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NEW SERIES IV.

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A · QUARTERLY · MAGAZINE · OF · LETTERS

SECOND NUMBER.

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POET-LORE

Vol. XII. No. 2

--wilt thou not haply saie,
Truth needs no collour with his collour fixt,
Beautie no pensell, beauties truth to lay:
But best is best if never intermixt.

Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse no silence so, for 't lies in thee,
To make him much outlive a gilded tombe:
And to be praised of ages yet to be.
Then do thy office----

THE THREE HERON'S FEATHERS.

BY HERMANN SUDERMANN.

Characters.

The Queen of Samland.
The young Prince, her son.
Anna Goldhair, her attendant.
Cölestin, her Major-domo.
The Chancellor.
Widwolf, Duke of Gotland.
Prince Witte.
Hans Lorbass, his servant.

Sköll,
Ottar,
Gylf,
} The Duke's men.

The Burial-wife.
Miklas, a peasant.
An old fisherman, a page, councillors, men and women of the Queen, the Duke's men, the people.

The scene of the first and fifth acts is laid on the coast of Samland; that of the second, third, and fourth acts in the capital city.

Between the fourth and fifth acts a period of fifteen years elapses.

ACT I.

The coast of Samland. The background slopes upward at right and left to wooded hills. Between them is a gorge, behind which the sea glitters. In the right foreground are graves with wooden head-boards and crosses, overgrown with shrubbery. At the left is a stout watch-tower with a door in it. Common household furniture stands about the threshold.

Scene 1.

HANS LORBASS *seated on a grave with spade and shovel, a freshly dug mound behind him.*

Hans Lorbass [*sings*].

Behind a juniper bush,
On a night in July warm and red,
Was my poor mother of me brought to bed
[*Speaking*]. And knew not how.

Behind a juniper bush,

Between cock's crow and morning red,
I struck in drink my father dead,
[*Speaking*]. And new not who.

Behind a juniper bush,
When all the vermin have had their bite,
I'll stretch myself out and give up the fight
[*Speaking*]. Still I know not when.

Yet one thing I know: anywhere hereabouts, a mile-stone or a cross-roads will do very well some day; I do not need a juniper bush. Let us say a garden hedge, that is a pleasant spot. If some day it should come into my head to lie down beneath one, in the tall grass, nearby a grave, and quietly turn my back on this dry, burnt-out old world, who--a plague upon him--would have aught to say against it? Here I sit and munch my crusts, and hold carouse--on water; [*getting up*] here I stand and dig graves, a free-will servant to weakness. I dig the graves of the unnamed, unknown, when icy waves toss them rotting on the shore, tangled in slimy sea-weed. Once all my thoughts were wont to follow on the foeman's path, to cleave him through with my blithely swinging sword, to carve my path straight through the solid rock; yet now I stand here and smile submission at a woman. But I bide my time until my master comes again knocking to set me free from my graveyard prison and breathe new life into my frame. Him at whose side I once stood guardian-like with fiercest zeal, him will I serve again with all my love and life, and follow like a dog.... Like a dog, yes, but like a master, too. For it is strength alone that wins the day at last, in all the brave deeds done upon this earth. And only he who laughs can win. The victory is never to the weakling whiner, nor to the man whose rage can master him; as little does it crown the man whose mind is woman-ruled; but less than these and least of all will it bless him who dreams away his life. For that I stole and sweated to secure,--his future good,--for that I sit now fixed firm within his soul,--I his servant and avenger! Here comes the old one. Never yet have I owned myself conquered by any soul on earth.... And yet--when she comes peering into my affairs, I feel as though I might become--I don't know what! I begin to know what strength is in sweet words; I feel a readiness for any sort of bout; my spirits swell to bursting roisteringness,--and yet I have not the shadow of a cause for any such ideas.

Burial-wife [*entering*]. Tell me, my little Hans, hast been industrious? Hast made a fine soft bed?

Hans. I am no Hans of thine. My name is Hans Lorbass. A knave who stalks stiff-necked and solemn up and down the world does not much relish being treated like a child.

Burial-wife. Thou art my dear child none the less. Only grow old and gray; and then shall thy body bear its scars and thy soul its sins back to the old wife.

Hans. Not yet.

Burial-wife. Thou hast dug many a deep still grave for me; many a wanderer will come and find rest, therein. Over the gray path of the boundless sea will each one come bringing his life's sorrow to lay it here upon my bosom. I open wide my arms to them as my father bade me, and blessing them I thus absolve myself from suffering and penance. Beneath my breath sin and crime straightway disappear;--and smilingly I bear all my dear children to their rest.

Hans. Not me. What concern hast thou with me? It is true thou holdest me here within thy grave-yard prison and compellest me to play the grave-digger with blows and taunts; but let my prince once come this way again, and not another hour of service shalt thou have.... My prince, my gold-prince! My sweet lad! How I could burst with a single leap straight to thy side through all the world, and with my too-long-idle sword hurl down to hell the coward pack that presses round thee!... And thou art all to blame,--yes, all. He had already quite enough agonizing longings, unfulfilled desires; but thou must needs fan the warmly glowing flames to a devouring blaze. It was thou that lured him into that adventure, that willed his braving danger singlehanded; and if he cracks the accursed nut, if I see the foam curl again about his prow,--even if I clasp him to me and feel him safe indeed,--who shall tell me that after all his prize is worth his pains? Where is that woman thou hast showed to him, that pattern of beauty and purity, that paragon of softness and strength, she who was born to steal away his other longings,--where is she?--show her to me!

Burial-wife. My little Hans, my son, why stormest thou so?

Hans. Let me curse.

Burial-wife. Hush thee, and lie down here beside me on the straw, and listen what I tell thee.

Hans. On the grave-straw? [*Lies down with a grimace.*]

Burial-wife. There landed two men yonder on a golden spring day, and wandered lost like wild things through the thicket. Who were they?

Hans. I and my master were the two. The villainy of his step-brother had rent from him his throne and kingdom. He was too young, he was too weak,--there lay the blame.

