho, for a skull!
Miller, thou art as tough a knot as e'er
The Devil tied. By God, mine ale is spilled.

[*The priests and Prioress have just reached the door, left
front, which the Miller is preparing to ram.*]

PLOUGHMAN

The door is locked.

JOANNES

But, sir, the Prioress —

SHIPMAN

Heigh! Clear the decks!

[*The Miller, with clenched fists, and head doubled over, runs for the door.*]

YEOMAN

Harrow!

PARSON

Run, Robin.

GUILD-MEN

[*Rise from their dice.*]

Ho!

[*With a crash, the Miller's head strikes the door and splits it. At the shock, he rebounds against Joannes, and reaching to save himself from falling, seizes the puppy.*]

MILLER

A twenty devils!

GUILD-MEN

[*All but the Weaver, clambering over the table.*]

Come on!

PLOUGHMAN

[*To the Miller.*]

What aileth thee?

MILLER

The priest hath bit my hand.

JOANNES

Sweet sir, the puppy —

It was the puppy, sir.

MILLER

Wring me its neck.

PRIORESS

Alas, Joannes — help!

MILLER

By Corpus bones!

Give me the cur.

PRIORESS

St. Loy! Will no one help?

CHAUCER

Madame, what may I do?

PRIORESS

My little hound —

The churl — My little hound! The churl will hurt it.
If you would fetch to me my little hound —

CHAUCER

Madame, I'd fetch you Cerberus from hell.

MILLER

Lo, masters! See a dog's neck wrung!

CHAUCER

[*Breaking through the crowd, seizes the Miller by the throat.*]

Which dog's?

MILLER

Leave go!—'Sdeath! Take the whelp, a devil's name.

CHAUCER

Kneel! Ask grace of this lady here.

MILLER

[*Sullenly.*]

What lady?

CHAUCER

Of her whom gentles call St. Charity
In every place and time. —

[*Turns then towards Prioress.*]

What other name

This lady bears, I have not yet been honoured
With knowing. — Kneel!

MILLER

[*Morosely; kneels.*]

Lady, I axe your pardon

CHAUCER

Madame, your little hound is safe.

PRIORESS

[*Nestles the little hound with tender effusiveness; then turns shyly to Chaucer.*]

Merci!

My name is Madame Eglantine.

[*Hurries out, left.*]

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

Hold, Geoffrey!

Yon beastie's quaking side thumped not as thine
Thumps now. And wilt thou ape a little hound?
Ah, Madame Eglantine, unless ye be
To me, as well as him, St. Charity!

FRANKLIN

Who is the man?

MILLER

The Devil, by his eye.
They say King Richard hath to court a wrastler
Can grip ten men. I guess that he be him.

COOK

Ho! milksop of a miller!

MILLER

[*Seizing him.*]

Say it twice;

What?

COOK

Nay, thou art a bull at bucking doors.

FRANKLIN

Let ribs be hoops for twenty gallon ale
And stop your wind-bags. Come.

MILLER

[*With a grin, follows the Franklin.*]

By Corpus bones!

SHIPMAN

Twelve crown.

MERCHANT

Twelve, say you? See my man of law.

WEAVER

[*Springs to his feet.*]

The throw is mine!

DYER

A lie! When we were away
You changed the dice!

WEAVER

My throw was cinq and three.

DYER

A lie! Have it in your gullet!

[*Draws his knife. They fight.*]

CARPENTER

Part them!

TAPICER

Back!

HOST

Harrow! Dick Weaver, hold! Fie, Master Dyer,
 Here's not a dyeing stablishment; we want
 No crimson cloth — Clap hands now: Knave, more
 ale.

CHAUCER

[*To the Doctor.*]

If then, as by hypothesis, this cook
 Hath broke his nose, it follows first that we
 Must calculate the ascendent of his image.

DOCTOR

Precisely! Pray proceed. I am fortunate
 To have met a fellow-doctor at this inn.

CHAUCER

Next, treating him by magic natural,
 Provide him well with old authorities,
 As Esculapius, Dioscorides,
 Damascien, Constantinus, Averrois,
 Hippocrates, Serapion, Rasis,
 Bernardus, Galienus, Gilbertinus —

DOCTOR

But, sir, the fellow cannot read —

CHAUCER

Why, true;
 Then there remains but one sure remedy,
 Thus: bid him, fasting, when the moon is wane,
 And Venus rises in the house of Pisces,
 To rub it nine times with a herring's tail.

DOCTOR

Yea, Pisces is a fish. — I thank you, sir.

[*He hurries off to the Cook, whose nose he has patched.*]

HOST

[*To the Reeve, who enters.*]

God save thee, Osewold! What's o'clock? Thou
look'st

As puckered as a pear at Candlemas.

REEVE

There be too many folk i' the world; and none
Is ripe till he be rotten.

[*Sits at table.*]

Penny'orth ale!

SQUIRE

My lord, father!

KNIGHT

Well, son?

SQUIRE

[*Looking at Chaucer.*]

Sir, saw you ever

So knightly, sweet, and sovereign a man,
With eyes so glad and shrewdly innocent?
O, when I laid my hand in his, and looked
Into his eyes, meseemed I rode on horse
Into the April open fields, and heard
The larks upsinging in the sun. Sir, have
You guessed who 'tis?

KNIGHT

To judge him by his speech,
Some valiant officer.

SQUIRE

Nay, *I* have guessed.

[*A merry jingling of bells outside. Enter the Monk, holding up a dead swan.*]

MONK

Soft! Handle not the fat swan. Give it me.
Bailey, I'll learn thy cook to turn a spit.

[*Exit, right. Enter, left, Joannes.*]

CHAUCER

[*To Ploughman.*]

Aye, man, but weather is the ploughman's wife
To take for worse or better. If thy loam
Be thin, and little snow, which is the best
Manure, then thou must dung thy furrows twice
'Twixt Michelmas and March.

PLOUGHMAN

Aye, but —

JOANNES

Sir Knight,

This letter . . .

CHAUCER

What! from whom?

PLOUGHMAN

Toot! Canst thou read, mon?

JOANNES

This letter, sir, my Lady Prioress —

CHAUCER

From Madame Eglantine? Waits she an answer?

JOANNES

So please you, sir.

CHAUCER

Sweet saints!

[*Takes the letter and reads, aside.*]

PLOUGHMAN

[*Watches Chaucer curiously.*]

Aye, 'e can read it.

[*Outside, is heard the distant voice of the Wife of Bath (ALISOUN), joined in chorus by the PARDONER, MANCIPLE, and SUMMONER, singing.*]

ALISOUN

When folk o' Faerie

Are laughing in the laund,

And the nix pipes low in the miller's pond,

Come hither, love, to me.

[*Chorus.*]

With doe and with dove,

Come back to your love.

Come hither, love, to me.

CHAUCER

[*Reading the Prioress's letter, as the song outside sounds nearer.*]

“Monsieur l'inconnu Chevalier —

These greetings shall apprise you that the little hound is convalescent, and now suffereth from nothing save a sore necessity for nourishment. Wherefore, being cast in holy pilgrimage upon this revelous inn, I appeal once more, gentil monsieur, to your honourable chivalry, of which I beseech you this favour, to wit; that you shall see prepared and delivered into the hands of Joannes, my priest, a recipe as follows: —

One ounce of wastel-bread, toasted a pleasant brown;

One little cup of fresh milk;

Soak the former in the latter, till the sand-glass shall be run half out;

Then sprinkle sparingly with sweet root of beet, rubbed fine.

Serve neatly.

MADAME EGLANTINE.”

SHIPMAN

[*At the door, to Friar, who is starting to flirt with a third serving-maid.*]

Hist! Who's yon jolly Nancy riding here,
With them three tapsters tooting up behind?

FRIAR

By sweet St. Cuthbert!

SHIPMAN

Ha! ye ken the wench.

FRIAR

The wench? Oho! Thou sayest well. List, sir;
List, gentle Mariner! Thy wench hath been
A five times wedded and five hundred woo'd;
Hath rode alone to sweet Jerusalem
And back more oft than Dick-the-Lion's-Heart;
And in her right ear she is deaf as stone,
Because, she saith, that once with her right ear
She listened to a lusty Saracen.
She was not born a-yesterday, yet, by
The merry mass, when she comes in the door,
She maketh sweet-sixteen as stale as dough.

SHIPMAN

She looks a jolly Malkin. What's her name?

FRIAR

Dame Alisoun, a cloth-maker of Bath.

CHAUCER

[*Reading.*]

"P.S. Let not the under-side be toasted as brown as
the upper.
P.P.S. The milk should not be skimmed."

[*Laughs to himself.*]

"A little cup of milk and wastel-bread!"
Haha!—A gentle heroine for a tale!
My heart is lost.

[*To Joannes, who is trembling at the Miller.*]

What, fellow, art thou scared?
Come with me to the kitchen.

JOANNES

[*Follows timidly.*]

Ben'cite! [*Exeunt.*]

[*Outside the song, "Come hither, Love," bursts into chorus. Enter the WIFE OF BATH, astride a small white ass, which is fancifully caparisoned like a fairy creature. Spurs jingle on the Wife's boots, and on her head is a great round hat. Followed by the SUMMONER, PARDONER, and MANCIPLE, she rides into the middle of the floor and reins up.*]

ALISOUN

Whoa-oo! — God save this merry company!

[*A commotion.*]

By God, I ween ye ken not what I am:
I am the jolly elf-queen, and this is
My milk-white doe, whereon I ride as light
As Robin Good-boy on a bumble-bee;

[*Indicating the ass's ears.*]

These be his wings. —

And lo — my retinue!

These here be choir-boys from Fairy-land.
Come, Pardoner, toot up my praise anon.

PARDONER AND ALISOUN [*sing*]

When sap runs in the tree,

And the huntsman sings "Halloo!"

And the greenwood saith: "Pewit! Cuckoo!"

Come hither, love, to me.

SWAINS AND ALISOUN

With turtle and plover,
Come back to your lover.
Come hither, love, to me.

ALISOUN

Now, lads, the chorus!

[*The Swains and Alisoun, joined by several other pilgrims,
repeat chorus.*]

MILLER

Nails and blood! Again!

FRIAR

. Encore!

ALISOUN

Nay lads, the song hath dried my whistle.
The first that fetches me a merry jug
Shall kiss my lily-white hand.

[*The Swains, with a shout, scramble to get ale of the tapster.*]

SWAINS

Here, ale here! ale!

HOST

Slow, masters! Turtle wins the rabbit race.

MILLER

[*Offers his tankard, tipsily.*]

Give's thy hand, girl.

ALISOUN

Thou art drunk! 'Tis empty.

MILLER

Well, 'tis a jug. Ye said "a merry jug."

ALISOUN

Pardee! I'll keep my word.

MILLER

[*Grinning, raises his face to her.*]

A kiss?

ALISOUN

A smack!

[*Flings the tankard at his head.*]

MILLER

[*Dodging it.*]

Harrow!

THE OTHER SWAINS

[*Pell-mell.*]

Here! here! Take mine!

FRIAR

Drink, sweet Queen Mab!

[*Re-enter Chaucer and Joannes. Chaucer carries in his hand a crock.*]

ALISOUN

[*To the Friar.*]

What, Huberd, are ye there? Ye are too late,
All o' ye! The elf-queen spies her Oberon.

[*Wheeling the ass to confront Chaucer.*]

By God, sir, you're the figure of a man
For me. — Give me thy name.

CHAUCER

Your Majesty,

This is most sudden. Dare I hope you would
Have me bestow my humble name upon you?

ALISOUN

Make it a swap, mon. Mine is Alisoun,
And lads they ken me as the Wife of Bath!

CHAUCER

My name is Geoffrey. When the moon is full,
I am an elf and skip upon the green;
By my circumference fairy-rings are drawn,
And lasses ken me as the Elvish Knight.

SQUIRE

[*Aside.*]

Father, 'tis he — the poet laureate!

KNIGHT

Brother-in-law to John of Gaunt?

SQUIRE

The same.

SHIPMAN

[*Offers his mug again.*]

Take this, old girl.

ALISOUN

The devil take a tar.

[*Snatches the crock from Chaucer's hand.*]

I'll take a swig from Geoffrey's. — Holy Virgin!
 What pap is this here? Milk and wastel-bread?

CHAUCER

Nay, 'tis a kind of brew concocted from
 The milky way, to nurse unmarried maids.

ALISOUN

[*Hands it back quickly.*]

Saints! None o' that for me.

CHAUCER

[*Aside to Joannes.*]

Bear it to your mistress.

ALISOUN

[*Aside.*]

Mistress? Aha! — A woman in the case.

[*Aloud.*]

Give us your hand, Sir Knight o' the Wastel-bread,
 And help me light adown. —

What! Are ye afear'd
 To take me in your arms?

CHAUCER

Sweet Alisoun,
Thou art a vision of the ruddy Venus
Bright pommelled on the unspotted Pegasus,
And I am Ganymede, thy stable boy.

[*He helps her to alight.*]

ALISOUN

Well swung! What think ye of my jolly heft?

CHAUCER

Thou art a very dandelion seed
And I thy zephyr.

MILLER

[*To the Swains.*]

'Sblood! He steals our wench.

SQUIRE

[*Approaching Chaucer diffidently, speaks under his breath.*]

Great Master Chaucer.

CHAUCER

Hush! Speak not my name.

[*Takes the Squire aside.*]

ALISOUN

Halloa! what's struck this jolly company?
Ye're flat as stale ale. Master Summoner, what's
The matter now? Ye should be glad at heart
To wear so merry a bonfire in your face.

SUMMONER

Was it for this I sang, "Come hither, Love"?

COOK

Aye, was it for this?

ALISOUN

What, Roger Hogge, yourself?
How long, bird, have you worn a gallows-warrant
Upon your nose?

[*The others hoot.*]

COOK

As long, Dame Alisoun,
As you have had a hogshead for a sweetheart.

ALISOUN

Geoffrey, ye mean? Ho! Are ye jealous there?

[*To the Shipman.*]

Jack, too, and hast a wife to home at Dartmouth?
Hark, lads! This Jealousy is but a ninny;
For though there be a nine-and-twenty stars,
Yet Jealousy stares only at the moon.
Lo! I myself have made a vow 'twixt here
And holy Thomas' shrine to twig a husband;
But if I like this fellow Geoffrey, can't
I like ye all? By God, give me your fists;
And I will tip ye a secret.

[*Mysteriously.*]

I am deaf !

Ye ken all great folks have some great defect :
Cupid is blind and Alisoun is deaf ;
But Cupid — he can wink the t'other eye,
And Alis — she can ope the t'other ear.

FRIAR

Sweet Alis, which is deaf ?

ALISOUN

I said, the t'other.

FRIAR

Nay, but which ear, the right or left ?

ALISOUN

Love, if

Ye guess the right ye won't be left : how's that ?
So, fellows, ye can knock at either door ;
And while Tom standeth scraping the front mat,
By God then, Dick, go rap at the side porch ;
The t'other door is locked ; I say not which.

[*Laughing and boxing their ears as they try, in turn, to whisper to her, she leads them to the ale-barrel, where they drink.*]

FRIAR

Sweet brethren, drink with me to t'other ear !

ALISOUN

Here's pot-luck to you all, lads !

PARDONER

[*Who has spread out his relics in another part of the room.*]

Pardons! pardons!

Offer your nobles now; spoons, brooches, rings:
Radix malorum est cupiditas.

CHAUCER

[*Aside to Squire.*]

Pray, speak no word of who I am. I ride
To Canterbury now, to bid farewell
My kinsman, John of Gaunt. But on the road,
I travel here incognito.

SQUIRE

But, sir,

At least, beseech you, let me guard your person;
So mean an inn, such raw folk, must offend
King Richard's royal poet.

CHAUCER

Not so, lad.

To live a king with kings, a clod with clods,
To be at heart a bird of every feather,
A fellow of the finch as well as the lark,
The equal of each, brother of every man:
That is to be a poet, and to blow
Apollo's pipe with every breath you breathe.
Therefore, sweet boy, don't label me again
In this good company.

SQUIRE

I will not, sir —

[*Aside.*]

A god! A very god!

PARDONER

Here's relics! pardons!
Offer your nobles now; spoons, brooches, rings!
Lordings, step up! Pardons from Rome all hot.

[*A crowd gathers round him.*]

PARSON

[*Lifting a relic.*]

What's this?

PARDONER

That, master, is the shoulder-bone
Of a sheep once slaughtered by a holy Jew.
Take heed, lordings, take heed! What man is here
That hath to home a well?

SEVERAL

I! I!

PARDONER

Pay heed!

Let any man take this same shoulder-bone
And chuck it in his well, and if he own
A cow, or calf, or ass, which hath the pox,
Take water from that well, and wash its tongue.
Presto! It shall be well again.

PLOUGHMAN

[*To the Parson.*]

By Mary,

I'll try it on Mol.

PARDONER

Hark, lordings, what I say!
 If also the goodman that owns the beasts
 Shall, fasting, before cock-crow, drink three draughts
 Of that same well, his store shall multiply.

PARSON

My word!

FRANKLIN

Nay, that's worth while.

PARDONER

List what I say!

Also, if any wife shall boil a broth
 Of this same bone, it healeth jealousy.

ALISOUN

Ho! give it me! And every fellow here
 Shall suck the marrow-bone.

PARDONER

What will you offer?

ALISOUN

[*Throws a kiss.*]

That's all ye get o' me.

PARSON

I'll give a florin.

PARDONER

Done, Master Parson. Listen, lordings, list!
 This is a piece o' the sail St. Peter had
 When he walked on the sea; and lo! this cloth —

ALISOUN

A pillow-case!

PARDONER

This is the Virgin's veil.

And in this crystal glass behold —

ALISOUN

Pig's bones!

[*Slaps Chaucer on the shoulder.*]

What, Geoffrey lad! Which will ye liever kiss,
A dead saint's bones, or a live lass — her lips?

[*Enter, L., the Prioress.*]

CHAUCER

Why, Alisoun, I say all flesh is grave-clothes,
And lips the flowers that blossom o'er our bones;
God planted 'em to bloom in laughter's sunshine
And April kissing-showers.

[*Laughing, he kisses Alisoun and faces the Prioress.*]

St. Charity!

ALISOUN

Haha! That time I had thee on the rump.

[*She calls the Friar aside, R.*]

PRIORESS

[*Starting to go.*]

Je vous demande pardong, Monsieur.

CHAUCER

Madame,
Qu'est ce que je puis faire pour elle ?

PRIORESS

Rien, rien.

CHAUCER

Madame, mais si vous saviez comme je meurs
De vous servir —

PRIORESS

You speak patois, Monsieur ;
I studied French in Stratford-at-the-Bowe.

CHAUCER

Your accent is adorably — unique.

PRIORESS

[Is about to melt, but sees Alisoun.]

And you a gentilhomme — at least I thought so
Whenas you saved my little hound — Ah, sir !

CHAUCER

Adam was our first father : I'm her brother.

PRIORESS

You meant no more ?

CHAUCER

Her brother and your servant,
Madame. And for the rest, I ride to Canterbury :
I will absolve me at St. Thomas' shrine.

PRIORESS

[*Eagerly.*]

Go you to Canterbury?

CHAUCER

With the rest.

PRIORESS

Oh! I am glad — that is, I came to ask you.
Know you, Monsieur, where lies upon the way
A little thorp men call Bob-up-and-down?

CHAUCER

Right well — we pass it on the road.

PRIORESS

We do?

Merci.

[*Going.*]

MILLER

[*Amid uproar, drinks to Alisoun.*]

Lend me thy t'other ear.

[*Startled, the Prioress returns to Chaucer. Behind them, the Friar, at a sign from Alisoun, listens unobserved.*]

PRIORESS

You see —

I expect to meet my brother on the road.
He is returning from the Holy Land;
I am to meet him at the One Nine-pin,
A tavern at Bob-up-and-down. But —

CHAUCER

But?

PRIORESS

I have not seen him since I was a child.
I have forgotten how he looks.

CHAUCER

He is

Returning from the Holy Land?

PRIORESS

And has

His son with him, for squire. He is a knight.

CHAUCER

[*Aside, looking at the Knight and Squire.*]

A son — his squire? Good Lord!

PRIORESS

And so, Monsieur,

I'm boldened by your courtesy to ask
Your help to find him at Bob-up-and-down,
Till which — your kind protection on the road.

[*More uproar, R.*]

CHAUCER

But —

PRIORESS

Have I asked too much?

CHAUCER

Madame, I am honoured

[*Hesitatingly.*]

How, then, am I to recognise your brother?

PRIORESS

He wears a ring, on which is charactered
The letter "A," and after, writ, in Latin,
The same inscription as is fashioned here
Upon my brooch. I may not take it off,
For I did promise him to wear it always.
But look, sir, here's the motto. Can you read it?

[*She extends her hand, from the bracelet of which dangles a brooch: The Friar draws nearer.*]

CHAUCER

I thank you.

[*Reads.*]

"Amor vincit omnia."

[*Looking at her.*]

"Love conquers all."

PRIORESS

C'est juste, Monsieur. Adieu!

[*Exit, L.*]

FRIAR

[*Making off to Alisoun.*]

Hist! "Amor vincit omnia," Sweet Alis!

[*After talking aside with Alisoun he goes to the Knight.*]

CHAUCER

[*Aside, looking at the Knight and Squire.*]

A morning's canter to Bob-up-and-down!
"Till which — my kind protection on the road."
When last they met, she was a little child;
Besides, I will make verses for his son.

A morning's canter — time, the month of April —
Place, Merry England — Why not Lord Protector
Geoffrey? Her brother! What's a suit of armor?
Nay! "Amor vincit omnia."

[*Turns away.*]

FRIAR

[*To the Knight, whose finger-ring he examines.*]

How quaint, sir!

A crownèd "A" and underneath a motto.

KNIGHT

Quite so.

FRIAR

Merci!

[*Returns quickly to Alisoun.*]

ALISOUN

Her brother — the One Nine-pin?

FRIAR

To-morrow.

ALISOUN

Good.

FRIAR

Sweet Alisoun — my pay?

ALISOUN

Saith holy Brother Huberd? Love's reward
Is service.

[*Aside, eyeing Chaucer, who passes her.*]

Corpus Venus! What a figure!

I'll woo him. Ay; but first to rid me of
These other fellows.

[*To the Friar.*]

Hist!

In Peggy's stall —

Peggy's my milk-white doe — in Peggy's stall,
Thou'lt find another jolly beggar, waits
To dun me.

FRIAR

Ho! A rendezvous?

ALISOUN

A' trysting.

Go, for my love, and play the wench for me,
And nab him by the ears until I come.

FRIAR

St. Cupid, I am game. In Peggy's stall?

[*Exit.*]

[*Alisoun whispers aside individually to the Shipman and Manciple, who exeunt at different doors.*]

CARPENTER

Sack? Sack in the cellarage?

WEAVER

Come on, let's tap it.

[*Exeunt with a number of others.*]

SUMMONER

[*At table, trying to rise.*]

Qu — questio quid juris?

COOK

Now he's drunk
You'll get no more from him but "hic, hac, hoc."

ALISOUN

[*Aside to the Miller.*]

And hold him till I come.

MILLER

In Peggy's stall?

His ears shall be an ell long! — Pull his ears!

[*Exit.*]

CLERK

[*Dazedly to Chaucer, returning him his book.*]

I thank you, sir. Is this the Tabard Inn?

So then I'm back again. Such mighty voyages

The mind sails in a book!

[*He walks slowly forth into the air. Chaucer sits again by the fireplace, with the book on his knees.*]

ALISOUN

[*Aside to the Cook.*]

Hold fast, and wait.

COOK

In Peggy's stall?

ALISOUN

Aye.

COOK

Ears for nose, Bob Miller.

[*Exit.*]

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

In Peggy's stall,

"Love conquers all."

[*Except for the drunken Summoner, Alisoun and Chaucer are now alone.*]

ALISOUN

[*To the Summoner, lifting his head from the table.*]

Ho, cockerel! Perk up thy bill.

SUMMONER

Quid juris?

ALISOUN

Cluck! Cluck! How pretty Red-comb chucketh.
Hark![*Throwing her arms round his neck, she whispers in his ear.*]

SUMMONER

A pax! What did a' say? A pax upon him.
A' said a'd pull my ears — in Peggy's stall?
By questio! a brimstone-cherub — me![*Rising.*]Quid juris! Blood shall spurt. By quid! His nose
Shall have a pax. By nails! A bloody quid![*Seizing up from the table a round loaf for a shield and a
long loaf for a sword, he reels out.*]

ALISOUN

[*Laughing.*]So, Peggy, they shall woo thy lily-white hoof,
While Alisoun doth keep her rendezvous.[*Comes over to Chaucer.*]

Ho, candle! Come out from thy bushel.

CHAUCER

[*Peering over the edge of his book.*]

Nay,

Tis a dark world to shine in; I will read.

ALISOUN

A book! Toot! My fifth husband was a clerk;
 He caught more learning *on* his head than in it.
 What is't about?

CHAUCER

The wickedness of woman.

ALISOUN

A man, then, wrote it. If you men will write,
 We wives will keep ye busy. Read's a snack.

CHAUCER

[*Pretending to read.*]

"Whoso that builds his mansion all of mallows,
 Whoso that spurs his blind horse over the fallows,
 Whoso that lets his wife seek shrines and hallows,
 Is worthy to be hanged on the gallows."

ALISOUN

Chuck that to another dog. My man is dead.

CHAUCER

[*Imperturbably.*]

"A lovely woman, chaste, is like a rose;
 Unchaste, a ring of gold in a sow's nose."

ALISOUN

Lo, what a pretty preaching pardoner!
 "Offer your nobles now; spoons, brooches, rings!"
 Cork up thy froth, a devil's name! Come, play.

CHAUCER

“ Better it is to dwell high on the roof
 Than down i' the house where woman wield's reproof.”
 O what a list of ladies! What a world!
 Hark, Alisoun! and after thou hast heard,
 Repent, and cease to be a woman. Hark!
 “ Who first obeyed the snake's advice, to thieve
 The apple from God's Eden? — Mother Eve.”

ALISOUN

That's Adam's whopper. He stole it and hid in's
 throat:
 Feel o' your own; the apple sticks there yet.

CHAUCER

[*Dramatically.*]

“ Who from great Samson's brow hath slyly shorn
 His strength? Delila, answer to thy scorn.
 O Hercules! What woman-shaped chimaera
 Gave thee the poisoned cloak? Thy Dejanira.
 O pate of Socrates! Who from the steepy
 Housetop upset the slop-pail? Thy Xantippe!
 Yea, speeding her lover through the dark finestra,
 Who hath her husband slain, but Clytemnestra!
 Thou, too, O Cleopatra — ”

ALISOUN

[*Tearing a page out of the book, boxes Chaucer on the cheek.*]

Hold thy gab!

A devil fetch thy drasty book!

CHAUCER

Hold, hold,
 Dame Alis! gentle Alisoun—

[*Recovers the torn page.*]

ALISOUN

Hoot-toot!

Are ye so dainty with a dirty parchment
 And so slipshod to smirch our reputations?
 You men! God's arms! What ken ye of true
 women?

You stuff one doll and name it Modesty,
 And bid her mince and giggle, hang her head
 And ogle in her sleeve; another poppet
 You make of snow and name St. Innocence:
 She sits by moonlight in a silver night-gown
 And sighs love-Latin in a nunnery.
 By Corpus bones! is not a mare a horse?
 A woman is but man; and both one beast—
 A lusty animal, for field or harness.
 But no! ye sanctify a squeamish mule;
 And when an honest wench, that speaks her mind,
 Meets a fine lad and slaps him on the buttock,
 And says out plat: "Thou art a man: I love thee—"
 She is a sinner, and your doll a saint.

CHAUCER

Alis, thou speak'st like one in jealousy.

ALISOUN

Why, Geoffrey, so I am. To tell thee flat,
 I'm jealous of thy Lady Prioress.

CHAUCER

Peace, dame. Speak not her name with mine.

ALISOUN

Aye, go it,

Miss Innocence and Master Modesty!
How's that?

CHAUCER

Dame Alisoun, it is enough.

ALISOUN

Why, then, it is enough. Come, lad; clap hands.
I am a bud of old experience,
Whom frost ne'er yet hath nipped. In love, I've danced
The waltz and minuet. Therefore, sweet Geoffrey,
This Prioress wears a brooch upon her wrist.

CHAUCER

Well, what of that?

ALISOUN

Yea, "What of that?" Good soul!
She stops to-morrow at Bob-up-and-down.

CHAUCER

How knowest thou?

ALISOUN

Nay, t'other ear is wise.
At the One Nine-pin she shall meet —

CHAUCER

Her brother.

ALISOUN

What wilt thou bet she goes to meet her brother?

CHAUCER

Why, anything.

ALISOUN

Hear that! As though a veil

Were perfect warrant of virginity.

What wilt thou bet she goeth not to meet
Her leman — aye, her lover?

CHAUCER

Thou art daft.

ALISOUN

Lo, subtle man! He robs a poor wife's wits
To insure his lady's honour.

CHAUCER

Tush, tush, dame.

The very brooch she wears, her brother gave her,
For whose sake she hath even promised never
To take it off.

ALISOUN

Wilt *bet* me?

CHAUCER

Bet away!

ALISOUN

Ho, then, it is a bet, and this the stakes:
If that my Lady Prioress shall give
Yon brooch of gold from off her pretty wrist,
Unto the man whom she expects to meet,
And that same man prove not to be her brother,
Then thou shalt marry me at Canterbury.

CHAUCER

A twenty of thee, dame. But if thou lose
The stakes, then thou shalt kneel a-down and kiss
Yon brooch of gold upon her pretty wrist,
And pray the saints to heal thy jealousy.

ALISOUN

Aye, man, it is a bet; and here's my fist.

CHAUCER

And here's mine, Alis; thou art a good fellow.

[*An uproar outside.*]

What row is this?

ALISOUN

Here comes my rendezvous.

[*Enter in tumult, the Friar, Miller, Cook, Shipman, Summoner, and Manciple, holding fast to one another's ears. They call out, partly in chorus.*]

FRIAR

He's nabbed, sweet Alisoun.

MILLER

Here is the lousel.

SUMMONER

I've got his quids.

COOK

I stalled him.

ALISOUN

Hang fast, hold him!

Ho! fetch him down. [*Laughing.*] O Geoffrey, here's
a wooing!

CHAUCER

Yea; "Amor vincit omnia."

ALL THE SWAINS

Here he is!

ALISOUN

Leave go.

[*They let go ears.*]

Where is the knave?

ALL

[*Pointing at one another.*]

There.

ALISOUN

Which one?

ALL

[*Pointing at one another.*]

Him!

ALISOUN

So, so! Hath Peggy jilted all of ye,
That took such pains to grow you asses' ears?
Fie! Peg's a jade — come back to Alisoun;
She'll learn ye the true dance of love.

ALL

The devil!

CHAUCER

Nay, Robin Huberd, Roger — lads, chirk up.
These be the thorny steps of Purgatory
That lead ye to your Beatrice of Bath.
When ye attain unto her t'other ear —

[*They groan.*]

FRIAR

We have attained unto it.

ALISOUN

[*To Chaucer.*]

Go thy ways!

[*Draws them aside.*]

Come here, sweethearts! Hark! I have made a bet
 With goodman Geoffrey yonder. Him as helps
 Me best to win my bet, by God! he shall
 Make merry for my marriage. Come, which fellow
 Will help me?

ALL

I!

ALISOUN

The best shall make me bride.

[*A kitchen-boy blows a horn.*]

BOY

[*Shouts.*]

Meat!

[*Servants enter with steaming trenchers; the other pilgrims
 come in and seat themselves at the table. The Prioress
 stands hesitating. Chaucer goes to meet her.*]

HOST

[*Rises on a bench.*]

Lordings, who goes to Canterbury?

ALL

I!

CHAUCER

[*Offers his arm to the Prioress.*]

Madame, will you vouchsafe to me the honour?

PRIORESS

[*With a stately courtesy.*]

Merci.

ALISOUN

[*Imitating the Prioress, takes his other arm.*]

Merci!

[*Chaucer escorts them both to the table, where he sits between them.*]

HOST

Lordings! Now hearkneth to a merry game.
 To-morrow when you canter by the way
 It is no mirth to ride dumb as a stone.
 I say — let every fellow tell a tale
 To short the time, and him as tells the best
 You'll give a supper here when ye return.
 Lo! I myself will ride with you and judge.
 If ye assent, hold up your hands.

ALL

Aye! Aye!

HOST

To-morrow then to Canterbury!

ALL

To Canterbury!

[*Amid the babbling din of eating, drinking, and laughter,
 Alisoun leans across Chaucer's trencher towards the
 Prioress.*]

ALISOUN

Who is the lean wench, Geoffrey?

PRIORESS

By St. Loy!

Explicit pars prima.

ACT SECOND

“WHAN that Aprille with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour ;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open ye,
(So pricketh hem nature in hir corages) :
Then longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.”

ACT II

TIME: April 19th. The afternoon.

SCENE: Garden of the One Nine-pin inn at the little hamlet of Bob-up-and-down, en route to Canterbury.

Right, the inn, with door opening into garden. Back, a wall about chin-high in which is a wicket gate. The wall is newly greened over with honeysuckle and rose-vines, which are just beginning to blossom. Left, an arbour of the same. Right front, a rough table and chair. Behind the garden wall runs the highway, beyond which stretches a quiet rolling landscape, dotted with English elms and hedgerows.

When the curtain rises, the scene is empty. There is no sound except the singing of birds, and the hum of a loom inside the inn. Then, away to the left, is heard a bagpipe playing. It draws nearer. Behind the wall, then, against the green background of Spring, pass, in pageant, the CANTERBURY PILGRIMS on horseback. Among the last, astride her ambler, rides the WIFE OF BATH, telling her tale, in the group with CHAUCER and the PRIORESS. Behind her follow the Swains, the MILLER playing the bagpipe. Last rides the REEVE.

Behind the scene, they are heard to stop at the inn and call for hostlers. The bustle of arrival, horses led across a stone court, laughter and abuse,—these sounds are suf-

ficiently remote to add to the reigning sense of pleasant quietness in the garden. Through the door of the inn enters CHAUCER, alone; in his hand, some parchments. He enters with an abandon of glad-heartedness, half reading from his parchments.

CHAUCER

“When that April with his sunny showers
Hath from the drought of March the dreamy powers
Awaked, and steeped the world in such sweet wine
As doth engender blossoms of the vine;
When merry Zephyrus, with his soft breath,
In every hedge and heath inspireth
The tender greening shoots, and the young Sun
Hath half his course within the Ram y-run,
And little birds all day make melody
That, all night long, sleep with an open ee,
(So Nature stirs 'em with delicious rages)
Then folk they long to go on pilgrimages—”

SQUIRE

[*Comes from the inn.*]

Dan Chaucer! Master Chaucer!

CHAUCER

Signorino!

SQUIRE

Sir, what a ride! Was ever such a ride
As ours from London? Hillsides newly greened,
Brooks splashing silver in the small, sweet grass,
Pelt gusts of rain dark'ning the hills, and then
Wide swallowed up in sunshine! And to feel

My snorting jennet stamp the oozy turf
 Under my stirrup, whilst from overhead
 Sonnets shook down from every bough. Oh, sir,
 Rode Cæsar such a triumph from his wars
 When Rome's high walls were garlanded with girls?

CHAUCER

Boy, let me hug thee!

SQUIRE

Noble sir!

CHAUCER

[*Embracing him.*]

A hug!

Spring makes us youths together. On such a day
 Old age is fuddled and time's weights run down.
 Hark!

[*A cuckoo sounds; they listen.*]

The meadow is the cuckoo's clock, and strikes
 The hour at every minute; larks run up
 And ring its golden chimes against the sun.

SQUIRE

Sir, only lovers count the time in heaven.
 Are you in love, too?

CHAUCER

Over head and heart.

SQUIRE

Since long?

CHAUCER

These forty years.

SQUIRE

Nay, is your mistress

So old?

CHAUCER

She's still kind.

SQUIRE

Kind, yet old! Nay, what's

Her name?

CHAUCER

Hush, she will hear thee.

SQUIRE

Hear me?

CHAUCER

[*Mysteriously.*]

Hush!

Mine own true mistress is sweet Out-of-doors.
 No Whitsun lassie wears so green a kirtle,
 Nor sings so clear, nor smiles with such blue eyes,
 As bonny April, winking tears away.
 Not flowers o' silk upon an empress' sleeve
 Can match the broidery of an English field.
 No lap of amorous lady in the land
 Welcomes her gallant, as sweet Mistress Earth
 Her lover. Let Eneas have his Dido!
 Daffydowndilly is the dame for me.

PRIORESS

[*Within.*]

Joannes!

SQUIRE

You are happy, sir, to have
Your mistress always by you. Mine's afar
Turning the Italian roses pale with envy.

CHAUCER

She dwells in Italy?

SQUIRE

In Padua.

CHAUCER

In Padua? Why, there I knew Dan Petrarch,
Whose sonnets make the world love-sick for Laura.

SQUIRE

Would I could make it sigh once for my lady!
Sir, will you help me?

CHAUCER

Gladly; what's her name?

SQUIRE

Alas! Her name is not poetical:
Johanna! Who can sonnetize Johanna?

CHAUCER

Invent her one to please you.

SQUIRE

Euphranasia —

How like you Euphranasia, sir?

FRIAR

[*Aside, popping his head from behind the wall.*]

Qui la?

[*Dodges down again.*]

PRIORESS

[*Within, singing.*]

Laudate, pueri, Dominum; laudate nomen Domini!
 Nay, Paulus, I *will* sing: 'tis pretty weather.

SQUIRE

Euridice or Helena?

PRIORESS

[*Sings within.*]

A solis ortu usque ad occasum, laudabile nomen
 Domini.

SQUIRE

Or, Thisbe?

CHAUCER

[*Lifting a sprig of honeysuckle on the wall.*]

Nay, boy, this spray shall name her.

[*The Friar peeps over the wall again.*]

SQUIRE

Eglantine!

Music itself! Methinks I have an aunt
 Named Eglantine. What matter? — Eglantine!

CHAUCER

I'll match that name against the Muses nine.

[*Takes out his parchments.*]

SQUIRE

What! verses?

CHAUCER

Scraps of prologue to a book

I think to call "The Canterbury Tales."

Good boy, leave me a bit; I have the fit

To rhyme for a time thy Donna Eglantine.

Come back at chapel-bell, or send someone

To fetch the verses.

SQUIRE

Sir, I will.

[*Exit left.*]

FRIAR

Me voila!

[*Exit right, behind wall.*]

CHAUCER

[*Reading from one of his parchments, crosses over by the
arbour.*]

"There was also a nun, a prioress,

That of her smiling was full simple and coy;

The greatest oath she swore was 'by St. Loy!'

And she was clepèd Madame Eglantine;

Full daintily she sung the psalms divine;

And French she spake (St. Patrick taught her how),

After the school of Stratford-at-the-Bowe.

Full prettily her wimple pinchèd was,
 Her nose piquante ; her eyes as grey as glass ;
 Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red ;
 In very sooth she had a fair forehead ;
 And dangling from her dainty wristlet small,
 A brooch of gold she wore, and therewithal
 Upon it there was writ a crownèd A,
 And after —

[*Enter, right, the Prioress, carrying her little hound. Chaucer sees her.*]

Amor vincit omnia."

[*He enters the arbour.*]

PRIORESS

Joannes, stay indoors and tell your beads.

[*To her little hound.*]

Jacquette, ma petite, it is a pretty day.

See you those clouds ? They are St. Agnes' sheep ;
 She hath washed their wool all white and turned 'em
 loose

To play on heaven's warm hillside. Smell that rose ?
 Sweet — sweet ! n'est ce pas, ma petite ? Hast ever
 heard

The Romance of the Rose ?

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

Saints !

PRIORESS

'Tis a tale

As lovely as the flower, — writ all in verses
 Dan Chaucer made at court. Hush, hush, don't tell:
 I've read it. Ah! Jacquette! Jacquette! Jacquette!
 When Mary was a girl in Joseph's garden,
 Were there such pretty days in Palestine?

[*Picks a rose.*]

CHAUCER

Gods! must I hand her over — to a brother!
 Alas! the sands of dreams, how fast they slip
 Till Geoffrey lose his Lord-protectorship.

PRIORESS

[*Plucking the rose's petals till the last petal falls.*]

Pater noster (our Father), qui es in cœlis (which art
 in heaven), sanctificetur nomen tuum (hallowed be thy
 name). Adveniat regnum tuum (thy kingdom come);
 fiat voluntas tua — thy will be done!

CHAUCER

Amen! I must resign!

[*He is about to step out from the arbour and discover himself, but pauses as the Prioress continues.*]

PRIORESS

Alas! We must go seek my brother and so
 Quit the protection of this noble stranger.
 You know, Jacquette, we must be fond of him.
 He saved your life — we mustn't forget that.

And though the wastel-bread was underdone,
 He was most kind at table, and inquired
 After your health, petite. And though he kissed
 The ale-wife — oui, ma pauvre Jacquette! — yet he
 Is contrite, and will seek St. Thomas' shrine
 For absolution.

CHAUCER

Forgive us our trespasses!

PRIORESS

He was so courteous, too, upon the road
 I'm sure he is a gentleman. Indeed,
 I hope my brother proves as true a knight,
 When he arrives.

CHAUCER

Deliver us from temptation!

[*A shout from the pilgrims within.*]

PRIORESS

Would he were here now. — Nay, I mean — the other.
 This April day flowed sweet as a clear brook
 Till these hoarse frogs jumped in to rile its silver.

SWAINS

[*Sing, within.*]

The Wife of Bath
 She's a good fellow,
 A maiden mellow
 Of Aftermath.

PRIORESS

Vite, vite, ma petite.

[*She hastens to the arbour, where Chaucer quickly pretends to be absorbed in writing. As she is withdrawing hastily, however, he turns round.*]

Monsieur, excusez moi!

CHAUCER

Madame, the fault is mine; I crave your pardon.

PRIORESS

What fault, Monsieur?

CHAUCER

[*Breaks a spray from the arbour and hands it to her.*]

I trespass in *your* bower.

Permettez.

PRIORESS

Honeysuckle?

CHAUCER

So 'tis called;

But poets, lady, name it — eglantine.

PRIORESS

M'sieur!

CHAUCER

May I remain and call it so?

PRIORESS

M'sieur — this is Jacquette, my little hound.

[*Chaucer takes the pup; they retire farther into the arbour, as the WIFE OF BATH enters from the inn. She is accompanied by the FRIAR, MILLER, COOK, SUMMONER, PARDONER, MANCIPLE, and SHIPMAN, who enter singing. They lift her upon the table, and form a circle round her.*]

SWAINS

The Wife of Bath
 She's a good fellow,
 A maiden mellow
 Of Aftermath.

She cuts a swath
 Through sere-and-yellow;
 No weeping willow
 Bestrews her path.

Her voice in wrath
 Is a bullock's bellow;
 For every good fellow
 Eyes she hath.

She's a good fellow,
 The Wife of Bath!

ALISOUN

Sweethearts, your lungs can blow the buck's horn. —
 Robin,
 Ye sing like a bittern bumbling in the mire.

MILLER

By Corpus, 'twas a love-toot.

FRIAR

Prithee, sweet dame,

Finish your tale.

ALL

Finish the tale.

[*Other pilgrims enter from the inn.*]

ALISOUN

Shut up, lads. Sure, my wits are gone blackberrying.
Where was I?

FRIAR

Where King Arthur's knight came home,
You said, and →

ALISOUN

Will you let me say it then?

FRIAR

Sweet dame, you said —

ALISOUN

A friar and a fly
Will fall in every dish, that's what I said.
Lads, will ye hear this church-bell ring, or me?

ALL

You — you —

SUMMONER

I'll muffle his clapper.

ALISOUN

Hark my tale :

This knight rode home a-whistlin' to himself,
 Right up the castle-hall, where all the lords
 And ladies sat. "Your majesties," quoth he,
 "Though I be hanged, this is my true reply:
 Women desire to do their own sweet wills."

[*The Swains clap.*]

"Ho!" cried King Arthur, "that's the best I've heard
 Since I was first henpecked by Guinevere.
 Depart! Thy neck is free!"

But at that word,
 Up sprang an old wife, sitting by the fire,
 And says: "Merci, your Majesty, 'twas I
 That taught this answer to the knight; and he
 Hath sworn to do the next thing I require.
 Therefore, sweet knight, before this court I pray
 That ye will take me to your wedded wife.
 Have I said false?"

"Nay, bury me," quoth he.

"Then I will be thy love."

"My love?" quoth he.

"Nay, my damnation!"

"Take your wife to church,"

Cries out the King, "and look ye treat her well,
 Or you shall hang."

MILLER

Ho! What a roast!

PRIORESS

[*Aside.*]

Poor man!

ALISOUN

The knight he spake no word, but forth he takes
His grizzly bride to church, and after dark
He leads her home. "Alas! sweet husband mine,
What troubleth you?" quoth she. "Nothing,"
quoth he.

"Perchance that I am old?" "Nay, nay," quoth he.
"Ugly and old," quoth she, "cures jealousy."
"It doth indeed," quoth he. "What then?" quoth she.
"Are ye content?" "More than content," quoth he;
"And will ye let me do my own sweet will
In everything?" "In everything," quoth he,
"My lady and my love, do as you please."
"Why, then, so please me, strike a light," quoth she.
And when the knight had lit the candle, lo!
His grizzly bride — she was the Fairy Queen.

[*Loud acclamation.*]

PRIORESS

[*Aside.*]

Praise heaven!

FRIAR

[*Into whose arms Alisoun jumps.*]

Bravo, Queen Mab, it was thyself.

COOK

I'll bet

The knight was her fifth husband.

ALISOUN

Welcome the sixth!
God made me the King Solomon of wives.

SHIPMAN

[*To the Miller, who begins to play his pipes.*]

God save thee, Robin! Bust thy pigin.

ALISOUN

Aye!

Let's have an elf dance. Come!

[*To the Summoner.*]

Thy arm, sweet Puck!

BOTTLEJOHN

[*To Herry Bailey, who is looking on.*]

Tarry ye all to-night?

HOST

Aye, till to-morrow.

BOTTLEJOHN

'Twill be a pinch for room.

HOST

[*Laughs.*]

But not for reckonings.

[*The Miller, sitting on the wall, plays his bagpipe, while Alisoun dances with her Swains, each of whom is jealous of the rest. Chaucer and the Prioress still remain out of sight in the arbour. As the music grows merrier, the Prioress begins to click the beads of her rosary rhythmically.*]

CHAUCER

Why do you tell your beads, Madame ?

PRIORESS

To keep

The fairies from my feet.

CHAUCER

The fairies ?

PRIORESS

Yes,

The bagpipe sets them free. I feel them twitch me.

CHAUCER

Why drive them away ?

PRIORESS

Monsieur !

CHAUCER

See you the birds ?

St. Francis taught that we should learn of them.

PRIORESS

What do they ?

CHAUCER

Sing, and dance from bough to bough.
The Muses sing ; and St. Cecilia danced.

PRIORESS

Think you she danced, sir, of her own sweet will ?

CHAUCER

Nay, not in April! In April, 'tis God's will.

PRIORESS

Monsieur —

[*Gives Chaucer her hand shyly.*]

'tis April.

[*They dance, in stately fashion, within the arbour. Forgetting themselves in the dance, however, they come a little too far forward; Alisoun spies them, and clapping her hands, the music stops.*]

ALISOUN

Caught! Ho, turtle-doves!

Come forth, Sir Elvish Knight, Sir Oberon!

Fetch forth thy veiled nymph, that trips so fair.

[*Chaucer steps forth from the arbour. The Prioress, within, seizes up her little hound from a settle and hides her face.*]

ALL

Hail!

CHAUCER

Silence, loons! And thou, wife, hold thy tongue

And know thy betters. As for you, ye lummocks,

You need be proud as water in a ditch

To glass this lady's image even in your eyes,

So, look ye muddy not her sandal-tips.

Begone! And mind when next you laugh the same,

That all the saints, to whom you bumpkins pray,

Dance with the Virgin round the throne of God.

Begone, and do your reverences.

[*Some of the pilgrims retire; others remain staring and bow as the Prioress, veiled, crosses over to the inn door with her little hound.*]

ALISOUN

[*To the Cook.*]

Hist, Roger!

What is the man?

COOK

No cheap dough.

PRIORESS

O Jacquette!

[*Exit.*]

ALISOUN

[*Approaches Chaucer tentatively.*]

God save thee, man! I ken not who thou art,
 But him's can curry down a ticklish mare
 Like me, he hath a backbone in his bolster;
 I love thee better for 't. — Ay, gang thy gait;
 But, bully Geoffrey, mind, we have a bet:
 Yea, if I fry thee not in thine own grease
 And cry thee tit for tat, call me a man.
 Man lives *for* wit, but woman lives *by* it. —
 These dancing virgins!

[*Exit, followed by Friar.*]

CHAUCER

Clods and bumpkins all!

MILLER

[*Gets in Chaucer's way defiantly.*]

Sir Oberon —

CHAUCER

Stand by!

MILLER

Lord Rim-Ram-Ruff!

He plays the courtier.

[*Bitterly.*]

Harkee, Monsieur Courtier,
 "When Adam delved and Eve span,
 Who was then the gentleman?"

CHAUCER

Why, Monsieur Snake; he cherished the family tree
 As the apple of his eye. In view of which,
 Go drink a pot of cider.

[*Throws the Miller a coin.*]

MILLER

[*Ducking.*]

'Save your Worship!

[*Exit with Swains.*]

CHAUCER

[*Solus.*]

"When Adam delved" — who was court-poet then?
 Adam. Who was Bob Clodhopper? Why, Adam.
 Which, then, in that close body politic
 Perked high his chin? Which doffed and ducked
 the knee?

Which tanned and sweat in the lean furrow? Which
 Spat on the spade — and wore it in his crest?
 Which was the real Adam? Sly Dame Clay,
 If paradox died not in Genesis,

Let me not fancy Richard's laureate
 Alone's incognito. Incognito
 Are all that pass in nature's pilgrimage,
 For thou, with loamy masks and flesh-tint veils,
 Dost make us, in this timeless carnival,
 Thy dupes and dancers, ushering the courtier
 To kiss beneath thy glove the goose-girl's hand,
 Or snub, behind the poor familiar rogue
 And clown, some god that hides in Momus' mask.
 Nay, but not she — my gentle Prioress!
 Though all the rest, in born disguisements, be
 Basted and togg'd with huge discrepancy,
She wears the proper habit of her soul.
 Dear God! how harmony like hers unchains
 Delight from the lugg'd body of Desire
 To sing toward heaven like the meadow-lark,
 Till, with her parting, it drops dumb again
 In the old quag of flesh.

Flesh, Geoffrey! Fie!

What need to guard from sight the poet in thee
 When nature thus hath hoop'd and wadded him
 With barracoons of paunch? What say, thou tun?
 Will Eglantine mistake thee for Apollo,
 Thou jewel in the bloated toad; thou bagpipe
 Puff'd by the Muse; thou demijohn of nectar;
 Thou grape of Hebe, over-ripe with rhyme;
 Thou lump of Clio, mountain of Terpsichore;
 Diogenes, that talkest in thy tub!
 Fie, Mother Earth! — Cling not about my waist
 As if I were a weanling sphere. Fall off!
 Ye gods! that kneaded this incongruous dough

With lyric leaven, sweat me to a rake-handle
Or let the Muse grow fat!

[*Exit.*]

FRIAR

[*Outside, sings.*]

Ye pouting wenches, pretty wives,
That itch at weddings, fairs, and wakes,
For trothal-rings and kissing-cakes,
For wristlets, pins, and pearlèd knives,
Hither trip it!
To peep i' the friar's farsèd tippet,
Who gently for sweet sinners' sakes —

[*Enter the Friar and Alisoun.*]

ALISOUN

Hush!

[*Going to the cellar-door, she opens it and ponders.*]

FRIAR

Ben'cite!

(Thus singeth he.)

Bene — benedicite!

ALISOUN

Hold thy cock-crow! My wit's working.

FRIAR

Nay,

Thy jealousy, sweet dame.

[*Sings.*]

Ye lasses jilted, lovers droopèd,
Rose-lip —

ALISOUN

Shut up!

FRIAR

[*Sings on.*]

Rose-lip, White-brow, Blue-eye, Brown-tress,
 Confide your pretty hearts! Confess
 To the pleasant friar: trust not Cupid—

ALISOUN

By Peter!

I have the plan!

FRIAR

[*Sings.*]

Love is a liar,
 But lovers love the pleasant friar,
 Who, making of their burdens less—

[*Here he approaches Alisoun caressingly, and deftly steals a gold pin from her head-dress.*]

ALISOUN

[*Laughing to herself.*]

Ha! that shall win my bet!

What, Huberd!

FRIAR

[*Secreting the pin.*]

Ben'cite!

(Thus singeth he.)

Bene—benedicite!

ALISOUN

Wilt thou hear my plan?

FRIAR

I would console thy jealousy.

Fair Alis,

ALISOUN

Blest be thy breech! Who of?

Me jealous!

FRIAR

[Imitating Chaucer in his former speech.]

“And, thou, wife, hold
Thy tongue and know thy betters.”

ALISOUN

Ho! my betters?

That little snipper-snapper of a saint
He praised for dancing ring-around-the-rose-tree,
When honest wives are damned for showing their
ankles?

A fig for her! — What, him! a walking hay-cock
That woos a knitting-needle of a nun!
And me! that when I was to home in Bath
Walked into kirk before the beadle's wife:
My betters? Wait until I win my bet!

FRIAR

What bet?

ALISOUN

Canst thou be mum?

FRIAR

Dame, I have been
A bishop's valet, a nun's confidant,
A wife's confessor, a maid's notary ;

As coroner, I've sat in Cheapside inns
When more than wine flowed. This breast can be
dark
As Pharaoh's chamber in the pyramids.

ALISOUN

List then: Ye wot I made a bet last night
With Geoffrey. This was it: Dame Eglantine,
Here at this inn, expects to meet her brother —

FRIAR

You mean — Dan Roderigo.

ALISOUN

Aye; but as
She hath not seen him since she was a child,
She hath not recognised him. He, ye ken,
Doth wear a ring wi' a Latin posy in't.

FRIAR

I know; 'tis "Amor vincit omnia,"
The same as on her brooch.

ALISOUN

There hangs my bet.
For if Dame Eglantine shall give yon brooch
Into the hands of any but her brother,
Then Geoffrey marries me at Canterbury.

FRIAR

Diable! *Marries* thee?

ALISOUN

What then, dear friend?
 Wouldst thou forswear thy celibate sweet vows
 To buckle on a wife?

FRIAR

Nay, dame, a sister.

ALISOUN

A sister of St. Venus' house? Go pray!
 A husband is my holy pilgrimage,
 And Geoffrey is my shrine.

FRIAR

Et moi?

ALISOUN

“Et moi?”

Thou art a jolly incubus. Thou shalt
 Help me to catch my bird.

[*Enter the Miller by the wicket gate.*]

FRIAR

Et donc?

ALISOUN

“Et donc?”

Why, then, I'll give a farthing to the friars.

FRIAR

Nay, dame, the coin of Cupid is a kiss.

[*Pleading.*]

One kiss pour moi. — At Canterbury — un baiser!

MILLER

[*Seizing the Friar.*]

One pasty, eh? thou shorn ape!

FRIAR

[*Screams.*]

Alisoun!

MILLER

By Corpus bones, I'll baste thee!

ALISOUN

Let him be!

Shame! Wouldst thou violate a modest friar?

MILLER

He asked thee for a —

ALISOUN

Baiser. Baiser means

In Latin tongue a blessing. Not so, Huberd?

FRIAR

Dame, from thy lips, it meaneth Paradise.

MILLER

[*Imitating him.*]Doth it in thooth, thweet thir? — Thou lisping jay!
Thou lousy petticoats!

ALISOUN

[*Suddenly embracing the Miller; whispers to him.*]

Whist! Robin, thou

Art just in the nick. I have a plan. Run fast;
Fetch here the other lads, and bring a gag.

MILLER

A gag? For him?

ALISOUN
Run quick.MILLER
[*Going.*]

By Corpus arms!

FRIAR

[*Taunting.*]

Mealy miller, moth-miller,

Fly away!

If Dame Butterfly doth say thee nay,
Go and court a caterpillar!

MILLER

[*Laughing, shakes his fist.*]

Ha, ha! By Corpus bones!

[*Exit at gate.*]

ALISOUN

Now, bird; the plot.

I've sent him for a gag.

FRIAR

A gag? What for?

ALISOUN

To win my bet, of course. 'Tis for this knight.

FRIAR

Thou wilt not gag a knight — the Prioress'
Brother!

ALISOUN

Hast thou forgot I bet with Geoffrey
The man that wears the ring will prove to be
Dame Virtue's lover?

FRIAR

He that wears the ring?
Methinks I smell: but who's your man?

ALISOUN

Sweet owl,

The sunlight hurts thine eyes, thou starest too hard.
[*Blindfolding his eyes with her hands, she whirls him thrice
round.*]

Behold him.

FRIAR

[*Dizzily.*]

Where?

[*Alisoun slaps her own shoulder.*]

What, thou? O ecce homo!
Thou wilt enact the lover and the knight
And woo Dame Eglantine?

ALISOUN

Who else? Forsooth,
I am a shapely crusader. This leg
Hath strode a palfrey thrice to Palestine.
I've won my spurs.

FRIAR

Thou wit of Aristotle.
O Helen of Troy! O Amazon! I catch:
Thou gaggest the *real* knight and bear'st him off
Where thou mayst steal his ring and togs.

ALISOUN

And borrow

A false beard from thy tippet. Thou shalt be
 My valet, and retouch the Wife of Bath
 To play the Devil in the Mystery.

FRIAR

But where'll be thy boudoir ?

ALISOUN

The cellar yonder.

Bob Miller and the other lads shall gag
 And tie him there.

FRIAR

Why, this is merrier than
 Nine wenches ducking in a Hallow-eeen bowl.

[*Doubling over with laughter, he almost knocks against
 Chaucer, who enters, left, meditative.*]

Whist! Geoffrey! Come away.

CHAUCER

[*Reads from a parchment.*]

“April, May,
 Cannot stay ;
 We be pilgrims — so are they,
 And our shrine,
 Far away — ”

[*A bell sounds outside ; Chaucer pauses, and draws out a
 pocket sun-dial.*]

The chapel bell!

Four, by my cylinder. My signorino
 Will claim his verses!

[*Reads on.*]

“And our shrine,
Far away,
Is the heart of Eglantine.”

[*Pauses and writes.*]

ALISOUN

[*Aside to Friar.*]

Eglantine! What's this?

FRIAR

Love verses. He hath writ them for the Squire
To give unto his lady-love Johanna.

ALISOUN

But he said “Eglantine.”

FRIAR

Aye, dame; he dubs
Her Eglantine to be poetical.

ALISOUN

A poet! Him?

FRIAR

Why not? Jack Straw himself
Could ring a rhyme, God wot, till his neck was wrung.

CHAUCER

[*Reads.*]

“Eglantine,
O to be
There with thee,
Over sea,

In olive-shaded Italy.”

Too rough. “Shaded” is harsh. H'm! “Olive-silvered.”

“In olive-silvered Italy.” — That's better.

FRIAR

[*To Alisoun.*]

Hide there!

ALISOUN

What now?

FRIAR

Watch.

[*The Friar approaches Chaucer obsequiously.*]

CHAUCER

[*Reads.*]

“ There to pray
At thy shrine — ”

FRIAR

Benedicite!

The blissful martyr save you, sir.

CHAUCER

And you.

FRIAR

The gentle Squire sent me for —

CHAUCER

His verses?

They are just finished.

[*Folds them up.*]

FRIAR

Sir, you see, he hailed me
Passing upon the road. He lies out yonder
Along a brookside, sighing for his lady.

CHAUCER

[*Handing the parchment to the Friar.*]

Bid him despatch her these. Here, wait; this spray
Of eglantine goes with them.

FRIAR

Save you, sir.

[*The Friar starts for the wicket gate. Chaucer, absent-minded, passes on to the inn door. As he does so, the Friar, treading tip-toe behind him, steals another parchment, which is sticking from his pouch.*]

CHAUCER

“ April, May,
Cannot stay ;

We be pilgrims — so are they.”

[*Exit.*]

FRIAR

[*Stands holding the second parchment, from which he reads.*]

“ There was also a nun, a prioress,
That of her smiling was full simple and coy ;
The greatest oath she swore — ”

Blessed be larceny !

This rhyme is slicker to have up my sleeve
Than five aces of trumps.

ALISOUN

[*Joining him.*]

What's up ?

FRIAR

List, dame !

Of human hearts I am an alchemist.
To stir them in the crucible of love
Is all my research and experiment ;
And but to find a new amalgam makes
My mouth to water like a diletante's.

ALISOUN

Well?

FRIAR

Geoffrey wrote these verses for the Squire
 To give his lady; therefore, *I* will give them
 To Eglantine, and watch the *tertium quid*;
 That is to say, whether the resultant be
 A mantling *colour rose*, or — an explosion.

ALISOUN

What's in the verses? Nay, man, read 'em out;
 I am no clerk.

FRIAR

I am a master-reader.

“Sigh, Spring, sigh,
 Repine

Amid the moon-kissed eglantine,
 For so do I.”

[*The Friar sighs.*]

ALISOUN

No more o' that.

FRIAR

Sweet Alis, 'tis the art.

When I look thus, — 'tis moonlight. When I sigh
 Thus, — 'tis a zephyr wooing apple blossoms.

ALISOUN

Wooing a sick goat! Read ahead.

FRIAR

Ahem!

[*Reads.*]

“ April, May,
Cannot — ”

[*Enter, from the inn, the Knight; from the wicket gate, the Swains, with ropes and a gag.*]

ALISOUN

Quit; here's our knight. Go find the Prioress.
And when you've given her the verses, join
Me and the other fellows in the cellar.

[*Jerking her thumb at the Knight.*]

He'll be with us.

FRIAR

Thy valet comprehends.

KNIGHT

[*To Friar.*]

Good fellow, have you seen my son, the Squire?

FRIAR

My lord, that dame can tell you.

[*Throwing a kiss to Alisoun.*]

Au revoir!

[*Then throwing another to the Miller, he sings as he skips out.*]

Ma douce gazelle,
Ma gazelle belle,
Bon soir!

MILLER

[*To the Shipman.*]

Quick! Head him off, Jack!

[*Exit Friar into inn.*]

ALISOUN

Let him go.

[*To the Miller.*]

Thine ear!

But —

MILLER

ALISOUN

Shh!

[*Draws him aside and whispers.*]

Art thou afeard?

MILLER

Nay, dame, but 'tis

A lord. Mayhap we'd catch the whipping-post.

ALISOUN

But mayhap me along with it, sweet Bob.

[*They whisper aside.*]

KNIGHT

This woman tell me of my son! 'Tis strange.

ALISOUN

[*Aside to Miller.*]

Ye ken!

MILLER

Aye, aye.

[*Looking pleased, he speaks to the others aside. During the following scene, all of them approach the Knight cautiously with the ropes and gag, while Alisoun, distracting the Knight, warns or urges them in pantomime.*]

KNIGHT

Good woman, have you seen —

ALISOUN

And do mine eyes behold him once again?
O sir! The blissful saints requite you, sir!

KNIGHT

For what, good dame?

ALISOUN

His voice! That I should hear
His voice once more! The vision bursts again
Upon my brain: the swords, the sweated horse,
The lifted battle-mace, and then his arms,
His arms around me — saved!

[*Falling at his feet.*]

Oh, can it be?

KNIGHT

Madame, arise. We met last night, methinks,
At Master Bailey's inn, in Southwark, but
Never before.

ALISOUN

[*Rising.*]

Hold! Gallop not so fast,
Ye steeds of Memory! — Was it perchance
A lonely damsel by the Coal Black Sea,
Forsaken save by him; or was it by
The walls of old Granada, at the siege,
When, dazzled by the white star of my beauty,
He raised his cross to smite the lustful Moor,
And cried, "Don Roderigo dies for thee!"

KNIGHT

[*To the Miller.*]

The woman is ill. You had best call a leach.

ALISOUN

Call no one, sir. Forgive my sentiment.
 Small wonder is it, though the lordly falcon
 Forget the dove he succoured from the crows.
 But ah! how can the tender dove conceal
 The flutterings of her snow-white breast to meet
 Her lord once more?

KNIGHT

[*Going.*]

Madame, I wish you better.

ALISOUN

Dear lord, when last we met at Algezir —

KNIGHT

Pray to the Virgin!

ALISOUN

Sweet lord! —

KNIGHT

I know you not.

By St. George,

ALISOUN

Alas! Alas! The faithless!
 Was this the chivalry ye promised me
 That night ye kissed me by the soldan's tent?

KNIGHT

Off me, thou wife of Satan!

ALISOUN

Heard ye that?

Lads, to the rescue!

KNIGHT

Sorcery!

[*The Miller and Alisoun gag the Knight, while the others assist in binding him.*]

ALISOUN

Quick, Roger!

Take off his finger-ring. Mum, sweethearts! In,
now!

[*Exeunt omnes, carrying the Knight into the inn cellar.*]

[*Enter the Squire and Johanna. Passing along behind the wall, they enter the garden by the wicket gate.*]

SQUIRE

Lady, I cannot yet believe my eyes
That you are here, and not in Padua.

JOHANNA

'Tis sweet to hear your voice discredit mine,
And yet I pray you, sir, believe in me;
I would not prove a rich Lombardian dream
To be more fair — even than I am.

SQUIRE

You could not.

JOHANNA

Grazie!

SQUIRE

For you authenticise yourself
 With beauty's passport. This alone is you;
 But how come hither?

JOHANNA

Like the Spring, because
 I heard the snows had thawed in Merry England.

SQUIRE

As ever, you're fellow-travellers, dear lady;
 I might have guessed it from the little birds,
 Your gossipy outriders. But with what
 Less winged chaperones came you?

JOHANNA

Nay, with none!
 Some flighty ladies of King Richard's court
 That oped their beaks — but not like nightingales —
 To prate of love. For my part when I saw them
 This morning trot away toward Canterbury
 With that dull Gaunt and silly Duke of Ireland,
 I sighed "sweet riddance." True, the king is different,
 But he is married.

SQUIRE

You are not alone?

JOHANNA

No, sir. I travel with a world-stormed priest,
 Whom all who love him call "Good Master Wycliffe";
 And those who love him not, "Old Nick," for writing
 The gospels in dear English.

SQUIRE

You — a Lollard!

JOHANNA

Wait till you know him. He rides now to assist
High mass at the Cathedral, for Duke John
Who sails to claim his kingdom in Castile.
But I ride with him, not so much to absolve
My sins, — which frankly, since they are so few
And serviceable, I hate to part with — as
I go to look on one shall grace that service —
The man I best admire.

SQUIRE

Sweet lady, whom?

JOHANNA

Dan Chaucer — laureate of chivalry.

SQUIRE

Chaucer! Why he —

[*Checks himself.*]

Alas!

JOHANNA

Scarce do I wonder

To see you bite your lip at that great name:
You, sir, who once, unless my memory fail,
Did promise me some verses of your own.

SQUIRE

Nay, you shall have them.

JOHANNA

What? The verses?

SQUIRE

Yes.

JOHANNA

Prithee, what are they? Rondeaux, amoretti,
Ballads? Why did you send them not? Odes?
Sonnets?

Which?

SQUIRE

Nay, I know not.

JOHANNA

Know not?

SQUIRE

Not as yet.

JOHANNA

Know not as yet!

SQUIRE

I mean — O Donna mine!

I have a friend, whom but to call my friend
Sets all my thoughts on fire, and makes the world
A pent-up secret burning to be told.

Whose slave to be, I would roll Sisyphus' stone;
Whom to clasp hands withal, I'd fight Apollyon;
For whom but to be Pythias, I would die.

JOHANNA

What amorous Platonic! Pythias?

Sure, Troilus were an apter choice. Well, sir,
Who is this paragon?

[*Aside.*]

Heaven send her freckles.

SQUIRE

Nay, if it were allowed me but to name —
If you could guess the Olympian pedigree —

[*Enter Chaucer from the inn.*]

Ah! Here he comes!

JOHANNA

Pray, sir, *who* comes?

SQUIRE

My friend.

CHAUCER

[*Scanning the ground.*]

I would not for good twenty pound have lost it.

JOHANNA

Is this your Damon?

SQUIRE

Lady, 'tis my friend.

CHAUCER

[*To himself.*]

If Madame Eglantine should find it, read it!
Nay, not for forty pound.

SQUIRE

He does not see us.

May I present him?

JOHANNA

[*Nods carelessly, then aside.*]

Saints! Must I essay
To circumvent a rival of such scope?

SQUIRE

Great sir!

JOHANNA

"Great sir" 's a proper epithet.

SQUIRE

[*Touching Chaucer's sleeve.*]

I prithee —

CHAUCER

Ah, boy, well met! Did I perchance —

[*Seeing Johanna.*]

Pardon!

SQUIRE

[*Whispers to Chaucer, then aloud to Johanna.*]

Permit me to present to you —

Lady Johanna, Marchioness of Kent —

This gentleman, my friend.

JOHANNA

[*Bows slightly.*]

A nameless knight?

SQUIRE

[*Embarrassed.*]

His name — ah!

CHAUCER

Master Geoffrey, and your servant

JOHANNA

[*To Chaucer.*]

We saw you searching. Was it for a sur-name?

SQUIRE

Have you lost something? Let us help you find it.
A purse?

JOHANNA

I trust your loss was not in pounds.

CHAUCER

Sooth, I have lost what fair your ladyship
Could least, methinks, supply — a piece of wit
Without a tongue; that is, a piece of parchment
Writ o'er with verses.

SQUIRE

Verses! Sir, a word.

[*Draws Chaucer aside to the arbour and whispers.*]

JOHANNA

A clever rogue! He'd make an apt court-fool.

CHAUCER

[*Aside to Squire.*]

No; these lost verses were a mere description —
To fit my prologue — of a dainty nun,
Poking some gentle mirth at her; of use
To none save me; but faith! I grudge 'em dearly.

SQUIRE

Did you find time to write — the other verses?

CHAUCER

The others?

SQUIRE

To my lady.

CHAUCER

Those you sent for?
Did not you like them?

SQUIRE

I? I sent for none, sir.

JOHANNA

[*Aside.*]

Still whispering? Faith! Hath my Aubrey lost
Both heart and manners to this tavern rhymester?
I will not have it.

SQUIRE

[*To Chaucer.*]

But I sent no friar!

CHAUCER

He took your mistress's verses, saying you
Had sent for them by him.

JOHANNA

Excuse me, sirs:

That arbour-seat has room for two to sit,
Providing we choose wisely from us three.

CHAUCER

Your choice is fate.

SQUIRE

[*Aside to Chaucer as they enter the arbour.*]

The friar must have stolen them.

[*Johanna and the Squire sit; Chaucer stands talking with
them, his back toward the arbour's entrance.*]

[Enter, right, from inn, the Prioress and Friar, the former reading a parchment.]

PRIORESS

The verse is very beautiful.

FRIAR

Is't not

Enough to make the Muse weep amber? Zipp!
'Tis honey'd moonbeams stored in lachrymals.

PRIORESS

[Reads.]

“Eglantine,
O to be
There with thee,
Over sea,
In olive-silvered Italy.”

But, gentle friar, why in Italy
When I'm in England?

FRIAR

Dame, 'tis poetry.

In poetry, all ladies have blue eyes
And live in Italy.

PRIORESS

And is this truly

For me?

FRIAR

He bade me give it with this spray

PRIORESS

[*Taking the sprig of eglantine.*]

He is so chivalrous! But I must finish.

“In olive-silvered Italy.

There to pray
At thy shrine,
There to lay
This green spray
Of our English eglantine.
At thy feet.

Lady mine,
Then wouldst thou say:
‘Pilgrim sweet
In Padua,
Take it; it is thine.’”

Is Padua short for Bob-up-and-down?

FRIAR

Yes, dame.

[*Aside.*]

And now to watch my experiment
Precipitate rose-colour.

PRIORESS

[*Sighs.*]

Almost finished!

[*Reads.*]

“Say not nay!
Fairest, dearest, far away,
Donna Eglantine.”

FRIAR

Alas, Madame, I did but do my duty.
He bade me bring them.

PRIORESS

From my heart, I thank you.
They're very beautiful.

FRIAR

But amorous,
I fear; they are *love-verses*.

PRIORESS

Are they? Sure,
I thought them sweet. He is so chivalrous.

FRIAR

[*Aside, takes out his stolen parchment.*]

Soft, then, I'll try the other. This should bring
The explosion.

[*Rattles the parchment.*]

PRIORESS

[*Eagerly, laying the first parchment on the table.*]

Did he send more verses?

FRIAR

Nay,
He sent no more, though from his pouch there fell
This parchment; but methinks he would desire you
Not to peruse it.

[*Turning as if to leave, he discovers the three conversing in
the arbour.*]

PRIORESS

Me!

FRIAR

Yes, dame, for it

Describes you.

PRIORESS

How?

FRIAR

Alas! In different vein

From the other.

PRIORESS

Different?

[*Demanding it with a gesture.*]

Quickly!

FRIAR

'Tis my duty.

[*Hands her the manuscript.*]

PRIORESS

[*Snatching it; reads.*]

“There was also a nun, a prioress,
That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
The greatest oath she swore was ‘by St. Loy!’”

O ciel! O quel outrage!

[*While she reads on to herself, changing visibly to pique and tears, the Friar, purloining the first parchment from the table, trips over to the arbour's entrance and bows.*]

FRIAR

Diner est servi!

Messieurs, you are awaited by a lady.

[*Runs off.*]

CHAUCER

[*To Squire.*]

Quick! Catch him!

JOHANNA

[*To Squire.*]

Stay! "A lady?"

[*Pursued, the Friar drops his parchment, and, as the Squire stops to pick it up, escapes at the garden gate.*]

PRIORESS

[*Holding her parchment, confronts Chaucer.*]

Stay, Monsieur.

[*Reads.*]

"And French she spake (St. Patrick taught her how!)"

You hear, Monsieur — "St. Patrick taught her how!"

Oh, where is my Jacquette!

SQUIRE

[*Joyfully; glancing at the other parchment.*]

These are the verses!

[*Hands the parchment eagerly to Johanna.*]

CHAUCER

Madame, be calm. I will explain.

PRIORESS

Non, non.

JOHANNA

[*Reads.*]

"Eglantine,

O to be

There with thee —"

[*To Squire.*]

Wrote you these verses, sir? Who's Eglantine?

Why, lady, she —

SQUIRE

PRIORESS

[*To Chaucer.*]

How could you write them?

CHAUCER

Patience,

Dear Madame Eglantine —

JOHANNA

Ha! Eglantine!

CHAUCER

[*To Prioress, distracted.*]

Which verses do you mean? I wrote them not
To you!

PRIORESS

What, not to me? Those gracious lines,
So exquisite?

CHAUCER

Good God!

SQUIRE

[*To Johanna.*]

Upon my truth,
These verses are for you. Let me explain —

JOHANNA

Nay, let your friend.

[*Showing her parchment to Chaucer.*]

Sir, did you write these verses?

CHAUCER

I did!

PRIORESS

[*Showing her parchment.*]

And these, Monsieur?

CHAUCER

I did.

JOHANNA

And pray

To whom did you write *these*?

CHAUCER

To you.

JOHANNA

O Heaven!

PRIORESS

To her!

[*Unseen, save by the audience, the cellar door is opened, part way, and Alisoun peers out, dressed in the Knight's clothes, but still without a make-up. She winks to Huberd, whose head bobs up a moment from behind the wall.*]

SQUIRE

[*To Johanna.*]

Sweet mistress —

JOHANNA

I demand to know

Who is this rhyming man? Who was his father?

CHAUCER

My father was a vintner, dame, in London.

PRIORESS

A vintner?

SQUIRE

[*With pleading deprecation.*]

Sir —

JOHANNA

Small marvel that his son
Should be a cask.

ALISOUN

[*Aside, jubilantly.*]

God save my betters!

JOHANNA

[*To Squire.*]

“ If

You could but guess the Olympian pedigree — ”
Saints! Take me to my guardian, sir.

PRIORESS

[*To Chaucer.*]

Ah! bring

Me to my brother! O Monsieur! How false!

FRIAR

[*From behind the wall, sings.*]

Love is a liar,
But lovers love the pleasant friar,
Who, making of their burdens less —

CHAUCER AND SQUIRE

That friar!

FRIAR

[*Popping his head above the wall with a mock gesture of benediction, sings.*]

Ben'cite!

(Thus singeth he.)

Bene — benedicite!

Explicit pars secunda.

ACT THIRD

“ WITE ye nat wher ther stant a litel toun
Which that y-clepèd is Bob-up-and-doun,
Under the Blee, in Caunterbury weye ? ”

ACT III

TIME: Evening of the same day.

SCENE: The hall of the One Nine-pin.

At the opening of the act all the PILGRIMS are on the stage, except the following: MILLER, SHIPMAN, COOK, MANCIPLE, SUMMONER, KNIGHT, ALISOUN, CHAUCER, and WYCLIFFE. Owing to the overcrowding of the little inn, the hall is arranged, for the night, as a common sleeping-room. Up stage, right, is a great canopied bedstead, with steps to climb into it. Along the right wall are truckle-beds. As the curtain rises, a clear bell is heard ringing outside, slow and musical. By the light of a single torch, the Pilgrims are seen, some putting on their cloaks and hoods, some peering from behind the bed-curtains, others taking links from a tap-boy, who distributes them. These, as they are lit, throw an ever stronger light upon the grouped faces and contrasted garbs of the company. The PARSON is just waking the PLOUGHMAN, who drowzes on a truckle-bed.

PARSON

Up, brother; yon's the chapel bell.

PLOUGHMAN

It rings

For thee; thou art the parson, Jankin.

PARSON

Nay,

The preacher will be Wycliffe, old good Master
De Wycliffe.

MERCHANT

Old good Master Weak-liver!

PARSON

[*Turns angrily.*]

Sir!

MAN-OF-LAW

Old good Master Black-sheep!

PARSON

[*Turns.*]

Sir!

MONK

Old Nick!

PARSON

[*Turns.*]

Whom name you thus?

MONK

Your preacher. Faugh! The pope
Hath bann'd him with five bulls for heresy.

PLOUGHMAN

The old man hath a good grip, if he can
Hold five bulls by the horns.

MAN-OF-LAW

[*Aside to Priest.*]

An ignoramus!

BOTTLEJOHN

Dick, fetch a pint of moist ale from the cellar
For Master Bailey here.

[*Aside.*]

A small pint, mind,
And notch his tally.

DICK

[*Takes a stick from wall, notches it with his knife, and shows it to Bottlejohn.*]

Sixpence, sir, three farthings.

[*Dick then goes to the cellar door. As he opens it, he is grabbed within by the Miller, handed breathlessly to the Shipman, who claps his hands over the boy's mouth, and disappears with him below. The door then is closed, but at intervals it opens and the Miller's head is seen cautiously to emerge.*]

MERCHANT

This Wycliffe's gab hath hurt good trade. 'Twas him,
Six year ago, whose preaching made the poor folk
March up to London-town with Wat the Tyler,
And burn the gentry's houses.

DYER

Served 'em right!

PLOUGHMAN

God save Wat Tyler!

MONK

Peasant! Spit upon thee!

PARSON

Thou son of Antichrist!

MONK

Thou unhang'd Lollard!

BOTTLEJOHN

Sst! Sst! Good masters! Pray, sweet lordings,
here

Comes Master Wycliffe.

[*Enter, in conversation, WYCLIFFE and CHAUCER, followed by JOHANNA, who seeks to draw WYCLIFFE away. The Pilgrims greet the last, some with shouts of welcome, others with hisses.*]

WYCLIFFE

[*To Chaucer.*]

Certes, sir, it may

Be as you say. — Good folk! good children! — Yet
To me this England is a gorgeous tabard,
Blazon'd with shining arms and kingly shields;
A cloth of gold, blood-dyed with heraldries
Of knightly joustings, presbyterial pomps,
And red-wine revellings; cunningly, i' the fringe,
Chaced round with little lutes and ladies' Cupids
To snuggle the horse-hair lining. This brave shirt,
This inward-goading cloth of gaiety,
The poor, starved peasant wears on his bare back —
A ghost, that plays the bridegroom with's despair.

PLOUGHMAN

[*Amongst sneers and applause.*]

Right!

WYCLIFFE

[*To Chaucer.*]

Friend, how seems it thee?

CHAUCER

Sir, with your pardon,

To me, our England is still "Merry England!"
 Which nature cirqued with its green wall of seas
 To be her home and hearth-stone; where no slave,
 Though e'er he crept in her lap, was nursed of her;
 But the least peasant, bow'd in lonely fief,
 Might claim his free share in her dower of grace;
 The hush, pied daisy for's society,
 The o'erbubbling birds for mirth, the silly sheep
 For innocence. — Mirth, friendship, innocence:
 Where nature grants these three, what's left for envy?
 These three, sir, serve for my theology.

MAN-OF-LAW

Parfoi! What is this man — a Papist? Is't
 Some courtier?

FRANKLIN

Naw! He rings true Lollard, him.
 They're friends.

PARDONER

[*Sniffs.*]

They say it is a London vintner.

WYCLIFFE

[*Aside, to Johanna, indicating Chaucer.*]

Not speak with him?

JOHANNA

On no account.

WYCLIFFE

But —

JOHANNA

'Tis

A villain. Pray, sir, come to chapel.

[*She hurries Wycliffe toward the door, where she is accosted, beseechingly, by the Squire.*]

SQUIRE

Mistress!

JOHANNA

Am I beset?

[*Indicating Chaucer.*]

Signore!

Join your conspirator,

[*She sweeps out.*]

SQUIRE

[*Following.*]

Grace, Madonna, grace!

[*Enter, right, Eglantine, with her priests.*]

CHAUCER

[*Aside, sees her.*]

My lady!

PARSON

[*To Ploughman.*]

Quick, mon, and light the way for Master Wycliffe.

[*Exeunt.*]

MERCHANT

[*To Man-of-Law.*]

Go you?

MAN-OF-LAW

[*Smiles ironically.*]

Hein? When an ass comes out of Oxford,
His braying charms great ears.

[*Lower.*]

They say he hath
A patron in John Gaunt.

[*They go out.*]

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Calls.*]

Dick! Drat thee, Dick!
Ned, fetch Dick from the cellar with that ale
For Master Bailey.

NED

[*Goes slowly.*]

Can I 'ave a candle?

[*The Host gives him such a look that he hastens on.*]

BOTTLEJOHN

[*To Bailey.*]

These 'prentices!

BAILEY

Haw! Haw!

MONK

[*To Pardoner.*]

Come, we'll go twit him.

[*Exeunt toward chapel.*]

[*As Ned is about to open the cellar door, a black face looks
out at him.*]

NED

[*Running back.*]

Ow! Ow! A devil's head! I seed a spook!

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Seizing a ladle, drives him back.*]Scat! And the devil swallow thee! Skedaddle!
Feared o' the dark!

NED

[*Goes whimpering.*]

'E'll drub me wi' his thigh-bones.

[*Opening the door, he feels his way down. As the door
closes, a faint scream comes from within.*]

CHAUCER

[*To Prioress, who, preceded by her three priests, is about to
go out.*]

Madame, goes she to chapel?

PRIORESS

Paul, Joannes,

Keep close.

CHAUCER

Si chère Madame — if dear my lady
Would vouchsafe but a moment, till —

PRIORESS

[*Pausing, but not looking at Chaucer.*]

Eh bien?

CHAUCER

[*Confused.*]

The night is very beautiful.

PRIORESS

Joannes !

CHAUCER

That is — I bring you tidings of your brother.

JOANNES

What would Madame ?

CHAUCER

The moon —

PRIORESS

[*To Joannes.*]

Go, go — to chapel.

JOANNES

But will Madame —

PRIORESS

Va ! Va ! —

[*Exeunt priests ; she turns shyly to Chaucer.*]

Alors, Monsieur,

Vous dites mon frère ? —

CHAUCER

Your brother —

[*Aside, as they go out.*]

Drown her brother !

WEAVER

[*To Dyer.*]

Come on !

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Blowing out a candle.*]

This preaching saveth tallow.

[*Calls.*]

Dick!

Ned! Slow knaves!

[*Exit right.*]

[*Cautiously, the cellar door is opened, and enter the Miller. He whistles softly; some one within whistles in answer.*]

MILLER

Be all gagged below there?

SHIPMAN

[*His head appearing.*]

Aye,

All's tight beneath the hatches. Is the deck clear?

[*Miller nods; Shipman disappears for an instant. Then the Miller bows low.*]

MILLER

This way, your lordship —

COOK

[*Appearing with Shipman.*]

'Save your Worship!

[*Enter SUMMONER, MANCIPLE, and HUBERD, the latter disguised as a chimney-sweep. Lastly, ALISOUN in the dress of the Knight.*]

ALL THE SWAINS

Hail,

Dan Roderigo!

ALISOUN

[*While the Swains assist in adjusting her disguise.*]

Good my squires and henchmen,
I thank you. — Roger, sweetheart, lace my boot
there. —

Our journey hath been perilous and dark —
Bob, chuck, how sits my doublet? — but praise Mary,
I am preserved to greet my virgin sister; —
God send *she* like the flavour of my beard
Better than me.

FRIAR

Let me amend it, sweet!

[*Kisses her.*]

ALISOUN

Avaunt, vile chimney-sweep! Beshrew thee, Huberd
Love, wouldst thou swap complexions?

[*Looks in a pewter plate, while the Cook holds a candle.*]

Thy smut nose

Hath blotched the lily pallor of my brow
Like a crushed violet. Some powder, quick,
And touch it off.

FRIAR

[*From his robe and cowl, which the Shipman holds, extracts
a rabbit's foot and touches up Alisoun's face, while the
Manciple helps her on with a scarlet-lined mantle.*]

Sweet love, how liketh you
This cloak I stole?

ALISOUN
'Twill serve.

FRIAR
[*Bowing.*]
Your valet is
Your abject Ethiop slave.

MILLER
[*Kicks him.*]
Your nincumpoop!
Scarecat! Thou blacks thy friar's skin to save it,
Lest the fat vintner and the young squire catch thee
And flay it off.

FRIAR
Even so.

SUMMONER
By quid, let's blab, then.
He kissed her, and we'll blab.

COOK, MANCIPLE, AND SHIPMAN
Aye!

ALISOUN
Wo betide ye,
Then! Down! Kneel down—the batch of ye—
and swear,
As ye have hopes to win this lily-white hand,
Ye will be brothers, till I win my bet.
Out with your oaths, now. Kiss my foot and say,

By Venus's lip,
 And Alis's hip,
 I swear to keep
 This fellowship!

ALL

[*Severally trying to kiss her extended foot.*]

By Venus's lip,
 And Alis's hip,
 I swear to keep —

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Calls outside.*]

Ned! Dick!

ALISOUN

[*In low voice, to Swains.*]

Get out! Back to your cellar; guard
 The knight and the two knaves. Whoever enters
 Gag 'em and tie.

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Entering.*]

Dick! Ned! The devil take

All 'prentices!

ALISOUN

[*Retaining Friar.*]

Hist!

[*Staying the Miller.*]

Bob!

[*To the others.*]

Go! Go!

BOTTLEJOHN

I wonder

Was it a spook he saw! 'Tis dark.

[*Takes up an unlit candle.*]

ALISOUN

Mind, when he strikes

A light, I am the devil, and your feet

Are hoofs.

BOTTLEJOHN

Folk say they dwell in cellars.

FRIAR

Soft!

I'll sprinkle a pinch of this sal volatile

I' the candle flame.

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Lights candle.*]

I'll take my crucifix.

[*He is about to go toward the priedieu, when the Friar thrusts his hand over the candle flame. A vivid flash of light reveals his black face to Bottlejohn.*]

FRIAR

Succubus! Incubus!

Praestare omnibus!

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Drops the candle, which goes out.*]

Help!

ALISOUN

Silence!

[*On the hearth the Friar lights a dull red flame, which throws a flickering glow about the room.*]

BOTTLEJOHN

[*To Alisoun.*]

O! what art thou? Dost thou laugh?
What is thy name?

ALISOUN

My name is Lucifer.

These be my urchins, Belial and Moloch.
Salaam! Salaam!

FRIAR AND MILLER

[*Salaaming.*]

Hail, Mephistophilis!

ALISOUN

[*To Host.*]

What thing art thou?— Duck!

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Ducks as the Miller pricks him with a dirk.*]

I be Bottlejohn,
The host o' the One Nine-pin.

ALISOUN

Bottlejohn,
Thee and thy One Nine-pin I damn. For know,
Thy cellar is the attic over hell,

And hath been leaking bad ale through my ceiling
 This seven year, and made a puddle deep
 As Proserpina's garter in her bridal
 Chamber, where thy two knaves —

BOTTLEJOHN

What! Ned and Dick?

ALISOUN

Came plumping through head-downwards into hell
 Like bullfrogs in a tarn.

MILLER

And drowned! and drowned!
 Shalt *thou* in thine own ale.

[*Leads him toward cellar.*]

BOTTLEJOHN

O Virgin!

FRIAR

[*At door, back.*]

Whist!

One comes.

BOTTLEJOHN

Help! help!

ALISOUN

[*To Miller.*]

Quick, Belial, lug thine ass
 Into his stall. Instruct him with thy whittle
 What manner devils we are, and when I clap
 My hands thus and cry "Host!" then lead him forth.

[*Exeunt Miller and Bottlejohn into cellar. To Friar.*]

Meantime, my pixy, hide we here.

FRIAR

Sweet lord —

[*They hide in the cupboard. Enter, left, Chaucer and Prioress.*]

PRIORESS

Parlez toujours, Monsieur!

Parlez toujours!

CHAUCER

How silver falls the night!

The hills lie down like sheep; the young frog flutes;
 The yellow-ammer, from his coppice, pipes
 Drowsy rehearsals of his matin-song;
 The latest swallow dips behind the stack.
 What beauty dreams in silence! The white stars,
 Like folded daisies in a summer field,
 Sleep in their dew, and by yon primrose gap
 In darkness' hedge, St. Ruth hath dropped her sickle.

PRIORESS

Nay, yonder's the new moon.

CHAUCER

But here's St. Ruth,
 Whose pity hath reprieved a vintner's son.
 Your nephew's verses —

PRIORESS

Pray speak not of them;
 That wicked Friar Huberd was to blame.
 But now —

[*Turning to the casement.*]

The moon, Monsieur; parlez, Monsieur!

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

“ Parlez, Monsieur.” How shall I trust myself ?

[*Aloud.*]

I may not, dear Madame. If I should speak,
My heart would run in passages too sweet
For this cloy'd planet.

PRIORESS

[*Pointing through casement to the sky.*]

Mais — parlez, Monsieur.

CHAUCER

Yea, if perchance there were some *other* star —

PRIORESS

Some other star —

CHAUCER

Some star unsurfeited,
Some blessed star, where hot and lyric youth
Pours not swift torment in the veins of age ;
Where Passion — gorgeous cenobite — blurs not
With fumid incense of his own hot breath
The hallow'd eyes of sweet Philosophy ;
Where body battens not upon the soul,
But both are Reason's angels, and Love's self —
Pontifical in daisy-chains — doth hold
High mass at nature's May-pole ; — if such star
There were in all God's heaven, and such indeed
Were ours, there would I speak and utter, not
“ Dear Eglantine, I love you,” but “ We love.”

PRIORESS

Monsieur, 'tis true.

CHAUCER

The simple truth, once said,
Is very sweet, Madame.

PRIORESS

Merci, Monsieur.

ALISOUN

Whist, Huberd; are they gone?

FRIAR

Nay.

ALISOUN

Did he kiss her?

Bones! Are they dumb!

FRIAR

Art jealous, dame?

ALISOUN

Shut up!

CHAUCER

[*At the window.*]

Some other star! Choose, lady, which is ours?

PRIORESS

Yonder cool star that hides its winking light
Like a maid that weeps — but not for heaviness.

CHAUCER

Ha! If I were Prometheus now, I'd filch it
From out the seventh crystal sphere for you
And 'close it in this locket.

[*Seizes her hand.*]

PRIORESS

Nay, that holds
My brother's hair.

CHAUCER

[*Dropping her hand, looks away into the night.*]

We dream.

PRIORESS

Of what, Monsieur?

CHAUCER

We dream that we are back in Eden garden
And that the gates are shut — and sin outside.

PRIORESS

Why, such in truth is love.

CHAUCER

Yes, such in truth
But not in fact, dear lady. Such sweet truth
Grows only on God's tree; we may behold
And crave immortally, but may not pluck it
Without the angel's scourge. — "When Adam
delved" —

Aye, then he dragged both heaven and earth and hell
Along with him. — O God! this suzerain mansion
Where saints and crown'd philosophers discourse
Familiarly together as thy guests —
This ample palace of poesie, the mind —
Hath trap-doors sunk into a murky vault,
Where passion's serfs lie sprawling.

PRIORESS

I am afraid!

CHAUCER

Forgive me, O sweet lady! I seem not
All that I am.

PRIORESS

[*Timidly.*]

What are you?

CHAUCER

Do you ask?

Why, then, for this dull, English bulk, 'tis true
A London vintner gat it; but for this
My moving soul, I do believe it is
Some changeling sprite, the bastard of a god,
Sprung from Pan's loins and white Diana's side,
That, like a fawn, I fain must laugh and love
Where the sap runs; yet, like an anchorite,
Pore on the viewless beauty of a book:
Not more enamoured (when the sun is out)
O' the convent rose, than of the hoyden milkweed
Bold in my path. Life, in whatever cup,
To me is a love-potion. In one breath,
My heart hath pealed the chimes above St. Paul's
And rung an alewife's laughter.

ALISOUN

[*Aside to the Friar.*]

Bless his heart

And waistband! Heard ye that?

PRIORESS

[*Who has listened, lost.*]

To hear you speak
Is sweeter than the psalter. Do not stop.

CHAUCER

[*Aside, smiling.*]

Dear Lady Dreams!—

[*Aloud.*]

Hark! Footsteps from the chapel.

[*Goes to the door.*]

It is your nephew and his lady-love.

Let's step aside before I introduce you,

And profit by these pangs of "lyric youth."

[*Chaucer and the Prioress step aside, as enter, left, Johanna and the Squire.*]

SQUIRE

Stay!

JOHANNA

Leave me!

SQUIRE

Hear me!

JOHANNA

Is the house of prayer
No sanctuary that you drag me from it?

SQUIRE

Donna, the cloudy-pillar'd dome o' the air

Alone can roof a lover's house of prayer.

JOHANNA

More verses? Send 'em to your lady nun.

SQUIRE

O heartless bosom! Cold concave of pity!
 Whet thy disdain upon the heart-shaped stone
 Lodged, like a ruby, in that marble breast,
 And slay me with the onyx of thine eye.

JOHANNA

Pray, did your Geoffrey write that?

SQUIRE

Do not scorn him.

He named you "Eglantine" because "Johanna"
 Was not euphonious.

JOHANNA

Because "Johanna"

Was not —

SQUIRE

Euphonious. But "Eglantine" —

JOHANNA

But "Eglantine" was all symphonious.
 "Johanna" — ha? — was not mellifluous
 Enough to woo me! So a honeysuckle,
 An eglantine, must be my proxy — ha?
 Go! go! Hide in the night — Go! Kill thyself!

SQUIRE

[*At the door.*]

O sky! thy noon was a broad, glorious mirror,
 Which now hath fallen from its frame and shattered;
 And little stars, like points of glass, they prick me
 That gather back my grains of crushed joy.

JOHANNA

[*At the window.*]

O starry night! thou art Fortune's playing-card,
All bright emboss'd with little shining hearts
That dash our own with destiny. Oh, false!

[*Turns.*]

Go! — to your Eglantine!

SQUIRE

Johanna!

CHAUCER

[*Speaks from the darkness.*]

Hide, Cleopatra, thy Egyptian hair!

JOHANNA

Hark!

CHAUCER

Esther, let melt thy meekness as the snow. —

JOHANNA

[*Draws nearer to Squire.*]

What is 't?

CHAUCER

Hide, Ariadne, all thy beauties bare!

SQUIRE

Who speaks?

CHAUCER

Penelope and Marcia Cato,
Drown all your wifely virtues in the Po. —

JOHANNA

Good Aubrey, strike a light.

CHAUCER

Isold and Helen, veil your starlit eyes —
Johanna comes, that doth you jeopardise!

[*The Squire lights a candle, revealing Chaucer.*]

JOHANNA

O monster! It is he.

[*Chaucer takes the candle from the Squire's hand, and, holding it high, approaches Johanna, thereby throwing the Prioress into his own shadow.*]

SQUIRE

Nay, gentle sir!

CHAUCER

Laodamia, Hero, and Dido,
 And Phyllis, dying for thy Demophon,
 And Canace, betroth'd of Cambalo, —
 Polixena, that made for love such moan,
 Let envy gnaw your beauties to the bone;
 Yea, Hypermnestra, swoon in envious sighs —
Johanna comes, that doth you jeopardise!

JOHANNA

Oh, thank you — both. Squire, I congratulate
 Your cunning chivalry on luring me
 From church to bait me in this bear-trap.

SQUIRE

Upon my honour —

Lady,

[*To Chaucer.*]

Good sir —

[*To Johanna.*]

Nay, fear nothing.

Indeed, if you but knew —

JOHANNA

[*Catching sight of Prioress.*]

If I but knew !

St. Ann ! I know too much.

SQUIRE

You would be proud

To have him rhyme your name. Sir, I protest

Had I conceived how fair “Johanna” sounds

In verse —

CHAUCER

[*Sternly.*]

Hold, signorino ! Was it thus

You bade me sonnetise your Eglantine ?

You said yourself —

SQUIRE

In sooth, that “Eglantine”

Is sweeter.

JOHANNA

Ugh !

CHAUCER

There you were false. For know

As ocean-shells give back the mermaid’s sigh,

The conches of a lover’s ears should hold

Eternal murmurs of his mistress’ name.

“Johanna” should have been thy conjure-word

To raise all spirits ; thy muses’ *nom de plume* ;

“Johanna” should have learnt thy brook to purl,
 Thy pine to sorrow, and thy lark to soar ;
 And nightingales, forswearing Tereus’ name,
 Have charmed thy wakeful midnight with “Johanna.”

JOHANNA

[*To Chaucer.*]

Roland of Champions! Ringrazio!
 Now, pray, what says the other lady?

SQUIRE

The other?

JOHANNA

[*To Prioress.*]

Dame Eglantine, your most obsequious.

PRIORESS

Votre servante. — I also, Mademoiselle,
 Have been at court.

JOHANNA

Does not Madame applaud, then,
 This vintner’s courtly eloquence?

PRIORESS

I think

Monsieur will soon explain how this good youth
 And I are dearly tied unto each other.

SQUIRE

What! I — and you, Madame?

JOHANNA
 It seems the trap
 Hath caught the hunters.

[*Aside.*]

Oh, my heart!

SQUIRE
 I swear
 I do not know this lady.

JOHANNA

What! you swear!

[*Aside.*]

Not perjury?

SQUIRE

I swear that we are strangers;
 Of no relationship, and least of love.

JOHANNA

Oh, Aubrey, is this true?

SQUIRE

Why, Mistress —

CHAUCER

[*Aside to Squire.*]

Soft!

Walk with this nun a moment.

SQUIRE

Sir?

CHAUCER

Dost trust me?

SQUIRE

Yes, but —

CHAUCER

[*Indicating Johanna.*]

I'll reconcile her.

[*Aside to Prioress.*]

Tell him all,

Madame. Leave us alone a moment.

SQUIRE

But —

CHAUCER

[*Aloud.*]

I will not play the hypocrite.

PRIORESS

[*To Squire, as they go out.*]

Dear Aubrey —

JOHANNA

“Dear Aubrey!” Gone! gone! and with her. O base
Conspiracy! — To leave me![*To Chaucer.*]

Stand aside!

CHAUCER

Nay, do not follow.

JOHANNA

I? I follow *her*?

Follow the lost Francesca into Limbo!

She's damned. I seek my ward, De Wycliffe.

CHAUCER

Stay!

JOHANNA

St. Winifred! You'll force —?

CHAUCER

Donna, my heart

Bleeds tears for you.

JOHANNA

Stand by!

CHAUCER

That one so young,

So seeming virtuous —

JOHANNA

“ So seeming ” — thanks!

CHAUCER

As this young squire should, at one look from his —
Should, at one look, forsake your ladyship
For his — alas! But such is man! The bonds
Which nature forges chain us to the flesh,
Though angels pry the links.

JOHANNA

The bonds which nature? —

CHAUCER

Yes, nature: 'tis not love. Had it been love,
Would he have turned, even in his vows of truth,
And left you with his — ah! it chokes me. Nay,
Go, go, great marchioness, seek out your ward;
I crave your pardon.

[Bowing, he steps aside. Johanna, passing disdainfully to the door, there pauses, and turns to Chaucer, as though he had spoken.]

JOHANNA

Well?

[Chaucer retires right.]

'Tis very dark.

[Returning.]

I will wait here.

CHAUCER

In sadness, honoured lady,
I take my leave.

[*He goes to the door; Johanna rises uneasily.*]

Yet I beseech your grace
Will never hint to that poor youth, my friend,
The secret I let slip.

JOHANNA

[*Aside.*]

“Let slip!” The booby!—
He thinks he’s told me who she is. Soft! *now*
I’ll worm it out.

[*Aloud.*]

Wait; if I promise never
To hint the thing we know — you understand.

CHAUCER

That’s it.

JOHANNA

One moment, Master Geoffrey. I
Have rallied you somewhat on your paternal
Vintage.

CHAUCER

To be hit by your Grace’s wit
Is to die smiling.

JOHANNA

[*Aside.*]

How the big fish bites!

[*Aloud, effusively.*]

But you’ll forgive me? ’Tis my nature, those
To banter whom I best adore.

[*Detaching a knot of ribbon from her gown, she offers it to
Chaucer.*]

Pray, sir, —

CHAUCER

For me? — A love-knot! By your Grace's favours
I am bewildered.

JOHANNA

Keep it as a pledge —

For you are Aubrey's friend, my Aubrey's friend —
As pledge that I will never, so help me Heaven,
Reveal to him my knowledge of his secret,
How Eglantine is his — oh, word it for me,
For I am heartsick.

CHAUCER

Trust me, honoured lady,
You have done bravely. For did he suspect
That I have even whispered to you how
That nun, whose sensuous name he bade me rhyme
In verses meant for you, that Prioress,
Whose cloistral hand even now, lock'd in his palm,
Leads here your Aubrey, how that vestal maid
Hath lived for months, nay years, your lover's — oh!

JOHANNA

[*Seizes Chaucer's arm.*]

His *what*? In God's name, speak it! His —

CHAUCER

His aunt!

[*Blows out the candle.*]

JOHANNA

His aunt?

CHAUCER

[*Going off in the dark.*]

O shire of Kent! thou shire of Kent!
To sit with thee in parliament
Doth not content
Me, verayment,
Like laughing at lovers after Lent.
Haha! Hahaha!

[*Exit.*]

Ho! Shire of Kent!

JOHANNA

So — Kent? He mocks my tittle, doth he?
O gall! If he have made a fool of me —
Yet, if he've made a fool of me, O sweet,
Sweet gall!

SQUIRE

[*Outside.*]

Johanna!

JOHANNA

Aubrey!

SQUIRE

[*Returning with Prioress.*]

He hath told thee?

JOHANNA

Nay, hath he told me *true*?

SQUIRE

This is my aunt,
Dame Eglantine, my father's sister.

ALISOUN

[*Aside.*]

Death!

We must be quick.

FRIAR

[*Aside.*]

I'll win thy wager for thee.

[*Exit Friar at door, front left.*]

PRIORESS

[*Extending her hand to Johanna.*]

My nephew tells me you and he —

JOHANNA

Madame,

I blush to think of my late rudeness; 'twas
My jealousy. Yet you should pardon it;
For you that wear St. Chastity's safe veil
Can never know how blind St. Cupid plagues
The eyes of worldlings.

PRIORESS

No?

SQUIRE

Love, you forgive me?

[*Reënter Chaucer.*]

JOHANNA

Forgive you? By my heart — I'll think about it.
Here comes our fool. Come hither, What's-your-name.

CHAUCER

[*Coming forward with the love-knot.*]

Your Grace's secret-monger.

JOHANNA

Tut! tut!

[*Embarrassed, motions him to put it away.*]

Rhymester,

If thou wilt come to court, I'll have thee made
Court-fool.

SQUIRE

[*Aside.*]

O mistress, hush!

JOHANNA

A cask of thy
Diameter should keep King Richard drunk
With laughter for a twelvemonth. Cask, I swear it,
Thou shalt be made court-fool.

SQUIRE

[*Aside to Chaucer.*]

She doth not mean it

PRIORESS

[*Aside to Squire.*]

Nephew, I cannot quite approve your choice.

JOHANNA

Nay, keep my knot; my favour is renewed.
I'll sue the king myself at Canterbury
To swaddle thee in motley.

[*Chaucer laughs aside.*]

— Well, no thanks?

CHAUCER

Lady, pray God I live to see that day.

JOHANNA

Amen. Now, Aubrey, where's your father? Let's
Make merry all together.

PRIORESS

True, my brother;

Went he to chapel?

SQUIRE

Ladies, I am 'shamed

To make confession of my selfishness:
To-day, all day, in the sweet day and night
Of my own thoughts I have been wandering.
I have not seen my father since this morning.
I'll go and seek him now.

CHAUCER

Nay, boy, remain.

Doubtless he's gone to chapel. I will find him
And bring him to you here. First, though, let me

Anticipate my fool's prerogative
 And play the father to another's bairns,
 This vixen girl and boy.

[*With an affectionate smile he draws Johanna and Aubrey together and kisses them.*]

God bless 'em both!

PRIORESS

[*Aside.*]

St. Loy! No more?

JOHANNA

Dear fool, thou'rt not so old.
 Come now, how old?

CHAUCER

Ah, lass, my crop is rowen.
 When grey hairs creep like yarrow into clover,
 Farewell, green June! Thy growing days be over.

[*Aside.*]

Bewitching Eglantine!

[*Exit left.*]

PRIORESS

[*At the casement, aside.*]

Some other star!

[*Aloud.*]

Nephew!

[*The Squire and Johanna stand absorbed in their own whisperings.*]

Nephew!

SQUIRE
Madame!

PRIORESS
I pray you, tell
Your father, when he comes, I am retired
A moment to my room.

SQUIRE
I will, Madame.
[*Exit Prioress, right.*]
My lady, we're alone.

JOHANNA
Alas, then come,
Sit and be sad.
[*She sits in the niche by the fireplace.*]

SQUIRE
Sad? Must I wear a mask, then?
Mistress! Mistress, masks fall away from love
Like husks from buds in April. By love's light
Lovers can look through mountains to their joy
As through these black beams I see heaven. Nay,
Hear me! When I have won my spurs—

FRIAR
[*Sings within.*]
What, ho! What, ho!
Dan Cupido!
A spurless knight usurps thy halls.—

JOHANNA

What's that?

SQUIRE

The friar! 'Tis his voice.

FRIAR

*[Sings within.]*Thy fortress falls,
And all her rosèd charms —

JOHANNA

Is't in the cellar?

SQUIRE

Or the wall?

[They look up the chimney.]

FRIAR

*[Sings within.]*To arms, Dan Cupido! To arms,
Dan Cupido!*[With a rush of soot, he falls into the fireplace.]*

Bon soir!

JOHANNA

'Od's fiends!

SQUIRE

*[Seizing Friar, drags him forth.]*Sneak thief, at last I have thee — What!
A chimney-sweep?

FRIAR

Did scare the ladykin?

SQUIRE

Was't thou that sung?

FRIAR

Sung-la?

JOHANNA

[*Brushing herself off.*]

My taffeta!

SQUIRE

Sing! Didst thou sing?

FRIAR

Oh, sing! You mean the friar, sir.

SQUIRE

[*Peremptorily.*]

Where?

FRIAR

In the cellar. He's a-hiding, sir.

SQUIRE

I warrant him. Here —

[*Gives Friar a coin.*]

Come, show me the scoundrel

FRIAR

[*Examining coin.*]

A noble!

[Sings.]

Oh, rare
Sweet miller,
Lady-killer,
Not there, not there!

SQUIRE

[Eyeing Friar with suspicion.]

What?

[The Miller slips stealthily from the cellar door and joins
Alisoun in the cupboard.]

FRIAR

Was't so he sung, sir?

SQUIRE

Yes.

JOHANNA

[Still brushing her gown.]

Ruined!

FRIAR

Sir, follow, sir. I know him well.

A begging friar?

SQUIRE

Yes.—One moment, Mistress.—

I'll flay the beggar. Now!

FRIAR

[The Friar opens cellar door; Squire snatches his candle
and precedes him.]

A sneaking friar—

A noble!—a swindling, skulking, lying friar.

[*Aside to Bob Miller, who joins him from the cupboard.*]

O rare Bob-up-and-down!

[*Exeunt; Alisoun leaves the cupboard and exit stealthily at door, left front.*]

JOHANNA

Stay; are they gone?

Mass! mass! I'm spotted worse than ink. And
kneel

In Canterbury kirk in such a gown!

I'll eat it first. Oh, Lord! Lord, now who comes?

[*Enter, left back, the Canon's Yeoman and the Carpenter;
after whom the Wife of Bath, disguised.*]

ALISOUN

Good fellow, you there, can you propagate
Unto my vision — a young prioress?

CANON'S YEOMAN

No, sir, I cannot.

ALISOUN

Or a marchioness?

[*The pilgrims pass on.*]

JOHANNA

[*Aside.*]

A marchioness!

ALISOUN

[*Twirling her sword-scabbard.*]

Hum! Hum!

CARPENTER

How went the sermon?

CANON'S YEOMAN

God's blood! Old Wycliffe hammered the pope flat.
The pulpit rang like a hot anvil.

CARPENTER

Aye,

There'll be skulls cracked yet.

[*Exeunt right.*]

ALISOUN

[*To Johanna.*]

Amorous Minerva!

JOHANNA

Signor!

[*Aside.*]

My left sleeve's clean.

ALISOUN

I have a son,

Whose aunt —

JOHANNA

Are you the Knight of Algezir?

ALISOUN

I am — Dan Roderigo d'Algezir.

JOHANNA

My Aubrey's father.

ALISOUN

Bones! Are you Johanna?

JOHANNA

[*Aside.*]

Bones !

ALISOUN

Corpus arms ! it sticks me to the heart
To gaze on your sweet face, my dear.

JOHANNA

[*Aside.*]

My dear !

ALISOUN

Ah ! the fat rogue ! He said your face was worth
Unbuckling an off eye to pop it in ;
But such a pretty finch !

JOHANNA

Finch ! Sir, perhaps
You are deceived in me. — Who sent you here ?

ALISOUN

Yon chum of that sweet spindle-shanks, my son —
Yon rhymester, Master Geoffrey.

JOHANNA

Yes ; 'twas he.

[*Aside.*]

Saints ! is *this* Aubrey's father ?

[*Aloud.*]

Doubtless, sir,
There's no mistake. Your sister left you word —

ALISOUN

O villain! Aye, though I ha' bred him! What
Though 'tis my own son — villain! God's teeth!

JOHANNA

Sir!

ALISOUN

Your pardon, dainty dame. Before I speak
I do not rinse my mouth in oleander.
I am a blunt knight. Nay, I cannot sigh
A simoon hot with sonnets like my son.
I am a blunt knight who, on Satan's heel,
Hath rode it and strode it, wench'd it, wived it, and
knived it,
Booted and footed 't, till — by Venus' shoestring,
I be a blunt and rough but honest soldier.

JOHANNA

Signore, I believe it.

ALISOUN

Blunt's the word, then;
And here's the blunt point. You're deceived.

JOHANNA

By whom?

ALISOUN

By Aubrey.

JOHANNA

What!

ALISOUN

Aye, by my smiling son
Wi' the pretty curls. Where is he now?

JOHANNA

Why, he —

He's gone to find the friar.

ALISOUN

Aye.

JOHANNA

Good Heaven!

Can he have harmed him?

ALISOUN

Who — the friar? The friar's
His pal — his pal; and so is Geoffrey; aye,
And that lascivious, Latin-singing nun —

JOHANNA

What! Eglantine?

ALISOUN

Yes, she; those four! Child, child,
Wouldst not believe it, how they've sneaked and
schemed,
Plotted my life, aye, for my money. But
'Twas lust, lust egged him on. Oh God! my son!
And 'twas a cherub 'fore this Geoffrey warped him!

JOHANNA

[*To herself.*]

They whispered here: and there she said "Dear
Aubrey."

ALISOUN

And their disguises ; oh, you'd not believe it !
That devil friar plays the chimney-sweep.
And —

JOHANNA

Chimney-sweep ! 'Twas he, then, sung ? Oh, come ;
Help !

ALISOUN

Where ?

JOHANNA

They're in the cellar.

ALISOUN

Like enough ;
They're plotting, plotting. God's wounds ! 'Tis a
trap.

Where be they all ? Geoffrey to send me here —
My son to leave you with the friar — Ha !
They're with that sly, deceptive Prioress ;
'Tis she —

JOHANNA

Why, she's your sister.

ALISOUN

[*As if taken back.*]

What — my sister !
Is *she* the Prioress ? *She* Eglantine ?

JOHANNA

Yes, yes ; and she, too, left upon a pretext.
Sir Roderigo, say, what shall we do ?

ALISOUN

My sister — and my son !

JOHANNA

[*Calls.*]

Aubrey ! — no answer ?

Aubrey !

ALISOUN

My son and sister !

JOHANNA

Oh, poor soldier !

ALISOUN

Oh, monstrous brood, hatched in a vampire's nest !
 But I will be revenged. Go to your room ;
 Lock fast the door ; but when I call, " A brooch,
 A brooch ! " come forth and raise the house.

JOHANNA

Why " brooch " ?

ALISOUN

A watchword. Quick ; go ! I hear footsteps. Go !

[*Urges her toward door, right back.*]

Blunt is the word ; your presence dangers me —
 Your room. No, no, I fear not.

JOHANNA

Poor Sir Roderick !

[*Exit ; Alisoun shuts door ; voices outside, left.*]

ALISOUN

A miss is as good's a mile.

REEVE

[*Outside.*]

Where went your knight?

[*Enter Reeve, Doctor, and Chaucer.*]

CHAUCER

To chapel.

REEVE

Na, na, na; I saw him not.

CHAUCER

[*To Doctor.*]

Nor you?

DOCTOR

A knight, say you, from the Holy Land?

CHAUCER

Yes, a crusader.

DOCTOR

[*Points at Alisoun.*]

Is that he?

CHAUCER

Ah, thank you;

[*Starts forward, but sees he is mistaken.*]

Nay, 'tis another man.

DOCTOR

Good even, sir.

REEVE

[*To Doctor.*]'Twas the first time I heard the devil preach
In chapel.

DOCTOR
Wycliffe?

REEVE

[*Nods.*]

Curse him and his Lollards!

[*Exeunt, right front.*]

CHAUCER

[*Follows them to door, and calls.*]

Aubrey!

ALISOUN

[*Claps her hands.*]

Host!

CHAUCER

Signorino!

ALISOUN

Host here!

[*Enter from cellar the Miller and Bottlejohn. As the door is closing, the chink is filled with the faces of the Swains, threatening Bottlejohn.*]

MILLER

[*His dagger drawn, aside to Bottlejohn.*]

Mum!

Quick! Be thy ribs good whetstones?

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Ducking to Alisoun.*]

Here, sweet lording.

ALISOUN

Thou'rt slow.

MILLER

[*Aside.*]

Ribs!

BOTTLEJOHN

Slow, sweet lording.

ALISOUN

Tell me, host,

Hast thou residing in this hostelry
A gentle prioress?

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

What?

MILLER

[*Aside to Bottlejohn, sharpening his dagger on an ale-mug.*]

Whetstones!

BOTTLEJOHN

Aye,

Sweet lording.

ALISOUN

Good; go tell her that her brother
Awaits her here.

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

Her brother!

[*Draws nearer.*]

HOST

Aye, sweet lording

[*Starts for door, right back, Miller following.*]

ALISOUN

Her brother, say — Dan Roderigo.

BOTTLEJOHN

Aye,

Sweet lording.

MILLER

Host, hast thou a whetstone in
Thy pocket?

BOTTLEJOHN

Aye, sweet lording.

MILLER

[*Winking at Alisoun.*]

“Aye, sweet lording.”

[*Exeunt Bottlejohn and Miller.*][*Alisoun ignores Chaucer's presence.*]

CHAUCER

[*Approaching her.*]Your pardon, sir, I trespass. By your cross
You come —

ALISOUN

From Palestine. Well met. You, friend?

CHAUCER

Nay, I'm a door-mouse, sir; a doze-at-home.
My home's near by at Greenwich. You have friends—
Friends at the inn?

ALISOUN

A friend, sir; a fair friend;
By Jupiter, a sweet friend.

CHAUCER

Ah!

ALISOUN

A sister.

She is a nun.

CHAUCER

Good God!

ALISOUN

A prioress.

It cannot be!

CHAUCER

ALISOUN

Signor!

CHAUCER

Her name? Her name?

ALISOUN

What's that to you — her name?

CHAUCER

[*Disconcerted.*]

It may be —

ALISOUN

Ah!

Perhaps you know her — what? 'Tis Eglantine.

CHAUCER

Impossible! — Sir, pardon me; I must
Have made some strange mistake.

ALISOUN

Nay, friend ; I guess
'Tis I have made the blunder.

CHAUCER

You, sir ?

ALISOUN

Sooth,

I might as well stick both feet in the mire
And wade across my blushes. We old lads
With beards, who sees our blushes, what ? So, then,
This prioress, she is not just my sister.

CHAUCER

No ?

ALISOUN

No.

CHAUCER

What then ?

ALISOUN

Vous savez bien, these nuns,
When they would have a friend, they clepe him
" brother."

Especially on holy pilgrimage
It hath a proper sound : " My *brother* meets me ;
My *brother* is a knight." You cannot blame 'em ;
'Tis more discreet ; we men must humour 'em.
Therefore this little honeysuckle nun
Doth take delight to call me *brother*.

CHAUCER

Liar!

[*As Chaucer lifts his hand about to strike Alisoun, she raises hers to guard; seizing it, he beholds her ring.*]

What! — “Amor vincit omnia.” — Even her!

ALISOUN

Take back your lie!

CHAUCER

That ring — tell me — that ring!

ALISOUN

St. Madrian! It is my love-ring. She,
My sweet nun, gave it me. She wears a brooch
To match it, on her wrist.

[*Enter, right, Bottlejohn and Miller.*]

BOTTLEJOHN

The Prioress,

Sweet lording.

[*Enter the Prioress.*]

PRIORESS

Brother! Welcome, brother!

CHAUCER

No!

God! God! I'll not believe it. Aubrey! Aubrey!

[*Exit, left.*]

ALISOON

My pretty virgin sister !

PRIORESS

[*Gives her hand, reticently.*]

Roderigo !

[*Looking after Chaucer.*]

He need not, sure, have gone.

ALISOON

Put up thy chin,
 My snow-white dove. Aha, but thou art grown !
 The silver slip o' girlhood that I kissed
 Good-by when I set out for Palestine
 Hath mellowed into golden womanhood.
 Give me thy lips.

PRIORESS

Nay, brother, nay ; my vows !

I may not kiss a man.

ALISOON

Toot ! never fear, then ;
 Thou shalt not break thy vows against *my* beard.
 What, I'm thy brother ; come !

PRIORESS

Adieu, mon frère.

ALISOON

Soft, soft, my startled fawn. You need not jump
 Because your brother is a true crusader.
 Or didst thou fancy I was cut in stone,
 With my cold gauntlets crossed above my breast,
 Like a dumb, marble knight upon a tomb ?
 Art not thou glad to see me, sister ?

PRIORESS

Yes,

Mon frère. Forgive me, I had thought — You see,
My nephew — 'tis a pretty mannered youth;
You're not alike, are you?

ALISOUN

[*Laughing.*]

By Peter's toe,

I hope not. Saints deliver me from being
A new-hatched chicken's feather.

PRIORESS

What! your son?

ALISOUN

Next, thou'll be wishing I were like that fellow
That fetched me here — yon what's-his-name, yon
Geoffrey.

PRIORESS

Why, 'tis a noble gentleman.

[*Enter, from cellar door, Summoner, Shipman, Cook, Friar,
and Manciple; they look on.*]

ALISOUN

Hoho!

Your noble gentleman! Why, harkee, sweet;
He told me he's betrothèd to an ale-wife.

PRIORESS

He told you — when?

ALISOUN

Just now, coming from chapel.

PRIORESS

Her name ?

ALISOUN

[*Ruminating, winks at the Swains.*]

What was her name, now ? — Alisoun,
The Wife of Bath, they call her.

PRIORESS

O gran Dieu !

That *person* !

ALISOUN

Person ! God wot, 'twas not so
Your Geoffrey called her. "Alisoun," quoth he ;
"My lily Alisoun, my fresh wild-rose,
My cowslip in the slough of womankind,
Bright Alisoun shall be my bride."

PRIORESS

[*Throwing herself into Alisoun's arms.*]

Mon frère !

Oh, keep me safe, mon frère !

[*She hides her face.*]

MILLER

[*Laughing.*]

By Corpus bones !

SUMMONER

Look !

SHIPMAN

Hold me up!

BOTTLEJOHN

[*Whispers.*]

Lady, beware!

MILLER

Mum!

PRIORESS

What

Are these?

ALISOUN

Begone, you varlets!

COOK

[*Bowing.*]

Yes, sweet lord.

SUMMONER

We know our betters.

[*They withdraw a little.*]

ALISOUN

Come, what cheer, my girl?

Hath that churl Geoffrey wronged thee?

PRIORESS

No, no, no!

ALISOUN

Nay, if the churl hath wronged thee, by this locket—

PRIORESS

Swear not by that. *He* swore by that.

ALISOUN

O vile!

He swore by this — the brooch that holds my hair,
Thy brother's hair?

PRIORESS

But, Roderigo —

ALISOUN

What!

Give't here! Or maybe thou hast promised it
To him?

PRIORESS

No, no, mon frère. Here, take it — keep it.

ALISOUN

So! By this brooch —

[*Aside.*]

Now, lads, learn how to woo!

Now, by this golden brooch of Eglantine,
And by this little, slender wrist of pearl,
Where once it hung; and by the limpid eyes
Of Eglantine, and by her ripe, red mouth,
Yea, by the warm white doves which are her breasts
And flutter at the heart of Eglantine,
I swear I will be ever Eglantine's
And lacerate the foes of Eglantine.

PRIORESS

Brother, such words —

ALISOUN

Call me not brother, sweet ;
 A brother's blood is lukewarm in his limbs,
 But mine for thee is lightning. Look at me !
 Was Jove a finer figure of a man
 Than me ? Had Agamemnon such an arm,
 Or Hector such a leg ?

PRIORESS

Forbear ! Forbear !

ALISOUN

Alack, she scorns me. Stay, Venus of virgins !
 Why dost thou wimple all the lovely dawn
 Of thy young body in this veil of night ?
 Why wilt thou cork thy sweetness up, and, like
 A mummy, wrapped in rose and ivory,
 Store all thy beauty till the judgment-day ?
 God did not paint thee on a window-glass.
 Step down from thy cold chapel, rosy saint,
 And take thy true-knight in thine arms.

PRIORESS

Help ! help !

BOTTLEJOHN

Pray, lady, pray ! It is Satanas ! They
 Be devils all !

ALISOUN

Love — Eglantine — I kneel.

PRIORESS

Joannes! Marcus!

[*Seizing her crucifix.*]

Tibi, Domine!

[*Enter, right, Joannes, Marcus, and Paulus. They are immediately driven back by the Summoner, Shipman, and Cook.*]

JOANNES

Madame.

SHIPMAN

Come on!

PRIORESS

Help! Save me!

[*Enter Chaucer, left.*]

ALISOUN

[*To Prioress.*]

Lovely nymph,

Come to my arms —

CHAUCER

[*To Alisoun, with his sword drawn.*]

Embrace me.

PRIORESS

[*Goes to his protection.*]

Cher monsieur!

ALISOUN

God save you, Master Geoffrey.

CHAUCER

Draw!

FRIAR

[*Aside.*]

Lord! Lord!

The pot boils. Now to add the salt and pepper.

[*Exit down cellar.*][*Enter, left back, in quick succession, all the pilgrims, returning with their links from chapel.*]

PRIORESS

[*To Chaucer.*]

Monsieur —

CHAUCER

[*To Alisoun.*]

Draw!

PRIORESS

Do not fight, Monsieur!

CHAUCER

Wilt draw, I say?

ALISOUN

Draw what? Draw *you*? Merci,

I'm not a dray-horse.

CHAUCER

Is this man your brother?

PRIORESS

Oh, sir, I know not; but he hath insulted —

CHAUCER

Insulted you? Enough. By all the devils,
Defend yourself!

ALISOUN

[*Drawing.*]

To arms then, sweet Achilles.

[*They fight. Re-enter right, Shipman, Summoner, and Cook.
They rush to Alisoun's aid.*]

SHIPMAN

Boardside the fat churl.

PILGRIMS

Come! A fight!

FRANKLIN

[*Entering.*]

Who are they?

MERCHANT

A Lollard and Papist.

PRIORESS

Stay them! Stop them!

PILGRIMS

Down with the Papists!

PRIORESS

Oh, St. Loy!

CHAUCER

[*To the crowd.*]

Stand off!

PILGRIMS

Down with the Lollards!

[*They close in and fight confusedly with staves.*]

ALISOUN

[*Holding up the locket.*]

Hold! A brooch! A brooch!

CHAUCER

I'll make thee yield it, ruffian.

[*From the cellar enter the Friar and the Squire, the latter sword in hand, fragments of cut ropes still clinging to him.*]

SQUIRE

[*To Chaucer — plunging at Alisoun.*]

Sir, I'm with you.

[*Enter, right, Johanna.*]

ALISOUN

[*To Squire.*]

Unnatural son!

JOHANNA

Help!

[*Throws herself between them.*]

Brave Sir Roderick!

[*To Squire.*]

Shame! Shame! Your father's blood?

SQUIRE

You, lady?

[*Enter, left, Wycliffe.*]

WYCLIFFE

[*To the pilgrims.*]

Peace!

CHAUCER

You, marchioness! What does this mean?

ALISOUN

[Stripping off her beard and wig—her own hair falling over her shoulders—snatches a warming-pan from the chimney, and confronts Chaucer.]

Sweet Geoffrey,

It means this pan shall warm our wedding sheets.

MILLER

What devil!

CHAUCER

Alisoun!—My bet is lost.

FRANKLIN

The Wife of Bath!

[The pilgrims crowd round and laugh.]

JOHANNA

[Turning away.]

Impostors!

ALISOUN

[To Chaucer.]

Come, sweet chuck,

And kiss the brooch that hath betrothed our hearts.

PRIORESS

M'sieur, is this true?

[As Chaucer turns to the Prioress in a kind of blank dismay, enter, from the cellar, swathed in a long gown, the real Knight and the Friar.]

KNIGHT

[*To Friar.*]

Where?

[*Friar points to Prioress; he advances.*]

Eglantine!

PRIORESS

[*Aghast at this apparition, runs to the priedieu.*]

No more!

CHAUCER

[*Struck, at a flash, by this medley of incongruities, bursts into laughter, and seizing an ale mug, lifts it high.*]

Alis, I drink to thee and woman's wit.

FRIAR

God save the vintner and the Wife of Bath!

PILGRIMS,

[*Shout.*]

God save the vintner and the Wife of Bath!

ALISOON

[*Sharing the ale mug with Chaucer.*]

Sweetheart!

Explicit pars tertia.

ACT FOURTH

“AND specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke.”

ACT IV

TIME: The next day.

SCENE: Before the west front of Canterbury Cathedral, gorgeously decorated with tapestries, hatchments, and cloth of gold. Grouped nearby are temporary booths of venders, gaily trimmed.

Many pilgrims are assembled; others keep arriving from different directions, talking, praying, and sight-seeing. At the Cathedral door a Priest blesses, with a sprenkel, those who enter.

FIRST VENDER

Relics! Souvenirs!

SECOND VENDER

Blood of the blissful martyr!

A BLACK FRIAR

[*To Bailey, the Host.*]

A guide, Sir Hosteler?

HOST

Be off!

SECOND VENDER

[*To the Guild-men.*]

Ampulles?

WEAVER

What are they?

SECOND VENDER

Leaden bottles; look!

DYER

What's in 'em?

SECOND VENDER

Drops from the holy well: St. Thomas' well,
That turned four times to blood and once to milk;
Good for the humours, gout, and falling-sickness.

WEAVER

[*Buys some.*]

Here.

SECOND VENDER

Eightpence.

[*The Guild-men buy, and arrange the leaden vials in their hats.*]

FIRST VENDER

Vernicles! St. Peter's keys!

CARPENTER

[*Examining a purchase.*]

What's written on this brooch, sir?

CLERK

"Caput Thomæ."

PLOUGHMAN

[*Staring at a statue in a niche of the Cathedral.*]

Is he alive?

FRANKLIN

Naw; he's just petrified.

BLACK FRIAR

[*To Merchant.*]

A guide, sir?

MERCHANT

No.

BLACK FRIAR

Show you the spot, sir, where
 The four knights murdered Becket, in the year
 Eleven hundred seventy, at dusk,
 The twenty-ninth day of December —

A GREY FRIAR

Nay, sir,

I'll show you the true statue of the Virgin
 That talked to holy Thomas when he prayed.

BLACK FRIAR

St. George's arm, sir! Come; I'll let you kiss it.

GREY FRIAR

This way; the tomb of Edward the Black Prince.

[*Both seize Merchant and tug him.*]

MERCHANT

[*Struggling.*]

Mine host!

HOST

[*Coming up.*]

Pack off!

PARSON

[*To Ploughman.*]

What May-day queen comes here ?

[*Outside, left, are heard girls' voices singing; enter, dressed richly and gaily, CHAUCER, surrounded by a bevy of Canterbury brooch-girls, who have wreathed him with flowers and long ribbons, by which they pull him; plying him with their wares, while he attempts to talk aside with the Man-of-Law, who accompanies him.*]

CANTERBURY GIRLS

[*Sing.*]

High and low,
 Low and high,
 Be they merry,
 Be they glum,
 When they come
 To Canterbury,
 Canterbury,
 Canterbury,
 Some low,
 Some high,
 Canterbury brooches buy.

CHAUCER

Sweet ladies — nay, sweet Canterbury muses,
 Not Hercules amid the Lydian nymphs
 Was ravished by more dulcet harmonies.

[*To Man-of-Law.*]

You sergeants-of-the-law are subtle men.

MAN-OF-LAW

We have a knack — a knack, sir.

A GIRL

Pull his sleeve.

ANOTHER

They say you are a bridegroom. Is it true, sir?

CHAUCER

Your Canterbury skies rain compliments.

[*To Man-of-Law.*]

Pray! —

MAN-OF-LAW

[*Taking money from Chaucer.*]

If you insist, my lord.

CHAUCER

Nay, not “my lord.”

How stands the case?

MAN-OF-LAW

You say this wife hath been
Some eight times wedded?

CHAUCER

Five times.

A GIRL

Stop their gossip,
He's talking business.

ALL THE GIRLS

Brooches! Souvenirs!

CHAUCER

[*Examining their wares.*]

How much?

A GIRL

This? Two-pence.

MAN-OF-LAW

Five times — five times. Well!

CHAUCER

[*To Man-of-Law, giving more money.*]

Prithee —

MAN-OF-LAW

If you insist.

A GIRL

[*To Chaucer.*]

Mine for a penny.

MAN-OF-LAW

Why, then, the case stands thus: By English law,
No woman may be wedded but five times.
By law, sir, a sixth husband is proscribed.

CHAUCER

You'll vouch for that? By law?

MAN-OF-LAW

Sir, I will quote
You precedents from William Conqueror.

CHAUCER

Alas, my nuptials! And I would have made
So neat a bridegroom!

A GIRL

Come, sir, will you buy?

Take mine!

ANOTHER

ALL THE GIRLS

Mine! Mine! Mine!

CHAUCER

Nay, fresh goddesses,
Your graces are more heavenly souvenirs!

Sell to me your glances
For a poet's fancies!

[*To a girl with yellow hair.*]

You, Midas' daughter, how much for this gold?

THE GIRL

'Tis not for sale, sir.

CHAUCER

[*To another.*]

How much for that rose?

THE GIRL

What rose?

CHAUCER

Your smile.

THE GIRL

Gratis — for you, sir.

[*Enter Alisoun, attired gorgeously as a bride.*]

ALL THE GIRLS

Oh-h!

CHAUCER

How much, Olympians, for your nectar'd lips?

ALL THE GIRLS

A kiss! A kiss!

ALISOON

Hold! Give the bride first licks.

ALL THE GIRLS

The bride!

ALISOON

[*After kissing Chaucer.*]

Now, lasses, take your turns.

A GIRL

The shrew!

ALISOON

Lo! what a pot of honey I have won
 To lure the village butterflies. Come, pretties,
 Sip, sip, and die o' jealousy.

A GIRL

[*To Chaucer.*]

Who is

This woman?

CHAUCER

Nymphs, this is the gentle Thisbe
 That wooed and won me. Judge then, goddesses,
 How I must weep to lose her.

ALISOON

Lose me, love?

Nay, honey-pot, I am too stuck on thee.
 Thy bosom is my hive, and I queen-bee.

A GIRL

I'd rather lose my heart to a ripe pumpkin.

ANOTHER

Or a green gourd.

[*They go off, in piqued laughter.*]

ALISOUN

[*Calls after them.*]

What devil doth it matter
 Whether he be a pumpkin or a rose,
 So be that he rings sound. — Give me the man
 That keeps his old bark grafted with new buds
 And lops away the dead wood from his trunk,
 And I will hug him like the mistletoe.
 Geoffrey, thou art the man.

CHAUCER

[*As Alisoun is about to embrace him, turns to the Man-of-Law.*]

Cold-blooded knave!
 The flower of women and the wit of wives —
 Yet I must lose her!

MAN-OF-LAW

Blame not me, sir; blame
 The law.

CHAUCER

O heartless knave!

MAN-OF-LAW

By English law,
 No woman may be wedded but five times.

ALISOUN

What's that?

CHAUCER

But is there no exception?

MAN-OF-LAW

None.
 By law, sir, a sixth husband is proscribed.

ALISOUN

Hey, what! What devil? Say't again. I'm deaf.

MAN-OF-LAW

By law, dame, a sixth husband is proscribed.

ALISOUN

Proscribed? Ho, then, art thou a doctor?

MAN-OF-LAW

No,

I am a sergeant-of-the-law. — "Proscribed"
Is to say, dame, "inhibited," "forbidden."

ALISOUN

How! you forbid me to take Geoffrey here
For my sixth husband?

CHAUCER

Nay, the law forbids it.

ALISOUN

Pish! What's the fine?

MAN-OF-LAW

To hang, dame, by the neck

Till thou art dead.

ALISOUN

Aye, man, by *Geoffrey's* neck.

Get out!

CHAUCER

Canst quote the law?

MAN-OF-LAW

The statute, sir,—

The forty-ninth doom of King Richard — saith :

“One woman to five men sufficeth,” or

“Quid tibi placet mihi placet,” sir.

ALISOUN

Hog-gibberish !

CHAUCER

[*Aside.*]

Nay, 'tis a man-of-law.

But soft ! we'll bribe him.

ALISOUN

[*Aside.*]

Do, duck.

CHAUCER

Sergeant — hist !

[*Whispers aside and gives him money, as if covertly. Then aloud.*]

This statute, is there no appeal from it ?

MAN-OF-LAW

A special dispensation from the king ;

That's all, sir.

ALISOUN

Break his head !

CHAUCER

Nay, Alis, here's

Good news. The king himself is here to-day

In Canterbury. I will beg him grant

This special dispensation for our marriage.

ALISOUN

Thou—ask the king?

CHAUCER

Why not?

ALISOUN

Give me a vintner
For cheek! Sweet duck, I do believe thou lov'st me.

[*Enter the Miller, with the other Swains.*]

CHAUCER

I am unworthy, love, to match thy wit.

MILLER

Thou art unworthy, fool, to latch her shoe.

CHAUCER

Even so.

MILLER

Thou likes to play the gentleman;
Come, then; I'll duel you.

CHAUCER

Good Bob, I love thee.

MILLER

Come: knives or fists?

CHAUCER

Kind Bob, thou shalt this day
Shed tears and vow I love thee.

MILLER

Wilt not fight?

Then —

ALISOUN

[Intercepting a blow at Chaucer.]

Hold there, Robin Sweetheart, art thou jealous?

MILLER

Aye, dame.

ALISOUN

What for?

MILLER

[To Swains.]

She axes me what for!

Axe her, who gagged the Knight?

SHIPMAN

Who tied the Squire?

MANCIPLÉ

Who watched in the wet cellar?

SUMMONER

Tied thy doublet?

FRIAR

Who stole thy scarlet cloak?

COOK

Who kissed thy toe?

MILLER

Axe her, what made us do all this? Mayhap
 To get our backs flayed — what? Mayhap to make
 Our wench a wedding with this vintner here?

SHIPMAN

Revenge!

FRIAR

Remember Peggy's stall.

[*They surround Chaucer threateningly.*]

COOK

Vile tub!

PRIORESS

[*Entering, left.*]

O Roderigo, help him!

KNIGHT

Whom? That churl!

SQUIRE

Father, let me!

KNIGHT

You are deceived in him.

SQUIRE

But, sir, these are the rogues that bound you.

KNIGHT

Is one of them. They are beneath our notice.

He

MANCIPLE

Death to the vintner!

SUMMONER

Hit him!

ALISOUN

Stand away!

CHAUCER

[As Alisoun, with her fists, keeps them at bay.]

Happy, bridegroom, be thy stars

When thy Venus turns to Mars!

[Enter heralds.]

HERALDS

Make way! Room for King Richard! Way! The
King!

CLERK

[In the crowd.]

Shall we see Chaucer now?

PARSON

He's sure to come.

[The heralds force back all the pilgrims, except those of high degree, showing, at the great door of the Cathedral, a procession of priests and choir-boys about to emerge.]

PRIEST

Peace, folk! Stop wrangling. Kneel! His Reverence,
Archbishop of Canterbury, meets the King.

PRIORESS

[To Squire.]

Chaucer, you say?

SQUIRE

A little patience more.

[A silence falls on the pilgrims as, within the Cathedral, choir-boys begin to chant a hymn. Issuing from the

door and forming against one side of the massed, kneeling pilgrims, enters a procession, headed by splendid-vested priests, carrying pictured banners of St. Thomas and his shrine, followed by choir-boys, and lastly, by the Archbishop of Canterbury with regalia.]

THE PROCESSION

[Sings.]

“ Tu, per Thomæ sanguinem
 Quem pro te impendit,
 Fac nos, Christe, scandere
 Quo Thomas ascendit.

[Chants.]

Gloria et honore coronasti eum Domine
 Et constituisti eum supra opera manuum tuarum
 Ut ejus meritis et precibus a Gehennæ incendiis
 liberemur.”

[*At the climax of the chant, as the Archbishop appears in the doorway, the chimes of the Cathedral peal forth from high above the kneeling crowd; cheers, beginning from the right, swell to a tumult, and as the people rise, enter, right, King Richard on horseback, the Dukes of Lancaster, Gloucester, and Ireland on ponies, and their train, among whom are Wycliffe and Johanna on foot. Six mules, laden with offerings, bring up the rear. The shouts of “God save the King!” “God save John Gaunt!” etc., continue till the King and nobles descend from their steeds.]*

PILGRIMS

God save King Richard!

KING RICHARD

Thanks, good gaffers, thanks !

[*To John of Gaunt.*]

Sweet Uncle Jack, thou hast a spanking pony.
Take her to Spain with you, and all the Dons
Will kiss her fetlock. N'est ce pas, bel ami ?

DE VERE

They will, my Dick. Par charity ! Haha !

ARCHBISHOP

[*Saluting gravely.*]

God save your Majesty !

KING RICHARD

God save you, too !

Your Reverence is looking in fine feather.
Here are some trinkets for the holy martyr.
These mules bear spices from Arabia ;
These — tapers ; and these — Persian tapestries.
Here's a neat statue of myself in gold ;
And so, and so, so. —

[*To the Duke of Gloucester.*]

Pretty Uncle Tom,

I wish my ruffs were puckered like your brows.
Dost thou pick faults, eh ? in my Paris gown ?

GLOUCESTER

My liege, this is the shrine of holy Becket.

KING RICHARD

Lord, save our souls !

[*To De Vere.*]

Lend me a looking-glass.

DE VERE

[*Takes one from his sleeve.*]

Ha ! Dick, par charity !

[*Richard and De Vere look in the glass and make faces in imitation of Gloucester and the others.*]

PARSON

[*In the crowd to the Clerk.*]

Yonder's the Duke

Of Lancaster : John Gaunt.

CHAUCER

[*Who has been held back with the crowd by the heralds, pushes through, and hastening forward, kneels to Johanna, who is talking with Wycliffe.*]

A boon ! a boon !

JOHANNA

[*To Wycliffe.*]

Protect me, sir !

CHAUCER

[*Holds up Johanna's love-knot.*]

Lady, once more, your pledge !

JOHANNA

Unmannered loon !

A HERALD

[*Seizes Chaucer roughly by the shoulder.*]

Get back !

JOHN OF GAUNT

What, brother Geoffrey!

CHAUCER

Well met, old friend!

[They embrace.]

KING RICHARD

God's eyes! Our laureate.

Halloa there, Chaucer!

JOHANNA

Chaucer!

ALISOUN

Chaucer!

PRIORESS

Chaucer!

[Chaucer bows to the King.]

SQUIRE

[To Knight.]

Father, I said so.

GAUNT

You are late, my poet.

What make you here?

CHAUCER

Blunders, your Grace.

GAUNT

How, blunders?

CHAUCER

Taxing the memory of a gracious lady.

JOHANNA

Signor, the place of fool I should have sued
 For you, hath been already filled — by me.
 I crave your pardon.

CHAUCER

And I kiss your hand.

KING RICHARD

Ho, Chaucer!

ALISOUN

[*Struggling with a herald.*]

Let me out!

CHAUCER

Your Majesty?

KING RICHARD

When April comes, there's not a man in England
 But thinks on thee and love. While thou art England's
 And England Richard's, thou art Richard's own.

[*As the King embraces Chaucer, Alisoun breaks away from
 the herald.*]

ALISOUN

Hold up, your Majesty! The man is mine.

KING RICHARD

What's this?

CHAUCER

My liege — another blunder.

[*Chaucer whispers aside to the Man-of-Law.*]

KING RICHARD

So?

The blunder was not God's in making her.

ALISOUN

The man is mine.

KING RICHARD

What, Geoffrey, art thou tripped?
 Have love and April overflowed thy verse
 To fill thy veins?

CHAUCER

Your Majesty —

MAN-OF-LAW

[*Aside to John of Gaunt.*]

Dan Chaucer

Bid me explain to you —

[*They talk aside.*]

CHAUCER

Your Majesty,
 This is that fair-reputed fay, Queen Mab,
 Who, having met amid the woods of Kent,
 Hath so enamoured me, as you have said,
 With love and April, that — to speak it short —
 We are betrothed.

KING RICHARD

Betrothed!

DE VERE

Par charity!

MILLER

[*To a herald, who restrains him.*]

Leave go!

GAUNT

[*Aside to Man-of-Law.*]

A miller?

MAN-OF-LAW

[*Aside.*]

Yes, that fellow there.

ALISOUN

[*Nudging Chaucer.*]

Speak on, sweet chuck.

CHAUCER

“Betrothed,” your Majesty:
 ’Tis a sweet word which lovers’ law hath hallow’d,
 But which your law, King Richard, hath envenom’d.
 “No woman may be wedded but five times :”
 Thus saith the law.

KING RICHARD

What! Where?

GAUNT

[*Laughingly aside.*]

My liege!

[*They whisper.*]

CHAUCER

And so,

Because this queen of wives hath scarce been knit
 Five times in wedlock, therefore — saith the law —
 Our bosoms must be sundered.

MILLER

[*In the crowd.*]

God be praised !

CHAUCER

But knowing, King, how nobly wit and mercy
 Are mixed in your complexion, I presume
 To ask your greatness to outleap your laws
 And grant, by special dispensation, to
 This woman — a sixth husband.

KING RICHARD

By my fay, sir,

You ask too much. My laws are sacred.

[*Aside to John of Gaunt, who whispers him.*]

Hein ?

ALISOUN

Dig him again there, Geoffrey.

CHAUCER

King, have grace !

KING RICHARD

The Duke of Lancaster advises me
 There may be one exception.

[*Aside.*]

What? What's that?

[*Aloud.*]

But only one. My law is sacred. — Woman,
I grant to thee the right to wed once more
On *one* condition. Mark it; thy sixth husband
Must be a miller. — Herald, sound the verdict.

[*As the herald blares his trumpet, Alisoun shakes her fist
at Chaucer, who eyes her slyly; then both burst into
laughter.*]

HERALD

If any miller here desire this woman,
Now let him claim her.

MILLER

[*Rushes up.*]

Here, by Corpus bones!

ALISOUN

Thou sweet pig's eye! I take thee.

[*Extending her hand to Chaucer.*]

Geoffrey, quits!

CHAUCER

Quits, Alisoun!

FRIAR

[*Bobbing up between them.*]

Et moi?

ALISOUN

Et toi.

[*Kisses him.*]

MILLER

[*Grabbing him.*]

Hold, friar!

That pays thee to perform the ceremony.

KING RICHARD

[*Seated, to Chaucer.*]

Come now, our prodigal Ulysses! Tell us;
 What dark adventures have befallen thee since
 Thou settest forth from Priam-Bailey's castle?
 What inland Circe witched our laureate
 To mask his Muse among this porkish rabble?

CHAUCER

My liege, may I have leave to tell you bluntly?

KING RICHARD

Carte blanche, carte blanche, mon cher. I'll be as
 mute
 As e'er King Alcinous i' the Odyssey.

CHAUCER

My Muse went masked, King Richard, from your
 court
 To learn a roadside rhyme. Shall I repeat it?

KING RICHARD

Carte blanche, j'ai dit. Say on!

CHAUCER

Your Majesty,

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
 Who was then the gentleman?"

MILLER

By Corpus bones !

KING RICHARD

[*Starts up.*]

Mort Dieu !

CHAUCER

“Carte blanche,” my liege !

Six years ago in London, when the mob
 Roared round your stirrups, Wat the Tyler laid
 His hand upon your bridle. “Sacrilège !”
 Cried the Lord Mayor, and Wat Tyler fell
 Dead.

[*The crowd murmurs.*]

GLOUCESTER

[*To Richard, remonstratingly.*]

Nephew !

[*The King, sitting again, motions Gloucester silence.*]

CHAUCER

Whereat you, your Majesty —
 God save you, a mere boy, a gallant boy —
 Cried out : “Good fellows, have you lost your captain ?
 I am your King, and I will be your captain.”

[*The pilgrims cheer.*]

Have you forgotten how they cheered ? Then hark !
 Once more that “porkish rabble” you shall hear
 Make music sweeter than your laureate’s odes.

[*Turning to the crowd.*]

Pilgrims and friends, deep-hearted Englishmen,
 This is your King who called himself your captain.

PILGRIMS

[*Shout.*]

God save the King!

CHAUCER

My liege, my dear young liege,
 Are these the dull grunts of the swinish herd,
 Or are they singing hearts of Englishmen?
 Where is *the gentleman*, whose ermined throat
 Shall strain a nobler shout? "When Adam delved"—
 Sire, Adam's sons are delving still, and he
 Who scorns to set his boot-heel to the spade
 Is but a bastard.

KING RICHARD

[*Jumps up again.*]

'Swounds!

PILGRIMS

God save Dan Chaucer!

KING RICHARD

[*To Chaucer.*]

Give me thy hand. God's eyes! These knaves cheer
 you
 Louder than me. Go tell the churls I love 'em.

CHAUCER

[*To the pilgrims.*]

His Majesty bids me present you all
 Before him, as his fellow Englishmen.

KING RICHARD

[*As the pilgrims approach.*]

Fellows, God bless you !

[*To Chaucer.*]

Thanks.

[*Snatching away his looking-glass from the hand of De Vere, who is making a comic face at Chaucer, he smashes it upon the ground.*]

DE VERE

Sweet Dick !

ARCHBISHOP

My liege,

The holy canopy is being raised.

[*A medley of sweet bells is heard from within the Cathedral.
The pilgrims crowd about Chaucer.*]

CHAUCER

Give me your hands, my friends. You hear the bells
Which call us to the holy martyr's shrine.
Give me your hands, dear friends ; and so farewell :
You, honest parson — sly Bob — testy Jack —
Gentle Sir Knight — bold Roger — Master Franklin —
All, all of you ! — Call me your vintner still,
And I will brew you such a vintage as
Not all the saps that mount to nature's sun
Can match in April magic. They who drink it —
Yes, though it be after a thousand years,
When this our shrine, which like the Pleiades
Now glitters, shall be bare and rasèd stone,
And this fresh pageant mildewed history —

Yet they who drink the vintage I will brew
 Shall wake, and see a vision, in their wine,
 Of Canterbury and our pilgrimage :
 These very faces, with the blood in them,
 Laughter and love and tang of life in them,
 These moving limbs, this rout, this majesty !
 For by that resurrection of the Muse,
 Shall you, sweet friends, re-met in timeless Spring,
 Pace on through time upon eternal lines
 And ride with Chaucer in his pilgrimage.

[*A deep bell sounds.*]

ARCHBISHOP

My liege, St. Thomas will receive his pilgrims.

[*The King, lords, and people, forming in procession, begin to move toward the entrance of the Cathedral.*]

CHAUCER

[*To Prioress.*]

Madame, will you walk in with me ?

PRIORESS

Monsieur,

If you will offer this at Thomas' shrine.

CHAUCER

Your brooch !

PRIORESS

Our brooch.

CHAUCER

When shall we meet again?

PRIORESS

Do you forget our star?

CHAUCER

Forget our star!

Not while the memory of beauty pains

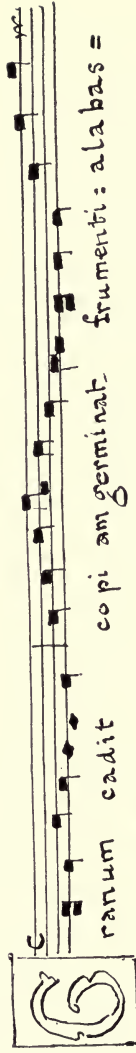
And *Amor vincit omnia*.

[*The heralds blare their trumpets; the priests swing their censers; the choir-boys, slowly entering the Cathedral, chant their hymn to St. Thomas, in which all the pilgrims join. Just as Chaucer and the Prioress are about to enter, the curtain falls.*]

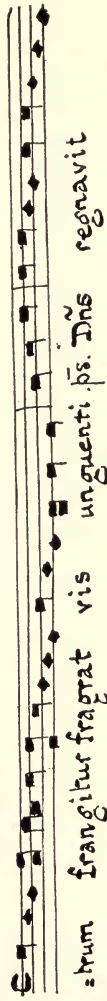
Explicit pars quarta.**FINIS.**

In laudibus. Añã.

Añã.

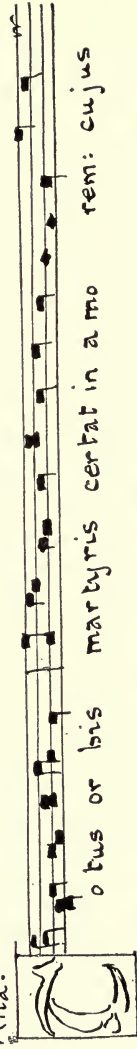


ranum cedit copi am germinat frumenti: alabas =

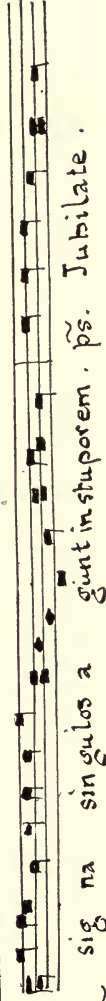


trum frangitur fragrat vis unguenti. ps. Dñs regnavit

Añã.



otus or bis martyris certat in amo rem: cuius



sig na singulos a gunt in stuporem. ps. Jubilate.

Añã.

me quinquies varians co lo rem

in lac semel transit quater in cru o rem. ps. De' de' me'

Añã



d tho me me mori am quater lux descendit: et

in sancti gloriam cereos accens. dit. ps. Benedicite

Añã.



u per thome sanguinẽ quem pro te impendit fac

nos christe scandere quo thomas as cen dit. ps. Laudate

ADDENDA

1. The accompanying reproduction of the original Hymn to St. Thomas, of which the last verse only is sung by the pilgrims in Act IV, is authentic in words and music.

The author is sincerely indebted to Professor Kittredge, of Harvard University, for tracing and securing, through the various courtesies of Mr. Albert Matthews (of Boston), Mr. Frank Kidson (of Leeds), Mr. J. E. Matthew (of S. Hampstead, London), and Mr. Wilson (of the British Museum Library), a copy of this almost inaccessible document.

The words are taken from Vol. 13, p. 240, of Dreves' "Collection of Sequences and Latin Hymns." The music is copied from the "Sarum Antiphonal" of 1519.

In regard to the music, Mr. Wilson writes: "Each of these Antiphons (*i.e.* each verse of the hymn) is sung once before, and once after, each psalm. Here there are five; and at the end of each is the catchword of the psalm. The first is '*Dominus regnavit*'; the second, '*Jubilate*,' and so on."

Mr. J. E. Matthew writes: "The catchword is not sufficient, in every case, to identify the psalm, but I have indicated all the psalms having such beginnings.¹

¹The psalms, as indicated by Mr. Matthew, are as follows: Beginning *Deus regnavit*, xxiii, xcix; *Jubilate*, c, lxvi; *Deus, Deus, meus*, xxii, lxiii; *Benedicite*, The Song of the Three Children? (Apocrypha.) *Laudate*, cxiii, cxvii, cxxxiv, cxlvii, cxlviii.

The lines 'Gloria et honore coronasti,' etc. (part, of course, of the 8th Psalm: 'Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour'), form no part of the service in the 'Sarum Antiphonal.' "

2. For valuable information and advice regarding the chronology of the "Canterbury Tales" as affecting this play, the author also gives sincere thanks to his friend, Mr. John S. P. Tatlock, of the University of Michigan.

3. The following dates will reveal certain anachronisms in the text of his play, which the writer, for dramatic purposes, has ignored:—

Oct. 1, 1386: Chaucer was elected Knight of the Shire for Kent, which office he still held in April, 1387.

Dec. 31, 1384: Wycliffe died.

1386: John of Gaunt left England for Castile.

4. According to Chaucer scholars, the third wife of John of Gaunt was probably a sister of Chaucer's wife. Upon this probability, though it could not have been a fact until after 1387, the author bases his dramatic license of referring to Chaucer and the Duke of Lancaster as brothers-in-law.

PERCY MACKAYE.

NEW YORK, March, 1903.

JEANNE D'ARC

JEANNE D'ARC

A TRAGEDY

To
AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF RARE INCENTIVES
TO THIS WORK

CHARACTERS

AT DOMREMY

- *JACQUES D'ARC, *father of Jeanne.*
- *PIERRE D'ARC, *brother of Jeanne, courting Mengette.*
- SEIGNEUR PIERRE DE BOURLEMENT, *proprietor of
"The Ladies' Tree."*
- COLIN, *courting Jeanne.*
- GERARD, *home from the English wars, betrothed to Hauviette.*
- GERARDIN, *a Burgundian villager, courting Isabellette.*
- *PERRIN, *bell-ringer of Domremy.*
- *JEANNE D'ARC ("Jeannette"), *the Maid.*
- HAUVIETTE, *her girl friend.*
- ISABELLETTE, *a peasant girl.*
- MENGETTE, *a peasant girl.*
- *ST. MICHAEL.
- *ST. MARGARET AND ST. CATHERINE.
- THE "LADIES OF LORRAINE," *i.e. the Fairies of the
Tree.*

IN FRANCE

- *CHARLES VII, *King of France.*
- *JEAN, DUC D'ALENÇON, *his cousin.*
- *SEIGNEUR DE LA TREMOUILLE, *his favorite.*
- *REGNAULT DE CHARTRES, *Archbishop of Rheims.*
- RÉNÉ DE BOULIGNY, *Receiver-General of France.*

- VENDÔME, *the King's Chamberlain.*
 *DUNOIS, *French Commander at Orleans.*
 *MARSHAL LA HIRE.
 *JEAN DE METZ, *of Jeanne's escort to the King.*
 *BERTRAND DE POULANGY, *of the same.*
 *PASQUEREL, *St. Augustine Friar, Jeanne's Confessor.*
 PIGACHON, *Franciscan Friar.*
 MASTER SEGUIN, *Dominican of Poitiers.*
 BROTHER RICHARD, *a Mendicant Friar.*
 *LOUIS DE CONTES, *Jeanne's Page, a boy.*
 *PIERRE CAUCHON, *Bishop of Beauvais.*
 *NICOLAS LOISELEUR, *of the Inquisition.*
 FLAVY, *Governor of Compiègne.*
 A TAILOR.
 A BOOTMAKER.
 *JOHN GRIS, *an English gentleman.*
 ADAM GOODSPEED, *an English yeoman.*
 AN ENGLISH HERALD.
 *CATHERINE DE LA ROCHELLE, } *Ladies of King*
 DIANE, } *Charles's Court at*
 ATHENIE, } *Chinon.*

AT ROUEN (Only)

- BROTHER MARTIN LADVENU, *a Monk.*
 CAPTAIN OF THE ENGLISH GUARD.
 THREE ENGLISH GUARDS.
 THE VOICE OF THE JUDGE'S CLERK.
 SERVANTS, POPULACE, PRIESTS, FRIARS, COURTIERS,
 PEASANTS, SOLDIERS.

NOTE.— Characters marked with a star take part in more than one act.

SCENES

ACT I

"The Ladies' Tree," near Domremy; Springtime, 1428.

ACT II

The Castle of King Charles VII, at Chinon; March 8, 1429.

ACT III

A meadow outside the Walls of Orleans; the attack on the Tournelles; May 7, 1429.

ACT IV

SCENE I. *Jeanne's camp before the Walls of Troyes, en route for Rheims; night of July 5, 1429.*

SCENE II. *A street in Rheims, seen from an old wall of the city; Coronation Pageant of King Charles; Sunday, July 17, 1429.*

ACT V

Jeanne's prison at Rouen; May 30, 1431.

ACT I

ACT I

SCENE: "The Ladies' Tree" near Domremy.

Springtime of 1428; a holiday gathering of young folk from the hamlet.

The trunk of the great beech tree, rising toward the back of the scene, left centre, spreads its branches (left) to a group of white birches, in the half concealment of which stands a stone bench. From beneath the branches of the beech (on the right), one looks away to the outskirts of a little French thatched village, more guessed than seen, in the not-far distance. Almost touching the treebole (on the left) stands a shrine, with a painted image of the Virgin.

Near this, leaning against the tree, sits a young man (GERARD), dressed — in part — as a soldier, one arm and his breast being bandaged. He watches the boys and girls dancing a country round, in which the latter carry garlands. On the edge of the dance (left) sits a placid group of old women knitting.

The Boys and Girls, taking respective parts in voice and pantomime, sing as they dance.

In green Lorraine, by our Lady's well,
 (Rose in flower.)

I picked a rose for a damosel;
 (Weave your garlands!)

I bended low my knee,
Comme çï!

She makèd courtesy,
Comme ça!

Vivo la roso et l'amour!

In green Lorraine, by our Lady's spring,
 (Rose in the hour.)

I dropt within the rose a ring,
 (Fetch your garlands!)

And gave it her sweetly;
Comme çï!

She lookèd long on me,
Comme ça!

Vivo la roso et l'amour!

In green Lorraine, by our Lady's shrine,
 (Rose in bower.)

Ring and rose she namèd mine;
 (Hang your garlands!)

I threw her kisses three,
Comme çï!

She tossed them back to me,
Comme ça!

Vivo la roso et l'amour!

[*With a finale of tossed kisses and dropt curtsies, the lasses give their garlands to the lads, who hang them on the*

trunk of the beech tree, after which all scatter, laughing and talking, into groups — cracking nuts, love-making, playing games. In one group (right), playing knuckle-bone on the grass, is JEANNE D'ARC, inconspicuous amongst the others.]

ISABELLETTE

[*To Gerardin.*]

Mine hangs too high ; they'll have to stand tip-toe
To reach it.

GERARDIN

Who?

ISABELLETTE

The Ladies of Lorraine.

GERARDIN

But who —

ISABELLETTE

Hush, Gerardin ; some call them ladies,
Some, fairies ; but my granny says that they
Long time ago were queens in old Provence
Who fell in love with their own troubadours,
And so were banished by their jealous kings
Far northward to Lorraine ; and here, because
They sorrowed with so piteous melody,
Singing the dear songs of their lovers dead,
They won the fairy's hospitality.

GERARDIN

And so these garlands are for them ?

ISABELLETTE

Of course !

HAUVIETTE

[*Dancing before Gerard and hugging him.*]

Lon lon, la la, deri dera !

GERARD

[*With a twinge, smiling up at her.*]

My arm !

HAUVIETTE

My poor Gerard ! — did she forget his wounds ?
 Ah, naughty *garçon*, what's he good for now ?
 Look, Perrin, how they've hacked my fine sweet boy —
 The English fiends !

GERARD

Burgundians, they were.

HAUVIETTE

[*To Perrin.*]

'Tis six o' one ! They've chopped him up so fine
 I'm going to serve him on a silver dish
 With lettuce hearts and little parsley leaves —
Ragoût Gerard, avec les petites têtes Anglaises.

[*She laughs merrily.*]

PERRIN

[*Aside.*]

Don't, don't, Hauviette ; you know he may not live.

HAUVIETTE

[*Impetuously.*]

Gerard, sweetheart! I love thee!

[*She weeps.*]

GERARD

[*Caressing her.*]

Little swallow!

MENGETTE

[*To Isabellette.*]

Jeannette is on her knees.

ISABELLETTE

Telling her beads?

MENGETTE

No, playing knucklebone there with the boys.

ISABELLETTE

She's brought her knitting with her; think of it!

MENGETTE

Colin will get a good wife.

ISABELLETTE

[*Turning up her nose.*]

Colin? — Pfui!

PIERRE D'ARC

[*Uncovering his face by the tree, shouts.*]

Time!

[*Hunts for others who are playing hide-and-seek with him.*]

TWO GIRLS

[*Dancing together.*]

Asusée! Asusée!

GERARD

Hauviette —

HAUVIETTE

[*Opening her lunch basket.*]

My fine boy must not talk; 'tis bad for him.

GERARD

I think —

HAUVIETTE

[*Thrusting it into his mouth.*]

A raisin!

GERARD

But —

HAUVIETTE

An almond!

GERARD

You —

HAUVIETTE

Crack it!

GERARD

I —

HAUVIETTE

Bite! — a cookie.

GERARD

[*Incoherently.*]

Wish —

HAUVIETTE

A kiss, then!

[*Kisses him on the mouth.*]

PERRIN

[*Cracking nuts with a stone.*]

Heigh, Gerardin! See here — this walnut.

GERARDIN

[*Flirting with Isabellette.*]

Hein?

PERRIN

This here's the Duke of Burgundy — his skull.

[*Smashes the nut loudly. The others laugh and jeer good-naturedly at Gerardin, whose proffered arm Isabellette taking, sticks out her tongue at them.*]

GERARD

[*Laughing back at Perrin.*]

Seigneur the Duke hath brains.

COLIN

[*Thrusting a walnut between his jaws.*]

I crack 'em — so!

GERARD

[*Half rising toward Gerardin.*]

Is he there —?

JEANNE D'ARC

HAUVIETTE

[*Standing between them.*]

Hush!

GERARD

• Burgundian?

HAUVIETTE

[*Caressing him.*]

Now, now,

If you're not quiet —

GERARD

[*Sinking back.*]

Curse him!

PIERRE D'ARC

[*Creeping stealthily behind Mengette, claps his hand over her eyes.*]

Name me!

MENGETTE

Pierre!

[*Springing loose.*]

Be still! Here comes the Sieur de Bourlement.

[*General commotion; all who are seated — save Gerard — get to their feet.*]

GERARDIN

[*Shrugs defiantly and makes a face off right.*]

Who?

ISABELLETTE

[*Horror-struck to Gerardin.*]My dear, he owns the Ladies' Tree, and half
The land of Domremy.

THE OLD WOMEN
[*Under their breaths.*]

Seigneur de Bourlement!

[*Enter, right, DE BOURLEMENT. He strolls in dreamily; in one hand a book; in the other, a walking-stick, which he twirls.*]

DE BOURLEMENT
[*Abstractedly.*]

Good-morrow, dears, good-morrow.

ALL
[*Scatteredly, with bobs and curtsies.*]

Save Seigneur!

DE BOURLEMENT
[*After a pause, during which he reads.*]

Now, now, my pretties, do not stand and stare.
And why are not you dancing? When I saw
You lassies twinkling on the grass, methought
The little marguerites had learned to run.

[*Twirling his cane he drops it. Jeanne springs forward and lifts it.*]

JEANNE
Seigneur — your walking-stick.

DE BOURLEMENT
My wand, Jeannette!
This is the month of May and I am Merlin.

[*Waving his stick.*]
Ask what you will, my lads: 'tis granted you.

COLIN

[*Awkward and loud.*]

I want Jeannette.

[*The others giggle.*]

DE BOURLEMENT

I grant thee, swain — to want her.

[*The others laugh tentatively.*]Love, Springtime, laughter — *c'est la poesie!*

COLIN

Nay —

DE BOURLEMENT

[*Sniffing the air.*]

Smell, boy! Smell this day! and mark what myth
 Still lurks i' the nostril: 'tis a charmed grotto
 Where sleeps a nymph, to whom a thousand flowers
 Make odorous minstrelsy; and for her love
 The tender lyric of the fleur-de-lys,
 The blue-bell's clear *chanson*, the daisy's ballad,
 Yea, and the languorous rondel of the rose —
 Are all respired. — [*Bowing.*] *Encore la poesie!*

COLIN

I want to wed her.

DE BOURLEMENT

Shepherd, hast thou never
 Taken a little walk toward sunset time
 Along the fields? One pauses now and then
 To squint the lids, and watch against the west
 The cowslip-colour'd light steam from the flocks

To float in haloes 'gainst the quiet clouds ;
 One sniffs the spearmint by the river's brink,
 And waits for dusk-fall, and the twittering
 Of swallows overhead, and underneath
 The nibbling sound of half-distinguished sheep,
 The neatherd's whistle and the colley's bark,
 The vesper bell, and with that — voices of angels.

JEANNE

[*Having listened rapt.*]

Amen !

GERARD

[*Who has heard de Bourlement with impatient scorn, tries to rise.*]

And what of France, Seigneur ?

[*Hauviette, frightened, claps her hand over his mouth.*]

DE BOURLEMENT

[*After scrutiny of mild surprise.*]

In France

The dew that fills the lily's cup is song.

GERARD

Song cannot make us men in France, Seigneur,
 Nor drive the English bloodhounds from our homes.

HAUVIETTE

Pardon ! Oh, sir, he's very ill.

DE BOURLEMENT

Poor boy !

I wish him better. Come, my dears. To-day
 Is Sunday of the Wells. Let see which one
 Shall win the foot-race to the holy well.

THE YOUNG FOLK

The race! Outré!

[*They crowd about de Bourlement.*]

PERRIN

[*Seizing Pierre.*]

Come to the starting line.

[*Preceded by de Bourlement with his cane, and followed in the rear by the old knitting-women, exeunt behind the birches all but Gerard and Hauviette.*]

GERARD

[*Gloomily, as Hauviette bends over him.*]

Fly with them, bonny swallow ; don't wait here
Beating your slender wings about my eyes.
You cannot blind me, dear ; I see it well
That I am through with life.

HAUVIETTE

Tu-whit! to-whoo!

His bonny swallow will peck out those eyes,
If they stare so.

GERARD

Nay, leave!

HAUVIETTE

I will not hop

One inch from him.

VOICES

[*Shout outside.*]

Outré!

HAUVIETTE

[Jumping up.]

Ah, hear them now!

'Tis the beginning.

GERARD

[Sinking back.]

And the ending.

HAUVIETTE

[Running to the edge of the scene.]

Oh!

Pierre d'Arc has stuck a rose in Mengette's hair.

She pulled it out, but he has put it back.

Now they've all toed the line; there's five of 'em:

Perrin, Mengette, Pierre d'Arc, Jeannette, and Colin.

Jeannette's between her brother and her sweetheart.

A VOICE

[Calls outside, with singing intonation.]

Make ready!

HAUVIETTE

[Coming back to Gerard.]

That's the Sieur de Bourlement. — Listen!

THE VOICE

Prepare! — Depart!

HAUVIETTE

[Rushing back to the edge of scene.]

Now! Now they're off!

[*Hauviette holds herself tensely with clenched hands. From outside there come shouts of "Perrin! Pierre! Jeannette!" etc., presently, in the distance, sounding only one name, "Jeannette."*]

Run! Run!

Perrin's ahead. — Ha! — Now! — [*Shouts*] — Jeannette! Jeannette!

Jeannette is winding him. — Faster, Jeannette!

Ah, now they're hid behind the willows. — Peste!

I cannot see.

GERARD

Run after them.

HAUVIETTE

[*Stamping.*]

I won't!

Sacré Maria! Hark! Jeannette — she's won!

Thou wretched boy! Why ever did you fight

Those English ogres? Now thou art a stump;

Can't race, can't dance, can't play. O saints! to have

A sweetheart half i' the grave! — Darling Gerard,

Forgive her! Please forgive her!

GERARD

[*Caressing her, where she snuggles close to him.*]

There, there, there!

[*While Gerard and Hauviette are absorbed in each other thus, boughs of the shrubbery part noiselessly, and Jeanne breaks upon the scene, panting and flushed from running. Not seeing the lovers beneath the beech tree, she seats herself on the stone bench, braids her hair, which has flown*

loose in the race, takes out her knitting, but lets it fall beside her, fixing her eyes dreamily on the air. Gerard meantime has been playfully humming to Hauviette.]

My sweetheart's a swallow :

Her sprite's

On wing;

Oh, might I follow

Her flights,

I'd bring

Back from Heaven the heart of Spring.

[Hauviette, spying Jeanne, turns Gerard's head and points.

Voices in the distance call "Jeannette !"]

Jeannette ! — What is she doing ?

HAUVIETTE

Hiding from 'em ;

Always she's stealing off alone.

[Speaking lower.]

They say

She talks with God.

[Mischievously.]

Let's ask her.

GERARD

Don't !

HAUVIETTE

[Bursting suddenly upon Jeanne.]

Hallo !

JEANNE

[Springs up, startled.]

Ha ! bon gré Dieu !

[Coming to herself.]

No one but thee, Hauviette ?

HAUVIETTE

Me and Gerard. — What made you leave the race?

JEANNE

[*Smiling.*]

'Twas finished.

HAUVIETTE

But you won the prize.

JEANNE

[*Shrugging.*]

Just that!

The Jack-o'-ninnies fetched a crown of laurel
To set upon my head. [*Laughing.*] Ha! but St. John!
I cut away into the underwood
And put 'em off my track.

HAUVIETTE

[*Seeing Isabellette appear through the birches.*]

Look sharp, then.

ISABELLETTE

[*Seeing Jeanne, shouts back.*]

Found!

GERARDIN'S VOICE

[*From without.*]

Where is she?

ISABELLETTE

Here.

[*Enter Gerardin.*]

But hush!

[*With wicked sanctimony.*]

We must not spoil

Mamselle's devotions.

GERARDIN

[Making a mock bow to Jeanne.]

Pray, Mamselle, forgive

My rude intrusion.

JEANNE

[Returning a mock curtsy.]

Nay, you're welcome, sir.

God puts a sweet root in the little pig's path,
So we're well met.

GERARDIN

[Baulked.]

Hein? Am I root or pig?

[Enter Colin with a wreath of green leaves.]

COLIN

Here is thy crown, Jeannette.

ISABELLETTE

Pish! not that one!

Run to the window of the kirk, and fetch
Yon little halo made of painted glass —
Sky-blue and gold; she left it by mistake
Last time she prayed there.

HAUVIETTE

Run, thou dunderhead!

How shall we get to Heaven without Jeannette?

ISABELLETTE

Yon keys, that dangle at her waist, unlock
St. Peter's wicket.

COLIN

Na; I will not go.

HAUVIETTE

[*To Isabellette.*]

I dare you steal 'em.

[*Makes a dash at Jeanne's keys.*]

JEANNE

[*Catching Hauviette's hand powerfully with her left, laughs.*]

If you poke more fun
I'll have your noses all! One, two, three, four!

[*Snatching at their faces with her right hand, she criss-crosses the thumb, child-fashion.*]

Now you'll not hold 'em in the air so high.

HAUVIETTE

[*Shaking Jeanne.*]

Wicked Jeannette! She won't be teased.

ISABELLETTE

[*To Jeanne.*]

But tell!

What made you run away alone?

JEANNE

[*Diffidently.*]

To listen.

ISABELLETTE

Listen! — for what?

GERARDIN

What did you hear?

JEANNE

[*Very quietly.*]

Let's go.

[*As she moves away, the others exchange nods and shrugs.*]

COLIN

Eh! what said I — 'twas them! They be her friends
And keep her company.

JEANNE

[*Turns wonderingly.*]

Who are my friends?

COLIN

The lady wood-folk : I ha' seen 'em with 'ee
Many's the chance at sundown.

ISABELLETTE

Seen them with her?

HAUVIETTE

What — speaking?

COLIN

Like as though.

ISABELLETTE

At sundown?

COLIN

[*Nodding.*]

Darkish.

HAUVIETTE

Where?

COLIN

Here, beside their tree.

JEANNE

Thou art wrong, Colin
 'Tis well to know that since the good priest read
 The gospel of St. John beneath these boughs,
 There are no fairies more in Domremy.

ISABELLETTE

O pfui!

HAUVIETTE

[*To Jeanne.*]

You don't believe? — But Colin saw!

JEANNE

Saw moonshine! — I believe my own good eyes
 And ears. *I never saw nor heard them.*

COLIN

Eh!

Thy father saith how folk what's spoken to
 By fairies knoweth naught of it; but getteth
 Gifties most wonderful.

ISABELLETTE

Aha! That's why
 He wants to marry thee, Jeannette.

COLIN

[*Eagerly.*]

Aye, that's!

[*Voices shout outside, amidst laughter.*]

GERARDIN

Hark there! Come on! We're missing all the game.

HAUVIETTE

[*Clasping her hands.*]

Ah me! if only I could go!

ISABELLETTE

[*Pulling Hauviette's sleeve as she passes.*]

Come, too!

[*Exit.*]

[*As Gerardin is hastening out, Gerard—with a great effort—lifting his sword in its scabbard, flings it clattering in front of Gerardin, who starts back.*]

GERARD

[*Bitterly.*]

Burgundian!

GERARDIN

You dropt this sword?

GERARD

I flung it

In challenge, sir.

GERARDIN

Bah! I'm no corpse-killer.

[*Exit.*]

HAUVIETTE

[*Exasperated.*]

Stupid Gerard!

JEANNE

[*Bending over Gerard; to Hauviette.*]

Fetch him some water; go.

I'll stay with him.

[*Voices shout outside.*]

HAUVIETTE

[*Calling gayly.*]

I'm coming!

[*Tossing Gerard a kiss.*]

Silly boy!

[*Pulling Colin after her, exit Hauviette. Jeanne, lifting Gerard's sword reverently, places it by the tree.*]

GERARD

[*Amazed.*]

My sword — your lips have touched it!

JEANNE

God himself

Hath fought with it for France.

GERARD

I fought with it!

JEANNE

And God did clasp His fingers over thine
 Along the hilt. Whoso hath fought for France
 Hath fought for Him.

GERARD

Jeannette! you knew, then, why
 I flung it there! You knew?

JEANNE

Full well, my friend.

GERARD

None other knew.

JEANNE

None here besides hath been

Into the battle.

GERARD

Never *you* have been.

JEANNE

Ah me, Gerard, so often have I gone
Amongst the armèd men, methinks I scarce
Have stayed at home.

GERARD

You saw the fighting? When?

JEANNE

Between the shearing and the shearing.

GERARD

Where?

JEANNE

Out there — beyond : in the wide land beyond !
And there were thousands flashing in the sun
Beneath dark walls and mighty battlements,
And all their shining limbs were stiff with steel ;
And rank by rank they rattled as they marched,
But each half hid his neighbour with his shield
Like soldiers in the chapel-window glass ;

And I rode with them, clad in silver mail
From heel to head, upon a snow-white horse,
And all my oriflammes were painted fair
With lilies and the Rising of our Lord ;
For we were marching, midst the roar of bells,
Towards a great cathedral.

GERARD

But you dreamed !

JEANNE

[*Changing.*]

Once in the midnight, when I saw them sleeping
After the battle, in the still moonshine
Their linkèd armour lay beside them, sloughed
Like adder skins ; and where the living slept,
Their bright breaths rose like candle mist, but on
The dead the dews fell.

GERARD

How saw you these sights ?

JEANNE

Sometimes I see them very small and bright,
As if they were inlaid in smooth enamel
Like wish-stones in my godfather's thumb-ring.
Sometimes I gaze at them as through clear water,
That moves between us, blurring the deep colours
With skeins of silver when the wind blows. Ah !
But tell me of the wars which you have seen.
I have great pity for the land of France.
Tell me — for you have fought — what of the wars ?

VOICES

[*Outside, amid laughter.*]*Vivo la roso!*

GERARD

[*Glooming.*]

Will you not go — play?

JEANNE

[*Smiling.*]

Now think ye they are sighing for me?

[*Adjusting his cloak as a back rest.*]

Move

A little; so is better?

GERARD

It is better.

You asked — what of the wars?

JEANNE

Thou art still in pain

GERARD

Not now; my body's pain is strangely numb, —
 What of the wars? Thou knowest the bitter news:
 The English are flooded up like the North Sea
 Over the fields of France, where all the land
 Southward to Orleans drowns with them, and all
 The men of France, like moles and field-mice, creep
 Under the bloodied furrows.

JEANNE

Orleans stands!

GERARD

Yes; stands like a strong headland in their tide
 And will not crumble. Orleans only stands

Between the English army and King Charles.
 Yet soon must also Orleans fall, and then —
 What hope then for the King ?

JEANNE

God fights for him.

GERARD

They say that he is poor and hath few friends,
 And daily those desert him, taunting him
 That he hath never been crowned.

JEANNE

He shall be crowned.

GERARD

And Burgundy the Duke, the one strong man
 Whose right arm should have struck for France, now
 fights
 For England and the taste of English gold. —
 O God! Jeannette, if thou hadst fought for France,
 Now mightest thou feel what 'tis of bitterness
 To close my eyes and go down in the dark,
 Knowing that even this dust of me must change
 Into a little heap of *English* earth.

JEANNE

Gerard! — and you must die ?

GERARD

Last night, the doctor
 Went from my door to Jacques-the-gravedigger's ;
 To-day they fetched me here with garlands.

[*Rising slowly to her feet, Jeanne holds in her left hand Gerard's sword, and raising her right as one taking a martial oath, speaks with dreamy fervour.*]

JEANNE

Listen!

Between Coussy and Vaucouleurs there lives
A girl, that, ere the year is gone, shall save
The land of France, and consecrate King Charles.

GERARD

A girl! — between Coussy and Vaucouleurs?
That's here in Domremy.

JEANNE

Have you not heard
How long ago 'twas spoken, " Out of Lorraine,
Beside the Ladies' Tree, shall come a maid —
Saviour of France " ?

GERARD

This is the Ladies' Tree!

JEANNE

And truly was it spoken. — I am the Maid.

GERARD

Jeannette!

JEANNE

It hath been told me.

GERARD

Who hath told?

JEANNE

The Lord hath sent His angel, even St. Michael,
To me, Jeannette.

GERARD

Thou hast beheld him ?

JEANNE

Yes.

GERARD

And heard him speak ?

JEANNE

Often.

GERARD

When was this ?

JEANNE

First

Four years ago. 'Twas in my father's garden ;
I was then but thirteen ; I heard his voice.
It was mid-day, in summer ; I was frightened.
I had not fasted on the day before.
A little to my right, towards the church,
I heard it ; on one side there shone a light.

GERARD

What ! — in the noon time ?

JEANNE

Yes ; a burning light.

It dazzled me ; and then I saw his face.

GERARD

Alone ?

JEANNE

It was surrounded all with angels,
That glittered like the little poplar leaves
Behind our barn.

GERARD

You saw them bodily?

JEANNE

I saw them with these eyes as clearly as
I see you there. Just then the mass bell rung,
And then St. Michael spoke.

GERARD

Mind you what words?

JEANNE

He said: "Jeanne d'Arc, thy Lord hath chosen thee
To save the land of France. When I am gone,
St. Catherine will come and Margaret,
His saints, to counsel thee."

GERARD

More did he say?

JEANNE

"Be good and wait," he said; and then once more
"Be a good girl, Jeannette," he said; and so
He and his angels went away, and I
Wept, for I would have liked to go with them.

GERARD

St. Catherine and Margaret — they came?

JEANNE

Often they come.

GERARD

You have seen them also?

JEANNE

Yes;

But oftenest I hear them speak; I call them
 "My Voices," and I hear them when the bells
 Are ringing — more at Matins and at Vespers
 Than other hours. At first they counselled me
 But to be good, and to prepare myself
 Against St. Michael's coming. But of late
 They have forewarned me I must go to raise
 The siege of Orleans and have crowned the Dauphin.

GERARD

[*Ardently.*]

For what, then, dost thou wait, Jeannette?

JEANNE

St. Michael,

His coming.

GERARD

Ah! and will he come again

Before — I go?

JEANNE

My Voices warn me oft

That he at any moment may appear
 And bid me go unto Chinon, the Castle
 Of Charles the Dauphin, and make known to him
 My mission from our Lord.

GERARD

He will believe!

Jeannette, he will believe, as I! — O France,

Out of Lorraine hath come the Lord His maid
To succour thee in thy death peril!

JACQUES D'ARC

[*His voice heard outside — left.*]

Colin!

JEANNE

My father! Tell him not. I have not leave
To tell yet what I know. You I have told,
For you must soon go hence before my saints,
And will explain my trespass.

GERARD

I will tell them

How you revealed their secret to one dead
And made him happy.

JEANNE

[*Watching her father approach outside.*]

He would grieve, besides,
And rage, and would not let me leave him.

[*Enter Jacques d'Arc and Colin.*]

Hush!

JACQUES

[*To Colin.*]

Round up the sheep with me.

COLIN

[*Follows slowly.*]

Where keepst thy dog?

JACQUES

Suckleth her whelps at home. Hark yonder! Yon's

The bell-wether, hath jumped the pound. — Good e'en,
Jeannette. Aye, knitting, hein?

JEANNE

God give good e'en.

JACQUES

What for not making holiday? 'Tis Sabbath;
Seigneur himself walks yon with the young folk;
And Colin there clapt to 't with another sweetheart, —
Ah, Colin?

COLIN

[*Jerking his thumb at Jeanne and Gerard.*]

She would browse with the lame sheep.

JACQUES

[*To Jeanne.*]

What for with *him*?

GERARD

She asked me of the wars.

JACQUES

The wars? Hark here, lass. Drop that gabble;
drop 't,
I warn thee, down the nighest well and bury 't.
No maid o' mine shall gossip o' the wars
With any man. — And hast forgot my dream,
Jeannette?

JEANNE

No.

JACQUES

Ofttime dreams be perilous.
I saw thee in my dream fighting for France,
And thou wert bleeding at the breast. May God

Forgi'e 't me!— Ere thou went to war, Jeannette,
I'd have thy brothers drown thee.

[Turns away, speaking to Colin.]

Where's thy staff?

COLIN

Over against the sheep-pound.

[There run in Hauviette, Mengette, Pierre, Ferrin, and
Others.]