Burial-wife. Yet he was blustering and drew his sword and demanded with storm and threat that I should grant a wish for him. Still thou knowest him, my dear son?

Hans. Do I know him!

Burial-wife. "Thou desirest the fairest of women for thy bride?" I said. "She is not here; but if thou dost not shrink before the danger, I can show thee the way, my son."

Hans. The way to death!

Burial-wife. "There lies an isle in the northern seas, where day and night are merged in dawn; never more shall he rejoice at sight of home who loses his path there in a storm. There lies thy path. And there, where the holy word is never taught, within a crystal house there lives a wild heron, worshiped as a god. From that heron thou must pluck three feathers out and bring them hither."

Hans. And if he brings them?

Burial-wife. Then I will make him conscious of miraculous power, through which he shall find and bind her to himself who awaits him in night and need; for by this deed he grows a man, and worth the prize.

Hans. And then? When he has got her, and sighs and coos and lies in her bosom half a hundred years, when he turns himself a very woman, I shall be the last to wonder at it. Look! [*he picks up a piece of amber*] I shovelled this shining glittering bauble out of the dune-sand. I have heaped up whole bushels of it in my greedy zeal. Now, as I toss from me this sticky mass of resin, that borrows the name and place of a stone, so with the act I hurl away in mocking laughter these many-colored lies of womankind. [*He tosses the lump to the ground.*] Now go and brew my evening draught. I will to the sea to seek my master. [*He goes out to the right. The* BURIAL-WIFE *looks after him grinning and goes into the tower.*]

Ottar [*sticking his head through the bushes*]. Holloa, Gylf!

Gylf [*coming out*]. What is it? [*The others also appear.*]

Ottar. Here is the tower, here lie the graves in a sandy spot; run below to the Duke and tell him; not a man to be seen, not even a worm, naught but a burying-ground, rooted up and worried as though we had been haunting it ourselves. [GYLF *goes out.*]

Sköll. Nay, for we would have saved some of our loved dead for the raven, we would not have been so stingy as to bury them straightway. [*They all laugh.*]

The First [*pointing out to sea*].--Ho--there!

Ottar. What's the matter?

The First. Does not the boat pass there that yesterday crossed our path on the high seas, whose steersman threatened fight with our dragon? How comes the bold rascal here?

The Second [*who has raised up the lump of amber*]. I tell you, comrades, let the fellow go, and look what I have found.

Ottar. Death and the devil! Then we are in Amberland.

The Third [*staring*]. That is amber?

Ottar. Give it to me!

The Second. I found it--it is mine!

Ottar. Thou gorging maw!

The Second. Thieves! Flayers!

Ottar. Dog! I'll strike thee dead!

Sköll. Be quiet, fools, there is plenty more! Go look in the tower, and you may curse me for a knave if you find the mouse-hole empty.

The First. Come.

The Two Others. Yes, come! [*The three go into the tower.*]

Sköll. Thou dost not go along?

Ottar. Thou hadst gladly got us out of the way to dig all by thyself? O, we all know thee, thou filthy fool!

Sköll [*slapping him on the back*]. More pretty words, my friend? Go on! When we are our own men on shore again, I will see what I can do;--but till that time I spare my skin.

[*The three come reeling backwards out of the tower, followed by the* Burial-wife *with raised fist.*]

Sköll. What is this?

Ottar. What do you call this? Seize her!

The First. Seize her! Easy to say! Dost thou court the palsy?

The Second. Or fits, at least!

Ottar. Cowards! [*He advances upon her. The others, except* Sköll, *follow him yelling.*]

Hans [*snatches his sword, that hangs on a tree, and throws the assailants into confusion with a blow or two*]. Ho, there! Let her alone, or--

Sköll. Look! Hans Lorbass!

The Others. Who? Our Hans?

Ottar [*rubbing his shoulder*]. How comest thou here? Thou still hast thy old strength, I find!

Sköll. Tell us, old Hans, what brings thee here? Is she thy latest love?

All [*burst out laughing*]. Hans, Hans! Poor old Hans!

Hans. Bandits! Just come on once! [*To the* Burial-wife.] How is it? I hope they have not hurt thee.

Burial-wife. None can harm me, none molest me, who has not first wronged himself and all his hopes.

Ottar [*sings*]. Ho, Hans is playing with his love!

Hans. Have a care!

[*The* Burial-wife *goes slowly into the tower.*]

Hans. It is now scarce three years since we bore within the hall our master in his ash-hewn coffin. He raised his hand already cold, and pointed with his pallid, bony finger--not toward the bastard Danish conqueror, but towards his own true son, Prince Witte; and him he left his

country's lord. The land was poor, the people rude, yet it had preserved its pride and loyalty un stained through a thousand murderous brawls. Three years ago as everybody knows, you would have murdered our young lord at summons of the Bastard and his fair promises; and now--what are you? Thieves, sand-fleas, loafers, riff-raff, haunting the moors and hiding in the thickets. Stop! I will build a gallows for you presently; my brave sword is too good for you. [*He throws down his sword. They laugh.*]

Sköll. Hanschen, has thou clean forgot who was the fiercest bloodhound of us all? Who was it always shouted "I will do it, I!" till everyone spread sail before him and left him to his work? Then wouldest thou come, wiping thy bloody hand, and laugh, and say: "My work is done!" And then one saw no more of thee. Now when we find thee and rejoice at sight of thee, thou scornest us like a pack of thieves or birds of such a feather, and playest the judge sitting above us;--fie, Hanschen, 'tis not kind of thee.

Hans. Quite right! Give us thy fist!... No use to wrangle! [*Offers his hand to one after the other. Looking at one suspiciously.*] Thou hast need of a little scouring first, I think. Children, what fine fellows you would be, if only you were not such frightful rogues. [*They laugh.*] Tell me now, what have you been at so long?

Ottar [*awkwardly*]. Who? We?

Hans. Yes, you!

Ottar. Thou wouldst draw us out then?

Hans. No need. I know that trade a thousand miles away. You are wreckers!