PERRIN

Fetch Gerard!

JACQUES

[To Colin.]

Come!— Wait for me, Jeannette; we'll home with 'ee.

[Exeunt Jacques and Colin, right.]

HAUVIETTE

Gerard, Gerard, three kisses! Then up, up!

GERARD

Where is the swallow flying!

HAUVIETTE

With the flock

Of course.

MENGETTE

You're coming with us?

PIERRE

To be cured.

HAUVIETTE

We're going to the well of thorns; Seigneur
Is waiting for us. 'Tis a sacred well,

And filled with holy water to the brim ;
And when you drink of it, you will be cured.

PIERRE

Make him a chair.

SEVERAL OTHERS

A chair !

[Pierre and another lad by interlacing their hands form a seat into which Gerard is raised.]

PERRIN

Now up with him !

[Lifted by the two lads, Gerard is carried off, surrounded by the others shouting.]

GERARD

[From his chair of hands.]

Good-by, Jeannette ; I'm going to be cured.

JEANNE

[Waves to him.]

Adieu, Gerard !

THE OTHERS

[Going out.]

Outré ! Gerard ! Gerard !

JEANNE

[To Perrin, as he is leaving with the others.]

Perrin !

[Perrin pauses and looks at Jeanne, who shakes her finger at him with a grave smile. He drops his eyes, confused.]

PERRIN

But 't isn't late.

JEANNE

The sky's all pink
And gold behind the bell-tower.

[Turning him toward the shrine.]

Naughty Perrin!

What will Our Lady say, who leaneth there
And listeneth for her Vesper bell, and heareth
Perrin at play.

PERRIN

I cannot ring just yet.

The others —

JEANNE

[Thrusting her knitting into his hands.]

Here's a mitten; 'tis of wool.

I'll knit thee its fellow before Michaelmas
If thou wilt run fast to the kirk, and ring
The bell.

PERRIN

Our Lady shall not scold, then. — Mind,
Thou'lt knit me t'other mitten?

JEANNE

I have promised.

[Perrin runs off toward Domremy. Jeanne, going slowly to the Ladies' Tree, leans against the trunk, and stands looking westward toward the town. As she does so, there rises — faint but close by, through the falling twilight — a music of sweet voices, singing to the old French ballad-melody these words, softly distinguishable.]

THE TWILIGHT VOICES

Derrière' chez mon père,
 (Vole, vole, mon cœur vole !)
 Derrière' chez mon père
 Y'a un pommier doux :
 Tout doux — et iou !
 Tout doux — et iou !
 Y'a un pommier doux.

Trois belles princesses
 (Vole, vole, mon cœur, vole !)
 Trois belles princesses
 Sont assis dessous :
 Tout doux — et iou !
 Tout doux — et iou !
 Sont assis dessous.

Ça dit la première, vole, etc.
 Je crois qu'il fait jour.

Ça dit la seconde — etc.
 J'entends le tambour.

[*Jeanne, pensive, does not hear the melody, nor observe how near her, from amid the obscurity of the birch trees, there emerge the shadowy forms of the LADIES OF LORRAINE. Each of these peers forth from her own bush or birch or flowering shrub, to which her garb — with its long green veil and flowing forest gown — approximates in tone and design.¹ Each wears a crown and has an air at once queenly and sylvan.*]

¹ Thus the veil of the Lady of the Flowering Thorn is embroidered all with thorn blossoms; the gown of the Lady of the Aspen twinkles and shivers with little leaves.

THE LADIES OF LORRAINE

[*Continuing.*]

Ça dit la troisième — etc.

C'est mon ami doux.

Il va-t-a la guerre — etc.

Combattre pour nous.

[*Ceasing, none of the Ladies entirely dissociates herself from her bush or tree, but peering forward, all together, they lift from their brows, and hold aloft with their right hands, their crowns and fillets and therewith lay a spell upon Jeanne, who — outwardly oblivious of their presence — yet is felt to soliloquize under their influence, not beginning to speak until they appear, and ceasing simultaneous with their abrupt departure.*]

JEANNE

[*By the Ladies' Tree.*]

How happily doth all the world go home !
 The bee hath left the shutting marguerite
 To dust his wings at Pierrot's garden-door
 And hum all night to drowsy chanticleer ;
 The rooks are whirling to the nested eaves. —
 Thou little darling town of Domremy,
 Good night ! Thou winkest with thy lids of vines,
 And layest down within the golden stream
 Thy yellow thatches and thy poplars pale ;
 And thou, too, art upgathered in home-fields ;
 But thy Jeannette must pass away from thee.
 For He who once disdainèd not to stay
 His wandering star o'er tiny Bethlehem
 Hath, in His love of France, sent unto thee

His shining messengers to fetch thy Maid.
 O little town, hush still thy breath and hark!
 Amid thy narrow streets are angels arming,
 And o'er thy steeping-stones immortal feet
 Are bearing light the undying fleur-de-lis;
 And from thy roofs clear horns-of-Paradise
 Are blowing wide unto the zenith: Hearken!—
 Who shall withstand the Lord of Hosts, or who
 Defy His power? The horses of the Lord
 Are neighing, terrible; His chariots
 Of thunder crash in darkness, and the voice
 Calleth of His Archangel from the battle:
 "Vive la France! Victoire! La France sauvée!"

JACQUES D'ARC

[*Outside.*]

Along! Along!

[*The Ladies vanish in the foliage. Jeanne stands as in a trance. Enter right Jacques, grasping by the wrist Colin, who holds back, quaking.*]

Where be they? Show me where?

COLIN

Na, na; I'll not come nigh her. They be gone
 Inside.

JACQUES

Inside o' what?

COLIN

The bark and roots:
 I saw them yonder lifting o' their veils.

JACQUES

Where?

[*Colin points.*]

Those be birches.

COLIN

Ladies were they then,
And peered and peeped at her.

JACQUES

At who?

COLIN

Jeannette;

I'll not come nigh her.

JACQUES

[*Visibly affected, yet will not show it to Colin.*]

Pfah! Thou hast such visions
As Pertelote, our hen: spyeth the moon,
And cackleth she hath laid our Lord an egg. —
Jeannette o' mine, come hither.

JEANNE

[*Breaking from her reverie, goes impetuously to his arms.*]

Papa Jacques!

JACQUES

[*Embracing her tenderly, looks toward the birches.*]

Th' art a good lass, Jeannette. I spake thee harsh
Awhile since.

JEANNE

Will I scold thee for it now?

JACQUES

A good lass was thou always; — but some stubborn.

JEANNE

Like Papa Jacques?

[*Kisses him.*]

JACQUES

Aye, Jacques d'Arc hath a will.
Th' art come short-cut thereby! But hark'ee, girl!
Shut mouth catches no flies. — I'll have thee speak
No more o' the wars. — What say? I'll have thee be
Like other village maid-folk — light o' heart,
Merry to love. — Eh, not? — I'll have thee wed,
And keep thy goodman's sheep-farm next to mine.
Come now: What say to Colin?

JEANNE

'Tis a good lad.

JACQUES

St. John! 'Tis a good answer. Once again!
What say to speak him troth now — man and maid?

JEANNE

I may not speak my troth to any man.

JACQUES

May not! May not! Who's thy new master, sith
Thy father died? Who hath forbade thee speak?
Well, well; let be! Thou needst not *speak* thy troth.
Look: yonder, Colin holds his sheep-staff out
Toward thee; take it, lass, and nothing spoke —
In token of thy trothal.

[*Jeanne, gazing apparently at Colin, clasps suddenly her
hands in awe, and makes a humble reverence.*]

JEANNE

Monseigneur!

Thy maid is ready.

JACQUES

[*Who has turned away.*]

Take 't and come along.

JEANNE

[*To Jacques.*]

What is that which you see held forth to me ?

JACQUES

Seest well thyself 'tis Colin's staff. What for
Art staring ?

JEANNE

'Tis exceeding beautiful
In glory and in power ; its handle gleams
Bright as the cross of jewels at the mass,
And oh, its sheath is like an altar-candle.[*In the distance a bell begins to ring slowly. Jacques bows
his head. Colin, awed by Jeanne's words and expres-
sion, thrusts the staff upright in the earth and steps
back a pace from it, superstitiously.*]

JACQUES

[*Crossing himself.*]

The Vespers.

JEANNE

[*Sinking to her knees.*]

Monseigneur !

[*At this moment in the air beside Colin appears the glorified
form of ST. MICHAEL. Shepherd and Archangel stand
contrasted, yet alike in posture, looking toward Jeanne.*]

JACQUES

Up, lass ! What aileth ?
Wilt take the sheep-crook ?

JEANNE

Wilt thou have me take
What in the turf stands yonder?

JACQUES

In God's name!

JEANNE

In God's name, then, I take it.

[*Reaching out, she pauses and draws back — her face lifted to St. Michael's — as, in the cadence of the bell, he speaks.*]

ST. MICHAEL

[*Slowly extending his hand.*]

Jeanne the Maid,

Behold the staff I bring thee is my sword.

[*Lightly laying his hand upon the staff, instantaneously his touch transforms it to a perpendicular sword, its point piercing the turf, its cross-formed handle and its sheath glowing with variegated fire.*]

Take it in vow of thy virginity,
And to perform the bidding of thy Lord —
That thou, in armour girded as a man
Shalt go to raise at Orleans the great siege,
And after, crown the Dauphin, Charles of France,
Anointed King at Rheims.

COLIN

[*Pointing.*]

The crook, Jeannette!

Take it in troth.

ST. MICHAEL

[*Pointing.*]

Take it in troth, Jeanne d'Arc.

JEANNE

In God His name, I take it as from Him
To whom my vow is given.

[*Extending her hand, Jeanne touches the sword; then bows her head as St. Michael disappears.*]

JACQUES

So; she hath touched
Thy staff in troth, lad. Now home with ye
Together.

COLIN

Come, Jeannette.

JEANNE

First, I will pray.

JACQUES

[*Aside to Colin.*]

The Vespers! — Come along. — She'll follow us.

COLIN

[*Going out, sings.*]

Sith for Charity

My love her troth me gave,

My troth hath she

I *her* have.

[*Exit Colin. Jacques, looking back at Jeanne, crosses himself, muttering, and exit. Twilight deepens. Blending with the tones of the chapel bell are heard two Voices.*]

THE FIRST VOICE

Jeanne d'Arc!

JEANNE

[*Calling.*]

St. Margaret!

THE SECOND VOICE

Jeanne la Pucelle !

JEANNE

St. Catherine !

THE TWO VOICES

Daughter of God, go forth !

[*Jeanne, on the turf, kneels before the cross of the shining sword. Vespers continue to ring.*]

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE: The Castle of Chinon. March 8, 1429.

An audience-hall, sparsely furnished with an indigent magnificence.

The chief entrance at back is in the centre. On the right of this an ornate clock, with chimes. On the left, high in the wall, a stained-glass window depicts the Emperor Charlemagne, with the shield of France, holding a crown. Against the left wall, a throne-chair with canopy; in the right wall, a fireplace with chimney-seat. At the oblique angle of the right and back walls, a stairway descends from a colonnade, partly visible without.

The scene, opening, discovers KING CHARLES seated on an arm of the throne-chair, with one foot on the seat, the other crossed over his knee. Round his neck, behind, is hung a placard, lettered in red and gold:

LE ROI
DAGOBERT
C'EST MOI

He is surrounded by LADIES of the Court, who are merrily shouting a song, whilst they watch the royal TAILOR, who bends assiduously over the King's crossed leg, plying his thread and needle. Beside him stands his spool-and-shears basket.

Apart from these, at a table near the fire, are seated LA TREMOUILLE and DE CHARTRES. The former is busily engaged in looking over a pile of parchments. From time to time he is approached with great reverence by servants and courtiers.

THE LADIES

[*Sing to the old ballad-tune.*]

'Twas good King Dagobert
 His breeches wrong-side-out did wear.
 Quoth his Master of Stitches :
 "Your Majesty's breeches,
 To put it mild strongly,
 Are put on well wrongly."
 "Eh bien!" the King he cried,
 "Just wait and I'll turn 'em right side."

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To VENDÔME, the Chamberlain.*]

This seal to the Receiver-General;
 These parchments to the Treasurer of War.

THE LADIES

God save King Dagobert!

THE TAILOR

Good Majesty
 Doth wear the seam outside.

CHARLES

Why not, old Stitches?
 I'll set the fashion so; I am chafed too long
 With wearing o' the seamy-side *within*.

CATHERINE

[*Aside to DIANE.*]

Still munching the old cud of melancholy —
 His mother.

DIANE

Why his mother?

CATHERINE

She called him —

Shh! They say

DIANE

Hein?

CATHERINE

They spell it with a "b."

ATHENIE

Imperial Dagobert, permit thy slave
To be thy needle-woman.

CATHERINE

Nay, let me;

My silk is threaded.

DIANE

'Twere a thousand pities
To wholly sheathe so glorious a sword!

[*Touching the King's leg.*]

Is it of gold?

CHARLES

Ah, lady, would it were,
And I would lend it out at usury
To line your purse withal. — Alas, madame,
'Tis a poor limb charr'd with celestial fire.

[*Waves her back.*]

CATHERINE

Ladies, we may not look. We must content
Our souls with incense of the burning thigh.

DE CHARTRES

[To La Tremouille, amid the Ladies' laughter.]

Is it possible?

LA TREMOUILLE

They are his only pair ;
 The rest he pawned this morning. These being torn,
 He calls the tailor and commands the ladies
 To acclaim him as King Dagobert.

DE CHARTRES

What for?

LA TREMOUILLE

For novelty. One day he'll hang himself
 For novelty.

THE TAILOR

Your Majesty is mended.

CHARLES

Approach, mesdames, and view the royal patch.

ATHENIE

But where?

CATHERINE

I cannot see it.

CHARLES

Even so!

Your patch is virtue's own epitome,
 The smooth'd-up leak in honour's water-mark,
 The small fig-leaf that shadows Paradise,
 The tiny seal of time and turpitude.
 Which for to prove, sweet dames, bethink you how
 The great Achilles — he who fought and sulked

Outside the walls of Troy — was once a babe,
 (Babes will occur, mesdames!) and had a mother
 (The best of us have mothers, though not all
 Be goddesses). His mother was called Thetis,
 And when she dipped him in the immortal wave,
 She held him by the heel — thus — thumb and finger,
 That ever afterward upon the heel
 He wore a patch — a little viewless patch,
 Whereby he came to dust. The moral's plain:
 A little patch is greater than a god,
 And therefore this your prince, poor Dagobert,
 Doth kiss his hands to you and abdicate
 In lieu of one more royal lord — King Patch.
 Acclaim him!

[*Stepping down, Charles mounts the Tailor upon the throne,
 on the seat of which he stands, in alarmed confusion.*]

THE TAILOR

Majesty! — Sweet ladies!

THE LADIES

Hail!

CHARLES

Behold the man who mendeth Alexander,
 And ravelleth up the rended Cæsar's wounds:
 Lo! moth corrupteth us, and mildew stains,
 Diana frays her moon-white taffeta,
 Yea, Phœbus sullieth his golden hose,
 Fate makes or mars us, but King Patch doth mend!

BOULIGNY

[*Having just entered, claps his palm.*]

Par excellence, a Cicero!

CHARLES

[*Bowing.*]

Your servant,
Boulogne! — now to crown him, ladies.

THE LADIES

Crown him!

[*Catherine snatches up the work-basket and, inverting, lifts it — dangling with spools, bobbins, and shears — toward the Tailor.*]

THE TAILOR

Dames! Gentle dames!

CATHERINE

[*Thrusting the basket over his head.*]

A crown!

DIANE

[*Forcing a yardstick into his hand.*]

A sceptre!

THE TAILOR

[*From within the basket.*]

Virgin!

ALL

Long live King Patch!

[*The Tailor, extricating himself, giggling and grinning a scared smile, bobs and kisses his palm to Charles and the Ladies, who shout with laughter.*]

THE TAILOR

Pardon and compliments!
Pardon, mesdames, seigneurs, and compliments!

[*At the height of this royal mockery, there enters from the colonnade, D'ALENÇON — a quiet, contrasting figure. He is scribbling on a parchment and pauses. Glancing from the throne-chair scene, he turns to where La Tremouille and De Chartres are talking together apart, and silently approaches them.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Pointing at the Tailor.*]

Behold the King of France enthroned.

DE CHARTRES

You mean

That we must strive to keep him thus.

LA TREMOUILLE

I mean

That he who holds a mortgage on a king
May keep the sceptre for security
During the debt's outstanding.

DE CHARTRES

How the sceptre?

LA TREMOUILLE

The power, De Chartres; like yonder Knave of
Spools
Charles wields the royal yardstick, but the King
Of France — the man that *reigns* — c'est moi!

DE CHARTRES

And I?

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Graciously.*]

My privy council.

[Suddenly; over his shoulder observing D'Alençon.]

Ah, D'Alençon! —

Poeticizing?

D'ALENÇON

Yes; I am composing

A rondel on the weather, called "*It rains.*"

[*De Chartres and La Tremouille glance at each other quizzically. With a studious look D'Alençon turns away, and takes from the fireplace a book.*]

THE COURT LADIES

A speech! A coronation speech!

THE TAILOR

Mesdames,

Seigneurs, and compliments! If Majesty

Would pay to me my wage, and let me go.

CHARLES

Thy wage, *par dieu!* O heart of emery!

Sharpen your needles in him, ladies. Wage!

Wage for a patch!

THE TAILOR

Nay, Majesty, a year —

One year, last Candlemas, 'tis overdue.

CHARLES

Hark to the bobbin buzz! What, take thy wages!

Wilt bear 'em on thy back? A twelvemonth, here!

One month — two — three — four!

[*Snatching from him the yardstick, Charles thwacks the Tailor down from the throne, whence he runs, pursued by the Ladies, who prick his sides with their needles.*]

THE TAILOR

[*Running off.*]

Charity, mesdames!

[*Exit.*]

CHARLES

[*Pauses, laughing, and greets D'Alençon, who, over his book, has been looking keenly on.*]

What think you of our royal sport, D'Alençon?

D'ALENÇON

No king, sire, could more quaintly lose his kingdom.

[*Charles, ceasing his laughter with a conscious look, vaguely ashamed, hesitates, then follows D'Alençon, who has turned away, and — walking aside with him — grows strangely serious.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To De Chartres.*]

Behold my Rome and Rubicon.

DE CHARTRES

What — yonder?

LA TREMOUILLE

That man is in my way; he must be crossed
Before the King is mine.

DE CHARTRES

That bookworm duke!

LA TREMOUILLE

His influence grows.

DE CHARTRES

Nay, hardly with the King!

LA TREMOUILLE

De Chartres, you know not Charles; he's like a tree-
frog

That takes the colour of the bark it clings to.
Watch how demure he holds the young duke's sleeve
And alters to the dim scholastic hue
Of vellum and antique philosophy;
As quickly would he turn blood-colour, if
The duke should flush with feeling.

DE CHARTRES

Feeling! Flush?

Why, 'tis a rhyming clerk! — a duke of parchment!
The mere illumination of a man
Stuck in life's margin to adorn the text.
He *feels* for naught this side the Fall of Troy.

LA TREMOUILLE

You have forgot "It rains"?

DE CHARTRES

A foolish pun!

LA TREMOUILLE

About *myself*: that theme, at least, is new
Since Troy fell. No; I do not trust him. — You
Were best to interrupt their tête-à-tête.

VENDÔME

[*At the door, announces to Charles.*]

His Majesty's bootmaker!

CHARLES

Show him here.

DE CHARTRES

[*As Charles turns momentarily toward Vendôme, touches D'Alençon's volume and speaks to him.*]

Who wrote the book ?

D'ALENÇON

Pierre Lombard, pupil once
Of Abelard, who sang to Heloise.

DE CHARTRES

[*Frowning suspicion.*]

Is it godly ?

D'ALENÇON

That your reverence may judge :
The writer plucks a hair out of his head,
Splits it in two, and names the one half Faith
The other, Heresy. The first he dyes
Pure gold, the other pitch-black, and both he nails
As index-fingers on the Church's apse,
And points one hair toward Heaven, the other —
elsewhere.

DE CHARTRES

I do not comprehend.

D'ALENÇON

[*Closing the book with a dry smile.*]

Neither do I !

[*Exit D'Alençon, right.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To De Chartres, who returns pensively to him.*]

What think you now ?

DE CHARTRES

I think *he* thinks too much.

[*Enter the BOOTMAKER, a big raw fellow, in leather.
He takes a pair of boots from his apron.*]

BOOTMAKER

Complete, sire.

CHARLES

Let me see them.

[*The Bootmaker hands him one.*]

Catherine,

What say you to the cut?

CATHERINE

Perfection, Charles!

Your Majesty shall walk like Puss-in-Boots
When he proclaimed the Marquis of Carabbas.

CHARLES

[*With sudden ennui, comparing the boot with his lower leg.*]

Perchance 'twill serve to hide Achilles' heel?

[*To the Bootmaker.*]

Show me the mate.

BOOTMAKER

Six livres, twenty sous.

CHARLES

The mate, I said.

BOOTMAKER

[*Stolidly, thrusting the mate under his arm.*]

Six livres, twenty sous.

CHARLES

Ah? Charge it on account. I'll take the pair.

BOOTMAKER

[*Inflexible.*]

A bird in the hand makes supper in the pot.

CHARLES

God's death! Am I the King? Set down the boot
And go!

BOOTMAKER

[*Backing to the door, stands sullenly, swinging the one boot
by its straps.*]

Six livres, twenty sous.

CHARLES

[*Hurling the other boot after him.*]

Go dun

The devil for it!

BOOTMAKER

[*Picking up the boot, eyes it over, spits on his apron, and
with that rubs the toe of the boot carefully.*]

Five and twenty sous!

[*Exit slowly, a boot in each hand. Charles, having
watched him go, turns in a pet of frenzy and, flinging
down upon the throne footstool, speaks hoarsely to him-
self, weeping.*]

CHARLES

Am I the King? God, God! Am I the King?

DE CHARTRES

[*Amused, to La Tremouille.*]

Have you no smiles for this?

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Yawning.*]

'Tis too familiar.

CATHERINE

[*Approaching La Tremouille, obsequiously.*]

The little King of Chinon hath caught the sulks,
 Sieur La Tremouille.

LA TREMOUILLE

I'm busy.

CATHERINE

Pardon —

[*With an ingratiatory lifting of the brows and a low
 reverence.*]

— Sire ?

[*La Tremouille smiles slightly and looks down again at
 his papers. As De Chartres, however, leaves the table
 to speak with Bouligny, La Tremouille calls Catherine
 with his eyes, and speaks to her intimately, watching
 with her the King and smiling.*]

ATHENIE

[*To LA HIRE, who enters.*]

Marshal, hast heard what ails the King's game-cocks ?

LA HIRE

No, dame.

ATHENIE

'Tis said that they have shed their spurs,
 And strut amongst the hens i' the castle-yard

[*Flaps her sleeves like a cock's wings.*]

Crying : " King Noodle-Nothing-Do ! *Chez nous !* "

[*La Hire turns away with a grimace.*]

DIANE

[*To a Lady.*]

No wonder the King's figure is god-like.
They say his lady mother had a steward
Shaped like Apollo.

CHARLES

[*From the footstool.*]

Ladies, I have the ear-ache.

DIANE

Beseech you, sire, what may we do to soothe it?

CHARLES

Bring here those honey-flasks of calumny
And pour them in my ears. Perchance 'twill stop
This piping noise within.

ATHENIE

What piping noise,
Your Majesty?

CHARLES

A lute within my head:

A slender lute carven with fleur-de-lis,
And at the tip a crown of fleur-de-lis,
And on the stops a lady's fingers lying,
And on the mouth-piece are a lady's lips,
And when they breathe, there opes a tiny rift
Within the fibre, and the hollow thing
Pipes a shrill hellish whistle —

[*Leaping up.*]

A mere rift,

A little, little rent! —

LA TREMOUILLE

Nine thousand francs!

CHARLES

What's that?

LA TREMOUILLE

[*With a side smile at Catherine.*]

The "little rent" you owe me, Charles
A trifle, as you say, and soon patched up.

CHARLES

My George! Thou hast a heart of gold!— But you
Must reimburse yourself o' the treasury.
Boulogne!

BOULIGNY

Sire!

CHARLES

How much in the general fund?

BOULIGNY

Eleven francs, five sous, your Majesty.

CHARLES

Saint dieu! no more than that?

BOULIGNY

Sieur La Tremouille

Hath authorized to-day another loan
From his estates.

CHARLES

[*Embracing La Tremouille.*]

My dear, thou art mine angel!

LA TREMOUILLE

Tut, Charlie! Go and play.

CHARLES

Nay, by my honour,
But you shall reap your master's gratitude.
When we have raised our arm imperial
And flogged with steel these spindling English —

[*The room bursts into a titter; Charles pauses disconcerted. La Tremouille, badly concealing a smile, raises an admonishing forefinger to the Ladies, who burst into louder laughter. Charles, covering his face, turns precipitately and is rushing from the room when, in the doorway (back) he encounters D'Alençon, entering. The latter has evidently just been concerned with the frayed edges of his scroll of parchment, but now — taking in the situation at a glance — he bows to the King with simple reverence.*]

D'ALENÇON

Sire,

You are generous to cover my confusion.
Yet if these gentles choose to laugh at me —

CHARLES

[*Bewildered.*]

At you!

D'ALENÇON

Why, they are right. You spoke of war,
Of frays where brave men break their limbs and
lances,
When lo! — I enter, mending of a parchment.
Should not they laugh? 'Tis such as I, my King,
Such dog-eared captains skulking in their books,
Such Frenchmen, idling in satiric ease
While France lies struck and bleeding — such who
bring

Your Majesty's dear reign dishonour. Thanks,
 Friends of Chinon! Thanks for your keen rebuke.
 I know what you would say: Here stands our King,
 Our sacred liege, namesake of Charlemagne,
 And we, who take our dignities from him,
 And only shine because we are his servants,
 Much it becomes us now, in his great need,
 To be no more his gossips, chamberlains
 And poetasters —

[*Tearing his parchment.*]

but his soldiers. Pray,
 Sieur La Tremouille, throw this in the fire:
 This is that little rondel on the weather.

[*With emotion, he offers his hand to La Tremouille, who
 refuses it icily.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

Your fire will scarce prevent *its raining* still,
 If Heaven so wills it, sir.

D'ALENÇON

[*At first feels the repulse keenly, then speaks in quiet disdain.*]

True, if Heaven wills it.

[*Turning to the hearth, D'Alençon throws the parchment
 into the flames.*]

CHARLES

[*Giving him his hand, diffidently.*]

D'Alençon — thanks!

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To De Chartres.*]

Our scrimmage now is on.

Let see which wins.

ATHENIE

The duke was warm.

CATHERINE

La! Let

Our little King still dream his name is France.
 Sure, he will soon believe this milking-maid
 Who comes to crown him.

ATHENIE

Milking-maid?

CATHERINE

Why, she

Who rode in town the eve of yesterday,
 The soldier-shepherdess, — Jeanne la Pucelle,
 The people call her.

LA TREMOUILLE

The dear people love
 To label any peasant drab a "virgin,"
 And every charlatan a "shepherdess."

LA HIRE

Tonnerre de dieu! What man hath seen the face
 Of Jeanne the Maid and named her charlatan?
 Her face — God's eyes! When I am cooked and
 damn'd,
 And devils twirl me on a spit in hell,
 I'll think upon that face and have redemption.

D'ALENÇON

[*Who has listened with eager interest.*]

Then you have seen her?

LA HIRE

Once, and ever since
My fingers have been itching at my sword
To crack an English skull and win her smile.

DIANE

O miracles! Monsieur the Growler speaks
In praise of women.

CATHERINE

Ah, my love, but think
How man's gear doth become the maiden shape.

LA HIRE

[*To La Tremouille.*]

And if she be not white as maidenhood,
I will — before these ladies and your Grace —
Pluck out mine eye-teeth.

LA TREMOUILLE

Save them, sir; 'tis plain
She hath already plucked your wisdom out.

[*Deliberately.*]

I do not love this Jeanne.

LA HIRE

[*Bowing.*]

I do, Seigneur.

ATHENIE

[*With awe, aside to Diane.*]

He'd better have drunk poison than said that.

D'ALENÇON

Marshal La Hire, your hand! Fame hath described
you —

Your pardon! — as a rake-hell, hydrophobious
Gascon, who bites at all men —

[*Glancing at La Tremouille.*]

even favourites.

I pray, sir, as the fire regales the hearth-mouse,
Grant me your friendship.

LA HIRE

[*Giving his hand.*]

Sir, you have it — hot.

D'ALENÇON

This Jeanne the Maid, you think she is — inspired?

LA HIRE

No, sir! — I *know* it.

D'ALENÇON

[*With a faint, indulgent smile.*]

This will interest

His Majesty: pray, will you tell him more?

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Watching D'Alençon escort La Hire to Charles.*]

By God, the man usurps me.

DE CHARTRES

But I thought

You laid an ambush for this charlatan
To keep her from the King.

LA TREMOUILLE

The plan failed. Now
 She is quartered here within the castle tower.
 The doctors of Poitiers are with her there,
 Cross-questioning her faith and sanity.

DE CHARTRES

Will, then, the King receive her?

LA TREMOUILLE

He must not.
 No; from this castle's tower she must depart
 Back to Lorraine.

[*Indicating D'Alençon and La Hire.*]

These babblers must be hushed,
 And Jeanne's reception foiled. Such sparks make
 flames.

Already she hath kindled the people; soon
 She might inflame the King himself to action;
 Then—follow me! If France *should* whip the
 English,
 Charles would be solvent.

DE CHARTRES

And you really fear
 Lest one weak girl shall overturn the world?

LA TREMOUILLE

One should *fear* nothing; what one *knows* is this:
 'Well for oneself is well enough for the world.'
 In short, at present all is well for *me*.

D'ALENÇON

[*To Vendôme, who has entered and spoken with him.*]

Bring here the men ; they shall be very welcome.

LA HIRE

Our livers are too fat, your Majesty.
 We Frenchmen are a herd of potted geese,
 A *paté de fois gras* to cram the bellies
 Of British mongrels.

CHARLES

Still, sir,—

LA HIRE

Ventre du diable !

Flanders, Artois, Champagne, and Picardy,
 Normandy — gobbled, all of 'em ! And now
 Talbot, the English mastiff, with his whelps,
 Squats on his haunch and howls at Orleans' gate,
 And Scales and Suffolk bark around the walls.
 God's bones ! and what do we ? Seize up our cudgels
 And drive the curs back to their island-kennel ?
 Nay, sire, we scare 'em off with nursery-songs.

CHARLES

You speak your mind a little harshly, Marshal ?

LA HIRE

I keep but one about me, sire, and that
 Is likely to go off in people's noses
 Like this new brand of snuff called gunpowder.

[*To a servant who has come to him from La Tremouille.*]

His grace would wish to speak with me ?—Delighted !

[*He follows the servant to La Tremouille, who speaks aside to him.*]

CHARLES

[*Utterly dejected by La Hire's words.*]

What can I do, D'Alençon? I am pawned
 And patched and mortgaged to my finger-nails.
 The very turnspits in the kitchen whistle
 For wages at me, and I bid them whistle.
 What can I do but *play* at King?

D'ALENÇON

A change

Of policy would bring you instant funds.
 Your people would recover your lost cities,
 If you would captain them.

CHARLES

My people! Ah!

'Tis God alone could make this people mine,
 By consecrated rite and taintless seed
 From sire to royal son. I had a mother,
 Who left me for her royal legacy
 A monstrous doubt in a tiny syllable:
 Legitimate or *illegitimate*? —
 Cure me *that* ill, and I will conquer Europe.

D'ALENÇON

Boethius saith, there is one antidote
 To being born; that is — philosophy.

LA HIRE

[*To La Tremouille.*]

Excuse me, sir! This silence is too golden
 For me to keep it by me. I have heard,

When I was hatched, the mid-wife split my tongue
 And had me suckled by a certain jackdaw,
 That was the village wet-nurse. — Who can vouch
 For all one hears ?

LA TREMOUILLE

Silence must come to all :
 To some a little sooner. — I have said.

LA HIRE

[*Bowing.*]

As soon as God shall have your Grace's permit,
 I shall be ready ! (*Lower*) Yet I warn your Grace,
 Bury me not too shallow under sod,
 Lest, where the stink is, *other* jackdaws scratch
 And cause your Grace's nose embarrassment.

[*Réënter Vendôme, followed by DE METZ and DE POULANGY,
 whom he escorts to D'Alençon and Charles.*]

D'ALENÇON

Your name ?

DE METZ

Mine : Jean de Metz, servant of France.

D'ALENÇON

And yours ?

DE POULANGY

Bertrand de Poulangy.

D'ALENÇON

[*To both.*]

Your master ?

DE METZ

Robert de Baudricourt of Vaucouleurs.

CHARLES

He sent you to conduct this shepherdess
Here to our castle ?

DE METZ

And beseech you, King,
To give her audience.

D'ALENÇON

You travelled shrewdly
To escape the English and Burgundians.
They hold the river-bridges and the fords.

DE METZ

We escaped by miracle : at black of night,
We swam our horses through the swollen streams ;
At dawn, we couched in hiding ; at our side
She slept all day in armour ; and we prayed.
It was the Maid who brought us safely here.

D'ALENÇON

Nay, but you say you were in hiding.

DE METZ

Yet
It was the Maid ; she said it should be so.

D'ALENÇON

Can she, then, prophesy ?

DE METZ

She is from God.

D'ALENÇON

[*Smiling.*]

You told us — from Lorraine !

DE METZ

Even so from God.

Out of Lorraine, beside the Ladies' Tree,
Shall come a maid — saviour of France.

CHARLES

What's that?

D'ALENÇON

A legend old as Merlin.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Who has approached.*]

And as heathen.

[*To De Metz and De Poulangy.*]

You are dismissed.

DE METZ

[*To Charles.*]

Beseech your Majesty

To grant her audience!

DE POULANGY

She is from God.

DE CHARTRES

That shall the judgment of the Church decide.

LA TREMOUILLE

The door is open.

DE METZ

[*Supplicatingly.*]

Gracious King!

CHARLES

But George —

LA TREMOUILLE

Don't fear; the beggars shall not plague thee, boy.

CHARLES

Nay, by St. Denis! but they plague me not.
A March-mad peasant-wench will pass the time.
I'll see the lass.

LA TREMOUILLE

Good-nature kills thee, Charles.

[*Dismissing De Metz and De Poulangy with a gesture.*]

His Majesty regrets —

D'ALENÇON

His Majesty

Regrets he might not sooner speak with her.

[*To the Chamberlain.*]

Vendôme, go with these men, and tell the Maid
The King will see her now.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Eying D'Alençon with shrewd defiance.*]

Sir, is this wise?

D'ALENÇON

Whether 'tis wise, your Grace, depends perhaps
Whether one holds a first or second mortgage.
Foreclosure of a second might be folly.

[*A slight pause.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

What's this — a parable?

D'ALENÇON

Why, what you please ;
 Call it a hook and line. I knew a man
 Who turned fish-monger of an Easter eve.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*With a piqued smile and shrug.*]

Nonsense prevails!

[*As De Metz and De Poulangy go out, he turns aside to De Chartres.*]

The devil fetch this duke !
 I would I knew what he hath loaned to Charles.

CHARLES

[*Pensively.*]

“ Out of Lorraine, beside the Ladies' Tree,
 Shall come a maid — saviour of France.” — D'Alen-
 çon !

What if this wench, green from her vines and cheeses,
 Her sheep-shears and her spindle, should dispel
 My sovereign doubt. — Nay, listen ! If she be
 From God indeed, and I be truly King,
 She should detect my royal sanctity
 Under what guise soever ; ought she not ?

D'ALENÇON

There are some powers of nature little known.
 But what may be your plan ?

CHARLES

I say, unless
 She be a charlatan, or I base-born,
 She'll recognize me by her holy vision
 As King amongst a thousand.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Eagerly.*]

Of course. That must follow,

D'ALENÇON

I think it follows not; but, sire,
What means of testing —

CHARLES

This! She comes but newly
From far Lorraine, hath never seen my face,
Nor heard my voice, nor set foot in this hall.
Good! You and I, D'Alençon, shall change cloaks,
You shall be King — she hath not seen thee?

D'ALENÇON

Never.

CHARLES

Good! I will be D'Alençon and stand here
One of the court, subordinate, whilst you
Sit yonder on the throne-chair — Charles of France.
Then let her enter.

LA TREMOUILLE

Bravo, Charles! A plot
Of genius!

CHARLES

Nay, a pleasant ruse.

D'ALENÇON

But if
She fail to uncloak the counterfeit? Such slips
Are common to the best of us.

CHARLES

At least

We shall have killed an hour in a new way,
And one less hoax to trouble us.

VENDÔME

[*Announces at the door.*]

The Maid!

The reverend masters are conducting her
Here to your Majesty.

CHARLES

Be quick, D'Alençon!

[*As Charles, stripping off his outer garment, reaches it to
D'Alençon, La Tremouille beckons Vendôme to himself.*]

D'ALENÇON

[*Hesitating.*]

You wish it, sire?

CHARLES

At once.

[*They exchange cloaks, but the placard of King Dagobert is
discarded to a servant.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To Vendôme, indicating to him the fact of the exchange.*]

You understand.

[*Exit Vendôme.*][*With an exultant smile, to De Chartres.*]

This whim of Charles's relieves us of much pains.
Look where he prays to the glass emperor.

[*La Tremouille points at Charles, who — wearing D'Alençon's
cloak of dun — stands beneath the window of
stained glass, and supplicates it, apart.*]

CHARLES

Thou, Charlemagne, dead sire and mighty saint !
 If in my veins thy hallowed blood still runs,
 Let through this mean disguise thy royal spirit shine,
 And make, in me, thy race and honour manifest.

[*D'Alençon, wearing Charles's royal cloak, sits on the throne.*

All those present range themselves as his subjects, some standing near, others closing about Charles, where he stands (right centre).

Reënter then, at back, Vendôme, followed by DOCTORS of the Church ; these by De Metz and De Poulangy, who stand by the door ; last enters Jeanne, dressed as a man. The Doctors, exchanging with Vendôme a hardly detectable look of understanding, approach D'Alençon, make their obeisances, and stand away. Vendôme, motioning then to Jeanne, moves forward to conduct her to D'Alençon as king, but pauses as she does not follow. Standing in the doorway, Jeanne, lifting her face intensely toward the stained-glass window, seems to listen. At the same moment, while the eyes of all are centred upon Jeanne, there emerges from the great fireplace, where logs are burning, and stands upon the hearth with flaming wings, St. Michael, who gazes also at Jeanne. The only sound or other motion in the hall is caused by the Court-fool, who, springing up from the throne-footstool to whisper of the Maid in D'Alençon's ear, sets thereby the bells on his cap to tinkling silverly. Simultaneously, the voice of St. Catherine speaks, as from mid-air.]

THE VOICE

Daughter of God, choose boldly.

[*Glancing slowly through the hall, the eyes of Jeanne meet those of St. Michael, who points with his hand at*

Charles, then turns and disappears within the smoke and glow of the fireplace. Moving then with decision, Jeanne follows Vendôme, but oblivious of D'Alençon, passes on straight to Charles, before whom she kneels down.]

JEANNE

Gentle Dauphin,

My name is Jeanne the Maid, and I am come
To bring you tidings from the King of Heaven
That He by means of me shall consecrate
And crown you King at Rheims.

[The hall remains silent and awed. Charles is visibly moved.]

CHARLES

I am not the King.

JEANNE

Truly you are the Dauphin — Charles of France,
Who shall be King when God anointeth you
In His cathedral.

D'ALENÇON

By my fay, young maid,
Thou dost not flatter us with homage. Rise
And stand before us. *We* are Charles of France.

JEANNE

I rise, Seigneur, but not unto the King.
You are not Charles of France.

DE CHARTRES

[With emotion, aside to La Tremouille.]

This troubles me.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Caustically.*]

We have been tricked somewhere.

D'ALENÇON

'Tis plain, good Jeanne,
That thou art wandered in some winter's tale,
Wherein lèse-majesté to fairy-princes
Doth little matter. You are smiling? What
Do we remind you on?

JEANNE

[*Meeting his mood.*]

In truth, Seigneur,
At home in Domremy where I was born
There lives an old good-wife, who used to tell
How Master Donkey wore King Lion's mane.

LA HIRE

[*Exploding in laughter.*]

Tonnerre!

JEANNE

[*Changing instantly.*]

Nay, honourable lords, and you
Fair gentlewomen, truly am I come
Into your midst — a sheep-maid dull and rude.
Pass on! Of that no more. But which of you
Hath cunning to deceive the sight of God?
Or which would speak a lie unto his Lord?
My Lord hath sent me here, His messenger,
But He hath girt me with a thousand more
Whose eyes are many as the nesting birds

And voices as cicadas in the summer.
Lo! in this hall they hover o'er you now,
But your dissembling eyes send up a mist
To obscure their shining wings. O gentles, mock
No more, but show God your true faces!

[*A pause, filled with the various pantomime of uneasiness, admiration, and wonder. All look for decision to D'Alençon.*]

D'ALENÇON

[*Rising abruptly, comes down.*]

Maid,

I lied to you. I am the Duke d'Alençon.

JEANNE

Dearer to France as duke than King, Seigneur.

[*She extends to him her hand—strong, peasantly, with a frank smile. He takes it, amazed, and unconsciously continues to hold it.*]

CHARLES

[*Exultant, seizes La Tremouille's shoulder.*]

She knew me, George! Unswervingly, at once,
In spite of all our cunning. —

LA TREMOUILLE

Hm!

CHARLES

She knew me;

George! but you saw.

LA TREMOUILLE

These charlatans are shrewd.

CHARLES

What? — What!

LA TREMOUILLE

I cannot say.

CHARLES

But you beheld,

Behold!

LA TREMOUILLE

It may be. — I have heard — who knows
 What hidden conspirator — Satan perhaps.

CHARLES

Satan!

LA TREMOUILLE

Why not?

CHARLES

[*Aside, imploringly.*]

D'Alençon, question her!

What deem *you* of this proof? What *is* this maid?

[*D'Alençon, having started at being addressed, has released
 Jeanne's hand.*]

D'ALENÇON

I know not, sire. — 'Tis that which fascinates me.

[*Looking again at Jeanne with his former friendly puzzled
 look, he hesitates, then speaks, embarrassed. Through-
 out the following brief scene — stirred by mingled mysti-
 fication and admiration of the peasant girl — he, in his
 questioning, halts occasionally; in which gaps La Tre-
 mouille steps shrewdly in.*]

D'ALENÇON

Jeanne d'Arc, you have well stood — or *seemed* to
 stand —

Our playful ruse — his Majesty's and mine —
 To test your boasted powers.

JEANNE

[*Simply.*]

I have no powers
To boast, Seigneur.

D'ALENÇON

You have been catechised
Already by these reverend Doctors here ?

JEANNE

Since dawn they have not ceased to question me.

D'ALENÇON

What is your verdict thus far, Master Seguin ?

SEGUIN

Your Grace, we find no fault in her.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Aside to De Chartres.*]

Come, come ;
Now *you* are needed.

DE CHARTRES

[*Aside, moved with confusion.*]

I believe in her.

LA TREMOUILLE

Our privy council fails us now ?

DE CHARTRES

Her face !

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Acidly.*]

Pardieu !

D'ALENÇON

[*To Jeanne.*]

What is this boon which you have come
To beg his Majesty ?

JEANNE

I beg, Seigneur,
A troop of the good fighting-men of France,
That I may lead them, by the help of God,
To drive from France the wicked Englishmen
That 'sieve his town of Orleans.

LA HIRE

[*Striding back and forth.*]

Sacré bleu!

Boil 'em in peppermint.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To Jeanne, intervening, as D'Alençon gazes in admiration.*]

Most excellent !

That thou, a shepherd lass, shouldst leave thy wool
To instruct our captains in the craft of war.

JEANNE

My Lord hath willed it so.

LA TREMOUILLE

Who is thy lord ?

JEANNE

The King of Heaven that is the King of France
Till He shall crown the Dauphin.

D'ALENÇON

[*To La Tremouille.*]

Sir, your pardon :

I am now catechiser. — Slowly, Jeanne :
 If God hath willed to bring deliverance
 To France, then soldiers are superfluous.
 Why do you ask for soldiers ?

JEANNE

En nom Dé !

The soldiers are to fight, and God to give
 The victory.

[*Murmurs of approbation.*]

D'ALENÇON

You do not then believe
 In God His power ?

JEANNE

[*Gravely.*]

Better than you, Seigneur.

D'ALENÇON

[*At first amused, then strangely moved by this character-reading, drops again the thread of his questioning in self-revery.*]

Better than I !

[*He continues to watch and listen to Jeanne, absorbed in her as in some problem unsolved.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

You have observed, my friends,
 The circling orbit of these arguments,

That veer like swallows round a chimney hole.
Clearly we must await some *valid* sign
Before we trust this maid.

JEANNE

My noble masters !
I come not to Chinon to show you signs,
But give me those good fighters, and for sign
I will deliver Orleans.

LA TREMOUILLE

Have you, then,
No other sign to show ?

JEANNE

I have, indeed,
A sign — but not for you. It may be seen
By one alone, my Dauphin.

CHARLES

Me ! By me ?

JEANNE

O gentle Dauphin, by the love you bear
To France, and by the love of France for you,
Hear me — but not with these.

CHARLES

[*To all.*]

Leave us alone.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Aside.*]

Remember, Charles, what black confederate
Instructs this man-maid.

CHARLES

Let the court withdraw.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Dryly, to Charles.*]

I stay, my dear!

JEANNE

[*Very quietly, standing with her eyes focussed far.*]

The Seigneur will withdraw.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Drawing away after the others toward the stairway, overtakes De Chartres, aside.*]

She is possessed.

DE CHARTRES

By angels.

D'ALENÇON

[*Withdrawing last with La Hire.*]

Friend La Hire,

How much of miracle, think you, do we

Ignore in simple nature?

[*Charles is now left alone with Jeanne, beyond the others' hearing.*]

CHARLES

Shepherdess,

How knewest thou it was I, among the many?

JEANNE

My Voices said, "Choose boldly," and I knew.

CHARLES

What voices, Jeanne?

JEANNE

You must believe in me
To hear them.

CHARLES

Tell me ; is it known of them
Or thee — this doubt which is my stain and cancer ?

JEANNE

That doubt is as the darkness of the blind
Which *is* not.

CHARLES

[*Feverishly.*]

Is not ? Oh, give me the sign !

JEANNE

You must believe before you may behold.

CHARLES

Look in my eyes, Jeanne ; I begin to see.

JEANNE

My Dauphin must believe ; he shall believe.

CHARLES

[*Sinking to his knees.*]

The crown !

JEANNE

[*Intense.*]

Believe !

CHARLES

He lifts it.

[*The clock begins to chime. In the same instant, the sunlit form of the Emperor in the stained glass is seen to*

turn toward the King — where he gazes at him past the face of Jeanne — and to hold out aloft the glowing crown of fleur-de-lis. From the colonnade, the persons of the court look on, whisper together, pointing at the King, where apparently he is kneeling, struck with adoration, at the feet of Jeanne. D'Alençon, standing forward from the rest of the court, is intent upon Jeanne, as, with the inward light of a vision mirrored, her face looks down on the King with a mighty intensity.]

THE EMPEROR IN THE STAINED GLASS

[Speaks with the voice of St. Michael.]

Charles the Seventh!

Inheritor of France, legitimate

By birth —

CHARLES

[Murmurs.]

Legitimate!

THE EMPEROR

Behold the crown —

The crown of Charlemagne — which thou shalt wear
At Rheims. This is the Maid, whom God hath sent
To bring thy land and thee deliverance.

[As the chiming ceases, so the vision. Charles — his hands clasped — rises wildly to his feet.]

CHARLES

Charlemagne! Charlemagne! Thy blood is vindicated.

My lords, this is the Maid of God!

JEANNE

[*Staggering slightly as with faintness, moves toward D'Alençon, who comes to her side.*]

I am tired ;

Thy shoulder, friend !

CHARLES

[*Kneels again, his arms upraised to the stained glass.*]

Charlemagne !

D'ALENÇON

[*As Jeanne rests her forehead on his shoulder, speaks to himself dreamily.*]

Why, 'tis a child !

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE: A Meadow before the Walls of Orleans.

May 7, 1429.

In the near background (occupying a large part of the scene) a green knoll overlooks the not distant river Loire flowing toward the right, and a part of the city wall, which sweeps beyond view, left. On this knoll are discovered Franciscan friars grouped about an altar, beside which floats a white painted banner, sprinkled with fleur-de-lis.¹ One of these friars, PIGACHON, is dressed half in armour, his cassock — worn over a steel corslet — being tucked up, thus revealing his legs encased in steel. On the left of the scene are women, old men, and priests of Orleans. The foreground and the rest of the adjacent meadow are thronged with French officers and soldiery. In the midst of the latter (centre), Jeanne d'Arc — in full armour — is dictating a letter, which PASQUEREL, her confessor, transcribes on a parchment.

¹ On one side of this banner (which, authentically, was Jeanne's personal standard) is depicted — on the ground of fleur-de-lis — Christ in Glory, holding the world and giving His benediction to a lily, held by one of two angels, who are kneeling at each side; on the other side the figure of the Virgin and a shield with the arms of France, supported by two angels.

The friars also have in their charge two smaller banners, viz.: one a pennon, on which is represented the Annunciation; the other, a banneret, adorned with the Crucifixion.

JEANNE

“ King of England ; and you, Duke of Bedford, who call yourself Regent of the Kingdom of France ; you, William De la Pole, Earl of Suffolk ; John, Lord Talbot ; and you, Thomas Lord Scales, Lieutenants of the same duke ; make satisfaction to the King of Heaven ; give up to the Maid, who is sent hither by God, the keys of all the good towns in France, which ye have taken. And as for you, archers, companions-in-arms, gentlemen, and others who are before this town of Orleans, get you home to your own country by God His command ; and if this be not done, then once more will we come upon you with so great an *ha, ha !* as shall be remembered these thousand years. Answer now if ye will make peace in this city of Orleans, which if ye do not, ye may be reminded on, to your much hurt.

Jhesus Maria — Jehanne la Pucelle.”

Good Pasquerel, I know not A nor B ;
Where shall I make my cross ?

PASQUEREL

Here, Angelique.

[*Jeanne makes her cross on the parchment, which she then rolls tight and ties to an arrow.*]

JEANNE

De Metz, ride to the bridge and shoot this arrow
Across the Loire into the English lines. —
Wait, aim it toward the tower of the Tournelles
Into the conning-shaft where Suffolk stands.

DE METZ

And if they make no answer ?

JEANNE

We have fought
 Since daybreak. We can fight again till dark ;
 And after that to-morrow, and to-morrow.

[*Exit De Metz, with the arrow, amid shouts of the people
 and soldiers.*]

DUNOIS

Your words are brave, Pucelle, and they are holy ;
 But holy words are weak against stone walls.
 The English fortress is too strong for us.

LA HIRE

Now by the hang'd thieves of Gethsemane !

JEANNE

[*Sternly.*]

Gascon !

LA HIRE

Forgive, my captain : by my stick !
 I swear to God I swore but by my stick.
 You said a man might curse upon his stick.

JEANNE

You do well to bethink you, Marshal ; mind,
 Who spits 'gainst Heaven, it falleth on his head.

[*Pulling his ear with her hand.*]

But thou art my brave Growler for all that !

[*Jeanne passes to speak earnestly to other officers.*]

LA HIRE

Now by my stick, Dunois, without offence,
 Thou liest in thy windpipe and thy gorge

To say the English walls are made of stone ;
 And if the Maid of God shall say the word,
 By supper-time we'll roll 'em out as flat
 As apple-jacks, with English blood for syrup.

DUNOIS

Truly the Maid of God hath wrought strange things
 Yet there be bounds —

LA HIRE

Eight days ! Eight days ! Dunois,
 Since she set foot in Orleans, and look now !
 The enemy that hemmed you in a web
 Of twenty fortresses now holds but one.

DUNOIS

But that one — the Tournelles !

LA HIRE

And think ye, then,
 That she who turns French poodles into lions,
 And changes British mastiffs into hares,
 Will find it difficult to change yon tower
 Into a sugar-loaf ? I tell thee, man,
 She is from God, and doth whatso she will.

JEANNE

[*To D'Alençon, who in his armour stands reading.*]
 A book, my knight ? And your good sword yet hot ?

D'ALENÇON

The war-horse, Jeanne, still craves his manger-oats. —
 My book is a little island in the battle,
 And I am moored alongside in this lull
 To barter with strange natives — deeds, for dreams
 Of deeds.

JEANNE

Is it the holy gospel?

D'ALENÇON

No.

JEANNE

Whereof, then, do you read?

D'ALENÇON

Of you, Madonna!

When you were virgin-queen of Attica,
 And all your maiden Amazons in arms
 Hailed you "Hippolyta."

JEANNE

[*Putting from him the book, hands him his sword with a
 friendly smile.*]

This is your sword,
 My bonny duke; and this dear ground is France.
 I know naught of your queens and "anticas."

A PRIEST

[*In the crowd.*]

Jeanne! Jeanne the Maid!

JEANNE

Who calls me?

THE PRIEST

Speak to us—

What of the battle?

SEVERAL VOICES

Tell us! Speak to us!

JEANNE

Good folk, you hearts of Orleans, holy fathers!
What would you that I tell you?

SEVERAL VOICES

Prophecy!

JEANNE

Ah, friends, if you would hear of bloody stars,
Of sun-dogs, and of mare's tails in the dawn,
Go to your gossips and your weather-wives;
'Tis ours to fight and God's to prophesy.
Yet what our Lord hath spoken by His Saints
To me, I speak to you again : be glad,
For not in vain, good men, have you stood strong
And shared your loaves of famine, crumb by crumb,
To man your walls against our wicked foe ;
And not in vain, mothers of Orleans, you
Have rocked your cradles by the cannon's side
To bring your sons and husbands ease of sleep ;
For you have kept this city for your Lord,
Which is the King of Heaven, and He hath come
To recompense you now. Therefore, return
Within your gates again, and when you hear,
Thrice blown, upon this horn, God's warning blast,
Then ring your bells for France and victory.

[*To her page.*]

Louis, the horn !

[LOUIS DE CONTES *blows the horn once.*]

So shall you know His sign.

[*The people depart with gestures of benediction and hope.*]

D'ALENÇON

[*Standing with La Hire, near Jeanne.*]

A child! and her clear eyes, upturned to Heaven,
Shall influence the stars of all the ages.

[*Clutching his companion's arm.*]

La Hire! We are living *now*, can watch, can serve her!

LA HIRE

Aye, folk that live in other times are damned.

[*An altar bell sounds.*]

PIGACHON

[*To Jeanne.*]

The Vespers, Angelique.

JEANNE

Soldiers, the Mass!

And let all you that have confessed yourselves
This day, kneel down, and let the rest depart
Until confession.

[*All kneel, save some few, who depart, abashed. Among these is D'Alençon, whom Jeanne stays wistfully.*]

You, my duke?

D'ALENÇON

I am

A tardy Christian, Jeanne.

JEANNE

I pray you kneel
Beside me. My good Pasquerel will hear you.

[*D'Alençon kneels beside Jeanne and Pasquerel; Pigachon among the friars is about to conduct the service at the*

altar, when De Metz's voice is heard calling (off right), and he enters, followed immediately by an English Herald, who, bearing himself defiant, holds in his hand a parchment.]

DE METZ

Jeanne! — Maid of God!

THE ENGLISH HERALD

Where is the whore of France?

[The kneeling soldiers start up in turbulence.]

SOLDIERS

La Mort! La Mort!

JEANNE

[Keeping them back.]

Peace! Let the herald speak;
His privilege is sacred. (*To D'Alençon*) Stop them.

HERALD

Where

Is she who calls herself the Maid of God?

JEANNE

I am the Maid.

HERALD

[Speaking, but at times referring with his eyes to the parchment.]

Thus saith my Lord, the King
Of England, by his servant Suffolk, Captain
Before the walls of Orleans: Whore of France —

D'ALENÇON

Death! —

JEANNE

[*Clings to him.*]

Stay! He speaks not for himself, but Suffolk;
His cloth is holy.

D'ALENÇON

[*Bitterly.*]

Holy!

HERALD

Courtesan

Of him who shames the blood of Charlemagne,
Consort of Satan, which hast ta'en the limbs
And outward seeming of a peasant wench
To execute thy damnèd sorceries
On England's sons, to please thy paramour —

JEANNE

[*To the soldiers, who grow more clamorous.*]

Yet patience, *garçons!*

HERALD

Thou unvirgin thing,
Which art vaingloried in the garb of man;
Thou impudent, thou subtle, thou unclean —

JEANNE

[*Choking back the tears.*]

No, no! Thou hast forgot what thou shouldst say!

HERALD

Thus fling we back thy poison'd script unread,
And therewith this defiance: Work thy worst,
And with the hand of strange paralysis

Strike numb with fear our noble English host ;
 Yet shall we still resist thee with our souls,
 And in the day when Christ shall let thee fall
 Within our power, then shalt thou make amends
 In fire for all thy witchcraft, and in fire
 Shall thy unhallow'd spirit return to hell.

D'ALENÇON

Hold, gentlemen ! Wait yet if he have done
 This "holy privilege" of infamy.

HERALD

Sir, I am done.

*[D'Alençon, taking the little pennon of the Annunciation
 from a friar, hands it to the Herald.]*

D'ALENÇON

Take, then, this back with you
 In token who it is whom you profane.
 Lock it within your fortress' strongest tower,
 And tell your masters that a simple maid
 Of France shall fetch it home, this night, to Orleans.
*[Exit Herald with pennon. The soldiers mutter applause
 and execrations.]*

JEANNE

[Hiding her face, turns to D'Alençon.]

What have I done that they should name me so ?

LA HIRE

Par mon baton ! We'll answer them in blood.

DUNOIS

Your places, officers !

JEANNE

[Starts to *Pigachon* and the soldiers.]

The psalm! Your psalm!

[*Pigachon* and the friars raise the chant of the hymn of Charlemagne. This is immediately taken up by all the soldiers, who, under its influence, pass out in solemn enthusiasm, led by *D'Alençon* and *Jeanne*, the latter carrying in her hand the banneret with the Crucifixion.]

ALL

*Veni creator spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia
Quæ tu creasti pectora.*

[There now remain behind only *Pasquerel* and the Franciscan friars, grouped around *Jeanne's* standard of the fleur-de-lis. These continue the chant in a low tone, as the voices of the soldiers grow fainter in the distance.]

FRIARS

*Qui paraclitus diceris
Donum Dei altissimi
Fons vivus, ignis, caritas
Et spiritalis unctio.*

*Hostem repellas longius
Pacemque dones protinus,
Ductore sic te prævio
Vitemus omne noxium.*

[During the last verses *Pasquerel*, having examined the banner critically, fetches a copper box, opens it, lays out some sewing and painting materials, lowers the banner,

and bends over it solicitously. With the last words of the chant, a serene quiet falls upon the knoll, save when, from time to time, contrasting sounds of the distant battle interrupt, or fill the pauses of the conversation between Pasquerel and Pigachon.]

PASQUEREL

Reach me my palette yonder, Pigachon.
Our Lord hath something scathed his brow and lip
I' the last mêlée, and one of his white lilies
Is smirched with river-slime. Take you my needle
And hem this ravell'd edge, whilst I retouch
The Saviour's robe and face.

PIGACHON

The crimson silk
Or white?

PASQUEREL

The white is better for the hem.
Now for our Lord, what say you? — to the lip
A touch of *Garence rose*? I much prefer
Myself, for blush and richness of the blood,
A *Garence rose dorée* to cinnabar;
Yet thereof Master Fra Angelico
Of Florence might be critical.

PIGACHON

[*Threading his needle.*]

May be.

PASQUEREL

Well, masters think not two alike.

[*Giving a touch.*]

Voilà!

[*Silence, and the distant battle.*]

Saw you the mauve and pink geraniums
In Brother Michel's hot-bed ?

PIGACHON

Wonderful !

PASQUEREL

He waters them at prime and curfew.

PIGACHON

Ha !

[*Silence again ; the two friars work on.*]

PASQUEREL

[*Suddenly.*]

I have it, Pigachon ! It comes to me !
To touch this lily's petal-tips with rose
In token that it bleeds.

PIGACHON

Why does it bleed ?

PASQUEREL

But thou art mule-brain'd, Pigachon. Know, then,
It bleeds for sorrow of its little sisters,
The fleur-de-lis of France, because they lie
Bleeding and trampled by the fiends of England.

PIGACHON

Ah !

PASQUEREL

Yet perchance the Maid might disapprove.

PIGACHON

May be.

PASQUEREL

[*Sighs.*]

Well, well ; I will not make it bleed.

[*Enter, amid louder cries from the battle, Louis de Contes with two men, fettered.*]

LOUIS

Your name ?

THE FIRST MAN

John Gris, Knight to the King of England.

LOUIS

Yours ?

THE OTHER

Adam Goodspeed, yeoman.

LOUIS

John Gris, Knight,

And Adam Goodspeed, yeoman, you are bound
 As prisoners to Louis, called De Contes,
 Page to God's maiden Jeanne, called La Pucelle.

GRIS

Sith God hath dropped us in the Devil's clutch,
 His will be done.

GOODSPEED

Amen.

PASQUEREL

[*Springing up from his paints, stares off scene (right), appalled.*]

O dolorosa !

[*Enter D'Alençon, supporting Jeanne, and followed by La Hire and a group of soldiers.*]

D'ALENÇON

Go back, La Hire : let not this thing be known.

[*Exeunt La Hire and soldiers.*]

JEANNE

Where is my standard ? Rest me here.

D'ALENÇON

The gates

Are but a little farther.

JEANNE

In God's name

I will not leave the field. — My standard !

[*She sinks down beside it.*]

D'ALENÇON

[*To Louis.*]

Run !

Fetch from the town a litter.

[*To Pasquerel.*]

Have you oil ?

Prepare a heated compress for the wound ;

She is stricken and may die.

[*Louis, after fastening his prisoners to a log (left), departs with a friar. Pasquerel, after lighting a charcoal brazier, begins with D'Alençon's help to tear and fold a bandage.*]

JEANNE

[*Faintly.*]

Good Pigachon !

PIGACHON

You called me, Angelique ?

JEANNE

Go to my men
And tell them I am well.

PIGACHON

[*Dubious.*]

A lie ?

JEANNE

A little,
A white lie : God will make of it a star
To shine on Orleans when she is delivered.

PIGACHON

I go.

[*Exit right.*]

PASQUEREL

- [*Looking after him.*]Would *I* might tell a lie for her !

JEANNE

No, dear my bonny duke, you shall not touch ;
I'll pluck it out myself.

D'ALENÇON

Thou must not, Jeanne ;
The barb hath sunken deep ; thou art but a girl.

JEANNE

I am a soldier. — Think you it will bleed ?
Ah, Heaven, if it should bleed !

D'ALENÇON

[*As Jeanne, turning away, clutches at her side.*]

What dost thou ?

JEANNE

See,

There is the arrow. I will keep my eyes
A little shut —

D'ALENÇON

She's dying, Pasquerel;
She's torn the arrow forth with her own hand.
Help me to bear her to the city gate.

PASQUEREL

She said beside her standard.

D'ALENÇON

But, thou sot

Of superstition, she is dying. Are
Her wishes dearer to thee than her life?

PASQUEREL

She is from God.

D'ALENÇON

O idiotic phrase!

We soldiers babble it like paraquets,
And let a child — this brave and dreamy girl —
Die in the sacrifice for us — for us!
Jeanne, thou must live — Jeanne! Though all France
shall find
Perdition, *thou* must live!

PASQUEREL

Unholy words!

She lives for France.

D'ALENÇON

[*Eagerly, as Jeanne lifts her head.*]

She lives; it is enough!

JEANNE

[*Faintly to D'Alençon.*]

Good neighbour, say to him I had to come.

D'ALENÇON

To whom?

JEANNE

My father. You will tell him?

D'ALENÇON

Truly.

JEANNE

You know, we have two fathers; one's in heaven.
We must obey the greater. — Was he angry?

D'ALENÇON

I think he was not angry.

JEANNE

That is strange;

His scowl is terrible, and yet he loves us:
My brother Pierre and me the most, I think.
What did he do the day I went away?

D'ALENÇON

Dost thou not know me, Jeanne?

JEANNE

I know thee well.

Thou art the face that comes to my closed eyes,
And in the darkness there I speak to it. —
I knew my mother she would understand,
For often I told her how my Voices said
That I must crown the King, and she would smile,
But always Papa Jacques he scowled.

D'ALENÇON

Now gently ;

Rest back upon my arm ; this is thy friend
D'Alençon. — So!

[*Pasquerel and D'Alençon put upon her the compress.*]

JEANNE

My mother hurts me here.

They said it was an arrow in my side,
But I knew well it was the homesickness,
And so I plucked it out, and gave 't to him
My Lord, because it had no business there.

D'ALENÇON

To me you gave it, Jeanne, not to your Lord.

JEANNE

And are you not His knight whom God hath sent
To be my shield in battle? — Verily
I leaned upon your shoulder at Chinon
When I was weary and the world grew dim. —
Thou art D'Alençon and my bonny duke.

[*Reënter (left) Louis and the friar with a litter.*]

D'ALENÇON

I am your servant, and must bear you now
Back to the town.

DISTANT CRIES

La Pucelle! Au secours!

JEANNE

You hear! I cannot go. They call for me.
Fetch me my horse.

D'ALENÇON

Madonna, you may die.

JEANNE

I may not die before I have performed
My Lord's commandment ; they have told me so.

D'ALENÇON

Who told ?

JEANNE

My Voices.

D'ALENÇON

Jeanne, for love of France
And truth and thy dear soul, lose not thy life
For vanities and whisperings of the air.

JEANNE

Know you whereof you speak ?

D'ALENÇON

I speak of nothing,
For they are naught.

JEANNE

My holy counsel — naught !

D'ALENÇON

Do not believe them, Jeanne. They are delusions.
Forgive me ! I must speak the truth to save
Thy life.

JEANNE

If this were true, O better death !
But listen !

*[The Franciscans about the altar are beginning to move it
from the knoll to the level ground (on the left).]*

D'ALENÇON

[*Persuadingly, bending near her.*]

Come now with me. Be a good girl.

JEANNE

Listen, my duke.

D'ALENÇON

'Tis but a friar, bearing

The altar bell.

A VOICE

[*Speaks with the bell, which sounds momentarily as the friar moves it.*]

Daughter of God, be strong.

JEANNE

[*Gazing before her into Pasquerel's lighted brazier.*]

It is her voice; it is St. Catherine.

See in the little flames how small she shines

And flutters like a moth mid peonies.

But holy saints fear not to singe their wings

In fire. You see, she is not frightened.

PASQUEREL

[*Sinks, murmuring, to his knees.*]*Pater,**Sanctum sit nomen tuum.*

GOODSPEED

[*To Gris.*]

Turn thine eyes

Away! The witch beginneth her hell charms.

JEANNE

[*Rising to her feet.*]

Thou dear St. Catherine, I will be strong!

PASQUEREL

[*To D'Alençon.*]

And will you now believe ?

D'ALENÇON

This is a strength
Unnatural, a fever from the wound.

Jeanne —

JEANNE

Look, D'Alençon, look, they leave the bridge !
Our men have turned. Alas ! They are beaten back.

[*Enter La Hire, beside himself.*]

LA HIRE

[*Raising both arms to heaven.*]

Lord God, I pray Thee, do Thou for La Hire
What he would do for Thee, if he were God,
And Thou, God, wert La Hire !

D'ALENÇON

What news, and quickly !

LA HIRE

News for the rats and skunks of Europe ! News
For dancing apes and Master Rigadoons !
Dunois himself hath bade our men retreat,
And me, La Hire, to tell it !

CRIES

[*Outside (right).*]

To the gates !

JEANNE

[Looking toward the battle.]

Dunois, Dunois, thou hast offended me.

CRIES

[Outside.]

The gates!

D'ALENÇON

Our men — they come. — Jeanne, you will fall.
Stay! — I will rally them.

JEANNE

[Climbing faintly the knoll, as D'Alençon comes to her support.]

Still be my shield.

[Enter Dunois and the French soldiery, in rout.]

CRIES

The gates of Orleans!

JEANNE

[From the knoll, speaking from D'Alençon's arms, which uphold her, stays the rout.]

Halt!

CRIES

The Maid! The Maid!

JEANNE

Who hath commanded you this thing?

DUNOIS

Jeanne d'Arc,

The English fortress is impregnable.

JEANNE

Dunois, heaven's fortress is impregnable
By souls of gentlemen who turn their backs.

DUNOIS

You fell ; we saw how you were wounded, Maid.

JEANNE

And ye beheld not One who did not fall :
Shame, captains of France ! Have ye not heard
" Better a dog's head than a lion's tail " ?
Back to the bridge and show your teeth again !
Back to the bridge and show to God your eyes !

SOLDIERS

Back to the bridge !

JEANNE

My banner, dear my duke !
Come, we will go together, hand in hand. —
Children of France, behold your fleur-de-lis !
Thou, Louis, stay, and when thou shalt have seen
This banner touch the English walls — thy horn !
Blow it at Orleans' gate : the siege is raised !
Follow your lilies now, brave boys of France !
Your lilies ! Christ the Lord doth captain you.
Ten thousand of his host surround us. See !
The sun goes down through archings of their wings,
The river burns and eddies with their swords.
Work, work, and God will work ! Follow the lilies
And shoot your arrows straight. — *Jhesus-Maria !*

SOLDIERS

Jhesus-Maria! — St. Denis! La France!

[*Exeunt all but Louis de Contes, in the foreground (right), and the two English prisoners tied, on the left, below the knoll. The Franciscans have been led away by Pasquerel toward the town, carrying with them the altar.*]

GRIS

I looked long in her face. Gentle it seemed
And beautiful.

GOODSPEED

So did the serpent's seem
In Adam's garden. Oh, the fiend is wise,
And in a witch's face most damnèd fair.

GRIS

Indeed, the spell of her is strange upon me.

[*To Louis.*]

Where is her banner now?

LOUIS

I cannot see;
The low sun hurts my eyes; which way I look
It stares me like a monstrous waning moon
Winked on the blood-red clouds of rolling dust.

GOODSPEED

More like it be the many-headed face
Of Satan mocking us.

LOUIS

The lilies, there!
The Maid! The Maid!

GRIS

What! do we drive her back?

LOUIS

She drives you from the bridge. Her armour!—
Now —

Oh, she is blown about and fluttered o'er
By clouds of little golden butterflies,
And where she thrusts her liliated banner through,
She glitters double — in the air and river.

GOODSPEED

Her fiends are blown up from the underworld
To succour her.

GRIS

[*Kneeling.*]

This spell upon me!

LOUIS

Ah!

They hurl you from the drawbridge. Christ! You
drown.

Yonder her banner and the fleur-de-lis!
The Maid hath touched the walls. *Vive la France!*

[*Rushing up the knoll, Louis turns toward Orleans and winds his horn three times. In an instant, from the left, a clamour of horns and shouts and bells reply. Away, on the right, the iron din of the battle is still heard. Behind the knoll's outline burns the bright red of sunset; against that, raising his horn, stands out the tense, lithe silhouette of the little page.*]

ACT IV

ACT IV

SCENE I: Before the walls of Troyes. July 5,
1429. Night.

On the left (up scene), partly surrounded by cypress trees, the entrance of a pavilion-like tent (extending off scene, left) is closed by a mediæval tapestry. At centre, beneath the trees, stand two benches of wood, one higher than the other. On the right, a stack of arms, and behind that vague outlines of a camp. Throughout the scene's action, from time to time, officers and guards of the French army pass by, or are visible in their battle-gear, as portions of the scene. After the rising of the moon, the walls and towers of the town are dimly visible in the background.

Enter, right, La Tremouille and CAUCHON, the latter in the garb of a layman.

LA TREMOUILLE

That is her tent; those reddish stars, that move,
Are sentries on the city ramparts. Troyes
Still shuts its gates against the Maid, the last
To stand between Charles and his crown at Rheims.

CAUCHON

He *will* be crowned?

LA TREMOUILLE

We hope yet to prevent.
You heard me speak of Brother Richard, here,

Staying in Troyes. He is a preaching friar,
 A kind of mendicant Demosthenes
 Who holds the keys of power between his teeth,
 And locks or opes the city with his tongue.
 To-night he is coming to interview the Maid
 To ascertain whether she be from God.
 On that the town's surrender will depend.

CAUCHON

So then — ?

LA TREMOUILLE

I think I have forestalled the Maid.
 A certain Catherine de la Rochelle —
 But never mind. *Our* point is this : that you
 Stand ready, when I will, to yield Jeanne d'Arc
 Into the English hands, to burn for witchcraft.

CAUCHON

To burn by course of law.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Smiling.*]

By law, of course !

[*Enter at back De Chartres, followed by FLAVY.*]

DE CHARTRES

[*Investigating with a torch.*]

Your Grace ?

LA TREMOUILLE

[*To Cauchon.*]

Ah, 'tis our man.

[*To De Chartres.*]

You've brought him ?

DE CHARTRES
[*Revealing Flavy.*]

There.

LA TREMOUILLE

Here is our honest bishop from Beauvais,
Pierre Cauchon.

CAUCHON
[*Indicating his disguise.*]
Ex officio, my lords!

DE CHARTRES

Your secret shall be safe with us. — This, sirs,
Is Marshal Flavy.

LA TREMOUILLE
[*To Flavy.*]
From Compiègne?

FLAVY

I am

Commander at Compiègne.

LA TREMOUILLE
[*To De Chartres.*]

He knows the plan?

FLAVY

I am to ask the help immediate
Of Jeanne the Maid against the enemy
That threaten my city.

DE CHARTRES

I explained to him
How *this* good friend (*indicates Cauchon*) will see to
it that the English
Shall know the proper moment to attack
And lure the Maid to fight outside the walls.

FLAVY

A few French troopers will pass out with her,
And then — I am to pull the drawbridge up.

CAUCHON

She shall be treated by us justly, sirs,
By process of the law for heretics.

DE CHARTRES

She is coming : I will go.

LA TREMOUILLE

What! not afraid
To catch a second ague?

DE CHARTRES

In her presence
All policy deserts me, I grow blind;
Once was enough.

LA TREMOUILLE

Wait; we will go along
With you and fetch the King and Brother Richard.
[*Exeunt La Tremouille, De Chartres, Cauchon, and Flavy*
(*right*).

*Enter, at left (down scene), Jeanne. She is closely followed
by a group of various persons, — women, artisans, gentle-
folk, — some of whom, drawing near, touch her cloak,
try to kiss her hands.]*

SEVERAL VOICES

Holy! holy! Hear us, Maid of God!

JEANNE

Good souls, what would ye ask of Jeanne the Maid?

A WOMAN

[*Holding out a swaddled bundle.*]

My babe is dead. Her little body's cold.
Oh, resurrect her!

JEANNE

[*Tenderly.*]

Was thy child baptized?

THE WOMAN

Yes, Angelique.

JEANNE

Then do not cry for her,
For she is playing now at Mary's knee.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Mine's newly born. Be godmother to him,
That he may prosper.

JEANNE

Let his name be *Charles*.

A COURTIER

[*Reaching out his palm.*]

My fortune, Maid! When shall my luck change?

JEANNE

If

Your luck be lame, rub it with elbow-grease.

A KNIGHT

Jeanne d'Arc, my master sendeth me —

JEANNE

Who is

Your master?

THE KNIGHT

'Tis a nobleman of France,
And prays you tell him which of the two popes
Of Rome or Avignon he should obey.

JEANNE

Tell him with God there is no politics;
Let him serve God. — Why do you touch your rings
To mine, good people?

AN ARTISAN

To be sanctified.

JEANNE

Oh, do not touch my hands. But if ye seek
Blessing, go home and kiss the old tired hands
Of your good mothers that have toiled for you;
Come not to me; good night, friends, and adieu!

*[The people depart; Jeanne stands with hands clasped.
Enter from the tent Louis de Contes; seeing her thus,
he kneels before her, worshipful.]*

What shall I do? — Ah, Monseigneur in heaven,
Protect me from their prayers! Let not this folk
Commit idolatry because of me,
Nor touch this body as a saintly thing.
Guard me, you dear and gracious Voices! — Still
Why do I think on what my duke he said:
“Do not believe them, Jeanne! They are delusions.”

[Shuddering.]

Dear God, let me forget, for I am tired;
Let Thy work be fulfilled and take me home.

[Seeing Louis on his knees, she drops impetuously beside him.]

No, no! Not thou, my Louis!

LOUIS

Angelique,

Why do you weep?

[*Enter D'Alençon through the cypresses behind them.*]

JEANNE

The night — how great it is!

And we — how little and how weak we are!

That star is shining down on Domremy

Between the pear-tree boughs. I had not dreamed

How that the world would be so great and wide.

LOUIS

They say it reacheth even beyond Rome,

Though I was never there.

JEANNE

It matters not;

It lieth all within Our Lady's arms. —

Tell me, my Louis, hast thou never played

At knucklebone?

• LOUIS

You will not play with me!

JEANNE

And may I not?

LOUIS

But you —

JEANNE

Sometimes we play

With pebbles; here are some.

LOUIS

But you! From you

The English fled at Orleans, and to you
The angels speak and the bright saints come down!

JEANNE

[Rising, drops the pebbles slowly from her hand.]

It seemed but yesterday: in dear Lorraine
There was a lass with a red petticoat,
And she was called "Jeannette."

D'ALENÇON

[Coming forward, impetuous.]

Madonna!

JEANNE

[Starts, then goes to him.]

Thou!

[Turning back.]

Ah, me! I saw it. Why did you stand there?

D'ALENÇON

Where, then?

JEANNE

Behind you! Over my left shoulder
I saw it rising, pale.

D'ALENÇON

[Glancing off right.]

The moon!

JEANNE

'Tis full.

What bad news have you brought me?

D'ALENÇON

I?

JEANNE

The King!

What of the King?

D'ALENÇON

The King is well.

JEANNE

But thou?

Thou art in pain, my duke.

D'ALENÇON

[*Looking at her.*]

It is not pain.

JEANNE

[*To Louis.*]Go in and sleep. When I have need of thee,
I'll call.

LOUIS

I will nap lightly, Angelique.

[*Exit into tent.*]

JEANNE

Now, now, my good knight, speak out plain: what
news?

I cannot bear the sadness in your eyes.

D'ALENÇON

There is a sadness which belies its name
And grows immeasurably dear to joy.
The King —

JEANNE

Ah!

D'ALENÇON

He is coming here to-night
To speak with you.

JEANNE

More counsels? In God's name,
Let us not hold so long and many parleys
But march short-cut to Rheims.

D'ALENÇON

This town of Troyes
Holds for the English still.

JEANNE

It will surrender.

D'ALENÇON

We have no engines for the siege.

JEANNE

I have sent
For Brother Richard. He will open the gates
To-morrow; the day after, we shall march
Straight on to Rheims.

D'ALENÇON

Charles will not march to Rheims

JEANNE

What shall prevent?

D'ALENÇON

A vision from the Lord.

JEANNE

D'Alençon! hath the King beheld a vision?

D'ALENÇON

I did not say the King.

JEANNE

Who, then ?

D'ALENÇON

A woman.

JEANNE

O bonny duke, why art thou strange with me ?
Be not like all the rest, careful and slow.
Speak to me bold and plain.

D'ALENÇON

Forgive me, Jeanne,
My soul, too, is infected with this air
And breathes of weakness, innuendo, doubt ;
But now, like thee, I will be bold and brief.
The woman Catherine de La Rochelle
Hath duped the Dauphin to believe in her
That she hath seen a vision out of heaven,
Declaring thee and all thy Voices false.

JEANNE

[*Scornfully.*]

Ha, by St. John ! And doth she think to fool
My King with *fi, foh, fum* ?

D'ALENÇON

The King believes.

JEANNE

[*Ardently.*]

Of course my King believes.

D'ALENÇON

[*Slowly.*]

In Catherine.

[*A pause: from off right come distant sounds of laughter,
and a flickering glow.*]

THE VOICE OF CHARLES

Walk near us in the torch light.

D'ALENÇON

. They are coming.

Madonna, do not let that scornful fire
Die from your face. For such apostasy
There's a divine contempt which makes us strong
To suffer and retaliate. Take heart!
What matters it though this half-minded prince
Goes begging for his crown. — Dost thou not hear me?

JEANNE

To build and build and build on running sands —
How terrible it must be to be God!

[*Reaching to D'Alençon her two hands.*]

Think you I shall be strong enough, my duke?

D'ALENÇON

Oh, I will give more than the world can take,
And fill the gap of this ingratitude
With burning recompense. Lean thou henceforth
On me — on me.—

THE VOICE OF CHARLES

[*Amid murmured conversation.*]

Enchantress!

JEANNE

'Tis my King.

Say I will welcome him within my tent —
 And Catherine. This shall be overcome.

D'ALENÇON

But not alone! Let me stand with thee, Jeanne.

JEANNE

Always you are with me. When I close my eyes,
 You lean against a pillar of the dark
 And pore upon a book. You do not speak,
 And yet I know whom you are reading of —
 A certain queen — her name is hard to learn.

D'ALENÇON

Hippolyta!

JEANNE

A maiden-queen, you said.

D'ALENÇON

In Attica.

JEANNE

I know not where; good night!
 Come not; this good fight will I make alone.

[*With a quick pressure of D'Alençon's hand, exit Jeanne
 into her tent.*]

D'ALENÇON

"Always you are with me." — Did she say those
 words,
 Or am I dizzy with this incense of her?
 "Say I will welcome him with Catherine."

What will she do? Well, I can but obey.
 "Always you are with me!" Always, always! Here—
 On the air, this moonlight, everywhere—her face
 Encounters mine in glory.

[*Enter Charles and CATHERINE attended by torch-bearers
 and followed by La Tremouille, BROTHER RICHARD, and
 Flavy.*]

CHARLES

[*To Catherine, holding her hand and gazing at her.*]

Even your shadow
 Steals splendour from the moonlight—less a shadow
 Than some bright spirit's reflection.

[*He kisses her fingers.*]

D'ALENÇON

God! Can that
 Which leads him captive be akin to this
 Which hallows me with beauty?

CATHERINE

Charles is kind
 To flatter his old comrade of Chinon.

CHARLES

Chinon! how our life-star hath changed since then!
 Aye, Dagobert is dead, and poor King Patch
 Is now a prince of Europe, thanks to—thanks
 To God's aid and Saint Charlemagne, and now
 Henceforth to you, sweet seeress. Tell me, Kate,
 Of this white lady in the cloth-of-gold
 That comes to you: when did you see her last?

CATHERINE

To-night : her limbs were lovely as first snow,
 And with her hand she touched me and said, " Rise,
 And seek your King, and go forth in the land,
 And let the royal trumpeters ride first
 And blow nine blasts before you in each town,
 And lo! all buried and concealèd gold
 In France shall straight be gathered to your feet
 In piles of glory. Give all to your King,
 But tell him to beware the town of Rheims,
 For if he enters there, my power is spent.

LA TREMOUILLE

Note that, your Majesty : the town of Rheims!
 The vision warns you to turn back from Rheims.

CHARLES

We'll make this known to Jeanne and change our plans
 Accordingly.

[*To D'Alençon.*]

She's here?

D'ALENÇON

There, in her tent,

And she hath bade me say —

[*Pauses.*]

CHARLES

What?

D'ALENÇON

[*Barely restraining his emotion.*]

Nothing, sire.

[*Exit swiftly (right).*]

CHARLES

[*Looking after D'Alençon in surprise, turns to Catherine and the others.*]

We will go in ; you also, gentlemen.

[*As he is about to enter the tent, the tapestry is opened from within by Jeanne, who stands in the entrance.*]

JEANNE

My Dauphin and the Lady Catherine
Are welcome.

CHARLES

[*Coldly.*]

'Tis some time, Maid, since we met,
And there are solemn matters to impart.
Come, Catherine.

[*Exit Charles into the tent.*]

CATHERINE

[*Aside to La Tremouille, as she follows Charles.*]

Why do you make me face her !

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Aside.*]

'Tis but a moment ; play the game well now.

[*Exit Catherine. La Tremouille speaks to Jeanne.*]

This is Commander Flavy of Compiègne.

JEANNE

I pray you enter, sir.

LA TREMOUILLE

This, Brother Richard
Of Troyes.

[*Brother Richard, approaching slow, and suspicious, makes constantly the sign of the cross and scatters before him liquid from a vial.*]

JEANNE

What is he sprinkling ?

LA TREMOUILLE

Holy water.

JEANNE

More boldly, sir ; I shall not fly away.

BROTHER RICHARD

How know I yet whether thou art from God ?

JEANNE

Enter and learn. — Come in, Sieur La Tremouille ;
The room is small to hold both you and me,
But skilful driver turns in a sharp space.

LA TREMOUILLE

[*Pausing beside her.*]

'Tis you or I, Jeanne.

JEANNE

You or God, Seigneur.

[*They go in together, the tapestry closing behind them. Enter (right) D'Alençon and La Hire.*]

D'ALENÇON

'Tis shame enough, La Hire, immortal shame,
That she who hath for us her toil, her visions
Given in service, should be snared about
By webs of this arch-spider, La Tremouille,
To struggle and to suffer ; yet 'tis worst
That he — that he, whom from a mockery

She hath made emperor, could so relapse
As to install this heinous substitute,
Rochelle.

LA HIRE

Not Catherine? Kate of Chinon!

D'ALENÇON

[*Bitterly.*]

She, too, hath visions — in Tremouille's brain —
Impugning those of Jeanne; and Charles, her dupe,
Treats her with amorous credulity,
Half gallant and half gudgeon.

LA HIRE

This would make
The little flowers of Saint Francis swear.

D'ALENÇON

If they had but devised some common sham!
But to pry inward to her maiden soul
And steal that delicate and fairy stuff
The visionary fabric of a child,
Whose dreams of saint and seraphim take on
The sureness of reality — to make
Of that, I say, a tawdry counterfeit
To ordain the humbug of a courtesan —
No, it is monstrous!

LA HIRE

Peste! less metaphysic,
And say what's to be done. Where is she?

D'ALENÇON

There ;

The King and Catherine are with her.

LA HIRE

Well,

Trust her to make a charlatan turn feather.

D'ALENÇON

There is the pity of it! How may she,
Unconscious child, disprove in Catherine
The nature of illusions which her own
Imagination shares? — God spare her that!
For there's no pang, 'mongst all our mortal hurts,
Sharp as the vivisection of a dream.

LA HIRE

I love thee, friend D'Alençon, but thy mouth
Is stuffed too full of parchment. Pray, disgorge ;
What means all this ?

D'ALENÇON

No matter. (*Broodingly*) Once at Orleans
I spake harsh truth to her myself. God knows
I said it but to save her.

LA HIRE

By my stick,
What shall we do? Go in there and smash pates ?

D'ALENÇON

That would be madness.

LA HIRE

What the devil, then ?

D'ALENÇON

This : I am strong in money and estates
 And have a certain influence with Charles
 Which I have never yet used : if he disowns
 Jeanne d'Arc, then I will offer her my hand
 In marriage.

LA HIRE

Thou! thou — to the Maid of God!

D'ALENÇON

No, to the maid of Domremy — “Jeannette.”
 This is no time for superstitious cant ;
 I must now serve her and be practical.
 I am a duke and she is peasant-born ;
 I, as her husband, would uphold her power ;
 If she reject me — mine alone the pain.

LA HIRE

Dost thou not fear the wrath of God for this?

D'ALENÇON

There is no God for me but human love,
 Nor vision save the true vouch of mine eyes,
 And human love and true vouch of mine eyes
 Compel me to this act.

LA HIRE

How long hast thou
 Run daft?

D'ALENÇON

Jeanne! Jeanne! thou shalt not stand alone.

LA HIRE

[*To himself.*]

Fala! This comes of poesie and parchment!

[*Hastening after D'Alençon, where he has gone toward
Jeanne's pavilion.*]

Look ye, my duke, walk this way to my tent
And reassure me that thou be not mad.

D'ALENÇON

Indeed, for love of her, perhaps I am.

[*Exeunt at back, La Hire drawing D'Alençon away from
the tent, from which — after a brief pause — Charles
bursts forth, followed by Catherine and soon afterward
by La Tremouille, who, standing at the entrance of the
tent watching them, twists the tapestry with his fingers.*]

CATHERINE

Charles! Charles, my King! Forgive me.

CHARLES

To forgive
Is simple: to obtain forgiveness — where
'Mongst all my fellow-men may I now look
To be forgiven.

CATHERINE

I am penitent.

CHARLES

Why, so am I; yet surely as that moon
Shall wane, so surely shall we lapse again.
Such creatures, Kate, as you and I are changelings,
Filched out of hell by Satan's forefinger
And smuggled into clouts of human kind
To mock at God the Father.

CATHERINE

Mine the sin;
I lied to you.

CHARLES

Hush! *I* lied to myself.
 Who made me King of France? Whose vision smote
 The clutch of England's armies from my throne? —

[*To his torch-bearers.*]

Go on! put out those lights, and if you can
 Put out those stars! and thou, dear Maid of God,
 Let me forget how basely I forgot.

[*Exit with torch-bearers. La Tremouille comes to Catherine,
 where she stands trembling.*]

LA TREMOUILLE

Have we been drugged with wine?

[*Points to the tent.*]

What happened there?
 I saw you speak to Jeanne, Jeanne look at you.
 What was it she did?

CATHERINE

I know not what she did,
 But what she *is* shone through her as a lamp
 Into my wretched heart, and made me weep
 To know myself. — Pray, lead me to my tent.

LA TREMOUILLE

Defeat once more; defeat! By Hercules!
 For strategy to outwit the lords of Rome
 Commend me to a sheep-girl from Lorraine!

[*Exit with Catherine. Within the tent is heard the voice of
 Brother Richard.*]

BROTHER RICHARD

The city's gates shall open to the King.

[*Enter from the tent Louis, who holds aside the tapestry, staggering with sleepiness. As Brother Richard passes out, he pauses and looks back within; then turns, moved, to Louis.*]

Child, thou art hallowèd to be her page.

[*Exit toward the ramparts.*]

LOUIS

[*Drowsily.*]

I dreamt I was awake and marching — marching —

[*Sinking upon the near bench, he is overcome by slumber. Enter Jeanne and Flavy from the tent.*]

JEANNE

I promise you, Commander, I will aid
Your brave folk in their need. Bid them take heart!
As soon as I have crowned my King at Rheims,
I will go to help the good town of Compiègne.

FLAVY

Your coming shall be rarely welcomed, Maid.

[*Exit (right).*]

JEANNE

All will be over soon — my King be crowned!
Louis, come forth! We'll sleep under the sky;
The night is hot, it stifles there within —
Louis!

[*Discovering him.*]

Ah, weary boy! Thou art still marching

Toward Rheims. — Wait but a moment, little Louis,
Under our lids I'll overtake thee there.

[*She lies down in her armour on the next bench and falls asleep in the moonlight. Enter at back, D'Alençon and La Hire. Seeing Jeanne, they pause, speaking together in low tones.*]

LA HIRE

Not if thy love were whiter and more chaste
Than Abelard's for his dead Heloise —
No, friend D'Alençon!

D'ALENÇON

Will you answer me?

A thousand common drudges, artisans,
Peasants and townsfolk daily flock to her
And kiss that hand in homage. — Am then I
Less worthy?

LA HIRE

They have faith in her. They seek
Salvation.

D'ALENÇON

For themselves! I seek it for her.
This maid is holy by simplicity
And not by miracle. She is a brave
And gentle girl, no more. — How noble she sleeps!
By Heaven, I will keep vigil here to-night.
I love her. Do you trust my honour? — Leave me.

LA HIRE

[*Giving his hand.*]

Good night, friend; but beware the Lord His angels.

[*Exit.*]

D'ALENÇON

When did such maidenhood sleep in the moon
 Before? Or such a soldier dream in armour?
 The camp is silent and this summer night,
 But all the dark is sown with dragon's teeth
 That with the dawning shall spring up in steel
 To rage and stab again. — What martial seed,
 Dropt in the April lap of green Lorraine
 By angels sacking hell from Sinai's mount,
 Bourgeoned this armèd girl to captain us?
 Here sleeps in silver the strong virgin — France.
 She murmurs: What was that?—Dear God, my
 name!