All [*laughing*]. Of course.

Hans [*half to himself*]. See, see!

Sköll. Only the name is not quite right. We are wreckers hereabouts; but we chiefly rob upon the high seas.

Hans. And your Duke?

Ottar. There's a man! He stands foremost in the attack. When the grappling-irons lay hold, when the javelin whistles in the air, when down upon the rashly canted dragon crashes the boarding-plank, when above they wait like calves for the slaughter, then rings his murder-cry: Ho huzzah!

All. Ho huzzah!

Hans [*half to himself*]. It must be fine. [*Aloud.*] Then in the battle--how shows he there?

Ottar. In what battle? We have no more battles.

Hans. So, so! I just bethought myself. One question more: How come you here?

Sköll. Hast thou not taken our measure, then? Take notice of my sparkling glance--its tender fire: observe his air, like to a love-sick cock's: Do we not smell of myrrh and balm! In short, we go to gaze upon the bride.

Hans. Who, then?

Ottar. Who? Dost thou mock at us? Thou livest here and yet thou hast not heard of the Amberqueen, the marvel of beauty who has sworn to yield herself and her throne to the man that is victorious in a tournament for life and death, and bears all her other suitors to the earth? The fair one is a widow, the heir an orphan; so it is meat and drink to him who throws the others by the heels.

Hans. Are you so sure of it?

Ottar. Well, where is the man who cares to try conclusions with our Duke?

Hans [*to himself*], I reared one who will strike him down some day.

[*Enter* DUKE WIDWOLF *and more of his men.*]

Duke. Why stand you there? Did I send you ahead to chatter? On with you! What stops your mouths? Clear the way! And if I find you sluggish I will call out my cat-o'-nine-tails for you.

Hans [*aside to the first man, who stands near him*]. He drubs you then?

The First. Past bearing.

Duke. Who is that man that speaks with you? Why have you not already struck him down?

Sköll. He is so droll, master, he would not let himself be killed.

Duke. Meseems ... Hans Lorbass--do I see aright? What--what?... Thou knowest I am in thy debt for business secretly done. I love not debts between master and man.

Hans. No need, my lord, I have my pay.

Duke. At first thou seemedst to serve me diligently; yet thou didst slip as suddenly from my throne as though thou hadst an ailing conscience.

Hans [*gazing out to sea.*] Perhaps. It may be.

Duke. Where hast thou stayed so long?

Hans [*without stirring*]. I am a servant. I have served.

Duke. What drivest thou now?

Hans. I drive naught, my lord, I am driven.

Duke [*threateningly*]. It pleases thee to jest.

Hans. And thee to be galled thereat.

Duke. That fellow's corpse was never found! Now clear thyself from the suspicion.

Hans. Think what thou wilt. Covered with wounds I sunk it in the ocean's depths.

Duke. I trust thee. If thou wilt swear thy truth to me, then come. With me all is feasting and revelry.

Hans [*looking out to sea again*]. Thank thee, my lord. I care not to do murder, and I can play the robber by myself.

Duke. Seize him.

Sköll [*beseechingly*]. Master, our dearest companion, who never yet has played us false.

[DUKE *draws his sword and makes as if to attack* HANS.]

Hans [*gripping his sword and flourishing it high in the air.*] Thou art the master and wonted to victory; but come too near, and thou hast only been the master!

Duke. Well, leave him then upon the path where thou hast found him. I had wellnigh killed instead of paying him.

[*He goes out. The others follow. Some of them shake* HANS LORBASS *furtively by the hand.*]

Hans [*alone*]. Then there is something holds his spirit in bonds; will make his race a race of weaklings, will plunge the land itself in guilt,--and yet they know not their own shame.... Right! Just now I saw something. Did I not behold, not far from land a blood-red sail a-dazzle against the blue night cloud? The keel bore sharply toward the shore--how gladly would I believe the old wife there, when--truly, it frets me so I must--[*He goes to the tower and is about to open the door.* PRINCE WITTE *appears in the background.*]

Hans [*casting himself at the* PRINCE'S *feet with a shout of joy*]. Master!--Thou hast come! Art thou safe? Unharmed? Here is thy nose--both ears--thy arm--and there thy sword! Thy voice alone is lost, it seems.

Prince. Let me be silent, friend. The horror I have seen stands black about me and takes the color from my joy.

Hans. What is that, now thou art here? [*Stammering.*] And even if thy journey were in vain, if thou hast not brought the heron's feathers back with thee, what is--

Prince. I brought not the heron's feathers with me? My nightly watches, twilight's scanty rest, the morning's ardent fiery prayers, and more than all, the consecrated labor of the day, wherein what has been obtained from God with tears, must be besieged anew with fierce resolve, and conquered by the teeth-set "I will," won by obstinate unshrinking,--sorrow--doubt--danger--struggle--unsuccess to-day and new onslaught tomorrow--and so on and on--and always forward--have I all this behind me, and yet have I returned without the feathers?

Hans. Thou hast the feathers? Are they really heron's feathers, from the very bird?

Prince. Set thy fears at rest; the wonder is fulfilled, and all our pains dispersed in thankful prayer.

Hans. Forgive me, dear my lord and master, that I forgot a moment the bare fact itself, to thee so all-important. I knew thou wouldst never have returned without them, however my heart thirsted after thee.

Prince. Thou wert right. I knew it well.

Hans. Where are they, master? Dost thou bear them in thy breast? I feel thou wouldest. Chide me if thou wilt, but show them to me.

Prince. Look at my helmet. I understand thy eagerness. No sword can cleave them from me, no rush of wind displace them. They are the standard of my fortunes.

Hans. Thy story, master,--come, tell it to me!

Prince. Wait, Hans. The hour will come, at drinking-time, while the dull camp-fire flickers to its end, and the fierce thirst of fighting will not let us sleep,--then will I tell the tale and make it glow anew.

Hans. Master, how changed thou art. Thy fire seems smothered, and thy passions burn less fiercely, being self-controlled.

Prince. Thou art wrong, my friend; in me there dwells no calm. I stir and seethe. Death itself, which I have conquered, reanimates in me. Only henceforth I gain by firmer paths the end which I have chosen. My country that betrayed me, lies small and half-forgotten in the distance. I measure myself against the great henceforth. What are they? Myself shall be the arbiter, and fate shall never again allure me with her cruel "Take what I offer thee" to a starvation feast.

Hans. I look at thee in wonderment. I left thee a boy, I find thee a man. And for this, though my sword has itched in my hand to answer to my thoughts, though I have sat for hours on end in gnawing tedium and spat into the sea, for this result I bless the old wife there. Once more I may strike good blows for thee, once more be proud to guard thee as before.

Prince [*giving him his hand*]. It shall be so.... Yes, yes, my lad. Since I have been gone--how long is it?

Hans. A good two years, master.

Prince. The old wife now, and quickly, that she may open to me all the enchantment lurking in the feathers, to which I trusted and surrendered myself. The time has come for this unmolded life to shape itself after the law of its own desire. Why dost thou hesitate?

Hans. I will go.

Prince. But yet thou mutterest?

Hans. Do not blame me, master; I know of what I speak. First of all, mistrust the old one. I fear her not ... but something horrible and slimy crawled in my throat when I first saw her crouching in a grave, all stiff, her brows drawn and her staring eyes turned inwards lifelessly.... When a storm stood coal-black in the heavens and gave the greedy coffins fresh food--lo, there she stood and bade me dig the graves; and when the wave cast corpses up on the strand, she bore each one up the hill pressed mother-like to her breast, shaken meanwhile with a sly laugh; and thus she laughed until they all lay quietly at rest beneath. Have a care for thyself!

Prince. Yet why? Her work is pious and she tends it faithfully.

Hans. But if she weaves enchantment, master?

Prince. I am the last from whom on that account a threat is fit. It has turned to blessing for me. To him who chooses sacrifice for his fate, there often comes the best of gifts,--to see deep into the unsearchable, and smilingly to build as though within a pleasure-park, upon the very boundary of the ideal. Once more--

Hans. And once more I stand broad-legged in thy unhappy path and shout: Do not destroy thyself! Whoever runs after his desire shall perish in the race; it only yields to him who hurls it from him. Thou dost not know as yet the old wife's schemes; thou standest now above enchantment, a young glowing god confiding in the magic of thine own strength. What thou dost know is that thy prize is hidden, and that the broad path of possibilities, on which thou thinkest to glide aloft, may be choked all at once between black walls and leave thee fevered and panting with the chase, with desire and loathing, eagerness and shrinking, to hasten on forever and never gain the end.

Prince [*pointing to his helmet with a smile*]. Look there!

Hans. Thou hast done well to bring them; if the fatal seed of death does not draw thee down to eternal failure thou must do well indeed! For now the secret purpose of thy path is about to reveal itself; now thy proud and self-poised soul pants to mount aloft,--and here I stand and counsel thee: Hurl away thy prize!

Prince. Thou ravest.

[*The* BURIAL-WIFE *appears in the door of the tower, thrown into lurid prominence by the fire that burns within on the hearth. It grows dark rapidly.*]

Hans. Too late. It has begun. [*Whispers.*] It looks as if the hearth-fire glowed straight through her parchment skin and wrapped her bones in flame.

Prince. Burial-wife! Look me in the face!

Burial-wife. Thou hast come! Welcome, dear son!

Prince. Thy dear son--I am not. Thy creditor I am, and I demand my own.

Burial-wife. What dost thou ask?

Prince. I forced from thee the words that taught me my way; the deed thou hast demanded is accomplished, and I claim the prize!

Burial-wife. What I have promised thee, I will faithfully fulfil, my child. A primal force lies within these white husks. They change their form according to their owner's will. What, then, is thy desire? A woman?

Prince. A woman? There are enough of women. More than one has borne me down to earth in the snare of her supple limbs, and hampered my soul's flight. What is a woman? A downfall and a heaviness, a darkness and a theft of alien lights, a sweet allurement in the eternal void, a smile without a thought, a cry for naught.

Hans. Bravo! Bravo!

Prince. What I demand now is that queen of women, after whom I have thirsted even while drinking, by the side of whom my princely dignity shall appear but as a herald; for whose voice my soul starves though I sit in the wisest councils of the world; in whom I see our torturing human weaknesses healed to a joyous beauty; that woman before whom I, though mad with victory, must bend my proud knee in trembling and affright; whose blushes shall bear witness to me how a longing heart can shield itself in modesty; she who will stand in deepest need and beg with me at the cross-roads; whose love can make death itself pass me by; this woman, this deep peace, this calm still world in which when lost I cannot lose myself, where wrong itself must turn to right,--this woman,--mine--I now demand of thee.

Burial-wife. Snatch down the prize from thy helmet: I will announce its promise to thee; unless thou art blind or deaf, thou shalt pierce to the depth of the riddle. The first of the feathers is but a gleam from the lights and shadows that brew about thee. When thou throwest it into the fire, thou shalt behold her image in the twilight. The second of the feathers,--mark it well--shall bring her to thee in love, for when thou burnest it alone in the dying glow, she must wander by night and appear before thee. And until the third has perished in the flame, thy hand stretched forth shall bless her; but the third burning brings her death: and therefore guard it well and think upon the end.

Prince. I will. Unwarned, I let them wave aloft in mad presumption; but now I will hide them safe within my gorget. [*To* HANS.] Why shouldst thou look at me so grimly? I know myself to be quite freed from sorrow; all I lack is a faithful companion on the way.... "When thou throwest the first into the fire thou shalt behold her image in the twilight." [*He pulls out one of the feathers and hastens toward the tower.*]

Hans [*boldly opposing him*]. What wilt thou do?

Prince. Out of the way? [*He opens the door of the tower.*]

Hans. Cursed witch, thou hast-- [*A sudden bright blaze within the tower. A flare of yellow light goes up. The Prince comes back.*] Art thou singed?

Prince [*looks about wildly*]. I see naught.