“D'Alençon!” — Jeanne! Jeanne, leave thy dreams
 ajar

And let me through to thee — so, with a kiss.

*[As he springs to kiss her hand, he is caused to stagger back
 by a dazzling, intervening splendour, out of which there
 takes shape the winged form of St. Michael, holding his
 sword drawn.]*

Thou burnest me, beloved; I grow blind;
 My brain is stung with fire. Where are thou snatched
 In flame away from me? — Ah! — stand not there
 Between us! Merely would I bend to touch
 Her still hand with my lips and then begone,
 And yet are you implacable? — Stern Saint,
 Vision, or flaming Minister of Heaven,
 Hallucination, or Apocalypse,
 Whatso you are that, beautiful, take on
 The likeness of imagination, why —
 Why do you stand between us?

[*With his sword St. Michael strikes D'Alençon.*]

Monseigneur !

At last the knowledge and the sin of it,
The sinning and the beauty ! — Lord, I go.
For thou art bridegroom to the Maid of God,
And she who lieth there is thy betrothed,
And I, that dared to love, have sinned. Adieu,
Bright sentinel ! Thine is the vigil now,
The midnight and the Maid inviolate.

[*Exit D'Alençon among the cypresses. A minute now passes before the curtain falls. Various night sounds steal upon the scene ; distant torches flicker out ; and the murmurs and motions of a great army, camped, are suggested to the audience's imagination, while Jeanne — the virgin-captain of that host — lies sleeping, moonlit, in her armour, guarded by the sentinel archangel, vigilant-eyed.*]

SCENE II: A Street in Rheims. July 17, 1429.

The street itself is hidden behind an old, half-ruined wall of the city, over the irregular top of which are visible the upper windows, balconies, and gables of the houses opposite, from which the inmates are seen watching the crowds below, invisible to the audience. The foreground of the scene consists partly of the wall itself, partly of an embankment (with a crooked, elevated foot-path, conducted by stone steps to different heights), which slopes upward to the wall's edge. On the left, at a breach in the wall, is a wide ruined gate, admitting ingress from the street on to the lower foreground left

where the path starts to ascend the slope of the embankment. Seated on the wall, or peering over it (where they stand on the embankment foreground), and filling the gateway, are varicoloured groups of persons. Among these (right) are Pierre Cauchon and NICOLAS LOISELEUR, in the dress of artisans; near the gateway, amid a group of peasants, Jacques d'Arc, Perrin, Pierre d'Arc, and Mengette. High in a seat of vantage on the wall, a PRIEST is looked up to by the people near by, as a presiding authority.

The following dialogue is spoken — with varying intervals of pantomime — during partial lulls in the hubbub of the hidden populace in the street, and the reflex of that among the groups of the foreground.

As the curtain rises, there resound from the left a fanfare and a vast, distant shout.

A CITIZEN

Those trumpets, father ?

THE PRIEST

[*On the wall.*]

Now the King receives
His crown in the cathedral, and the people
Acclaim the Maid of God.

PERRIN

[*To Pierre and Mengette.*]

Why were we late !
They say Jeannette stands next the King himself.

MENGETTE

And all in armour !

PIERRE

If she goes right by!
And if she never sees us!

JACQUES D'ARC

Fret thee not;
I ha' fetched from home a clinkle in my pouch
To catch thy sister's ear.

PIERRE AND MENGETTE

What is it?

JACQUES

[*Mysteriously.*]

Look!

[*Shows a string of little pewter sheep bells.*]

LOISELEUR

[*To Cauchon.*]

Your Reverence' disguise is masterly.

CAUCHON

Thanks, Nicolas; and yours!

A WOMAN

[*To Mengette.*]

From Domremy?
Aye, that's the town the King hath freed from tax
Because the Maid would ask no other boon.

MENGETTE

[*Anticipating her triumphant effect with blushes of pleasure.*]
I am her neighbour and her brother's wife!

CAUCHON

[*To Loiseleur.*]

Yes, much at stake! My kind friend Winchester
Hath promised me the archbishopric of Rouen —
When she is ashes.

LOISELEUR

That should not be long.

She goes hence to help Flavy at Compiègne.
At Compiègne there will be a witch for sale.

CAUCHON

Aye, Flavy knows the smell of English gold —

[*Looking from the wall.*]

How proud her pageant rides! The dust rolls up
Like smoke before her.

LOISELEUR

Soon it shall be *fire*.

CAUCHON

Look where she comes!

LOISELEUR

Who looketh where she goes?

[*The pageant has begun to enter. Above the wall are visible the lances and halberds of the marching soldiers, their standards and the floats of the pageant. From the left, after the passing of several displays and devices, the tumult and hosannahs roar and swell to a rhythmic, pæan-like acclaim upon the entrance (as yet unseen by the audience) of Charles and Jeanne.*]

THE PEOPLE

Noël! Noël! Noël! The Maid of God!

[*As this royal portion of the pageant passes beneath the central groups in the foreground, Jacques d'Arc at the gateway takes from his pouch the little pewter bells, and, raising, tinkles them in the uproar. As he does so, the throng in the breach itself are swayed inward and aside by a commotion from the street without, and Jeanne and the King appear in the gateway on horseback, their immediate followers — La Tremouille, De Chartres, D'Alençon, La Hire — being visible behind them.*]

JEANNE

[*Reining her horse.*]

My King!

CHARLES

[*Halting the procession, turns solicitously to Jeanne who, not yet seeing Jacques d'Arc and his bells, is listening with a bewildered look of pleasure.*]

What is it, Maid?

JEANNE

The sheep!

JACQUES D'ARC

[*Breaking from the crowd and going to her.*]

Jeannette!

JEANNE

Ah! — Papa Jacques!

PIERRE, MENGETTE, AND PERRIN

Jeannette! Jeannette!

JACQUES

[*At her horse's side.*]

My lass!

JEANNE

[*Kissing his hands where he raises them to her.*]

And art not angry with me?

JACQUES

God is good.

Thou hast served Him long, lass. Come now home
with me!

CHARLES

This is thy father?

JEANNE

May I go with him?

[*Showing the bells.*]

See, he hath fetched me these from home.

[*Waving her hand.*]

Mengette!

Perrin! — I did not knit the other mitten!

LA TREMOUILLE

Sire —

JEANNE

[*Turning quickly.*]May I go? My vow to God is kept,
And nothing now prevents —

LA TREMOUILLE

Your promise, Maid.

Compiègne —

JEANNE

I had forgot!

LA TREMOUILLE
 [*To the Procession.*]

Go on.

JEANNE
 [*To the group with her father.*]

Adieu!

I must go to serve my good friends at Compiègne.

JACQUES
 Thy mother! — waiteth for thee.

JEANNE
 [*Tossing to Jacques the steel gauntlet from her right hand.*]

Show her this,
 And tell her I would rather spin at home,
 But for a web begun God sendeth thread
 And I must spin for France.

[*The Procession begins to move; the crowd sways between Jeanne and her father, who stands, with bowed head, holding the gauntlet.*]

MENGETTE
 [*Lifted from her feet by Pierre, tears off her head-dress and waves it above the people's heads.*]

Jeannette!

[*Jeanne, turning her horse and looking straight on, holds in her left hand her banner; in her right — close to her ear — the string of clinking bells, to the others inaudible through the cries of "Noël!" and the thunder of the cathedral chimes.*]

JEANNE

The sheep!

ACT V

ACT V

SCENE: Jeanne's Prison at Rouen. May 30,
1431.

A dim room, with only one small, barred window (at back) very high up. Doors, right (down stage) and left (up stage). Massive stone pillars sustain the ceiling. Inconspicuous in the obscurity of the right upper corner stands a narrow cage, with irons for the occupant's neck and hands.

As the scene opens, a group of persons in black ecclesiastical gowns is seen passing slowly across the prison chamber, from the door of an inner room (right) to the outer door (left). Among them are Pierre Cauchon and Nicolas Loiseleur. They are followed by John Gris, BROTHER MARTIN LADVENU, and the CAPTAIN OF THE ENGLISH GUARD. In the background loiter THREE SOLDIERS OF THE GUARD, coarse types of men-at-arms.

CAUCHON

What think you, Nicolas?

LOISELEUR

Her spirit fails;

I fear she will not last.

CAUCHON

That will not do!

She cost too dear a penny at Compiègne
For us to let her now escape the fire
And pass like any Christian soul.

LOISELEUR

'Twere pity.

CAUCHON

And this long trial which hath lately closed
To end in farce! — Besides, the folk of Rouen,
That weep around this prison on their knees,
Will say we murdered her. Whereas, i' the fire,
Not merely shall we brand her heretic
And witch, but we shall tarnish with her shame
The crown of Charles, which this said witch put on
him.

LOISELEUR

Then, too, your Reverence' archbishopric
So nearly earned!

CAUCHON

Hush; nothing of that now.
We must make haste. — Captain, a word with you.
*[As Cauchon takes the Captain of the Guard aside, John
Gris speaks to Brother Martin.]*

GRIS

I was her prisoner at Orleans once,
And now her keeper! Would to God again
I were her prisoner, and she once more
In that proud freedom. — When did she begin
To doubt her Voices?

BROTHER MARTIN

After the great lapse,
When she recanted all in the open square,
Seeing the executioner's black cart

Awaiting her. Since then, though she hath now
Resumed her man's garb which she then put off,
And docilely affirms her faith, yet she
Is shaken in her soul, for now no more
She sees her visions, hears no more her Voices.

GRIS

To what doth she ascribe this ?

BROTHER MARTIN

I know not.

A year of darkness and imprisonment,
And slow, sharp probings of the Inquisition
Have weighed on her bold spirit. This I know :
That many an age your English hearts shall bleed
To hear the story which doth end this hour.

GRIS

[*Drawing closer to Brother Martin.*]

Where stays your Paris monk ?

BROTHER MARTIN

[*Secretively looking toward Cauchon.*]

The duke is still here ;
Three days I have concealed him in my cell,
But still have found no means to bring him to her.

GRIS

Means *must* be found. I'll call the guard away.

CAUCHON

Thou, Brother Martin, come with us ; let stole
And Eucharist be brought for her last rites.

[*To the Captain.*]

You have your orders, sir.

[*To the Inquisitors.*]

Come, gentle masters,
This noon we'll lunch with long-earned appetites.

[*Exeunt (left) Cauchon, Loiseleur, Brother Martin, and the Doctors of the Inquisition. At the door, John Gris stops and speaks to the Captain of the Guard.*]

GRIS

The orders of my lord the Bishop you
Will execute with gentleness. Remember
That you are Englishmen and she a maid.

[*Exit.*]

THE CAPTAIN

[*To the Guards.*]

Remember, too, my lads, how this same "Maid"
By damnèd arts hath sent ten thousand souls
Of Englishmen to hell.

FIRST GUARD

Comes now her turn.

THE CAPTAIN

Fetch here the prisoner and put on her
The garb of heresy.

[*Exeunt guards into the inner room, whence they return immediately, dragging Jeanne, one of whose feet is tied to a heavy log. From this they unchain her. She is dressed still as a man, in a worn, dull-coloured garb. In aspect she is very pale, and of a spiritual emaciation. From the cage in the corner, the Captain has brought a*

long white tunic and a mitre-shaped cap, which he hands to one of the guards, who prepares to put them upon Jeanne.]

JEANNE

Will it be now?

THE CAPTAIN

Aye, and forever after.

SECOND GUARD

There be piled
Kindlings in Rouen Square. After the Bishop
Hath spoke his sermon, there shall be a bonfire.

THIRD GUARD

They say the Square is packed.

FIRST GUARD

[To Jeanne, lifting the tunic.]

Come!

JEANNE

'Tis for me?

What are these, sir?

FIRST GUARD

The wedding cap and gown
That old Dame Inquisition gives her daughters
When they go to the Devil.

SECOND GUARD

He'll make her a brave
House-warming —

[Saluting Jeanne derisively.]

Hail to 's doxy!

THIRD GUARD

Hail her cap!

[*Taking it from her head, for Jeanne to see, he holds it aloft while the other guards, severally bowing and doffing before it, read the words which are blazoned on its surface.*]

THE GUARDS

Apostate! — Heretic! — Idolatress!

[*Reënter Brother Martin, with candles and stole. He stands in the doorway; behind him appears another cowed figure, which withdraws when the Captain speaks.*]

BROTHER MARTIN

I bring the last rites for the prisoner.

THE CAPTAIN

Whom hast thou with thee there?

BROTHER MARTIN

A monk from Paris.

[*Enter abruptly, in the doorway, John Gris.*]

GRIS

Captain, your guard is wanted in the court!

THE CAPTAIN

[*To the guards.*]

Come! — Jeanne, by order of my lord the Bishop,
Thou hast four minutes wherein to confess
And gear thy soul whither it goes. — Hear'st thou?

JEANNE

I hear thee, *godon*.

THE CAPTAIN

[*To Brother Martin.*]

The executioner

Is waiting in the court. When you shall hear
His bell-cart tolling, come away.

[*Exeunt the Captain, John Gris, and the guards, the third guard handing the mitre-cap to Brother Martin, who sets it and the candles on the floor of the cell. During the time in which the door remains open, sounds of distant chanting come from without.*]

JEANNE

What voices

Are those?

BROTHER MARTIN

Priests chanting for thy soul. — My child,
I will return at once and bring thee comfort.

[*Exit (left).*]

JEANNE

They are not priests: that is the Judge's Clerk
Reading the questions in the Justice Hall;
Day after day they lead me down to answer.
Do not you hear? Those are the accusations,
And there are seventy. He's crying them
Aloud in the open court. He will not cease;
And all the masters' gowns are turned to grey. —
Cease! I have heard all, my lords! Pray, bid him
cease.

[*From behind the blank wall which Jeanne, clad in her white tunic, thus supplicates with outstretched arms, there rises, articulate, out of the far-heard chanting of the monks, and becomes loud enough for clearness — a monotonous, droning voice.*]

THE VOICE

And first, according to Divine Law, as according to Canon and Civil Law, it is to you the Bishop, as Judge Ordinary, and to you the Deputy, as Inquisitor of the Faith, that it appertaineth to drive away, destroy, and cut out from the roots in your Diocese, and in all the kingdom of France, heresies, witchcrafts, superstitions; to punish and amend all those who act against our Faith: to wit, sorcerers, diviners, invocers of demons, their abettors and accomplices. And your power as to this exists against all lay persons, whatever be their estate, sex, quality, and preëminence; in regard to all you are competent judges.

What have you to say to this Article?

JEANNE

Pass on!

[*The Voice resumes with the same intoning monotony. Before it is done speaking, there softly reënters (left) Brother Martin, followed by D'Alençon. The latter is dressed in a robe and cowl similar to the monk's, but these are but thrown loosely over his usual garb. Jeanne neither hears nor sees them.*]

THE VOICE OF THE CLERK

But it is time to instruct you more fully, my lords and judges, on the offences, excesses, crimes, and misdemeanours committed by the accused, Jeanne d'Arc, in many and diverse places. In her childhood she was not instructed in the beliefs and principles of our Faith; but by certain old women she was initiated in the science of witchcraft, divination, superstitious

doings, and magical arts — so much so that, in these interrogations before you, touching her visions and the apparitions of fairies, she hath confessed that even now she doth not know if these fairies were evil spirits or not.

What have you to say to this Accusation ?

JEANNE

I have answered you before. As for the fairies, I know not what they are. But for my teaching I was brought up to say my Creed, and do Whatso a good child ought.

D'ALENÇON

Whom speaks she to ?

BROTHER MARTIN

Some phantom of her fever ;
For pale hallucinations come to her,
No more her sacred visions ; random voices —
The memories of her late torture-trial —
Not now her saints. Oft, as I told you, she
Will call your name.

D'ALENÇON

Oh, that she call it now !

THE VOICE OF THE CLERK

Of Robert de Baudricourt Jeanne asked to have made for her a man's dress and armour appropriate. These garments and armour being furnished, Jeanne, rejecting and abandoning women's clothing, her hair cut around like a young coxcomb, took tunic, doublet,

surcoat, close-cut cap, buskins, spurs, sword, lance, and other arms in fashion of a man, affirming that in this she was executing the order of God as had been prescribed to her by God's messenger.

[*Jeanne makes toward the wall a gesture of pathetic affirmation.*]

D'ALENÇON

Surely she hears some voice! — Is she so ill?

THE VOICE OF THE CLERK

What have you to say to this Accusation?

JEANNE

Pass on! It is so.

D'ALENÇON

Jeanne! *What* is so?

BROTHER MARTIN

She wanders.

Speak to her; but remember you yourself
Are under doom — an escaped prisoner;
Speak not too loud.

D'ALENÇON

Nay, let them find me. Death
Comes equitably now with her; and though
I am powerless to save her, yet 'tis sweet
Not to survive.

BROTHER MARTIN

Your will, then, is to be
Discovered and to perish?

D'ALENÇON

Here.

BROTHER MARTIN

If I

Consent, it is because *she* needs you : you,
 Who first instilled her doubts, must extirpate them.
 Farewell ; though she shall think you but a dream,
 Yet speak ! — I will confess her — at the flames.

[*Exit.*]

D'ALENÇON

The flames ! — O Christ ! how dare I speak to her ?
 [*Leaning faintly against one of the stone pillars, D'Alençon
 struggles for self-possession.*]

THE VOICE OF THE CLERK

[*Gradually sounding more remote.*]

Obstinate in her presumption, Jeanne hath said,
 proclaimed, and published that she recognized and
 discerned the voices of Archangels, Angels, and
 Saints ; and she hath affirmed that she knoweth how
 to distinguish their voices as of such ; she hath not
 feared to proclaim that St. Michael, Archangel of
 God, did himself come to her ; also that by revelation
 of Saints the crown of Charles the King was shown
 to him through her. All these are lies imagined by
 Jeanne at the instigation of the Devil, or suggested
 by demons in deceitful apparitions, to make sport of
 her curiosity — she who would search secrets beyond
 her capacity and condition.

What have you to say to this Accusation ?

JEANNE

What *should* I say, my lords ? — Yes, they were lies !

My Voices lied to me, my friendly visions,
 That brought to me all holy signs of heaven,
 They lied — they lied! for look, my masters: now --
 Now I am brought before you in this hall,
 And you command me to reveal you proofs
 That what I saw was holy; now I call
 On those bright saints to be my witnesses —
 They come not, answer not! Ah, truly ye
 Condemn me; I was tempted: demons were they,
 And have deserted me, deluded me.

D'ALENÇON

Do not believe them, Jeanne!

JEANNE

You hear him, judges.

Even so he spake at Orleans, and I chid him.
 My duke forewarned me well, yet I believed.

D'ALENÇON

Child, look on me. The latest moment, Jeanne,
 Yet I am here: I too was prisoner,
 Knew naught of this; but when I heard, escaped,
 And now I am come to witness to the truth.

JEANNE

My lords, you hear! Even he is come, a witness,
 Before you.

D'ALENÇON

Not a witness before them, —

Your dread, grey judges, — but before those saints
 And thy dear soul to attest their faith in you
 And yours in them.

JEANNE

How pale thou art, my friend.
 You must not sorrow now to speak against me.
 You bade me doubt those visions, yet I kept
 My faith ; the blame was mine. Well I remember
 You warned me then they were but "vanities
 And whisperings of the air."

D'ALENÇON

I knew not then —

JEANNE

How France should sell me to the English ! No !
 Pass on ; 'tis over. — Will you address the court ?

D'ALENÇON

Here is no court nor trial-chamber, Jeanne.
 Feel here — D'Alençon's hand ; this is your prison,
 Where in a little moment Death shall enter
 And lead us both away. I cannot bar
 His coming, child, but I can make it happy
 If this swift prayer can move your soul to hear.

JEANNE

To me you pray ? To me ? — They used to pray
 To me at Rheims, and all the chimes were ringing.

[In the distance a harsh tolling resounds, and ceases.]

Hark ! they have begun again.

D'ALENÇON

That knelling bids
 Me speak, nor hesitate. Jeanne, what I say
 Is heaven and hell and life and death : I love you,
 How — you shall know and understand. At first

I, now your anchorite, burned high for you
 With man's desire. Ere yet you came to France,
 I caught afar the pastoral breath of you,
 And sudden, when you'd come, you rose for me
 Amidst our army's spears — a martial Ruth,
 Bright from those rustled battle-sheaves of men,
 And drew me, soul-bound. — 'I will love this child,'
 I vowed, 'and win her love, for 'tis in sooth
 A simple child, whose quick, religious heart
 And pied imagination fill for her
 The air with painted angels, speaking saints
 And bell-toned voices. Who that lives would not
 Follow her eyes to Orleans and to Rheims?'
 And so, a pagan in your holy war,
 I followed you. At last we camped by Troyes.
 There in the moon, after the weary day,
 While pale in armour you lay slumbering,
 I kept my vigil. Suddenly, your lips
 Murmured "D'Alençon." Ah! I leapt to kiss
 Your sleeping hand — Jeanne! Jeanne! it rose
 between us
 And smote me back!

JEANNE

My hand?

D'ALENÇON

No, *his*.

JEANNE

What smote thee?

D'ALENÇON

The mystery of you, the holiness,

For these — a blazing, keen, and two-edged sword —
 That silent angel, radiant in wrath,
 Did smite me with ; and lo ! with blinded eyes
 I saw thee — what thou art : the Maid of God.
 Angel, or saint, or guardian wraith — that blow
 Made me to pray, to tremble, and believe.
 I, who did boast to riddle a child's heart,
 Was humbled and was glad.

[*The knelling resounds again.*]

JEANNE

[*Listening.*]

Is it the cart?

I am afraid. Art thou to go with me?

D'ALENÇON

[*Gently.*]

Of course ; and all your visions wait for you
 To call them. Child, let not my sceptic love
 Lead your weak spirit to the world's dark sill
 Thus stricken — blinded, groping for its saints
 Believe ! you who have made me to believe.

JEANNE

Why have they then forsook me — those sweet saints
 That used to come — at least, methought they came.
 Why do I not behold them any more?

D'ALENÇON

Because — remember what you told the King !
 You must believe before you may behold !
 But I — I wronged your faith. Those noxious seeds
 Of doubt I sowed in freedom — here, in darkness,

Prison, and pain, your black Inquisitors
 Have fostered for their ends. *They* are your demons,
 That have deluded you with sophistries ;
 And if they ask for proof, say to them this :
 Orleans is not a lie ; the gates of Troyes
 Are not delusions ; no ! Rheims stands in stone ;
 France — France is saved, and Charles the King is
 crowned !
 Who hath done this but God and Jeanne, His Maid ?

JEANNE

Art thou a dream comest to tell me this ?
 Or art my knight — my bonny duke ?

D'ALENÇON

Madonna !

JEANNE

It doth not matter ! — Though a thousand miles,
 And clouds and towers and darkness are between us,
 Still are you with me, absent, like a star.
 Thou only knewest me, thou only knowest,
 Save God, and thou hast brought me back to Him.
 Look down, St. Michael ! Once again I wear
 Thine armour : Lord, I dread no more the flames.
 Lean down, St. Catherine, St. Margaret !
 See, now I am your true girl — take my soul
 And tell me you forgive, for I believe ;
 Tell me you are true, and all my sin a dream !

[*Outside as the slow, harsh knelling resounds close by, high in the dim, barred window appear, in splendour, the faces (and, in part, the forms) of St. Michael, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, who look down upon Jeanne.*]

THE FEMALE SAINTS

[*Simultaneous with the bell.*]

Thy pain — it is a dream.

JEANNE

[*With a cry of passionate joy.*]

My duke — they hear!

Behold they are come again! I see their faces,
I hear their voices!

D'ALENÇON

[*Kneeling beside her with bowed head, kissing the edge of her white robe, speaks to himself.*]

Would to God might I!

[*The door (left) is thrown open. In the passageway are heard heavy approaching footsteps and a murmur as of many people. Jeanne, standing, gazes up at the grated window — her face lit with a lost rapture.*]

THE VOICE OF BROTHER MARTIN

[*From outside.*]

The executioner.

ST. MICHAEL

[*His voice sounding with the approaching bell.*]

Be not afraid.

[*Away on the left, voices of men are heard chanting:*
"Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!"

FINIS

ADDENDA

In Act I, the refrain of the opening song is dialectical. In Act III, the letter dictated by Jeanne to the English is authentic; in the same act, the hymn, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, known as the Hymn of Charlemagne, was historically sung by Jeanne and the French before battle. In Act V, the words spoken by the Voice of the Clerk are transcribed directly from the translation of the Seventy Articles, prepared by the Promoter d'Estivet, which formed the Accusation of Jeanne's Trial in Ordinary — published in the Appendix of the volume of Original Documents on Jeanne d'Arc, edited by T. Douglas Murray, New York, McClure, Phillips, & Co., 1902.

The author's sincere acknowledgments are due to Mrs. Patrick Campbell for her friendly interest in having specifically directed his attention to the above illuminating book, which has constituted the chief informing source, and a large inspiration, to his work.

The music of the play — incidental, as well as lyrical — has been composed by Mr. F. S. Converse, and may be had in published form.

The cover design and the scene illustrations of the present volume were drawn by Mr. Barry Faulkner.

The acting rights of the play, in America and England, are owned by Mr. E. H. Sothern and Miss Julia Marlowe.

PERCY MACKAYE.

CORNISH, N.H. September, 1906.

1850

Received of the Treasurer of the State of New York
the sum of \$1000.00 for the year 1850
in full of the amount due to the State
for the year 1849.

Witness my hand and seal of office
this 1st day of January 1850
at the City of New York
John C. Spencer
Treasurer of the State of New York

1850

SAPPHO AND PHAON

THE END OF THE WORLD

SAPPHO AND PHAON

A TRAGEDY

SET FORTH WITH A PROLOGUE, INDUCTION,
PRELUDE, INTERLUDES, AND EPILOGUE

ΤΟ ΜΑΡΙΟΝ

σύν μοι πῖνε, συνήβα, συνέρα,
συστεφανηφόρει,
σύν μοι μαινομένῳ μάλνεο,
σύν σῶφροσι σωφρόνει.

PREFATORY NOTE

As the manuscript of this play is in press, the report comes from Italy that the momentous project of Professor Charles Waldstein, of Cambridge, England, for the excavation of Herculaneum is once more — after some years of vicissitude — in suspense.

Whether that incomparable undertaking, mysterious with the promise of hidden beauty and human revelation, shall be destined to fulfilment, remains for the civilizations, and preëminently for the Italian government, to determine.

In so far as some of its potential aspects have been inspirational to the inductive portions of this play, the author desires to extend his grateful acknowledgments to Professor Waldstein for having provided him with frequent authentic information regarding the Herculaneum project, and to express his hope that the conception of that project — one of the noblest modern uses of the imagination — may yet attain to its legitimate aim and acclamation.

The writer wishes, also, to express his sincere appreciation to Professor Francis W. Kelsey, of the University of Michigan (translator of Mau's "Pompeii"), for criticism of archæological details in the Prologue and Induction; to Robert Eames Faulkner, of Keene, New Hampshire, for his fine instigations to the knowledge of those alluring *Sapphic Fragments*, which breathe to-day the passionate presence of Sappho herself; to Barry Faulkner, for the cover design of this volume.

The stage rights of the play, in America, are owned by Mr. Harrison Grey Fiske, for Madame Bertha Kalich.

P. M-K.

CORNISH, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
March, 1907.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

I. OF THE PROLOGUE

- *MEDBERY, an American
PIETRA DI SELVA, an Italian
DR. ZWEIFEL, a German
- } Archæologists engaged in
the excavation at Hercu-
laneum.
- ITALIAN LABOURERS.

II. OF THE INDUCTION

- *ACTIUS, a Pompeian player (enacting Phaon in the Tragedy).
SOREX, a pantomimist, from Pompeii (enacting Hercules in
the Interludes of the Tragedy).
HERACLIUS, training-master (Choregus) of the players,
mimes, and pantomimists at Varius' private theatre in
Herculaneum.
VARIUS, the Roman dramatic poet, author (suppositionally)
of the Tragedy.
Q. HORATIUS FLACCUS (Horace), the Roman Satirist.
P. VERGILIUS MARO (Virgil); the poet of the Georgics
and Eclogues.
*NÆVOLEIA, a mime (enacting Sappho in the Tragedy).

III. OF THE PRELUDE

- PROLOGUS (announcing Varius' Tragedy before the Hercula-
neum curtain).
Varius, Horace, Virgil, Mæcenas, Pollio, Guests of Varius,
Citizens of Herculaneum (all as mutes).

IV. OF THE TRAGEDY

(Conceived as being performed on the stage of Varius' theatre.)

*PHAON, *a public slave and fisherman of Mitylene in Lesbos.*

ALCÆUS, *the Greek lyric poet, a noble of Mitylene.*

PITTACUS, *tyrant of Mitylene.*

BION, *a child.*

PRIEST OF POSEIDON (*mute*).

*SAPPHO, *the Lesbian poetess.*

ANACTORIA, *one of her girl-disciples.*

ATTHIS, *another.*

THALASSA, *a slave woman of the sea-beach.*

V. OF THE INTERLUDES

See Appendix.

VI. OF THE EPILOGUE

*MEDBERY.

THE ITALIAN LABOURERS.

* Medbery, Actius, and Phaon are impersonated by one and the same modern actor; Nævoleia and Sappho, by one and the same modern actress.

TIME AND PLACE OF ACTION

OF THE PROLOGUE: *The near(?) future. — A subterranean excavation, beneath the modern Italian town of Resina, the ancient site of Herculaneum. The scene represents a shallow, semi-ruinous chamber, anciently used as the Players' Quarters (behind the stage wall) of the private theatre of Varius, in Herculaneum.*

OF THE INDUCTION: *About B.C. 25. — The same spot, in its state of original use and adornment.*

OF THE PRELUDE AND INTERLUDES: *About B.C. 25. — The fore-stage or orchestra, in front of the closed curtain of Varius' theatre.*

OF THE TRAGEDY (conceived as being enacted B.C. 25, on the stage of Varius' theatre): *About 600 B.C. — The scene, which remains the same throughout, represents a high promontory, overlooking the Ægean Sea, near Mitylene in Lesbos; the temple of Aphrodite and Poseidon, exterior.*

ACT I. — *A day in Spring; late afternoon and sunset.*

ACT II. — *The moonlit night of the same.*

ACT III. — *The next morning; earliest dawn until sunrise.*

OF THE EPILOGUE: *The same scene as the Prologue; one hour later.*

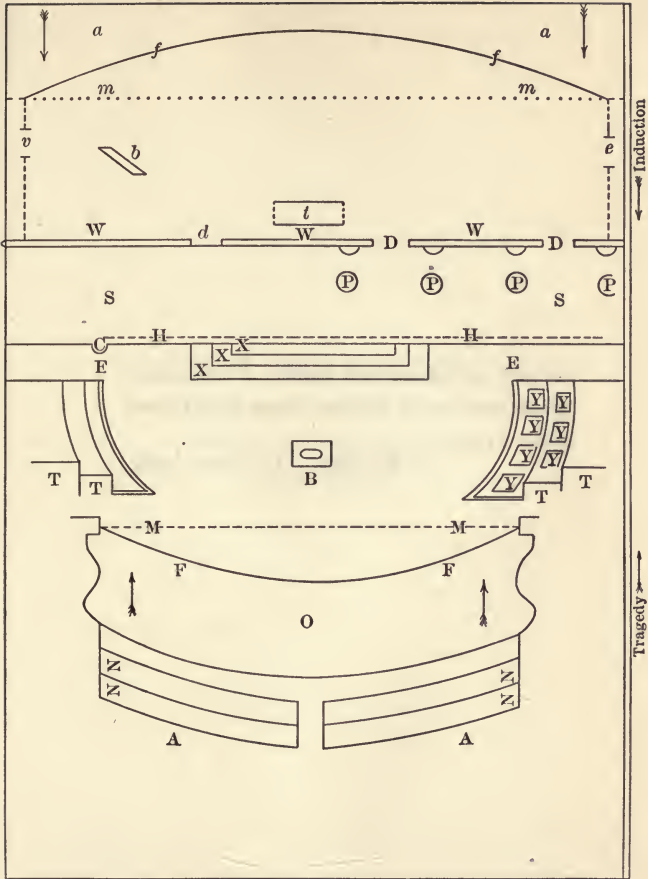
EXPLANATION OF DIAGRAM

INDUCTION SCENE (*Projected*)

- a* Modern audience.
 - b* Bronze bench (from which Horace, Virgil, and Varius watch rehearsal of the Tragedy).
 - d* Door, blocked by back of ancient scenery (*viz.* : the painted drop depicting the Ægean Sea).
 - e* Exit to dressing rooms of ancient players.
 - f* Footlights of modern theatre.
 - m* Modern curtain.
 - t* Table of stone (at which Actius makes up as Phaon).
 - v* Door to passageway leading to the villa of Varius.
 - w* Dividing wall between Herculaneum stage and players' quarters.
-
-

GROUND PLAN OF TRAGEDY

- A* Modern audience.
- B* Marble altar and base.
- C* Caryatid of bronze (defining proscenium opening of Herculaneum Stage).
- D* Door of temple.
- E* Exit aisle.
- F* Footlights of modern theatre.
- H* Herculaneum curtain (disappearing through slit in floor of ancient stage).
- M* Modern curtain.
- O* Orchestra of modern theatre.
- P* Pillar of colonnade in front of temple.
- S* Stage of Herculaneum theatre.
- T* Tier of seats in Herculaneum theatre.
- X* Steps ascending to ancient stage from Herculaneum orchestra space.
- Y* Separate seat of sculptured marble.
- Z* Row of seats in modern theatre.



GROUND PLAN OF TRAGEDY
WITH IMAGINARY PROJECTION OF INDUCTION SCENE.

*Ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quisvis
speret idem, sudet multum frustra que laboret
ausus idem.*

— HORACE: *De Arte Poetica.*

THE PROLOGUE

“Tutt’ altro ciel mi chiama,
Addio, Addio!”

THE PROLOGUE

Before the curtain rises, voices of men are heard singing in harmony. During their song the scene is disclosed, revealing a subterranean excavation, in the left portion of which Labourers, with picks and mattocks, are digging, slowly and carefully, the blackish earth. In the obscurity of the right exit, stands a mule with a drag-cart, into which the workmen, from time to time, shovel the sifted tufa-dust and débris.

By the light of electric torches, the place is seen to be a shallow, oblong room, the semi-ruinous walls of which are painted, in Pompeian style and colouring, with dim-hued frescoes.¹

At the back of the scene are three door-spaces; the two at left and right are boarded up with new timbers; the one at the centre is closed by a gate of iron-grating, through which—in the darkness beyond—are barely visible Roman pillars and, behind those, what appear to be the circle-formed tiers of stone seats.

¹ NOTE.—Of these frescoes the centre one depicts several figures in players' masks—evidently a mythological scene from Old Roman Comedy, wherein a grotesque, bearded demigod, in woman's chlamys, seated with a spindle, is spinning wool, while a nymph, garbed in a lion's skin, bends beside him, with her attendant nymphs grouped about her. From a green coppice near by a satyr looks on, grinning slyly, surrounded by fauns with sylvan pipes.

In the right and the left wall, respectively, is a door-space, but of that on the left only the upper portion is visible above the mound of earth which the workmen are digging out; that on the right is partly concealed by a pillar of tufa (rising to the ceiling) which, on that side, frames the scene, thereby causing it to be several feet narrower than the actual proscenium-opening of the modern theatre. The ceiling consists also of vaulted tufa.

Near the back wall, centre, is a stone table with sculptured front solid to the ground. Beside this, half reclined with his elbows upon it, bending near his torch over a papyrus scroll, is a young man, in a workman's blouse. His eager face, bare save for a light moustache, is intent upon the partly unwound papyrus before him.

At the left, among the excavators, overseeing their digging, stands a man with dark hair and moustache, evidently an Italian. Near him stands a short, stout, bearded man with eye-glasses, clothed in an ill-fitting frock coat. He also watches the workmen narrowly as they pick, sift, and shovel the hard black soil.

THE LABOURERS

[*As they work, singing to the popular melody.*]

“ Addio mia bella Napoli,
Addio, addio !
La tua soave immagine
Chi mai, chi mai scordar potrà !

“ Del ciel l' azzurro fulgido,
La placida marina,
Qual core non inebbria,
Non bea, non bea di voluttà !

“ In tela terra e l' aura
 Favellano d' amore ;
 Te sola al mio dolore
 Conforto io sognerò. — Oh !

“ Addio mia bella Napoli,
 Addio, addio !
 Addio care memorie
 Del tempo ah ! che passò !

“ Tutt' altro ciel mi chiama — ”

THE ITALIAN

[*Raising his hand, stops them in their song.*]

Basta !

[*Signing to the head-workman to pass him an object which the latter has just dug out, he takes it in his hand and examines it, then passes it to the man in the frock coat. At the ceasing of the song, the younger man in the blouse has glanced up from the table, and now, starting to his feet, speaks to him of the frock coat.*]

THE MAN IN THE BLOUSE

What's your new find, Zweifel ?

ZWEIFEL

A bronze box.

THE MAN IN THE BLOUSE

[*Coming over to him.*]

What is it ?

ZWEIFEL

If you mean by that, Medbery, what was its use in ancient Herculaneum, that remains to be determined later —

[*Handing him the box gingerly, with a wry look over his eye-glasses.*]

scientifically, not poetically!

MEDBERY

You forget, Doctor, that this science of ours is poetry.

[*Taking the box to the table, he opens it with care, the Italian looking over his shoulder.*]

Small ivory compartments ; here are vials ; dust of different colours ; is this chalk, di Selva ?

DI SELVA

[*Examining the dust.*]

It may once have been paint.

MEDBERY

[*Eagerly.*]

Paint! Let me look again.

[*Di Selva is called aside by the head-workman, whom he confers with and quietly directs concerning the work of the labourers. Medbery continues speaking half to himself, half to Zweifel.*]

Here are hairs — crumbling already in the air ; these carved handles must have been brushes. And what are these letters on the lid ? Great Scott ! this proves it all. Do you know what this was, Doctor ?

ZWEIFEL

I see it *is* — a box.

MEDBERY

I see it *was* — a make-up box.

ZWEIFEL

A what?

MEDBERY

A box for holding the make-up paints of an ancient Roman actor — one of those players who used this place where we are as a dressing-room for their performances on the stage yonder.

ZWEIFEL

As usual, my young friend, jumping at conclusions and landing in premises! Evidence, sir; what's your proof?

MEDBERY

Well, let me sum it up a little. We have now tunnelled into these bowels of Vesuvius for several thousand metres; last month we finished excavating the interior of the theatre there — the *cavea*, the orchestra, and the stage. We discovered that it was built originally with a roof, though evidently that was destroyed by the earthquake of '63, previous to the final eruption that covered Herculaneum.

ZWEIFEL

I am in no need of a Baedeker, sir. Your proofs!

MEDBERY

Pardon me. To-day we are just completing the excavation of this apartment behind the stage-wall. We have made here many pertinent findings — this charred mask, for instance; that bronze hand-mirror, now crusted over; those spears, evidently for stage use as properties; all prove, it would seem, that we are standing in what was once the Players' Quarters of this ancient theatre.

ZWEIFEL

Perhaps. [*Pöinting right.*] That doorway also leads to more such rooms.

MEDBERY

Doubtless for the mimes and pantomimists.

ZWEIFEL

[*Shrugging.*]

“Doubtless” — what a word! Well?

MEDBERY

Well, Zweifel [*pointing left*], *that* doorway, which we are just unearthing there, opens, as you know, into a marble passage, leading about thirty yards northeast into the dining-room of a palatial villa. That villa, by the inscriptions there, was once the seaside winter residence of Varius, the dramatic poet of Rome, in the reign of Augustus Cæsar.

ZWEIFEL

Please! I am not a tourist. What has all this to do with our bronze box?

MEDBERY

[*Pointing to the lid.*]

Do you see those letters raised in the metal?

ZWEIFEL

[*Reading.*]

C. U. A. A. — Well?

MEDBERY

C. Ummidius Actius Anicetus.

ZWEIFEL

What, the actor whose name is scratched on the walls in Pompeii?

MEDBERY

Known as Actius. He was popular there, as you know. But he acted also at Herculaneum; he made up his face two thousand years ago here in this room, with paint from this box.

ZWEIFEL

[*With irritation.*]

Are you an archæologist, or an actor yourself? When and where did you get this specific knowledge?

MEDBERY

Last night [*tapping his papyrus scroll*], from this. I sat up till daylight deciphering these few lines of it.

ZWEIFEL

Ah! One of the manuscripts we discovered in the library of the villa.

MEDBERY

It is, as you see, charred by the tufa, and ticklish to unwind without breaking; but look here for my pains. May I translate to you this bit I've unwound?

ZWEIFEL

[*Stolidly.*]

I should be interested.

MEDBERY

Listen, then [*reading from the scroll*]: "Here is written a Tragedy called *Sappho and Phaon*, conceived in verse by Varius the poet. It was first performed on the eve of the vernal equinox, in the ninth consulship of Cæsar Augustus" —

ZWEIFEL

B.C. 25.

MEDBERY

[*Continuing.*]

— "being enacted upon the stage of the aforesaid Varius's private theatre in Herculaneum, in the presence of P. Vergilius Maro and Q. Horatius Flaccus, poets" —

DI SELVA

[*Who has approached and listened.*]

Virgil and Horace!

MEDBERY

[*Continuing.*]

— "and other illustrious guests, his friends, from Rome and elsewhere."

ZWEIFEL

[*Fidgeting.*]

Very interesting; but what of this Actius —

MEDBERY

So much, you see, is written by the scribe. Now follows a note by a different hand in the margin. [*Reading.*] “On the above occasion, the parts of Sappho and of Phaon were enacted, respectively, by Nævoleia, the mime, and C. Ummidius Actius Anicetus, the popular player, who consented to come from Pompeii to act with her, because he loved the wench. These players, in their disguises, used not masks but face-paint, after the early fashion of the renowned Roscius; but customary masks were used in the pantomine *Hercules and the Sphynx*, which was enacted in the Interludes by Sorex, the pantomimist. The Tragedy was well received by friendly auditors, but has seldom been repeated before the multitude, the poet having taken certain liberties with his theme and verse unfamiliar to this time and people. The present manuscript was used as a prompter’s copy, and is the property of me, Heraclius, Choregus of the private players of Varius, my master.”

DI SELVA

[*Seizing Medbery’s hand.*]

My boy, I congratulate you. A rare find!

MEDBERY

I think so. What do you say, Zweifel?

ZWEIFEL

We must be very cautious, young man. In the first place, perhaps your translation — excuse me! — may be flavoured a little with your favourite extract — imagination.

MEDBERY

[*Glancing at di Selva.*]

Thank you.

ZWEIFEL

In the second place, it is very doubtful if we should put trust in an authority so manifestly at variance with the accepted facts of ancient histrionic art. How, for example, if your player Actius, in defiance of tradition, had used face-paint from this box — how do you explain the existence here of this actor's mask?

[*Zweifel points to the charred mask.*]

MEDBERY

[*Lifting it.*]

Why, you see for yourself; this doubtless was Hercules in the pantomime here referred to.

ZWEIFEL

[*Puckering his mouth.*]

“Doubtless!” It is always “doubtless” — except to scientists. In the next place, sir, how are we to account for the lapse of time between the date of this manuscript and the eruption of Vesuvius in 79?

Furthermore, as to this illustrious audience of yours, — these poets — these Virgils and Horaces — I must first see with my eyes —

[*He reaches for the manuscript; but Medbery, retaining it, raises his hand mysteriously, as in warning.*]

MEDBERY

Hush!

ZWEIFEL

Sir?

MEDBERY

Hark, Herr Doctor!

[*A few of the workmen, now just departing with their torches — leading with them the mule and the drag-cart — leave the scene more dim. At the same time, a faint rumbling sound, echoing through the excavation, grows ever perceptibly louder.*]

Do you not hear?

ZWEIFEL

Hear what?

MEDBERY

[*With a swift smile toward di Selva.*]

Ah, Zweifel, we must be cautious — very cautious — in these excavations. We must not offend this antique world.

ZWEIFEL

Offend what?

MEDBERY

We must not forget the prerogatives of these ancient citizens in their Limbo; their shades flitted to and fro in the dimness forever; they never died.

ZWEIFEL

What the devil do you mean?

MEDBERY

Mean?

[*Tiptoeing to the iron grating and opening it, he peers into the dark theatre, while the rumbling sound increases to a hollow, murmurous thunder.*]

Listen again! This lost world under the lava — 'tis not like ours up there in the daylight. Here in the dark, these Herculaneans — they have had no need of eye-glasses, nay, for twice these thousand years. And if we hunt them only with our eyes we shall never quarry them. Yet if we doubt them they will only mock us the more, — like that! Herr Doctor! do you hear them now? *They* have heard you — those departed poets, those Horaces and Virgils, those Mæcenases and Pollios, those dead illustrious guests of Varius! Hark, they are mocking you, Doctor! They are mocking, for look there in the dark: they have risen in their seats — that ancient audience; they are applauding their poet's play — *Sappho and Phaon*; they are rolling their applause over your head, Herr Zweifel, in thunder and in ashes — ashes of reprehension!

ZWEIFEL

[*Exasperated.*]

Ashes of stratification! Very true, young man. Your nerves are deranged by insomnia. That rumbling is the noise of carriage wheels on the road

to Resina above us — precisely twenty-two and a half metres up there in a plumb line through the tufa bed — which reminds me that I ordered a carriage for Naples at noon. [*Taking out his watch.*] Twelve o'clock — just; and lunch-time. — Are you coming, gentlemen?

DI SELVA

In a moment. I'll bring the men along for their hour of sunshine.

ZWEIFEL

[*To Medbery.*]

By the way, my Romanticist, I am going to the theatre to-night in Naples to see young Salvini in *Œdipus*. Will you come in my carriage and join me?

MEDBERY

Many thanks, Doctor, but you see I am just now allured by an older player of tragedy — this Actius, whose rôle was Phaon.

ZWEIFEL

May you enjoy him — in papyrus, sir. I advise you to join his profession.

MEDBERY

[*Abstractedly.*]

His profession was not as honoured in Herculaneum as Salvini's is in Naples.

ZWEIFEL

[*Lighting a cigar, departs, speaking to di Selva as he goes.*]

Don't forget to lock the gates; we must keep out the thieves and Cook's tourists.

[*Exit, right.*]

DI SELVA

[*Locking the grated iron gate.*]

This find of yours will arouse great interest, Medbery.

MEDBERY

I believe so, but it is all thanks to you, my dear di Selva; thanks, too, to your King of Italy, who has had the greatness of initiative to gather all the modern civilizations of the world harmoniously to this aspiring task: the excavation of Herculaneum. I remember well, some years ago, — it was about 1906 or '07 — how deeply you were discouraged. You had laid your electrifying plan before the heads of the Nations — to restore together their common heritage; they responded generously, but soon delay and complication and controversy set in darkly. The people were apathetic — blindfold. Apathetic, good God! Here was one spot — one only in all the soil of Europe — where the Goth had never pillaged, the Saracen had never burned, the insensate Christian centuries had never ravaged — the art, the loveliness, the knowledge of the ancient world. And this one spot was saved from these ravages of man by Nature herself — saved by fire, by the cataclysm of Vesuvius. Two thou-

sand years in lava and oblivion! and you said to the Nations, Look! — Hellas, Alexandria, Rome, the Augustan Age, they are not burned, not crumbled; their marbles, their pillars, their papyri, exist now and here, they are yours to-day — *yours*, and for what? Why, for a pick and a shovel and a penny and a heart of desire from every man of you. — Apathetic! Why, where was even a drunken miner buried alive in the earth by a crumbled shaft, but his fellows and townsmen would dig for him — dig till they fell from the foul gases a mile underground; and will not *man* — all the nations of mankind — dig a hundred feet to restore the sun to Sophocles and Sappho and Menander?

Ah, yes, but they will, — they *have*, thank God! Man has heard at last their muffled cry through the lava — their prayer to live again! And we are here now, because of you, my friend. And this scroll is but one, the poor first of a thousand others, whose titles you and I have seen, and whose words shall sound among the nations within the year. And that Apollo of Praxiteles, which we dug out last week, stands sunlit now in the Naples Museum, because long since you dreamed of him in darkness — the god in the pumice stone.

DI SELVA

[*To Medbery, who has taken his hands and pressed them.*]

It is pleasant, my friend, to see our dreams come true. But now the men need their lunch. Are you coming?

MEDBERY

No. [*Unwinds the papyrus scroll.*] I will stay here [*smiling*] — and lunch with Nævoleia.

DI SELVA

Well, we'll return in an hour.

[*Laughing back as he goes.*]

Good appetite! *Addio!*

[*Exit at right. The Labourers, having taken up their lunch-pails, follow him, resuming their singing, which grows fainter and dies away through the excavations.*]

THE LABOURERS

Di bacie d'armonia
È l' aura tua ripiena,
O magica Sirena
Fedel, fedele a te sarò!

Al miq pensier più teneri
Ritornano gl' instanti
Le gioje e le memorie
Di miei felici dì — 'oh!

Addio, mia bella Napoli,
Addio, addio!
Addio care memorie
Del tempo ah! che fuggì!

MEDBERY

[*Stands alone in the dimness — his one torch still gleaming by the table.*]

I wonder was she pretty — “Nævoleia, the mime!” Yes, yes, I can see her: there she stood and looked — a little wickedly? — at Actius here: Actius [*glancing at his scroll*] “who consented to come from Pompeii to act with her, because he loved the wench.” The wench, *puellulam*, dubious word for a lady! But then the player folk were outcasts — despicable in the world’s eye: poor vermin! And still they loved, like us; laughed — like us; and died — all poor vermin!

[*Going slowly to the table, lays down the scroll, and gazes at the bronze box.*]

Iteration — reiteration! — how this underworld re-echoes the word, forever! Exit; enter; *exeunt omnes* — forever.

[*Sitting behind the table and the broad mirror, crusted with verdigris, he toys with the ancient brushes.*]

Actius, you sat here; your eyes looked out of that mirror; this dust was your paint. You dipped your brush there — so fashion; touched your face — was it so, like that? No, this art was a bit strange to you. Sorex, your friend in the next room, perhaps he could help you. Why not? “Sorex!” you called, “come help me.” What was that? The girl-mimes were laughing? He couldn’t have heard you? Nay, call him louder, then!¹

[*End of the Prologue.*]

¹ Here, without pausing, the modern actor, who plays Medbery, continues to speak the words of the Induction.

THE INDUCTION

Animæ quales neque candidiores
Terra tulit, neque quis me sit devinctior alter.

HORACE: *Sat.* V; Bk. I.

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.

HORACE: *Ode* I; Bk. III.

Acti, amor populi, cito redi.

Inscription on a Pompeian Wall.

THE INDUCTION

[*From the right is heard soft laughter.*]

Sorex! Hai, Sorex, there! My wick
Is low. Fetch here another light
And hurry up. I'm late; the play
Will soon begin. You louse, I say!
Quit pinching of the girls and help
Me paint my face.

[*From the door on the right there enters — carrying a hand lamp — an antique figure, whose head and face are concealed by a grotesque bearded mask. The lamp, illuminating the scene, reveals the same room as that of the Prologue, now perfectly renovated, devoid of tufa or sign of ruin, its wall-frescoes undimmed, its furnishings freshly bright. Various belongings of actors and stage properties are hung, or scattered about. Partly concealed behind the stone table and the hand mirror (in the spot where Medbery before was sitting) sits a man in Roman garb. Him the entering figure in the mask addresses with a kind of salaam.*]

THE MASKED ONE

Great Actius'

Obedient insect!

ACTIUS

[*Looking up, reveals a smooth-shaven face partly made up.*]

What's the mask?

THE MASKED ONE

I'm Hercules, in the pantomime
We play to-night.

ACTIUS

I envy you.
By Cæsar, this new-fangled art
Of painting your own skin — 'tis one
Too fine for me. — Look at my face.
How goes it now?

THE MASKED ONE

You're exquisite.

ACTIUS

You're impudent! — They tell me, though,
Roscius himself did often act
Without a mask.

THE MASKED ONE

[*Hovering round him, begins to take the brushes and touch his face.*]

Who told you so?

ACTIUS

Our poet, the lord Varius,
 Who wrote the tragedy, in which
 I play this rôle of Phaon. Well,
 He ought to know; the emperor
 Paid him a million sesterces
 For his last play. I would I had
 A thousand of 'em!

THE MASKED ONE

What would you
 Buy with 'em?

ACTIUS

Buy! Hark, Sorex; keep
 This in your mask; I'd buy back what
 I've lost — a wench. I am in love.

THE MASKED ONE

[Titters.]

In love! — with whom?

ACTIUS

With Nævoleia,
 That plays the part of Sappho to
 My Phaon. 'Tis the sweetest wench,
 The vilest slut, the dearest drab,
 The loveliest mercenary minx
 In Herculaneum. — Look out!
 What are you doing?

THE MASKED ONE

Lift your chin ;

I'll finish you.

[Turning him to the mirror, the Masked One plies the paint and brushes, and proceeds — without his perceiving it — to make up his face in the most grotesque lines and colours.]

ACTIUS

[Lifting from the table some tiny figures of bronze.]

Now swear me, up
And down, and blue and black, upon
These Lares and Penates, not
To whisper what I say to her
Or any breathing soul.

THE MASKED ONE

[Touching the bronze figures.]

'Tis sworn !

ACTIUS

Friend Sorex, Nævoleia has
Deceived me. Ten denarii
Per day she has received from me
This seven months and been content,
And hung upon my eyes with love,
And I have worshipped her. By Styx !
Now comes along this Myrmillo,
The gladiator—he that made
Such big noise in the amphitheatre
Killing your Pugnax— well, he offers

A twenty to my ten, and she
 Takes him, and fools me. — Jove! She thinks
 I do not know it. But to-day
 I wrote a note, signed Myrmillo,
 Asking a tryst; and, as you know,
 She sent an answer, by that note
 Which you did bring to me instead
 Of Myrmillo. The answer said
 She'd come to night. — Ha! have a care,
 You pinched me! — I will show the wench
 She shall not make me ludicrous
 To my own face.

THE MASKED ONE

[*Whirling him round, thrusts his painted face against the mirror.*]

Look at it, then!

[*Running toward the door, right, the Masked One is pursued by Actius, who catches up a lyre that lies near.*]

ACTIUS

[*Striking with it.*]

You dog of Hades —

[*The other, removing the mask of Hercules, turns and reveals to Actius the face of a girl laughing at him.*]

Nævoleia!

NÆVOLEIA

Well, love, how do you like yourself?

ACTIUS

[*Rubbing the paint off with his garment.*]

I swear—

NÆVOLEIA

Nay, Acti, keep your face ;
 Don't let it fall ; it makes a lovely
 Fool.

ACTIUS

But you changed your voice !

NÆVOLEIA

Let's hope

I am an artist, though I be
 A mercenary slut.

ACTIUS

Sweet love,
 You have not heard yet —

NÆVOLEIA

How you forged

A note, signed Myrmillo !

ACTIUS

But you
 Replied to it.

NÆVOLEIA

O hypocrite !

ACTIUS

Nay, Sorex brought your answer.

NÆVOLEIA

Worse

Than worst! — To steal a note, and then
Upbraid me for your robbery!

ACTIUS

But Nævoleia —

NÆVOLEIA

[*Raging, thrusts the mask of Hercules into the hands of
Actius (now bewildered).*]

Sorex! Sorex!

[*Enter, right, SOREX, carrying several masks of comedy.
Nævoleia rushes to him.*]

Take me away from him.

SOREX

What's up?

I'm hunting for my mask.

NÆVOLEIA

[*Pointing at Actius.*]

'Tis there.

[*Crying on Sorex's shoulder.*]

O save me from his slander!

SOREX

Wench,

That's right, wench; weep thy heart on me.

I'd rather feel thy tears than take

A shower in the tepidarium.

NÆVOLEIA

[*Turning upon Actius.*]

Reviler! forger! — Tell him, darling
Sorex, what 'tis to be a loyal
Lover!

SOREX

Nay, he's no gentleman
That is no lover. Look at me:
In all Pompeii, where I was born,
Lives not another lover, with
A score like mine for loyalty.
Offhand, 'twixt my two thumbs, I'll name ye
A dozen wenches, who will be
My witnesses, how I to each
Have been a gentleman — that is,
Within the meaning of the word.
There's Januaria, Vitalis,
Doris, Lalage, Damalis,
Amaryllis, Florentina,
Hecla, Romula, Quieta —

ACTIUS

[*Stopping his mouth with his hand.*]

Shut up thy brothel, fool!

SOREX

[*Escaping, squares at him.*]

By Venus,
Come call me fool in the forum!

[*Nævoleia, drawing back, points to the door, left, — the same
which in the Prologue was partly concealed and blocked
by tufa, — where HERACLIUS has just entered.*]

NÆVOLEIA

Hush!

HERACLIUS

[*Raising his staff toward them.*]

Players!

SOREX

[*Ducking behind Nævoleia.*]

Lay low! Here's the Choregus.

HERACLIUS

[*Approaches, threatening to strike.*]

Less noise! — Your master Varius
 Has heard you in the villa. He
 Is risen from the dining couch,
 And now is bringing here his guests
 To show them through his theatre.

ACTIUS

And has our master guests?

HERACLIUS

'Tis well
 For you to know it. Play your best
 To-night. He hath from Rome invited
 Horatius, the satirist,
 And from Neapolis another
 Poet, Virgilius — both friends
 Of his and Cæsar's. They are come
 To criticise his play, this first

Performance. In the audience
 There will be other guests — the great
 Mæcenæ, and the tragicist
 Lord Pollio, and many friends
 From Herculaneum, Pompeii,
 And Baiæ. — Look you know your lines.

[*Handing Actius a scroll—the same as that in the Prologue.*]

Here is the prompter's manuscript ;
 Glance over it again.

[*To Sorex, indicating the masks which Nævoleia is amusing herself by trying on.*]

These masks
 Are ready for the pantomime ?

SOREX

[*Showing them severally.*]

I wear these two, my master. This
 Is Hercules Dejected, when
 I sit a-spinning lamb's wool ; that
 Is Hercules Triumphant, where
 I go to woo the Sphinx ; this coy
 Maiden is Omphale, and this
 Her man-slave, Servus ; this one here
 Is old Silenus — would I had
 A face like that !

HERACLIUS

Where are the fauns ?

All dressed ?

SOREX

[Whistles.]

The mimes are here, sir.

[As he whistles a second time, there storm in from the right a troupe of mimes, garbed as fauns, in various stages of dress and make-up. Heraclius checks them.]

HERACLIUS

Back!

Not now! Go back.

[The mimes, shoving and pulling one another in laughter, return through the door, which closes after them. At the same moment appear, in the left doorway, VARIUS, HORACE, and VIRGIL. Seeing these, Heraclius signs to Actius, Nævoleia, and Sorex to draw back — up scene, right.]

Your masters! Quiet!

[Himself stepping slightly forward, Heraclius bows low, and stands waiting deferentially. Horace enters, talking volubly. Both he and Varius, in their mutual chaffing, address their remarks to Virgil, who stands absent-mindedly between them.]

HORACE

[Saluting Varius with his gesture.]

Hail to mine host Preceptor of
Gastronomy! — I say, my Virgil,
Let no man lightly claim the art
Of giving banquets, till he hath
Deduced the subtle theory
Of tastes.

VARIUS

[*Laughing.*]

Will nothing stop him ?

HORACE

Lo!

With waxing moons the slippery shellfish
 Waxes, but not in every sea
 Alike. Peloris from the Lake
 Lucrine is far more exquisite
 Than Baian murex ; at Circeii
 Ripens the lush, lascivious oyster,
 The urchin at Misenum ; but
 At proud Tarentum breeds the ample
 Voluptuous scallop.

VARIUS

By the star

Of Julius ! Must we stand this ?

HORACE

If

Beneath a cloudless sky you set
 Your Massic wine, the thickish motes
 Will vanish on the breeze of night
 And with them every heady fume,
 But if 'tis strained through linen cloth,
 Its flavour's lost forever ! — He
 Who mixes Surrentine with dregs
 Of casks Falernian, may clear
 The sediment with pigeon's eggs,
 Whose sticky yolks, being heavier,

Fall to the bottom. O forget not
 Your appetizers — Afric snails
 And roasted shrimps with lettuce — shrimps
 That swim upon the stomach —

VARIUS

This,

Mind you, is Horace — frugal Horace,
 Who boasts he only chews a cud
 Of sorrel on his Sabine farm.

HORACE

[*Smiling, nudges Varius.*]

He has not heard us.

[*Speaking suddenly and loud.*]

Virgil!

VIRGIL

[*Starting.*]

Ah?

HORACE

What's that you said?

VIRGIL

[*Speaks slowly and with a slight stutter.*]

I said — Did I

Say anything? I think the view
 Behind your villa, Varius,
 Is beautiful: Vesuvius
 Raising its quiet dome of green
 Above us in the blue; below us
 The red roofs of Pompeii, and
 The sea — a blazing shield.

HORACE

Ye Muses!

Send me a lung complaint and lack
 Of appetite, so I may live
 On scenery instead of shrimps,
 Like this your virgin, Virgil!

[*Laughing, he embraces Virgil, while Varius, who has called Heraclius to him and spoken aside, now turns to Horace.*]

VARIUS

If

You'll deign to turn your thoughts from dinner
 Upon my tragedy, I'd like
 Your judgments on these rascals here
 In a brief scene, before the play
 Begins.

HORACE

What is the scene?

VARIUS

The one

I spoke to you about at dinner,
 In the first act, where Sappho helps
 Phaon to mend his net.

HORACE

This is

Your Phaon?

VARIUS

This is Actius,

The player.

HORACE

[*As Nævoleia approaches with Actius.*]

And your Sappho — what,
A woman ?

VARIUS

Yes, she was a mime,
But showed such gifts as made me grant her
This trial. — Nay, I told you this
Would be a play with innovations! —
Shall they begin ?

HORACE

Surely.

VIRGIL

I pray you.

[*On a bronze bench, left, Horace and Virgil seat themselves.*]

VARIUS

Imagine, then, a net suspended
Here, and the temple yonder.

[*Taking from Actius the scroll of papyrus.*]

Now ;

The cue is : “I will mend it.” — “You !”

[*Varius sits between the two poets, there watching with them the two players, who — changing now their mien and expression — assume their rôles of Sappho and Phaon.*]

NÆVOLEIA

[*As Sappho.*]

To mend is woman's task.

ACTIUS

[*As Phaon.*]

Are you a woman ?

NÆVOLEIA

Perhaps I am what women yearn to be —
Man.

ACTIUS

Did you grow here in the temple ?

NÆVOLEIA

Where

I grew, or in what garden by the spray
Or wave-lit cave my spirit's seed was sown,
Surely, 'tis thou who knowest: for methinks
Thou also grewest there.

ACTIUS

It may be so.

NÆVOLEIA

Stood we not then as now ? and raised as now
The net between us ?

ACTIUS

[*Strangely.*]

Somewhat I remember.

NÆVOLEIA

And even as now thine eyes shone through the meshes,
And mine in thine : was it not always so ?

ACTIUS

[*Relapsing to indifference, turns as to tie the strands of the imaginary net.*]

'Tis broken.

NÆVOLEIA

Ah, but shall be mended ; I

Will tie the fibres.

HORACE

[*Interrupting.*]

One moment : Fellow, in what parts
Hast thou been wont to act ?

ACTIUS

In all

That meet the people's favour.

HORACE

[*With a wry face.*]

Ha !

I feared as much ; what parts, for instance ?

ACTIUS

In comedy I've played Dossenus
The knave, Bucco the bumpkin, Maccus
The clown, and Pappus, the old dotard.
In tragedy, Orestes, Ajax,
Achilles, Agamemnon, Creon,
And Œdipus ; besides, in plays
By Livius Andronicus, some
Odd score of parts —

HORACE

Too versatile
 To please the Muse ; for Tragedy,
 Though she will mix with grinning satyrs,
 Still does so with such sweet aloofness
 As when an honest matron dances
 To keep a festival. Play not
 To please your people, but your poet.

VARIUS

[Smiling.]

Nay, Horace ! If you'll let him please
 Me, let him please the people.

HORACE

Fie
 Upon you ! Let us watch 'em farther.

NÆVOLEIA

[To Actius, resuming her impersonation.]

You are a boatman.

ACTIUS

Yes.

NÆVOLEIA

Go you alone upon the water ?

ACTIUS

Yes.

NÆVOLEIA

When you are all alone, are you afraid ?

ACTIUS
 No.
 NÆVOLEIA
 Put you ever far to sea ?
 ACTIUS
 Sometimes.
 NÆVOLEIA
 And have you never rowed to the mainland ?
 ACTIUS
 Oft.
 NÆVOLEIA
 By tempest ?
 ACTIUS
 Once.
 NÆVOLEIA
 A storm at twilight ?
 ACTIUS
 Once.
 NÆVOLEIA
 Oh, is it true, then, what the sea-wives tell ?
 Was she a goddess ?
 ACTIUS
 Long ago : 'twas long
 Ago ! I was a boy, and that's all dark.
 NÆVOLEIA
 And have you never seen her since she sprang
 Burning, upon the sands of Lydia ?

ACTIUS

[*Momentarily ardent.*]

Sometimes methought — I know not.

NÆVOLEIA

You saw.

Still you dreamed

ACTIUS

How knowest thou ?

NÆVOLEIA

Tell me your dreams.

ACTIUS

[*Rapt.*]

Oft ere the day, while all the slaves are sleeping,
 I and my boat put out on the black water ;
 Under us there and over us the stars sing
 Songs of that silence.

Soon then the sullen, brazen-hornèd oxen
 Rise in the east, and slowly with their wind-ploughs
 Break in the acres of the broad Ægean
 Furrows of fire.

So, many a time there, as I leaned to watch them
 Yoked in their glory, sudden 'gainst the sunrise
 Seemed that there stood a maiden — a bright shadow.

NÆVOLEIA

Ah! You beheld her!

HORACE

[*Applauding with Virgil.*]

Well done and aptly! By Apollo,
 My Varius, is not this strange
 That player-vermin such as these,
 Who live in tavern-holes and swill
 Sour wine and soup of peas, and sit
 Carousing with their harlots, should
 Thus animate your poetry
 With power and truth?

ACTIUS

[*Stepping forward.*]

Is that so strange?

HORACE

[*Turns to the others with a look of amused surprise.*]

What's this?

ACTIUS

Is it permitted, masters,
 For vermin to discourse?

HORACE

[*Touching his forehead meaningly, glances with inquiry at Varius.*]

A crack?

VARIUS

[*Nodding, amused, at Horace, speaks genially to Actius.*]
 Speak, rascal, what you will.

ACTIUS

My lord

Horatius has deemed it strange
 That we, who live in tavern-holes
 And swill sour wine, should still be artists,
 With souls to imbue a poet's lines
 With animate power. For this he has
 Been gracious to applaud us, as
 Good players. I would ask of him,
 What *is* a player? Is he not
 A man who imitates his kind,
 That is — mankind? But what, my masters,
 Is man?

HORACE

By Socrates! The rogue
 Hath grazed in Athens, and been groomed
 By schoolmasters.

ACTIUS

Man — is not *he*

An animal who imitates
 Also his kind? Why, then, a player
 Is man epitomized, an ape
 Of glorious hypocrisy,
 Magnificent, because alone
 He shows the counterfeit his image,
 The hypocrite — himself. No schism
 Exists, my lord, between yourself
 And me but this: you are by nature,
 Skillless, what I am by vocation,
 More perfected. — You patch, you bungle,

Where I excel. Horatius is
 Your part upon life's play-bill, but
 You blur with that, and imitate,
 Most pitifully, twenty others
 All in an hour. — My part to-night
 Is Phaon, whom my master there
 Conceived *in nubibus*; 'tis true
 I too may botch and fail to draw
 The finer shades, but when I do,
 My art's at fault, not I; my aim
 Is single and declared: to be
 Phaon to-night, to-morrow Maccus
 The clown, the next day Œdipus
 The tyrant, but while each shall last,
 To be at least an honest player
 And live the part I play. — I beg
 A moment still! You spoke just now
 Of Athens and of schoolmasters,
 The name of Socrates you made
 An oath, as he had been a god
 Like Cæsar, yet you — you that hold
 In reverence these philosophers,
 See how you scorn and satirize
 Their temple of philosophy —
 The Theatre.

HORACE

Scorn!

ACTIUS

Not your plays,
 O poets! No, but us, that are

Your instruments of flesh and blood,
 Us players, in whose living eyes
 And limbs your wan scripts flush to life
 And flash their passionate response
 From the eyes of your breathing audience. —
 My lord Horatius, let me
 Reverse your question : Is not *this*
 Strange — yea, too strange ! — that we who thus
 Give radiant reality
 To your pale visions, are ourselves
 Despised, and by your cult cast off
 In shame, to share our dogs of wine
 With harlots, in a tavern-hole ?

HORACE

[*After a brief silence, rising.*]

Player, we have deserved this, yet
 I'll hope you still may deem me more
 A Roman than I seemed. My father
 Was born a slave and earned his oats
 At public auctions ;

[*Indicating Virgil.*]

his kept bees

In Mantua. I trust we all
 Are Roman gentlemen — all four.

[*Horace, Virgil, and Varius, in turn, take Actius' hand,
 and press it cordially.*]

VIRGIL

The cocks will cackle at the swan
 Until they see him swim — good friend.

ACTIUS

[*Deeply moved.*]

My masters, you have lifted up
My heart and stopped my tongue.

VARIUS

[*As music sounds from within.*]

The flutes!

Our friends are gathering in front
To see the play. Mæcenas there
'Waits us with Pollio. Come, lads,
And lacerate my tragedy.

HORACE

“Sappho and Phaon!” You have been
Bold in your subject—to portray
The eternal maiden and her lover.

VARIUS

The subject made me bold, to dare
What Sappho did herself aspire—
To make her love live on, and be
Perpetual as Spring, that comes
Newly to generations new.

[*Lifting, then laying the papyrus scroll on the table.*]

And if to-night these thoughts of mine,
Sculptured alive in Actius
And Nævoleia here, shall move
To pity spirits such as yours—
There's my ambition and reward.

VIRGIL

[*Opening a door — up, left — which discloses the back of a set scene on the stage of Varius' theatre.*]

Is this the way ?

VARIUS

No ; that door's blocked

By scenery.

[*Opening, at centre, another door which discloses a wide dark space — dimly lit.*]

This one will lead us

Through to the orchestra, across

The stage.

VIRGIL

[*Closing his door.*]

Who did your scenery ?

HORACE

Our shepherd of the Eclogues still

Pipes of the scenery !

VARIUS

'Twas painted

For me by Auceps, a disciple

Of Tadius, the master. He

Has pictured the Ægean shore

At Lesbos with a brush not dipped,

Methinks, in common paint-pots.

[*Waving Horace and Virgil to precede him.*]

Pray !

[*Turning to the Choregus.*]

Look that your pantomimists be

Masked for the Interludes.

HORACE

[*Pausing in his departure, raises both hands in deprecation.*]

Dumb play

Between the acts of tragedy? —

Worse than a curtain-show at Rome

VARIUS

[*Smiling, waves him in.*]

Wait till you see before you scoff.

This way.

[*The door closes. Actius, still moved by his talk with the poets, having gone to the table, sits and begins to put on the light beard of Phaon, not noticing Sorex and Nævoleia, whom the Choregus, going out, has left behind him in the upper right corner. Nævoleia now, tiptoeing behind Actius, kisses him suddenly and runs away, right. Starting up, Actius looks after her passionately.*]

ACTIUS

Wilt thou forgive me, witch?

NÆVOLEIA

[*Throwing him kisses.*]

Forever and aye.

[*Turning to Sorex, snuggles close to him, and, glancing slyly back at Actius whispers, aside.*]

Sweet Hercules,

Where is the house of Myrmillo?

SOREX

[*Goes with Nævoleia, giggling as she winks at him.*]

What, wench? Nay, wench! — Ho, wench of Venus!

[*Exeunt. Actius sits again moodily and swiftly completes the make-up of his beard, as the laughter of players and girl mimes resounds from the room which Nævoleia and Sorex have just entered. Rising then with the manuscript, he lifts, from among other stage-properties near him, a spear and, holding it in one hand, walks twice back and forth, conning the manuscript of the play held in his other hand.*]

ACTIUS

[*To himself.*]

That passage in the second act!

[*The sounds of laughter are renewed, and Nævoleia's voice is heard above the others; but Actius does not now notice the sounds. Pausing in his motion, he lays down the spear and murmurs his part of Phaon aloud, gradually growing articulate.*]

Nevermore

Shall you be sovereign of your maiden will
Or single in your fate. Not here with priest
And song, but with a spear, you have betrothed me.

[*Raising the weapon above him, he smiles up at it — as the voice of Nævoleia, outside, sings to Sorex's laughter.*]

NÆVOLEIA

Januaria, Vitalis,
Doris, Lalage, Damalis —

ACTIUS

[*Oblivious.*]

O thou, my spear, thou singest in my hand.
 Thou art my power and manhood. Face to face
 Thou pittest me in combat with the gods,
 And raising thee, my mind is raised up
 Confronting heaven, till from those clouds of fire
 This slavish world grows dim, and all that sways it —
 The tyrant's hate, the galley-master's goad,
 The sordid trader's dreams of avarice —
 Dwindle to impotence. Thine is the war
 Which shall not end with time — war with those gods
 Which made men's misery.

THE VOICE OF NÆVOLEIA

[*Singing.*]

Amaryllis, Florentina,
 Hecla, Romula, Quieta —

[*Actius — his spirit completely lost and merged in the part
 of Phaon — slowly lowers his spear as, to the laughter
 of the players within, the curtain falls.*]

[*End of the Induction.*]

THE PRELUDE



tu, quid ego et populus mecum desideret, audi.
si plausoris eges aulæa manentis et usque
sessuri, donec cantor 'vos plaudite' dicat,
ætatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores,
mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis.

— HORACE: *De Arte Poetica*.

sic priscae motumque et luxuriam addidit arti
tibicen traxitque vagus per pulpita vestem.

— *Idem*.

THE PRELUDE

To the music of flutes within, the modern curtain rises, disclosing to the spectator's view the interior of Varius' private theatre in Herculaneum — namely, that segment of it which includes the ancient stage, orchestra space [the outer curve of which coincides with the curve of the modern footlights], and the first four tiers of the *cavea*, or auditorium, — the said tiers being actually represented, on either side, only as far as the marble coping of a first aisle, which runs approximately parallel to the modern footlights and disappears behind the [modern] 'wings' ¹ on either side.

On the left side, the tiers of this auditorium are provided with separate, sculptured seats of marble; on the right, however, the first tier consists of a curved marble bench,² the curve of which defines the edge of the orchestra space on that side.

Thus the modern audience is seated, as it were, within the omitted [but imagined] segment of Varius' Theatre, facing — together with the Herculanean audience — the ancient stage.

¹ These [modern] 'wings' depict, or suggest by the customary perspective of stage scenery, the interior constructive outlines of Varius' Theatre.

² This bench — since no Herculanean spectators are ever visible on the right side — is, later, used by the characters in the Tragedy.

This ancient stage consists of a shallow platform, raised about two feet above the orchestra space, and connected therewith by broad, wide steps of stone.

[At left and at right, in front of the stage, is an exit aisle.]

At the rise of the modern curtain, however, the ancient stage itself is not visible, being shut from view by the Herculaneum curtain.¹

The Herculaneum curtain itself is painted to represent the street exterior of a house, in the Pompeian style. In the centre, set in a lintel frame, is depicted a wide, squat door, the stage platform forming its sill, to which the broad stone steps [aforesaid] lead up from the orchestra space.

Above the squat doorway is a window casement. Both door and window are not merely painted on the curtain, but are devised to open and close practically when needed.²

The top of the curtain is designed as an overjutting tiled roof.

Curtain and theatre are tinted and adorned with

¹ This, being constructed on the principle of all Roman theatre curtains, is not let down from above, but, fastened to a top rod, is drawn upward [by pulleys behind the scenes] through a narrow slit in the floor of the stage platform, close to its outer edge. Through this slit it stretches its expanse upward from the stage's edge to a height at which the curtain's top is just visible, and extends laterally, on the right, to a bronze caryatid [which forms the proscenium frame of the ancient stage on that side], and on the left disappears behind the [modern] 'wings.'

² In such case, when the door is open, a temporary back set-piece within — painted to represent a hallway — conceals from view the Herculaneum stage itself, with its [Greek scene] setting of the Tragedy.

the pseudo-Orient richness of the early Augustan age.

In the centre of the orchestra space, raised one step above its level, stands a low marble altar, sculptured with emblems of the sea. Upon this stands fixed a slim tripod of bronze.

Before this curtain, then, when the scene opens, are discovered groups of Herculanean citizens and guests of Varius, in festal Roman garments. Amongst them are Pollio and Mæcenas, the latter magnificently yet delicately wreathed and garbed.

To the piping of the two Flutists [who stand, at left and right, at the edge of the scene], all of these persons make their way, in laughter and conversation, from the right exit aisle across the orchestra space to the seats of the *cavea* on the left. Here, passing between the marble seats and mounting the tiers to their places, they disappear from view within the wings, whence their flickering shadows, cast down by torches above, and the humming sound of their conversation, give token of their presence in the theatre.

This humming sound is suddenly increased to a murmurous roar, upon the entrance—through the door in the curtain—of Varius, Horace, and Virgil.

These, as they descend the broad steps to the orchestra space, are hailed from the [hidden] tiers of the *cavea* by cries of “Varius! Horatius! Vergilius!” and greetings, blended and indistinguishable, in Latin.

Varius and the two poets return these greetings with smiles and gestures of friendship, and approach the first seats of the *cavea*. There, looking up,

Varius waves his hand, calls, "Mæcenas! Pollio!" enters the *cavea*, and, mounting with his companions, passes also to a tier beyond view.

At this moment, in the curtain-doorway, clad in simple Greek garment and wreath of gold, appears PROLOGUS, preceded by two slaves. To one of the slaves he hands a lighted taper, to the other a bronze disk with incense powder. Descending the steps with these, the slaves approach the altar, on the bronze tripod of which the one slave places his disk, and the other ignites the incense. Each then departs at either side aisle. Meantime, upon the entrance of Prologus, each of the Flutists — his flute discarded — gives blast to a mellow, antique horn, the sound whereof silences the Herculaneum audience. Simultaneously Prologus raises his arms, as in invocation, toward the pale blue wreaths of smoke that float upward from the tripod.

PROLOGUS

To Cæsar where he sits in Rome our Emperor,
Remembrance! and through him unto the mightier
 gods

Be incense evermore! — The gods alone discern
What darkly man imagines; his pale future's dawn
And twilit past alike to them are noonday. We,
Therefore, who meet this hour, expectant to behold
Long-perished Sappho and her antique age awake
To life, ourselves are ancients of a time unborn,
Shadow-enactors of an audience of shades,
And as this little smoke of incense, so are we

On the altar of the immortals. — What are they? —

Ourselves

That were, ourselves that will be ever : Ancestry,
Posterity — *they* are the gods, of whom we are
Both seed and loins : one race, one lineage of love,
One continuity of passion and of pain ;
And unto them this fleeting breath and smoke of us
Goes up in prayer. — *Vale !* Our tragedy begins ;
And if the play shall please, — Shadows, applaud
yourselves !

[*Exit within the curtain-door, which closes.*]

Slowly then the curtain itself descends and disappears, disclosing the scene of the Tragedy.

[*End of the Prelude.*]



THE TRAGEDY

καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι . . .

ἀλλὰ πᾶν τόλματον. . .

— *Sapphonis Fragmenta.*

Βῆ δ' ἀκέων παρὰ θίνα
πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης.

— *Iliad, I.*

ACT I

SCENE: A high promontory, overlooking the Ægean sea, sprinkled with isles.

On the left, pillars of a Doric temple form a colonnade which, stretching away left, disappears behind tall cypresses. Behind these columns, tapestries of dark azure hide the whole wall of the temple, concealing the doorway. Against the background, the contours of the pillars themselves rise vast and chaste into the obscurity of foliage — their capitals lost among ancient boughs.

Near the centre of the scene, at back, against the side wall of the temple, built on a raised and jutting rock and approached by steps from the colonnade, stands an altar of yellow marble, in which is sculptured a flying dove.

Below this altar of Aphrodite, the foreground on the right juts upward to it in contours of the bare, weathered rock of the promontory; in this, a worn crevice, near the centre of the scene, indicates the beginning of a sheer cliff-path, which descends the precipice to the unseen beach, the far sound of whose breakers, in ceaseless cadence, rising murmurous from below, catches the ear in pauses of the action. Near the cliff-path, a fire-urn, upheld by sculptured Nereids. On the right, the seascape is defined by a grove of olive trees, which grow near to the foreground.

On the edge of this grove, chiselled in colossal proportions out of yellow marble, rises a statue of Aphrodite, conceived with the naïve, pre-classic simplicity of an age still half Homeric.

Similarly, on the left, a statue of Poseidon. These images do not obtrude themselves, but partly withdrawn in foliage, their large presences overshadow in silence the action of the Tragedy.

As this scene is disclosed to view, voices of women are heard singing in unison within the temple.

THE VOICES

Builders, build the roof-beam high :

Hymenæon !

More than mortal comes the man ;

Hymenæon !

But the maiden like a maid,

Rose-pale, rose-red,

Kala, O Chariessa !

[*From the temple appears ANACTORIA. She looks away, right, then turning to depart, left, encounters ATTHIS entering.*]

ANACTORIA

So late ?

ATTHIS

O Anactoria !

ANACTORIA

Our lady

Sappho hath bade me look for thee. — Not weeping !

ATTHIS

He hath not come! My eyes are water-blind
 With staring on the sea, in hopes to espy
 His scarlet sail slope from the mainland. Still
 No sign — no little gleam — of Larichus.

ANACTORIA

Thou happy Atthis!

ATTHIS

Happy? But to-morrow —

ANACTORIA

To-morrow you shall wed with Sappho's brother,
 And win for sister the bright Lesbian Muse,
 Who hath herself composed your bridal-hymn,
 And he that is Poseidon's cup-bearer
 Shall be your husband.

ATTHIS

Shall I not, then, weep
 Because he does not come? Three days ago
 He sailed for Lydia, to fetch me home
 Pearls for our bridal. Oh, I want not pearls,
 Nor any gift but Larichus, his love.

ANACTORIA

Why, he will come. To-night the moon is full,
 The Ægean calm. — What's this?

ATTHIS

I had forgot.

As I climbed up from Mitylene here,
I met Alcæus, and he gave me this
To bring —

ANACTORIA

Alcæus? Give it me!

[*She snatches a vase from Atthis.*]

Dear gods,

Let not this trembling quake the promontory
And topple temple and all into the waves.
Daylight and dark! — *Alcæus* sends me this.

ATTHIS

[*Gazes away, sighing.*]

O little clouds, why are ye shaped like sails?

ANACTORIA

Fresh from his hands — himself the potter! Here's
A painted vine, and under the ripe grapes
A dove hath wove her nest among the verses.
Verses and vase — poem and painter — mine!

[*She kisses the verse and reads.*]

'The sea-god breathes his heart in the sea-shell,
And leaves it on the sands, to syllable
One sound forever.
O maid of Lesbos, murmuring one name
Within this vase, thy lover's lips have vowed
Passion eternal.'

[*With sudden abandon, she springs to Atthis and embraces her.*]

My Atthis, thou hast brought to me in this
More precious medicine than ever healed
Fever and ague.

ATTHIS

I?

ANACTORIA

You do not guess ;
Of late I have been damned with jealousy
That almost made me hate him.

ATTHIS

[*Appalled.*]

Larichus?

ANACTORIA

No, no, you doting bride : Alcæus. Quick,
What said he when he bade you bring me this?

ATTHIS

But that is not for you. — Ah! twist me not!
Thou hurtest my arm.

ANACTORIA

Speak, then!

ATTHIS

What should I say?

ANACTORIA

Whom is this for?

ATTHIS

For Sappho.

ANACTORIA

[*Loosing Atthis, with a cry.*]

She it was!

[*Sinks crouching upon the steps.*]

ALCÆUS

[*Calls outside.*]

Atthis!

ATTHIS

[*To Anactoria.*]

My friend! I did not guess. — Forgive!

[*Enter, left, ALCÆUS. He addresses Atthis, who stands before Anactoria.*]

ALCÆUS

Hath Sappho seen it? Hast thou shown it her?
 What did she say?

ANACTORIA

[*Holding the vase, rises.*]

Your lady's in the temple,
 Training the chorus of her girl-disciples.
 This votive urn of incense from your lips
 Hath not yet breathèd in her delicate ear
 "Passion eternal!"

ALCÆUS

By Hephæstus, how
Came you with this ?

ANACTORIA

Oh, by Alcæus, how
Came this to you : this mad, this hollow love ?
Look ! “ Maid of Lesbos, murmuring one name
Within this vase, thy lover’s lips ” — And are
Sappho and Anactoria one name ?
How ardent hast thou murmured that one name
Up at my casement : “ Anactoria ! ”
Now hers to her ! No other eyes but Sappho’s
Had done it ! — Atthis, that it should be she
Whom best I love, our mistress and our muse,
Hath drawn him from me ! So she draws the world,
Day, evening, and the dawn, to wait on her —
Maiden and man, like an immortal.

ALCÆUS

So

Love draws us all.

ANACTORIA

Not all ! To some of us
Love beacons like a star.

ALCÆUS

[Smiling.]

A shooting-star !
That nightly fills anew his fiery quiver !

ANACTORIA

And this is thou — Alcæus! O this air
 Goes black and red between us. Fare you well;
 But when your Sappho comes here from the singing,
 Take her your gift —

[*From the height of the steps, she flings the vase at his feet,
 dashing it in pieces.*]

and when you lift it up,
 Tell her it is the heart of her girl-friend.

[*Exit, right.*]

ALCÆUS

[*To Atthis.*]

Nothing of this to Sappho!

ATTHIS

Dost thou deem
 Others as false as thou art? She shall know.

ALCÆUS

[*Springing up the steps.*]

But Atthis —

[*Exit Atthis within the temple.*]

If she tells her!

[*Watching persons approach, he starts violently.*]

Pittacus!

[*Enter, left, PITTACUS, followed by a soldier, to whom he
 speaks.*]

PITTACUS

Say to the citizens, I will not hold
 Council to-day. The sea-wind blows too sweet
 Of lentisk and of samphire for my thoughts
 To brood on war; the eyes of Sappho are
 A mightier tyranny than Mitylene. —
 Wait; it were wiser to omit that last.

[*Exit the soldier.*]

ALCÆUS

O seven wise men of the world in one!
 Most civic lover — *to omit that last!*

PITTACUS

Greeting, Alcæus!

ALCÆUS

Pittacus is gone

To smell the south wind. Therefore, citizens,
 Adjourn the council! It were wiser not
 Allude to tyranny and Sappho's eyes,
 For Pittacus, elected by the people,
 Must keep one eye or two for votes. Enough,
 He hath a nose enamoured of the south wind!
 What was that odorous phrase? — Lentisk and sam-
 phire!

PITTACUS

Alcæus still is young.

ALCÆUS

And Pittacus a lover!
 What says Archilochus:
 "*Lovers that stink of leeks
 Put samphire in their songs.*"

PITTACUS

In temper temperance,
My friend.

ALCÆUS

In lack of sense
Sententiousness, O sage!
How is philosophy
Selling per pound? I mean
Without the fat, of course.

PITTACUS

Is not this feud too old
For us to blow up fire
In the ashes?

ALCÆUS

'Tis as old
As when you, gutter-tyrant,
Imprisoned me — a noble
And knight of Lesbos.

PITTACUS

For

Sedition. Yet it seems
You now go free.

ALCÆUS

Bright gods,
Witness this gentle tyrant!
Look where the shouting people
Crown him with garlic leaves;

For he hath freed from prison
 Alcæus the seditious!
 Hail him Magnanimous,
 And grant him in the Assembly—
 A thousand extra votes!

PITTACUS

Sir, you go far.

ALCÆUS

Nay, grant him
 For that great-minded deed,
 Fair Sappho's admiration!

PITTACUS

Insolence!

ALCÆUS

Hypocrite!

PITTACUS

[*Raising his staff.*]

Go!

ALCÆUS

Sniggling demagogue!

[*Enter, right, PHAON—his shoulders stooped beneath a burden of drift-wood. Moving toward the temple, his path lies between Alcæus and Pittacus.*]

PITTACUS

Thou, swollen-up with words
 And bitter wind, presumptuous
 Fop—

ALCÆUS

Mule of Mitylene,
Bray! Let the temple fillies
Hark to thy hee-haw.

PITTACUS

Zeus,

Chastise this man!

[*Striking at Alcæus, who springs back, the staff of Pittacus falls and breaks upon Phaon, who receives the blow with mute passivity and passes on to the temple. Pittacus slowly lets fall the pieces of his staff.*]

Eternal Zeus, thy hand
Hath interposed this slave. Look where he goes,
Alcæus; dumb, submissive, yet my blow
Fell undeserved.

ALCÆUS

A pack-beast!

PITTACUS

True; and yet

His silence hath a peace majestic,
His unresistingness, an awe! 'Tis we
That, by comparison, are petty: we
That for a snarling ideality
Yelp at each other like Actæon's dogs
To tear our master — our own self-command.
Ah, passionless indifference! That we
Might rather live like yonder sea-drudge, callous
To quickening beauty, and incapable
Of joy or anguish of imagination,
Than thus in bondage of enamour'd pain

For that immortal being, Sappho, rage
 Vituperate and scorn each other, clutch'd
 Mind against mind, man against man, to possess her.

ALCÆUS
 [*Cynically.*]

Still you remain to rage.

PITTACUS

No; fare you well,

Alcæus: go you in to Sappho first
 And I will come hereafter. Better were it —
 Far better than this venom'd wrangling — there
 From Aphrodite's rock into the sea ·
 For us to adventure the Leucadian leap:
 That leap which brings to passionate lovers — death,
 Or from the goddess, ultimate repose.

[*He passes from the scene, right. Alcæus stands for a moment, moved by his words. Within the temple voices once more lift up the Sapphic hymn. Then from the temple emerge, singing, the GIRL-DISCIPLES of Sappho, and pass, left, away toward Mitylene. SAPPHO herself, followed at a little distance by Atthis, comes slowly down the steps, twining a fillet of violets, lost in the music. Seeing her, Alcæus approaches, passionate, but pauses — abashed by her presence.*]

THE GIRL-DISCIPLES

Gath'ers, what have ye forgot

Hymenæon!

Blushing ripe on the end of the bough?

Hymenæon!

Ripe now, but ye may not reach,
For the bride is won, and the groom is strong.

Kala, O Chariessa!

[*Exeunt.*]

ALCÆUS

Lady of violets and reverie,
Sappho — I long to speak, but shame restrains me.

SAPPHO

Alcæus, had your thoughts been beautiful,
Nor any double-speech upon your tongue,
Shame would not turn away your eyes from mine ;
You would have spoken simply to me now.

ALCÆUS

It is not simple to say beautifully
What I would say. — Hast thou, in Mitylene,
Watched the young market-maidens weaving fillets
Of wild flowers? Know you what men say 'tis sign of?

SAPPHO

Is it a sign?

ALCÆUS

That all such are in love.
Truly they are but country maids, and yet
Persephone herself was such a girl
Weaving *her* wild-flowers when dark Pluto plucked her.
Lady, you too are weaving : may I ask
For whom?

SAPPHO

[*Holding out the fillet.*]

And if I answered — for Alcæus?

ALCÆUS

[*Ardent.*]

Sappho!

SAPPHO

[*Withholding the fillet.*]

And if I gave this — to another!

[*Stooping, she lifts a fragment of the broken vase and reads.*]“*Within this vase thy lover’s lips have vowed*” —

The vow itself is cracked : how came it broken?

ALCÆUS

[*Bitterly.*]

At this hath told thee!

SAPPHO

Anactoria

Is dear to me.

ALCÆUS

But she should understand :

I loved her, and I love her now no more.