[Burial-wife *points silently to the background, where on the horizon above the sea the dark outline of a woman's figure appears and glides slowly from left to right.*]

Prince. I see in the heavens a shadowy form, rosy with flame, pierced through with light. If it be thou on whom my longing hangs, I pray thee turn thy face and lighten me! Lift the veil from thine eyes! Remain, ah, vanish not behind the stars,--step down that I may learn to love thee!... She does not hear. When we part, say how I may know thee again!... How shall I--? Her figure sways, it fades with the clouds-- was that the sign?

Hans. Thou hast bewitched him finely.

Prince. Still she is mine, as I know who I am! And should she never long to come to me, yet my soul's longings shall be stronger than she herself. Hans Lorbass, my brave fellow-soldier, take thy sword and arm thyself straightway.

Hans. I am armed. [*To the* Burial-wife.] The hangman--

Prince. Spare thy curses. She serves my happiness as best she can. Farewell! We will seek the world over, and when the first promise is fulfilled--Farewell!

Hans [*grimly*]. Farewell!

[*They go out to the left.*]

The Burial-wife [*alone*]. Go, my children, face the combat, fight boldly, wield the feathers unrestrained; when you weary, bring me back your outworn bodies, cast them here upon my shore. But till the time shall come when I will plant them like twigs in my garden, go and fight and love and dance ... for I can wait.... I can wait!

ACT. II.

Arcade on the first story of a Romanesque palace, separated in the background by a row of columns from the court below, to which steps lead down from the middle to right and left. On the platform between them, facing the court, is a throne-chair, which later is covered with a curtain. Walks lead right and left rectangularly toward the background. On the right are several steps to the back, the principal path to the castle chapel. On the left side-wall in front is a door with a stone bench near it, and to the left of that another door. On the right in front is an iron-bound outside door. Stone benches stand between the columns. The back of the buildings surrounding the court form the background of the scene. Early morning.

Scene 1.

Sköll *with his spear between his knees, asleep on a bench.* Cölestin *with a page holding a torch.*

Cölestin. Put the link out, my son. It hangs on thy tired arm too heavily.... Yes, yes, this morning many a one thinks of his bed.... What, an alarm so early? Man and steed armed?

Sköll [*in his sleep*]. Brother--thy health!

Page. Look! The fellow is still drunk.

Cölestin. How else? Would, though, the filthy wretch and his Duke too with his dissolute bravery, were smoked out of the country!... Still, I am not anxious. The Pommeranian prince--there is a man of glorious renown!--may win.

Page. I fear, my lord, thou art wrong. The horses of the Pommeranian snort below. They look as though they were about to start.

Cölestin. Hast thou seen aright? The Pommeranian?

Page. Yes.

Cölestin. I feel as though the earth itself did sway, as though my poor old head would burst in pieces. Now falls the Fatherland, which, kingless, thought it might escape from rapine; yet all the while in its own breast there stood the powerfullest of robbers. Here where a continual harvest of peace once smiled, where inborn modesty of soul once paired joyously with ingrown habit and youth grew guiltless to maturity, the ruthless hand of tyranny will henceforth rest choking on our necks, and-- [*Blows sound on the door to the right.*] Who blusters at the door? Go look.

Page [*looking through the peep-hole*]. I see a spear-shaft glitter. [*Calling.*] What wilt thou without there?

Hans Lorbass's Voice. Open the door!

Page [*calling*]. Why didst thou come up the steps? The entrance is there below.

Hans Lorbass's Voice. I know that already. I did not care to sweat there in the crowd. Open the door.

Page. What shall I do?

Cölestin. I am as wrung as though the fate of the whole country hung on the iron strength of the lock.... Give him his way.

[*The* PAGE *opens the door*, HANS LORBASS *enters*.]

Cölestin. Who art thou, and what wouldst thou here? Speak!

Hans. My master, a brave knight and skilled in arms, born far in the north, where he was betrayed in feud with his stepbrother, to atone has undertaken a journey to the Holy Sepulchre. We have but just now entered your kingdom, and crave for God's love, if not a refuge, at least a resting place.

Cölestin. Thou hast done well, my friend. Every wanderer is a welcome guest in this castle, for our Queen is one from whose soul there flow deeds of boundless kindness to all the world. From to-day, alas!... nay, call thy knight, and if he stands on two such good legs as his servant, I warrant he has shivered many a spear.

Hans. And I warrant, my lord, that thou hast warranted rightly. [*He goes to the door and motions below*. CÖLESTIN *and the* PAGE *look out from behind him.*]

Sköll [*dreaming*]. Hans Lorbass--seize him!

[PRINCE WITTE *enters.*]

Cölestin. Here is my hand, my guest. And though thou comest here in an unhappy hour, I look within thine eye, I gaze upon thy sword, and feel as though thou hadst lifted a cruel burden from my oppressed soul.

Prince. I thank thee that thou holdest me worthy thy confidence. Yet I fear that thou art misled; it was no fate drew us together, but only chance. Thinkest thou that because I took this path I was sent to thee?

Cölestin. No, no! God forbid!--Well, unarm, my friend, ... so, so.

Hans. Whither then?

Cölestin. We have for our guests--they will show it to thee.

Prince. They crowd in early at your doors,--have I come to a festival?

Cölestin. To a ...? Stranger, there burns in me a fever of speech ... they chide the doting chatter of old men, and yet--

Prince. Thou hast chosen me for thy confidant ... I listen gladly.

Cölestin. Well then: our King, stricken with years, died and left us unprotected and afraid, for we had no guide nor saviour. The Queen, herself a child, carried trembling at her breast the babe she had borne him.... It is six years ago, and all this time have birds of prey scented the rich morsel from afar and come swooping down upon this fair land, where unmeasured riches lie. The danger grows--the people clamor for a master. And so our Queen, who had sat long sunk in modest grief, now divined in anguish her soul's call, the echo of the kingly duty, and guessed the sacrifice her land demanded. She tore in twain her widow's garlands, and made a vow that he who could bear all other suitors to her feet in battle, should be her lord and her country's king. The day has come. The lists are hung, the people crowd into the tournament. Woe to them! Their tears are doomed to fall, for all the princes who came hither have fled faint-heartedly before a single one, a man of terror, who is thus victorious without a struggle.

Prince. And this one--who is he?

[*A clamor in the court below. A* NOBLE *enters.*]

Noble. Sir Major-domo, I beg thee, hasten. The guard is in confusion. The people are already mounting the newly built lists in a countless throng.

Cölestin [*pointing below*]. Look, there is the flock; but where is the shepherd? Wait here, while I press into the thickest of the crowd and give the people a taste of my severity ... though I doubt much if it will aught avail. [*He hastens down by the middle way with the* NOBLE *and the* PAGE.]

Prince Witte. That which I long for lies not here. My sober judgment whispers warningly within my breast of delay and thoughtless dalliance. [*He seats himself on a bench to the right of the stage and looks up at the sky.*]

Sköll [*in his sleep*]. Quite right.

Hans. What's that? Eh, there, sleepy-head, wake up!

Sköll. Leave me alone! When I sleep I am happy.

Hans [*startled*]. What--Sköll?

Sköll. Hans Lor--

Hans. Hsh--sh!

Sköll. Well, old fellow, what wilt thou in this berth?

Hans. Thy master is here?

Sköll. Well, yes!

Hans. The devil take him! [*Looking round at the* PRINCE.] What now?

Sköll. What now? Why now, we will have a drink.

Hans. What draws you here!

Sköll. Thou knowest, thou rogue! We are the jolliest of jolly good fellows ever found at a wedding.

Hans [*to himself*]. Has he the strength for this redeeming act, and would it break the bonds of the madness that holds him?

[*Enter a* HERALD *from the left, behind. Then the* QUEEN, *holding the young* PRINCE *by the hand, and followed by her women. After them*, ANNA GOLDHAIR.]

Herald. Way there, the Queen approaches!

Sköll [*standing attention*]. We cannot speak when the Queen comes by.

Hans [*looking towards* PRINCE WITTE]. His soul dreams. The distance holds him spellbound.

[*The* QUEEN *and her attendants approach. She stops near* PRINCE WITTE, *who is not conscious of her presence, and gazes at him long.*]

The Young Prince [*bustling up to him*]. Here, thou strange man, dost thou not know the Queen? It is the rule that when she comes we all should rise. I am the Prince, and yet I must do it too.

Prince Witte [*rising and bowing*]. Then beg, friend, that the Queen grant me her forgiveness.

The Young Prince. That I will gladly. [*He runs back to the* QUEEN.]

[*The* QUEEN *passes on and turns again at the corner to look at* PRINCE WITTE, *who has already turned his back. Then she disappears with her women into the cathedral, from which the gleam of lights and the roll of the organ come forth. The door is closed.*]

Hans. Well, did she please thee? Hast thou found her worthy to awake thy idle sword to deeds of battle?

Prince. It would be no less than idleness for me to unsheathe my sword in her behalf; for my field of battle lies not here.

Hans. Then come. Thy path is hot. Thy path is broad!--Then hasten! Already far too long hast thou delayed before this tottering throne, from which an eye in speechless pleading calls for help.

Prince. At first, when my desires pointed from hence, didst thou not beg me to delay?--and now!--

Sköll [*aside to* HANS]. Heaven save us! Brother, who is this? I would know him a thousand miles away!

Hans [*with a gesture towards* SKÖLL, *to leave him alone*]. Perhaps I wished to test thee, or perhaps--

Sköll. All good spirits praise--

Prince. Whatever it was, I will go gladly.

Sköll [*crossing himself*]. All good spirits praise the Lord! [*Bursts out through the door to the left.*]

Prince. Why, who was that, that went out in such a hurry?

Hans. Who would it have been? Some body-servant about the castle, perhaps, some--

Prince. Where are my--?

Hans. Here is thy shield. Quick, take it.

Prince. Where is that ape that just now--

Hans. Let the filthy rascal go, whoever he is, and come!

[*Enter* Duke Widwolf. Sköll, *behind him, pointing to the* Prince.]

Duke. Hans Lorbass, thou shalt pay for this!

Hans. For what, my lord? Here are the very bones whereon thine eyes desired to feast themselves. It is true they are covered with flesh for the present, but they are there inside, I swear to thee.

Prince. Silence, Hans! This man stands above thy mockery; for though he stole my inheritance in despicable treachery, yet he wears the crown of my fathers, and I bow before it. And until heaven's cherubim call on me loudly to avenge the wrong, in practice for a better thing I bend before him, and grind my teeth.

[Duke *bursts into a loud laugh.*]

Prince. I see destruction naming in thine eyes,--thou laughest in scorn.... Laugh on. For I shall not avenge myself, nor count it my duty to shatter the fearful edifice of thy throne. So long as it will uphold thee and thy blood-blinded sword, so long be thou and thy people worthy of one another. Enough! Hans, set forth!

[Cölestin *and the other nobles come up the steps.*]

Duke. Behold, ye noble gentlemen! Blood of the cross, what a hero we have here! He halts here: makes a mighty clamor: naught has or ever can delay his march of triumph:--and then on a sudden he makes a short turn, breathes a deep sigh, and like the other poltroons, leaves the field to me.

Hans [*aside*]. Control thyself, master, all this can be borne.

Cölestin. What, stranger, art thou also of princely blood?

Prince. Whether princely or not, my blood is mine, and I myself must be the judge of what suits it. My host, I thank thee.... I would right gladly have rested here, gladly have sat down at thy hearth as a humble guest--

Cölestin. Thou earnest on the day of the tournament; and therefore thou hast come to free the Queen.

Prince. Thou callest me stranger, and will pardon me that I had heard naught of thy Queen.

Cölestin. Still thou sawest her when she and her women--

Prince. I saw her, yes.

Cölestin. And yet thou thinkest of departure? Art thou made of stone that thou hast not felt a thrust of pity like a knife, at the mere sight of that pious grace, that spring-like mildness?