Well, if for this she weeps, let her revile

The god, not me. — Can I constrain a god?

Tether him? Clip his wings? Say ‘come’ or ‘go’?

Love is a voyager, and like the wind

That shakes awhile the summer woods with music

Moves on, to stir the hearts of unknown bowers.

SAPPHO

O love in man ! How then in woman ? What
 If Anactoria had scorned Alcæus ?
 Is there a god and eke a goddess Love :
 The one all vagrant, lawless, unrestrained,
 Self-seeking ardour ? The other — all compassion'd
 Submissive constancy ? How would it fare
 With us, Alcæus, had you won my love
 And I should prove untrue ?

[*From the right, Anactoria enters and rejoins Atthis at the steps of the shrine. There, while Atthis seeks gently to distract her, she keeps her eyes fixed in passionate brooding upon Sappho and Alcæus. The latter is about to reply to Sappho, when she stays him with a smile and gesture.*]

It matters not.

Love is indeed goddess and god, and man
 And woman, and the world ! What shall it boot
 To argue with the shy anemone,
 Or reason with the rose ? — This air is spring,
 And on this isle of flowers we all are lovers.

ALCÆUS

Ah, then you love me, Sappho !

SAPPHO

By what token ?

ALCÆUS

Even by this speech of thine.

SAPPHO

Eyes are the tongues

Of lovers, and their speech is light, not sound,
Therefore you know not Love's infallible
Tokens.

ALCÆUS

But tell me !

SAPPHO

Grant it then — I love you :

Then, were it so, what need had you to ask ?
For should I see you but a little instant,
Then is my voice choked and my tongue is broken ;
Under my flesh quick fire runs flame and quivers ;
My eyes look blank on darkness ; sounds of roaring
Sing in mine ears ; chiller than death the frore dews
Danken my limbs, and pale as grass in autumn,
I tremble.

[Smiling.]

Are the tokens manifest ?

[From the temple reënters Phaon without his burden. As Sappho turns her face archly from Alcæus, her eyes fall upon the slave, who, oblivious, with dreamy gaze fixed upon the sea, approaches and passes her by, silent as a sleep-walker. Following his figure unconsciously with her look, Sappho — with rapid gradation changing in mood and aspect — begins to show visibly the tokens she has been describing, till overwhelming faintness closes her eyes.]

ALCÆUS

Why do you mock me, lady? Pain of hope,
 Pain of desire are punishment enough,
 Without your irony. — Gods, thou art pale!
 What is it, Sappho? Ha! thou hast *not* mocked me!
 You tremble: Nay, poor fool, me — happy fool!
 Now, now I understand.

SAPPHO

[*Faintly.*]

Not now.

ALCÆUS

[*With lowered voice.*]

I know;

Eyes only speak, and yours are eloquent;
 They follow yonder slave to where she stands
 Watching us there. — Her jealousy is mad;
 Let it not move thee; it can touch us not;
 And what are we to Anactoria
 That — lean on me!

[*He reaches to support Sappho, whose eyes have closed.*
Exit Phaon, right.]

SAPPHO

Later — to-night.

ALCÆUS

But Sappho —

SAPPHO

Under the stars to-night ; here, by the temple —

[*Slowly, looking away right.*]

When there are no slaves passing.

ALCÆUS

[*Kissing her robe.*]

Till to-night !

[*He departs by the colonnade, exultant. Sappho stands silent, shaken by deep breaths of a great emotion. Anactoria, whose eyes have never left Sappho's face, seeing her now alone, leaves Atthis who seeks fearfully to detain her by catching at a lyre which Anactoria carries rigidly in her arm.*]

ATTHIS

Wait ; let me play to thee !

[*Unheeding, Anactoria approaches Sappho and comes very close, before Sappho, opening her arms with a glad start, embraces her.*]

SAPPHO

My 'Toria.

[*Allowing Sappho to draw her face close to hers, Anactoria speaks then in a tense, low voice. Before she has finished speaking, she springs loose, with a spurning gesture.*]

ANACTORIA

Oh, that I were a beast on the wild hills,
 And I had borne thee to my twilight lair
 Alive, and there had bitten thee to death,
 And dabbled all thy beauty in the dew —
 And *he* to look upon it !

SAPPHO

'Toria!

ANACTORIA

[*Wildly.*]

Oh, call me not that name ; it is too dear.
 So did you call me first that silver night
 Below your orchard, when you taught me first
 To strike this plectron on this lyre. — You kissed me
 And cried : “ Well played, my 'Toria ! ”

SAPPHO

And so

I'll kiss thee, dear, a thousand silver nights.

ANACTORIA

[*Holding the plectron like a daggeret.*]

Come not so close ; I'll scratch thy cheek with this,
 And stencil in thy blood Alcæus' name,
 That all may read how Sappho loved her friend.

SAPPHO

[*To Atthis.*]

And so for this she would she were a beast
 To dabble all my beauty in the dew !

[*Turning to Anactoria with gentle laughter.*]

O girl!

ANACTORIA

I heard you bid him come to-night.

SAPPHO

I said to-night ?

ANACTORIA

Wilt thou deny it ?

SAPPHO

Let

Alcæus come to-night, then. I will be
 Punctual to his coming, and if thou
 Hast deemed me ever a wise art-mistress, trust me
 To teach him such a lesson then in love
 As he shall long remember — for *thy* sake.
 Come, wilt thou love thine old friend — one night more ?

ANACTORIA

[*Going to her and embracing her knees.*]

O dear and mighty ! Thou art not as we.

SAPPHO

A goddess once again ? No cheeks, eyes, elbows
 To be restored ? Why, truly, then, these poets
 Are wise who sing : “Hail, Sappho, thou tenth Muse !”
 Therefore rise up, sweet mortal, and attend
 How I shall prove my Musehood by a song.

[*Taking the lyre from Anactoria.*]

Hand me the plectron. — Atthis, sit with us
 Here. 'Tis a Linus-song for vintagers
 To chant in autumn. Therefore, 'Toria,
 If thou wilt weep, weep not for Cupid, but
 Adonis. — Kiss me ! Now this will I sing
 Deftly to please my girl-friends.

[*Sappho is seated on the marble bench, right; Atthis on the ground before her. Anactoria, standing beside the bench, turns away while Sappho sings and, overcome with restrained weeping, steals off through the colonnade. Meantime, from the right, Pittacus has appeared and stands listening, unseen.*]

What shall we do, Cytherea?

Tender Adonis is dying!

What shall we do?

Rend, rend your delicate tunics,

Rend, rend your breasts, O my maidens:

Weep — *Ai le nu!*

[*Looking after Anactoria.*]

Poor jealousy! — Run, fetch her back to us,
And take her this.

ATTHIS

[*Taking the lyre from Sappho.*]

I fear she will not come.

[*Exit.*]

PITTACUS

[*Approaches Sappho with hesitating deference.*]

Clear voice of Lesbos —

SAPPHO

[*Turning.*]

Lord of Mitylene!

PITTACUS

Lady, in Athens, the last time I met
Solon, the tyrant, he was in his garden,
And where he sat the almond-blossoms fell
On his white hair. He had thrown his parchments
down

And looked on me with eyes that saw me not,
For near him stood a slender, thrush-voiced boy
Gushing a song. And when the boy had ceased,
"Whose song was that?" he asked. The boy said,
"Sappho's:"

And Solon, speaking low, said: "Sing that only!
So that I may not die before I learn it."

SAPPHO

Solon was wise; my songs are beautiful.

PITTACUS

For they are you. Sappho, I also am
Tyrant and lawgiver. My function 'tis
In war and peace to engineer this isle,
And through the level conduits of the mind
To irrigate the state with the still waters
Of reason; I have schooled and flogged my will
With the iron whips of Sparta; and my words
Are sown abroad for wisdom; yet—O hear me!
Thy voice hath loosed in me a thousand streams
That overleap their banks, and inundate
My ordered world with passion; vain it is
I strive to dam those springs; their foaming tides

Burst into glorious laughter, and I drown
 Rapturous; vain it is I charge my soul —
 This love is madness, peril and despair!
 I *know* that it is madness — yet I love you.

SAPPHO

Are you, then, mad? Does not supreme desire
 Beget the supreme joy? This engineered,
 Wise-ordered state of yours — when you have cast
 Its lovers forth on some bleak lepers' rock
 In the barren sea; when you have builded all
 Its solemn temples of serenity,
 And sculptured on its gates your city's god —
 The massy image of Indifference;
 When you have set up in the public ways
 Fountains of running reason, where cold virgins
 And silent boys, with philosophic beards,
 Fill their chaste pitchers, and turn dumbly home
 To tipple with their grandsires — tell me, then!
 Will you not fear, some day, an insurrection,
 When those same boys and girls, with flying hair
 And eyes aflame, shall drag you in the market
 And cry: "Our lovers! Give us back our lovers!
 Give us our mad joys and our loves again!"

PITTACUS

Sappho, the wild bees of Persuasion hive
 Between your lips. Call me what name you will:
 Sage — madman; only take from me my gift
 In love.

SAPPHO

What do you offer ?

PITTACUS

Mitylene.

SAPPHO

As mine ?

PITTACUS

To rule with me.

SAPPHO

Is not such rather

A man's, not woman's office ?

PITTACUS

Yours alone

Of women ! See, a little while ago
I brought this staff to you : you were in the temple,
And here I met Alcæus ; here for you
We wrangled, and in wrath I lifted this
And left it — so.

SAPPHO

Heigh me ! A vase, a sceptre :

And now both dashed in pieces at my feet !
Surely this Sappho is a stony image
And not a maid, to shatter such love-tokens.
You struck Alcæus ?

PITTACUS

No, by chance the blow

Fell on a passing slave.

SAPPHO

[*Slowly.*]

You said — a slave ?

PITTACUS

A sea-drudge

With drift-wood for Poseidon's
Night-fire.

SAPPHO

[*Breathing quick.*]

Give me the pieces.

His flesh, you say ?

PITTACUS

His flesh ?

It did not strike Alcæus !

SAPPHO

[*Feeling the staff's splintered edge.*]No, but his bare flesh ! On
His shoulder ?

PITTACUS

It struck only

The slave.

SAPPHO

[*Quivering.*]

The bright blood started !

PITTACUS

There sprang no blood, dear lady ; the staff broke
 Against the fagots on the fellow's shoulder. —
 All for mere words ! Alcæus had but gibed me
 With foolish words. Judge now if I have need
 Of you, to sway the staff of Mitylene.

SAPPHO

[*After a brief pause.*]

True, Pittacus ; why should we not splice these
 In one, and wield this staff together ? Grant
 I'm but a slave, being but woman ; yet
 If you, that are the maker of your law,
 If you detect in me this civic gift
 Surpassing woman, shall you not then leap
 This breach of sex, and make me your true mate —
 Greatly your wife and lover ?

PITTACUS

Speak with pity !

Let me not doubt I hear this.

SAPPHO

Hear it well,

For I would reason, too : A slave, I said,
 But — turn the tables ! *You* are now the slave
 (No maid as I, but such a bondman, say,
 As that same drift-wood bearer whom you struck),
 And I am maiden-tyrant of Mitylene,
 Over all Lesbos lawgiver of love.

PITTACUS

Even as thou art!

SAPPHO

Why then, you poor base slave,
 If I detect in your sea-sinew'd limbs
 Olympian graces moving, if I see
 Far in your cold deep eyes dæmonic fire
 Outburning the eye-glance of a faun in love,
 If I behold in you, outcast, my kin
 Congenial spirit, may I not reach to you
 My tyrant's staff, and raise you at my side —
 No more a thing for men to scorn, but now
 Greatly my lord and lover?

PITTACUS

What would . . . ?

SAPPHO

Wait!

Or must I now because I am a woman,
 Forego the tyrant's great prerogative —
 To make mine own law?

PITTACUS

Sappho, but to what
 Leads this? I do not follow you.

SAPPHO

It leads
 To the Golden Age. If you would get my love,
 Follow me there.

[Turning away, Sappho springs to the steps of Aphrodite's
 shrine.]

PITTACUS

Have you, then, only mocked me?
Am I to come no more?

SAPPHO

[*Pausing.*]

Nay, Pittacus,
I have but mocked myself. Come when you will.

PITTACUS

To-night? Under these olives?

SAPPHO

When you will;
And so, good-by! Oh, you have given me thoughts
To make the woman tremble in me.

PITTACUS

Sappho!

[*With a gesture of love toward her, as she turns again to the steps, he departs, left. Sappho, having mounted to the shrine, prostrates herself before it; then — facing the Ægean, seated, her arms about her knees, plastic, silent — gazes down upon the waves. From the colonnade Atthis enters and searches about with her eyes.*]

ATTHIS

Where art thou, Sappho?

[*Discovering her, Atthis ascends the steps.*]

Anactoria

Is wilful, and she swears she will not come
Again, till she has sought Alcæus out

And dragged him to thy scorn. — Thou hast not
heard me.

Sweet mistress, here is Atthis. What hath happened
That like an image thou sittst staring?

SAPPHO

[*In a low voice.*]

Hark!

She is calling me.

ATTHIS

Who calls?

SAPPHO

My mother.

ATTHIS

[*Starting.*]

Sappho!

SAPPHO

Dost thou not hear her sob and sing below us?
Her hollow lute is turquoise, and she touches
The silver strings of ever-roaring reefs
Far off to sound her awful lullaby;
And while she croons, between her foaming breasts —
Like infants at their milk — Hyperion lies
And heaving Triton dreams. Us too, us mortals,
She suckles there, and there she buries us.

ATTHIS

What new hymn art thou musing?

SAPPHO

Listen again!

Oh, such a sobbing cry did Thetis make
That night she rose beside the blood-starr'd beach

Of Troy, to her great son Achilles, ere
 He died. Me, too, she calls: I sink, I sink!
 Atthis, I have heard the whirling cliff-birds scream,
 And watched my breaths burst up through the green
 wave
 In moons of opal fire.

ATTHIS

I am afraid;
 Is it some goddess calls thee?

SAPPHO

'Tis the sea,
 The teeming, terrible, maternal sea
 That spawned us all. She calls me back to her,
 But I will not go. Her womb hath brought me forth
 A child defiant. I will be free of her!
 Her ways are birth, fecundity, and death,
 But mine are beauty and immortal love.
 Therefore I will be tyrant of myself —
 Mine own law will I be! And I will make
 Creatures of mind and melody, whose forms
 Are wrought of loveliness without decay,
 And wild desire without satiety,
 And joy and aspiration without death;
 And on the wings of those shall I, I, Sappho!
 Still soar and sing above these cliffs of Lesbos,
 Even when ten thousand blooms of men and maids
 Are fallen and withered — there.

[*Peering below, she touches Atthis' arm and points.*]

What man is that?

ATTHIS

Where ?

SAPPHO

There, beneath us, where the cliff-path leaves
The beach. See, he is climbing toward our faces.

ATTHIS

I am dizzy.

SAPPHO

He is clinging to the rock
Of garnet, where the sea-doves build their nests.
He is reaching over it. — Atthis, he will fall !

ATTHIS

I see him now — a fisherman : his net
Is over his shoulder.

SAPPHO

He hath seized it, look —
A young dove ! And he brings it in the net.

ATTHIS

A slave.

SAPPHO

Know you his name ?

ATTHIS

His name is Phaon.

SAPPHO

[*Slowly.*]

Phaon! And so 'tis Phaon! and forever
 'Sappho and Phaon.'

ATTHIS

Dost thou muse again?

SAPPHO

When lovers' names are born, their syllables
 Fall like the snowflakes of Apollo's tears,
 That crystallize in song.

[*Murmuring.*]

— Sappho and Phaon!

ATTHIS

'Tis not a slave like others. You have heard
 What the old sea-wives whisper.

SAPPHO

No.

ATTHIS

Of him

And Aphrodite?

SAPPHO

[*Eagerly.*]

Nay, what do they whisper?

ATTHIS

They say that once, when Phaon was a boy,
 One twilight, when the Ægean was upturn
 By mighty wind and thunder, and the fish-folk
 Prayed in their harbours — at the tempest's height,
 Appeared upon the beach an old, poor woman
 And begged a passage to the mainland. None
 Heard her but scoffed or cursed her; only Phaon
 Unloosed his boat, and rowed her through the storm
 To Lydia. At dawn, when he returned,
 His look was altered and he spoke strange things;
 How, when his boat reached mainland, the poor hag
 Had cast her cloak and sprung, with burning limbs,
 Upon the sands — a goddess! Since which night
 (They say) he hath grown up indifferent
 To all his kith and kind; to laughter, love,
 And slave-girls singing. — 'Tis a pretty tale;
 Wouldst thou not love to make a song of it?

SAPPHO

In truth, my Atthis, 'tis a moving tale,
 And I should love to make a song of it.
 Leave me!

ATTHIS

Wilt thou compose it on the spot?
 Nay, then I'll go for news of Larichus.

[*Atthis departs toward Mitylene. Sappho, left alone, descends from the shrine and leans against one of the temple pillars. From the cliff-path, Phaon enters. About him is flung a sea-net, under the hanging folds of which he holds in his hands, enmeshed, a white dove.*

Seeing him, Sappho withdraws into the temple through the tapestries, from between which she soon looks forth again. Slowly Phaon descends the broad steps and, sitting upon the last, extricates the dove from the net. As he rises with it in his hand and goes toward the altar of Poseidon, Sappho — unseen of him — comes from the temple and descends the steps behind him. Having reached the altar, Phaon is about to lift a knife which lies upon it, when Sappho stays his arm. Seeing her, he bends low in a subjected manner.]

SAPPHO

The dove : what wouldst thou with the wild thing ?

PHAON

[*Serenely.*]

Kill it.

SAPPHO

It struggles. See, is not it beautiful ?

PHAON

I know not ; you have spoken.

SAPPHO

But for whom

Wilt thou then kill it, bondman ?

PHAON

For Poseidon ;

The god is angry.

SAPPHO

Oh, not for Poseidon!

His sacrifice is death; to Aphrodite
 Give it! For her the sacrifice is life.
 Give it to me and I will dedicate it
 Alive to Aphrodite, for it is
 Her sacred bird. Look, I will give thee this —
 My bracelet — for the dove.

PHAON

*[Taking, as at a command, Sappho's bracelet, releases the
 dove into her hands.]*

'Tis yours.

SAPPHO

Her shrine

Is yonder. I will loose it to her there.

*[Starting for the shrine, Sappho treads upon the net, which
 Phaon before has let fall beside the steps. Pausing, she
 looks back at him, where he stands intent upon the
 gleaming bracelet in his hand. For a moment she con-
 tinues to look at Phaon thus, then, wrapping the dove in
 her filmy scarf, and placing it with her flowers on the
 steps, she lifts the net where it lies.]*

Thy net is torn.

PHAON

I climbed here from the beach.
 It caught on the cliff-rocks.

SAPPHO

I will mend it.

PHAON

[*For the first time gazing at her.*]

You!

[*Fastening one end of the net—somewhat more than shoulder-high—to the tripod on the altar, Sappho secures the other end to the bronze caryatid, right. Thus (the net cutting the foreground obliquely from the middle) her face is separated from Phaon's by the interlaced strands, some of which—hanging torn—leave gaps in the fibre.*]

SAPPHO

To mend is woman's task.

PHAON

[*In wonder.*]

Are you a woman?

SAPPHO

Perhaps I am what women yearn to be :
Man.

PHAON

Did you grow here in the temple?

SAPPHO

Where

I grew, or in what garden by the spray .
Or wave-lit cave my spirit's seed was sown,
Surely 'tis thou who knowest : for methinks
Thou also grewest there.

PHAON

It may be so.

SAPPHO

Stood we not then as now? and raised as now
The net between us?

PHAON

[*Strangely.*]

Somewhat I remember.

SAPPHO

And even as now thine eyes shone through the meshes,
And mine in thine: was it not always so?

PHAON

[*Indifferent, begins to tie strands of the net.*]

'Tis broken.

SAPPHO

Ah, but shall be mended! I
Will tie the fibres.

[*In silence now for a little, they stand mending the net: Phaon before it, dumbly engrossed in his task; Sappho, from behind, thrusting at times her white hand or arm through a gap to reach for a strand, and keeping her eyes burningly intent upon Phaon.*]

You are a boatman.

PHAON

Yes.

SAPPHO

Go you alone upon the water?

PHAON

Yes.

SAPPHO

When you are all alone, are you afraid?

PHAON

No.

SAPPHO

Put you ever far to sea?

PHAON

Sometimes.

SAPPHO

And have you never rowed to the mainland?

PHAON

Oft.

SAPPHO

By tempest?

PHAON

Once.

SAPPHO

A storm at twilight?

PHAON

Once.

SAPPHO

Oh, is it true, then, what the sea-wives tell?
Was she a goddess?

PHAON

Long ago! 'twas long
Ago. I was a boy, and that's all dark.

SAPPHO

And have you never seen her since she sprang
Burning, upon the sands of Lydia?

PHAON

[*Momentarily ardent.*]

Sometimes methought—I know not.

SAPPHO

You saw.

Still you dreamed

PHAON

How knowest thou?

SAPPHO

Tell me your dreams.

[*After a pause, Phaon — with a rapt smile — speaks.
While he does so, Sappho — who has unwittingly tied
his left wrist in one of the meshes where his hand rests
— comes round to the other side of the net, and draws
near to him.*]

PHAON

Oft ere the day, while all the slaves are sleeping,
 I and my boat put out on the black water ;
 Under us there and over us, the stars sing
 Songs of that silence.

Soon then the sullen, brazen-hornèd oxen
 Rise in the east, and slowly with their wind-ploughs
 Break in the acres of the broad Ægean
 Furrows of fire.

So, many a time there, as I leaned to watch them
 Yoked in their glory, sudden 'gainst the sunrise
 Seemed that there stood a maiden — a bright shadow —

SAPPHO

Ah, you beheld her !

[From the colonnade, behind the farthest pillar, Alcæus and Anactoria enter and pause. Anactoria, nearly concealed by the pillar, points out to Alcæus the figures (on the opposite side of the net) of Phaon and Sappho, where, standing together, they are visible through the meshes. Alcæus' face darkens. Sappho, not seeing them, speaks in a low, impassioned voice to Phaon.]

Look in my face. What were her features like —
 Hers, that bright shadow ?

PHAON

I am tangled ; you
 Have tied me in the mesh.

SAPPHO

I tied you ?

PHAON

Here —

My wrist.

SAPPHO

Did I do this?

PHAON

You see — the noose.

SAPPHO

But did you feel me tie this?

PHAON

No.

SAPPHO

[*Murmurs.*]

'Twas she!

Your hand is fast ; know you who made it fast ?

'Twas she: her fingers drew these knots.

PHAON

Untie them.

[*Alcæus, darkly, and Anactoria, radiant, withdraw
unseen.*]

SAPPHO

Nay, but who knows what wise, unconscious plot
 Her deft, strange fingers wove to trap thee? Thou
 Perchance hast trespassed here too near her shrine,
 And, having stranded thee in thine own net,
 She now is loath to toss thee back again
 In the sea, to thy dumb mermen.

PHAON

[*Working with his right hand.*]

They are fine,
These knots.

SAPPHO

And so perchance, for chastisement,
She hath contrived this noose to keep thee here
In speech with her, till thou shalt call to mind
The face, and name the name, of her you love.

PHAON

I mind it well — her face. Unloose me.

SAPPHO

Look!
Is it a dream-face still? — A shadow?

PHAON

No;
'Tis with me days and nights. It is familiar.

SAPPHO

And yours to her familiar as these nights
And days — and yet as worshipful and strange.

PHAON

[*Fascinated.*]

Untie me.

SAPPHO

First, her name! You may not slip
Her noose, till you have guessed the name of her
You love.

PHAON

I know it well.

SAPPHO

[*Smiling.*]

Methinks you boast
To seem more skilled than she in guessing yours.
How call you her ?

PHAON

Thalassa.

SAPPHO

[*After a pause.*]

What is that ?

PHAON

Her name.

SAPPHO

What's she ?

PHAON

A slave.

SAPPHO

To you ?

And what is she

PHAON

She's mine ; maketh my fire.

SAPPHO

Ah !

PHAON

Loose me.

SAPPHO

You do not dwell alone, then ?

PHAON

No.

SAPPHO

You are wed ?

PHAON

We are slaves ; slaves are not wed.

SAPPHO

No ; but you love her.

PHAON

Yes ; children have I got with her ; the bairn
Is stricken of the fever.

SAPPHO

[Seizing the knife, cuts the meshes of the net.]

Go ; you are free.

[Phaon goes, silent.]

Stay ; I have cut your wrist.

PHAON

A scratch.

SAPPHO

It bleeds.

PHAON

The bairn is sick and I must sacrifice
 A young dove to our lord Poseidon. Soon
 Its mother will be here, to pray with me
 For the babe's life.

SAPPHO

Where is its mother now?

PHAON

She is gone up to the city, to the house
 Of Sappho — the great lady.

SAPPHO

Oh, of Sappho!

What does she there?

PHAON

She is gone to the slave-quarters
 With crawfish and sea-tortoise for a feast.
 Methinks the lady's brother shall be wed
 To-morrow.

SAPPHO

She is gone to the slave-quarters. —
 Let see thy wrist. — The house of Sappho is
 A slave's house. — Ah, the blood!

[*Tearing a shred from her garment, she binds his wrist.*]

I, too, have heard
 Of Sappho — the great slave.

PHAON

Nay, 'tis a noble

Maiden of Lesbos. At Apollo's feast
 Once, in the crowd, I saw her fillet pass
 Above the virgins' heads into the palace,
 And all the people shouted : *Io Sappho !*

SAPPHO

Believe it not ; the people were deceived.
 I know her well and she was born in chains —
 A weak and wretched fellow-slave of thine,
 Whose proudest joy were but to bind the hurt
 Which she hath given thee, even as I do now.
 Dost thou not hear me? Whereon dost thou gaze?

PHAON

[Looking off, left.]

She is coming.

SAPPHO

Phaon ! Phaon !

PHAON

*[For the first time turning upon her a wild unconscious
 look of love, grasps his bound wrist tightly.]*

Ah ! it pains.

*[Enter THALASSA, bearing a willow basket of strange design.
 She is dishevelled with seaweed and her long, fair hair,
 tinged with the green of salt ooze, has partly slipped its
 fillet of vari-coloured shells. She moves impassively to
 Phaon, and speaks in a low monotone:]*

THALASSA

The day's dead ; the moon's with child ;
The tide's full. I saw far out
A shark's fin. — Poseidon calls.
Hast killed it ?

PHAON

[*Pointing toward Sappho.*]

She bade me not.

THALASSA

[*Turning to Sappho, who shrinks from her behind the net,
bows herself low in obeisance.*]

What Sappho forbiddeth thee
The sea-god hath bidden thee. —
The babe shall have sacrifice.

PHAON

[*Looking at Sappho, with a rush of thought.*]

'What, Sappho' — !

THALASSA

The sea-dove — where
Didst hide it ?

PHAON

'Tis there.

[*As Thalassa goes toward the steps.*]

'Tis hers.

She bought it ; this bracelet gave
To save its life.

THALASSA

Give it me.

[*Taking the bracelet from Phaon, she holds it against the sunset, turning and turning it in the light.*]

PHAON

[*Standing at a distance.*]

And are you Sappho? Yet did speak my name,
And bind my wrist, and call yourself a slave!

SAPPHO

And art thou Phaon? Phaon for whom the stars
Sang, and the brazen-hornèd oxen ploughed
The acres of the sunrise? Yet thou lovest — this?

PHAON

You said: "I know her well, and she was born
In chains — a fellow-slave!" What did you mean?

SAPPHO

[*Gazing, curious and incredulous.*]

Thalassa!

THALASSA

[*Slipping the bracelet over her arm.*]

It shineth fine:

See, Phaon!

SAPPHO

Thalassa, where's

Thy home?

THALASSA

On the beach we sleep
Together.

SAPPHO

What dost thou for
Thy lover?

THALASSA

For him I keep
Food, fire, and the babe and boy.

SAPPHO

And what wilt thou do to make
His labour and name to grow
Magnificent over the isles?

THALASSA

[*Returns Sappho's enkindled gaze with proud serenity.*]
More bairns will I bear to him.

SAPPHO

And they — when the frost of death
Hath gathered both thee and him —
Shall *they* too but live — to live?
Be born still to bear again
Procreative things that die?

PHAON

[*Having listened, vaguely fearful, moves now between the two women, and draws Thalassa, protectingly.*]

Cease, cease! — Thalassa, come with me. Her eyes!
They burn us through the net. O come away!

THALASSA

[As she goes with Phaon, raises her arm with the bracelet, for Sappho to see.]

This gold will I give the bairn
To play with. — Keep thou the dove.

PHAON

[With a gesture of yearning toward Sappho, departs in the falling twilight, his voice broken with pain.]

Thalassa!

[Sappho, through the net, watching them together till they disappear, seizes then the net before her and, tearing it down, rends once the meshes with her hands.]

SAPPHO

Aphrodite! Aphrodite!

Now, now thy net is torn, thy bird is free.

[Springing to the steps, she lifts the sea-dove and unwinds from about it the filmy scarf.]

O darling bird, which art my beating soul,
That Phaon captured on these wild sea-cliffs,
Mount up, mount up! and nestle with thy wings
Against the burning chlamys of heaven's queen
There where her breast heaves highest. — Say to her:
“Lady of love, almighty! This is Sappho —
Her spirit — whom thou madest of that fire
Which sleeps in Phaon's eyes. Lo, I am his,
And I will make him mine!” — This say to her,
My heart's bird, and beseech her, if she hears

My prayer, and sanctioneth my passionate
 Resolve, that she will speed thee back to me
 In token she approves. — Yet should she *not*,
 Here do I choose, in spite of sea and heaven,
 The sanction of myself.

[*Releasing the sea-dove.*]

Good-by, sweet bird !

[*On the steps, from her uplifted hand, she looses the bird, which takes wing into the sunset. Immediately Sappho springs up the steps and goes to the cliff's edge. There, standing against the subdued reflections of the Ægean, she follows the dove's far flight with her eyes.*]

[*Rising, the Herculaneum curtain shuts off the scene.*]

Here follows the Pantomime of the First Interlude.

Vide Appendix.

ACT II

ACT II

Early night of the same day. The temple and sea gleam vaguely under the moon. Tapers are burning beneath the outstretched stone wings of the dove on Aphrodite's shrine, and the urn of Poseidon glows with fire — a signal light to mariners. Swinging lamps twinkle in the olive grove. On the edge of the grove, alone, stands Pittacus in reverie. From all sides out of the night, arise the soft string-sounds of sweet instruments and the music of far laughter. In the near distance (from the left) the voice of Alcæus sings.

ALCÆUS

Wine, dear child, and truth
And youth and these lips of thine!
Wine from the crocus' cup
And truth from the poppy's heart
Drink to me
While I think of thee!
Think of me
While I drink, drink
Wine and youth
And truth from these lips of thine.

PITTACUS

[*Coming slowly down the steps.*]

'Tis silent now — that song; but still the silver shores
Are drench'd with dews of it; the olive groves — the
air,

The ever-rhythmic waters — are in love. Of all
 I only and the white stars are not amorous.
 No more the wine of thee, dear child: the truth I
 drink!
 And drinking that, I pass from madness into peace:
 Peace *now*, yet should I look once more into her eyes,
 What *then*?

[*Enter from the grove a Figure, clad in the cloak of a Greek
 soldier, wearing a helmet with long horse-hair plume,
 a gold breastplate, and greaves of gold.*]

THE FIGURE

[*Approaching Pittacus.*]

'Under these olives,' lord of Mitylene!

PITTACUS

[*Starting.*]

Her brother, Larichus.

[*Turning toward the Figure, pauses bewildered.*]

Not Sappho — you!

SAPPHO

'Under these olives' — was it not the place?
 Well met, O Pittacus!

PITTACUS

In such a garb —

SAPPHO

The wise Athene walked at Ilium
Among the tetchy Greeks. The arbiter
Of men needs govern as a man. — Where is
Your tyrant's staff?

PITTACUS

[*Drawing back.*]

Keep from me, lest again
I lose the tranquil planet of my peace.
Let me depart from you.

SAPPHO

I will depart
When you have given me what I come to claim.

PITTACUS

All but my quiet soul.

SAPPHO

That girdle of keys.

PITTACUS

[*Feeling at his side.*]

They are the city keys.

SAPPHO

Which one of them
Unlocks the yoke-rings of the public slaves?

[*Pittacus loosens one.*]

Give me that one.

[*Reaching, snatches it from him with a glad sigh.*]

Now keep your quiet soul,
Philosopher: I will no more affray
Your sleep with my alarms.

[*She turns, and is leaving.*]

PITTACUS

[*Unmanned by her presence.*]

Yet do not go!

SAPPHO

Peace! You have put away with me the quest
Of happiness. Yours is the living pall,
The aloof and frozen place of listeners
And lookers-on at life. But mine — ah! mine
The fount of life itself, the burning spring
Pierian! — I pity you. Farewell!

[*Exit, left.*]

PITTACUS

Farewell, thou burning one and beautiful!
I pity *thee*, for thou must live to quench
With thine own tears thine elemental fire.

[*Enter Phaon, right.*]

PHAON

[Groping toward the altar, moans low.]

Poseidon! O Poseidon!

PITTACUS

Still this slave
That rises in my path to baffle me!

PHAON

Ah — ah, Poseidon!

PITTACUS

[Drawing near.]

Slave!

PHAON

[Pausing, speaks confidently.]

Are you the god?

PITTACUS

*[Half bitterly.]*The god! I have deserved thy question, slave.
Before, thy silence stung me — now thy words.

PHAON

Lord, lift it from me; take it from my eyes!
Why have you cast its dimness over me?

PITTACUS

What wouldst thou have me lift?

PHAON

It closes down.
Stretch forth your arm and draw it back to you.

PITTACUS

Look near : canst thou not see me ?

PHAON

None I see !
The shore is gone ! It shutteth out the stars,
Thicker and colder !

PITTACUS

What ?

PHAON

The fog ! The fog !
It shuts between us, and her far white face
Wanes toward me like the lady in the moon,
And now between the meshes I can see,
Like shrines, her two eyes burning.

PITTACUS

Even this one !
Is there none then too low ? no piece of clay
But passion there will make its chrysalis
And kindle the worm wings ? Rest, thou poor churl !

[*Exit slowly, right.*]

PHAON

[*Descending the steps supplicatingly.*]

Lord, be not angry! Take it from before
My face, and show me hers! Sweep it away,
And with your great hand show again the stars.

[*Enter from the grove Thalassa. Slung at her back, is a swaddled babe. At her side is a little boy of some four or five years — his sturdy, sun-tanned body naked, save for wreathings of sea-weed and kelp, partly concealing his torse and intertangling the oozy locks of his long hair. The child carries a tortoise' shell, with which — sitting upon the ground — he plays. Pausing at the top of the steps, Thalassa unbinds the infant from her back and takes it in her arms.*]

THALASSA

Io, my bairn! wakest thou?
Aye drowseth thy bonny head
Low! burneth thy little cheek
That erst it was cold as ice.
Io, my bairn! droop thee not
Away from thy mother's eyes;
Look up in them.

[*Descending the steps, Thalassa reaches the swaddled child toward Phaon, who stands by the altar, his face from hers, oblivious — staring ahead of him.*]

Phaon, take
The bairn to thee: might it smile
To lie in its father's arm
And feel it strong. — Phaon!

[*Turning about vaguely toward her, Phaon takes the out-reached burden in his arms and holds it, rigid. Thalassa then, bending over, takes from her arm Sappho's bracelet and holds it dangling over the infant.*]

So!

Now shall my bairnling look up and see what the
 Lady of Lesbos
 Hath given its father — a little gold dolphin instead
 of the sea-dove
 For bairnling to hold in its fingers and play with and
 make it grow strong. Look!
 Its eyes are the green little stones that burn in the
 shallows at low-tide,
 And it bringeth a pearl in its mouth to please thee;
 aha! glint thine eye now
 And look where the scales of it shine and shine in my
 bairnling's moon-beam,
 And it hath a slippery silvery tail like a sea-maiden's.

[*Bending over closer.*]

Phaon!

It waketh not. Speak to it once! It sleepeth aye
 as in fire.

[*Snatching the babe from Phaon's arm and nestling it, passionate, she drops the bracelet on the ground.*]

A curse on the bright dark Lady of Lesbos! A curse
 on her shining
 Arm-ring! Ah, naught it availeth the fever. Go!
 Go and seek thou
 A victim and kill it. The wave-god is angry! worse
 is the bairn. — Go!

But seek first the house of Sappho and give her the
gold thing back. — Go !

[Phaon moves a dazed step, then remains motionless. Turning away, Thalassa, her face bent near to the babe in her arms, goes slowly up the steps.]

Io, my bairn ! Come away.
Now under the holy beam
Thy mother will pray for thee
That soon thou shalt wake and smile.
Io, my bairn ! droop thee not
Away from thy mother's heart.

[She passes into the temple. The little boy is about to follow, but, seeing the bracelet at Phaon's feet, he runs back, and lifts it in his hand to his father.]

THE CHILD

Babbo !

PHAON

Thy voice it is ! Bion, thy face !
Methought it had been hers till thy young eyes
Shone through her misty hair : and now that mist
Fades in the moon away.

[Smiling at the child, he sits on the altar steps and takes him in his arms.]

How creptst thou here,
Sand-snail ? Aye stickest to thy Babbo's side
Like a spar of drift-wood. Ever at evening
When roweth Babbo weary to the beach,
Thou springest from the kelp, climbest his knees,

Showest thy day's sport. Tighter, tighter, bairn,
 Thine arms about me! Keep thy father fast. —
 Thou little piece of me, grow not so tall!
 Taller than the iris-reeds that water-maids
 Make into pipes for Pan to play upon.
 Soon too shalt thou be ripe for him to play.
 Nay, whither now? What new sport bringest here
 To show me? — Tortoise! A young turtle's shell:
 And was thine own catch? Flung him on the
 back!
 Brave kill! — What shineth in thy fingers there?
 Show me what 'tis.

[*The Child lifts to him again the dolphin-bracelet of Sappho.
 Phaon, staring at it, starts to his feet with his former
 gesture of passionate groping.*]

Poseidon! Ah, Poseidon!
 Once more, once more, why blurrest thou the
 world!
 Lift it away! Thy mist is over all.
 Show me the path to her.

[*With wondering eyes, the Child takes Phaon's hand as if to
 lead.*]

'Tis bitter cold,
 And is thy hand so small and warm? Lead on —
 [*Slowly the Child leads his father up the steps toward the
 colonnade.*]

'Tis ticklish walking on the wet weed-slime
 And naught but cloud to lean on — Lead the
 way.
 Her house is yonder where the breakers are.

[*Reëntering with the infant from the temple, Thalassa steps forward between the first and second pillars. There, taking the bracelet from the boy's hand, she draws him with her away from his father and returns to the temple door.*]

THALASSA

This gold will ^{*I} give to her
 Back. Go thou to Sappho's gate
 And ask of what hour to-night
 She cometh to the temple. We
 Shall wait thee here. Come to us!

[*She goes into the temple with the children. Phaon — his face lifted, his hand feeling before him — passes slowly off through the colonnade.*]

PHAON

Poseidon, — thy hand again!

[*Exit.*]

[*The voice of Alcæus calls outside in the olive-grove.*]

ALCÆUS

Boy! — Iacchus! — Boy!

[*Enter Alcæus, accompanied by an Ethiopian slave boy, and followed by Sappho, disguised as before, now carrying a spear. Alcæus, wreathed with grape leaves, is adorned fantastically as a Bacchanalian. The slave, likewise draped with vines, bears upon his head and shoulders a bulging wine-sack made of a skin. This (sinking upon one knee) he supports thus as upon a salver at Alcæus' side, and lifts to him, from beneath it, a shallow, black-figured drinking cup.*]

ALCÆUS

Here, here, thou sack-stool! Down,
And hold the pigskin for the bridegroom. Wait!

[*Addressing the cloaked figure of Sappho.*]

Hail, Larichus! hail, bridegroom home again!
To Dionysus I thy welcome pour. —
The cup! —

[*Filling it from the sack.*]

I charge thee, bird from Lydia,
When Atthis keeps thy house in Lesbos, plant
No other tree before the vine! And so
Sleep long and make your nest in grape-leaves.
Drink!

And so for song:

[*Singing.*]

Wine, dear child, and truth
And youth and these lips —

SAPPHO

[*Turning from the cup.*]

No wine for me.

ALCÆUS

No bride for Larichus!
For what is love but grape-juice? brides, but grapes?
And lovers — wine-skins! Look you on this sack
My caryatid here is holding — This
Whilome was pig and grunted in the bog
For water-nuts and mire: a sow's first-born
With bristles, Hyacinthus of the herd!

[*Pouring from the sack and drinking.*]

Behold him now — a vessel for us gods,
 Swelling with Cyprian nectar. O translation!
 Yet such a pig was Pittacus, who now
 Swelleth with love of Sappho. —

[*Drinking.*]

Nay, but we —
 Before we fell in love, were *we* not swine
 Compared to this we are?

[*Patting the wine-sack.*]

I say, for one,
 The Arcadians crunched acorns and no slander
 To them; and as for me —

[*Singing.*]

O Ajax was a king, not I!
 I fell by the kiss of the Cyprus-born —
 And though Hebrus be the most plentiful of rivers
 yet 'tis said: from nothing,

[*Inverting his empty cup.*]

nothing cometh. More, boy!

SAPPHO

Where's Atthis?

ALCÆUS

Where's thy sister? Where's the song-dove?
 Where's Sappho?

SAPPHO

[*Starting.*]

You've not answered me.

ALCÆUS

All's one!

I say, there lives a kind of four-wing'd Muse,
 Quadruple-eyed and double-filleted,
 Called indiscriminately Sappho — Atthis;
 Find one, find both; for they be always arm
 And neck together. Nay, but Larichus,
 Patience and wait! As I am drunk, henceforth
 I am thy brother: Sappho loveth me.

SAPPHO

Since when?

ALCÆUS

By Heracles, I know not: here
 To-day upon this ground, she swooned all pale
 Because another loved me; and she bade
 Me meet her here to-night. — Good lad, thy hand
 And blessing!

[*Sappho draws slightly away.*]

What!

SAPPHO

I wish you joy of her.

ALCÆUS

And not thy hand upon it?

SAPPHO

To be honest,

I cannot deem you happy.

ALCÆUS

With thy sister !

SAPPHO

These sisters are not all they seem to be.

ALCÆUS

But Sappho !

SAPPHO

I perhaps know her too well.

ALCÆUS

And doubt she loves me ?

SAPPHO

Nay, far otherwise.

I doubt if ever she saw form of man,
Or maiden either, whom — being beautiful —
She hath not loved.

ALCÆUS

But not with passion —

SAPPHO

All

That breathes to her is passion ; love itself.
All-passionate.

ALCÆUS

Thou goadest me with thorns. —
 This evening — Nay, why should I tell thee this?
 And yet I will : — At sunset, here I saw
 Thy sister speaking with a public slave.

SAPPHO

[*Withdrawing.*]

Ah!

ALCÆUS

If I thought — but I will tell thee more.
 Here hung a net suspended, and they stood
 Together, speaking low — I watched them yonder.
 The slave was mending. Somehow he had got
 One of his hands entangled in the mesh,
 And she — I could not plainly watch her through
 The net — methought she peered into his face.

SAPPHO

Ah!

ALCÆUS

So I left them.

SAPPHO

No more ?

Did you stay to see

ALCÆUS

There was one with me.

SAPPHO

[*Quickly.*]

Who?

ALCÆUS

No matter.

But him — that slave! Sappho to speak with him
On the temple steps! — The thought hath maddened
me.

Why art thou silent? Dost thou deem it nothing
That she should stoop to him?

SAPPHO

She could not stoop

To him.

ALCÆUS

By heaven! I'd have his vermin heart
Upon a spit and roast it — were it so;
But I am drunk to think it. — Boy, I pray you
When next you meet your sister, say no word
Of what I saw; but tactfully you might
Whisper some praises of me. Wait a little,
I'll run and find her.

[*To the wine-slave.*]

Come!

[*Calling back.*]

And Atthis too!

I'll tell her thou art waiting here to clasp
Her neck with Lydian pearls. Ho bride and groom!

[*Nabbing the slave-boy by the ear, he departs with him, singing.*]

Fetch me a Teian
Goblet of gold!
Life is a cubit,
Love is a span.
[*Exit.*]

SAPPHO

[*After a pause.*]

Soon shall the moon on the waters
Sleep, and the Pleiades; midnight
Come and the darkness be empty,
I in the silence — be waiting.

Phaon! Phaon! — where must I
Seek thee? Send me thine omen!

[*Remotely from the grove sounds the voice of Alcæus, singing.*]

ALCÆUS

Love me, drink with me, bloom with me, die, love!
Garlands for me are thine.

Mad when I am, share *thou* of my madness,
Wise, be thou wise with me.

[*From between the temple-tapestries appears Bion, the child. Running to the grove, he lifts from the ground a broken olive-bough, with lithe green shoots. These he strips of their leaves and twines, snake-like, round the main stem, which he flourishes blithely as a staff. Discovering then the tortoise-shell which lies near the steps, he runs to pick it up.*]

SAPPHO

[*Watching him.*]

At play — a luck-child! Here's my happy omen.

[*Taking the shell, Bion is about to return to the temple, when, seeing the cloaked Figure, he pauses and stares.*]

SAPPHO

Well, water-elf? Upon what dolphin's back
 Or oily bladder rodest thou here to land?
 Why dost thou pierce me with those sea-blue eyes,
 As though they saw me in as guileless state
 As thy small body is? Dost thou perchance
 See through this manly corselet and suspect
 This strutting Menelaus, that he wears
 Within, a heart more coward-womanly
 Than Paris? Stare not so, but answer me.
 Ah, now I know thou art a water-boy,
 For wave-sprites all are dumb to mortals, speak
 Only to mermaids and to weedy Triton,
 Their father. Come, what hast thou there?

[*The boy holds out the tortoise-shell and as, taking it, Sappho sits upon the altar steps (at the right), the child comes and stands near.*]

A shell!

A turtle's house! — and once upon a time —
 Sprite, wilt thou hear a story?

[*The child nestles close.*]

Long ago

There lived another turtle, and he died
 And left his shell-house empty by the waves,

And there a goddess bore a little boy
 Named Hermes, and when he was four hours old
 He was as tall as thou art,

[*Playfully twitching his branch of olive.*]

Nay, methinks
 By thy caduceus, boy, thou shouldst be *he*,
 And I that goddess. — Play, then! So he walked
 Beside the waves and found the empty shell,
 (Like this) and took a golden thorn —

[*Taking from under the helmet a hair-pin of gold.*]

like this,
 And turned and turned the thorn — like this — and
 bored
 Nine holes in either side, and drew through them
 Nine strings —

[*Lifting the lyre which Alcæus left behind on the ground.*]

like these, and so he made the shell
 To sing

[*Striking the lyre.*]

like this, and sitting in the spray
 He sang with it a song — a song like this : —

[*Singing.*]

Hollow shell, horny shell,
 Wake from slumber.
 Long — too long — hast thou lain
 Deaf and silent.

Where the pulse blooms in gold —
 Moon- and sun-rise —
 Thou didst creep slow and dumb,
 Seeing nothing.

Yet above thee gleamed and swung
 Star and swallow,
 And around thee, lost in song,
 Lovers mingled.

Horny shell, hear'st thou not
 What I murmur?
 Wake! my breath is on thee warm.
 Wake! I touch thee.

*[Throwing away the lyre, Sappho starts up, and clasping
 the child close, speaks passionately.]*

Ah, little Hermes, pray for me! Thou only
 Whose dumb child-cry the immortals hearken, go
 And kneel to thy grandsire, the great Poseidon,
 And tell him thou didst meet with a bright being,
 Nor man nor woman, but a spirit both,
 That bade thee intercede for him — for her,
 That all the wild desire of this wild heart
 May be to-night fulfilled. Pray him, through you,
 To yield my love to me. Run, Hermes! — run!

*[The Child, with eyes of wonder, springs up the steps toward
 the temple. On the way, seeing the lyre lying where it
 has been thrown, he drops the tortoise-shell and, taking
 with him the lyre, runs into the temple. This Sappho,
 having turned away introspectively, does not perceive.
 From the olives now the voice of Atthis calls. — Enter-
 ing, she rushes forward with outstretched arms.]*

ATTHIS

Larichus — Welcome home, my Larichus!

[Shrinking back.]

Ah me, what are you?

SAPPHO

[*With a smile.*]

Am I, then, so changed ?

ATTHIS

Sappho ! but thou art cruel. Where's thy brother ?
Alcæus said he waited for me here.

SAPPHO

Myself am all thy lovers that are here.
Why do you sob ?

ATTHIS

[*Throwing herself on the marble bench.*]

He never will return.

SAPPHO

[*Leaning over her.*]

I loved thee, Atthis, long and long ago,
Even when thou wert a slight and graceless child,
And should I let this soldier-brother come
And steal thee now away ?

ATTHIS

He does not come.

Why have you done this to me ? Why are you
Clad in his armour ? Why have you deceived
Alcæus, and now me ?

[*From the colonnade Anactoria enters, in moody revery.*]

SAPPHO

[*Indicates her to Atthis.*]

Come, ask of her.

[*Going toward the colonnade.*]

'Toria!

[*Atthis rises slowly, and looks after her.*]

ANACTORIA

[*Starting from her thoughts, looks in amazement.*]

Is it you?

SAPPHO

Have I not kept

My promise well?

ANACTORIA

But —

SAPPHO

He hath been here.

ANACTORIA

He!

SAPPHO

Alcæus : his love-lesson hath begun.
 Did I not tell thee I would teach him well?
 Leaving me now, he's gone to look for me,
 And looking for his love, he is to find
 You.

ANACTORIA

Me?

SAPPHO

There in the temple I have left
My violets. Go you and put them on
And come again.

[On Anactoria's face slowly there dawns a light of passionate triumph.]

ANACTORIA

[Raising her clenched hands.]

Oh! this is wonderful!

[She turns and goes into the temple. Atthis comes wonderingly to Sappho.]

ATTHIS

And is it for her sake you wear this garb?

SAPPHO

For her sake? No; not all; nor to rebuke
Alcæus, all. But there are motives, girl,
To guess which thou wouldst tremble, for thou art
What thou wert born — a soft bride to be wooed,
And 'Hymenæon!' was thy cradle song;
But I — Listen yonder!

[Distantly the deep voices of men are heard, lifting a rude and intermittent chant, which soon recurs — wild and low — more near.]

THE VOICES

Akoue, Poseidon !

SAPPHO

Upward from the shore
 The men-slaves and the beach-folk now are bringing
 Their offerings here to the sea-god, for
 Fair weather on the morrow. — There perhaps
 Among them, there among the dark sea-faces,
 Ruddy with wine and passion, unaware
 My lover walks — a dumb and dreamy slave
 Yearning for liberation. *Therefore, Atthis,*
 I have put on this garb, that as a man
 I still may search those faces of the night
 Till I shall peer within that bondman's eyes
 And set his spirit free.

[As Atthis, with a start of half comprehension, is about to speak.]

Hush ; do not guess,
 But go now with thy servant to my house
 And wait for Larichus. — Fear not for me.

[Atthis kisses Sappho's hand and goes in awe.]

[Groups of sea-slaves now have begun to enter in the moonlight — rough, forbidding presences of rude physical power and superstition ; some are wrapped in cloaks, others are almost naked, their sun-darkened flesh branded with symbols of their owners ; all are bare-headed and without weapons. Bringing in their hands their sea-offerings, — shells, coral, kelp, and other simple tokens, — they place these on the top step before the temple, and moved vaguely — now some, now others — to utter

their discontinuous chant, gather upon the steps and before the temple. Thus, for a minute or more, there transpires only pantomime. Upon the entrance of the slaves, Sappho at first turns instinctively away from them, and draws her cloak more closely about her. Yearningly, however, she turns back and moves among them — silent, searching. Now she joins a group of three that are drinking from a stone wine-jar, scans them, and turns elsewhere to one who is laying his gift of coral before the altar; from him too she turns and, touching a stooping form, peers wistfully an instant at the eyes upraised there to hers, then moves toward other forms obscure in the shadows.]

THE SEA-SLAVES

Iou, Poseidon!

[At this cry of the slaves, the tapestry at the temple door parts, and there enters — clad in dark purple and green — the PRIEST OF POSEIDON, attended by two Acolytes (who gather up the offerings). The Priest raises his long trident staff, at which the slaves fall upon their faces, prostrating themselves with their low cry.]

THE SEA-SLAVES

Chaire, Poseidon!

[Sappho alone remains standing, at once wistful and imperious. The Priest motions toward her with his staff.]

SAPPHO

Biddest thou me bow down, O Silent One?
 Not with these abject children of the earth,
 Nor to thy god. — Not to thy pitiless
 God of the generations, pain and death,

Whom I defy ! This day did I release
 Out of his clutch a dove of sacrifice
 Despite of him ; and of these nameless slaves
 Bow'd to his yoke, one — one will I set free
 And lift as an immortal at my side
 This night, in scorn of thee and thy Poseidon.
 Put back thy trident : that is powerless
 To sway me, for unseen the deathless birds
 Of Aphrodite ward me with their wings
 Inviolably free, and passionate
 To dare. Thy god is not my god ; thy law
 Is not my law.

[*Turning from the temple and the priest — who remains impassive, majestically mute — Sappho, pursuing her search among the dark forms, passes quickly from the scene (right).*]

[*As she goes, one of the prostrate slaves on the temple steps, who has partly raised himself during her speech, rises now alone and gazes after her. It is Phaon. Standing erect among the bowed forms of his fellow-slaves, he moves a few steps toward the place of Sappho's departure, and pauses. The trident of the Priest touches his shoulder, but he does not feel it. The other slaves rise menacingly and, muttering, are about to force him prostrate before the Priest, when the latter intervenes and motions them away. They depart slowly, uttering their chant ; the Priest and Acolytes reënter the temple. All this Phaon neither heeds nor sees. Left alone, he stands gazing still where Sappho has departed — in his face the struggle of an awaking consciousness.*]

[*Outside from the colonnade, some one whistles. The sound is repeated. Phaon turns absently and looks back.*]

ALCÆUS

[*Outside.*]

Here, water-dog!

Stand where thou art.

[*Entering.*]

Where art thou skulking, cur?

PHAON

[*Bending.*]

What would you, lord?

ALCÆUS

What makest at this hour

Here by the holy temple?

PHAON

Seeking, lord.

ALCÆUS

What, charity? A meal of maggots? Some
Goat's entrails by the altar? What wast seeking?

PHAON

[*Slowly.*]

A dream.

ALCÆUS

[*Bursting into shrill laughter.*]

Ha — ha, Apollo! my Apollo!

Behold thy Trojan Kalchas lives again,
Born of a Lesbian sea-bitch! Lo, a dog

Hath sniffed thine altar and become a seer
 And prophet! Come, my dream-seeker, canst read
 The flight of birds? Look there — those moonlit
 doves —

What mean their dreamy circlings? Prophecy!

PHAON

*[Looking over the dim sea, where for a moment a flutter of
 doves is visible, shrinks back superstitiously.]*

Death.

ALCÆUS

[His shrill derision checked by a sudden awe.]

Here's enough of this. I, too, am seeking.
 The lady Sappho spoke with thee to-day —
 Answer me, churl: what said she?

PHAON

[Slowly straightening to his erect stature.]

She will tell.

ALCÆUS

So shalt thou, scavenger;
 And if thou'd 'scape the knot-whip,
 Speak quickly.

PHAON

I have spoken.

ALCÆUS

[*About to burst into passion, pauses and squints maliciously.*]

Oho, an avaricious
Lick-bones!

[*Taking from a pouch, hands to Phaon a coin.*]

An itching mongrel!
Here, hound; here's for thy mange.
Speak; we'll not tell the lady.

[*Phaon, looking from the coin in his hand to Alcæus' face, silently tosses the coin over the cliff. Alcæus starts passionately.*]

Slave, thou shalt have the rack
For this; I'll have thy master
Flay thee.

PHAON

I have no master.
I am a public slave;
The city owns me.

ALCÆUS

[*Seizing the spear which Sappho has left behind, strikes with it at Phaon.*]

Let
The city burn thy carcass.

PHAON

[*Wresting from him the spear.*]

Lord, you have drunk too deep.

ALCÆUS

Boy — Iacchus! Ho, boy! here!

[*Enter the Ethiopian slave-boy.*]

My guards! run to my garden
And fetch them thither. — Run!

[*Exit the slave.*]

By heaven, it grows now plainer
Why Sappho hath not met me:
She hath prepared a feast
Of tidbits for a sea-dog,
And keeps her chamber.

PHAON

She

Is not at home.

ALCÆUS

So thou

Hast sought her there!

PHAON

I left

Lately her house.

[*Reënter Sappho, now without her helmet — her dark locks falling about her breastplate in the moonlight. She stands unobserved, intense, watching the two.*]

ALCÆUS

'Twas so, then!

Her brother said so. Faugh!

Faugh! how the mad night reeks it!

A slave! — O Larichus,

Thou spakest well: These sisters

Are not all that they seem!

But she — the Muse! — to turn

Circe, and set her meshes

To catch a water-rat —

A public, prowling slave!

PHAON

No more!

ALCÆUS

But this is Lesbos,

Where all are lovers! This

Will sing most musically

Set to the lyre: how Sappho,

Enamour'd of the sea-god,

Invoked the slime, to yield

As substitute —

PHAON

[*Approaching near.*]

No more!

ALCÆUS

A wharf-rat for her lover.

PHAON

[Bursting his culminated self-control, strikes with clenched hand Alcæus to the ground, where he lies his length, unconscious, at the foot of the steps. Ignoring him there, Phaon lifts his face with an exultant, dreamy smile, speaking low.]

Lord, the stars!

Thy stars again! how glorious they burn!

SAPPHO

[Coming forward.]

At last!

PHAON

[Gazing in her face.]

Still they are burning there.

SAPPHO

At last

Thy hand is lifted and thy blow is fallen.
Look! at thy feet he bows, alive and prone
From his proud pedestal: this lord of lords.
Ha, Aphrodite! in this man of men
How I have triumphed!

PHAON

Are you not the same
That stood amidst us, with thy helmet plume,
And scorned the silent god?

SAPPHO

Wert thou so near
And yet I found thee not ?

PHAON

Your spirit found me ;
Its voice awoke me 'mongst the herded slaves
And bade me rise towards you, for it said —
'One — one will I set free.'

SAPPHO

That slave is freed !
There lies his bondage stricken in the dust
By his own hand.

PHAON

[*Bewildered.*]

My hand ?

SAPPHO

Was it not thine
That felled him yonder ? Was it not thy soul
That to his mockery cried out " No more !"
And smote him mute ?

PHAON

Thou sayest it was I :
Speak on ! — Even so thou spakest by the net.

SAPPHO

Canst thou then name me?

PHAON

Sappho.

SAPPHO

Hush ; he breathes

Less hard ; come hither.

[*They move away to the right.*]

All the waning time

Of all the stars have I kept watch for thee.

PHAON

And I have groped in darkness — toward thine eyes.

SAPPHO

Who shall constrain Apollo 'neath the sea
 When he uplifts his glad brow from the fens
 Aspiring to inevitable noon?
 Who shall constrain Phaon a slave?

PHAON

Speak still!

SAPPHO

Out of thy dim fens hath thy godhead dawned
 Insufferably fair. O Phaon, that
 Which thou hast struck already from thy soul
 I loose now from thy body.

[*With the key of Pittacus, Sappho unfastens the bronze yoke-ring from the neck of Phaon, and takes it from him in her hand.*]

Know you this?

PHAON

My name-ring 'tis.

SAPPHO

[*Reads from the characters in the metal.*]

' Phaon of Lesbos — slave.'

PHAON

[*Pressing his hand to his throat.*]How light! — how light and strange! Methought it
was

Even myself, a part of me.

SAPPHO

Hear how it falls now — a dead thing
Back to the dust.[*She drops the bronze ring, which falls with a muffled sound to the earth. Watching this, Alcæus, who from his swoon has awakened and listened with fierce self-restraint, now, unobserved, crawls on the ground to within reach of the ring, secures it, and returns silently, while Sappho continues speaking to Phaon.*]Never shalt thou, cramped again in thy sea-sleep,
Wake at its twinge in thy sinews; never again in the
noon-glareFeel it scorch in thy flesh familiar shame, nor at
bitterSundown, numbly, in winter, lay on thy drowsy blood
its

Ache long accustomed.

PHAON

The clutch hath loosened ; the fingers of bronze
 are
 Loosened.

SAPPHO

And with them the yoke of contumely,
 scorn and the callous
 Scar of the drift-wood.

PHAON

What breath filleth my body with fire?
 What is the voice of this cloud that speaketh in flame
 to me ?

SAPPHO

Phaon of Lesbos is dead.

Hear it!

PHAON

Ah!

SAPPHO

Phaon of Hellas is risen !
 Phaon of all the Æolian isles — of the ages that
 will be
 Unto the Autumn of time : Phaon, the freedman of
 Sappho.

ALCÆUS

[*Faintly from where he lies.*]

Larichus!

[*There is a moment of silence, without motion. Slowly then Sappho points to her spear on the ground, speaking to Phaon.*]

SAPPHO

To my service, bonds slave: bear
My spear for me.

PHAON

[*Lifting the spear, precedes Sappho, as she moves to go.*]

Forever!

[*Exit right.*]

ALCÆUS

[*Half raising himself.*]

Larichus!

SAPPHO

[*Pausing.*]

Who speaks to me?

ALCÆUS

[*Rising.*]

A liar, for he names
You Larichus: a liar and a dupe
Of yours.

SAPPHO

Alcæus, you have listened — heard?

ALCÆUS

Laughter from high Olympus have I heard :
 ' Sappho the Rat-catcher hath speared her quarry !'
 Cries blithe Terpsichore. — You shall not go ;
 You shall not, till you hear me.

[*Sappho, who has started away, pauses again in serene contempt, and looks full at Alcæus.*]

SAPPHO

Well ?

ALCÆUS

Forgive.

The wine-god for my words. But that is past
 And I am bitter earnest. — Men are born,
 Not made ; and what is bred is bred in soul
 And brain more deep than sinews.

SAPPHO

Well ?

ALCÆUS

A slave

Shall always be a slave. No yoke of bronze
 Cast off can liberate him.

SAPPHO

Yet a slave

Could bid Alcæus bow and eat the earth
 Even at his feet.

ALCÆUS

Beware ! I love you.

SAPPHO

I

Love Phaon.

ALCÆUS

He —

SAPPHO

[*Bitingly.*]

‘Can I constrain a god?

Tether him? Clip his wings? Say *come* or *go*?

Love is a voyager’ — or hath this Love

Changed, since you scoffed at Anactoria?

ALCÆUS

You have upraised him, not himself; and he

Shall fall more basely from your height.

SAPPHO

Oh, I

Am sure of him as of this liberal air

I breathe. [*Reaching upward her arms.*]

This will not ever fail, nor Phaon.

ALCÆUS

[*Fiercely, staying her as she goes again.*]

Keep from him yet. One knowledge

I will not spare you now.

Look down: There in the caverns

Of sea-weed and the slime-ooze,

The tide creatures and reptiles

Seek in the dark their mates

And spawn their generations.

SAPPHO

[*Drawing back.*]

The Spring is universal.

ALCÆUS

Even as the Autumn.

[*Pointing below.*]*He*

Is one of those. His mate
And brood are there. — Ha, Sappho!
You did not know.

SAPPHO

[*Dreamily.*]

I knew.

ALCÆUS

You knew that Phaon —

SAPPHO

Was he not a slave,
And now — no more?

ALCÆUS

Impossible! Art thou
Sappho of Mitylene?

SAPPHO

Do you dream
I am *not* she? or have you never known
Sappho?

ALCÆUS.

You are gone blind with passion.

SAPPHO

Blind !

Have you beheld through the obscuring world
 The Beautiful? There comes a day, Alcæus,
 When one of us, that for a million years
 Have gendered in the sun, looks upward in
 His face, and in the features there discerns
 Our own divinity. I am that one;
 And so the stumbling and unconscious ways
 Of nature are no longer mine : her currents,
 Self-foiled, obstructed, clogged, I sway to sure
 And passionate direction. Thenceforth I
 Am pilgrim and not pathway : destiny
 I am, no more the clay of destiny.

ALCÆUS

But Phaon —

SAPPHO

Have you felt the maker's joy
 Who out of clay sculptures Hyperion,
 Or out of silence shapes heart-moving song? —
 That is my joy of Phaon.

ALCÆUS

You are fooled ;
 Yourself are Nature's bondmaid.

SAPPHO

Little minds
 Muddy with resolution. — Go your ways,
 Alcæus, for I go now to my lover :
 Yea, knowing all *thy* knowledge do I go,
 And on his liberated soul I stake
 My hope — my life.

[*Exit right.*]

ALCÆUS

[*Springing after her, then pausing.*]

Sappho! — Ah, Muse of Vengeance!
 A medicine — a medicine for this!

[*Lifting in his hand the bronze yoke, he reads.*]

‘Phaon of Lesbos — slave.’

[*As he stands thus desperately intent, Anactoria enters from the temple, wearing the violet-wreath of Sappho. She walks direct to him and looks silently in his face, with fierce pride and yearning. At her presence, he starts and smiles faintly.*]

Her violets!

ANACTORIA

She sent them to you — so.

ALCÆUS

[*His look turning back from her to the yoke of bronze.*]

Put them away
 From you.

ANACTORIA

To one who hath herself been put
Away, they should be fitting.

ALCÆUS

[*Watching some one approach.*]

Pittacus !

[*Enter in meditation Pittacus. Alcæus — his face lighting
with sudden exultation — turns to his companion with
a gesture of passionate deference.*]

Incomparable Anactoria,
Beloved! all those damnèd subtle chains
Of Sappho thou hast struck away. Once more
My vows and I are thine. — Hail, Pittacus!
Your boon and blessing! A betrothal boon
On us, two foolish lovers reconciled.

ANACTORIA

[*Utterly bewildered.*]

Alcæus!

PITTACUS

You and Anactoria!

ALCÆUS

Will you deny true love its whims, and heap
Embarrassment on her, who trembles there?
Enough she chooses me, your rival once
And now your craving friend. 'Twas you who said
'Forgiveness better is than punishment.'
Therefore a boon, to prove it!

PITTACUS

What have I
Would please you ?

ALCÆUS

A mere nothing, yet my heart
Is set upon it. You, my lord, are Tyrant
Of Mitylene, and as such 'tis you
Who own the public slaves. — A lover's whim,
My lord ! — You will remember how to-day
You struck one of these slaves — a fellow passing
With drift-wood.

PITTACUS

Yes.

ALCÆUS

The blame was mine. I can't
Forget his face. By heaven, I will requite
That fellow. I would have him feel to-night
As glad as I am. Sir — a foolish boon !
Give him to me to be my body-slave.

ANACTORIA

No, no!

ALCÆUS

[Reaching his arm toward her.]

Dear love!

PITTACUS

How deep is wine — and truth !
 This spinning world, 'tis but a street-boy's top,
 And each must whip his own.

[*Passing on.*]

The slave is yours.

ANACTORIA

[*Starting after.*]

You do not understand.

ALCÆUS

[*Staying her.*]

'Tis you, sweet girl,
 Who have not guessed my purpose.

ANACTORIA

[*Trembling.*]

Tell me.

PITTACUS

[*From the colonnade.*]

Friends,

If you shall chance to meet with Sappho, say
 That Pittacus, her friend, hath sailed for Sparta.

[*Exit.*]

ANACTORIA

[*Feverishly.*]

What would you do with Phaon ?

ALCÆUS

[*Kissing her hand, which she withdraws.*]

Can't you guess?

Love, I have purchased him to wait on you
 In public, when the girl-disciples meet
 And Sappho leads the singing.

ANACTORIA

[*Gazing at him, fascinated.*]

Horrible!

ALCÆUS

And at the festivals, amid the mirth
 And fluttered laughter of the maidens, Phaon
 Shall bear the wine-sack in, and pass the cakes
 To Sappho, where she sits beside you. — Come ;
 Yonder's my black knave Iacchus. He is running
 Up from my garden. We'll go meet him.

ANACTORIA

[*Following impotent.*]

Why?

ALCÆUS

[*Seizing her arm and raising the yoke-ring in his other hand.*]

Why do the robins fly to meet the spring?

[*Exeunt, left.*]

[*Enter, right, Sappho and Phaon. Each has a hand upon
 the horizontal spear between them, and—until Sappho
 releases—they speak across it, lifting or lowering it in
 their mutual persuasion.*]

SAPPHO
'Tis mine.

PHAON
'Tis mine.

SAPPHO
You must not bear it more
In servitude.

PHAON
[*Pleadingly.*]
In service now!

SAPPHO
Even now?
Yielded so soon, and all my victory
Reversed? — Nay, be it mine in the pursuit,
For I have been your huntress.

PHAON
Him you sought
You have transformed. O Spirit, Woman,
Whatso you are, the war-cry of your love
Shouts in my blood and tingles in my brain
For action and for freedom and for life.
Let me go armed to-night — your conqueror.
Into my hands — the spear!

SAPPHO

A little while

Be conquered yet ; a little breathing-space
Fear me — lest I shall fear.

PHAON

For what ?

SAPPHO

You are

Awakened to me from your torpid lair
So newly masterful. My sudden wound
Of liberty hath quickened into power
Till now, imperious, you turn at bay
And wrestle with me.

PHAON

[*Smiling.*]

Yield, then.

SAPPHO

O not yet!

Still let me be Diana — thou, my stag,
And through the April uplands of the world
Flee on, on, burning backward with thine eyes,
And I forever kindled.

PHAON

Not that free

And lordly animal —

[*Setting his foot upon Bion's tortoise-shell beside him.*]

Look there, the thing

Which you awakened into ecstasy
Of being — me, this soul you gaze upon.

SAPPHO

[*Looking from the shell to Phaon's face.*]

My playmate Hermes — grown to manhood : even
So might he glance and smile.

PHAON

Hermes — what's he ?

SAPPHO

A little child I love. — My Phaon, share
This weapon with me. Make not of me yet
A woman only. Comrades let us be,
Or children bargaining their captaincy —
Agamemnon and his brother, hand in hand
Against the Trojans.

PHAON

Childhood never trafficked
Rapture like yours. You would not what you ask.
[*Lifting high the spear, to which Sappho's hand still clings.*]
Relinquish !

SAPPHO

Not — playfellow ?

PHAON

No.

SAPPHO

[*Releases her grasp, half fearfully.*]

My peer, then !

PHAON

No, but your lord and lover! Nevermore
 Shall you be sovereign of your maiden will
 Or single in your fate. Not here with priest
 And song, but with a spear, you have betrothed me.

[Raising the weapon above him, and smiling up at it.]

O thou my spear, thou singest in my hand.
 Thou art my power and manhood. Face to face
 Thou pittest me in combat with the gods,
 And raising thee, my mind is raised up
 Confronting heaven, till from those clouds of fire
 This slavish world grows dim, and all that sways it —
 The tyrant's hate, the galley-master's goad,
 The sordid trader's dreams of avarice —
 Dwindle to impotence. Thine is the war
 Which shall not end with time — war with those gods
 That made men's misery.

[To Sappho.]

Belovèd, know
 What you have quickened, and if you would hear
 The chant of life my lips can never sing,
 Hark, hark now to the hymning of this steel!

[From the cliff he hurls the spear into the night.]

There flies the first: ten thousand will I fling
 Because of you.

SAPPHO

[Going to his arms.]

My lover!

[*Then, as Phaon embraces her, she draws back wistful, and peers in the moonlight after the fallen spear.*]

If its dart,
Falling, should strike a dove!

PHAON

Turn not away.

Where are your thoughts deep wandered in the night,
Or what, love, do they hear?

[*Where they stand silent, from below the faint roar of the surf and a far love-song are dreamily distinguishable.*]

SAPPHO

[*Turning to him.*]

‘The chant of life!’

Listen! Your lifted spear hath been a signal
For that world-music. Even as the master
Lifteth his staff and all the temple-choir
 Raise their clear chanting,
So hath it waked those wild-sweet ocean murmurs
Yonder — Thou hearest with me! — where the
 crickets
Melt with that human lover and the night-bird
 Over Mitylene.

PHAON

These are but thou; and thoughts of thee are music.

SAPPHO

Nay, but *look* also ! On the glassy sea-floor,
White as the moonbeam, how it rises ghostly
There !

PHAON

'Tis a fog-bank.

SAPPHO

Yes, but the cloud is carved : against the night sky,
Trembling, lifts the pearl horns of a lyre
Curved, and a hand that holds a mighty plectron
Plays to Orion !

PHAON

Nay, 'tis a ship I see : her prow is curving
Up from the cloudy billows, and her captain,
Standing upon it, where the bending oarsmen
Churn the bright star-foam,
Points to the world beneath them — all its kingdoms
Kindling with men, and to his one companion
Speaks in the silence : ' All this will I conquer,
Sappho !'

SAPPHO

My master !

[*Enter, from the colonnade, Anactoria.*]

ANACTORIA

[*Wildly.*]

He is coming : go ! Go in the temple !

SAPPHO

Who

Is coming, 'Toria ?

ANACTORIA

Alcæus ! Oh,

Mad was I for his love, and blind with dread
Of you. I did not dream his horrible
Vengeance. Go in the temple.

SAPPHO

Why ?

ANACTORIA

In there

Is sanctuary.

[*To Phaon.*]

He can take thee not.

PHAON

Take *me* ?

ANACTORIA

Thou art his body-slave, his flesh,
His chattels. Pittacus hath granted him
Thee and thy freedom. He is coming now
To seize thee.

PHAON

[*As Sappho, with a cry, goes to him.*]

I will greet him.

ANACTORIA

His guards — two score of spearmen. Nay, he brings

SAPPHO

[*To Phaon.*]

My house will shelter us. Come with me ;

ANACTORIA

You cannot leave ;
The ways are held, his men surround this place.

SAPPHO

[*Tensely.*]

Is there no path unknown to them ?

PHAON

This one.

SAPPHO

The cliff-path, ah ! Quick, Phaon : we will go
Here.

PHAON

You would dare this with me ?

SAPPHO

Yours ?

Am I not

PHAON

You will go ?

SAPPHO

Even to the underworld !

PHAON

Against the Tyrant's will ?

SAPPHO

Against the gods'.

PHAON

[Moves with swift decision.]

Come, then ; my boat is there.

ANACTORIA

[Imploringly, to Sappho.]

Stay ! — there is death.

Your brother is returned. Stay in the temple
Till I can bring him here.

SAPPHO

Not Larichus.

At dawn he brings his bride. They must not know
This thing. *[Imperiously.]*

Go : keep it from them — for my sake.

ANACTORIA

[Goes.]

For thy sake would that I had killed myself !

[Exit, left.]

SAPPHO

[*To Phaon.*]

Look there: what gleams among the olives?

PHAON

Spears.

They are coming.

SAPPHO

[*In dread, protectingly.*]

Phaon!

PHAON

See, the path falls sheer
Into the wave — my arms your only staff.

[*Swinging from the cliff, Phaon takes footing upon the juttred path below, his face and shoulder only visible as he reaches upward to Sappho's support.*]

Still do you dare?

SAPPHO

We must dare all to be
Ourselves. — Your arms, love! — Now to the world's
end,
The islands of the Cyclops in the seas!

[*Sappho and Phaon disappear below the cliff. As they do so there is heard the low rattle of greaves and, emerging on the edges of the scene, the points of spear-heads glisten. Simultaneously, from the temple, comes forth Thalassa — her babe at her breast — followed by Bion, who carries in his hands the lyre.*]

THALASSA

[*Searching with her eyes.*]

He tarrieth long away —
 Too long for the fever ; yet
 At last will he come to me.

[*Stooping in the shadow of the pillar, she sits on the lowest step leading to the shrine. There, while the little boy, in his garb of sea-weed, wanders in the moonlight, thrumming the strings of the lyre with low, monotonous cadence, Thalassa clutches her babe close, and swaying her body with a strange rhythm, suckles the fever-stricken child. From there, as she sings, her voice floats mournfully in the night.*]

Hesper, Hesper,

Eleleu !

Lord of evening, thou that bringest
 All that lovely Morning scattered —

Eleleu ! Eleleu !

Lord, the sheep, the goat thou bringest,
 The child to its mother.

Eleleu !

[*Slowly the Herculaneum curtain shuts off the scene.*]

Here follows the Pantomime of the Second Interlude.

Vide Appendix.

ACT III

ACT III

Earliest daybreak is beginning to struggle faintly with the light of the low moon, muffled now by masses of slowly indrifting fog from the sea, in the background. Against this, stand out vaguely the outlines of the temple, uncertain shadows of which are cast upon the fog by the glow of the still blazing urn. Beside this urn, white-haired, clad in his dark-flowing purple and green, stands the Priest of Poseidon, replenishing it with fagots. All is silent, and the last of the swinging lamps in the olive grove flickers out.

As the Priest, leaning wearily on his trident-staff, moves slowly from the urn, there enters to him, from the temple, Phaon. About him is thrown a rough fisher's cloak. He greets the Priest in a low voice and points back to the temple.

PHAON

Father, she rests; the holy vestals fetch her there
Garments and warmth.—Ah, blessèd was thy beacon!

Calm

All night it gazed upon us like a parent's eye
Guiding us home to refuge, when the lamps of heaven
Themselves were swallowed up with black, insuffer-
able

Fog. Father, speak! What is this portent? And
this pang

Of cold and clutching cloud — what meaneth it, that
never

Since I was child, can I remember like to this?
Yet first methought I dreamed it: all last evening
Darkly it hung with mist my mind; but now that fog,
Which rolled and gathered in imagination, look!
This air and actual world are palled and numb with
it.

Oh, if this thing be more than earthly, tell!

[*The Priest turns away.*]

Forgive,

I had forgot thy vow of silence to the god.

Yet answer me in sign: is it Poseidon's anger?

[*The Priest nods assent.*]

Yet wherefore is he angry? Hath some mortal
broken

His law?

[*The Priest, nodding once more assent, moves past Phaon.*]

Stay, father! — Who? Who hath offended him?

[*The Priest gazes sadly into Phaon's face, then, giving no further sign, passes into the temple. Phaon starts, with a low cry of fear.*]

Ah me, Poseidon, lord! I have offended thee.

[*Going to the altar, Phaon prostrates himself to the earth and remains there, bowed. After a brief pause enter from the temple Sappho, clad in the white garment of a vestal. Seeing Phaon, she comes down furtively and stands beside him. For a moment Phaon does not see her. Then as with a shiver she touches his shoulder, he leaps up beside her, ardent.*]

Once more!

[*Pausing, he draws back in awe.*]

How art thou changed! Scarce would I dream
'Tis thou.

SAPPHO

The virgins they have clothed me.

PHAON

Have you come forth into the cold?

Why

SAPPHO

How long

Until the day?

PHAON

Already it grows dawn;
Were it clear, the cedars would be burning black
Along the yellow hill-sky. You are chilled:
Still you are trembling from the sea-damp. — Here!

[*Taking his cloak from his shoulders, he throws it about
her.*]

SAPPHO

It may be that; it may be so.

PHAON

Come in

And warm thee.

SAPPHO

Phaon, no ; 'tis not the night
 Hath deadened so my heart ; hardly it beats.
 'Tis not the chill, the faintness and the fog.

PHAON

What is it, Sappho ?

SAPPHO

[*Turning to him, impetuous.*]

Ah ! why are we here ?
 Wherefore have you returned and brought me back ?
 Why are we not still there — out there alone
 Together in thy little groping boat,
 Lost, rudderless, amid the unimagin'd
 Glooms of the gray Ægean ! Over us —
 No wider than the space betwixt our faces —
 The fog had built a tent, and shut away
 Sky, shore, and men and temples, yet our eyes
 Had lighted there an inward universe
 More vast, wherein our hearts stood still, and breathed
 The awful passion of the breathing tide.
 Ah, why did you turn back ?

PHAON

[*Hesitant.*]

You would have perished ;
 Twice in my arms you fainted with the cold.

SAPPHO

Not with the cold — with ecstasy of fire !

PHAON

[*Uneasily, veiling his deeper reason.*]

This holy beacon gleamed our only sign
Of haven; 'twas the god who summoned us. —
Food, warmth, and life were here for you.

SAPPHO

And fear!

Portent and fear.

PHAON

What fear?

SAPPHO

Unspeakable!

[*To herself.*]

Whilst we returned, methought I heard again
The croon of that eternal cradle-song,
And — all of mist — the awful Mother rose,
Outreaching on the air her vacant arms.

[*Wildly, to Phaon.*]

O better to have died together there
Than here — to separate.

PHAON

That will not be.

SAPPHO

Phaon, *they* will find you here. Come to the boat
Once more.

[*Taking hold of him as to go.*]

Come back with me.

PHAON

[*Putting her hand away.*]

You know not yet
The mightiest cause of my return.

SAPPHO

The fog,
You said. But see—the dawn! The fog will lift.

PHAON

The fog will never lift—if we go yet.

SAPPHO

What do you mean?

PHAON

[*His face taking on a look of superstitious fear, his body—
slowly—a slave-like bearing, he half whispers mysteriously.*]

Sappho, I know the fog;
Since boyhood I have known. *This* is not fog.
This is the wrath and darkness of the god:
I have offended him.

SAPPHO

Look not like that!

PHAON

The dove I should have killed for him—it lives;
You took it from me, but it was Poseidon's.
Therefore I have returned to appease his anger.

SAPPHO

Phaon, drift not away! In pity of
Our love, drift not away.

PHAON

This will not lift
Till I have sacrificed.

[*Going.*]

Wait but a little
And I will find a victim.

SAPPHO

[*With imperious appeal.*]

Do you say
This — you, that for our liberty defied
With me fate and the gods?

PHAON

That blasphemy
Hath raised this cloud. The sea-god demands death,
And I must sacrifice.

SAPPHO

Stoop not to this!
Our wills are their own Providence, and shape
The mandates of the immortals to their ends.

PHAON

Wait: I will not be long.

SAPPHO

[*Following.*]

It must not be.

Phaon, this thought itself is bondage. Think :
 To you I yielded as my guiding star,
 And now if you shall fall, our heaven and we
 Shall have one darkness. Be once more thyself —
 Master of life.

[*From off the scene, left, is heard the low thrumming of a
 stringed instrument. Phaon stops to listen.*]

PHAON

What sound is that ?

SAPPHO

[*After a pause.*]

Alcæus,

His lyre it is ; the tone of it I know. —
 Come back, or he will seize you. Phaon !

PHAON

[*Raising his clasped hands, exultant.*]

Lord !

Thy victim ! Thou hast sent him to my hands.

SAPPHO

You know him not : his guards are with him there
 To do his vengeance. He will violate
 The temple in the dark, and murder you.

[*Phaon hastens to the altar.*]

What would you do ?

PHAON

[*Seizing the knife of ritual.*]

He comes for sacrifice ;
The god, not I, hath summoned him.

[*Calling into the mist.*]

Alcæus !

SAPPHO

[*Imploring.*]

Phaon, be silent.

PHAON

[*Mounting the steps toward the colonnade.*]

Mockest thou me, Alcæus ?
Makest thou me thy slave to tinkling strings
And thrum of music ?

SAPPHO

[*Clinging to him.*]

Hush.

PHAON

[*Putting her away.*]

Am I. Come, take me ; here

SAPPHO

[*Numbly.*]

The star is fallen.

PHAON

[*To Sappho.*]

Fear no more ;

I have but drawn him on. Now will I be
Silent — and sure.

[*Crouching behind the second pillar, he holds the long knife drawn and, waiting, murmurs to Sappho, who stands pale and spellbound.*]

Soon shall the fog be lifted.

[*The low thrumming sounds draw near and nearer, along the colonnade, until suddenly Phaon, listening, springs forward and strikes blindly behind the pillar in the obscurity.*]

Thy blood upon me !

[*He leaps back.*]

A CHILD'S VOICE

[*Cries in the dimness.*]

Babbo !

[*From behind the pillar, Bion, the child, with arms outstretched to Phaon, staggers forward and falls, dropping from his hands a lyre. Phaon, staring for an instant, turns away his face toward Sappho, and points to the earth behind him.*]

PHAON

What is there ?

SAPPHO

[*Kneeling, raises the lyre and looks upon the boy.*]

The lyre I played. Ah, little Hermes, thou!
Lift up thy head, my luck-boy. 'Tis thy friend, dear,
The goddess.

PHAON

[*Turning superstitiously.*]

Ha!

SAPPHO

The blood! His heart's still.

[*Rising fiercely toward Phaon.*]

You

Have murdered him — my elf, my intercessor!
Blindly you struck this blow in your own darkness
And killed him — innocent. Look! I accuse you!
His blood is on you.

PHAON

[*Who has looked, speechless, upon the body, sinks upon his knees beside it.*]

Bion, my son!

SAPPHO

[*Shrinking back.*]

His father!

[*There is an utter silence. Sappho, gazing at the two, murmurs to herself in awe.*]

And if the dove had died, the child had lived.

[*With impulsive tenderness, she moves to speak to Phaon, but over his bowed form, her utterance fails. At last she half whispers to him.*]

Phaon, I did not know. — Phaon!

PHAON

[*Oblivious, touches the child's tumbled hair.*]

Shalt grow

No taller now among the iris-reeds.

SAPPHO

Mine is this deed, not yours. My sorrow shall
Be ransom for you.

PHAON

[*Rises slowly.*]What hast *thou* for me?Thou which hast taken him! — *O moi!* Thalassa![*He rushes into the temple.*]

SAPPHO

[*Wildly, following him.*]

No, no — not her! Not now to her!

[*From off the scene, left, is heard a low crooning sound — the voice of Thalassa.*]

THALASSA

Eleu!

[*Sappho, at the temple door, pauses, clutching the tapestry.*]

Where art thou, my Bion? Dim

The way is; I hear thy shell

No more; strike it louder.

[*Thalassa enters, bearing in her arms the babe.*]

Didst

Thou meet with thy Babbo? We
Have followed thy music far,
Yet nowhere we found him in
The night. Speak: where art thou? — Ah,
Thou'st wearied, and laid thee down
Asleep.

SAPPHO

[*Stepping forward, with compassion, intercepts Thalassa's
gaze from the body.*]

Come no nearer. Go
In peace.

THALASSA

The bright lady!

[*Starting toward Sappho, she holds out to her the swaddled
babe.*]

Feel,

'Tis cold now: will drink no more
Its mother's milk.

[*Taking from her bosom the dolphin-bracelet.*]

Look, 'tis here —

Thine arm-ring, the shining curse
Thou gavest to Phaon; take
The gold thing! Ah, take it back
That so may my little one
Be warm now, and drink again.

SAPPHO

[*Trembling.*]

'Tis cold?

THALASSA

[*Fiercely.*]

Nay, shalt touch it not!

'Tis mine, mine! Take thou the gold
And give me its smile again.

SAPPHO

[*Slowly taking the bracelet from Thalassa, peers at the
infant's face and draws away.*]

Ah me!

THALASSA

[*Looking from Sappho to the child with an eager hope.*]Thou hast ta'en it back
At last! Still why keepest thou
The warmth of it? Mine it is —
Not thine — the babe. Give it me
In my arm alive!

SAPPHO

[*Anguished, turns upon Thalassa.*]

What am I

To thee? Or what art thou
Or this to me? — Not I,
Not I it was who chilled its little heart.
I say it was not I.

[*Thalassa, heedless and unhearing, watches only the child's face, while from her own the light of hope goes slowly out.*]

Phaon I took from thee,
 Phaon I freed, because his soul is mine
 And mine his own; and these —
 These little lifeless ones — I would have given
 Joy of their days; but now
 This double bolt from heaven, this aimless death
 Hath snatched them, as the lightning slayeth the
 sheep. —
 O say not it was I!

THALASSA

It stirs not; it nestles not.
 Perchance yet the sacrifice
 Shall make it to breathe again.

[*Moving toward the temple.*]

Its father will know. —

SAPPHO

[*Placing herself in her path.*]

Not there!
 Go to thy kin on the beaches,
 Bearing thy sorrow. Go quickly
 Lest it shall be too late.

THALASSA

[*Smiling wanly, murmurs to the infant.*]

Nestling!

SAPPHO

Hear me ! I plead to you. Passionate
 Slave imperturbable ! Sibyl —
 Sphinx of maternity ! Hear me
 Now ; I am humble.

THALASSA

Eleu !

Nine moons was I blithe of it,
 Awaiting the cry of it ;
 Ah, glad was the glimpse of it
 And soft were the fingers ; warm
 It clung to me.

SAPPHO

[*Terribly.*]

Leave me : I fear you.

You, of all beings, alone I
 Fear. On the waters I feared you.
 Even as he rowed us to freedom,
 Out of the drip of his oars, you
 Sang to him. Out of the fog-bank,
 Fog-born, the fate of you rose, and
 Drew us to shore again. But though,
 Sibyl, I feared you, yet now I
 Challenge. Not so shall that vision
 Blast, which I witnessed with Phaon
 Here — No, not so shall the coil of
 Circumstance strangle us ! I, not
 You, am his destiny. — Prove us !

[*Reënter Phaon from the temple.*]

THALASSA

[*Going to him.*]

Look, Babbo: 'tis gone away,
Hath left my arms.

PHAON

[*Looking on the infant.*]

Both!

[*Gazing away to the sea.*]

The night
Is lifting now.

THALASSA

Phaon, hast

Thou sacrificed?

PHAON

[*Pointing where Bion lies.*]

There: 'tis done.

THALASSA

[*Turning swiftly to the body, stoops near.*]

Poseidon! Poseidon! Ah!

[*Crouching over the body, she moans low and lays the infant
beside it.*]

Io! io! Sleep with him.

[*She bows prostrate over the children.*]

o

PHAON

[*With sullen fierceness, slave-like, approaches Sappho.*]

Goddess, be merciful — thou that hast maddened me !

Thou that in longing

Infinite yearnest for life, be appeased now. For
thee — for thee thisSacrifice! Look, we have made our offering. There
is our life-blood :Warm is it still, and the opened hearts have yielded
their happy

Spirits to thee. Be appeased !

SAPPHO

Phaon, do you not know me?

PHAON

Long have I known thee — too long. First in my
boyhood I saw thee.Thou from the awful immortals camest in storm, and
thy beautyBlinded the day ; and the slave-folk warned me, but
I would not heed theirCounsel. I loved thee. Ah, why — why now again
in thy vengeanceHast thou returned here to curse me? Thou, not
Poseidon, hast spread these

Meshes of cloud to entangle me in this murder.

SAPPHO

[*Cries aloud.*]

No, Phaon !

PHAON

Kneel, Thalassa, bow down! Bow down to the
 Lady of Heaven;
 Pray thou with me.

[*To Sappho.*]

O remove thy scourge from us,
 most wretched slaves.

THALASSA

[*Bowing down with Phaon before Sappho.*]

Bright
 Lady, give us our bairns again!

SAPPHO

Kneel not! No Lady of Heaven —
 Sappho am I, and a mortal wretched as ye are: a
 woman
 Born from the pang of a mother like thee, Thalassa
 — a woman
 Passionate, seeking the love of the man that loveth
 her. Phaon,
 Phaon! Remember you not this place in the sun-
 set, — the brightening
 Moon on the Ægean, the falling cliff-path below us,
 the crying
 Sea-birds — my hand on thy shoulder? I am Sappho
 — that Sappho!

PHAON

[*Dreamily.*]

Glorious there was your face as you leaned to me.

SAPPHO

Hast thou forgotten
 How, with our hands on my spear between us, we
 wrestled for mastery
 Here? — How you pleaded and, lordly, bade me
 relinquish, and conquered?

PHAON

Over your golden breastplate glooming, your hair like
 the tempest
 Darkened.

SAPPHO

[*Moving gradually nearer the cliff, while Phaon follows —
 hesitant, fascinated.*]

You lifted it high — the spear — and gazed
 on it, raising
 Upward your glowing mind to it, crying aloud 'gainst
 the heaven
 War on the tyrant gods that make men's slavery.

PHAON

Shone in your smile.

Starlight

SAPPHO

How you towered, god-
 like yourself, — yea, as even
 Now! — and the spear in your hand grew divine — a
 fiery symbol.

PHAON

Yours was that fire.

SAPPHO

Then you hurled it into the
 mystery — hurled it
 Singing — and turned to me.

[*Exulting, as Phaon — ardent — reaches toward her.*]

So!

PHAON

Belovèd!

SAPPHO

Thou art restored to me!

[*Springing to the cliff-path.*]

Come, then : Our vision has triumphed.

THALASSA

[*Calling low.*]

Babbo!

PHAON

[*Pausing wildly, with instant revolution lapses to his slave's
 posture.*]

Ha ! thou art tempting
 Me to thy power again.

[*Going to Thalassa, who still is bowed, stricken, over the
 bodies.*]

Thalassa, come to me !

THALASSA

[*Lifts her craving face to his.*]

Give them

Back to me, Babbo.

PHAON

[*Starting.*]

Babbo! — Hark, they are calling it: “ Babbo!”
 “ Father!” From yonder they call to me, lifting
 their little arms hither
 Out of the dark of Hades. — Cease now, my Bion! I
 hear thee,
 Yea, and will bring ye both home again.

[*Raising Thalassa to him.*]

Mother of them, thou my slave-mate,
 Come with me! I — thou and I — shall draw them
 again to us — call their
 Flitting ghosts back into flesh and blood — warm
 again in our arms. Come,
 Come to the beach with me: far, far in the salty-
 weed caverns,
 There will I give thee them back, and make repara-
 tion; there shalt thou
 Bear to me children — alive, bright-eyed avengers of
 me, their
 Father, — this murder. Thalassa, lift up yon little
 body,
 And I will bear in my son unto the temple.

[*Lifting the dead boy in his arms, he goes with the slave-woman, who carries the infant child. At the door of the temple, where their eyes meet across the dead forms of their children, Phaon gives to her a yearning look of tenderness, and they enter the temple.*

From her place by the cliff whence she has watched without moving, Sappho calls with anguished appeal.]

SAPPHO

Thalassa!

[*The colours of sunrise begin now to flood the scene. Away on the left are heard the voices of men and maidens singing.*]

THE VOICES

Gath'ers, what have ye forgot,

Hymenæon!

Blushing ripe on the end of the bough?

Hymenæon!

Ripe now, but ye may not reach —

For the bride is won, and the groom is strong:

Kala, O Chariessa!

SAPPHO

[*Murmurs.*]

The epithalamium! — and so the end!

[*Slowly, with aspect of succumbed despair, Sappho moves toward the steps of Aphrodite's shrine. As she does so, the Priest of Poseidon comes from the temple to the first pillar and, raising there his trident toward the sunrise, stands awaiting the approaching singers, whose flutes and lyres sound nearer.*

Art thou then come once more, O Silent One?

[*Sinking at his feet.*]

God of the generations, pain, and death,
 I bow to thee. — Not for love's sake is love's
 Fierce happiness, but for the after-race.
 Yet, thou eternal Watcher of the tides,
 Knowing their passions, tell me! Why must we
 Rapturous beings of the spray and storm
 That, chanting, beat our hearts against thy shores
 Of aspiration — ebb? ebb and return
 Into the songless deep? Are we no more
 Than foam upon thy garment? — flying spume
 Caught on thy trident's horn, to flash the sun
 An instant — and expire? Are we no more?
 Reveal to me! Break once thine infinite
 Vow of secretiveness, and whisper it
 Soft. I will keep thy secret.

[*Rising.*]

Thou *wilt* not!
 Thou wilt divulge it — never. Fare you well!

[*She rushes up the steps to the jutting shrine.*]

Another wave has broken at your feet
 And, moaning, wanes into oblivion.
 But not its radiance! That flashes back
 Into the Morning, and shall flame again
 Over a myriad waves. That flame am I,
 Nor thou, Poseidon, shalt extinguish me.
 My spirit is thy changeling, and returns
 To her, who glows beyond the stars of birth —
 To her, who is herself time's passion-star.

[Turning to the edge of the rock, Sappho calls upward into the breaking mists, through which the full glory of morning ruddies her white robe with its splendour.]

Beautiful Sister, goddess of desire,
Come to me! Clasp me in your wings of sunrise
Burning, for see! I go forth to you burning
Still. — Aphrodite!

[She leaps into the fog and disappears.

As she vanishes, there enters, through the colonnade, singing, the bridal procession of youths and girl-disciples, accompanying Atthis, who holds, smiling, the hand of a youth in gold armour. As these reach and pass the silent form of the Priest, the fog — increasing from the sea — rolls over the scene.]

VOICES OF THE SINGERS

Like the stars about the moon
Hymenæon!
When her orbèd smile she shows,
Hymenæon!
Lovers, yield to her your light;
She is single in the night.
Kala, O Chariessa!

[With ever-increasing obscurity the fog closes down, until — as the last of the men and maidens pass into the veiled temple — the scene is involved in darkness entire, save where, beside his pillar, the brooding Priest of Poseidon is vaguely visible.

Gradually, then, on the foggy texture of this obscurity, the outlines of another scene become apparent; and while the female voices within the temple die away, and the male

voices, blending, pass without cessation into a song of different melody in Italian, the Brooding Figure is itself obscured, and there stands now, beside the lava pillar of the excavation — the archæologist, Medbery. Simultaneously the dimness is pierced by the rays of approaching torches, and enter — through the right door of the Prologue-scene — the Neapolitan Labourers, singing.]

Tutt' altro ciel mi chiama,
Addio! Addio!
Ma questo cor ti brama,
È il cor, il cor ti lascerò!

Di bacie d' armonia
È l' aura tua ripiena,
O magica Sirena
Fedel, fedele a te sarò! . . .

Addio, O care memorie
Del tempo, ah! che fuggì!

[Having placed their torches, and with their picks begun to strike the lava with muffled reverberation, one of the Labourers stoops and lifts, from the newly dug débris, a curved object, which he hands to the pensive archæologist. The others pause in their lazy digging, and look at him.]

MEDBERY

[Taking it in his hand.]

A lyre of tortoise-shell! How long it has lain silent in the heart of Time! Ah, no — this was no dream. Here *Sappho* dreams — buried, but not dead.

Here we shall find her asleep in the arms of her lover
— the Antique World : — And *I* shall awaken her !
Labourers, to your work ! Your picks are ready ; the
lava crumbles. *Scavate!* Dig — dig !

[*As the Labourers resume their labour and their song*]

THE MODERN CURTAIN FALLS.

APPENDIX

FIRST AND SECOND INTERLUDES

[PANTOMIME]

verum ita risores, ita commendare dicaces
conveniet Satyros, ita vertere seria ludo.

— HORACE: *De Arte Poetica*.

segnius iritant animos demissa per aurem
quam quæ sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quæ
ipse sibi tradit spectator.

— *Idem*.

FIRST AND SECOND INTERLUDES



CHARACTERS

PANTOMIMUS¹—*announcing the Pantomime, "Hercules and the Sphinx," before the Herculeaneum Audience.*

VARIUS,¹ HORACE,¹ VIRGIL,¹ MÆCENAS,¹ POLLIO,¹ as Mutes

HERCULES, *the demigod*

SILENUS, *the satyr*

SERVUS, *a slave*

OMPHALE, *a Nymph (afterward disguised as the Sphinx)*

*Masked Characters
in the Pantomime:
Mutes*

BOY-MIMES, *as Fauns (afterward as Cupids)*

GIRL-MIMES, *as Nymphs (afterward as Psyches)*

*Unmasked Characters
in the Pantomime:
Mutes and Lyrists*

¹ Appears only in First Interlude.

FIRST INTERLUDE

PERFORMED BEFORE THE HERCULANEUM CURTAIN BETWEEN
ACT I AND ACT II OF THE TRAGEDY.



FIRST INTERLUDE

No sooner has the curtain closed than from their hidden seats the Herculaneum audience burst into murmurous applause, mingled with the cries of "Vivat! Vale, Varius! Plaudite!" At this, Horace, Virgil, Varius, Mæcenas, and Pollio appear from their places [which, during the Act of the Tragedy, they have occupied in a row beyond sight] and take seats in the first row of marble chairs.

Here they are greeted again by the Herculaneum audience, whom Varius, rising, salutes, and is about to address when enters, through the door in the curtain, PANTOMIMUS, a parti-coloured figure, garbed antequely as a harlequin, wreathed and masked.¹

Perceiving his entrance, Varius makes a gesture to the audience indicative that he cannot then respond to their applause, and with that sits down to watch the ensuing action.

Behind Pantomimus, enter [on either side of him] two little Pantomimi, half his height, exactly resembling him in every particular. These, as with a skipping step and motion Pantomimus speaks his Introduction, imitate in dumb show his every movement of wand and gesture, and this with such simultaneousness, that they appear like his twin-images in miniature projected beside him.

¹ In one hand, Pantomimus carries a wand resembling a caduceus, but differing from that of Mercury in that the heads of the twining snakes are carved as little masks of comedy, and the tip of the wand, to which the flying wings are affixed, is the shining disk of a mirror, into which at times Pantomimus peers quaintly at his reflection.

Pantomimus makes his entrance with suddenness and, raising his caduceus for silence, speaks his first four lines from the top of the steps. Descending then to the centre of the orchestra space, he recites the remainder, with agile gestures, to the low, quick-thrummed accompaniment of a harpist [within the wings].

PANTOMIMUS

Salve,

Herculaneans!

Hush:

Pantomimus I!

Behold my palace:

Up that slit

Through the floor

I plucked it. — *Ecce!*

So you see

How thin a wall

Divides the wise

From the fools.

T'other side

Melpomene,

The tragic Muse,

Weaves the plot;

This side now

(Behind her back)

I pull her play

Wrong-side-out.

Thus in the seams

Shall we reversed

View the design,

And so discern

How the crease

In Grandeur's scowl

Is but a grin

Up-side-down.

Therefore, as critic
 Who would test
 Tragedy,
 Between the curtains
 I slip a mask on,
 Catch the Muse,
 Gag her mouth,
 Skew up her eyebrows,
 And thus ask pardon :
 "O Olympic
 Lady, if so
 Grotesque a greeting
 Mar and tarnish
 Your chaste complexion,
 Then am I certain
 You're no sky-born
 Goddess, but merely
 A painted drab.
 So, lords, a masquerade I leave you :
 A hero, and
 A riddle and
 A heroine —

THE SPHINX AND HERCULES: the riddle
 To find the tragic Muse. — Heaven help you!

[*Exit, with Pantomimi, within the curtain door.*]

Enter at left aisle and at right [*as in the Prelude*] the two Flutists, whose playing outside has accompanied the speech of Pantomimus. These, now visible, accompany the ensuing pantomime, with flute and harp. With these, enter two slaves [functionaries of the theatre] bearing two stage-properties, which they place on either side, near the wings: that of the right-hand one represents a squat pillar, on top of which is the sitting figure of a bronze Sphinx: that of the left-hand — a set-piece of foliage and shrubbery. Exeunt.



Enter then, at left, the first of the Pantomimists — *Servus*, a house-slave, masked as such. He places at the foot of the steps, centre, a low seat and, beside it, a heap of wool and spinning materials. There he prostrates himself toward the left entrance, as enter there—dancing to harp music—a group of young girl-mimes [without masks], dressed as *Nymphs* and carrying distaffs.

In the midst of these — preceded by most of them — enter *Hercules*, in grotesque mask, which depicts a comic-dejected expression. He is wadded after the manner of the comic histrionic vase-figures of antiquity, and walks downcast. Instead of his legendary lion's skin, there hangs from his shoulder the woolly pelt of a sheep; in place of his knotted club, his hand holds a huge distaff; and for the rest he is dressed like a Greek woman.

He is accompanied by *Omphale*, masked as a beautiful and amorous nymph. Over her shoulders she wears his lion's skin; in one hand she holds his massive club; with the other she caresses him.

With coquetting wiles, the Nymphs in their dancing draw the two toward the centre, where they sit beside the wool — Hercules, with heavy sighs, beginning to spin, while Omphale, posing in the lion's skin, approves his labour. Here the Nymphs, reclined about them on the steps and the ground, execute a rhythmic dance with their arms and distaffs, singing to their movement: —

Angustam amice pauperiem pati
 robustus acri militia puer
 condiscat et Parthos ferocēs
 vexet eques metuendus hasta
 vitamque sub divo et trepidis agat
 in rebus. illum ex mœnibus hosticis
 matrona bellantis tyranni
 prospiciens et adulta virgo
 suspiret, eheu, ne rudis agminum
 sponsus lacesat regius asperum
 tactu leonem, quem cruenta
 per medias rapit ira cædes.¹

At the culmination of this, Hercules, who has been repelling the attentions of Omphale, at first with feeble ennui, but afterwards with increasing determination, now rises in grandiose disgust, and — snatching from her his lion's skin and club — repudiates her and the Nymphs.

Flinging down the sheep's pelt and setting his foot upon it, he breaks his distaff in pieces and, threatening Omphale, drives the Nymphs off the scene, left. [During this excitement, Servus — who has been standing aside — seizes the heap of wool, and exit with it in flight.] Turning then to the image of the *Sphinx*, Hercules expresses in dumb show how, lured by the riddle of the Sphinx, he aspires to fight and conquer the world for her sake. Laying his club and lion's skin devoutly at the foot of the column, he

¹ Horace: Ode II of Book III.

The literal translation (by A. H. Bryce) is as follows: —

“Let youth, made strong by active war, learn to endure privation in a happy mood; let him as horseman bold with dreaded spear harass the daring Mede, and spend his life in open air, and midst alarms of foes. Let wife and daughter of the warring king, as from the hostile walls they look, heave many a sigh, alas! lest princely spouse, untried in war, provoke the lion, dangerous to stir, whom bloodthirsty anger hurries on through thickest of the fight.”

kneels, embraces it, and raises then his arms in supplication to the Sphinx.

Thus kneeling, he is watched furtively at a distance by Omphale, who, at his outburst, has run to the edge of the foliage, right. Hercules, rising, puts on his lion's skin, and brandishing his club heroically for the benefit of the immovable Sphinx, goes off, left.

Immediately Omphale seizes from among the foliage a sylvan pipe, and blows on it a brief, appealing ditty. At this, from behind the foliage, run out boy-mimes, in the guise of Fauns; she gesticulates to them beseechingly. They run back and presently return, dancing to pipe-music, accompanying and leading a goat, astride of which sits *Silenus*, an old grotesque Satyr, in mask.

Omphale greets him joyfully and helps him down from the goat. She then describes to him in pantomime the late outburst of Hercules — his breaking the spindle, his enamoration for the Sphinx, etc., and prays his aid and advice.

Silenus pauses an instant in philosophical absorption, then gives a leap and skip. Omphale, seeing that he has hit on some plan, expresses her pleasure and inquires what his plan may be. Silenus bids her call a slave. Omphale claps her hands toward the left entrance. Servus enters. Silenus signs to him. Servus goes back and returns immediately, rolling in a wine-cask, from which he fills an antique beaker. From this Silenus sips and approves. He then points to the Sphinx and asks if it be that of which Hercules is enamoured. Omphale assents. Silenus then directs Servus to lift the Sphinx down from the pillar. Servus does so, revealing its hollow interior as he carries it. Silenus, drawing Omphale's attention to this fact of its hollowness, opens the door in the curtain, and commands Servus to bear the Sphinx within. Servus does so. Silenus, then, pointing to the window above

the door, whispers in the ear of Omphale, who, delighted, enters the door after Servus. Silenus closes the door as Hercules reënters, left.

The hero has discarded his woman's garb, and comes forward now dressed as a man, with lion's skin and club—his mask changed to one of an exultant and martial expression.

Silenus greets him with obsequious and cunning servility and offers him wine. Hercules, with good-natured hauteur, condescends to accept the cup which he offers. While he is drinking, the window above in the curtain opens, and Omphale thrusts her head out, revealing [within] beside her own, the Sphinx's head. Silenus secretly motions her to be cautious. Seeing his gesture, Hercules looks up, but not swiftly enough to detect Omphale, who withdraws. Again looking forth, as he turns to drink again, Omphale mocks Hercules below, dropping wisps of wool on his head, the source of which, however, Hercules fails to detect. Silenus explains that the wool is really feathers, which fell from a bird flying overhead.

Hercules now, under the sly persuasions of the old Satyr, grows more pleased with the wine, drinks finally from the spigot of the cask, and becomes drunk—as he becomes so, expressing to Silenus, with increasing familiarity and descriptive force, all the mighty exploits he intends to accomplish in the service of the incomparable Sphinx, whose living prototype he declares he will immediately set forth in search of.

Starting now, humorously drunk, to depart [right] he is detained by Silenus, who points upward to the window, where now the blank, immovable face of the Sphinx looks forth at the sky. Hercules, bewildered, asks Silenus if it is really the Sphinx herself and alive? Silenus assents and proves his assertion by pointing to the deserted pedestal. At this, Hercules

addresses the Sphinx, with impassioned gestures. The Sphinx remains immovable. Hercules becomes discouraged. Silenus then puts a pipe in his hand, and tells him to play it. He does so, and is rewarded by a slow, preternatural look from the Sphinx. At this he plays more vociferously and, surrounded by the little piping Fauns, performs a serenade beneath the casement, while Silenus, looking on from a distance, rubs his hands with sly delight.

The serenade ends by Hercules, on his knees, imploring the Sphinx to come down. The Sphinx at length consents and the casement closes. Silenus calls his Fauns away to the edge of the foliage, and Hercules goes to the door.

For a moment nothing happens and Hercules knocks on the steps impatiently with his club. Then the door opens and enter the Sphinx—dressed below in the Greek garments of Omphale, but from the waist upward consisting of the sitting image of the Sphinx, beneath whose closed wings the arms of Omphale are thrust through and have place for motion.

The Sphinx, its tail swinging behind, descends the steps, reticent and impassive, attended by Hercules, drunk and enamoured.

Then at the foot of the steps, to the accompaniment from the foliage of the piping Fauns, who play softly a variation of the serenade theme, Hercules woos the Sphinx, who, at the proper moment, succumbs to his entreaties. After embracing him amorously, she extends her hand to him. He seizes it to kiss; she withdraws it and signifies that he must put a ring on the ring-finger. Hercules hunts about him in vain for a ring. Calling then Silenus and the Fauns, he explains to them the situation.

Silenus declares that there will be no difficulty; his Fauns will forge him a ring with which to wed the

Sphinx. At this joyful information, Hercules, the Sphinx, and Silenus express their feelings in a dance¹ with the Fauns, at the climax of which the Fauns escort the three masked characters to the door in the curtain, through which they pass and disappear, while the Fauns, dividing into two groups, dance off and exeunt at either side. Simultaneously the two theatre slaves remove the stage properties.



Varius, Mæcenas, and Pollio, rising now in laughter, pass again to places beyond sight in the Herculaneum audience, followed thither by Horace and Virgil, talking together.

The theatre slaves then pass silently across and the lights shine dimmer. After a pause, the Herculaneum curtain is lowered, discovering again Lesbos—the scene of the Tragedy.

Explicit Interludium Primum

¹ Before the commencement of this dance, Servus has entered and removed the low seat and wine-cask.

SECOND INTERLUDE¹

THE theatre of Varius remains in dimness, and its audience in silence. A shaft of pale light falls upon the altar [centre], out of the top of which [where before was the tripod] are seen to be growing lilies, harebells and vari-coloured wild flowers.

At the same time, an elfin dance-music is heard off scene, and enter [left] to the sound of harps, the girl-mimes in guise of *Psyches*, with little wings. In-and-out of the shadows of the shaft of moonlight, these trip a light-footed dance, the motif of which is the finding and plucking of flowers. At times they run, at times they stoop, at times they pause and weave. Toward the end of their dance, they espy the growing lilies on the altar and, encircling it, pluck away the flowers till the marble is bare. Weaving these into ropes, they dance off the scene, right.

These have already gone when enter [left] the boy-mimes, guised as *Cupids*, the one-half carrying long golden sledge-hammers, the other half holding tongs and great pincers made of gold. As they enter, there rises out of the top of the altar an anvil, glowing red-hot, upon which gleams a great gold ring. Coming forward, as before the *Psyches* danced their measures simulative of the plucking of flowers, so now the *Cupids* carrying their gleaming sledge-hammers and tongs—their wrists and ankles fastened with golden cymbals—execute a dance, the

¹ This Interlude, like the First, occupies approximately the time of a usual entr'acte.

motif of which is the hammering and forging of rings upon viewless anvils — at the strokes of their play-labour clashing their cymbals together to the music of flutes and strings. Similarly toward the end of their dance, having discovered the anvil glowing upon the altar, they encircle it, and half of them seizing the great ring with their pincers, the other half ply upon it their golden hammers, in rhythm with the music.

Finally their leader, lifting the ring with his tongs, bears it away [left] and is followed off the scene by the others, dancing.

At this moment the door in the curtain opens, and enter Silenus in the vestments of a priest, followed by Hercules and the Sphinx fantastically garlanded as bridegroom and bride, — their steps lighted by Servus, whose torch illuminates the scene.

Silenus leads the way down the steps straight to the altar, coming round to the other side of which he turns his back and faces Hercules and the Sphinx, who stand facing him on the other side. At the same time reënter, from right and left, the leaders of the girl-mimes and boy-mimes, who — at either side of the altar — proffer to Silenus respectively a rope of flowers and a small gold ring. Laying the flowers on the altar, Silenus bestows his benediction upon Hercules and the Sphinx, to the former of whom he extends the ring. Hercules takes it and as the Sphinx extends her left hand, he slips upon her ring-finger the gold ring.

Instantly a clash of cymbals is heard from the left, and a clapping of palms from the right, and reënter — dancing — the Cupids and Psyche, who encircle the scene just as Servus removes from the bride the great mask of the Sphinx, thereby revealing her to the astounded Hercules — as Omphale, who embraces him, exulting in her ring.

With gestures of comic resignation, Hercules at the side of Omphale follows Silenus, accompanied by the Cupids and Psyche in procession, to the door in the curtain, wherein all pass and disappear to the jubilant cymbal-clashings of the Cupids and the flower-rope-wreathings of the Psyche. The door closes, the music sounds more faintly and dies away.

For a moment all is blackness and silence; then the Herculaneum curtain, descending, reveals again the temple in Lesbos.

Explicit Interludium Secundum.

THE SCARECROW



THE SCARECROW

A TRAGEDY OF THE LUDICROUS



To

MY MOTHER

IN MEMORY OF AUSPICIOUS

“COUNTINGS OF THE CROWS”

BY OLD NEW ENGLAND CORN-FIELDS



PREFACE

BUT for a fantasy of Nathaniel Hawthorne, this play, of course, would never have been written. In "Mosses from an Old Manse," the *Moralized Legend* "Feathertop" relates, in some twenty pages of its author's inimitable style, how Mother Rigby, a reputed witch of old New England days, converted a corn-patch scarecrow into the semblance of a fine gentleman of the period; how she despatched this semblance to "play its part in the great world, where not one man in a hundred, she affirmed, was gifted with more real substance than itself"; how there the scarecrow, while paying court to pretty Polly Gookin, the rosy, simpering daughter of Justice Gookin, discovered its own image in a looking-glass, returned to Mother Rigby's cottage, and dissolved into its original elements.

My indebtedness, therefore, to this source, in undertaking the present play, goes without saying. Yet it would not be true, either to Hawthorne's work or my own, to classify "The Scarecrow" as a dramatization of "Feathertop." Were it intended to be such, the many radical departures from the conception and the treatment of Hawthorne which are evident in the present work would have to be regarded as so many unwarrantable liberties taken with its

original material; the function of the play itself would, in such case, become purely formal,—translative of a narrative to its appropriate dramatic form,—and as such, however interesting and commendable an effort, would have lost all *raison d'être* for the writer.

But such, I may say, has not been my intention. My aim has been quite otherwise. Starting with the same basic theme, I have sought to elaborate it, by my own treatment, to a different and more inclusive issue.

Without particularizing here the full substance of Hawthorne's consummate sketch, which is available to every reader, the divergence I refer to may be summed up briefly.

The scarecrow Feathertop of Hawthorne is the imaginative epitome or symbol of human charlatanism, with special emphasis upon the coxcombry of fashionable society. In his essential superficiality he is characterized as a fop, "strangely self-satisfied," with "nobby little nose thrust into the air." "And many a fine gentleman," says Mother Rigby, "has a pumpkin-head as well as my scarecrow." His hollow semblance is the shallowness of a "well-digested conventionalism, which had incorporated itself thoroughly with his substance and transformed him into a work of art." "But the clothes in this case were to be the making of the man," and so Mother Rigby, after fitting him out in a suit of embroidered finery, endows him as a finishing touch "with a great deal of brass, which she applied to his forehead, thus

making it yellower than before. 'With that brass alone,' quoth she, 'thou canst pay thy way all over the earth.'"

Similarly, the other characters are sketched by Hawthorne in accord with this general conception. Pretty Polly Gookin, "tossing her head and managing her fan" before the mirror, views therein "an unsubstantial little maid that reflected every gesture and did all the foolish things that Polly did, but without making her ashamed of them. In short, it was the fault of pretty Polly's ability, rather than her will, if she failed to be as complete an artifice as the illustrious Feathertop himself."

Thus the *Moralized Legend* reveals itself as a satire upon a restricted artificial phase of society. As such, it runs its brief course, with all the poetic charm and fanciful suggestiveness of our great New Englander's prose style, to its appropriate *dénouement*, — the disintegration of its hero.

"'My poor, dear, pretty Feathertop,' quoth Mother Rigby, with a rueful glance at the relics of her ill-fated contrivance, 'there are thousands upon thousands of coxcombs and charlatans in the world made up of just such a jumble of worn-out, forgotten, and good-for-nothing trash as he was, yet they live in fair repute and never see themselves for what they are. And why should my poor puppet be the only one to know himself and perish for it?'"

Coxcombry and charlatanism, then, are the butt of Hawthorne's satire in his *Legend*. The nature of his theme, however, is susceptible of an application

far less restricted, a development far more universal, than such satire. This wider issue once or twice in his sketch he seems to have touched upon, only immediately to ignore again. Thus, in the very last paragraph, Mother Rigby exclaims: "Poor Feather-top! I could easily give him another chance and send him forth again to-morrow. But no! *His feelings are too tender—his sensibilities too deep.*"

In these words, spoken in irony, Hawthorne ends his narrative with an undeveloped aspect of his theme, which constitutes the starting-point of the conception of my play: the aspect, namely, of the essential *tragedy of the ludicrous*; an aspect which, in its development, inevitably predicates for my play a divergent treatment and a different conclusion. The element of human sympathy is here substituted for that of irony, as criterion of the common absurdity of mankind.

The scarecrow Feathertop is ridiculous, as the emblem of a superficial fop; the scarecrow Ravensbane is pitiful, as the emblem of human bathos.

Compared with our own ideas of human perfection, what human rubbish we are! Of what incongruous elements are we constructed by time and inheritance wherewith to realize the reasonableness, the power, the altruism, of our dreams! What absurdity is our highest consummation! Yet the sense of our common deficiency is, after all, our salvation. *There* is one reality which is a basic hope for the realization of those dreams. This sense is human sympathy, which is, it would seem, a more searching critic of

human frailty than satire. It is the growth of this sense which dowers with dignity and reality the hollownest and most ludicrous of mankind, and becomes in such a fundamental grace of character.

In a recent critical interpretation of Cervantes' great work, Professor G. E. Woodberry writes: "A madman has no character; but it is the character of Don Quixote that at last draws the knight out of all his degradations and makes him triumph in the heart of the reader." And he continues: "Modern dismay begins in the thought that here is not the abnormality of an individual, but the madness of the soul in its own nature."

If for "madness" in this quotation I may be permitted to substitute *ludicrousness* (or *incongruity*), a more felicitous expression of my meaning, as applied to Ravensbane in this play, would be difficult to devise.

From what has been said, it will, I trust, be the more clearly apparent why "The Scarecrow" cannot with any appropriateness be deemed a dramatization of "Feathertop," and why its manifold divergencies from the latter in treatment and motive cannot with any just significance be considered as liberties taken with an original source. Dickon, for example, whose name in the *Legend* is but a momentary invocation in the mouth of Mother Rigby, becomes in my play not merely the characterized visible associate of Goody Rickby ("Blacksmith Bess"), but the necessary foil of sceptical irony to the human growth of the scarecrow. So, too, for reasons of the play's

different intent, Goody Rickby herself is differentiated from Mother Rigby; and Rachel Merton has no motive, of character or artistic design, in common with pretty, affected Polly Gookin.

My indebtedness to the New England master in literature is, needless to say, gratefully acknowledged; but it is fitting, I think, to distinguish clearly between the aim and the scope of "Feathertop" and that of the play in hand, as much in deference to the work of Hawthorne as in comprehension of the spirit of my own.

P. M-K.

CORNISH, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
December, 1907.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JUSTICE GILEAD MERTON.

GOODY RICKBY (*"Blacksmith Bess"*).

LORD RAVENSBANE (*"Marquis of Oxford, Baron of Wittenberg, Elector of Worms, and Count of Cordova"*), *their hypothetical son.*

DICKON, *a Yankee improvisation of the Prince of Darkness.*

RACHEL MERTON, *niece of the Justice.*

MISTRESS CYNTHIA MERTON, *sister of the Justice.*

RICHARD TALBOT, *Esquire, betrothed to Rachel.*

SIR CHARLES REDDINGTON, *Lieutenant Governor.*

MISTRESS REDDINGTON } *his daughters.*
AMELIA REDDINGTON }

CAPTAIN BUGBY, *the Governor's Secretary.*

MINISTER DODGE.

MISTRESS DODGE, *his wife.*

REV. MASTER RAND, *of Harvard College.*

REV. MASTER TODD, *of Harvard College.*

MICAH, *a servant of the Justice.*

TIME. — *Late Seventeenth Century.*

PLACE. — *A town in Massachusetts.*



ACT I

ACT I

The interior of a blacksmith shop. Right centre, a forge. Left, a loft, from which are hanging dried cornstalks, hay, and the yellow ears of cattle-corn. Back centre, a wide double door, closed when the curtain rises. Through this door—when later it is opened—is visible a New England landscape in the late springtime: a distant wood; stone walls, high elms, a well-sweep; and, in the near foreground, a ploughed field, from which the green shoots of early corn are just appearing. The blackened walls of the shop are covered with a miscellaneous collection of old iron, horseshoes, cart wheels, etc., the usual appurtenances of a smithy. In the right-hand corner, however, is an array of things quite out of keeping with the shop proper: musical instruments, puppets, tall clocks, and fantastical junk. Conspicuous amongst these articles is a large standing mirror, framed grotesquely in old gold and curtained by a dull stuff, embroidered with peaked caps and crescent moons. Just before the scene opens, a hammer is heard ringing briskly upon steel. As the curtain rises there is discovered, standing at the anvil in the flickering light of a bright flame from the forge, a woman—powerful, ruddy, proud with a certain masterful beauty, white-haired (as though prematurely), bare-armed to the elbows, clad in a dark skirt (above her ankles), a loose blouse, open at the throat; a leathern apron and a workman's cap. The woman is GOODY RICKBY. On the anvil she is shaping a piece of iron. Beside her stands a

framework of iron formed like the ribs and backbone of a man. For a few moments she continues to ply her hammer, amid a shower of sparks, till suddenly the flame on the forge dies down.

GOODY RICKBY

Dickon! More flame.

A VOICE

[*Above her.*]

Yea, Goody.

[*The flame in the forge spurts up high and suddenly.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Nay, not so fierce.

THE VOICE

[*At her side.*]

Votre pardon, madame.

[*The flame subsides.*]

Is that better?

GOODY RICKBY

That will do.

[*With her tongs, she thrusts the iron into the flame; it turns white-hot.*]

Quick work; nothing like brimstone for the smithy trade.

[*At the anvil, she begins to weld the iron rib on to the framework.*]

There, my beauty! We'll make a stout set of ribs for you. I'll see to it this year that I have a scare-

crow can outstand all the nor'easters that blow. I've no notion to lose my corn-crop this summer.

[*Outside, the faint cawings of crows are heard. Putting down her tongs and hammer, Goody Rickby strides to the double door, and flinging it wide open, lets in the gray light of dawn. She looks out over the fields and shakes her fist.*]

So ye're up before me and the sun, are ye?

[*Squinting against the light.*]

There's one! Nay, two. Aha!

One for sorrow,
Two for mirth —

Good! This time we'll have the laugh on our side.

[*She returns to the forge, where again the fire has died out.*]

Dickon! Fire! Come, come, where be thy wits?

THE VOICE

[*Sleepily from the forge.*]

'Tis early, dame.

GOODY RICKBY

The more need —

[*Takes up her tongs.*]

THE VOICE

[*Screams.*]

Ow!

GOODY RICKBY

Ha! Have I got thee?

[*From the blackness of the forge she pulls out with her tongs, by the right ear, the figure of a devil, horned and tailed. In general aspect, though he resembles a mediæval familiar demon, yet the suggestions of a goatish beard, a shrewdly humorous smile, and (when he speaks) the slightest of nasal drawls, remotely simulate a species of Yankee rustic.*

Goody Rickby substitutes her fingers for the tongs.]

Now, Dickon!

DICKON

Deus! I haven't been nabbed like that since St. Dunstan tweaked my nose. Well, sweet Goody?

GOODY RICKBY

The bellows!

DICKON

[*Going slowly to the forge.*]

Why, 'tis hardly dawn yet. Honest folks are still abed. It makes a long day.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Working, while Dickon plies the bellows.*]

Aye, for your black pets, the crows, to work in. That's why I'm at it early. You heard 'em. We must have this scarecrow of ours out in the field at his post before sunrise.

[*Finishing.*]

So, there! Now, Dickon boy, I want that you should —

DICKON

[*Whipping out a note-book and writing.*]

Wait! Another one! "I want that you should —"

GOODY RICKBY

What's that you're writing?

DICKON

The phrase, Goody dear; the construction. Your New England dialect is hard for a poor cosmopolitan devil. What with *ut* clauses in English and Latinized subjunctives — You want that I should — Well?

GOODY RICKBY

Make a masterpiece. I've made the frame strong, so as to stand the weather; *you* must make the body lifelike so as to fool the crows. Last year I stuck up a poor sham and after a day they saw through it. This time, we must make 'em think it's a real human crittur.

DICKON

To fool the philosophers is my specialty, but the crows — hm!

GOODY RICKBY

Pooh! That staggers thee!

DICKON

Madame Rickby, prod not the quick of my genius. I am Phidias, I am Raphael, I am the Lord God! — You shall see —

[*Demands with a gesture.*]

Yonder broom-stick.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Fetching him a broom from the corner.*]

Good boy!

DICKON

[*Straddling the handle.*]

Haha! gee up! my Salem mare.

[*Then, pseudo-philosophically.*]

A broomstick — that's for imagination!

[*He begins to construct the scarecrow, while Goody Rickby, assisting, brings the constructive parts from various nooks and corners.*]

We are all pretty artists, to be sure, Bessie. Phidias, he sculptures the gods; Raphael, he paints the angels; the Lord God, he creates Adam; and Dickon — fetch me the poker — aha! Dickon! What doth Dickon? He nullifies 'em all; he endows the Scarecrow! — A poker: here's his conscience. There's two fine legs to walk on, — imagination and conscience. Yonder flails now! The ideal — the *beau idéal*, dame — that's what we artists seek. The apotheosis of scarecrows! And pray, what's a scarecrow? Why, the antithesis of Adam. — “Let there be candles!” quoth the Lord God, sitting in the dark. “Let there be candle-extinguishers,” saith Dickon. “I am made in the image of my maker,” quoth Adam. “Look at yourself in the glass,” saith Goodman Scarecrow.

[*Taking two implements from Goody Rickby.*]

Fine! fine! here are flails — one for wit, t'other for satire. *Sapristi!* with two such arms, my lad, how thou wilt work thy way in the world!

GOODY RICKBY

You talk as if you were making a real mortal, Dickon.

DICKON

To fool a crow, Goody, I must fashion a crittur that will first deceive a man.

GOODY RICKBY

He'll scarce do that without a head.

[*Pointing to the loft.*]

What think ye of yonder Jack-o'-lantern? 'Twas made last Hallowe'en.

DICKON

Rare, my Psyche! We shall collaborate. Here!

[*Running up the ladder, he tosses down a yellow hollowed pumpkin to Goody Rickby, who catches it. Then rummaging forth an armful of cornstalks, ears, tassels, dried squashes, gourds, beets, etc., he descends and throws them in a heap on the floor.*]

Whist! the anatomy.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Placing the pumpkin on the shoulders.*]

Look!

DICKON

O Johannes Baptista! What wouldst thou have given for such a head! I helped Salome to cut his off, dame, and it looked not half so appetizing on her charger. Tut! Copernicus wore once such a pump-

kin, but it is rotten. Look at his golden smile!
Hail, Phœbus Apollo!

GOODY RICKBY

'Tis the finest scarecrow in town.

DICKON

Nay, poor soul, 'tis but a skeleton yet. He must
have a man's heart in him.

*[Picking a big red beet from among the cornstalks, he places
it under the left side of the ribs.]*

Hush! Dost thou hear it beat?

GOODY RICKBY

Thou merry rogue!

DICKON

Now for the lungs of him.

[Snatching a small pair of bellows from a peg on the wall.]

That's for eloquence! He'll preach the black knaves
a sermon on theft. And now —

*[Here, with Goody Rickby's help, he stuffs the framework
with the gourds, corn, etc., from the loft, weaving the
husks about the legs and arms.]*

here goes for digestion and inherited instincts! More
corn, Goody. Now he'll fight for his own flesh and
blood!

GOODY RICKBY

[Laughing.]

Dickon, I am proud of thee.

DICKON

Wait till you see his peruke.

[*Seizing a feather duster made of crow's feathers.*]

Voici! Scalps of the enemy!

[*Pulling them apart, he arranges the feathers on the pumpkin, like a gentleman's wig.*]

A rare conqueror!

GOODY RICKBY

Oh, you beauty!

DICKON

And now a bit of comfort for dark days and stormy nights.

[*Taking a piece of corn-cob with the kernels on it, Dickon makes a pipe, which he puts into the scarecrow's mouth.*]

So! There, Goody! I tell thee, with yonder brand-new coat and breeches of mine — those there in my cupboard! — we'll make him a lad to be proud of.

[*Taking the clothes, which Goody Rickby brings — a pair of fine scarlet breeches and a gold-embroidered coat with ruffles of lace — he puts them upon the scarecrow. Then, eying it like a connoisseur, makes a few finishing touches.*]

Why, dame, he'll be a son to thee.

GOODY RICKBY

A son? Ay, if I had but a son!

DICKON

Why, here you have him.

[*To the scarecrow.*]

Thou wilt scare the crows off thy mother's corn-field—won't my pretty? And send 'em all over t'other side the wall—to her dear neighbour's, the Justice Gilead Merton's.

GOODY RICKBY

Justice Merton! Nay, if they'd only peck his eyes out, instead of his corn.

DICKON

[*Grinning.*]

Yet the Justice was a dear friend of "Blacksmith Bess."

GOODY RICKBY

Ay, "Blacksmith Bess!" If I hadn't had a good stout arm when he cast me off with the babe, I might have starved for all his worship cared.

DICKON

True, Bessie; 'twas a scurvy trick he played on thee—and on me, that took such pains to bring you together—to steal a young maid's heart—

GOODY RICKBY

And then toss it away like a bad penny to the gutter! And the child—to die!

[*Lifting her hammer in rage.*]

Ha! if I could get the worshipful Justice Gilead into my power again —

[*Drops the hammer sullenly on the anvil.*]

But no! I shall beat my life away on this anvil, whilst my justice clinks his gold, and drinks his port to a fat old age. Justice! Ha — justice of God!

DICKON

Whist, dame! Talk of angels and hear the rustle of their relatives.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Turning, watches outside a girl's figure approaching.*]

His niece — Rachel Merton! What can she want so early? Nay, I mind me; 'tis the mirror. She's a maid after our own hearts, boy, — no Sabbath-go-to-meeting airs about *her*! She hath read the books of the *magi* from cover to cover, and paid me good guineas for 'em, though her uncle knows naught on't. Besides, she's in love, Dickon.

DICKON

[*Indicating the scarecrow.*]

Ah? With *him*? Is it a rendezvous?

GOODY RICKBY

[*With a laugh.*]

Pff! Begone!

DICKON

[*Shakes his finger at the scarecrow.*]

Thou naughty rogue!

[*Then, still smiling slyly, with his head placed confidentially next to the scarecrow's ear, as if whispering, and with his hand pointing to the maiden outside, Dickon fades away into air. RACHEL enters, nervous and hesitant. Goody Rickby makes her a courtesy, which she acknowledges by a nod, half absent-minded.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Mistress Rachel Merton—so early! I hope your uncle, our worshipful Justice, is not ill?

RACHEL

No, my uncle is quite well. The early morning suits me best for a walk. You are—quite alone?

GOODY RICKBY

Quite alone, mistress. [*Bitterly.*] Oh, folks don't call on Goody Rickby—except on business.

RACHEL

[*Absently, looking round in the dim shop.*]

Yes—you must be busy. Is it—is it here?

GOODY RICKBY

You mean the —

RACHEL

[*Starting back, with a cry.*]

Ah! who's that?

GOODY RICKBY

[*Chuckling.*]

Fear not, mistress; 'tis nothing but a scarecrow.

I'm going to put him in my corn-field yonder. The crows are so pesky this year.

RACHEL

[*Draws her skirts away with a shiver.*]

How loathsome!

GOODY RICKBY

[*Vastly pleased.*]

He'll do!

RACHEL

Ah, here!— This is *the* mirror?

GOODY RICKBY

Yea, mistress, and a wonderful glass it is, as I told you. I wouldn't sell it to most comers, but seeing how you and Master Talbot —

RACHEL

Yes; that will do.

GOODY RICKBY

You see, if the town folks guessed what it was, well— You've heard tell of the gibbets on Salem hill? There's not many in New England like you, Mistress Rachel. You know enough to approve some miracles— outside the Scriptures.

RACHEL

You are quite sure the glass will do all you say? It— never fails?

GOODY RICKBY

Ay, now, mistress, how could it? 'Tis the glass of truth — [*insinuatingly*] the glass of true lovers. It shows folks just as they are; no shams, no varnish. If your sweetheart be false, the glass will reveal it. If a wolf should dress himself in a white sheep's wool, this glass would reflect the black beast inside it.

RACHEL

But what of the sins of the soul, Goody? Vanity, hypocrisy, and — and inconstancy? Will it surely reveal them?

GOODY RICKBY

I have told you, my young lady. If it doth not as I say, bring it back and get your money again. Trust me, sweeting, 'tis your only mouse-trap for a man. Why, an old dame hath eyes in her heart yet. If your lover be false, this glass shall pluck his fine feathers!

RACHEL

[*With aloofness.*]

'Tis no question of that. I wish the glass to — to amuse me.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Laughing.*]

Why, then, it shall amuse you. Try it on some of your neighbours.

RACHEL

You ask a large price for it.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Shrugs.*]

I run risks. Besides, where will you get another?

RACHEL

That is true. Here, I will buy it. That is the sum you mentioned, I believe?

[*She hands a purse to Goody Rickby, who opens it and counts over some coins.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Let see; let see.

RACHEL

Well?

GOODY RICKBY

Good: 'tis good. Folks call me a witch, mistress. Well — harkee — a witch's word is as good as a justice's gold. The glass is yours — with my blessing.

RACHEL

Spare yourself that, dame. But the glass: how am I to get it? How will you send it to me — quietly?

GOODY RICKBY

Trust me for that. I've a willing lad that helps me with such errands; a neighbour o' mine.

[*Calls.*]

Ebenezer!

RACHEL

[*Startled.*]

What! is he here?

GOODY RICKBY

In the hay-loft. The boy's an orphan; he sleeps there o' times. Ebenezer!

[*A raw, dishevelled country boy appears in the loft, slides down the ladder, and shuffles up sleepily.*]

THE BOY

Evenin'.

RACHEL

[*Drawing Goody Rickby aside.*]

You understand; I desire no comment about this purchase.

GOODY RICKBY

Nor I, mistress, be sure.

RACHEL

Is he —?

GOODY RICKBY

[*Tapping her forehead significantly.*]

Trust his wits who hath no wit; he's mum.

RACHEL

Oh!

THE BOY

[*Gaping.*]

Job?

GOODY RICKBY

Yea, rump-head! His job this morning is to bear yonder glass to the house of Justice Merton — the big one on the hill; to the side door. Mind, no gabbing. Doth he catch?

THE BOY

[*Nodding and grinning.*]

'E swallows.

RACHEL

But is the boy strong enough?

GOODY RICKBY

Him?

[*Pointing to the anvil.*]

Ebenezer!

[*The boy spits on his palms, takes hold of the anvil, lifts it, drops it again, sits on it, and grins at the door, just as Richard Talbot appears there, from outside.*]

RACHEL

Gracious!

GOODY RICKBY

Trust him. He'll carry the glass for you.

RACHEL

I will return home at once, then. Let him go quietly to the side door, and wait for me.

Good morning.

[*Turning, she confronts Richard.*]

RICHARD

Good morning.

RACHEL

Richard!—Squire Talbot, you—you are abroad early.

RICHARD

As early as Mistress Rachel. Is it pardonable? I caught sight of you walking in this direction, so I thought it wise to follow, lest —

[*Looks hard at Goody Rickby.*]

RACHEL

Very kind. Thanks. I've done my errand. Well; we can return together.

[*To Goody Rickby.*]

You will make sure that I receive the — the article.

GOODY RICKBY

Trust me, mistress.

[*Courtesying.*]

Squire Talbot! the honour, sir!

RICHARD

[*Bluntly, looking from one to the other.*]

What article?

[*Rachel ignores the question and starts to pass out. Richard frowns at Goody Rickby, who stammers.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Begging your pardon, sir?

RICHARD

What article? I said.

[*After a short, embarrassed pause : more sternly.*]

Well?

GOODY RICKBY

Oh, the article! Yonder old glass, to be sure, sir. A quaint piece, your honour.

RICHARD

Rachel, you haven't come here at sunrise to buy — that thing?

RACHEL

Verily, "that thing" and at sunrise. A pretty time for a pretty purchase. Are you coming?

RICHARD

[*In a low voice.*]

More witchcraft nonsense? Do you realize this is serious?

RACHEL

Oh, of course. You know I am desperately mystical, so pray let us not discuss it. Good-by.

RICHARD

Rachel, just a moment. If you want a mirror, you shall have the prettiest one in New England. Or I will import you one from London. Only — I beg of you — don't buy stolen goods.

GOODY RICKBY

Stolen goods?

RACHEL

[*Aside to Richard.*]

Don't! don't!

RICHARD

At least, articles under suspicion.

[*To Goody Rickby.*]

Can you account for this mirror — how you came by it?

GOODY RICKBY

I'll show ye! I'll show ye! Stolen — ha!

RICHARD

Come, old swindler, keep your mirror, and give this lady back her money.

GOODY RICKBY

I'll damn ye both, I will! — Stolen!

RACHEL

[*Imploringly.*]

Will you come?

RICHARD

Look you, old Rickby; this is not the first time. Charm all the broomsticks in town, if you like; bewitch all the tables and saucepans and mirrors you please; but gull no more money out of young girls.

Mind you! We're not so enterprising in this town as at Salem; but—*it may come to it!* So look sharp! I'm not blind to what's going on here.

GOODY RICKBY

Not blind, Master Puritan? Oho! You can see through all my counterfeits, can ye? So! you would scrape all the wonder out'n the world, as I've scraped all the meat out'n my punkin-head yonder! Aha! wait and see! Afore sundown, I'll send ye a nut to crack, shall make your orthodox jaws ache. Your servant, Master Deuteronomy!

RICHARD

[*To Rachel, who has seized his arm.*]

We'll go.

[*Exeunt Richard and Rachel.*]

GOODY RICKBY

[*Calls shrilly after them.*]

Trot away, pretty team; toss your heads. I'll unhitch ye and take off your blinders.

THE SLOUCHING BOY

[*Capering and grimacing in front of the mirror, shrieks with laughter.*]

Ohoho!

GOODY RICKBY

[*Returning, savagely.*]

Yes, yes, my fine lover! I'll pay thee for "stolen goods" — I'll pay thee.

[*Screams.*]

Dickon! Stop laughing.

THE BOY

O Lord! O Lord!

GOODY RICKBY

What tickles thy mirth now?

THE BOY

For to think as the soul of an orphan innocent, what lives in a hay-loft, should wear horns.

[*On looking into the mirror, the spectator perceives therein that the reflection of the slouching boy is the horned demon figure of Dickon, who performs the same antics in pantomime within the glass as the boy does without.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Yea; 'tis a wise devil that knows his own face in the glass. But hark now! Thou must find me a rival for this cock-squire, — dost hear? A rival, that shall steal away the heart of his Mistress Rachel.

DICKON

And take her to church?

GOODY RICKBY

To church or to Hell. All's one.

DICKON

A rival!

[*Pointing at the glass.*]

How would *he* serve—in there? Dear Ebenezer! Fancy the deacons in the vestry, Goody, and her uncle, the Justice, when they saw him escorting the bride to the altar, with his tail round her waist!

GOODY RICKBY

Tut, tut! Think it over in earnest, and meantime take her the glass. Wait, we'd best fold it up small, so as not to attract notice on the road.

[*Dickon, who has already drawn the curtains over the glass, grasps one side of the large frame, Goody Rickby the other.*]

Now!

[*Pushing their shoulders against the two sides, the frame disappears and Dickon holds in his hand a mirror about a foot square, of the same design.*]

So! Be off! And mind, a rival for Richard!

DICKON

For Richard a rival,
Dear Goody Rickby
Wants Dickon's connival:
Lord! What can the trick be?

[*To the scarecrow.*]

By-by, Sonny ; take care of thy mother.

[*Dickon slouches out with the glass, whistling.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Mother! Yea, if only I had a son—the Justice Merton's and mine! If the brat had but lived now to remind him of those merry days, which he has forgotten. Zooks, wouldn't I put a spoke in his wheel! But no such luck for me! No such luck!

[*As she goes to the forge, the stout figure of a man appears in the doorway behind her. Under one arm he carries a large book, in the other hand a gold-headed cane. He hesitates, embarrassed.*]

THE MAN

Permit me, Madam.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Turning.*]

Ah, him!—Justice Merton!

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Removing his hat, steps over the sill, and lays his great book on the table ; then with a supercilious look, he puts his hat firmly on again.*]

Permit me, dame.

GOODY RICKBY

You!

[*With confused, affected hauteur, the Justice shifts from foot to foot, flourishing his cane. As he speaks, Goody Rickby, with a shrewd, painful expression, draws slowly backward toward the door left, which opens into an inner room. Reaching it, she opens it part way, stands facing him, and listens.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

I have had the honour — permit me — to entertain suspicions; to rise early, to follow my niece, to meet just now Squire Talbot, an excellent young gentleman of wealth, if not of fashion; to hear his remarks concerning — hem! — you, dame! to call here — permit me — to express myself and inquire —

GOODY RICKBY

Concerning your waistcoat?

[*Turning quickly, she snatches an article of apparel which hangs on the inner side of the door, and holds it up.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Starting, crimson.*]

Woman!

GOODY RICKBY

You left it behind — the last time.

JUSTICE MERTON

I have not the honour to remember —

GOODY RICKBY

The one I embroidered ?

JUSTICE MERTON

'Tis a matter —

GOODY RICKBY

Of some two and twenty years.

[*Stretching out the narrow width of the waistcoat.*]

Will you try it on now, dearie ?

JUSTICE MERTON

Unconscionable! Un-un-unconscionable witch!

GOODY RICKBY

Witchling — thou used to say.

JUSTICE MERTON

Pah! pah! I forget myself. Pride, permit me, goeth before a fall. As a magistrate, Rickby, I have already borne with you long! The last straw, however, breaks the camel's back.

GOODY RICKBY

Poor camel!

JUSTICE MERTON

You have soiled, you have smirched, the virgin reputation of my niece. You have inveigled her into notions of witchcraft; already the neighbours are beginning to talk. 'Tis a long lane which hath no turning, saith the Lord. Permit me — as a witch, thou art judged. Thou shalt hang.

A VOICE

[*Behind him.*]

And me too?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Turns about and stares.*]

I beg pardon.

THE VOICE

[*In front of him.*]

Not at all.

JUSTICE MERTON

Did — did somebody speak?

THE VOICE

Don't you recognize my voice? *Still and small*, you know. If you will kindly let me out, we can chat.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Turning fiercely on Goody Rickby.*]

These are thy sorceries. But I fear them not. The righteous man walketh with God.

[*Going to the book which lies on the table.*]

Satan, I ban thee! I will read from the Holy Scriptures!

[*Unclasping the Bible, he flings open the ponderous covers.*
— *Dickon steps forth in smoke.*]

DICKON

Thanks; it was stuffy in there.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Clasping his hands.*]

Dickon!

DICKON

[*Moving a step nearer on the table.*]

Hillo, Gilly! Hillo, Bess!

JUSTICE MERTON

Dickon! No! No!

DICKON

Do ye mind Auld Lang Syne — the chorus that night, Gilly?

[*Sings.*]

Gil-ead, Gil-ead, Gil-ead
 Merton,
 He was a silly head, silly head,
 Certain,
 When he forgot to steal a bed-
 Curtain!

Encore, now!

JUSTICE MERTON

No, no, be merciful! I will not harm her; she shall not hang: I swear, I swear it!

[*Dickon disappears.*]

I swear — ah! Is he gone? Witchcraft! Witchcraft! I have witnessed it. 'Tis proved on thee, slut. I swear it: thou shalt hang.

[*Exit wildly.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Ay, Gilead! I shall hang *on*! Ahaha! Dickon, thou angel! Ah, Satan! Satan! For a son now!

DICKON

[*Reappearing.*]

Videlicet, in law — a bastard. *N'est ce pas?*

GOODY RICKBY

Yea, in law and in justice, I should-a had one now. Worse luck that he died.

DICKON

'One and twenty years ago?

[*Goody Rickby nods.*]

Good; he should be of age now. One and twenty — a pretty age, too, for a rival. Haha! — For arrival? — Marry, he shall arrive, then; arrive and marry and inherit his patrimony — all on his birthday! Come, to work!

GOODY RICKBY

What rant is this?

DICKON

Yet, Dickon, it pains me to perform such an anachronism. All this Mediævalism in Massachusetts! — These old-fashioned flames and alchemic accompaniments, when I've tried so hard to be a native American product; it jars. But *che vuole!* I'm naturally middle-aged. I haven't been really myself, let me think, — since 1492!

GOODY RICKBY

What art thou mooning about?

DICKON

[Still impenetrable.]

There was my old friend in Germany, Dr. Johann Faustus; he was nigh such a bag of old rubbish when I made him over. Ain't it trite! No, you can't teach an old dog like me new tricks. Still, a scarecrow! that's decidedly local color. Come then; a Yankee masterpiece!

[Seizing Goody Rickby by the arm, and placing her before the scarecrow, he makes a bow and wave of introduction.]

Behold, madam, your son — illegitimate; the future affianced of Mistress Rachel Merton, the heir-elect, through matrimony, of Merton House, — Gilead Merton second; Lord Ravensbane! Your lordship — your mother.

GOODY RICKBY

Dickon! Can you do it?

DICKON

I can — try.

GOODY RICKBY

You will create him for me? —

[Wickedly.]

and for Gilead!

DICKON

I will — for a kiss.

GOODY RICKBY

[*About to embrace him.*]

Dickon!

DICKON

[*Dodging her.*]

Later. Now, the waistcoat.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Handing it.*]

Rare! rare! He shall go wooing in't—like his father.

DICKON

[*Shifting the scarecrow's gold-trimmed coat, slips on the embroidered waistcoat and replaces the coat.*]

Stand still, Jack! So, my macaroni. *Perfecto!* Stay—a walking-stick!

GOODY RICKBY

[*Wrenching a spoke out of an old rickety wheel.*]

Here: the spoke for Gilead. He used to take me to drive in the chaise it came out of.

DICKON

[*Placing the spoke as a cane, in the scarecrow's sleeve, views him with satisfaction.*]

Sic! There, Jacky! *Filius fit non nascitur.*—Sam Hill! My Latin is stale. “In the beginning, was the—gourd!” Of these thy modest ingredients may thy spirit smack!

[*Making various mystic passes with his hands, Dickon intones, now deep and solemn, now with fanciful shrill rapidity, this incantation :*]

Flail, flip;
 Broom, sweep;
Sic itur!
 Cornstalk
 And turnip, talk!
 Turn crittur!

Pulse, beet;
 Gourd, eat;
Avé Hellas!
 Poker and punkin,
 Stir the old junk in:
 Breathe, bellows!

Corn-cob,
 And crow's feather,
 End the job:
 Jumble the rest o' the rubbish together;
 Dovetail and tune 'em.
E pluribus unum!

[*The scarecrow remains stock still.*]

The devil! Have I lost the hang of it? Ah!
 Hullo! He's dropped his pipe. What's a dandy
 without his 'baccy!

[*Restoring the corn-cob pipe to the scarecrow's mouth.*]

'Tis the life and breath of him. So; hand me yon
 hazel switch, Goody.

[*Waving it.*]

Presto!

Brighten, coal,
I' the dusk between us!
Whiten, soul!
Propinquit Venus!

[*A whiff of smoke puffs from the scarecrow's pipe.*]

Sic! Sic! Jacobus!

[*Another whiff.*]

Bravo!

[*The whiffs grow more rapid and the thing trembles.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Puff! puff, manny, for thy life!

DICKON

Fiat, fætus! — Huzza! *Noch einmal!* Go it!

[*Clouds of smoke issue from the pipe, half fill the shop, and envelop the creature, who staggers.**]

GOODY RICKBY

See! See his eyes!

* Here the living actor, through a trap, concealed by the smoke, will substitute himself for the elegantly clad effigy. His make-up, of course, will approximate to the latter, but the grotesque contours of his expression gradually, throughout the remainder of the act, become refined and sublimated till, at the *finale*, they are of a lordly and distinguished caste.

DICKON

[*Beckoning with one finger.*]

Veni, fili! Veni! Take 'ee first step, *bambino!* —
Toddle!

[*The Scarecrow makes a stiff lurch forward and falls side-wise against the anvil, propped half-reclining against which he leans rigid, emitting fainter puffs of smoke in gasps.*]

GOODY RICKBY

[*Screams.*]

Have a care! He's fallen.

DICKON

Well done, Punkin Jack! Thou shalt be knighted for that!

[*Striking him on the shoulder with the hazel rod.*]

Rise, Lord Ravensbane!

[*The Scarecrow totters to his feet, and makes a forlorn rec-tilinear salutation.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Look! He bows. — He flaps his flails at thee. He smiles like a tik-doo-loo-roo!

DICKON

[*With a profound reverence, backing away.*]

Will his lordship deign to follow his tutor?

[*With hitches and jerks, the Scarecrow follows Dickon.*]

GOODY RICKBY

O Lord! Lord! the style o' the broomstick!

DICKON

[*Holding ready a high-backed chair.*]

Will his lordship be seated and rest himself?

[*Awkwardly the Scarecrow half falls into the chair; his head sinks sideways, and his pipe falls out. Dickon snatches it up instantly and restores it to his mouth.*]

Puff! Puff, *puer*; 'tis thy life.

[*The Scarecrow puffs again.*]

- Is his lordship's tobacco refreshing?

GOODY RICKBY

Look now! The red colour in his cheeks. The beet-juice is pumping, oho!

DICKON

[*Offering his arm.*]

Your lordship will deign to receive an audience?

[*The Scarecrow takes his arm and rises.*]

The Marchioness of Rickby, your lady mother, entreats leave to present herself.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Courtesying low.*]

My son!

DICKON

[*Holding the pipe, and waving the hazel rod.*]

Dicite! Speak!

[*The Scarecrow, blowing out his last mouthful of smoke, opens his mouth, gasps, gurgles, and is silent.*]

In principio erat verbum! Accost thy mother!

[*The Scarecrow, clutching at his side in a struggle for coherence, fixes a pathetic look of pain on Goody Rickby.*]

THE SCARECROW

Mother!

GOODY RICKBY

[*With a scream of hysterical laughter, seizes both Dickon's hands and dances him about the forge.*]

O Beelzebub! I shall die!

DICKON

Thou hast thy son.

[*Dickon whispers in the Scarecrow's ear, shakes his finger, and exit.*]

GOODY RICKBY

He called me "mother." Again, boy, again.

THE SCARECROW

From the bottom of my heart — mother.

GOODY RICKBY

"The bottom of his heart" — Nay, thou killest me.

THE SCARECROW

Permit me, madam!

GOODY RICKBY

Gilead! Gilead himself! Waistcoat, "permit me," and all: thy father over again, I tell thee.

THE SCARECROW

[*With a slight stammer.*]

It gives me — I assure you — lady — the deepest happiness.

GOODY RICKBY

Just so the old hypocrite spoke when I said I'd have him. But thou hast a sweeter deference, my son.

[*Reënter Dickon; he is dressed all in black, save for a white stock, — a suit of plain elegance.*]

DICKON

Now, my lord, your tutor is ready.

THE SCARECROW

[*To Goody Rickby.*]

I have the honour — permit me — to wish you — good morning.

[*Bows and takes a step after Dickon, who, taking a three-cornered cocked hat from a peg, goes toward the door.*]

GOODY RICKBY

Whoa! Whoa, Jack! Whither away?

DICKON

[*Presenting the hat.*]

Deign to reply, sir.

THE SCARECROW

I go — with my tutor — Master Dickonson — to pay my respects — to his worship — the Justice — Merton — to solicit — the hand — of his daughter — the fair Mistress — Rachel.

[*With another bow.*]

Permit me.

GOODY RICKBY

Permit ye? God speed ye! Thou must teach him his tricks, Dickon.

DICKON

Trust me, Goody. Between here and Justice Merton's, I will play the mother-hen, and I promise thee, our bantling shall be as stuffed with compliments as a callow chick with caterpillars.

[*As he throws open the big doors, the cawing of crows is heard again.*]

Hark! your lordship's retainers acclaim you on your birthday. They bid you welcome to your majority. Listen! "Long live Lord Ravensbane! Caw!"

GOODY RICKBY

Look! Count 'em, Dickon.

One for sorrow,
 Two for mirth,
 Three for a wedding,
 Four for a birth —

Four on 'em! So! Good luck on thy birthday!
 And see! There's three on 'em flying into the Jus-
 tice's field.

— Flight o' the crows
 Tells how the wind biows! —

A wedding! Get ye gone. Wed the girl, and sting
 the Justice. Bless ye, my son!

THE SCARECROW

[*With a profound reverence.*]

Mother — believe me — to be — your ladyship's —
 most devoted — and obedient — son.

DICKON

[*Prompting him aloud.*]

Ravensbane.

THE SCARECROW

[*Donning his hat, lifts his head in hauteur, shakes his lace
 ruffle over his hand, turns his shoulder, nods slightly,
 and speaks for the first time with complete mastery of
 his voice.*]

Hm! Ravensbane!

[*With one hand in the arm of Dickon, the other twirling his
 cane (the converted chaise-spoke), wreathed in halos of
 smoke from his pipe, the fantastical figure hitches ele-
 gantly forth into the daylight, amid louder acclamations
 of the crows.*]

ACT II

ACT II

The same morning. Justice Merton's parlour, furnished and designed in the style of the early colonial period. On the right wall, hangs a portrait of the Justice as a young man; on the left wall, an old-fashioned looking-glass. At the right of the room stands the Glass of Truth, draped—as in the blacksmith shop—with the strange, embroidered curtain.

In front of it are discovered RACHEL and RICHARD; Rachel is about to draw the curtain.

RACHEL

Now! Are you willing?

RICHARD

So you suspect me of dark, villainous practices?

RACHEL

No, no, foolish Dick.

RICHARD

Still, I am to be tested; is that it?

RACHEL

That's it.

RICHARD

As your true lover.

RACHEL

Well, yes.

RICHARD

Why, of course, then, I consent. A true lover always consents to the follies of his lady-love.

RACHEL,

Thank you, Dick; I trust the glass will sustain your character. Now; when I draw the curtain —

RICHARD

[*Staying her hand.*]

What if I be false?

RACHEL

Then, sir, the glass will reflect you as the subtle fox that you are.

RICHARD

And you — as the goose?

RACHEL

Very likely. Ah! but, Richard dear, we mustn't laugh. It may prove very serious. You do not guess — you do not dream all the mysteries —

RICHARD

[*Shaking his head, with a grave smile.*]

You pluck at too many mysteries; sometime they may burn your fingers. Remember our first mother Eve!

RACHEL

But this is the glass of truth ; and Goody Rickby told me —

RICHARD

Rickby, forsooth!

RACHEL

Nay, come ; let's have it over.

[She draws the curtain, covers her eyes, steps back by Richard's side, looks at the glass, and gives a joyous cry.]

Ah! there you are, dear! There we are, both of us — just as we have always seemed to each other, true. 'Tis proved. Isn't it wonderful?

RICHARD

Miraculous! That a mirror bought in a blacksmith shop, before sunrise, for twenty pounds, should prove to be actually — a mirror!

RACHEL

Richard, I'm so happy.

[Enter JUSTICE MERTON and MISTRESS MERTON.]

RICHARD

[Embracing her.]

Happy, art thou, sweet goose? Why, then, God bless Goody Rickby.

JUSTICE MERTON

Strange words from you, Squire Talbot.

[*Rachel and Richard part quickly; Rachel draws the curtain over the mirror; Richard stands stiffly.*]

RICHARD

Justice Merton! Why, sir, the old witch is more innocent, perhaps, than I represented her.

JUSTICE MERTON

A witch, believe me, is never innocent.

[*Taking their hands, he brings them together and kisses Rachel on the forehead.*]

Permit me, young lovers. I was once young myself, young and amorous.

MISTRESS MERTON

[*In a low voice.*]

Verily!

JUSTICE MERTON

My fair niece, my worthy young man, beware of witchcraft.

MISTRESS MERTON

And Goody Rickby, too, brother?

JUSTICE MERTON

That woman shall answer for her deeds. She is proscribed.

RACHEL

Proscribed? What is that?

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Examining the mirror.*]

What is this?

JUSTICE MERTON

She shall hang.

RACHEL

Uncle, no! Not merely because of my purchase this morning.

JUSTICE MERTON

Your purchase?

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Pointing to the mirror.*]

That, I suppose.

JUSTICE MERTON

What! you purchased that mirror of her? You brought it here?

RACHEL

No, the boy brought it; I found it here when I returned.

JUSTICE MERTON

What! From her! You purchased it? From her shop? From her infamous den, into my parlour!

[*To Mistress Merton.*]

Call the servant.

[*Himself calling.*]

Micah! This instant, this instant — away with it!
Micah!

RACHEL

Uncle Gilead, I bought —

JUSTICE MERTON

Micah, I say! Where is the man?

RACHEL

Listen, Uncle. I bought it with my own money.

JUSTICE MERTON

Thine own money! Wilt have the neighbours gossip? Wilt have me, thyself, my house, suspected of complicity with witches?

[*Enter MICAH.*]

Micah, take this away.

MICAH

Yes, sir; but, sir —

JUSTICE MERTON

Out of my house!

MICAH

There be visitors.

JUSTICE MERTON

Away with —

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Touching his arm.*]

Gilead!

MICAH

Visitors, sir; gentry.

JUSTICE MERTON

Ah!

MICAHA

Shall I show them in, sir?

JUSTICE MERTON

Visitors! In the morning? Who are they?

MICAHA

Strangers, sir. I should judge they be very high gentry; lords, sir.

ALL

Lords!

MICAHA

At least, one on 'em, sir. The other—the dark gentleman—told me they left their horses at the inn, sir.

MISTRESS MERTON

Hark!

[The faces of all wear suddenly a startled expression.]

Where is that unearthly sound?

JUSTICE MERTON

[Listening.]

Is it in the cellar?

MICAHA

'Tis just the dog howling, madam. When he spied the gentry he turned tail and run below.

MISTRESS MERTON

Oh, the dog!

JUSTICE MERTON

Show the gentlemen here, Micah. Don't keep them waiting.

[*Exit MICAH.*]

A lord!

[*To Rachel.*]

We shall talk of this matter later. — A lord!

[*Turning to the small glass on the wall, he arranges his peruke and attire.*]

RACHEL

[*To Richard.*]

What a fortunate interruption! But, dear Dick! I wish we needn't meet these strangers now.

RICHARD

Would you really rather we were alone together?

[*They chat aside, absorbed in each other.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

Think of it, Cynthia, a lord!

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Dusting the furniture hastily with her handkerchief.*]

And such dust!

RACHEL

[*To Richard.*]

You know, dear, we need only be introduced, and then we can steal away together.

[*Reënter MICAH.*]

MICAHA

[*Announcing.*]

Lord Ravensbane: Marquis of Oxford, Baron of Wittenberg, Elector of Worms, and Count of Cordova ; Master Dickonson.

[*Enter RAVENSBANE and DICKON.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

Gentlemen, permit me, you are excessively welcome. I am deeply gratified to meet —

DICKON

Lord Ravensbane, of the Rookeries, Somersetshire.

JUSTICE MERTON

Lord Ravensbane — his lordship's most truly honoured.

RAVENSBANE

Truly honoured.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Turning to Dickon.*]

His lordship's — ?

DICKON

Tutor.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Checking his effusiveness.*]

Ah, so !

DICKON

Justice Merton, I believe.

JUSTICE MERTON

Of Merton House. — May I present — permit me, your lordship — my sister, Mistress Merton.

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Merton.

JUSTICE MERTON

And my — and my —

[*Under his breath.*]

Rachel !

[*Rachel remains with a bored expression behind Richard.*]

— my young neighbour, Squire Talbot, Squire Richard Talbot of — of —

RICHARD

Of nowhere, sir.

RAVENSBANE

[*Nods.*]

Nowhere.

JUSTICE MERTON

And permit me, Lord Ravensbane, my niece — Mistress Rachel Merton.

RAVENSBANE

[*Bows low.*]

Mistress Rachel Merton.

RACHEL

[*Courtesies.*]

Lord Ravensbane.

[*As they raise their heads, their eyes meet and are fascinated.
Dickon just then takes Ravensbane's pipe and fills it.*]

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel!

RACHEL

Your lordship!

[*Dickon returns the pipe.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

A pipe! Gilead! — in the parlour!

[*Justice Merton frowns silence.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

Your lordship — ahem! — has just arrived in town?

DICKON

From London, via New Amsterdam.

RICHARD

[*Aside.*]

Is he staring at *you*? Are you ill, Rachel?

RACHEL

[*Indifferently.*]

What?

JUSTICE MERTON

Lord Ravensbane honours my humble roof.

DICKON

[*Touches Ravensbane's arm.*]

Your lordship — “roof.”

RAVENSBANE

[*Starting, turns to Merton.*]

Nay, sir, the roof of my father's oldest friend bestows generous hospitality upon his only son.

JUSTICE MERTON

Only son — ah, yes! Your father —

RAVENSBANE

My father, I trust, sir, has never forgotten the intimate companionship, the touching devotion, the unceasing solicitude for his happiness which you, sir, manifested to him in the days of his youth.

JUSTICE MERTON

Really, your lordship, the — the slight favours which — hem! some years ago, I was privileged to show your illustrious father —

RAVENSBANE

Permit me! — Because, however, of his present infirmities — for I regret to say that my father is suffering a temporary aberration of mind —

JUSTICE MERTON

You distress me!

RAVENSBANE

My lady mother has charged me with a double mission here in New England. On my quitting my home, sir, to explore the wideness and the mystery of this world, my mother bade me be sure to call upon his worship, the Justice Merton; and deliver to him, first, my father's remembrances; and secondly, my mother's epistle.

DICKON

[*Handing to Justice Merton a sealed document.*]

Her ladyship's letter, sir.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Examining the seal with awe, speaks aside to Mistress Merton.*]

Cynthia! — a crested seal!

DICKON

His lordship's crest, sir: rooks rampant.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Embarrassed, breaks the seal.*]

Permit me.

RACHEL

[*Looking at Ravensbane.*]

Have you noticed his bearing, Richard: what personal distinction! what inbred nobility! Every inch a true lord!

RICHARD

He may be a lord, my dear, but he walks like a broomstick.

RACHEL

How dare you !

[*Turns abruptly away ; as she does so, a fold of her gown catches in a chair.*]

DICKON

[*To Justice Merton.*]

A word, sir.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Glancing up from the letter.*]

I am astonished — overpowered !

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel — permit me.

[*Stooping, he extricates the fold of her gown.*]

RACHEL

Oh, thank you.

[*They go aside together.*]

RICHARD

[*To Mistress Merton.*]

So Lord Ravensbane and his family are old friends of yours ?

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Monosyllabically.*]

I never heard the name before, Richard.

RICHARD

Why! but I thought that your brother, the Justice —

MISTRESS MERTON

The Justice is reticent.

RICHARD

Ah!

MISTRESS MERTON

Especially concerning his youth.

RICHARD

Ah!

RAVENSBANE

[*To Rachel, taking her hand after a whisper from Dickon.*]

Believe me, sweet lady, it will give me the deepest pleasure.

RACHEL

Can you really tell fortunes?

RAVENSBANE

More than that; I can bestow them.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*To Dickon.*]

But is her ladyship really serious? An offer of marriage!

DICKON

Pray read it again, sir.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Reads.*]

“To the Worshipful, the Justice Gilead Merton,
“Merton House.

“My Honourable Friend and Benefactor :

“With these brief lines I commend to you our
son ” — *our* son !

DICKON

She speaks likewise for his young lordship’s
father, sir.

JUSTICE MERTON

Ah ! of course.

[*Reads.*]

“In a strange land, I intrust him to you as to a
father.” Honoured, believe me ! “I have only to
add my earnest hope that the natural gifts, graces,
and inherited fortune ” — ah — !

DICKON

Twenty thousand pounds — on his father’s demise.

JUSTICE MERTON

Ah ! — “fortune of this young scion of nobility will
so propitiate the heart of your niece, Mistress Rachel
Merton, as to cause her to accept his proffered hand
in matrimony ; ” — but — but — but Squire Talbot is
betrothed to — well, well, we shall see ; — “in matri-
mony, and thus cement the early bonds of interest
and affection between your honoured self and his

lordship's father; not to mention, dear sir, your worship's ever grateful and obedient admirer,

“ELIZABETH,

“Marchioness of R.”

Of R.! of R.! Will you believe me, my dear sir, so long is it since my travels in England—I visited at so many—hem! noble estates—permit me, it is so awkward, but—

DICKON

[*With his peculiar intonation of Act I.*]

Not at all.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Starting.*]

I—I confess, sir, my youthful memory fails me. Will you be so very obliging; this—this Marchioness of R.—?

DICKON

[*Enjoying his discomfiture.*]

Yes?

JUSTICE MERTON

The R, I presume, stands for—

DICKON

Rickby.

RAVENSBANE

[*Calls.*]

Dickon, my pipe!

[*Dickon glides away to fill Ravensbane's pipe.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Stands bewildered and horror-struck.*]

Great God! — Thou inexorable Judge!

RICHARD

[*To Mistress Merton, scowling at Ravensbane and Rachel.*]

Are these court manners, in London?

MISTRESS MERTON

Don't ask *me*, Richard.

RAVENSBANE

[*Dejectedly to Rachel, as Dickon is refilling his pipe.*]

Alas! Mistress Rachel is cruel.

RACHEL

I? — cruel, your lordship?

RAVENSBANE

Your own white hand has written it.

[*Lifting her palm.*]

See, these lines: Rejection! you will reject one who loves you dearly.

RACHEL

Fie, your lordship! Be not cast down at fortune-telling. Let me tell yours, may I?

RAVENSBANE

[*Rapturously holding his palm for her to examine.*]

Ah! Permit me.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Murmurs, in terrible agitation.*]

Dickon! Can it be Dickon?

RACHEL

Why, Lord Ravensbane, your pulse. Really, if I am cruel, you are quite heartless. I declare I can't feel your heart beat at all.

RAVENSBANE

Ah! mistress, that is because I have just lost it.

RACHEL

[*Archly.*]

Where?

RAVENSBANE

[*Faintly.*]

Dickon, my pipe!

RACHEL

Alas! my lord, are you ill?

DICKON

[*Restoring the lighted pipe to Ravensbane, speaks aside.*]

Pardon me, sweet young lady, I must confide to you that his lordship's heart is peculiarly responsive to his emotions. When he feels very ardently, it quite stops. Hence the use of his pipe.

RACHEL

Oh! Is smoking, then, necessary for his heart?

DICKON

Absolutely — to equilibrate the valvular palpitations. Without his pipe — should his lordship experience, for instance, the emotion of love — he might die.

RACHEL

You alarm me!

DICKON

But this is for you only, Mistress Rachel. We may confide in you?

RACHEL

Oh, utterly, sir.

DICKON

His lordship, you know, is so sensitive.

RAVENSBANE

[*To Rachel.*]

You have given it back to me. Why did not you keep it?

RACHEL

What, my lord?

RAVENSBANE

My heart.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*To Dickon.*]

Permit me, one moment; I did not catch your name.

DICKON

My name? Dickonson.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*With a gasp of relief.*]

Ah, Dickonson! Thank you. I mistook the word.

DICKON

A compound, your worship.

[*With a malignant smile.*]

Dickon-

[*Then jerking his thumb over his shoulder at Ravensbane.*]

son!

[*Bowing.*]

Both at your service.

JUSTICE MERTON

If — if you can show pity — speak low.

DICKON

As hell, your worship?

JUSTICE MERTON

Is he — he there?

DICKON

Bessie's brat; yes; it didn't die, after all, poor suckling! Dickon weaned it. Saved it for balm of Gilead. Raised it for joyful home-coming. Prodigal's return! Twenty-first birthday! Happy son! Happy father!

JUSTICE MERTON

My — son!

DICKON

Felicitations!

JUSTICE MERTON

I will not believe it.

DICKON

Truth *is* hard fare.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Faintly.*]

What — what do you want?

DICKON

Only the happiness of your dear ones.

[*Indicating Rachel and Ravensbane.*]

The union of these young hearts and hands.

JUSTICE MERTON

What! he will dare — an illegitimate —

DICKON

Fie, fie, Gilly! Why, the brat is a lord now.

JUSTICE MERTON

Oh, the disgrace! Spare me that, Dickon.

RICHARD

[*In a low voice to Rachel, who is talking in a fascinated manner to Ravensbane.*]

Are you mad?

RACHEL

[*Indifferently.*]

What is the matter ?

[*Laughing, to Ravensbane.*]

Oh, your lordship is too witty !

JUSTICE MERTON

[*To Dickon.*]

After all, I was young then.

DICKON

Quite so.

JUSTICE MERTON

And she is innocent ; she is already betrothed.

DICKON

Twiddle-twaddle ! Look at her eyes now !

[*Rachel is still telling Ravensbane's fortune ; and they are manifestly absorbed in each other.*]

'Tis a brilliant match ; besides, her ladyship's heart is set upon it.

JUSTICE MERTON

Her ladyship — ?

DICKON

The Marchioness of Rickby.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Glowering.*]

I had forgotten.

DICKON

Her ladyship has never forgotten. So, you see, your worship's alternatives are most simple. Alternative one: advance his lordship's suit with your niece as speedily as possible, and save all scandal. Alternative two: impede his lordship's suit, and —

JUSTICE MERTON

Don't, Dickon! don't reveal the truth; not disgrace now!

DICKON

Good; we are agreed, then?

JUSTICE MERTON

I have no choice.

DICKON

[*Cheerfully.*]

Why, true; we ignored that, didn't we?

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Approaching.*]

This young lord — Why, Gilead, are you ill?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*With a great effort, commands himself.*]

Not in the least.

MISTRESS MERTON

Rachel's deportment, my dear brother —

RACHEL

I am really at a loss. Your lordship's hand is so very peculiar.

RAVENSBANE

Ah! Peculiar.

RACHEL

This, now, is the line of life.

RAVENSBANE

Of life, yes?

RACHEL

But it begins so abruptly, and see! it breaks off and ends nowhere. And just so here with this line — the line of — of love.

RAVENSBANE

Of love. So; it breaks?

RACHEL

Yes.

RAVENSBANE

Ah, then, that must be the *heart* line.

RACHEL

I am afraid your lordship is very fickle.

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Horried.*]

I tell you, Gilead, they are fortune-telling!

JUSTICE MERTON

Tush! Tush!

MISTRESS MERTON

Tush? "*Tush*" to me? Tush!

[*Richard, who has been stifling his feelings at Rachel's rebuff, and has stood fidgeting at a civil distance from her, now walks up to Justice Merton.*]

RICHARD

Intolerable! Do you approve of *this*, sir? Are Lord Ravensbane's credentials satisfactory?

JUSTICE MERTON

Eminently, eminently.

RICHARD

Ah! So her ladyship's letter is —

JUSTICE MERTON

Charming; charming.

RICHARD

To be sure; old friends, when they are lords, it makes such a difference.

DICKON

True friends — old friends;
New friends — cold friends.

N'est ce pas, your worship?

JUSTICE MERTON

Indeed, Master Dickonson; indeed!

[*To Richard, as Dickon goes toward Ravensbane and Rachel.*]

What happiness to encounter the manners of the nobility!

RICHARD

If you approve them, sir, it is sufficient. This is your house.

[*He turns away.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

Your lordship will, I trust, make my house your home.

RAVENSBAKE

My home, sir.

RACHEL

[*To Dickon, who has spoken to her.*]

Really?

[*To Justice Merton.*]

Why, uncle, what is this Master Dickonson tells us?

JUSTICE MERTON

What! What! he has revealed—

RACHEL

Yes, indeed. Why did you never tell us?

JUSTICE MERTON

Rachel! Rachel!

MISTRESS MERTON

You are moved, brother.

RACHEL

[*Laughingly to Ravensbane.*]

My uncle is doubtless astonished to find you so grown.

RAVENSBANE

[*Laughingly to Justice Merton.*]

I am doubtless astonished, sir, to be so grown.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*To Dickon.*]

You have —

DICKON

Remarked, sir, that your worship had often dandled his lordship — as an infant.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Smiling lugubriously.*]

Quite so — as an infant merely.

RACHEL

How interesting! Then you must have seen his lordship's home in England.

JUSTICE MERTON

As you say.

RACHEL

[*To Ravensbane.*]

Do describe it to us. We are so isolated here from the grand world. Do you know, I always

imagine England to be an enchanted isle, like one of the old Hesperides, teeming with fruits of solid gold.

RAVENSBANE

Ah, yes! my mother raises them.

RACHEL

Fruits of gold?

RAVENSBANE

Round like the rising sun. She calls them — ah! punkins.

MISTRESS MERTON

“Punkins!”

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Aside, grinding his teeth.*]

Scoundrel! Scoundrel!

RACHEL

[*Laughing.*]

Your lordship pokes fun at us.

DICKON

His lordship is an artist in words, mistress. I have noticed that in whatever country he is travelling, he tinges his vocabulary with the local idiom. His lordship means, of course, not pumpkins, but pomegranates.

RACHEL

We forgive him. But, your lordship, please be serious and describe to us your hall.

RAVENSANE

Quite serious: the hall. Yes, yes; in the middle burns a great fire — on a black — ah! — black altar.

DICKON

A Druidical heirloom. His lordship's mother collects antiques.

RACHEL

How fascinating!

RAVENSANE

Quite fascinating! On the walls hang pieces of iron.

DICKON

Trophies of Saxon warfare.

RAVENSANE

And rusty horseshoes.

GENERAL MURMURS

Horseshoes!

DICKON

Presents from the German emperor. They were worn by the steeds of Charlemagne.

RAVENSANE

Quite so; and broken cart-wheels.

DICKON

Reliques of British chariots.

RACHEL

How mediæval it must be !

[*To Justice Merton.*]

And to think you never described it to us !

MISTRESS MERTON

True, brother ; you have been singularly reticent.

JUSTICE MERTON

Permit me ; it is impossible to report all one sees on one's travels.

MISTRESS MERTON

Evidently.

RACHEL

But surely your lordship's mother has other diversions besides collecting antiques. I have heard that in England ladies followed the hounds ; and sometimes —

[*Looking at her aunt and lowering her voice.*]

they even dance.

RAVENSBANE

Dance — ah, yes ; my lady mother dances about the — the altar ; she swings high a hammer.

DICKON

Your lordship, your lordship ! Pray, sir, check this vein of poetry. Lord Ravensbane symbolizes as a hammer and altar a golf-stick and tee — a Scottish

game, which her ladyship plays on her Highland estates.

RICHARD

[*To Mistress Merton.*]

What do you think of this?

MISTRESS MERTON

[*With a scandalized look toward her brother.*]

He said to me "tush."

RICHARD

[*To Justice Merton, indicating Dickon.*]

Who is this magpie?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Hisses in fury.*]

Satan!

RICHARD

I beg pardon!

JUSTICE MERTON

Satan, sir— makes you jealous.

RICHARD

[*Bows stiffly.*]

Good morning.

[*Walking up to Ravensbane.*]

Lord Ravensbane, I have a rustic colonial question to ask. Is it the latest fashion to smoke incessantly in ladies' parlours, or is it— mediæval?

DICKON

His lordship's health, sir, necessitates —

RICHARD

I addressed his lordship.

RAVENSBANE

In the matter of fashions, sir —

[*Hands his pipe to be refilled.*]

My pipe, Dickon!

[*While Dickon holds his pipe — somewhat longer than usual — Ravensbane, with his mouth open as if about to speak, relapses into a vacant stare.*]

DICKON

[*As he lights the pipe for Ravensbane, speaks suavely and low as if not to be overheard by him.*]

Pardon me. The fact is, my young pupil is sensitive; the wound from his latest duel is not quite healed; you observe a slight lameness, an occasional absence of mind.

RACHEL

A wound — in a real duel?

RICHARD

Necessitates his smoking! A valid reason!

DICKON

[*Aside.*]

You, mistress, know the *true* reason — his lordship's heart.

RACHEL

Believe me, sir —

RICHARD

[*To Ravensbane, who is still staring vacantly into space.*]

Well, well, your lordship.

[*Ravensbane pays no attention.*]

You were saying — ?

[*Dickon returns the pipe.*]

in the matter of fashions, sir — ?

RAVENSBANE

[*Regaining slowly a look of intelligence, draws himself up with affronted hauteur.*]

Permit me !

[*Puffs several wreaths of smoke into the air.*]I *am* the fashions.

RICHARD

[*Going.*]

Insufferable !

[*He pauses at the door.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

[*To Justice Merton.*]

Well — what do you think of that ?

JUSTICE MERTON

Spoken like King Charles himself.

MISTRESS MERTON

Brother ! brother ! is there nothing wrong here ?

JUSTICE MERTON

Wrong, Cynthia! Manifestly you are quite ignorant of the manners of the great.

MISTRESS MERTON

Oh, Gilead!

JUSTICE MERTON

Where are you going?

MISTRESS MERTON

To my room.

[Murmurs, as she hurries out.]

Dear! dear! if it should be that again!

[Dickon and Justice Merton withdraw to a corner of the room.]

RACHEL

[To Ravensbane.]

I—object to the smoke? Why, I think it is charming.

RICHARD

[Who has returned from the door, speaks in a low, constrained voice.]

Rachel!

RACHEL

Oh!—you?

RICHARD

You take quickly to European fashions.

RACHEL

Yes? To what one in particular?

RICHARD

Two; smoking and flirtation.

RACHEL

Jealous?

RICHARD

Of an idiot? I hope not. Manners differ, however. Your confidences to his lordship have evidently not included — your relation to me.

RACHEL

Oh, our relations!

RICHARD

Of course, since you wish him to continue in ignorance —

RACHEL

Not at all. He shall know at once. Lord Ravensbane!

RAVENSBANE

Fair mistress!

RICHARD

Rachel, stop! I did not mean —

RACHEL

[*To Ravensbane.*]

My uncle did not introduce to you with sufficient elaboration this gentleman. Will you allow me to do so now?

RAVENSBANE

I adore Mistress Rachel's elaborations.

RACHEL

Lord Ravensbane, I beg to present Squire Talbot,
my betrothed.

RAVENSBANE

Betrothed! Is it —

[*Noticing Richard's frown.*]

is it pleasant?

RACHEL

[*To Richard.*]

Are you satisfied?

RICHARD

[*Trembling with feeling.*]

More than satisfied.

[*Exit.*]

RAVENSBANE

[*Looking after him.*]

Ah! Betrothed is *not* pleasant.

RACHEL

Not always.

RAVENSBANE

[*Anxiously.*]

Mistress Rachel is not pleased?

RACHEL

[*Biting her lip, looks after Richard.*]

With him.

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel will smile again?

RACHEL

Soon.

RAVENSBANE

[*Ardent.*]

Ah! if she would only smile once more! What can Lord Ravensbane do to make her smile? See! will you puff my pipe? It is very pleasant.

[*Offering the pipe.*]

RACHEL

[*Smiling.*]

Shall I try?

[*Takes hold of it mischievously.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*In a great voice.*]

Rachel!

RACHEL

Why, uncle!

JUSTICE MERTON

[*From where he has been conversing in a corner with Dickon, approaches now and speaks suavely to Ravensbane.*]

Permit me, your lordship—Rachel, you will kindly withdraw for a few moments; I desire to confer with Lord Ravensbane concerning his mother's—her ladyship's letter;

[*Obsequiously to Dickon.*]

— that is, if you think, sir, that your noble pupil is not too fatigued.

DICKON

Not at all; I think his lordship will listen to you with much pleasure.

RAVENSBALE

[*Bowing to Justice Merton, but looking at Rachel.*]

With much pleasure.

DICKON

And in the meantime, if Mistress Rachel will allow me, I will assist her in writing those invitations which your worship desires to send in her name.

JUSTICE MERTON

Invitations — from my niece ?

DICKON

To his Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor; to your friends, the Reverend Masters at Harvard College, etc., etc.; in brief, to all your worship's select social acquaintance in the vicinity — to meet his lordship. It was so thoughtful in you to suggest it, sir, and believe me, his lordship appreciates your courtesy in arranging the reception in his honour for this afternoon.

RACHEL

[*To Justice Merton.*]

This afternoon! Are we really to give his lordship a reception this afternoon ?

DICKON

Your uncle has already given me the list of guests; so considerate! Permit me to act as your scribe, Mistress Rachel.

RACHEL

With pleasure.

[*To Justice Merton.*]

And will it be here, uncle?

DICKON

[*Looking at him narrowly.*]

Your worship said *here*, I believe?

JUSTICE MERTON

Quite so, sir; quite so, quite so.

DICKON

[*Aside to Justice Merton.*]

I advise nothing rash, Gilly; the brat has a weak heart.

RACHEL

This way, Master Dickonson, to the study.

DICKON

[*As he goes with Rachel.*]

I will write and you sign?

RACHEL

Thank you.

DICKON

[*Aside, as he passes Ravensbane.*]

Remember, Jack! Puff, puff!

RACHEL

[*To Ravensbane, who stretches out his hand to her with a gesture of entreaty to stay.*]

Your lordship is to be my guest.

[*Courtesying.*]

Till we meet again!

DICKON

[*To Rachel.*]

May I sharpen your quill?

[*Exeunt.*]

RAVENSBANE

[*Faintly, looking after her.*]

Till — we — meet — again!

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Low and vehement to Ravensbane.*]

Impostor!

RAVENSBANE

[*Still staring at the door.*]

She is gone.

JUSTICE MERTON

You at least shall not play the lord and master to my face.

RAVENSBANE

Quite — gone !

JUSTICE MERTON

I know with whom I have to deal. If I be any judge of my own flesh and blood — permit me — you shall quail before me.

RAVENSBANE

[*Dejectedly.*]

She did not smile —

[*Joyously.*]

She smiled !

JUSTICE MERTON

Affected rogue ! I know thee. I know thy feigned pauses, thy assumed vagaries. Speak ; how much do you want ?

RAVENSBANE

Betrothed, — he went away. That was good. And then — she did not smile : that was not good. But then — she smiled ! Ah ! that was good.

JUSTICE MERTON

Come back, coward, and face me.

RAVENSBANE

First, the great sun shone over the corn-fields, the grass was green ; the black wings rose and flew before me ; then the door opened — and she looked at me.

JUSTICE MERTON

Speak, I say ! What sum ? What treasure do you hope to bleed from me ?