Duke. Who speaks of pity, when I myself protect her with my shield? Pity?--how--wherefore? Have a care!

Cölestin. Thy threat hath no meaning today. Yet all the same I know that wert thou king, thou wouldst lay my gray head at thy feet.

Duke. Perhaps. And again perhaps, if this braggart who was sent hither and now crawls away again, did not quite take off that weak old head of thine, he would just have thee hanged, out of pure pity.

Cölestin. Thou listenest in silence to this unmeasured raving? I ask not now upon what throne thy father sat, I only ask the weakling: Art thou a man? Is this body that glows in prideful youth, only a hardly fed up paunch? Is the angry red painted upon thy brow, and yet canst thou endure and not wipe out the insult thou hast received?

Hans [*aside*]. Master, be stronger now than I have strength myself. I have naught to say, not I. Only say to me: "Hans, we will go"--and I will gulp down my rage; and never to the last day of my life shall a look, a word, a motion of an eye-lash, remind thee of what befell today.

Prince. Your eyes all hang in hopeful question on my broad-edged sword; and yet I may not tell you why I wear it, but must endure what ever you think. Still, know one thing; all the shame which he has heaped today upon my dulled heart I will add to the need by which he shattered my young days. I will reckon with him for those thirsting nights wherein I drank the poison of renunciation,--when my trust in mankind sank to ruin with my blood-defiled rights,--when in despair I reckoned my coming manhood by my growing beard,--when my fate became a lot of powerless shame,--and I will grope along the path where my desires once ranged themselves when the rousing voice of hope rang out of abyssmal blankness.... And thus the scorn I have received to-day glides past my closed ears like unwelcome flattery; and silently I go from hence.

[*The* Queen *with the young* Prince. Anna Goldhair *and her other women come from the cathedral during the last words.*]

Queen. O go not, stranger!

A Noble. Listen, the Queen!

Another. She who was never used to address a stranger.

Queen. A most unhappy woman stands before thee, and with streaming eyes casts away all the shame that modesty and rank combine to weigh her with, and prays thee: O go not! For behold! As I came to-day to God's dwelling-house full of tormenting thoughts--I saw thee on the way, thou scarce didst notice me--while I stood there before thy face longing within me that a sign might be given me, it seemed as though there flowed a something like light, like a murmuring through the spacious place, as on a festal day the sacred miracle of His presence. And a voice spoke in my heart: have faith, O woman, he came and he is thine; to thy people whose courage failed them, he shall be a hero, to thy child a father.... Then I fell thankfully upon my face. And now I beg thee: O go not!

Duke. And I tell thee, my lady Queen, he goes! I answer for it with my sword. If there is a prayer within the hero-soul of him, it runs thus: dear God, graciously be pleased to spare my reputation only as far as yonder door.

Prince. Thou liest.

Hans [*whispers*]. Now defend thyself. Treason to thy being's sanctuary is a half-voluntary deed.

Prince. Forgive me, Lady, if but hesitatingly I have sworn myself into thy service. Behold, I tread a half-obscured path, and the dim traces lead me into the far gray distance ... lead me--and I know not whither. I know not whether that great night which descends upon the crudest sorrow of our common day, bringing sleep to the wearied soul, will wrap me also in its folds, or whether as reward for that unquenched spirit in me that still must trust, endure, and spread its wings, the sunshine of the heights at last will smile upon me. I am Desire's unwearied son; I bear her token hidden in my breast, and till that token fades or disappears, well canst thou say: "Come die for me," but never canst thou say: "Remain."

Queen. Then never shalt thou hear that bitter word, that word so full of weakness, come from my trembling lips. The blessing of this hour that passes now shall never rise to distract thee on thy path in the gray distance. Yet there shall be a charm, rising unspoken in the soul itself, which when thou pausest wearied on thy journey, shall whisper to thee where a home still blooms for thee.... Where a balsam is prepared to heal thy wounded feet, bleeding from the sharpness of thy path ... where a thousand arms reach out to greet their loved one ... whence those voices rise that call to thee out of the darkness ... and where there waits a smile, smothered with joy, to say to thee: "I charmed thee not."--I will be silent, lest thou shouldst be weary of my speech; since all my words speak only this desire: it rings within thine ears,--longing must find a resting-place.

Prince. O, that mine lay not so far from here! There, where the clouds disperse in light, and the eternal sun kisses my brow, there ... Enough. Since thou hast asked no more than chance has in a measure forced me to, whether for good or evil I know not, I must needs grant thy wish. Hans, arm me.

Duke [*whispers*], Sköll, do not forget ... where are the others?

Sköll. Who knows?

Duke. But was there not a great feast to-night?

Sköll. Yes. But they flung us out just now.

Duke. Listen! And heed me well. As soon as that rascal has had enough and grovels in the dust, shout out with all thy might "Hail to King Widwolf!" Dost thou understand?

Sköll. Eh? Yes, indeed.

Anna Goldhair. Oh! dearest Lady, if I might speak I would beg thee to go. The sight of all the horrors that gather round us will shake thee sorely.

Queen. Who stays for me if I will not for him? And is it not fitting for an unhappy mother to protect the head of her child even with her own shattered arm? [*To the young* Prince.] Listen, my darling. Thou must go. [*To* Anna Goldhair.] Take him to my waiting-women. Without this sight his heart will all too soon burn with a thirst for blood.

The Young Prince. Ah, mother!

Queen. Nay, thou must. But nestle once again upon my breast, my dear one, so!

The Young Prince [*running up to* Prince Witte]. Please, thou strange man, be so good as to conquer for us!