RAVENSBANE

[*Ecstatically.*]

Ah! Mistress Rachel!

JUSTICE MERTON

Her! Scoundrel, if thou dost name her again, my innocent—my sweet maid! If thou dost—thou godless spawn of temptation—mark you, I will put an end—

[*Reaching for a pistol that rests in a rack on the wall, — the intervening form of Dickon suddenly appears, pockets the pistol, and exit.*]

DICKON

I beg pardon; I forgot something.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Sinking into a chair.*]

God is just.

[*He holds his head in his hands and weeps.*]

RAVENSBANE

[*For the first time, since Rachel's departure, observes Merton.*]

Permit me, sir, are you ill?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Recoiling.*]

What art thou?

RAVENSBANE

[*Monotonously.*]

I am Lord Ravensbane: Marquis of Oxford, Baron of Wittenberg, Elector of Worms, and—

JUSTICE MERTON

And my son!

[*Covers his face again.*]

RAVENSBANE

[*Solicitously.*]

Shall I call Dickon?

JUSTICE MERTON

Yea, for thou art my son. The deed once done is never done, the past is the present.

RAVENSBANE

[*Walking softly toward the door, calls.*]

Dickon!

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Starting up.*]

No, do not call him. Stay, and be merciful. Tell me: I hate thee not; thou wast innocent. Tell me! — I thought thou hadst died as a babe. — Where has Dickon, our tyrant, kept thee these twenty years?

RAVENSBANE

[*With gentle courtesy.*]

Master Dickonson is my tutor.

JUSTICE MERTON

And why has thy mother — Ah, I know well; I deserve all. But yet, it must not be published now! I am a justice now, an honoured citizen — and my

young niece — Thy mother will not demand so much; she will be considerate; she will ask some gold, of course, but she will show pity!

RAVENSBANE

My mother is the Marchioness of Rickby.

JUSTICE MERTON

Yes, yes; 'twas well planned, a clever trick. 'Twas skilful of her. But surely thy mother gave thee commands to —

RAVENSBANE

My mother gave me her blessing.

JUSTICE MERTON

Ah, 'tis well then. Young man, my son, I too will give thee my blessing, if thou wilt but go — go instantly — go with half my fortune, go away forever, and leave my reputation unstained.

RAVENSBANE

Go away?

[*Starting for the study door.*]

Ah, sir, with much pleasure.

JUSTICE MERTON

You will go? You will leave me my honour — and my Rachel?

RAVENSBANE

Rachel? Rachel is yours? No, no, Mistress Rachel is mine. We are ours.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Pleadingly.*]

Consider the disgrace.

RAVENSBANE

No, no ; I have seen her eyes, they are mine ; I have seen her smiles, they are mine ; she is mine !

JUSTICE MERTON

Consider, one moment consider — you, an illegitimate — and she — oh, think what thou art !

RAVENSBANE

[*Monotonously, puffing smoke at the end.*]

I am Lord Ravensbane : Marquis of Oxford, Baron of Wittenberg, Elector of Worms, and Count —

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Wrenching the pipe from Ravensbane's hand and lips.*]

Devil's child ! Boor ! Buffoon !

[*Flinging the pipe away.*]

I will stand thy insults no longer. If thou hast no heart —

RAVENSBANE

[*Putting his hand to his side, staggers.*]

Ah ! my heart !

JUSTICE MERTON

Hypocrite ! Thou canst not fool me. I am thy father.

RAVENSBANE

[*Faintly, stretching out his hand to him for support.*]

Father!

JUSTICE MERTON

Stand away. Thou mayst break thy heart and mine and the devil's, but thou shalt not break Rachel's.

RAVENSBANE

[*Faintly.*]

Mistress Rachel is mine —

[*He staggers again, and falls, half reclining, upon a chair.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

Good God! Can it be — his heart?

RAVENSBANE

[*More faintly, beginning to change expression.*]

Her eyes are mine; her smiles are mine.

[*His eyes close.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*With agitated swiftness, feels and listens at Ravensbane's side.*]

Not a motion; not a sound! Yea, God, Thou art good! 'Tis his heart. He is—ah! he is my son. Judge Almighty, if he should die now; may I not be still a moment more and make sure. No, no, my son — he is changing.

[Calls.]

Help! Help! Rachel! Master Dickonson! Help!
Richard! Cynthia! Come hither!

[Enter Dickon and Rachel.]

RACHEL

Uncle!

JUSTICE MERTON

Bring wine. Lord Ravensbane has fainted.

RACHEL

Oh!

[Turning swiftly to go.]

Micah, wine.

DICKON

[Detaining her.]

Stay! His pipe! Where is his lordship's pipe?

RACHEL

Oh, terrible!

[Enter, at different doors, Mistress Merton and Richard.]

MISTRESS MERTON

What's the matter?

JUSTICE MERTON

[To Rachel.]

He threw it away. He is worse. Bring the wine.

MISTRESS MERTON

Look! How strange he appears!

RACHEL

[Searching distractedly.]

The pipe! His lordship's pipe! It is lost, Master Dickonson.

DICKON

[Stooping, as if searching, with his back turned, having picked up the pipe, is filling and lighting it.]

It must be found. This is a heart attack, my friends; his lordship's life depends on the nicotine.

[Deftly he places the pipe in Rachel's way.]

RACHEL

Thank God! Here it is.

[Carrying it to the prostrate form of Ravensbane, she lifts his head and is about to put the pipe in his mouth.]

Shall I — shall I put it in?

RICHARD

No! not you.

RACHEL

Sir!

RICHARD

Let his tutor perform that office.

RACHEL

[Lifting Lord Ravensbane's head again.]

Here, my lord.

RICHARD AND JUSTICE MERTON

[*Together.*]

Rachel!

RACHEL

You, too, uncle?

DICKON

Pardon me, Mistress Rachel; give the pipe at once. Only a token of true affection can revive his lordship now.

RICHARD

[*As Rachel puts the pipe to Ravensbane's lips.*]

I forbid it, Rachel.

RACHEL

[*Watching only Ravensbane.*]

My lord — my lord!

MISTRESS MERTON

Give him air; unbutton his coat.

[*Rachel unbuttons Ravensbane's coat, revealing the embroidered waistcoat.*]

Ah, heavens! What do I see?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Looks, blanches, and signs silence to Mistress Merton.*]

Cynthia!

DICKON

See! He puffs — he revives. He is coming to himself.

MISTRESS MERTON

[Aside to Justice Merton, with deep tensity.]

That waistcoat! that waistcoat! Brother, hast thou never seen it before?

JUSTICE MERTON

Never, my sister.

RACHEL

[As Ravensbane rises to his feet.]

At last!

DICKON

Look! he is restored.

RACHEL

God be thanked!

DICKON

My lord, Mistress Rachel has saved your life.

RAVENSBANE

[Taking Rachel's hand.]

Mistress Rachel is mine; we are ours.

RICHARD

Dare to repeat that.

RAVENSBANE

[Looking at Rachel.]

Her eyes are mine.

RICHARD

[Flinging his glove in his face.]

And that, sir, is yours. I believe such is the

proper fashion in England. If your lordship's last duelling wound is sufficiently healed, perhaps you will deign a reply.

RACHEL

Richard! Your lordship!

RAVENSBANE

[Stoops, picks up the glove, pockets it, bows to Rachel, and steps close to Richard.]

Permit me!

[He blows a puff of smoke full in Richard's face.]

ACT III

ACT III

The same day. Late afternoon. The same scene as Act II.

RAVENSBANE and DICKON discovered at table, on which are lying two flails. Ravensbane is dressed in a costume which, composed of silk and jewels, subtly approximates in design to that of his original grosser composition. So artfully, however, is this contrived that, to one ignorant of his origin, his dress would appear to be merely an odd personal whimsey; whereas, to one initiated, it would stamp him grotesquely as the apotheosis of scarecrows.

Dickon is sitting in a pedagogical attitude; Ravensbane stands near him, making a profound bow in the opposite direction.

RAVENSBANE

Believe me, ladies, with the true sincerity of the heart.

DICKON

Inflection a little more lachrymose, please: "The true sincerity of the heart."

RAVENSBANE

Believe me, ladies, with the true sincerity of the heart.

DICKON

Prettily, prettily! Next!

RAVENSBANE

[*Changing his mien, as if addressing another person.*]

Verily, sir, as that prince of poets, the immortal Virgil, has remarked :

“Adeo in teneris consuescere multum est.”

DICKON

Hm! Act up to the sentiment.

RAVENSBANE

Verily, sir, as that prince —

DICKON

No, no; *basta!* The next.

RAVENSBANE

[*With another change to courtly manner.*]

Trust me, your Excellency, I will inform his Majesty of your courtesy.

DICKON

His Majesty more emphatic. Remember! You must impress all of the guests this afternoon.

RAVENSBANE

His Majesty of your courtesy.

DICKON

Delicious! O thou exquisite flower of love! How thy natal composites have burst in bloom: The pump-

kin in thee to a golden collarette; thy mop of crow's wings to these raven locks; thy broomstick to a lordly limp; thy corn-silk to these pale-tinted tassels. Verily in the gallery of scarecrows, thou art the Apollo Belvedere! But continue, Cobby dear: the retort now to the challenge.

RAVENSBANE

[*With a superb air.*]

The second, I believe.

DICKON

Quite so, my lord.

RAVENSBANE

Sir! The local person whom you represent has done himself the honour of submitting to me a challenge to mortal combat. Sir! Since the remotest times of my feudal ancestors, in such affairs of honour, choice of weapons has ever been the prerogative of the challenged. Sir! This right of etiquette must be observed. Nevertheless, believe me, I have no selfish desire that my superior attainments in this art should assume advantage over my challenger's ignorance. I have, therefore, chosen those combative utensils most appropriate both to his own humble origin and to local tradition. Permit me, sir, to reveal my choice.

[*Pointing grandly to the table.*]

There are my weapons!

DICKON

[Clapping his hands.]

My darling *homunculus*! Thou shouldst have acted in Beaumont and Fletcher!

RAVENSBANE

There are my weapons!

DICKON

I could watch thy histrionics till midnight. But thou art tired, poor Jacky; two hours' rehearsal is fatiguing to your lordship.

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel — I may see her now?

DICKON

Romeo! Romeo! Was ever such an amorous puppet show!

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel!

DICKON

Wait; let me think! Thou art wound up now, my pretty apparatus, for at least six and thirty hours. The wooden angel Gabriel that trumpets the hours on the big clock in Venice is not a more punctual manikin than thou with my speeches. Thou shouldst run, therefore, —

RAVENSBANE

[*Frowning darkly at Dickon.*]

Stop talking; permit me! A tutor should know his place.

DICKON

[*Rubbing his hands.*]

Nay, your lordship is beyond comparison.

RAVENSBANE

[*In a terrible voice.*]

She will come? I shall see her?

[*Enter MICAH.*]

MICAH

Pardon, my lord.

RAVENSBANE

[*Turning joyfully to Micah.*]

Is it she?

MICAH

Captain Bugby, my lord, the Governor's secretary.

DICKON

Good. Squire Talbot's second. Show him in.

RAVENSBANE

[*Flinging despairingly into a chair.*]

Ah! ah!

MICAH

[*Lifting the flails from the table.*]

Beg pardon, sir ; shall I remove —

DICKON

Drop them ; go.

MICAH

But, sir —

DICKON

Go, thou slave !

[*Exit Micah.*]

RAVENSBANE

[*In childlike despair.*]

She will not come ! I shall not see her !

DICKON

[*Handing him a book.*]

Here, my lord ; read. You must be found reading.

RAVENSBANE

[*Flinging the book into the fireplace.*]

She does not come !

DICKON

Fie, fie, Jack ; thou must not be breaking thy Dickon's apron-strings with a will of thine own. Come !

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel.

DICKON

Be good, boy, and thou shalt see her soon.

RAVENSBANE

[*Brightening.*]

I shall see her?

[*Enter* CAPTAIN BUGBY.]

DICKON

Your lordship was saying — Oh! Captain Bugby?

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Nervous and awed.*]

Captain Bugby, sir, ah! at Lord Ravensbane's service — ah!

DICKON

I am Master Dickonson, his lordship's tutor.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Happy, sir.

DICKON

[*To Ravensbane.*]

My lord, this gentleman waits upon you from Squire Talbot.

[*To Captain Bugby.*]

In regard to the challenge of this morning, I presume?

CAPTAIN BUGBY

The affair, ah! the affair of this morning, sir.

RAVENSBANE

[*With his former superb air — to Captain Bugby.*]

The second, I believe?

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Quite so, my lord.

RAVENSBANE

Sir! the local person whom you represent has done himself the honour of submitting to me a challenge to mortal combat. Sir! Since the remotest times of my feudal ancestors, in such affairs of honour, choice of weapons has ever been the prerogative of the challenged. Sir! this right of etiquette must be observed.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Indeed, yes, my lord.

DICKON

Pray do not interrupt.

[*To Ravensbane.*]

Your lordship: "observed."

RAVENSBANE

—observed. Nevertheless, believe me, I have no selfish desire that my superior attainments in this art should assume advantage over my challenger's ignorance. I have, therefore, chosen those combative utensils most appropriate both to his own humble

origin and to local tradition. Permit me, sir, to reveal my choice.

[*Pointing to the table.*]

There are my weapons!

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Looking, bewildered.*]

These, my lord?

RAVENSBANE

Those.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

But these are — are flails.

RAVENSBANE

Flails.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Flails, my lord?

RAVENSBANE

There are my weapons.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Lord Ravensbane — I — ah! express myself ill — Do I understand that your lordship and Squire Talbot —

RAVENSBANE

Exactly.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

But your lordship — flails!

RAVENSBANE

My adversary should be deft in their use. He has doubtless wielded them frequently on his barn floor.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Ahaha! I understand now. Your lordship — ah! is a wit. Haha! Flails!

DICKON

His lordship's satire is poignant.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Indeed, sir, so keen that I must apologize for laughing at my principal's expense.

[*Soberly to Ravensbane.*]

My lord, if you will deign to speak one moment seriously —

RAVENSBANE

Seriously?

CAPTAIN BUGBY

I will take pleasure in informing Squire Talbot — ah! as to your *real* preference for —

RAVENSBANE

For flails, sir. I have, permit me, nothing further to say. Flails are final.

[*Turns away haughtily.*]

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Must I really report to Squire Talbot — ah! — flails?

DICKON

Lord Ravensbane's will is inflexible.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

And his wit, sir, incomparable. I am sorry for the Squire, but 'twill be the greatest joke in years. Ah! will you tell me — is it —

[*Indicating Ravensbane's smoking.*]

is it the latest fashion?

DICKON

Lord Ravensbane is always the latest.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Obliged servant, sir. Aha! Such a joke as — O lord! flails!

[*Exit.*]

DICKON

[*Returning to Ravensbane.*]

Bravo, my pumpky dear! That squelches the jealous betrothed. Now nothing remains but for you to continue to dazzle the enamoured Rachel, and so present yourself to the Justice as a pseudo-son-nephew-in-law.

RAVENSBANE

I may go to Mistress Rachel?

DICKON

She will come to you. She is reading now a poem from you, which I left on her dressing-table.

RAVENSBAKE

She is reading a poem from me?

DICKON

With your pardon, my lord, I penned it for you. I am something of a poetaster. Indeed, I flatter myself that I have dictated some of the finest lines in literature.

RAVENSBAKE

Dickon! She will come?

DICKON

She comes!

[*Enter RACHEL, reading from a piece of paper.*]

Hush! Step aside; step aside first. Let her read it.

[*Dickon draws Ravensbane back.*]

RACHEL

Once more,

[*Reads.*]

“To Mistress R——, enchantress:

If faith in witchcraft be a sin,
Alas! what peril he is in
Who plights his faith and love in thee,
Sweetest maid of sorcery.

If witchcraft be a whirling brain,
A roving eye, a heart of pain,
Whose wound no thread of fate can stitch,
How hast thou conjured, cruel witch,

With the brain, eye, heart, and total mortal residue
of thine enamoured

JACK LANTHORNE,
[LORD R ——.]

DICKON

Now to leave the turtles alone.

[*Exit.*]

RACHEL

“To Mistress R——, enchantress :

If faith in witchcraft be —”

“To Mistress R——.” R! It *must* be. R——
must mean —

RAVENSBANE

[*With passionate deference.*]

Rachel!

RACHEL

Ah! How you surprised me, my lord.

RAVENSBANE

You are come again ; you are come again.

RACHEL

Has anything happened? Tell me, my lord. Has
Squire Talbot been here?

RAVENSBANE

No, Mistress Rachel ; not here.

RACHEL

And you have not — Oh, my lord, I have been in such terror. But you are safe. — You have not fought?

RAVENSBANE

No, Mistress Rachel; not fought.

RACHEL

Thank God for that! But you will promise me — promise me that there shall be — no — duel!

RAVENSBANE

I promise Mistress Rachel there shall be no duel.

RACHEL

Your lordship is so good. You do not know how gratefully happy I am.

RAVENSBANE

I know I am only a thing to make Mistress Rachel happy. Ah! look at me once more. When you look at me, I live.

RACHEL

It is strange indeed, my lord, how the familiar world, the daylight, the heavens themselves have changed since your arrival.

RAVENSBANE

This is the world; this is the light; this is the heavens themselves. Mistress Rachel is looking at me.

RACHEL

For me, it is less strange perhaps. I never saw a real lord before. But you, my lord, must have seen so many, many girls in the great world.

RAVENSBANE

No, no; never.

RACHEL

No other girls before to-day, my lord!

RAVENSBANE

Before to-day? I do not know; I do not care. I was not here. To-day I was born—in your eyes. Ah! my brain whirls!

RACHEL

[*Smiling.*]

“If witchcraft be a whirling brain,
A roving eye, a heart of pain,—”

[*In a whisper.*]

My lord, do you really believe in witchcraft?

RAVENSBANE

With all my heart.

RACHEL

And approve of it?

RAVENSBANE

With all my soul.

RACHEL

So do I—that is, innocent witchcraft; not to harm anybody, you know, but just to feel all the

dark mystery and the trembling excitement—the way you feel when you blow out your candle all alone in your bedroom and watch the little smoke fade away in the moonshine.

RAVENSBANE

Fade away in the moonshine!

RACHEL

Oh, but we mustn't speak of it. In a town like this, all such mysticism is considered damnable. But your lordship understands and approves? I am so glad! Have you read the "Philosophical Considerations" of Glanville, the "*Saducismus Triumphatus*," and the "Presignifications of Dreams"? What kind of witchcraft, my lord, do you believe in?

RAVENSBANE

In all yours.

RACHEL

Nay, your lordship must not take me for a real witch. I can only tell fortunes, you know—like this morning.

RAVENSBANE

I know; you told how my heart would break.

RACHEL

Oh, that's palmistry, and that isn't always certain. But the surest way to prophesy—do you know what it is?

RAVENSBANE

Tell me.

RACHEL

To count the crows. Do you know how?

One for sorrow —

RAVENSBANE

Ha, yes! — Two for mirth!

RACHEL

Three for a wedding —

RAVENSBANE

Four for a birth —

RACHEL

And five for the happiest thing on earth!

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel, come! Let us go and count five crows.

RACHEL

[*Delightedly.*]

Why, my lord, how did *you* ever learn it? I got it from an old goody here in town — a real witch-wife. If you will promise not to tell a secret, I will show you. — But you must promise!

RAVENSBANE

I promise.

RACHEL

Come, then. I will show you a real piece of witchcraft that I bought from her this morning — the glass of truth. There! Behind that curtain. If

you look in, you will see — But come ; I will show you.

[*They put their hands on the cords of the curtain.*]

Just pull that string, and — ah !

DICKON

[*Stepping out through the curtain.*]

Your pipe, my lord ?

RACHEL

Master Dickonson, how you frightened me !

DICKON

So excessively sorry ! I was observing the portrait of your unclè. I believe you were showing his lordship —

RACHEL

[*Turning hurriedly away.*]

Oh, nothing ; nothing at all.

RAVENSBANE

[*Sternly to Dickon.*]

Why do you come ?

DICKON

[*Handing back Ravensbane's pipe filled.*]

Allow me.

[*Aside.*]

'Tis high time you came to the point, Jack ; 'tis

near your lordship's reception. Woo and win, boy ;
woo and win.

RAVENSBANE

[*Haughtily.*]

Leave me.

DICKON

Your lordship's humble, very humble.

[*Exit.*]

RACHEL

[*Shivering.*]

Oh ! he is gone. My dear lord, why do you keep
this man ?

RAVENSBANE

I — keep this man ?

RACHEL

I cannot — pardon my rudeness — I cannot en-
dure him.

RAVENSBANE

You do not like him ? Ah, then, I do not like him
also. We will send him away — you and I.

RACHEL

You, my lord, of course ; but I —

RAVENSBANE

You will be Dickon ! You will be with me always
and light my pipe. And I will live for you, and
fight for you, and kill your betrothed !

RACHEL

[*Drawing away.*]

No, no!

RAVENSBANE

Ah! but your eyes say "yes." Mistress Rachel leaves me; but Rachel in her eyes remains. Is it not so?

RACHEL

What can I say, my lord! It is true that since my eyes met yours, a new passion has entered into my soul. I have felt — your lordship will laugh at me — I have felt an inexpressible longing — but 'tis so impertinent, my lord, so absurd in me, a mere girl, and you a nobleman of power — yet I have felt it irresistibly, my dear lord, — a longing to help you. I am so sorry for you — so sorry for you! I pity you deeply. — Forgive me; forgive me, my lord!

RAVENSBANE

It is enough.

RACHEL

Indeed, indeed, 'tis so rude of me, — 'tis so unreasonable.

RAVENSBANE

It is enough. I grow — I grow — I grow! I am a plant; you give it rain and sun. I am a flower; you give it light and dew; I am a soul, you give it love and speech. I grow. Towards you — towards you I grow!

RACHEL

My lord, I do not understand it, how so poor and

mere a girl as I can have helped you. Yet I do believe it is so; for I feel it so. What can I do for you?

RAVENSBANE

Do not leave me. Be mine. Let me be yours.

RACHEL

Ah! but, my lord — do I love you?

RAVENSBANE

• What is “I love you”? Is it a kiss, a sigh, an embrace? Ah! then, you do not love me. — “I love you”: is it to nourish, to nestle, to lift up, to smile upon, to make greater — a worm? Ah! then, you love me.

[*Enter RICHARD at left back, unobserved.*]

RACHEL

Do not speak so of yourself, my lord; nor exalt me so falsely.

RAVENSBANE

Be mine.

RACHEL

A great glory has descended upon this day.

RAVENSBANE

Be mine.

RACHEL

Could I but be sure that this glory is love — Oh, *then!*

[*Turns toward Ravensbane.*]

RICHARD

[*Stepping between them.*]

It is *not* love; it is witchcraft.

RACHEL

Who are you? — Richard?

RICHARD

You have indeed forgotten me? Would to God, Rachel, I could forget you.

RAVENSBANE

Sir, permit me —

RICHARD

Silence!

[*To Rachel.*]

Against my will, I am a convert to your own mysticism; for nothing less than damnable illusion could so instantly wean your heart from me to — this. I do not pretend to understand it; but that it is witchcraft I am convinced; and I will save you from it.

RACHEL

Go; please go.

RAVENSBANE

Permit me, sir; you have not replied yet to flails!

RICHARD

Permit *me*, sir.

[*Taking something from his coat.*]

My answer is — bare cob!

[*Holding out a shelled corn-cob.*]

Thresh this, sir, for your antagonist. 'Tis the only one worthy your lordship. .

[*Tosses it contemptuously towards him.*]

RAVENSBANE

Upon my honour, as a man —

RICHARD

As a *man* forsooth! Were you indeed a man, Lord Ravensbane, I would have accepted your weapons, and flailed you out of New England. But it is not my custom to chastise runagates from asylums, or to banter further words with a natural and a ninny.

RACHEL

Squire Talbot! Will you leave my uncle's house?

RAVENSBANE

One moment, mistress: — I did not wholly catch the import of this gentleman's speech, but I fancy I have insulted him by my reply to his challenge. One insult may perhaps be remedied by another. Sir, permit me to call *you* a ninny, and to offer you —

[*Drawing his sword and offering it.*]

swords.

RICHARD

Thanks; I reject the offer.

RAVENSBANE

[*Turning away despondently.*]

He rejects it. Well!

RACHEL

[*To Richard.*]And *now* will you leave?

RICHARD

At once. But one word more. Rachel — Rachel, have you forgotten this morning and the glass of truth?

RACHEL

[*Coldly.*]

No.

RICHARD

Call it a fancy now if you will. I scoffed at it; yes. Yet *you* believed it. I loved you truly, you said. Well, have I changed?

RACHEL

Yes.

RICHARD

Will you test me again — in the glass?

RACHEL

No. Go; leave us.

RICHARD

I will go. I have still a word with your aunt.

RAVENSBANE

[*To Richard.*]

I beg your pardon, sir. You said just now that had I been a man —

RICHARD

I say, Lord Ravensbane, that the straight fibre of a true man never warps the love of a woman. As for yourself, you have my contempt and pity. Pray to God, sir, pray to God to make you a man.

[*Exit, right.*]

RACHEL

Oh! it is intolerable!

[*To Ravensbane.*]

My dear lord, I do believe in my heart that I love you, and if so, I will with gratitude be your wife. But, my lord, strange glammers, strange darknesses reel, and bewilder my mind. I must be alone; I must think and decide. Will you give me this tassel?

RAVENSBANE

[*Unfastening a silk tassel from his coat and giving it to her.*]

Oh, take it.

RACHEL

If I decide that I love you, that I will be your wife — I will wear it this afternoon at the reception. Good-by.

[*Exit, right.*]

RAVENSBANE

Mistress Rachel! —

[*Solus.*]

God, are you here? Dear God, I pray to you —
make me to be a man!

[*Exit, left.*]

DICKON

[*Appearing in the centre of the room.*]

Poor Jacky! Thou shouldst 'a' prayed to t'other
one.

[*He disappears. Enter, right, RICHARD and MISTRESS
MERTON.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Pointing to the wall.*]

That is the portrait.

RICHARD

Indeed! The design is very like.

MISTRESS MERTON

'Tis more than like, Richard; 'tis the very same.
Two and twenty years ago she embroidered it for
him, and he would insist on wearing it for the por-
trait he was then sitting for.

RICHARD

That same Goody Rickby!

MISTRESS MERTON

A pretty girl!—and a wild young man was my
brother. The truth comes hard to tell thee, Richard;

but he was wild, Gilead was wild. He told me the babe had died. But God worketh His own righteousness. Only — he must be saved now; Rachel must be saved; we must all be saved.

RICHARD

You feel sure — very sure, Mistress Merton?

MISTRESS MERTON

Yea, that waistcoat; 'tis the very one, I know it too well. And you see it accounts for all, — this silly impostor lord; my brother's strange patronage of him; the blackmail of this Master Dickonson —

RICHARD

But who is *he*?

MISTRESS MERTON

Nay, heaven knows! Some old crony perchance of Gilead's youth; some confederate of this woman Rickby.

RICHARD

O God! — And Rachel sacrificed to these impostors; to an illegitimate — your brother would allow it!

MISTRESS MERTON

Ah! but think of his own reputation, Richard. He a justice — the family honour!

RICHARD

'Tis enough. Well, and I must see this Goody Rickby, you think?

MISTRESS MERTON

At once — at once. My brother has invited guests for this afternoon to meet “his lordship”! Return, if possible, before they come. She dwells at the blacksmith shop — you must buy her off. Oh, gold will buy her; ’tis the gold they’re after — all of them; have her recall both these persons.

[*Giving a purse.*]

Take her that, Richard, and promise her more.

RICHARD

[*Proudly.*]

Keep it, Mistress Merton. I have enough gold, methinks, for my future wife’s honour; or if not, I will earn it.

[*Exit.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

Richard! Ah, the dear lad, he should have taken it.

[*Enter MICAH.*]

MICAH

The minister and his wife have turned into the gate, madam.

MISTRESS MERTON

The guests! Is it so late?

MICAH

Four o’clock, madam.

[*Going to the table.*]

Shall I remove these?

MISTRESS MERTON

Flails! Flails in the parlour? Of course, remove them.

MICAHA

[*At the door.*]

Madam, in all my past years of service at Merton House, I never waited upon a lord till to-day. Madam, in all my future years of service at Merton House, I trust I may never wait upon a lord again.

MISTRESS MERTON

Micah, mind the knocker.

MICAHA

Yes, madam.

[*Exit at left back. Sounds of a brass knocker outside.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

Rachel! Rachel!

[*Exit, right. Enter, left, JUSTICE MERTON and DICKON.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

So you are contented with nothing less than the sacrifice of my niece?

DICKON

Such a delightful room!

JUSTICE MERTON

Are you merciless?

DICKON

And such a living portrait of your worship! The waistcoat is so beautifully executed.

JUSTICE MERTON

If I pay him ten thousand pounds —

[*Enter MICAH.*]

MICAH

Minister Dodge, your worship; and Mistress Dodge.

[*Exit. Enter the MINISTER and his WIFE.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Stepping forward to receive them.*]

Believe me, this is a great privilege. — Madam!

[*Bowing.*]

MINISTER DODGE

[*Taking his hand.*]

The privilege is ours, Justice; to enter a righteous man's house is to stand, as it were, on God's threshold.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Nervously.*]

Amen, amen. Permit me — ah! Lord Ravensbane, my young guest of honour, will be here directly — permit me to present his lordship's tutor, Master

Dickonson; The Reverend Master Dodge, Mistress Dodge.

MINISTER DODGE

[*Offering his hand.*]

Master Dickonson, sir —

DICKON

[*Barely touching the minister's fingers, bows charmingly to his wife.*]

Madam, of all professions in the world, your husband's most allures me.

MISTRESS DODGE

'Tis a worthy one, sir.

DICKON

Ah! Mistress Dodge, and so arduous — especially for a minister's wife.

[*He leads her to a chair.*]

MISTRESS DODGE

[*Accepting the chair.*]

Thank you.

MINISTER DODGE

Lord Ravensbane comes from abroad?

JUSTICE MERTON

From London.

MINISTER DODGE

An old friend of yours, I understand.

JUSTICE MERTON

From London, yes. Did I say from London?
Quite so; from London.

[*Enter MICAH.*]

MICAH

Captain Bugby, the Governor's secretary.

[*Exit. Enter CAPTAIN BUGBY. He walks with a slight lameness, and holds daintily in his hand a pipe, from which he puffs with dandy deliberation.*]

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Justice Merton, your very humble servant.

JUSTICE MERTON

Believe me, Captain Bugby.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Profusely.*]

Ah, Master Dickonson! my dear friend Master Dickonson — this is indeed — ah! How is his lordship since — aha! but discretion! Mistress Dodge — her servant! Ah! yes,

[*Indicating his pipe with a smile of satisfaction.*]

the latest, I assure you; the very latest from London. Ask Master Dickonson.

MINISTER DODGE

[*Looking at Captain Bugby.*]

These will hatch out in the springtime.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Confidentially to Dickon.*]

But really, my good friend, may not I venture to inquire how his lordship — ah! has been in health since the — ah! since —

DICKON

[*Impressively.*]

Oh! quite, quite!

[*Enter MISTRESS MERTON; she joins Justice Merton and Minister Dodge.*]

CAPTAIN BUGBY

You know, I informed Squire Talbot of his lordship's epigrammatic retort — his retort of — shh! ha haha! Oh, that reply was a stiletto; 'twas sharper than a sword-thrust, I assure you. To have conceived it — 'twas inspiration; but to have expressed it — oh! 'twas genius. Hush! "Flails!" Oh! It sticks me now in the ribs. I shall die with concealing it.

MINISTER DODGE

[*To Mistress Merton.*]

'Tis true, mistress; but if there were more like your brother in the parish, the conscience of the community would be clearer.

[*Enter MICAH.*]

MICAH

The Reverend Master Rand of Harvard College;
the Reverend Master Todd of Harvard College.

[*Exit. Enter two elderly, straight-backed divines.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Greeting them.*]

Permit me, gentlemen; this is fortunate — before
your return to Cambridge.

[*He conducts them to Mistress Merton and Minister Dodge,
centre. Seated left, Dickon is ingratiating himself
with Mistress Dodge; Captain Bugby, laughed at by
both parties, is received by neither.*]

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Puffing smoke toward the ceiling.*]

Really, I cannot understand what keeps his Ex-
cellency, the Lieutenant Governor, so long. He has
two such charming daughters, Master Dickonson —

DICKON

[*To Mistress Dodge.*]

Yes, yes; such suspicious women with their charms
are an insult to the virtuous ladies of the parish.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

How, sir!

MISTRESS DODGE

And to think that she should actually shoe horses
herself!

DICKON

It is too hard, dear Mistress Dodge ; too hard !

MISTRESS DODGE

You are so appreciative, Master Dickonson.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Piqued, walks another way.*]

Well !

REV. MASTER RAND

[*To Justice Merton.*]

It would not be countenanced in the college yard,
sir.

REV. MASTER TODD

A pipe ! Nay, *mores inhibitae* !

JUSTICE MERTON

'Tis most unfortunate, gentlemen ; but I understand 'tis the new vogue in London.

[*Enter MICAH.*]

MICAH

His Excellency, Sir Charles Reddington, Lieutenant Governor ; the Mistress Reddingtons.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

At last !

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Aside.*]

Micah.

[*Micah goes to her. Enter SIR CHARLES, MISTRESS REDDINGTON, and AMELIA REDDINGTON.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

Your Excellency, this is indeed a distinguished honour.

SIR CHARLES

[Shaking hands.]

Fine weather, Merton. Where's your young lord?

THE TWO GIRLS

[Courtesying.]

Justice Merton, Mistress Merton.

MICAH

[To Mistress Merton, as he is going out, right.]

I will speak to them, madam.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Oh, my dear Mistress Reddington! Charming Mistress Amelia! You are so very late, but you shall hear — hush!

MISTRESS REDDINGTON

[Noticing his pipe.]

Why, what is this, Captain?

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Oh, the latest, I assure you, the very latest. Wait till you see his lordship.

AMELIA

What! isn't he here?

[*Laughing.*]

La, Captain! Do look at the man!

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Oh, he's coming directly. Quite the mode—
what? Ah! but, ladies, you shall hear.

[*He talks to them aside, where they titter.*]

SIR CHARLES

[*To Dickon.*]

What say? Travelling for his health?

DICKON

Partially, your Excellency; but my young pupil and
master is a singularly affectionate nature.

THE TWO GIRLS

[*To Captain Bugby.*]

What! flails—really!

[*They burst into laughter among themselves.*]

DICKON

He has journeyed here to Massachusetts peculiarly
to pay this visit to Justice Merton—his father's
dearest friend.

SIR CHARLES

Ah! knew him abroad, eh?

DICKON

In Rome, your Excellency.

MISTRESS DODGE

[*To Justice Merton.*]

Why, I thought it was in London.

JUSTICE MERTON

London, true, quite so; we made a trip together to Lisbon — ah! Rome.

DICKON

Paris, was it not, sir?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*In great distress.*]

Paris, Paris, very true; I am — I am — sometimes I am —

[*Enter MICAH, right.*]

MICAH

[*Announces.*]

Lord Ravensbane.

[*Enter right, RAVENSBANE with RACHEL.*]

JUSTICE MERTON

[*With a gasp of relief.*]

Ah! his lordship is arrived.

[*Murmurs of "his lordship" and a flutter among the girls and Captain Bugby.*]

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Look! — Now!

JUSTICE MERTON

Welcome, my lord!

[*To Sir Charles.*]

Permit me, your Excellency, to introduce —

RAVENSBANE

Permit me; Mistress Rachel will introduce —

RACHEL

[*Courtesying.*]

Sir Charles, allow me to present my friend, Lord Ravensbane.

MISTRESS REDDINGTON

[*Aside to Amelia.*]Her *friend* — did you hear?

SIR CHARLES

Mistress Rachel, I see you are as pretty as ever. Lord Ravensbane, your hand, sir.

RAVENSBANE

Trust me, your Excellency, I will inform his Majesty of your courtesy.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

[*Watching Ravensbane with chagrin.*]

On my life! he's lost his limp.

RAVENSBAKE

[*Apart to Rachel.*]

“A great glory has descended upon this day.”

RACHEL

[*Skylly.*]

My lord!

RAVENSBAKE

Be sure — O mistress, be sure — that this glory is love.

SIR CHARLES

[*Watching the two, whispers a loud aside to Justice Merton.*]

Hoho! is it congratulations for your niece?

JUSTICE MERTON

Not — not precisely.

DICKON

[*Aside to Justice Merton.*]

Why so, Gilly?

SIR CHARLES

My daughters, Fanny and Amelia — Lord Ravensbane.

THE TWO GIRLS

[*Courtesying.*]

Your lordship!

SIR CHARLES

Good girls, but silly.

THE TWO GIRLS

Papa!

RAVENSBANE

Believe me, ladies, with the *true* sincerity of the *heart*.

MISTRESS REDDINGTON

Isn't he perfection!

CAPTAIN BUGBY

What said I?

AMELIA

[*Giggling.*]

I can't help thinking of flails.

MISTRESS REDDINGTON

Poor Squire Talbot! We must be nice to him now.

AMELIA

Oh, especially *now*!

RAVENSBANE

[*Whom Rachel continues to introduce to the guests; to Master Rand.*]

Verily, sir, as that prince of poets, the immortal Virgil, has remarked:

“Adeo in teneris consuescere multum est.”

DICKON

Just a word, your worship.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Going with him.*]

Intolerable!

REV. MASTER TODD

His lordship is evidently a university man.

REV. MASTER RAND

Evidently most accomplished.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Aside to Dickon.*]

A song! Why, it is beyond all bounds of custom and decorum.

DICKON

Believe me, there is no such flatterer to win the maiden heart as music.

JUSTICE MERTON

And here; in this presence! Never!

DICKON

Nevertheless, it will amuse me vastly, and you will announce it.

RAVENSBANE

[*To Minister Dodge.*]

My opinion is simple: In such matters of church government, I am inclined toward the leniency of that excellent master, the Rev. John Wise, rather than the righteous obduracy of the Rev. Cotton Mather.

MINISTER DODGE

Why, there, sir, I agree with you.

[*Aside to his wife.*]

How extremely well informed!

MISTRESS DODGE

And so young, too!

JUSTICE MERTON

[*With hesitant embarrassment, which he seeks to conceal.*]

Your Excellency and friends, I have great pleasure in announcing his lordship's condescension in consenting to regale our present company—with a song.

SEVERAL VOICES

[*In various degrees of amazement and curiosity.*]

A song!

MISTRESS MERTON

Gilead! What is this?

JUSTICE MERTON

The selection is a German ballad—a particular favourite at the court of Prussia, where his lordship last rendered it. His tutor has made a translation which is entitled: "The Prognostication of the Crows," and I am requested to remind you that in the ancient heathen mythology of Germany, the crow or raven, was the fateful bird of the God Woden.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

How prodigiously novel!

MINISTER DODGE

[*Frowning.*]

Unparalleled!

SIR CHARLES

A ballad! Come now, that sounds like old England again. Let's have it. Will his lordship sing without music?

JUSTICE MERTON

Master Dickonson, hem! has been — persuaded — to accompany his lordship on the virginals.

AMELIA

How delightful!

REV. MASTER RAND

[*Aside to Todd.*]

Shall we remain?

REV. MASTER TODD

We must.

RAVENSBANE

[*To Rachel.*]

My tassel, dear mistress; you do not wear it?

RACHEL

My heart still wavers, my lord. But whilst you sing, I will decide.

RAVENSBANE

Whilst I sing? My fate, then, is waiting at the
end of a song?

RACHEL

At the end of a song.

DICKON

[*Touches Ravensbane's arm.*]

Your lordship.

RAVENSBANE

[*Starting, turns to the company.*]

Permit me.

[*Dickon sits, facing left, at the virginals. At first, his fingers in playing give sound only to the soft tinkling notes of that ancient instrument; but gradually, strange notes and harmonies of an ærial orchestra mingle with, and at length drown, the virginals. The final chorus is produced solely by fantastic symphonic cawings, as of countless crows, in harsh but musical accord. During the song Richard enters. Dickon's music, however, does not cease but fills the intervals between the verses. To his accompaniment, amid the whispered and gradually increasing wonder, resentment, and dismay of the assembled guests, Ravensbane, with his eyes fixed upon Rachel, sings.*]

Baron von Rabenstod arose;

(The golden sun was rising)

Before him flew a flock of crows:

Sing heigh! Sing heigh! Sing heigh! Sing—

“ Ill speed, ill speed thee, baron-wight,
 Ill speed thy palfrey pawing!
 Blithe is the morn but black the night
 That hears a raven’s cawing.”

[*Chorus.*]

Caw! Caw! Caw!

MISTRESS DODGE

[*Whispers to her husband.*]

Did you hear them?

MINISTER DODGE

Hush!

AMELIA

[*Sotto voce.*]

What *can* it be?

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Oh, the latest, be sure.

DICKON

You note, my friends, the accompanying harmonics;
 they are an intrinsic part of the ballad, and may not
 be omitted.

RAVESNBANE

[*Sings.*]

The baron reckèd not a pin;
 (For the golden sun was rising)
 He rode to woo, he rode to win;
 Sing heigh! Sing heigh! Sing heigh! Sing—

He rode into his prince's hall
Through knights and damsels flow'ry :
"Thy daughter, prince, I bid thee call ;
I claim her hand and dowry."

[*Enter Richard. Mistress Merton seizes his arm nervously.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Aside.*]

Well ?

RICHARD

Gold will not buy her. She defies us.

SIR CHARLES

[*To Captain Bugby.*]

This gentleman's playing is rather ventriloquistical.

CAPTAIN BUGBY

Quite, as it were.

REV. MASTER TODD

This smells unholy.

REV. MASTER RAND

[*To Todd.*]

Shall we leave ?

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Sternly to Richard, who has attempted to talk with him
aside.*]

Not now.

RICHARD

Pardon me — it *must* be now.

JUSTICE MERTON

Squire Talbot —

RICHARD

[*Very low.*]

Sir — I come from Goody Rickby.

JUSTICE MERTON

Hush!

[*They go apart.*]

RAVENSBANE

[*Sings.*]

“What cock is this, with crest so high,
That crows with such a pother?”

“Baron von Rabenstod am I;
Methinks we know each other.”

“Now welcome, welcome, dear guest of mine,
So long why didst thou tarry?”

Now, for the sake of auld lang syne,
My daughter thou shalt marry.”

JUSTICE MERTON

[*To Richard.*]

Spare me, I am helpless.

RICHARD

What! you will sacrifice her?

JUSTICE MERTON

What can I do?

RICHARD

Tell her the truth at least.

JUSTICE MERTON

Never, Richard, no, no, never that!

AMELIA

[*To Bugby.*]

And he kept right on smoking!

MINISTER DODGE

[*Who, with Rand and Todd, has risen uneasily.*]

This smacks of witchcraft.

REV. MASTER RAND

The Justice seems moved.

RAVENSBANE

[*Sings.*]

The bride is brought, the priest as well ;

(The golden sun was passing)

They stood beside the altar rail ;

Sing ah! Sing ah! Sing ah! Sing—

“Woman, with this ring I thee wed.”
 What makes his voice so awing?
 The baron by the bride is dead:
 Outside the crows were cawing.

Chorus.

[*Which grows tumultuous, seeming to fill the room with the invisible birds.*]

Caw! Caw! Caw!

[*The guests rise in confusion. Dickon still plays delightedly, and the strange music continues.*]

MINISTER DODGE

This is no longer godly. — Justice Merton!

RICHARD

[*To Justice Merton.*]

I told you, sir, that witchcraft, like murder, will out. If you want further proof, I believe I can provide it.

MINISTER DODGE

Justice Merton, sir!

RAVENSBANE

[*To Rachel, who holds his tassel in her hand.*]

Ah! and you have my tassel!

RACHEL

See! I will wear it now. You yourself shall fasten it.

RAVENSBANE

Rachel! Mistress!

RACHEL

My dear lord!

[*As Ravensbane is placing the silken tassel on Rachel's breast to fasten it there, Richard, by the mirror, pulls the curtain back.*]

RICHARD

Lovers! This is the glass of truth. Behold yourselves!

RACHEL

[*Looking into the glass, screams and turns her gaze fearfully upon Ravensbane.*]

Ah! Do not look!

DICKON

[*Who, having turned round from the virginals, has leapt forward, now turns back again, biting his finger.*]

Too late!

[*In the glass are reflected the figures of Rachel and Ravensbane — Rachel just as she herself appears, but Ravensbane in his essential form of a scarecrow, in every movement reflecting Ravensbane's motions. The thing in the glass is about to pin a wisp of corn-silk on the mirrored breast of the maiden.*]

RAVENSBANE

What is there?

RACHEL

[*Looking again, starts away from Ravensbane.*]

Leave me! Leave me! — Richard!

RAVENSBANE

[*Gazing at the glass, clings to Rachel as though to protect her.*]

Help her! See! It is seizing her.

RACHEL

Richard!

[*She faints in Richard's arms.*]

RAVENSBANE

Fear not, mistress, I will kill the thing.

[*Drawing his sword, he rushes at the glass. Within, the scarecrow, with a drawn wheel-spoke, approaches him at equal speed. They come face to face and recoil.*]

Ah! ah! fear'st thou me? What art thou? Why, 'tis a glass. Thou mockest me? Look, look, mistress, it mocks me! O God, no! no! Take it away. Dear God, do not look! — It is I!

ALL

[*Rushing to the doors.*]

Witchcraft! Witchcraft!

[*As Ravensbane stands frantically confronting his abject reflection, struck in a like posture of despair, the curtain falls.*]

ACT IV

ACT IV

The same. Night. The moon, shining in broadly at the window, discovers RAVENSBANE alone, prostrate before the mirror. Raised on one arm to a half-sitting posture, he gazes fixedly at the vaguely seen image of the scarecrow prostrate in the glass.

RAVENSBANE

All have left me — but not thou. Rachel has left me; her eyes have turned away from me; she is gone. And with her, the great light itself from heaven has drawn her glorious skirts, contemptuous, from me — and they are gone together. Dickon, he too has left me — but not thou. All that I loved, all that loved me, have left me. A thousand ages — a thousand ages ago, they went away; and thou and I have gazed upon each other's desertedness. Speak! and be pitiful! If thou art I, inscrutable image, if thou dost feel these pangs thine own, show then self-mercy; speak! What art thou? What am I? Why are we here? How comes it that we feel and guess and suffer? Nay, though thou answer not these doubts, yet mock them, mock them aloud, even as there, monstrous, thou counterfeitest mine actions. Speak, abject enigma! — Ah! with what vacant horror it looks out and yearns toward me. Peace to thee!

Thou poor delirious mute, prisoned in glass and moonlight, peace! Thou canst not escape thy gaol, nor I break in to thee. Poor shadow, thou —

[*Recoiling wildly.*]

Stand back, inanity! Thrust not thy mawkish face in pity toward me. Ape and idiot! Scarecrow! — to console me! Haha! — A flail and broomstick! a cob, a gourd and pumpkin, to fuse and sublimate themselves into a m^age-philosopher, who puffeth metaphysics from a pipe and discourseth sweet philanthropy to itself — itself, God! Dost Thou hear? Itself! For even such am I — I whom Thou madest to love Rachel. Why, God — haha! dost Thou dwell in this thing? Is it Thou that peerest forth *at* me — *from* me? Why, hark then; Thou shalt listen, and answer — if Thou canst. Hark then, Spirit of life! Between the rise and setting of a sun, I have walked in this world of Thine. I have gazed upon it, I have peered within it, I have grown enamoured, enamoured of it. I have been thrilled with wonder, I have been calmed with knowledge, I have been exalted with sympathy. I have trembled with joy and passion. Power, beauty, love have ravished me. Infinity itself, like a dream, has blazed before me with the certitude of prophecy; and I have cried, “This world, the heavens, time itself, are mine to conquer,” and I have thrust forth mine arm to wear Thy shield forever — and lo! for my shield Thou reachest me a mirror — and whisperest: “Know thyself! Thou art — a scarecrow: a tinkling clod, a rigmarole of dust,

a lump of ordure, contemptible, superfluous, inane!" Haha! Hahaha! And with such scarecrows Thou dost people a planet! O ludicrous! Monstrous! Ludicrous! At least, I thank Thee, God! at least, this breathing bathos can laugh at itself. At least this hotch-potch nobleman of stubble is enough of an epicure to turn his own gorge. Thou hast vouchsafed to me, Spirit, — hahaha! — to know myself. Mine, mine is the consummation of man — even self-contempt!

[*Pointing in the glass with an agony of derision.*]

Scarecrow! Scarecrow! Scarecrow!

THE IMAGE IN THE GLASS

[*More and more faintly.*]

Scarecrow! Scarecrow! Scarecrow!

[*Ravensbane throws himself prone upon the floor, beneath the window, sobbing. There is a pause of silence, and the moon shines brighter. — Slowly then Ravensbane, getting to his knees, looks out into the night.*]

RAVENSBANE

What face are you, high up through the twinkling leaves? Why do you smile upon me with such white beneficence? Or why do you place your viewless hand upon my brow, and say, "Be comforted"? Do you not, like all the rest, turn, aghast, your eyes away from me — me, abject enormity, grovelling at your feet? Gracious being, do you not fear — despise me? To you alone am I not hateful — unredeemed?

O white peace of the world, beneath your gaze the clouds glow silver, and the herded cattle, slumbering far afield, crouch — beautiful. The slough shines lustrous as a bridal veil. Beautiful face, you are Rachel's, and you have changed the world. Nothing is mean, but you have made it miraculous; nothing is loathsome, nothing ludicrous, but you have converted it to loveliness, that even this shadow of a mockery myself, cast by your light, gives me the dear assurance I am a man. Yea, more, that I too, steeped in your universal light, am beautiful. For you are Rachel, and you love me. You are Rachel in the sky, and the might of your serene loveliness has transformed me. Rachel, mistress, mother, beautiful spirit, out of my suffering you have brought forth my soul. I am saved!

THE IMAGE IN THE GLASS

A very pretty sophistry.

[*The moonlight grows dimmer, as at the passing of a cloud.*]

RAVENSBANE

Ah! what voice has snatched you from me?

THE IMAGE

A most poetified pumpkin!

RAVENSBANE

Thing! dost thou speak at last? My soul abhors thee.

THE IMAGE

I *am* thy soul.

RAVENSBANE

Thou liest.

THE IMAGE

Our Daddy Dickon and our mother Rickby begot
and conceived us at sunrise, in a Jack-o'-lantern.

RAVENSBANE

Thou liest, torturing illusion. Thou art but a phan-
tom in a glass.

THE IMAGE

Why, very true. So art thou. *We* are a pretty
phantom in a glass.

RAVENSBANE

It is a lie. I am no longer thou. I feel it ; I am
a man.

THE IMAGE

And prithee, what's a man? Man's but a mirror,
Wherein the imps and angels play charades,
Make faces, mope, and pull each other's hair —
Till crack! the sly urchin Death shivers the glass,
And the bare coffin boards show underneath.

RAVENSBANE

Yea! if it be so, thou coggerly! if both of us be in-
deed but illusions, why, now let us end together. But
if it be not so, then let *me* for evermore be free of
thee. Now is the test — the glass!

[*Springing to the fireplace, he seizes an iron cross-piece from
the andirons.*]

I'll play your urchin Death and shatter it. Let see what shall survive!

[*He rushes to strike the glass with the iron. DICKON steps out of the mirror, closing the curtain.*]

DICKON

I wouldn't, really!

RAVENSBANE

Dickon! dear Dickon! is it you?

DICKON

Yes, Jacky! it's dear Dickon, and I really wouldn't.

RAVENSBANE

Wouldn't what, Dickon?

DICKON

Sweep the cobwebs off the sky with thine aspiring broomstick. When a man questions fate, 'tis bad digestion. When a scarecrow does it, 'tis bad taste.

RAVENSBANE

At last, *you* will tell me the truth, Dickon! Am I then — that thing?

DICKON

You mustn't be so sceptical. Of course you're that thing.

RAVENSBANE

Ah me despicable! Rachel, why didst thou ever look upon me?

DICKON

I fear, cobby, thou hast never studied woman's heart and hero-worship. Take thyself now. I remarked to Goody Bess, thy mother, this morning, as I was chucking her thy pate from the hay-loft, that thou wouldst make a Mark Antony or an Alexander before night.

RAVENSBANE

Thou, then, didst create me!

DICKON

[*Bowing.*]

Appreciate the honour. Your lordship was designed for a corn-field; but I discerned nobler potentialities: the courts of Europe and Justice Merton's *salon*. In brief, your lordship's origins were pastoral, like King David's.

RAVENSBANE

Cease! cease! in pity's name. You do not know the agony of being ridiculous.

DICKON

Nay, Jacky, all mortals are ridiculous. Like you, they were rummaged out of the muck; and like you, they shall return to the dunghill. I advise 'em, like you, to enjoy the interim, and smoke.

RAVENSBANE

This pipe, this ludicrous pipe that I forever set to my lips and puff! Why must I, Dickon? Why?

DICKON

To avoid extinction — merely. You see, 'tis just as your fellow in there

[*Pointing to the glass.*]

explained. You yourself are the subtlest of mirrors, polished out of pumpkin and pipe-smoke. Into this mirror the fair Mistress Rachel has projected her lovely image, and thus provided you with what men call a soul.

RAVENSBANE

Ah! then, I have a soul — the truth of me? Mistress Rachel has indeed made me a man?

DICKON

Don't flatter thyself, cobby. Break thy pipe, and whiff — soul, Mistress Rachel, man, truth, and this pretty world itself, go up in the last smoke.

RAVENSBANE

No, no! not Mistress Rachel — for she is beautiful; and the images of beauty are immutable. She told me so.

DICKON

What a Platonic young lady! Nevertheless, believe me, Mistress Rachel exists for your lordship merely in your lordship's pipe-bowl.

RAVENSBANE

Wretched, niggling caricature that I am! All is lost to me — all!

DICKON

“Paradise Lost” again! Always blaming it on me. There’s that gaunt fellow in England has lately wrote a parody on me when I was in the apple business.

RAVENSANE

[Falling on his knees and bowing his head.]

O God! I am so contemptible!

[Enter, at door back, GOODY RICKBY; her blacksmith garb is hidden under a dingy black mantle with peaked hood.]

DICKON

Good verse, too, for a parody!

[Ruminating, raises one arm rhetorically above Ravensbane.]

“Farewell, happy fields
Where joy forever dwells! Hail, horrors; hail,
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessor.”

GOODY RICKBY

[Seizing his arm.]

Dickon!

DICKON

Hullo! You, Bess!

GOODY RICKBY

There’s not a minute to lose. Justice Merton and the neighbours have ended their conference at Minister Dodge’s, and are returning here.

DICKON

What! coming back in the dark? They ran away in the daylight as if the ghosts were after 'em.

GOODY RICKBY

[*At the window.*]

I see their lanterns down the road.

DICKON

Well, let 'em come. We're ready.

GOODY RICKBY

But thou toldst me they had discovered —

DICKON

A scarecrow in a mirror. Well? The glass is bewitched; that's all.

GOODY RICKBY

All? Witchcraft is hanging — that's all! Come, how shall the mirror help us?

DICKON

'Tis very simple. The glass is bewitched. Mistress Rachel — mind you — shall admit it. She bought it of you.

GOODY RICKBY

Yea, of me; 'twill be me they'll hang.

DICKON

Good! then the glass is bewitched. The glass bewitches the room; for witchcraft is catching and

spreads like the small-pox. *Ergo*, the distorted image of Lord Ravensbane; *ergo*, the magical accompaniments of the ballad; *ergo*, the excited fancies of all the persons in the room. *Ergo*, the glass must needs be destroyed, and the room thoroughly disinfected by the Holy Scriptures. *Ergo*, Master Dickonson himself reads the Bible aloud, the guests apologize and go home, the Justice squirms again in his merry dead past, and his fair niece is wed to the pumpkin.

RAVENSBANE

Hideous! Hideous!

GOODY RICKBY

Your grateful servant, Devil! But the mirror was bought of me — of me, the witch. Wilt thou be my hangman, Dickon?

DICKON

Wilt thou give me a kiss, Goody? When did ever thy Dickon desert thee?

GOODY RICKBY

But how, boy, wilt thou —

DICKON

Trust me, and thy son. When the Justice's niece is thy daughter-in-law, all will be safe. For the Justice will cherish his niece's family.

GOODY RICKBY

But when he knows —

DICKON

But he shall *not* know. How can he? When the glass is denounced as fraudulent, how will he, or any person, ever know that we made this fellow out of rubbish? Who, forsooth, but a poet — or a devil — *would* believe it? You mustn't credit men with our imaginations, my dear.

RAVENSBANE

Mockery! Always mockery!

GOODY RICKBY

Then thou wilt pull me through this safe?

DICKON

As I adore thee — and my own reputation.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Hurrying away.*]

Till we meet, then, boy.

DICKON

Stay, marchioness — his lordship!

GOODY RICKBY

[*Turning.*]

His lordship's pardon! How fares "the bottom of thy heart," my son?

DICKON

My lord — your lady mother.

RAVENSBANE

Begone, woman.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Courtesying, laughs shrilly.*]

Your servant — my son !

[*About to depart.*]

RAVENSBANE

Ye lie ! Both of you ! Ye lie — I was born of Rachel.

DICKON

Tut, tut, Jacky ; you mustn't mix up mothers and prospective wives at your age. It's fatal.

GOODY RICKBY

[*Excitedly.*]

They're coming !

[*Exit.*]

DICKON

[*Calling after her.*]

Fear not ; if thou shouldst be followed, I will overtake thee.

RAVENSBANE

She is coming ; Rachel is coming, and I may not look upon her !

DICKON

Eh ? Why not ?

RAVENSBANE

I am a monster.

DICKON

And born of her — Fie! fie!

RAVENSBANE

O God! I know not; I mock myself; I know not what to think. But this I know, I love Rachel. I love her, I love her.

DICKON

And shalt have her.

RAVENSBANE

Have her, Dickon?

DICKON

For lover and wife.

RAVENSBANE

For wife?

DICKON

For wife and all. Thou hast but to obey.

RAVENSBANE

Ah! who will do this for me?

DICKON

I!

RAVENSBANE

Dickon! Wilt make me a man — a man and worthy of her?

DICKON

Fiddlededee! I make over no masterpieces. Thy mistress shall be Cinderella, and drive to her palace with her gilded pumpkin.

It is the end.

RAVENSBANE

DICKON

What! You'll not?

RAVENSBANE

Never.

DICKON

Harkee, manikin. Hast thou learned to suffer?

RAVENSBANE

[*Wringing his hands.*]

O God!

DICKON

I taught thee. Shall I teach thee further?

RAVENSBANE

Thou canst not.

DICKON

Cannot—ha! What if I should teach Rachel too?

RAVENSBANE

Rachel!—Ah! now I know thee.

DICKON

[*Bowing.*]

Flattered.

RAVENSBANE

Devil! Thou wouldst not torment Rachel?

DICKON

Not if my lord—

RAVENSBANE

Speak! What must I do?

DICKON

Not speak. Be silent, my lord, and acquiesce to all I say.

RAVENSBANE

I will be silent.

DICKON

And acquiesce?

RAVENSBANE

I will be silent.

[*Enter MINISTER DODGE, accompanied by SIR CHARLES REDDINGTON, CAPTAIN BUGBY, the REV. MASTERS RAND and TODD, and followed by JUSTICE MERTON, RICHARD, MISTRESS MERTON, and RACHEL. Richard and Rachel stand somewhat apart, Rachel drawing close to Richard and hiding her face. All wear their outer wraps, and two or three hold lanterns, which, save the moon, throw the only light upon the scene. All enter solemn and silent.*]

MINISTER DODGE

Lord, be Thou present with us, in this unholy spot.

SEVERAL MEN'S VOICES

Amen.

DICKON

Friends! Have you seized her? Is she made prisoner?

MINISTER DODGE

Stand from us.

DICKON

Sir, the witch! Surely you did not let her escape?

ALL

The witch!

DICKON

A dame in a peaked hood. She has but now fled the house. She called herself — Goody Rickby.

ALL

Goody Rickby!

MISTRESS MERTON

She here!

DICKON

Yea, mistress, and hath confessed all the damnable art, by which all of us have lately been so terrorized, and his lordship, my poor master, so maligned and victimized.

RICHARD

Victimized!

JUSTICE MERTON

What confessed she?

MINISTER DODGE

What said she?

DICKON

This: It appeareth that, for some time past, she hath cherished revengeful thoughts against our honoured host, Justice Merton.

JUSTICE MERTON

Sir! What cause — what cause —

DICKON

Inasmuch as your worship hath ever so righteously condemned her damnable faults, and threatened them punishment.

MINISTER DODGE

Yea — well?

DICKON

Thus, in revenge, she bewitched yonder mirror, and this very morning unlawfully inveigled this sweet young lady into purchasing it.

SIR CHARLES

Mistress Rachel!

MINISTER DODGE

[*To Rachel.*]

Didst thou purchase that glass?

RACHEL

[*In a low voice.*]

Yes.

MINISTER DODGE

From Goody Rickby?

RACHEL

Yes.

RICHARD

Sir — the blame was mine.

RACHEL

[*Clinging to him.*]

O Richard!

DICKON

Pardon, my friends. The fault rests upon no one here. The witch alone is to blame. Her black art inveigled this innocent maid into purchasing the glass; her black art bewitched this room and all that it contained—even to these innocent virginals, on which I played.

MINISTER DODGE

Verily, this would seem to account—but the image; the damnable image in the glass?

DICKON

A familiar devil of hers—a sly imp, it seems, who wears to mortal eyes the shape of a scarecrow. 'Twas he, by means of whom she bedevilled this glass, by making it his *habitat*. When, therefore, she learned that honour and happiness were yours, Justice Merton, in the prospect of Lord Ravensbane as your nephew-in-law, she commanded this devil to reveal himself in the glass as my lord's own image, that thus she might wreck your family felicity.

MINISTER DODGE

Infamous!

DICKON

Indeed, sir, it was this very devil whom but now she stole here to consult withal, when she encoun-

tered me, attendant here upon my poor prostrate lord, and — held by the wrath in my eye — confessed it all.

SIR CHARLES

Thunder and brimstone! Where is this accursed hag?

DICKON

Alas — gone, gone! If you had but stopped her.

MINISTER DODGE

I know her den — the blacksmith shop.

SIR CHARLES

[*Starting.*]

Which way?

MINISTER DODGE

To the left.

SIR CHARLES

Go on, there.

MINISTER DODGE

My honoured friend, we shall return and officially destroy this fatal glass. But first, we must secure the witch. Heaven shield, with her guilt, the innocent!

THE MEN

[*As they hurry out.*]

Amen.

SIR CHARLES

[*Outside.*]

Go on!

[*Exeunt all but Richard, Rachel, Justice Merton, Mistress Merton, Dickon, and Ravensbane.*]

DICKON

[*To Justice Merton, who has importuned him, aside.*]

And reveal thy youthful escapades to Rachel?

JUSTICE MERTON

God help me! no.

DICKON

So then, dear friends, this strange incident is happily elucidated. The pain and contumely have fallen most heavily upon my dear lord and master, but you are witnesses, even now, of his silent and Christian forgiveness of your suspicions. Bygones, therefore, be bygones. The future brightens — with orange-blossoms! Hymen and Felicity stand with us here ready to unite two amorous and bashful lovers. His lordship is reticent; yet to you alone, of all beautiful ladies, Mistress Rachel —

RAVENSBANE

[*In a mighty voice.*]

Silence!

DICKON

My lord would —

RAVENSBANE

Silence! Dare not to speak to her!

DICKON

[*Biting his lip.*]

My babe is weaned.

RACHEL

[*Still at Richard's side.*]

Oh, my lord, if I have made you suffer —

RICHARD

[*Appealingly.*]

Rachel!

RAVENSBANE

[*Approaching her, raises one arm to screen his face.*]

Gracious lady! let fall your eyes; look not upon me. If I have dared remain in your presence, if I dare now speak once more to you, 'tis because I would have you know — O forgive me! — that I love you.

RICHARD

Sir! This lady has renewed her promise to be my wife.

RAVENSBANE

Your wife, or not, I love her.

RICHARD

Zounds!

RAVENSBANE

Forbear, and hear me! For one wonderful day I have gazed upon this, your world. The sun has kindled me and the moon has blessed me. A million forms — of trees, of stones, of stars, of men, of common things — have swum like motes before my eyes; but one alone was wholly beautiful. That form was Rachel: to her alone I was not ludicrous; to her I

also was beautiful. Therefore, I love her. You talk to me of mothers, mistresses, lovers, and wives and sisters, and you say men love these. What is love? The sun's enkindling and the moon's quiescence; the night and day of the world — the *all* of life, the all which must include both you and me and God, of whom you dream. Well then, I love you, Rachel. What shall prevent me? Mistress, mother, wife — thou art all to me!

RICHARD

My lord, I can only reply for Mistress Rachel, that you speak like one who does not understand this world.

RAVENSBANE

O God! Sir, and do you? If so, tell me — tell me before it be too late — *why*, in this world, such a thing as *I* can love and talk of love. Why, in this world, a true man and woman, like you and your betrothed, can look upon this counterfeit and be deceived.

RACHEL AND RICHARD

Counterfeit?

RAVENSBANE

Me — on me — the ignominy of the earth, the laughing-stock of the angels!

RACHEL

Why, my lord. Are you not —

RAVENSBANE

No.

JUSTICE MERTON

[*To Ravensbane.*]

Forbear! Not to her —

DICKON

My lord forgets.

RACHEL

Are you not Lord Ravensbane?

RAVENSBANE

Marquis of Oxford, Baron of Wittenberg, Elector of Worms, and Count of Cordova? No, I am *not* Lord Ravensbane. I am Lord Scarecrow!

[*He bursts into laughter.*]

RACHEL

[*Shrinking back.*]

Ah me!

RAVENSBANE

A nobleman of husks, bewitched from a pumpkin.

RACHEL

The image in the glass was true?

RAVENSBANE

Yes, true. It is the glass of truth — thank God! Thank God for you, dear.

JUSTICE MERTON

Richard! Go for the minister; this proof of witchcraft needs be known.

[*Richard does not move.*]

DICKON

My lord, this grotesque absurdity must end.

RAVENSBANE

True, Dickon! This grotesque absurdity must end. The laughter and the laughing-stock, man and the worm, possess at least one dignity in common: both must die.

DICKON

[*Speaking low.*]

Remember! if you dare — Rachel shall suffer for it.

RAVENSBANE

You lie. She is above your power.

DICKON

Still, thou darest not —

RAVENSBANE

Fool, I dare.

[*Turning to Rachel.*]

Mistress, this pipe is I. This intermittent smoke holds, in its nebula, Venus, Mars, the world. If I should break it — Chaos and the dark! And this of me that now stands up will sink jumbled upon the floor — a scarecrow. See! I break it.

[*He breaks the pipe in his hands, and flings the pieces at Dickon's feet in defiance; then turns, agonized, to Rachel.*]

Oh, Rachel, could I have been a man —!

DICKON

[*Picking up the pieces of pipe, turns to Rachel.*]

Mademoiselle, I felicitate you; you have outwitted the devil.

[*Kissing his fingers to her, he disappears.*]

MISTRESS MERTON

[*Seizing the Justice's arm in fright.*]

Satan!

JUSTICE MERTON

[*Whispers.*]

Gone!

RACHEL

Richard! Richard! support him.

RICHARD

[*Sustaining Ravensbane, who sways.*]

He is fainting. A chair!

RACHEL

[*Placing a chair, helps Richard to support Ravensbane toward it.*]

How pale; but yet no change.

RICHARD

His heart, perhaps.

RACHEL

Oh, Dick, if it should be some strange mistake! Look! he is noble still. My lord! my lord! the glass —

[*She draws the curtain of the mirror, just opposite which Ravensbane has sunk into the chair. At her cry, he starts up faintly and gazes at his reflection, which is seen to be a normal image of himself.*]

RAVENSBANE

Who is it?

RACHEL

Yourself, my lord — 'tis the glass of truth.

RAVENSBANE

[*His face lighting with an exalted joy, starts to his feet, erect, before the glass.*]

A man!

[*He falls back into the arms of the two lovers.*]

Rachel!

[*He dies.*]

RACHEL

Richard, I am afraid. Was it a chimera, or a hero?

FINIS

MATER

MATER

AN AMERICAN STUDY IN COMEDY

CHARACTERS

MATILDA DEAN (*"Mater"*).

MICHAEL DEAN, *her son*.

MARY DEAN, *her daughter*.

ARTHUR CULLEN.

RUDOLPH VERBECK.

TIME. — *To-day*.

PLACE. — *A City in Eastern United States*.

SCENE

LIVING-ROOM IN THE DEANS' HOUSE

ACT I. — MORNING.

ACT II. — A FEW DAYS LATER : AFTERNOON.

ACT III. — MIDNIGHT.

FOREWORD

THE acting rights of this play are owned by Mr. Henry Miller, under whose direction it was first produced in San Francisco, at the Van Ness Theatre, August 3, 1908, and in New York, at the Savoy Theatre, September 25, 1908.

The music to Mater's song in the play has been composed by Professor George W. Chadwick, Director of the Boston Conservatory of Music, and may be had, arranged for the piano, in published form.

P. M-K.

CORNISH, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
September, 1908.

ACT I

ACT I

The living-room in the Deans' house, simply furnished, with an atmosphere of books, pictures, music and domesticity. In color, the prevailing tones are harmonious browns. The walls are panelled high with oak, above which they are covered with a soft brocade of unobtrusive design. In the back wall, at centre, hung with long curtains, a large casement window, with deep, cushioned seat, looks out upon the tops of fruit trees toward neighboring city houses. On both sides of the window are book-cases. Near the right wall, at back, the room opens, by a curtained doorway, into a hall, where the newel-post and descending balustrade of a stairway are visible. In the left wall, between doors, is a fireplace, above which is hung the large oil portrait [head and bust] of a middle-aged man — a face of strong character and vitality.

Against the right wall, a divan, below which a door opens into a closet with shelves. At right, a baby-grand piano, with ruddy brown case; at left, an ample table, on which — amid newspapers, books, sewing materials and manuscripts — stands a telephone instrument.

At this table are seated MARY DEAN and RUDOLF VERBECK. Mary, who is dressed in black and wears rimless spectacles, is a handsome girl of strong features, dark hair and intense eyes. She is reading aloud from a thick volume. Rudolf, a Dutch-American type of young man, is gazing at her with a look of forced concentration and unforced affection.

MARY

[*Reads.*]

“To destroy human egotism is impossible. Therefore let us direct it so as to make it serve the ends of society instead of subverting them. Now there is reason to believe that society, through organization, can be converted into a great happiness-producing mechanism, and that self-interest can be utilized to drive it. Thus we shall not have to essay the hopeless task of destroying egotism in man, but by simply diverting its channel from competition to coöperation, convert it into a mighty power for the good — instead of the harm — of mankind.”

RUDOLF

Mary! That's the point.

MARY

What?

RUDOLF

Egotism. It's for our good, you know.

MARY

To be sure; if it's rightly diverted.

RUDOLF

That's what I mean. You see, it's self-interest that makes me ask it.

MARY

Ask what?

RUDOLF

When are we going to be married?

MARY

Rudolf Verbeck, you're incorrigible! You have as much power of generalization as a June bug.

RUDOLF

Just the same, your brother's book there gives me the lead.

MARY

Your sense of proportion is crude, my dear. My brother's book is concerned with the great interests of society; and compared to such, I assure you, our engagement and marriage are of very trifling concern.

RUDOLF

Oh, but I say! I ain't trifling.

MARY

[*Her teeth on edge.*]

Please! Whatever you are, or aren't, don't say *ain't*.

RUDOLF

I know, but when a fellow's in love —

MARY

Not that! I've told you — this is the tenth time at least — you are never to mention *that* to me again till after Michael is elected.

RUDOLF

But what if he ain't — *isn't* elected?

MARY

Then I shall devote myself solely to him until he is. Michael is the youngest man ever nominated for the legislature; if he fails of election now, he must run again. He is needed in the nation. He must be a force to shape its chaos, to stem its corruption. But you know he is far from well. The launching of his life-work must be my first concern — and yours, if you care for me. You — you *do* care for me?

RUDOLF

Care! You know, girl, I love —

MARY

[*Holding the volume interceptingly.*]

Love me — love my brother's book! Read, please. My glasses are dusty.

[*She takes off her spectacles and wipes them. He takes the book and reads vaguely.*]

RUDOLF

“Common Sense and the Common Weal: by Michael Dean.”

MARY

You needn't read the cover. I stopped on page 78.

RUDOLF

[*Hastening to find the place.*]

Good.

[*Reads quickly.*]

“The social structure I propose may conveniently be expounded under eight topics:

First, Public ownership of the means of production, retention of the wage system and abolition of profit.

Second, Organization of a system of distribution, whereby supply and demand in products may be adjusted.

Third, Organization of a national labor exchange, whereby supply and demand in labor may be adjusted." —

Adjusted — say, Mary!

MARY

What?

RUDOLF

You *will* adjust it all right — if we elect him?

[*Mary snatches the book from him and turns away.*]

I was only talking of supply and demand!

MARY

If you say one word more of it, I won't speak to you for a week.

[*Relentlessly returning him the book.*]

Now, take *in* what you read.

RUDOLF

[*Reads on gropingly.*]

"Fourth, Organization of an inspection system, whereby the quality of products may be retained at a definite standard.

Fifth, Application of labor to production.

- . Sixth, Organization of invention.
- Seventh, Old age insurance.
- Eighth, Reform of Education."

MARY

— Rudolfo! To think when he's elected, Michael will be a living factor in all this. And the campaign is going on gloriously.

RUDOLF

I wish to-morrow was election day.

MARY

Do you remember, in the settlement work, down there in the slums, how they shouted for him that first meeting; and when they saw him—

RUDOLF

I remember when I first saw *you* there, addressing the Mothers and Daughters' Club, and starting a campaign of clean clothes. How in thunder did you ever cut and stitch that mountain of pinafores?

MARY

Oh, Mater attends to that for me. She's just domestic and practical, you know. I'm concerned with the large principles and statistics. I'm a very humble disciple of my great brother.

RUDOLF

I thought your mother's trump cards were books and pianos and such.

MARY

I suppose you mean dabbling in lyrics and poets and such light stuff? Yes, Mater mixes that up with her housekeeping. She's an outlandish little person — of course, very nice and dear and useful — but when it comes to serious things — Oh, quite beyond her depth! Politics, sociology, for instance — she hasn't the first ray of comprehension.

RUDOLF

Never mind — *you* have! And I know the poor dirty people love you for what you are doing for 'em.

MARY

Oh, it's Michael they love. And they look to him as a new young prophet — a prophet of reason and joy. And it isn't only the poor — it's the overworked men everywhere, eager to see a way out of forced labor into free life. Do you know what they call this book? The busy-man's Bible. Ah, when Michael is elected, Rudolf, do you know the first thing we must do?

[Rudolf, leaping up impetuous, kisses her. Mary springs from him and looks back wrathfully.]

The last time, the very last! I vow it. Now I won't speak to you again till after election day.

RUDOLF

[Calling heaven to witness.]

And I never said a word!

[Enter MICHAEL DEAN, lower left. He is without his coat— in his shirt sleeves. With both hands clasped behind his head, he strides across the room, and paces back and forth, oblivious of Mary and Rudolf.]

Mary pauses in her own mood of anger, which evaporates as she watches him with eager attention and some little awe.]

RUDOLF

[Not observing Michael— beseechingly.]

Mary! Forget it— please! I won't make another—

[Mary raises her hand to Rudolf in stern warning of silence— looking at Michael, who in his paces comes to a standstill in front of her, riveting an abstracted gaze upon her face as if it were far away.]

MARY

Is it finished, Michael? All thought out?

MICHAEL

[Looks at her, vaguely quizzical, biting the edge of his thumb.]

Eh?

MARY

I have just been reading your "Common Sense" with Rudolf. I wish in your next campaign speech you would sum up that splendid chapter on Liberty.

MICHAEL

Liberty, my dear sir! Where did you find it?

MARY

[Pointing to the book.]

Why, there. — You're not ill again?

MICHAEL

[*Impatiently.*]

What, what?

MARY

I'm not your *dear sir*, you know.

MICHAEL

[*Drawing a deep breath, smiles faintly.*]

Hello, sisterkin! — I was thinking of that fellow Cullen.

MARY

Cullen!

[*With a touch of embarrassment.*]

What Mr. Cullen?

MICHAEL

The Honorable Arthur!

MARY

Honorable?

MICHAEL

Of the Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Grafters — Grand Master! — Hello, Verbeck.

[*Gives Rudolf his hand.*]

RUDOLF

[*Waving the volume in his other hand.*]

Say! It's real meat.

MICHAEL

Have you tried to digest it?

MATER

MARY

You mean the notorious Cullen of the legislature?

MICHAEL

To whose brotherhood I am now aspiring. Heaven forgive — one of us!

RUDOLF

[*With vague alarm.*]

Brotherhood? You —

MICHAEL

If you elect me, Rudolf.

RUDOLF

Oh, that's what you mean. Well, that's what I'm living for.

[*With a beseeching look toward Mary, who keeps on the opposite side of the room.*]

— Ask Mary.

MARY

Is he in your way?

MICHAEL

[*Absorbed again.*]

Who?

MARY

[*Hesitatingly.*]

Mr. Cullen. Is he obstructing you politically?

MICHAEL

That's the question. The Honorable Arthur has been singularly affable to me — lately.

RUDOLF

[*Looking anxiously at Mary.*]

Lately? More than usual?

MICHAEL

So I've noticed. And I don't like it, for I don't trust him. He has risen in life by what his friends call a sense of humor, and that, if I'm not mistaken, is the liveliest endowment of the Devil. I'd rather face a rhinoceros than an ineradicable smile. — That reminds me — he's to call me up this morning on a matter of business.

MARY

He's *for* you in the election?

MICHAEL

So he explained — with his smile. His influence is to go my way — for my father the Senator's sake.

MARY

Did Mr. Cullen know father?

MICHAEL

Only by reputation — far off. Our father, I'm sure, never knew Cullen.

[*Looking up at the portrait on the wall.*]

There was a man, thank God, and a magician! He knew how to pipe the rats from their nests in the nation, and to purge the temple of the state without fouling his own fingers. Give me to be like him.

— Mary, does it seem possible that he has gone from us: one year ago to-day!

MARY

But you live on — to finish his work.

MICHAEL

Finish? It has no end.

RUDOLF

Yes, old fellow. When you're in office, there'll be something doing!

MICHAEL

Something doing! So what will be doing — Eh? — when I'm in office?

RUDOLF

Something big, that's sure.

MICHAEL

“Big,” and “something.” Just *what* doesn't matter, I suppose, so long as it's big?

RUDOLF

I mean you'll keep things busy.

MICHAEL

“Busy” — of course! Big, Busy, Barnum and Bailey — all with a B! Get into the circus, statesmen, three rings and a loop-the-loop — and keep the public guessing!

By Heaven, Verbeck, I believe there are no more dangerous citizens than just such good fools as you. You pay for your seat at the show — *Bang!* goes the clown's head through the hoop. *Spin!* goes your hat in the air, and "Hurrah!" you bawl; "Even so God created the world and the solar system."

[*He begins to pace back and forth again and speaks with vehement swiftiness.*]

"Something doing." It's the quack showman's motto of the age! Under that banner, we harvest a million acres of wheat to fill a hundred millions of mouths, and we rear up the mouths to be filled with the wheat. Under that banner, we move a continent of freight cars to consume steel rails, and we disembowel the continent for steel to move the freight cars. Under that banner, we fell mountains of forest to feed a myriad presses with Sunday editions, and we set up a myriad presses to devour the wood-pulp. "Something doing!" Motion, my friend. *Motion* is the God of such as you, and so far as you can, you make yourselves in his image.

He's a glorious Titan — your *Motion!* His brow is of gold and his bowels of brass; his biceps of iron and his thighs of silver. His beard is black smoke. His heart is pure steel. Within his head he has a billion wheels, and when he opens his mouth to speak through his beard, the clang of his voice is the noise thereof.

Look in the morning above the cities, and you shall see his hair obscuring the day, and his eyes like arc

lights. In the palm of one hand he holds the great god Pan — no taller than a pigmy; and in the other fist he clutches a worm called Man. “Behold me!” he cries to the heavens; “even from this worm have I arisen, and even to this stature have I grown beyond this pigmy. Behold me, you sun and moon! Am I not Busy? Am I not Big? I am the Lord of Hosts — I am Prosperity! I am —

MATER*

[*Entering.*]

Button! Button! Who’s got the button?

MICHAEL

[*Glaring desperately as she approaches with his coat.*]

Mater, Mater, how you do interrupt!

MATER

Boy, you carried off the button in your pocket.

[*Feels in his pockets and finds it.*]

MICHAEL

Damn the button!

MATER

Shh! Remember this afternoon! You can’t address the Reform Club with a whole heart — and one button missing.

* She appears in the doorway, — lower left — holding Michael’s coat, a needle and thread. Upon her blond, wavy hair is a wreath of daffodils, and she wears a fresh becoming gown of yellow and buff.

MICHAEL

I can address the universe in my night-shirt, if I like. Give me the coat.

MATER

[*Helping him on with it.*]

Of course; put it on. That's much better.

[*He starts to walk away. Catching her needle and thread through the front of his coat, she begins to sew on the button.*]

Now go right ahead, dear. I can listen beautifully while I sew.

MICHAEL

[*Gloomily.*]

Here's a prophet in his own country!

MARY

[*Approaching Mater, looks particularly hard at her wreath, speaking sternly.*]

How could you, mother!

MATER

[*Sewing, as Michael — his hands in his pockets — turns away.*]

I can't — very well.

RUDOLF

You sized me up pretty small, Dean.

MICHAEL

Did I? Forgive me; I'm tired.

MATER

[*With a glance of solicitude.*]

Tired, boy?

[*She sits on a chair beside Michael, sewing on the button.*]

RUDOLF

That's all right. But I didn't catch your drift, just. Next time I start something doing, how am I to know whether it's right or wrong?

MICHAEL

The only test of right and wrong is common sense.

MATER

So it is, dear. There's my own philosopher.

RUDOLF

Well, then, ain't it common sense for us Americans to develop our national resources?

MICHAEL

Yes, so long as we, as a nation, develop them to the one common-sense end.

RUDOLF

What's that?

MICHAEL

National happiness; nothing else.

RUDOLF

Why, of course. That's why we're *all* in business.

MICHAEL

Is it? I think not. You're in business—for business; nothing else. You see to the end of your nose and then your eyes cross. So the huge world of business, in which you are an atom, careens in a vast orbit of itself—chasing forever the end of existence, as a kitten the end of its tail.

RUDOLF

Hmm! I don't see it. Why, man, nothing can stop us from going it, just like we are—only more so. It's Destiny; and I say, it's great. Don't you?

MICHAEL

What's great?

RUDOLF

Just being America. And since it's great, why then—wheat and steel, people and towns, the more the merrier.

MICHAEL

The more indeed—if it *be* the merrier. But no more—if it be *not* the merrier. The need of our country to-day is not more towns, but happier towns; not more men, but happier men; not life itself, unless it be life worth living.

RUDOLF

Oh, come, Dean. You know you want America to be the greatest nation on the globe.

MICHAEL

I do! I want America to be the Hercules—not the megatherium—of the nations.

RUDOLF

The mega — which ?

MATER

[*Rising, and putting aside her sewing materials.*]

Now, baby boy, you're a poet.

MICHAEL

[*With a gesture of chagrin, sits in the chair she has just left.*]

Then let me be exiled. Poets! Your old friend Plato had *one* good idea, — he banished all poets from his Republic. The whole pack of 'em have been bitten with mad words and got the logomania. They should be muzzled.

[*Mater comes behind the chair and, while he continues talking, hovers over him, smoothes his coat collar, takes some threads off his shoulder, sleeks his hair with her hands and, taking her scissors, snips some wry locks over his ears.*]

Whenever the times are in gloom or panic, each breed has his own bark: Inalienable Rights! — Return to Nature! — The Truth of Beauty! — The Point of View! — The Voice of Conscience! — You may hear them baying in chorus, tenor and basso, from stump and bar and inkpot and pulpit — these moon-dogs of the nation — while the people run to and fro, crying "Saved!" But none yet ever has voiced the excellent salvation of Common sense. [*Leaping up.*]
— What on earth are you doing, Mater ?

MATER

[*Standing beside the empty chair, clicks her shears and bows toward Mary, with the urbanity of a hairdresser.*]

Next!

MARY

Oh, this is too bad. You keep spoiling it all.

MATER

[*Trilling her r's à la Français.*]

Ah, Madame, but with a pretty pompadour and a little rat's nest inside, *n'est ce pas?*

[*She rumples Mary's hair with her fingers.*]

MARY

[*Escaping from her.*]

Mother, why haven't you a little maturity?

MATER

[*Pensively.*]

I suppose I gave birth to it all, dear, when you were born.

MARY

If only you wouldn't break in on serious discussions. You *know* you know nothing of politics. — Where are those infants' clothes for the Orphans' Home?

MATER

The little night-gowns? They're loves! I've finished them.

MARY

Pack them up, please. I promised them for the Alliance meeting this afternoon.

MATER

[Going to the closet.]

I'll show them to you.

[Opening the closet door, she lifts some heaped articles of apparel, and lays them in a basket.]

MICHAEL

[Gazing before him, ostensibly speaking to Mary.]

Yes! The orchards of Reason are ripening: already the people have begun to pluck. Out of their sufferings, surely, very surely, rises the sane revolution of joy.

[With a great breath.]

And I shall be one of the Orchard-keepers! One of the vindicators of philosophy!

MATER

[Approaching with her basket, filled with baby-clothes, smiles quaintly at Michael.]

“How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute —”

[Turning and presenting the basket.]

Mary, here are your nighties.

MARY

[Starting away.]

They're not *mine!*

MATER

Really ?

[*Holding up a tiny night-gown with drawers.*]

Rudolf, are they yours ?

MARY

[*Exasperated.*]

Mater !

[*Snatching the nightie.*]

That's simply — impossible !

MATER

There! I *knew* it.[*Bubbling with mirth, she puts back the basket in the closet.*]

RUDOLF

[*Explaining, with obtuse earnestness.*]

She means, they're for the Orphan Asylum.

MATER

[*Beckoning to Rudolf, looks at Mary and Michael. The former has joined her brother at the large table, where he has spread some manuscripts. Beyond them hangs the portrait of the Senator.*]

Rudolf, look at them — both. Can you see them — distinctly ?

RUDOLF

[*Mystified.*]

See them ?

MATER

Those two — in a rosy cloud there.

MATER

RUDOLF

You mean —

MATER

The future presidents of the United States and Vassar College! Tell me: Can you guess where I ever got them?

RUDOLF

You mean —

MATER

Not so loud! They are fairies — out of Mother Goose. *I* was the goose. I lived in an old little barn-yard, under a hill. Oh, it was ages ago!

RUDOLF

Do you mean —

MATER

[*Nodding mysteriously.*]

'Way back in New England — on the sunshiny side of the hill. One lone, little, yellow-feather, sunny-weather goose, with a sky-blue puddle for a hand-glass. That was *me!* Do you want to know how it all happened?

— In a storm! 'Twas spring o' the year, just at equinox, when the winds ruffle your feathers till they show the white. That's why I turned tail for home. But before I could reach my hand-glass, there he stood! Tall — black — terrible — his head high in the thunder, his beautiful eyes in the darkness — black, an ink-black swan!

RUDOLF

[*In a low voice, looking toward the portrait.*]

You mean —

MATER

[*Nods with a reminiscent smile.*]

Him. — My dear, fancy it! I had never seen even a gander before. And now, in a glare of lightning — that wonderful swan-dragon! For his feathers in the dark were fiery scales; his crest was like purple iris; his eyes were far up and starry; and when he struck at the storm with his flashing beak, the sky was all fire. — Just a clap of thunder, and the hillside was far away. On his great black wings he bore me high over the world, and we lighted, at break of day, on the golden dome of a Capitol. — Heigho, Mother Goose! Mother Goose! In the shadow of the golden dome she hatched two chicks, and — will you believe me? — *All* their goosequills were ink-black.

MICHAEL

[*Tugging with his teeth at his pen-holder.*]

Double damnation on this pen!

MATER

[*To Rudolf.*]

Hush! He's pulling one out with his beak.

MICHAEL

First it's busted and now it's rusted in.

[*Flinging it to the floor and rising.*]

How many times, Mater, have I asked you to keep a clean new pen on my desk!

MATER

Dear swan-boy, I thought —

MICHAEL

But you didn't do it. I want one ready — always ready.

MATER

[*Whimsically.*]

Boy?

MICHAEL

I know, Mater, but bad pens are used only in Purgatory.

MATER

[*Going closer to him.*]

Don't you like daffodils? — Smell!

MICHAEL

[*Looks down at the wreath.*]

What? Where did you get them, this time of year?

MATER

You know, that pleasant gentleman — what's his name?

[*Mary, in precipitate haste, reaches over and pulls Mater's gown. Mater turns to her.*]

Anything wrong with my skirt?

[*Mary, glancing toward Rudolf, makes to Mater indescribable faces of cautionary silence, which she ignores.*]

Oh, of course; *you* remember it, Mary, — Mr. Lucky, or Sullen, or —

RUDOLF

[*Starting.*]

Who?

MARY

I don't know what you're talking about, mother. And I don't think it can be of any great consequence.

MATER

Of course not. The only question of great consequence in all the world at this minute is — remember it!

[*She pauses, raising one monitory finger as in grave portent.*]

MICHAEL

[*Interested.*]

What?

MATER

[*With a ripple of laughter, throws herself into his arms.*]

Do you *love* me?

MICHAEL

[*Returning her hug.*]

Ha, little Mater! You are good for nothing but sewing and singing —

MATER

[*Playfully.*]

And silliness!

MICHAEL

And silliness.

MATER

MATER

And soap-bubble castles !

MICHAEL

And chateaus in Spain !

MATER

[*Wistfully.*]

And nothing else ?

MICHAEL

And nothing else. But I like you better than —

MATER

[*Quickly.*]

Politics ?

MICHAEL

Better even than politics !

MATER

I don't believe it. Prove it.

MICHAEL

[*Shrugs.*]

How ?

MATER

You are all worn out. This pen-holder is my witness. Come with me for a lark in the country — for one week.

MICHAEL

In the country — *this* week ! And every day a campaign speech till election !

MATER

So: "Better than politics!" — perjurer!

MICHAEL

Besides, you don't understand. If you want me to be well, if that's what you're after —

MATER

[*Passionately.*]

It's *all* I'm after.

MICHAEL

There's one sure road to that.

MATER

Tell me.

MICHAEL

I must be elected.

[*With deep vehemence.*]

I must be elected!

MATER

[*Troubled.*]

And if you shouldn't be?

MICHAEL

Then I will not rest, day or night, till I am. — Not if I die for it!

MATER

Don't, Michael.

MICHAEL

I know the goal, I know the path, for our people.

I have pointed out the goal as a writer ; I must help to shape the path as a representative !

MATER

[*Quietly.*]

I know. — You are like *him*.

MICHAEL

Tell me that I am, Mater. It heartens me.

MATER

I have a little picture of him, just at your age.

MICHAEL

At my age ?

MATER

[*Lifting from the table a little gold-framed mirror holds it close to Michael's face.*]

Look.

MICHAEL

So like as that ?

[*Mater hides her face against him.*]

I thank God for it. The world shall meet him again — in me. Little Mater, there is a vow I want to make aloud, and I want you and Mary to make it with me, here by his portrait, as I remember him.

MATER

[*Starting back with a frightened look.*]

I don't like vows.

MICHAEL

[*Slowly.*]

You don't like vows ?

MATER

Good people never keep them. That is, they oughtn't.

MICHAEL

Oughtn't!

MATER

X I mean, they needn't. You see, it mortgages the future with the past.

MICHAEL

My future is in endless debt to his past.

MATER

Don't say that, boy. He — he wouldn't like it.

MICHAEL

Have you forgotten what day it is? What anniversary?

MATER

Oh, I hate anniversaries.

MICHAEL

But to-day — the reminder of —

MATER

Not of that! He was never *that*. He was life. He was always life.

MICHAEL

That's my vow — *our* vow, Mater. Come!

MATER

MATER

[*Hesitant.*]

I'd rather — will it please you?

MICHAEL

[*With startled sadness.*]

Will it not — you?

MATER

[*Cheerfully.*]

Oh, very much indeed!

[*To Mary, drawing her affectionately.*]

Come, my other swan!

[*Hugging them both.*]

Dear, incredible twins!

MARY

[*With an impulsive caress.*]

Liebes Mütterchen!

MICHAEL

[*Looking up at the portrait, speaks simply.*]

Father, one year ago the vision fell from your eyes, the power from your hand. To-day I take up both and restore them to you in myself. And myself I dedicate, as you dedicated yourself, to our country's leadership. The way is open at last. In this campaign my career begins — without fetters and without deceit. Uncompromisingly I will walk in your clean path, uncompromisingly these women will help me in this vow.

[*Turning with emotion to Mater and Mary.*]

Won't you?

[*Mater and Mary go to him affectionately. As they do so the telephone on the desk before them rings. Michael sits and lifts the receiver.*]

Oh, it's you, Cullen. Good morning.

MATER

Why, it's that delightful —

MARY

Hush, mother!

MICHAEL

[*At the telephone.*]

What's that? Yes, I can see you. You'd like me to decide to-day. Well, what's the proposition?

[*A pause. Michael's brow suddenly knits, and with his right hand he crushes some papers on the table.*]

— Four thousand dollars. And you want me — Considering the what? — Oh, the great consequences. A trifle, of course! — You *will* explain? I think, sir, it will be necessary. — The sooner the better. — An alternative, you say. What is it? — I see; you will *explain*. — Yes, she is at home. What of it?

RUDOLF

[*Starting.*]

Who's at home?

[*Mater smiles at Mary. Mary turns away.*]

MATER

MICHAEL

— What? I don't catch it. Oh, very well. — In quarter of an hour; all right.

[*He hangs up the receiver.*]

MATER

Be careful; you're crumpling your nice manuscripts.

[*Michael rises and lets the crushed papers slip scattering from his hand.*]

MICHAEL

I see. They will initiate me — behind closed doors. I shall be a knight of their secret order — one of the mighty oligarchs of our democracy. God! It was almost mine, I had almost touched it, and now — contamination! contamination!

[*He staggers and sinks into a chair.*]

MATER

[*Bending over him.*]

Boy, what is it?

[*Mary and Rudolf come near on either side.*]

MARY

[*To Rudolf.*]

Some brandy.

MICHAEL

[*With a gesture.*]

No.

MATER

Your work is wearing you out, dear.

MICHAEL

[*Looking at the three.*]

My work is stopped — for the present.

MATER

Thank heaven!

MICHAEL

I am not to be elected.

MARY

Michael!

RUDOLF

Gad!

MICHAEL

Not this year.

[*Rising.*]

But I *will* be elected at last!

MATER

What *has* happened? What did that charming Mr. Cullen want of you?

MICHAEL

A little matter of four thousand dollars.

MARY

For what?

MICHAEL

To make a very old mare go.

MARY

A mare!

MICHAEL

You never heard of the all-party mascot? Why, she's an old stager. She helped to pull the Congressional coach in pioneer days, and to-day she is hitched to the campaign band-wagon. Her off eye winks; three legs of her are black, and all four are game. But she's a live old mare yet, is old Bribery.

MATER

[*Who has been counting on her fingers.*]

Four thousand you said? That's not so much.

MICHAEL

Considering the great consequences — a trifle!

MATER

[*Jubilantly.*]

Don't worry, boy. I've got it.

MICHAEL

[*Darkly.*]

What?

MATER

I've got —

[*Aware of his contracting brows*]

— an idea. I will see Mr. Cullen.

MICHAEL

See Cullen? — You!

MATER

Woman to man, you know.

MICHAEL

What in nonsense do you mean by woman to man?

MATER

Oh, just Eve and Adam and all that.

MICHAEL

Mater, are you daft—or aren't you grown-up yet?

MATER

Forty-four next month, my dear. Is Mr. Cullen coming this morning?

MICHAEL

He is. What can *you* have to say to him?

MATER

I shall say to him that you have nervous dyspepsia, and he must elect you immediately.

MICHAEL

And for this you'll hand him a cheque for four thousand dollars?

MATER

[*With naïveté.*]

Not all in a cheque. The money's mostly in Savings Banks.

MATER

MICHAEL

[*Blankly.*]

And you were married to father for twenty-six years!

[*He walks away.*]

MATER

And, my dear, while he was in the Senate, I helped him out of many such pickles.

MICHAEL

[*Turning fiercely.*]

Mater! Not like this! You never paid money for father in a case like this!

MATER

No; he never would let me. That's just the way he would scowl. But then I contrived somehow, and it always came out all right.

MICHAEL

Somehow! What do you mean?

MATER

Why, your father, you know, could see only one right thing at a time; but I always manage to see several points of view.

MICHAEL

Points of view are perdition.

MATER

So he told me.

MICHAEL

A given act must be right or wrong ; not both.

MATER

Common sense or nonsense, of course ! So whenever I found some necessary little compromise —

MICHAEL

Compromise ! — And father knew of this ?

MATER

[*Startled at his voice.*]

Oh, never at the time. I always told him afterwards, and then we'd make up.

MICHAEL

This is terrible. "Afterwards !" How *could* he make up ! I can't bear it.

[*Going toward the door, lower left.*]

Let me know when Cullen arrives. And here —

[*Indicating some newspaper clippings on the table.*]

Please attend to these. Come, Mary ; I must talk with you — upstairs.

[*Pausing at the door, which Mary opens.*]

Mater, one thing you must promise me now : Never to meddle in my career without my knowl-

edge. I ask your loving help; but not your loving subterfuge. Promise me, once and forever, never to deceive me in this.

MATER

Boy, I promise you, work-bells and kirk-bells!

MICHAEL

[*Pointing to the portrait.*]

Remember our vow — there. I will see Cullen when he comes.

[*Exeunt MICHAEL and MARY.*]

MATER

[*Looks after them, humming low and tapping with her foot.*]

Dear, dear! Dear, dear!

[*She bursts into soft laughter. Rudolf approaches and looks at her with earnest perplexity.*]

RUDOLF

Mrs. Dean —

MATER

[*Starting.*]

Nonsense, Rudolf. Call me *Mater*. You'll be my son in a jiffy.

[*As she talks with Rudolf, Mater moves lightly about the room. Picking up the crumpled sheets of manuscript, she smoothes them out, puts a new pen in the holder, examines the packet of clippings and places them in an open scrap-book on the table.*]

RUDOLF

Thanks, Mrs. — Mater. But that's just what keeps me guessing. This morning, Mary told me right here that compared to this book

[*Slamming down Michael's volume on the table.*]

and her brother's career, our marriage was a very trifling concern.

MATER

Did she say that? Oh, delicious!

RUDOLF

Delicious! She said that her work is to make humanity in America —

MATER

Of course it is. Her work is to get married to you, and make American sons and daughters.

RUDOLF

She won't get married, she says, till her brother is elected. You know when she sets her teeth, she hangs on hard.

MATER

I know. I call her Molly Mud-turtle; she pokes so in her slums, and snaps when you pull her out.

RUDOLF

She snapped me all right this morning. Said she wouldn't speak to me again till after election. I wonder! That political fellow on the telephone —

Michael said to him: "She's at home." Who do they call *she*?

MATER

The Ship, stupid!

RUDOLF

Ship!

MATER

Ship of State, you know. Whenever Michael converses with politicians, he talks their dialect.

RUDOLF

Say, Mater, you're a great fixer. Please fix it up with Mary for me, won't you?

MATER

Never fear, fond lover!

When fair wind blows
The weather-cock crows.

I'll send you a fair wind.

RUDOLF

Well, I must light out.

[*From the hall.*]

And listen, Mater, he's *got* to be elected. Fix that, too.

MATER

[*Waving to him.*]

That, too.

[*Exit RUDOLF by the stairs.*]

[Bringing a pot of paste to the table, Mater undoes the packet of clippings and begins to arrange some in the scrap-book.

Enter MARY, left. With flashing eyes, she approaches Mater, looking at her wreath.]

MARY

Those daffodils!

MATER

What! Are they wilting?

MARY

He sent them to *me*.

MATER

And you threw them away.

MARY

Of course I threw them away. You think I care for *him*?

MATER

Don't you? I dote on him. He has such a Utopian sense of humor. So foreign to our family!

MARY

Why, he's a grafter—a corrupt villain!

MATER

Really? Now to me, my dear, his smile quite infects his character.

[Looking in the hand-glass at her wreath.]

Nonsense; they're as fresh as ever.

MATER

MARY

You surely know that he's Michael's worst enemy.

MATER

I didn't know that was settled. Then it is particularly important I should like him, isn't it?

MARY

Oh, mother, you have no more logic than an infant. And look at you there in that dress, and those daffodils! I don't wonder he made that ridiculous mistake when he met you and me at the Robinsons' dinner party. I'm sure I really feel complimented.

MATER

I knew you would, Mary. That's why I appropriated these flowers he sent here addressed to "Miss Dean." They just suit my hair. And I know when I tell Rudolf —

MARY

[*Flushing.*]

If you dare! Do you think that I want Rudolf to know that Mr. Cullen mistook *me* for your *mother*?

MATER

Me rather, for your *daughter*, my dear. I don't remember that he paid you any attention, except to notice your spectacles and your elderly black gown.

MARY

Elderly! I declare you should be ashamed, mother, — under the circumstances — not to wear mourning.

MATER

[*With deep feeling, simply.*]

You see, dear, I hate black — and all it means.

MARY

No, I don't see anything *you* mean. You are absolutely immature and provoking. And those night-gowns — mine! And Rudolf standing right by! Oh, it's too much.

MATER

But, my dear, they *were* darlings!

MARY

[*Shrilly, stopping her ears.*]

Be quiet! Since you can't reason, I must ask you to make *me* a promise.

MATER

It's my pet avocation, child.

MARY

Don't call me "child"; it's ridiculous. You're just a spoilt one yourself. Please listen. I'm ashamed to have any acquaintance with Mr. Cullen. Rudolf doesn't know I went to that dinner party. Michael's forgotten it. Now promise me, mother, you will never tell either one of them that I've met Mr. Cullen.

MATER

MATER

[*Crossing herself solemnly.*]

Never — never — never !

MARY

[*Goes impetuously and kisses her.*]

I forgive you. Now do behave !

[*She hurries off, left.*]

MATER

[*Affectionately.*]

Twins! twins!

[*She laughs to herself; then, as a shade passes over her face, turns slowly and walks toward the piano-seat, pausing an instant to glance up at the portrait.*]

Michael dear !

[*She sits at the piano, touches the keys and sings.*]

Long ago, in the young moonlight,
 I lost my heart to a hero;
 Strong and tender and stern and right,
 Darker than night,
 And terribler than Nero.
 Heigh, but he was dear, O !

And there, to bind our fellowship,
 I laughed at him ; and a moment after,
 I laughed again till he bit his lip ;
 For the test of love is laughter.

[*As she sings on, the door-bell rings below, unheard by her.*]

“ Lord and master, look up ! ” I cried ;
“ I wreath your brow with a laurel !
Gloom and wisdom and right and pride —
 Cast them aside,
And kiss, and cure our quarrel.
Never mind the moral ! ”

Alas ! with strange and saddened eyes
 He looked on me ; and my mirth grew dafter,
To feel the flush of his dark surprise ;
 For the zest of love is laughter.

[*While she continues, there comes up the stairway into the hall a handsome man of early middle age. He enters, unnoticed by her ; softly approaches — smiling slightly — until he stands behind the piano-seat.*]

Long ago, in the old moonlight,
 I lost my hero and lover ;
Strong and tender and stern and right,
 Never shall night
 Nor day his brow uncover.
Ah, my heart, that is over !

Yet still, for joy of the fellowship
 That bound us both through the years long after,
I laugh to think how he bit his lip ;
 For the test of love —
 And the best of love — is laughter.

[*Finishing, Mater remains sitting in a reverie. Behind her, the man lightly touches the flowers on her hair.*]

THE MAN

Was it a fragrance, or a song ?

MATER

[*Springing up, steps back in startled reserve.*]

Mr. Cullen !

CULLEN

The maid told me to walk up, Miss Dean. I had no right to listen, but the daffodils made me bold.

MATER

Oh, the daffodils !

CULLEN

[*Smiling.*]

You see,

“ I wandered lonely as a cloud —
When all at once ” —

It is gracious of you to wear them — and like that.

MATER

I didn't know they taught Wordsworth in the legislature.

CULLEN

You are fond of yellow ?

MATER

Very ; it's so becoming.

CULLEN

To pure gold !

MATER

Oh, you've come to talk *business!*

CULLEN

With your brother, Miss Dean.

MATER

[*Starting.*]

My brother? — To be sure!

CULLEN

[*Taking from his pocket a large envelope.*]

I have brought him some papers — memoranda in regard to the election.

MATER

I remember now. — How soon is he to be elected?

CULLEN

[*Smiling.*]

Well, that may depend upon how soon he is willing to receive these papers.

MATER

How nice of you! Then it's all settled.

CULLEN

I think we may have to confer — first.

MATER

Don't trouble, I'll hand them to him.

MATER

CULLEN

I'm afraid he might not accept them — without explanation.

MATER

[*Cordially.*]

Mightn't *I* explain that you'd like him to?

CULLEN

My dear Miss Dean, you are delightfully *apropos*. I really think you might. The whole matter, you see, is comprised in — in what one might call, in politics or philosophy, the point of view.

MATER

Yes, I've heard him mention that phrase, very earnestly.

CULLEN

[*Twinkling.*]

Have you! That doesn't sound promising.

MATER

Really? Why, what are the papers?

CULLEN

Let me be perfectly clear. The daughter of a Senator will doubtless understand. They are pledges from certain powerful quarters — quite informal pledges — of votes for your brother's election, *provided* he can see his way in assisting the campaign fund to the extent, say, of four thousand dollars. En-

tirely, of course, for necessary expenses. A simple business proposition, as you see. Do you catch the — the point of view?

MATER

Yes, I think, as you say, I *catch*.

CULLEN

[*Laughing.*]

Did I say "catch"? How unnecessary! Well, and do you think you can persuade your brother to — also to —

MATER

No, I'm certain he would *muff*.

[*Confidentially.*]

You see he's much younger than I.

[*Cullen lifts his eyebrows.*]

And he's had as yet so little knowledge of men and real life from the practical — what do you call it? — point of view.

CULLEN

On my word!

MATER

And besides that

[*With maternal confidingness.*]

— he's so tired! You've no idea what insomnia! — We must be extremely careful not to let him think too hard. So, you see, I'm sure we had better not mention the papers to him at all.

MATER

CULLEN

[*Turning toward the hall.*]

That's a pity. I was looking forward so much to his becoming my colleague in the legislature.

MATER

[*Following.*]

Oh, you needn't let anything interfere with that.

CULLEN

[*Whose eyes have constantly watched Mater with fascination.*]

These papers, believe me, are the obstacles, not I.

MATER

I have it, then! Why not tear them up and stay to lunch?

CULLEN

[*With mingled ardor and grandiloquence.*]

Do *you* say that? You? — Dear Miss Dean, say it once more, and I will tear these to shreds and throw them into oblivion.

MATER

[*Catching her breath.*]

Gracious!

CULLEN

[*Checking himself.*]

You see, these represent, now, a matter of business between business men; but if, instead, all this were — may I say it, dear Miss Dean — were in one family —

MATER

[*Playing with the hand-glass on the table.*]

Dear me!

CULLEN

Between brothers —

MATER

Brothers!

[*Her mouth twitching, she turns the glass and glances at her reflection.*]

That is an idea.

CULLEN

Then, you see, the case would be utterly changed.

MATER

[*Glancing up.*]

Oh, utterly!

CULLEN

Young Dean — that is, Michael — and I would then have but one interest and ambition. And of course there would be no need for even mentioning business between us.

MATER

Of course not. I hadn't thought of that before — really!

CULLEN

[*Smiling enthralled.*]

But you'll think of it now, and — invite me to lunch again?

[*Looking at her, he lifts the large envelope, about to tear it. She stops him with a gesture.*]

MATER

Just a minute! Mayn't I see them?

[*Cullen shakes his head.*]

And you are absolutely sure that Michael's election depends on the papers in that envelope?

CULLEN

On pledges which they informally stand for — absolutely.

MATER

[*Turning away her head to hide a swift frown of perplexity, pauses, lifts the hand-glass again, smiles wickedly, crosses herself, turns backward her face to the right, looks at Cullen and the envelope, and reaches back (right) her left hand across her shoulder.*]

Please! Over my right shoulder! Just for luck?

CULLEN

[*Again shaking his head, puts the envelope inside his coat.*]

Not these; but something else, if you will let me.

[*He fumbles in his outer side pocket.*]

May I ask what you are smiling about?

MATER

May I ask you the same?

CULLEN

[*Producing from his pocket a tiny box, and offering it.*]

It's such a little thing —

MATER

[*Meeting his glance.*]

To save a nation!

[*Taking the box.*]So this is the *alternative*?

CULLEN

And in presenting it, may I beseech you to be unequivocal — and ask me to lunch again?

MATER

Unequivocally, this is called — “putting the question,” isn’t it?

CULLEN

[*Ardently.*]

Need you ask?

MATER

[*Drawing back a little.*]

Well, you see it’s so long — since the last time; I’m afraid I’ve grown rusty.

CULLEN

Gold is cruel, but it never rusts. Dearest young lady, in the gleam of your hair, your wreath, your smile, you are a book of little ironies bound in gold, and in spite of being your butt, my heart “dances with the daffodils.”

MATER

[*Opening the box.*]

Why, it’s a thimble!

MATER

CULLEN

And gold to match !

MATER

[*Delightedly.*]

My dear Mr. Cullen, it's the booby prize — the one we drew for guessing riddles at that dinner party.

CULLEN

You and I.

MATER

Yes, we were partners. It fits beautifully. What glory for Michael's socks !

CULLEN

I told you I would have it inscribed.

MATER

How good of you to remember !

CULLEN

How *could* I forget ? Can you read the inscription ?

MATER

[*Examining the thimble.*]

M. D. & A. C. Partners.

How interesting ! Is this one of the riddles — we *didn't* guess ?

CULLEN

The letters, of course, stand for you and me.

Us?

MATER

The initials —

CULLEN

MATER

Wait. You mustn't tell. Let me guess: M. D. — Marvellous Deep, that's me; & A. C. — Awfully Clever, that's you. Right?

CULLEN

Wrong! You've inverted us.

MATER

Three more guesses!

[*She proceeds to point her index finger, first at herself and then at Cullen, in repetition.*]

M. D., Mend Darns & A. C., Aid Charity.

Money Deposited & Accounts Credited.

Make Declarations & Accept Consequences.

Have I won?

CULLEN

Lost! You pointed the wrong way.

[*Taking from her the thimble.*]

Matilda Dean, M. D. —

MATER

Doctor of Matrimony!

CULLEN

& A. C., Arthur Cullen —

MATER

MATER

Author of Compliments!

[*She courtesies, he bows and both laugh.*]

CULLEN

You have saved the day — and the prize. Now you must wear it.

MATER

[*Holding out her right hand.*]

On my darning-finger?

CULLEN

No; the left hand — on the ring-finger.

[*Mater puts out her left hand, but draws it back hastily behind her. In the same moment, Cullen's smile dies away.*]

I beg pardon.

[*He looks at her quizzically.*]

MATER

[*Quickly.*]

Oh, not at all.

[*After a pause.*]

You — you want to see it?

CULLEN

I believe I — caught a glimpse.

MATER

[*Hesitatingly, brings her left hand forward, revealing a ring on the ring-finger.*]

It's quite plain.

CULLEN

Quite — plain gold.

MATER

You don't — mind, do you?

CULLEN

Mind? I?

MATER

I mean, because of the finger. You see, it's a wedding-ring.

CULLEN

I see.

MATER

You see, it belonged to the first Mrs. Dean — Mrs. Senator Dean.

CULLEN

Oh! — Thank you.

MATER

You see, Michael's mother — well, of course, I can never feel quite the same sentiment toward her — as *he* does. And so, my own mother not being living — you understand —

CULLEN

Oh, entirely.

MATER

So, you see, I wear her ring — the *first* Mrs. Dean's ring — from a kind of sentiment — a very natural kind of sentiment, I think.

MATER

CULLEN

Absolutely.

MATER

[*Naively.*]

You think so?

CULLEN

Of course.

MATER

[*Anxiously.*]

You're relieved?

CULLEN

Enormously, Miss Dean.

MATER

[*Drawing a deep breath.*]

So am I!

CULLEN

Really though, you gave me a bad minute.

MATER

[*Absently.*]

I'm so glad.

CULLEN

[*Smiling.*]

I'm afraid you are wicked.

MATER

I am, I am!

CULLEN

I had supposed that Michael Dean—but I knew nothing about it. I knew nothing, you see, of his

family, till that happy riddle party, when I met you; the only time till now. I didn't know, of course, that you and he are children of different mothers.

MATER

[*With great earnestness.*]

Oh, but we are — honestly we are! — What makes you look at me like that?

CULLEN

I was taking *my* turn.

MATER

At what?

CULLEN

Miss Matilda Dean: her Marvellous Deepness.

MATER

Oh, but surely Arthur Cullen, Esquire, his Awfully Cleverness can decipher that.

CULLEN

Will you answer me downright one thing?

MATER

Ask it first.

CULLEN

Miss Dean, have you never given your heart to a man?

MATER

MATER

Downright — that's difficult to answer. Would you call yourself a man, Mr. Cullen?

CULLEN

[*Fervently.*]

Do you mean —

MATER

What I ask? — Of course.

CULLEN

[*Constraining himself.*]

Well, for argument, yes; give me the benefit. What, then, is your answer?

MATER

Then my answer is — no.

CULLEN

Never?

MATER

With one limitation. To speak downright of my heart, — long ago I gave it to a dragon.

CULLEN

A dragon!

MATER

A wonderful black swan, made of fire and tempest and tenderness. And he devoured it in flames.

CULLEN

[*With growing emotion.*]

And where, may I ask, does this fiery swan-dragon live?

MATER

[*Quietly.*]

He is dead.

CULLEN

Fortunate for him, Miss Dean, or I should have been tempted to become his Saint George.

MATER

[*Smiling faintly.*]

Fortunate for *you*, Mr. Cullen.

CULLEN

O undecipherable lady! You are just muddling my head with your mythology. Let it go!

[*Lifting the thimble.*]

I haven't a spark of curiosity; I don't care a hang where you may have hung your heart before, so long as you don't drive me to the gallows-tree by refusing me this thimbleful of hope.

MATER

Drive you where?

CULLEN

To corruption, Miss Dean,—to the campaign fund; and your brother to despair.

MATER

My — [*checking herself.*] Michael to despair? If I refuse this thimble?

CULLEN

Precisely. He will lose his election, and I shall lose my morals. Think, dear Miss Dean, think of the double salvation that lies in your power.

[*Holding out the thimble, he steps toward her.*]

MATER

Do you mean, Mr. Cullen, that you would intimidate me with a thimble?

CULLEN

Intimidate! — Ah, there you forget again. Are we not both good Hegelians? Intimidation and love are but points of view.

MATER

Mr. Cullen, you are positively medicinal! If only I had you always in the house, I'd consult no more specialists. I'd drop you every morning, by lumps, in Michael's coffee.

[*The voice of Michael calls from outside, "Mater!" She starts for the door, lower left.*]

Goodness! He wants me now. I must tell him you're here.

CULLEN

[*Holding it out.*]

The thimble.

MATER

What *shall* I do ?[*The voice sounds again impatiently.*]

CULLEN

What's that he called you ?

MATER

Me? That? Oh, "Mater!" — Short for Matilda, you know. He always called me that as a little boy, and the Senator used to encourage him. He thought it sounded so pretty and maternal. So now, you see, it's grown habitual with him.

[*With anxiety but assumed spontaneity.*]

— Do you like it ?

CULLEN

Why, it's quite charming, but quite inappropriate.

MATER

[*Surprised and ruffled.*]

Nonsense! I don't agree with you.

[*She starts for the door again.*]

CULLEN

Miss Dean — the thimble.

MATER

[*Pausing — her matronly feelings still piqued.*]

It's very unfriendly of you. If you think me a seminary miss —

MATER

CULLEN

But, dear young lady, I *must* remind you—

MATER

[*Tartly.*]

Oh, I don't mean the thimble.

CULLEN

Won't you take it before —

MATER

[*Taking it quickly.*]

Of course I'll take it — and hide it. That's part of the game, you know.

[*She puts it in her girdle.*]

CULLEN

Remember! That means hope.

MATER

Not in the least, — not till I wear it.

CULLEN

Don't forget! Whatever service in the world I can do for your brother —

MATER

But I did forget. Those campaign clippings!

[*She goes toward the table.*]

He will gobble me up.

CULLEN

I beg of you. Can I be of any possible use?

MATER

Why, of course you can. Sit down and paste these in quickly.

[*He sits at the table by the scrap-book.*]

These here, those there. Exactly like that—parallel. Exactly, mind! No; you'll have to sit *square* to do it.

[*Adjusting him.*]

So! Like that. Now, *don't move* from that angle till I come back and criticise. If you do—

CULLEN

[*Raising his hand, as in oath-taking.*]

Geometrical lady, I will keep parallel—though I petrify!

[*As she is going, she places, rather conspicuously, one of the clippings beside him; then hurries away. Cullen calls after her.*]

And the thimble?

MATER

[*At the door.*]

If ever you see it on my darning-finger, you may have *hope*.

[*Exit, in low-voiced laughter.*]

CULLEN

[*Looks after her.*]

Hope, bewitching Hope!

[*He turns to the scrap-book, takes paste brush and shears and lifting the clipping which Mater has laid down, glances at it more closely, whistles a soft whistle and reads.*]

“A striking feature of the present campaign has been the nomination of that young and idealistic radical, Michael Dean, son of the late lamented Senator. Whatever opinions may be held in regard to his epoch-making work ‘Common Sense and the Common Weal,’ it is pleasant, at least, to contrast the straightforward promise of this young man with the compromising accomplishment of the majority of our legislators; notably with the activity of the Honorable Arthur Cullen, whose record of public activity so far has consisted in playing astutely that game of so-called ‘practical’ politics, which is simply another name for private enterprise.”

[*Looking toward the door, lower left.*]

Well, of all artistic deviltry —!

MICHAEL

[*His voice heard outside.*]

No, you will wait, please. I wish to see him alone.

[*Cullen closes the scrap-book hastily. MICHAEL enters and pauses with aloofness. Cullen starts to rise, but sits again suddenly, in his former pose of angular rigidity.*]

MICHAEL

Good morning, Mr. Cullen.

CULLEN

Good morning, Dean.

MICHAEL

We have already conversed by telephone.

CULLEN

Yes; very pleasant to hear your voice. How are you?

MICHAEL

Very curious.

CULLEN

Eh? What's curious?

MICHAEL

I — to hear you explain.

CULLEN

Oh, of course! Beg pardon, I forgot. The fact is, I've an ugly touch of sciatica, and that prevents me.

[He contorts his face for an instant.]

MICHAEL

Prevents you from explaining?

CULLEN

No, my dear fellow, from rising. I trust I have explained. It comes and goes — by fits, you know.

MICHAEL

And did you come in this fit to consult me as a doctor?

CULLEN

No, don't worry; I've seen the doctor already. I'm prescribed for. Just Hope! And *no moving*, till Hope returns.

[*Cullen, still sitting rigid, glances uncomfortably but humorously toward the door, left. Michael begins to pace with nervous strides.*]

MICHAEL

Mr. Cullen, this afternoon I have a public speech to make. My time is brief. You will kindly leave these prevarications and explain your business.

CULLEN

[*His eyes constantly seeking the door.*]

There's really no great hurry.

[*Taking from his pocket the large envelope.*]

I have brought with me some memoranda, forecasts of your election, which I should be glad to hand you, in the event —

MICHAEL

In the event of my handing you four thousand dollars.

CULLEN

Toward the campaign expenses.

MICHAEL

Thanks, sir; but you are old fashioned. Since your good old days, you forget that the people have been to school — politically. The A B C of public morality forbids any candidate to provide expenses for his own campaign.

CULLEN

My dear Dean, those of us who never get beyond their A B C's may have to sit always in the back benches.

MICHAEL

And those of us who *forget* their A B C's may have to be sent even farther back.

CULLEN

[*With a grimace.*]

The devil! — Pardon my sciatica.

MICHAEL

[*Earnestly.*]

Are you really in pain?

CULLEN

A touch, a mere touch.

[*Pocketing the envelope again.*]

Let's change the subject. I have an alternative to propose.

MICHAEL

So you mentioned.

CULLEN

A pleasanter solution to all this. Your sister —

MICHAEL

My sister! What has she to do with all this?

CULLEN

It occurred to me when I first met her —

MICHAEL

When? I didn't know you had ever met.

CULLEN

Heaven forgive you, then! You introduced me yourself at the Robinsons' dinner.

MICHAEL

Did I? I don't remember. — Well, the alternative?

CULLEN

My dear Dean, you and I are in politics — probably for keeps. I possess large influence already; you *may* possess it sometime. You are, of course, a genius, but —

MICHAEL

Skip that.

CULLEN

In short, you yourself have prompted my suggestion. In your incomparable book, you will re-

member, you point out that self-interest is the most powerful motive of humanity, and the logical one to employ for attaining the ends of the common weal.

MICHAEL

In brief, what's your proposition?

CULLEN

Simply this: In our common weal, we can be friends or enemies. *For* our common weal, therefore, let self-interest make us friends. Now it so happens that I am unmarried, and you have a sister —

MICHAEL

Get up!

CULLEN

[*Still seated.*]

What's the row?

MICHAEL

Take yourself out of here!

CULLEN

[*In smiling consternation.*]

I wish I might, but Hope — bewitching Hope — has deserted me.

MICHAEL

Get out of that chair, and get out of this house!

CULLEN

[*Without rising, gesticulates rigidly, opens the scrap-book, peers in, and dips the paste brush wildly.*]

Great heaven! They're not parallel!

MATER

MICHAEL

[*About to seize him*]

Thundering hell, I say —

MATER

[*Bursting in.*]

Found! Found!

CULLEN

[*Leaping precipitously from his chair.*]

Praise God!

MATER

[*Raising her right hand.*]

Behold it!

CULLEN

[*Rapturously.*]

On the darning-finger!

MICHAEL

[*Glowering at Cullen.*]

What game are you at now?

MATER

Hide the thimble! I've found it. See!

MICHAEL

[*To Mater.*]

Have you run mad?

MATER

[*To Cullen, seating herself.*]Now *I* sit and *you're* it!

CULLEN

[*Gazing at Mater's finger.*]

Now I'm *it* indeed, — *it* forever!

MICHAEL

This is beyond me.

CULLEN

I don't wonder, Dean. You see, it accounts for my extraordinary sitting capacity.

MICHAEL

I see — nothing.

MATER

Of course you do! We're just playing.

MICHAEL

Playing what, in God's name? Oh, less smiles! less smiles!

CULLEN

My dear fellow, let me now *really* explain. Forgive me. All this was a little device of my own to test you.

MICHAEL

Test — *me!*

CULLEN

Need I say that the device was superfluous? I congratulate you and your constituents in the election. You have withstood a double temptation, like the upright man you are.

[*Taking out the large envelope.*]

Dean, I'm proud of you, and I take great pleasure in handing you these pledges—with no conditions whatsoever.

MICHAEL

But the four thousand—

CULLEN

Mere talk.

MICHAEL

And the alternative?

CULLEN

Utter nonsense.

MICHAEL

[*Taking the envelope mechanically.*]

Very wonderful! Very incredible! Mater, what do you know of all this?

MATER

You have told me frequently, Michael, how little I know of politics.

MICHAEL

Have you done what is right unscrupulously?

MATER

Oh, quite unscrupulously.

MICHAEL

And remembered your promise?

MATER

Of course I've remembered it.

MICHAEL

Well, sir, I accept these pledges—with no conditions. I ask pardon for my excitement, but I ask no pardon for continuing to distrust you. And until you can provide me with some less fantastic reason for your sudden change of attitude than this sudden relief from sciatica, I will ask you to leave this house immediately and permanently.

[*Crossing to the door, lower left, Michael—about to go out—pauses a moment on the threshold.*]

CULLEN

Of course, Dean, I will take my leave. But I feel sure that when you come to look at my sciatica from a different point of view—

MICHAEL

[*Exploding.*]

Point of view again! Points of view, sir, are points of the devil's horns. They sprout as fast as they moult. Your practical politician wears them for a helmet in the arena, and as fast as his antagonist blunts one, the tip o' t'other sharpens and gleams in his eyebrow.

[*Thundering.*]

When the Cimmerian Pluto, sir, vacated his throne to a sophist—

MATER

[*Who has watched Michael with a glow of maternal admiration, now no longer containing herself, claps her hands with delight.*]

Isn't he a *poet*! Dear Mr. Cullen, isn't he a poet?

MICHAEL

[Glaring at Mater and Cullen, who burst simultaneously into applause and laughter.]

Damnation!

[He rushes out, slamming the door.]

ACT II

ACT II

A few days later. Afternoon.

The curtains of the window are almost closed, admitting only a slit of light. The hallway curtains are also drawn. On the table is an ironing-board; beneath it, a tablecloth hangs to the floor; upon it, a pressing-iron, and a pair of black trousers. On the front edge of the table, a glass, half filled with a milky liquid, stands on a silver tray, on which is also a teaspoon. Near by, a small pitcher. In various parts of the room are vases filled with yellow flowers.

On the divan (his head toward the audience) lies MICHAEL, with a dark green silk neckerchief laid over his eyes. Owing to the piled-up pillows and the shawl which covers him, his form is hardly discernible. A tall folding-screen shuts off the divan partly from the rest of the room, obstructing the meagre light that comes from the window. Near the head of the divan, seated beside the pillows, MATER is stroking Michael's brow and hair with the lightest of touches. In her dress are fastened yellow cowslips.

MATER

[*Singing.*]

Sleep, dearie, sleep!

I saw the first star peep.

As soon as the solemn day is done,

The stars and dreams begin their fun.

Dearie boy,
Weary boy, sleep!

[*Ceasing, she sits motionless for a moment, watching his breathing; then she rises quietly, tiptoes round the screen to the table, lifts the pressing-iron, tests its heat with a moistened finger, spreads out the trousers and begins to press them.*

Michael stirs and moans. Mater stops and looks anxiously toward him; begins then softly to sing again, resuming her work as she does so.]

Hush thee, my bonny, thy cradle is green,
Father's a nobleman, mother's a queen.

[*Enter from the hall MARY, wearing her hat. This she takes off, goes to the screen, looks at Michael and speaks low and feelingly.*]

MARY

How long has he been asleep?

MATER

[*Answering in a like undertone.*]

Half an hour. His first day-nap for a fortnight. He's been over-working so terribly. Thank God election day is here at last!

MARY

What did the doctor say?

MATER

He fears nervous prostration. Said everything would depend on to-day — on whether he's elected.

MARY

[*Anxiously.*]

Everything! How?

MATER

My dear, he said if Michael should be beaten, disappointed now in his ambition, he might be "down and out for always—an invalid." Those were his very words.

MARY

Don't speak them. Poor boy! I was sure that rally last night would be the last straw. It did up even me. And now I've been watching round the polls all morning—I'm a wreck!

MATER

[*With affectionate banter.*]

Dear Mollykins! You do look rather green in the gills.

MARY

[*Irritated.*]

I don't either.—How absurd of you, mother, to be doing this here!

MATER

Ironing?

MARY

Trousers!

MATER

I hope I may scratch for my own chick and child, and still keep a wing over him.

MARY

Why didn't he send for the tailor?

MATER

Hush!

[*Beckoning Mary farther from the screen.*]

So he did! And do you think I would allow a tailor with nine undisinfected children to carry off my boy's trousers, and he lying helpless? Gracious, girl! To put your legs into measles-germs and chicken-pox — I hope *you'll* never do such things.

MARY

I wish *you* would never *think* such things! And I wish you wouldn't *wear* such things.

MATER

Cowslips? I love cowslips.

MARY

Well, if that Mr. Cullen is such a ninny as to send me yellow flowers every day —

MATER

Oh, but he doesn't. He sends them to *me* — Miss Dean, you know.

MARY

Then you ought to be all the more ashamed to wear them. You bowed to him in the Park yesterday. Really, if you're not more careful, he may misunderstand it.

MATER

I devoutly hope he will.

MARY

Now, what do you mean by that?

MATER

Who knows, my dear? He's so devoted — and he might be so useful

[*Glancing toward the divan.*]

to Michael boy. — Would it surprise you?

MARY

[*With wide eyes.*]

What?

MATER

[*Softly shaking her.*]

Stupid! Don't you see? I have half a mind to —

MARY

To what?

MATER

Run for the legislature myself.

[*At Mary's expression of dense disgust, she breaks into laughter, which she instantly stifles.*]

MARY

Of all preposterous things —

MATER

MATER

But fascinating, my dear! It's a fascinating art.

MARY

An art!

MATER

This acting. It's such fun, and so ticklish! It's like first skating — there are so many ways to trip and see stars. If you make a false entrance, miss a cue or take a wrong one, lose track of who you are, or forget how to improvise — bing! lights out; down comes the curtain and out goes your reputation. Ah, but it's rare sport while it lasts. We must take to the stage, Mary, you and I.

MARY

I shall take to my bed, mother, directly. I'm worn out listening to speeches.

MATER

Now that's sensible; have a good nap.

MARY

I have just written this letter to Rudolf.

[*Handing it.*]

Give it to him when he calls.

[*Going.*]

Dear old Rudolfo! He always *does* call, though I never see him. — Read it if you like.

MATER

May I?

MARY

And wake me up, mind, just as soon as the first returns come in. There ought to be some "Extras" out before dark.

[*Yawning wearily.*]

Oh, me for the sand-man!

MATER

Sleep tight.

[*Exit MARY, lower left.*]

[*Mater returns to the divan, gazes anxiously at Michael, softly adjusts a pillow, goes to the bay-window, where she draws the curtains to a narrower slit, by the light of which she stands, reading Mary's letter with flitting smiles. From the hall, RUDOLF enters. He wears his overcoat and holds his hat. Dazed for a moment by the darkened room, he is approached — before he sees her — by Mater, who claps her hand over his lips, points to the divan and draws him to the farther corner of the room.*]

Softly — or your life!

RUDOLF

How is she?

MATER

He, you mean. He's worse. Will he be elected?

RUDOLF

Sure thing! Great weather for the votes.

MATER

How much longer to wait?

MATER

RUDOLF

The polls close at six. —

[*With a gasp, dropping his hat on the piano.*]

Well, I'll be ice-cream-soda'd !

MATER

[*With a gesture of silence.*]

You'll wake him. What's the matter ?

RUDOLF¹

[*Pointing at Mater's yoke.*]

Those ! — Cowslips, ain't they ?

MATER

Yes.

RUDOLF

That cinches it. I'm damned if I stand it any longer. No, Mater, there's no use joshing me ; you got those from Mary, and she got 'em from that grafter.

MATER

Quiet !

RUDOLF

I've tracked him, I tell you, every day, and every day to that same damn florist's store. — Yellow,² every time ! Daffodils, primroses, cowslips, yellow lilies, yellow daisies, yellow roses — Oh, he's a genuine yellow dog !

¹ The dialogue which follows between them is carried on in low tones, rising at times on Rudolf's part to a higher key, at which times — on his own or Mater's initiative — he checks himself abruptly, and lowers his voice again.

² Rudolf pronounces this as if it were *yuller*.

MATER

[*Laughing low.*]

Thoroughbred yellow!

RUDOLF

And I tracked the messenger boy here to the front door. Every morning he rung the bell. I wish I'd wrung his neck! "For Miss Dean," says he. For Miss Dean!

MATER

Well, you see she doesn't wear them herself.

RUDOLF

How do *I* know? You may be trying to let me down easy. *She* won't see me. Just because I kissed her! I can't swallow it.

MATER

Silly! She's only teasing.

RUDOLF

Teasing! Well, I tell her straight, then, if she thinks she can shuffle me into the tricks of that blackleg—

MATER

[*Holding up the letter.*]

What will you give for this?

RUDOLF

[*Snatching it.*]

From Mary! Bless her heart!

[*He rushes with it to the curtains and reads. As he does so the door-bell rings. Mater crosses to the hallway curtains, opens them a little, listens, closes them quickly and hastens to Rudolf.*]

MATER

I want you to do something for me.

RUDOLF

[*With joyous explosion.*]

Mater! She's a cracker-jack. Read it.

[*He thrusts the letter into her hands.*]

She tells me to come round right after midnight and she'll make up. Election day will be over then, you know.

MATER

What did I tell you?

[*Laying the letter on the table.*]

Now, what will you do for *me*?

RUDOLF

Anything! Pickle myself!

[*Takes up the pressing-iron.*]

MATER

Well, then, since you're in such a hurry —

RUDOLF

Who said that I —

MATER

[*Edging him toward the door, upper left.*]

Go out by the back way and give this iron to Nellie, the cook, and tell her please —

RUDOLF

But, hold on —

MATER

Here's your hat. Tell her to put it on the stove and heat it immediately. Be quick.

[*Standing in the doorway, Rudolf — his Derby hat in one hand, the iron in the other — extends his arms. Simultaneously, the hallway curtains part quietly and CULLEN enters, sees, hears, and exits precipitously, unseen.*]

RUDOLF

Mater, you're a darling! I'd like to give you a hug. Can I?

MATER

Quoth the Big-sized Bear to Goldy-locks!

[*She hugs him playfully, growling in bear-fashion; then pushes him out.*]

Now lively, Rudolf, give it to the cook.

RUDOLF

[*Outside.*]

See you at midnight.

[*Mater closes the door, and is going toward the screen, when CULLEN reënters from the hall. Mater points warningly toward the divan.*]

MATER

MATER

Asleep! — You oughtn't to have dared.

CULLEN

You got my note with the flowers?

MATER

Yellow — how nice of you to remember! But you know *he* has forbidden you the house. If he should wake —

CULLEN

Would the next room —?

MATER

Oh, I mustn't leave him. You'd better come to-morrow.

CULLEN

[Slowly, with smiling suspiciousness.]

Mightn't that be too late?

MATER

Why?

CULLEN

May I glance again at your darning-finger?

[Mater shows it.]

And where, may I ask, is the —

MATER

It's hid, of course. — How queerly you smile!

CULLEN

It's a queer day — election day.

MATER

[*With an obvious sigh of relief.*]

It will soon be over.

CULLEN

Yes, Miss Dean ; but it *isn't* over *yet*.

[*Looking at his watch.*]

It's not quite four o'clock. The ballots are counted at six.—Have you made our little announcement

[*Nodding.*]

— to him ?

MATER

[*Naïvely*]

Dear Mr. Cullen, he's *so* ill.

CULLEN

Dear Miss Dean, — may I call you *Mater* ?

MATER

[*Repressing a spring of laughter.*]

How gracious of you !

CULLEN

You're not playing with me ?

MATER

On my heart ! It's too good to be true. I was praying you would come to call me — that.

MATER

CULLEN

Like so many *other* friends of yours?

MATER

Oh, dear no! Only the family.

CULLEN

Only the family!

[*Glancing at the door where Rudolf lately went out.*]

So!

MATER

That is, except one, of course, who may *sometime*—

[*She pauses in sudden embarrassment.*]

CULLEN

[*Intensely.*]

May sometime?

MATER

[*Whispering quickly.*]

We're talking too much.

[*She hurries on tiptoe to the divan, motions silence to Cullen, turns her back on him, oblivious, and sings low beside Michael.*]

Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top,
 When the wind blows, the cradle will rock;
 When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
 And down will come baby, cradle and all.

[*Cullen, who listens captivated, moves impulsively toward her.*]

CULLEN

Dearest of women — Damn !

[*Brushing past the table, he strikes the ironing-board and knocks off the tray, glass and teaspoon from its edge. They clatter noisily on the floor. Michael starts from his sleep. Mater turns in consternation and whispers, with an agitated gesture.*]

Go ! Go !

[*Cullen ducks behind the table, the cloth of which conceals him. Michael sits up, with a startled look.*]

MICHAEL

What's the matter ?

MATER

[*Picking up the glass, etc.*]

I was fixing your egg-nog, dear, and it spilled.

MICHAEL

[*Testily.*]

You shouldn't be so careless.

[*He rises, pale and worn-looking, in his dressing-gown; rubs his eyes, and lays the dark silk neckerchief on the table.*]

MATER

Does the light still hurt ?

MICHAEL

Yes.

MATER

Did tired boy have a nice sleep ?

MATER

No, I dreamed.

MICHAEL

MATER

A penny for a dream !

MICHAEL

I saw Cullen in this room again ; I was sure I heard him talking.

MATER

[*Drawing away.*]

You were sure ?

MICHAEL

Positive — in my nightmare ! Mater, I have never understood that morning, — that hide-the-thimble nonsense. I was thinking —

MATER

But you mustn't think ! The doctor said " No." Come upstairs and we'll rest again.

MICHAEL

[*Crossing with her toward the door, lower left.*]If you are hiding any thimble from *me* —

MATER

[*Appealingly.*]

Now, boy !

MICHAEL

I said *if*, Mater. Take care ! Remember your promise. And remember, too, that never am I to set eyes on that hypocrite in this house again.

MATER

Never, dear,

[*With a twinkling glance toward the tablecloth.*]

if we can help it. So now come. I've instructed the maid that you cannot see *anybody* at all.

MICHAEL

Not till to-night.

[*With sudden melancholy.*]

To-night — Mater! What if the ballots go against me?

MATER

But they can't! My funny-bone aches, and bones are prophetic. — You are to be elected!

MICHAEL

I'm tired! — It's all the finger of fate, anyway.

MATER

Of course it is. And Fate wears a thimble.

MICHAEL

What's that?

MATER

Fate and I, my dear, are old cronies. So don't worry. She has revealed to me her omens and they are all auspicious. To-night's the new moon, and whenever the moon is new —

MICHAEL

Nonsensical little noddle!

[*Holding her temples and looking in her eyes.*]

With all the doting, patient love it contains, I wouldn't swap it for a thousand moons chock-full of destiny. —

[*Raising his forefinger.*]

So long as it never fibs!

MATER

[*Uneasily moving to the door.*]

Now we'll come?

MICHAEL

No, Mater — not with me. I'm going to my room alone. I want to think of all that's coming — to-night.

MATER

[*With affectionate reproach.*]

But, dearie, —

MICHAEL

[*With a gesture of finality.*]

I want to be alone — utterly alone.

[*Exit.*]

MATER

[*Looking after him wistfully.*]

He mustn't say that.

CULLEN¹

[*Rising from behind the tablecloth.*]

Compliments, please! Didn't I take my medicine like a man?

¹ Throughout the ensuing scene between Cullen and Mater, the dialogue is to be so rendered by the actor and actress that beneath

MATER

[Turns round with annoyance, which she represses, and looks at the floor.]

You did indeed! And my rug will never recover from it. —

Dear, dear, what a spot! And it's sinking in.

[Looking hastily round her.]

Please fetch me something to —

[He offers his handkerchief.]

Oh, thanks!

[She stoops down to wipe up the egg-nog.]

CULLEN

Don't.

[Raising her and kneeling down himself.]

Allow me.

MATER

[Handing him the small pitcher.]

Here's some water. Rub hard. — You need more light.

[She goes to the window curtains and throws them back, letting in a rush of sunshine.]

the humorous outward badinage of both, the more serious feelings of each are made evident: On Mater's part, her absent-minded thoughts of Michael, her earnest desire to play her part skilfully and her fears lest Cullen shall suspect her; on Cullen's part, a serious suspicion that Mater is playing with him, and a real feeling of enamoration for her.

CULLEN

[*On his knees, mopping.*]

Permit me to certify that this is the first time a handkerchief of mine has ever been wet with spilt milk.

MATER

[*Flashing at him a look of relief.*]

I adore you for that!

[*Cullen gets to his feet, glowing.*]

For now I know I am saved. You *won't* cry, will you, when I do tell you —

CULLEN

[*Quickly, sobering.*]

Please! — Don't tell me. We mustn't spill any more — either of us. If we did, *you* might cry, dear Mater, and it mustn't come to that.

MATER

[*With badinage.*]

You're too delightful, but really —

CULLEN

Pardon me. I merely want to remark that if you imagine our little game of hide-the-thimble is over, you are fundamentally mistaken.

I repeat: It is now a little past four o'clock. The election ballots are counted at six. Your brother's warm sentiments toward me he has lately rehearsed with eloquence, so that, in estimating my chances

in this game, I realize that I must depend on your touching devotion to him and his future career; though, I trust deeply that some tokens of my own humble devotion —

[*He holds out comically the draggled handkerchief.*]

MATER

[*In true consternation.*]

Good heavens! Do you mean that the voters' ballots can really be juggled with?

CULLEN

There again! "Juggled" fails to hit the exact viewpoint. In advanced mathematics, dear young lady, there are two distinct divisions, known as Popular Arithmetic and Political Arithmetic. The former is theoretical; the latter, practical. According, for instance, to your theoretical arithmetic, one and one make two; whereas, according to my practical computation, —

[*Looking hard at her.*]

one and one must be made one, otherwise one more must be eliminated from politics.

MATER

[*Dubiously.*]

Before to-morrow?

CULLEN

Before six o'clock; say, five-thirty.

MATER

[*Beginning to clear off the table.*]

Let me reckon a little.

[*She looks about, absent-mindedly.*]

Your arm, please. Carefully!

[*Holding Michael's trousers by the creases, she lays them over Cullen's extended left arm.*]

CULLEN

[*Smiling.*]

Only think how practical I should always be!

MATER

I've forgotten where I hid it.

[*As she takes off the tablecloth to fold it, Mary's letter drops to the floor unnoticed.*]

CULLEN

If you should ever need a mop, for example, or a suit-hanger,

[*Mater tosses the folded cloth across his right shoulder.*]

or a clothes-rack —

MATER

[*With mental decision.*]

I remember now. It's in my work-basket.

[*Standing the ironing-board against Cullen.*]

Now, if you'll put that — over here.

[*Leading the way to the closet, which she opens.*]

Inside!

CULLEN

[*Laden with ironing-board, cloths and trousers, follows awkwardly.*]

Or an auto-domestic toting-machine —

[*He puts the things in the closet.*]

MATER

[*Seating herself at the table, takes from the work-basket some socks, a darning egg and the gold thimble.*]

The whole combination outfit delivered free of charge when I exhibit this thimble to Michael! As advertised! Is that the offer?

CULLEN

[*Observing the thimble with pleasure.*]

Ha! found again! — You will also, of course, interpret to him the inscription.

MATER

Before five-thirty?

CULLEN

[*Smiling shrewdly.*]

Call it five.

MATER

Do yours wear at the heel or the toe, Mr. Cullen?

CULLEN

May I beseech you to call me *Arthur*?

MATER

MATER

[*With decisiveness.*]

Not till five-thirty! —

[*Humming as she darns.*]

Wear at the heel,
Spend a good deal.

Wear at the toe,
Spend as you go.

[*Holding up the undarned sock.*]

Michael's great toe is invincible!

CULLEN

Do you know, dear Mater, when I behold you like
this, enshrined, so to speak, in the very soul of do-
mesticity —

MATER

[*Darning.*]

Wear at the ball,
Spend not at all.

CULLEN

And when just now I listened to you crooning that
old Yankee tree-top lullaby —

MATER

There's the real national anthem for you!

CULLEN

I cannot resist thinking, after all, how aptly your
pretty nickname may become you — sometime.

MATER

[*Singing.*]

“When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.” —

[*Glancing up.*]

It's so delightfully reassuring to the baby, don't you think?

CULLEN

[*Dubiously.*]

That might depend on the baby.

MATER

[*Reassuringly.*]

But you see, he's bound to grow up a genuine American humorist. He will have learned the national doxology in the maternal nest. Whenever the wind blows, he'll be sure that *the worst is yet to come*, and he'll compose himself accordingly, with smiles, to slumber.

[*She glances up again quickly.*]

CULLEN

Was I smiling?

MATER

You should have been. Anyway, assumed a virtue, you know; for I absolutely rely on your turning out a humorist. May I depend on you?

CULLEN

[*Smiling.*]

I will try.

MATER

MATER

That's an immense relief.

CULLEN

Thank you for that faith in me. And to prove to you how fondly I aspire to deserve it, I will remind you that these are your brother's trousers, in which he may desire to incorporate himself sometime before the polls close.

MATER

Forgive me. I've been so busy patching the heel of Achilles, I forgot the arm of Paris. It must be tired.

[*Putting down her darning things, rises.*]

CULLEN

In the service of the golden Helen of Troy — never!
[*She takes the trousers. With a grimace, he painfully relaxes his left arm.*]

MATER

[*Watching him.*]

I see! It was over your left.

[*Going with the trousers.*]

I'll take these to my tree-top.

CULLEN

And I'll wait down here to watch how the wind blows.

MATER

[*Wickedly.*]

You needn't wait — if you hear a bough breaking!

[*Exit* MATER. Cullen smilingly seats himself by the table, gradually growing pensive. Mechanically he picks up a sheet of paper and an envelope from the floor at his feet, and is about to lay them upon the table. Glancing at the envelope, he brings it nearer to his eyes.]

CULLEN

“Rudolf Verbeck, Esquire”: — Rudolf!

[*He gives a glance toward the door of Mater's exit; then looks at the sheet of paper.*]

“Dearest Rudolf,

[*Hesitating an instant, he reads on.*]

“I have treated you very badly these last few days. I am so sorry, but of course I had to keep my word. You know I told you I would not speak to you again till after election. Now the great day is almost over and Michael, let us pray, will be elected, to the discomfort of his enemies — especially that horrid Mr. Cullen. Then at last I shall be free again to welcome you. I shall sit up to-night till after twelve. If you will call in at midnight, I will make up for my long silence.

Your devoted

M. D.”

[*Slowly folding up the sheet of paper, he puts both letter and envelope into his pocket.*]

M. D. — That horrid Mr. Cullen!

[*Enter, from the hallway, RUDOLF. He is out of breath, and hurries; but seeing Cullen, stops short.*]

Jehosaphat!

RUDOLF

CULLEN

Mr. Rudolf Verbeck?

RUDOLF

You!

CULLEN

My name, sir, is Cullen.

RUDOLF

And mine is Dennis! What in the devil — Oh, come! You haven't seen her?

CULLEN

You are referring perhaps to Miss Dean?

RUDOLF

Has she been here with you?

CULLEN

Ever since your abrupt departure, till a moment ago.

RUDOLF

You're a liar!

CULLEN

Your vocabulary, sir, and your inference are both in error.

RUDOLF

I tell you, it wasn't fifteen minutes ago when I left that —

[*Pauses.*]

CULLEN

When you left that iron with the cook?

RUDOLF

What? — No! Mater wouldn't do that! *She* hustle me off so that you — my God! Why, I was just coming back to get that —

CULLEN

Probably you mean this letter you forgot.

[*Rudolf stares at the letter.*]

It was my privilege to help in composing it. It has, I think you'll agree, an Homeric style of pleasantry. —

“That horrid Mr. Cullen.” — Terse, but it tells the story.

RUDOLF

Wait a minute! You're a scientific old shark and you want to Fletcherize me. You swiped that letter, and you're sponging here where you don't belong. Miss Dean is engaged to me, and you know it. So clear out!

CULLEN

She has never shown you this?

[*Takes from the work-basket the thimble.*]

RUDOLF

What's that?

CULLEN

A little engagement gift of mine. She has just been wearing it and laid it down.

MATER

RUDOLF

[*Taking it disdainfully.*]

More taffy!

CULLEN

Have you read the inscription?

RUDOLF

M. D. & A. C. Partners. — I'll be damned![*Reënter* MATER. *She starts hastily to withdraw, but is aware of Rudolf's eye upon her.*]

MATER

[*Coming in.*]

Gracious, Rudolf!

RUDOLF

So you're surprised to see me back!

MATER

I really didn't intend —

RUDOLF

You didn't intend I should see this honorable gentleman! Hustled me out of one door before he should come in t'other. — Well, I gave the iron to the cook all right.

MATER

[*Embarrassed.*]

Thank you.

RUDOLF

No, Mater! You don't mean to stand there and say it's true. Him! Him to win out, and me to get the go-by! And all those damn yellow flowers —

CULLEN

Mr. Verbeck forgot his letter.

[*Showing it.*]

MATER

[*Appalled.*]

Heaven be merciful!

RUDOLF

And you, Mater! You, of all people in the world, to contrive all this against me!

MATER

[*Looks from one to the other in chaotic perplexity; then raises her arms as in supplication.*]

✓ Melpomene and Pulcinello, befriend me! Shades of Absurdity, hallow me with your wings! If ever scowling eyebrow, scornful nostril and suspicious lip have been the altars of my sacrifice, by these now I invoke you. Listen! I lift up your hollow reed of praise. Listen, and succor your priestess on this ultimate verge of —

[*She bursts into laughter.*]

Gentlemen, I give up. The situation is too perfect; it is beyond my technique — *Bien! c'est fini!* You must hear my confession.

RUDOLF

[*In utter gloom, glowers at Cullen, who wears a faint suspicious smile of discomfiture.*]

Thanks. I don't want to hear any more. I was always slow on a joke, but I guess I've caught the point of that letter all right.

[*Goes toward the hall, stops and looks back at Cullen.*]

Congratulations!

MATER.

[*Uneasily.*]

You'll call in again about midnight! We'll make a Welsh rarebit.

RUDOLF

Of me? — Much obliged!

[*Exit down the stairs.*]

MATER

Poor, dear, dull boy! — Do you think that kind runs to suicide?

CULLEN

[*With coolness.*]

You, perhaps, are the better judge.

MATER

No, I'm sure his Dutch ancestors wouldn't let him. He *is* so dense, good soul. And to think that some day he'll be married. Lord, what children they will have! Well, if they're born in Dutch pants and spectacles, I'll disown 'em.

CULLEN

[*Twirling his watch-chain.*]

I beg to remind you —

MATER

Don't do that; you'll get it full of kinks.

CULLEN

[*Determinedly.*]

To remind you once more —

MATER

There! How good of you! I knew I'd forgotten something else.

[*Going to the book-shelves.*]

These verses — I must read them to you.

CULLEN

To swap poets with you is a privilege. But now I really must remind you —

MATER

Listen! *I* am the poet.[*She brings a sheet of paper.*]

It's mine.

CULLEN

Another song about a hero?

MATER

No; a campaign-hymn. It's a surprise for Michael. They're going to serenade him with it to-night — if he's elected.

CULLEN

I am happy you realize that he *must* be. Which reminds me —

MATER

Don't be so impatient. I'll read it to you directly. It's to be sung to old John Brown's tune.

I know Michael would love to have me read it to you — [*Keenly*] as a statesman.

[*She reads from the manuscript, gradually losing herself in it as she goes on, speaking the lines toward the end with fiery rhythm.*]

They have strewn the burning hearths of men with
darkness and with mire,
They have heaped the burning hearts of men with
ashes of desire,
Yet from out those hearts and hearths still leaps the
quick eternal fire
Whose flame is liberty.

For the freedom of the laborer is freedom from his
toil,
And freedom of the citizen is right to share the soil,
And the freedom of our country is the loosing of the
coil
That chokes posterity.

CULLEN

[*Clapping with polite applause.*]

The real Dean fire and storm-cloud ; I never observed the family resemblance before.

MATER

[*Flashing upon him a look of quick scorn.*]

Listen ! — I'm not through.

[*She reads on, merely glancing at the paper.*]

Let us who wage our devious wars, in fastness and in
 fen,
 March out and claim our birthright in the common sun
 again,
 And the battle of the beasts become the reasoning of
 men,
 And joy our harmony.

For the vote that makes a man free, bringing gladness
 to his bread,
 Is mightier than the mindless gun that leaves a million
 dead ;
 And common sense is common joy, when all is sung
 and said,
 And common sense shall be !

[*Mater stands in a kind of martial brown-study, quite oblivious of Cullen's presence.*]

CULLEN

Enigma, I have solved thee.

MATER

Splendid boy! —

MATER

[*Eagerly.*]

Do you think it will please him?

[*With a sigh.*]

Of course, though, he hates all poetifying!

CULLEN

You are talking against time. But I warn you it's in vain. —

[*Pointing overhead.*]

When you carried the trousers up there, you did not tell your brother.

MATER

How do you know?

CULLEN

Because I've heard no breaking of furniture. Now, therefore, nothing less than painful necessity forces me to reveal to you — my universal reputation. I'm an ugly character, — an unusually ugly political character. My dearest enemies will not deny that, in whatever venture has fallen to my hands, I have never failed to secure the goods. In my present venture, you — beloved lady — are the goods.

MATER

Am I loot or merchandise?

CULLEN

I trust I am no usurper. *Quid pro quo* is my coat

of arms. In brief, here are my propositions and deductions : First, you love this Verbeck.

MATER

Of course !

CULLEN

Second : you are engaged to marry him.

MATER

Really !

CULLEN

Third : in the unimpeded course of human events, you would doubtless accompany him from altar to hearthstone and rear up a disownable number of progeny in Dutch pants and spectacles.

MATER

Upon my word — what corollaries ! And can you compute the precise number by this magical mathematics ?

CULLEN

Precisely ! — An appropriate number.

MATER

Like the number of good votes in a ballot-box ?

CULLEN

You follow me perfectly. Which brings me to the fourth and last proposition : You love also your brother.

Hence, we may cancel the first three items and

dispense with Verbeck altogether. For you love your brother and your brother loves his career. But his career depends on the calculations of Cullen. Now Cullen loves you. Therefore you love in Cullen your brother's career, which is the resultant of Cullen's love for you. By final deduction, therefore, you love Cullen.

MATER

Quod erat demonstrandum!

CULLEN

So much for the proof; now for the pudding!

[With business-like tone and directness.]

You will kindly inform your brother at once that you are no longer engaged to Mr. Verbeck, but to me. In plain United States, what do you say to that?

MATER

In plain United States, *that's a corker!*

CULLEN

Miss Dean, that won't do. I wish you good afternoon.

MATER

It isn't five-thirty.

CULLEN

Good-by.

[Without looking back, he passes into the hall and down the stairs. After he has disappeared, Mater stands still an instant, fingering nervously the silk neckerchief of Michael on the table. Then she goes to the stairway and calls softly.]

MATER

Mr. Cullen! Mr. Cullen!

[*A longer pause.*]

Arthur —

[*Under her breath.*]

Cullen, Esquire!

[*She hurries back into the room. Cullen leaps up the stairway and bursts across the hall into the room.*]

CULLEN

Dearest Mater!

MATER

[*Raising an admonishing hand.*]

Listen! When I cross myself, it's a sure sign.

CULLEN

Of what?

MATER

True blue. No fibbing. Now, look.

[*She slowly crosses herself.*]

I hereby renounce and cancel all intention, promise and desire which I have ever uttered, improvised or felt, to marry Rudolf Verbeck. Is that legal?

CULLEN

Desire! You even renounce your desire?

MATER

Perhaps that's an illegal word. I cannot renounce, I suppose, what I've never felt.

MATER

CULLEN

Goldlocks, you cannot fool me so, — not since I have read this letter.

[*Showing it.*]

But I believe your sign of true blue, and so I must believe you have utterly renounced him — for me.

MATER

[*Crossing herself again.*]

But I never wrote that letter.

CULLEN

[*Trying to stop her hand.*]

Don't! Don't! You're fibbing.

MATER

[*Crossing herself faster and faster.*]

If that's a fib, I'll marry you whenever you please.

CULLEN

But is that another?

MATER

Of course it is. For I'll never marry you.

[*As Cullen makes a desperate gesture, she speaks with rippling rapidity.*]

That is, of course, if it isn't, I will. — To-morrow, if you like.

CULLEN

Done! Fibbing or fibless, you are the most fascinating woman in the world, and fibbified or not, I adore the very sound and sight of you.

MATER

[*With a dreamy pause.*]

Poor dear Mr. Cullen — don't!

CULLEN

Don't *you*! Don't try to dash me now. I won't be dashed.

MATER

Who could have imagined it!

CULLEN

What, that I —

MATER

No. Me! I have a new symptom. It's awful! I'm beginning to feel sorry for you.

CULLEN

Pity, saith the poet, is the mother of love.

MATER

[*Quickly, with naïve relief.*]

That's it, I suppose. That makes me feel better already. Especially as you ought really — really to have some one to look after you.

MATER

CULLEN

[*With amorous cadence.*]And will not *you*?

MATER

[*Maternally.*]

Of course I will.

[*Looking intently just below his chin.*]And so, from the first, I want you to promise *me* something.

CULLEN

With all my heart.

MATER

No, your throat. Promise me not to send your collars to a Chinese laundry. So many of those coolies have tuberculosis, and you know how they — well, how they — you know, what the little Tritons on street fountains do.

CULLEN

[*Bursting into laughter.*]

Oh, wonderful!

MATER

[*Momentarily puffing her cheeks.*]Only not so prettily! *Promise me?*

CULLEN

Eternally!

[*Mater, darting to the piano, strikes the first chords of the song "Oh, Promise Me!" As Cullen springs to her side, she breaks off abruptly, and stares straight ahead of her.*]

MATER

Demon, demon, you're at it again!

CULLEN

Is it quite polite to call me *demon*?

MATER

Oh, not you.

[*Pointing at the air in front of her.*]

Him!

CULLEN

Who?

MATER

[*Darkly.*]

My familiar slave and master.

CULLEN

[*Puzzled at her expression.*]

The devil!

MATER

Exactly! All the bewitching ladies have little devils to serve them,

[*Sighing.*]

whom they also serve. So do the great sages. Socrates had one; *you* remember.

CULLEN

Is that a guess at my age?

MATER

Now *my* demon — Do you want to know what he's like?

CULLEN

I *must* know.

MATER

Usually he's a faun and on tiptoe he stands about

[*Measuring about an inch with her fingers.*]

so high, though sometimes he shoots up so tall that he shakes the stars from his curls. He's all kinds of artists and philosophers. First, a musician; he has composed a *Symphonie Comique*, in which he plays himself; and whenever the tender violins grow melancholy, he bleats on his droll bassoon — so nearly off the key, that it gives you shivers of fun to hear his new-found harmony. Next, a painter; he has a color-box called Paradox, with brushes of lamb's wool, and with these he will retouch a middle-aged Mamma to pass for a *débutante* in the eyes of a lover. Then he's a biologist; he puts fleas in men's ears, which they can never scratch out; and bees in their bonnets, that don't sting but buzz them to death; and lap-dog puppies on the sills of their doors; whereupon he cries, "Wolf! wolf!" and howls horridly with laughter. Most of all, he's a Humanist. He will put on the cloak of Erasmus, the cap of La Fontaine and the girdle of Gargantua, and, mounting the rostrum of an American thimble, harangue the nation through the eye of a needle. Oh, he's an adorable demon!

CULLEN

So this is your guide and mentor?

MATER

And true love! To be honest, I know he's a fib, a tease and a March-hare. That's why I introduced you. *You* will appreciate him. He's Michael's abomination. Michael can't bear to hear me even mention his names.

CULLEN

Names! Has he more than one?

MATER

Lots! Sometimes I call him Plato, sometimes Punch; but his formal family title is Conscience.

CULLEN

[*Passionately.*]

You captivating girl! Can you guess how you have bewildered —

MATER

No, no! You mustn't.

[*She starts from him to the edge of the piano, where she stands with a look half frightened, half abstracted, while he speaks to her.*]

CULLEN

You *must* let me stutter — cry out. My gladness hurts. You've burst upon me sudden and strange, like a sharp memory — a dear sickness in childhood, a first spring-day in the country. I am petulant with the joy of you, faint with the wonder. I don't recog-

nize even my voice, my words, the beautiful world in this room.

MATER

How could I!

CULLEN

Years, cold hard years of gray business and dull rascality — they're brushed to the horizon, and here you are blooming instead; and here I am speaking once more the heart of me — sharing with you fancy and beauty and love, just as once I used to share them in college days with my books, and the warm fields, golden with young cattle and the sunset. I don't know myself, Mater; you have made me all over.

MATER

Dear me! Dear me! What a wretch!

CULLEN

Oh, I know; I'm a chump and a rascal.

MATER

Purgatory's too good!

CULLEN

I have played a political trick and I'm forcing you to step into your brother's trap to save him. So be it! I cannot, I *will* not lose you. Only believe me — though it's a rascal that catches you, it's a better fellow will keep you. Once you declare yourself mine — I'll lay out my life to be worthy of you.

MATER

Now it's all up. I cannot possibly go on.

CULLEN

You can't believe me?

MATER

But worse yet, I *ought* to go on—now. You'd never forgive me.

CULLEN

Do you care what I'd do?

MATER

But worst of all, I *must* go on. Oh, I'll never forgive you.

CULLEN

For what blackest of my sins?

MATER

Treachery. I deposited all my faith in you, and now you have failed.

CULLEN

How can you speak so?

MATER

How can you *look* so? I *told* you to be a humorist, and you said you'd try.

CULLEN

Dear one, all that nonsense is passed away.

MATER

MATER

Sic transit gloria![*She feels for her handkerchief.*]

CULLEN

[*Appealingly.*]

Mater!

MATER

No! While you were witty, it was all right.

CULLEN

Mater, you're not crying?

MATER

Yes — probably! There seems to be no end to it.
Now I'm beginning to feel sorry for myself.

CULLEN

You are an angel.

MATER

You don't know me. I'm a desert. But Moses
smote the rock, and whosoever smiteth the rock of
my self-pity —

CULLEN

Please!

MATER

After him — the deluge!

CULLEN

[*Dropping beside her, snatches her hand.*]

Dearest —

[*He kisses it.*]

MATER

[Starting away.]

Don't, don't!

[Enter MICHAEL. He strides toward Cullen.]

MICHAEL

How dare you!

MATER

Michael! Be careful! There's too much light.

[She springs to the curtains and partly draws them, obscuring the room.]

MICHAEL

[To Cullen.]

Explain again! Can you?

CULLEN

[Starting to his feet.]

Ask her.

MATER

Shade your eyes, boy. Sit down.

MICHAEL

[Ignoring her.]

First you try to taint my honor in the nation, and now in my family.

CULLEN

[Tense and quiet.]

Ask her.

MICHAEL

Did he sneak in the window, Mater? Or up the back-stairs? Look out for your silver and trinkets. We'd better search him.

MATER

Don't rack your voice so, dear. And your poor head! Remember what the doctor —

MICHAEL

He touched *you!*

MATER

There, there! Mr. Cullen was just telling me —

MICHAEL

[*Staring at her.*]

What! — What!

MATER

In the course of our conversation —

MICHAEL

You received him! You spoke with him again after — You've lied to me! All the worse for him.

MATER

Michael!

MICHAEL

[*To Cullen.*]

Go, or I'll put you out with my own hands.

CULLEN

[*Imperturbably, looking from his watch to Mater.*]

Five o'clock.

[*He walks slowly toward the hall.*]

MICHAEL

Faster!

[*He moves toward Cullen; Mater comes between.*]

MATER

Don't! Mr. Cullen has just asked me — Oh, Michael!

MICHAEL

[*Glaring.*]

Quick!

MATER

To marry him.

MICHAEL

[*To Cullen.*]

You infamous —

MATER

Wait! And I have just — consented — with conditions.

MICHAEL

Consented!

[*He stares at Mater, and sways.*]

You're stark mad.

MATER

Oh, no, I'm quite calm. See!

[*Looking at Cullen.*]

We both are.

MICHAEL

Then God curse him and you and all of us! Better. He'd kill you in your calmness and me — me in this —

MATER

Boy! My boy!

MICHAEL

[*Pointing toward the portrait.*]

You stood here with me.

MATER

[*With poignant appeal.*]

Please don't!

MICHAEL

You stood here with me. You stood here with me. It was on his anniversary.

MATER

Stop! I can't bear it. I'll explain every bit.

MICHAEL

Now *you'll* explain, too! He's given you the plague. — *Hide-the-thimble!* That was the game! — Go!

[*Driving her by his gesture toward the hall.*]

Go with him! Hypocrites — hand in hand. Your silly head's turned. — You're a thimble — a vanity! Go! You're empty, empty, empty — all but of sinning!

MATER

[*To Cullen.*]

Come! He's too ill. — It's killing him.

[*They hurry off.*]

MICHAEL

Go, go, go, go!

[*Turning with a hoarse cry.*]

Father!

[*He falls, lying near the portrait.*]

ACT III

ACT III

The room is softly lighted by electricity through burners of amber-colored glass. The bay-window curtains are partly drawn, as at the end of Act II. Between them glows the whiter light of an unseen arc lamp outdoors.

On the divan sits MICHAEL — his head in his hands. Near him stands MARY. From outside comes the clamor of distant horns and bells and shouting, with occasional detonations of fireworks.

MARY

Listen now! They are nearer.

MICHAEL

[Looks up dully.]

You found me here, you say, — on the divan?

MARY

I found you sleeping here. I overslept myself. She didn't wake me from my nap, of course.

MICHAEL

Strange!

MARY

[Indicating a decanter and empty wine-glass on the table.]

You must have got yourself this port, after you recovered from your fainting.

MATER

MICHAEL

And I drunk that! I remember nothing of it.

[*He rises.*]

MARY

Are you stronger now?

MICHAEL

Much.

MARY

[*Listening with excitement.*]

Just hear them!

MICHAEL

And all this you've been telling me — what was it?

MARY

The flowers he sent here for Miss Dean were for *her* — not me. He mistook her from the first for your sister; and she evidently has let him believe it.

MICHAEL

[*His face twitching.*]

Stop! Don't speak of this again. It's unbearable.

[*Mary puts her hand affectionately on his shoulder. They embrace quickly; then he puts her away from him. — With the noise of approaching horns are now mingled the strains of a brass-band.*]

What time is it?

MARY

Quarter of twelve. The committee were here, and several reporters.

MICHAEL

I can't see them.

MARY

I told them to come back in an hour.

[*The shouting voices outside break irregularly and then harmoniously into the tune of "John Brown's Body." Mary rushes to the bay-window and looks out.*]

Such crowds in the street, Michael! They are marching here.

MICHAEL

I have dreamed of this for years!

[*He shuts out the sounds with his hands.*]

THE VOICES OUTSIDE

[*Singing deeply to the brazen blare of the instruments and the rhythm of marching.*]

They have strewn the burning hearths of men with
darkness and with mire,

They have heaped the burning hearts of men with
ashes of desire,

Yet from out those hearts and hearths still leaps the
quick eternal fire

Whose flame is liberty.

[*The singing ceases; cries of "Dean! Dean!" resound beneath the window; Mary makes a gesture for Michael to come; he sinks into a chair, still stopping his ears. The voices take up the song again.*]

For the freedom of the laborer is freedom from his
toil,

And freedom of the citizen is right to share the soil,

And the freedom of our country is the loosing of the
coil

That chokes posterity.

[*Cries of "Dean! Speech!" etc., and the cheering grows more insistent. Mary bends over Michael with an appealing look.*]

MICHAEL

They must go away.

MARY

They won't, till you speak to them. Come!

MICHAEL

[*Rising slowly.*]

All right. One pang is no worse than the other.

[*He goes to the casement and throws it open. Mary accompanies him, but sits far back in the corner of the window-seat, left. The cheering becomes wilder. Just as Michael opens the window, there emerges [right] from behind the heavy folds of the curtain, MATER. As Michael speaks to the invisible crowd below, she stands at the edge of the curtain, watching him rapturously.*]

MICHAEL

Citizens :

You have honored me by electing me as a leader. Therefore I will honor you by leading you toward the goal I promised. That goal is civic liberty — the self-interest of each in the happiness of all. Remember, citizens, I will *lead* you, and not follow. If there be some of you who later shall vacillate or hang back,

they shall not hinder the advancing cause. I am now a captain in your ranks; and until you shall level your votes at me again and bring me down, I will remain your captain.

[*He turns from the window and the cheering outside bursts again into song, gradually diminishing in the distance.*]

MATER

[*Coming forward impetuously*]

My boy! My glorious boy!

MICHAEL

[*Staring at her.*]

Mater!

MATER

[*Throwing her arms about him.*]

Elected! At last!

MICHAEL

[*Putting her back, with a shudder.*]

At last!

MATER

Didn't you like your serenade?

[*Gazes an instant, then turns toward Mary, frightened.*]

Is he worse?

MARY

[*With fierceness.*]

Will you torture him now?

MATER

Torture!

MATER

MARY

So *that* was why you wore them!

MATER

[*Smiling.*]

Yes. Didn't it work well!

MARY

Oh, it's unspeakable!

[*She rushes from the room.*]

MATER

[*Bewildered.*]

Hasn't she told you? — The absurd mix-up?

MICHAEL

Mother and daughter: Yes. She has told me.

MATER

That's good. Then the play's over. — Well, I'm waiting for bouquets.

MICHAEL

[*Smiling painfully.*]

Of daffodils?

MATER

Anything yellow and becoming. Wasn't I monstrously clever?

MICHAEL

Monstrously, monstrously! — For you *are* a mother.

MATER

And fat and forty, my dear! To impersonate your own progeny in the sere and yellow, when, as Shakespeare has it, "The heydey in the blood is tame," and so, to lure your delightful villain lover into the secret tower of your family, and there — with the blazing edge of a life-membership ticket — to blind him, and bind him body and soul, till the election bells ring out "Liberty and Life-work!" to the hero — There's the imagination of Molière and the *finesse* of Rachel!

MICHAEL

What devil has sent you here to damn me like this?

MATER

[*Pausing, as if struck.*]

Boysie! Don't you understand?

MICHAEL

Of course I understand. And for the first time in my life, I curse God for understanding.

MATER

Forgive me. You're weak and ill. I was so happy I'd almost forgot. Forgive me.

MICHAEL

You come to me now — *now* to ask forgiveness? Don't tempt me beyond my strength. I have cursed God and myself; don't —

MATER

[*Starting to leave.*]

I'll go, dear. Rest awhile.

MATER

MICHAEL

[*Detaining her.*]

No; but you shall not go. Now is as good as never. Perhaps when you are gone, you might forget to ask again. And then to remind you — I myself might forget my duty.

MATER

Duty!

MICHAEL

But since you have forgot so much — so be it! You hated anniversaries, you told me. Now I know why. But you love your old poetry and superstitions. Listen, then!

[*The clock is striking twelve.*]

Midnight: At this hour, your forgotten shall return again. Once before you showed him to me in a glass; now I show him to you in the flesh.

[*Imperiously.*]

Look at me, Mater. Do you remember *now*?

MATER

[*Pensively.*]

All but the name.

MICHAEL

Must I speak it again and remind you how sacred a name —

MATER

[*With gentle reserve.*]

No, boy; you cannot speak it; for not even you

ever heard *that* name he called me by, and I will never tell you.

MICHAEL

I stand here in his place and I will rebuke—

MATER

[*With moved dignity.*]

Your mother! Not — his wife.

MICHAEL

And if it be necessary —

MATER

[*Quiet but commanding.*]

Take care, my son! He would not permit you.

[*She looks toward the portrait.*]

MICHAEL

[*No longer dictatorial, but appealingly.*]

Look there, then, Mater. Look well, and think — think of your wretched, frivolous falling-off — from such honorable manhood, to such depravity — a scoundrel —

[*Mater turns away, hiding her face from Michael. In the distance the shouts and music and bells are faintly heard. Mater listens, bowing her head convulsively.*]

Yes, it is well for you to sob, and remember.

MATER

O memorable midnight! Ever on this night, my Michael, even after a hundred years, when your childrens' children shall pass by my forgotten grave—

MICHAEL

My God! You are *laughing!*

MATER

Yes, boy; and the flowers that spring from me then shall titter in the face of my tombstone, while the little honeysuckles blow election horns, and the daffodils laugh till their petals are filled with tears.

MICHAEL

Oh, you are as light as those petals, and your tears are as unhuman. Irredeemably shallow — fickle, fickle woman! A butterfly on a daffodil — and so you are caught in his fingers; by a common hypocrite, a crooked scoundrel, a political rat —

[*Seizing her wrist.*]

Can nothing sacred make you to see yourself and him for what —

MATER

Gently, my mad prince! Mr. Cullen is not yet King of Denmark, nor even a rat in the wall; and though you have closeted your mother to show to her her own foolish little face, please don't fancy you *must be cruel only to be kind.*

MICHAEL

Mater, if ever I should go mad, it would be an inheritance from you.

MATER

“O wad some power the giftie gie us” — to find

out! Now lie down, dear. How did my port wine agree with you?

MICHAEL

You gave it to me?

MATER

Yes, you were a little —

[*Touches her forehead.*]

MICHAEL

Where's Cullen, then?

MATER

So you *will* let me explain. — I don't know where Mr. Cullen is.

MICHAEL

But you went together —

MATER

As far as the front hall. Then he begged to come back for Welsh rarebit, and I returned here to tuck you up comfily. He promised not to go near the ballot-boxes.

MICHAEL

Ballot-boxes!

MATER

And you see he has kept his word; for I have triumphed and you have been elected.

MICHAEL

By the people. How does that concern you?

MATER

Me, my dear? I *am* the people. I elected you.

MICHAEL

So you did bribe him with your gold!

MATER

Yes; so he said. "Pure gold," he called me. He admires my hair.

MICHAEL

[*Gasping.*]

What! You not only broke your word to me — Mater! You have *sold* yourself?

MATER

No; I have sold Mr. Cullen — poor man!

[*Slowly and distinctly.*]

In plain, predigested English for infants: I have *fooled* him, my dear.

MICHAEL

[*Gazes an instant, then bursts forth wildly.*]

And you have fooled *me*! I will never forgive you.

MATER

For my necessary little subterfuge?

MICHAEL

Subterfuge, in my life-work! Oh, I'll renounce my election.

MATER

And desert your country, for a fib or two of mine?

MICHAEL

A fib is a falsehood; and falsehood between mother and son is unforgivable.

MATER

But it's *right*— sometimes.

MICHAEL

No, wrong; unforgivably wrong.

MATER

Come, boy, admit: *This* time it was common sense.

MICHAEL

Common sense!

MATER

And remember you've said yourself: Nothing can be wrong when it's common sense. So kiss and make up.

MICHAEL

Make up! I see! You'll try to do with me what you did with father. You'd dissemble first—and *afterwards* you'd make up. But not so with me! Don't dream it! I will never— never make up!

[*Exit impetuously, lower left.*]

MATER

MATER

[*Repressing tears, sinks into a chair.*]

The dear old tragedy! Heighde'me!

[*CULLEN comes up the stairs and enters. He carries a white tissue-paper parcel, which he lays on the piano.*]

CULLEN

Mater!

MATER

[*Rising with a start.*]

You? Isn't it rather late — for you?

CULLEN

[*Showing his watch.*]

It's to-morrow.

MATER

[*Shaking her head.*]

To-morrow never comes.

CULLEN

But *I* have come, to ask —

MATER

After Michael? He's better. He's in the second stage already.

CULLEN

The real fact is —

MATER

There are three, you know — in the *masculine*.

CULLEN

Three stages?

MATER

In the tragedy. In the first stage, you wake up — to the feminine offence; in the second, you break up — well, anything; in the third, you make up — everything. Wake up, Break up, Make up: there's the trilogy of Man!

CULLEN

My dear Mater, as for me —

MATER

Oh, as for you, you're not even in the *first* yet. You're not likely to *wake up* till bed-time. I've set your alarm very late.

CULLEN

May I get in a word? — I've brought you a swap for the thimble.

[*Handing it.*]

MATER

A ring! So you've sent for the parson — hop, skip and jump?

CULLEN

Not as hasty as that. This is merely —

MATER

[*Taking the ring.*]

A moonstone!

MATER

CULLEN

[*Sofily.*]

In souvenir.

MATER

The stone of fickleness.

CULLEN

What?

MATER

What a lovely surprise! They will be so delighted.

CULLEN

They will?

[*The knob of the door—lower left—turns with a slight sound, the door opens a crack, and Mary coughs ostentatiously outside.*]

What's that?

MATER

That's just the click, before it goes off.

[*Enter MARY.*]

MARY

I beg your pardon.

MATER

Come in.

MARY

Didn't Rudolf say he would come?

MATER

Yes, dear; he's coming in for a Welsh rarebit. And look! See what our friend, Mr. Cullen, has brought to you and Rudolf.

MARY

[*Staring.*]For *us*? A ring!

CULLEN

[*Fidgeting.*]

My dear Miss Dean —

MATER

In souvenir of Michael's election and the announcement of your engagement to Mr. Verbeck.

MARY

[*Drawing herself up.*]

Mother!

[*A pause: Mater, with rigid, outstretched hand holding the ring toward Mary, does not stir an eyelash.*]

CULLEN

[*Barely vocalizing the word.*]*Mother?*

MATER

[*Relaxing.*]

You remember my daughter, whom you met at the Robinsons'?

[*Cullen bows slightly.*]At the *riddle* party!

CULLEN

[*Murmurs faintly.*]

“Wake up.”

[*Enter RUDOLF, from the hall.*]

MATER

MATER

[*Still holding out the ring toward Mary.*]

Such a lovely surprise!

RUDOLF

Hulloa! So I'm just in time for the ceremony.

MARY

[*Going to him eagerly.*]

Rudolf dear! You got my letter?

RUDOLF

Sure, I got it.

[*Looking at Cullen.*]

Ask him.

CULLEN

[*Mutters.*]

"Break up."

MARY

Ask whom?

RUDOLF

Your ring-partner there in the ceremony. I thought I might as well turn up for the betrothals, so as not to spoil your fun.

MARY

- Betrothals!

CULLEN

[*With a whimsical expression, takes from his pocket Mary's letter and lays it on the table beside Mater.*]

"Make up?"

[*Mater, taking it, speaks to Mary, who is gazing astounded.*]

MATER

I was showing Mr. Cullen your beautiful handwriting, dear.

MARY

[*Snatching from Mater the letter.*]

You — you showed him!

RUDOLF

[*Lifts the thimble from the table and twirls it.*]

First it was a thimble, and now it's a ring.

MARY

Is this a farce? That's mother's; it belongs to — to them.

RUDOLF

[*Beginning to read from it.*]

M.D. —

MATER

[*Taking the thimble.*]

Mother Dean, Doctor of Matrimony! — It's mine and I shall keep it always. Mr. Cullen helped me win it — as a booby prize.

CULLEN

[*Nodding.*]

Booby! — *It! It forever!*

RUDOLF

I say, but Mater —

[*Mary beckons Rudolf to the bay-window, where they converse eagerly.*]

CULLEN

“Mater!” — Mater, from you I have learned my first advanced Latin and diplomacy.

MATER

Think of me, then, as your Alma Mater.

[*Lifting from the table the big envelope.*]

Receive your diploma, with honorable mention in Politics, and go forth now to face your new world.

[*She hands to him the envelope. He takes it with mingled pleasantry and emotion.*]

CULLEN

My world! You have made it over new so frequently that now it's all nebulous fire.

MATER

So the prize graduate always feels on his Commencement.

CULLEN

Commencement! — May I then hope that even still — or must I be hopeless?

MATER

Hopeless of what?

CULLEN

That I may come again enchanted, and find you as before, enchantress, in your golden garden, with your demon —

MATER

Always! Here you shall find Judy, with thimble and needle, still fighting the battles of her baby.

CULLEN

No, but Juliet —

MATER

By any other name — may wear a thimble!

CULLEN

Why, it's a dream — ridiculous! You — you, my Madonna of the daffodils —

MATER

All madonnas must have babes, you know.

[*With happy self-satisfaction.*]

And mine's elected! I'm so much obliged for your faith in me.

CULLEN

And I for yours.

MATER

[*Triumphantly.*]

Oh, but you were transparent!

CULLEN

[*With assumed naïveté.*]

Easy, was I?

MATER

As easy as fibbing. Though, I must confess, that when you threatened me with ballot-boxes at the last minute, I trembled.

CULLEN

And *I* must confess, that when I threatened you with those ballot-boxes, I fibbed.

MATER

[*Blankly.*]

You fibbed! How is it possible?

CULLEN

Well, you see, it's possible for an expert to count two thousand votes wrong—but hardly twenty-thousand!

[*He looks at her with shrewd amusement. She frowns an instant, then beams upon him.*]

MATER

Mr. Cullen, I love you! I've done you an injustice.

[*She holds out her hand. Starting in ardent surprise, he reaches to take it.*]

You *are* a humorist, after all.

[*Cullen checks himself, smiles at her smile, bows and kisses the tips of her fingers.*]

CULLEN

I tried *hard*.

MATER

And I shall always depend on you. And Michael, I trust, will continue to prosper in politics?

CULLEN

Michael might prosper in Hell, with such a mother.

MATER

Such a devil of a mother, you *would* say?

CULLEN

I can't express — what I would say.

MARY

[*Coming forward with Rudolf.*]

Mother, I can't make it out. If that ring —

RUDOLF

And besides, Mary's been telling me —

MATER

Ha! Rudolf! You are just — how do you say it?
—*just the cheese!*

RUDOLF

What for?

MATER

For the Welsh rarebit. It's in the kitchen. Will you ask Nellie —

RUDOLF

[*Dubiously.*]

What, again? I'm all tangled up.

MATER

[*Putting one arm through his and the other around Mary.*]

Now this is what I call a true-lover's knot.

MARY

[*Embarrassed.*]

Mother!

MATER

RUDOLF

[*With enthusiasm.*]

She's all right, Mary.

MATER

[*Waving them toward the door.*]

And plenty of cheese for Mr. Cullen!

CULLEN

I regret! I regret! I would give my career to remain, but destiny forbids — and dyspepsia.

[*Lifting the white tissue-paper parcel from the piano.*]

Machiavel of ladies, within your realm of flowers, I have met — and I have lost — my better half.

MATER

He who loses — even half of himself shall find a whole kingdom.

[*Noticing the parcel.*]

What's this?

CULLEN

The white flag. Dearest Mater, — “short for Matilda,” — with this I surrender the field, with my *filial* allegiance.

[*He hands her the parcel. While she stands unwrapping the folds of paper, he goes quietly to the hall, where he pauses — her back being toward him.*]

MATER

[*Exclaiming with pleasure.*]

Pansies!

CULLEN

You'll supply the quotation.

[*He goes down the stairs.*]

MATER

[*Starting.*]

Is he gone? — *Finis!* Farewell, Romeo!

MARY

Mother, I feel sure there's a joke somewhere; I wish I could see the point.

MATER

[*Pensively.*]

I've lost sight of it myself, dear — for the moment.

MARY

[*Awkwardly caressing her.*]

Anyway — forgive me.

MATER

You darling!

[*Mussing Mary's hair and taking off her spectacles.*]

Such eyes — behind windows!

[*Pushing her toward Rudolf.*]

Now *you* go and play Juliet.

Sir Lover, light down and hunt the Rarebit for your lady-love.

RUDOLF

[*At the door.*]

Come on, Mary.

MARY

Rudolfo !

[*They go out together. From below comes the sound of a door closing. Mater, the pansies in her hands, goes to the bay-window, knocks on the pane, pushes open the casement and looks down.*]

MATER

[*Waving the flowers.*]

Remember about your laundry !

[*Tosses two or three pansies out.*]

For thoughts !

[*She waves again, closes the casement, comes to the table and drops the pansies absent-mindedly. Then she goes slowly to the piano, sits, plays and sings quietly. While she does so, Michael opens the door, upper left, and stands on the sill, in inward agitation.*]

Long ago in the old moonlight,

I lost my hero and lover ;

Strong and tender and stern and right,

Never shall night

Nor day his brow uncover. —

Ah, my heart, that is over !

[*MICHAEL enters; Mater starts up, but sits again, as he makes a moody gesture and strides darkly across the room, struggling with himself. Mater resumes.*]

Yet still, for joy of the fellowship

That bound us both through the years long after,

I laugh to think how he bit his lip,

For the test of love —

And the best of love — is laughter.

MICHAEL

[*Hoarsely.*]

Mater! You're right. It's common sense. I
make up.

MATER

[*Darting to his arms.*]

Ah, my hero!

[*Clinging to him, she looks past him— smiling through tears
— toward the portrait.*]

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