Prince [*smiling*]. If thou art good, my Prince!... How clear their glances sparkle! From those eyes a world of sunshine bursts; alas, I am not worthy of it! [*The young* Prince *and* Anna Goldhair *go out.*]

[*The* Chancellor *and a train of nobles come up the steps. After them guards and two trumpeters. The* Chancellor *makes obeisance and asks the* Queen *a question. The* Queen *assents silently and mounts, holding by the balustrade, to the platform on which the throne stands, pushed to one side. The* Chancellor *makes a sign to the trumpeters, and they blow a signal, which echoes below, then he raises the sword, which a page brings upon a cushion.*]

Chancellor. Illustrious Lady, honored Queen, as chancellor of thy appointed realm, I offer thee this sword whereon to take the oath: that in thy hand, so strong because so weak, what first prevailed as thy country's law, what now prevails, and what shall prevail again when violence and lust cease to clutch after our soul's sanctuaries,--that law on which we have relied, so mild it was, because created by a free and happy fatherland--will be forever new and vigorous.

Queen. I swear it on the iron sword of my kingdom, and on the runes carved thereupon; though nature has denied it to a woman to avenge a violated oath with her own hand, yet I will never rest in my grave unless all is fulfilled that I have spoken. I swore it solemnly, and on this sword I will announce and reavow to you, that whosoever conquers in this fight may claim me for his wife when he desires.... Speak now, ye who cursed my mourning and my sorrow's backward glance: do I fulfill your will with shuddering? Do I not give ye the King ye seek?

[*The nobles strike their shields with their swords in token of approval.*]

Chancellor. Now to you who stand prepared to ring the throne and kingdom with the sharpness of your swords; before the land submits itself to the victor, give answer who you are!

Duke. Thou knowest me well.

Chancellor. Who knows thee not? Flames spread before thee hither like a banner, the vulture knows thee that shrieks after carrion, the auk knows thee on the blood-furrowed sea; yet custom demands, the which thou knowest not, that thou shalt name thyself at this hour.

Duke. I am the Duke of Gotland!

Hans Lorbass [*highly excited, pointing to* PRINCE WITTE]. He is the Duke of Gotland! [*Great disturbance and amazement.*]

Cölestin. We are groping here in a black riddle.

Chancellor [*to* PRINCE WITTE]. Witness thyself.

Prince Witte. If there is a man here in whom dwells a spirit of sacrifice, a worship of the right, and not of power and bloody gain, to him I speak, as to a stem of that ancient race which still springs from Gotland's gods; I boldly say: "I am." But to that vicious misbegotten wight who cringes in the dust and worships tyranny if it but prosper him, to him I say: "No, I am not."

Chancellor. A lofty mind, bred in the bitterness which deep sorrow brings, speaks in thy words and gives them weight. But yet--we know not who stands before us as the Duke of Gotland.

Duke. It seems to me, my lords, that the sword will show.

Chancellor. True enough. If the Queen will.

[*The* QUEEN *bows her head in assent. The* CHANCELLOR *gives a sign to the trumpeters and they blow a signal which is answered below in the court. The nobles make their obeisances to the* QUEEN *and go down the steps to the right and left.*]

Hans Lorbass [*meanwhile*]. Remember that thrust I showed thee once: at the arm-joint where the leather is easily cut, thou canst--

Prince Witte [*alarmed*]. Where are the feathers?

Hans. How--what--? That witch-work to distract thee now? Here is thy sword, and there the foe! Play with him, tickle him, stroke his beard, till he weeps blood out of his mouth, till--

Prince. They are quite safe.

Hans. Master!

[PRINCE WITTE *goes last behind* DUKE WIDWOLF, *with a bow to the* QUEEN *in passing. She watches him in agitation and follows him with her eyes.*]

Queen. How is the Prince?

Anna Goldhair. As children always are. At first he wept and tried to slip away. Then he lay still and had his playthings brought. Now he lies sprawling under a table, playing at dice, though he understands them not.

Queen. While we go to throw upon his life.

[*The* Queen, Cölestin, *the* Chancellor, Anna Goldhair, *and the other women go out. The guards draw the curtains behind the throne. The applause of the people greeting the* Queen *rises from the court. Then silence.*]

Sköll. Well, my heart's brother, so we are alone again.

[Hans Lorbass *without noticing* Sköll, *tries to pass the* First Guard *after* Prince Witte.]

First Guard. Back!

[Hans *tries on the other side of the curtain.*]

Second Guard. Back! The passage is forbidden.

Hans. I am the Prince's servant!

Second Guard. That may all be; but hast thou not seen--

Hans. I counsel thee, take off thy hands!

Sköll [*takes hold of his arm soothingly*]. Come, brother of my heart, be sensible, stay in thy seat; down below there is just a mob of women, and thou wouldst be no use at all.

Hans. True enough. [*The drums sound.*] The third call! Now is the time!

Sköll. Now I can put my hands in my pockets and let them break each other's necks; if I only had something to drink, then--[*as* Hans *clutches him by the arm in excitement at the first clash of swords sounding from below*] Ouch! Whew! The devil, what a grip thou hast!

Hans [*accompanying the movements below with dumb-show, which is accentuated by the noise of the crashing weapons*]. There! That was a blow! Take that! [*Alarmed.*] Guard thyself! Ah, that was good! Now after him and strike!... He missed! [*To* Sköll, *threateningly.*] I thought thou didst laugh!

Sköll. What should I do?

Hans. I tell thee, thou brute beast, thou calf, thou knave, thou thief, as truly as I love thee as my brother, I will kill thee!

Sköll. Not so fierce!

Hans. There, which one of them drives the other in the corner, now? Eh?

Sköll. What?... I will stand above both sides and wait to see which one comes out ahead.

Hans. Ho, ho! How the rascal puffs! Yes, thou wilt learn to run, my fine fellow! Another blow! He struck him not! Now for thy life!--What is he thinking of? [*Shrieks out.*] My master bleeds!

Sköll. Ei, ei!

Hans. Wipe it off! Whisk it away! That little blood-letting but sharpens the anger, pricks the hate and--

Sköll. Look!

Hans. Now gather all thy powers together, master! And all my love for thee turn into fire and flame, that--

[*Pause. Then a woman's shriek is heard, and the ringing fall of a man's body. A dull murmur of many voices follows.*]

Sköll. That was a blow! [*Shouting down.*] Hail to King Wid--

Hans [*seizes him like lightning and hurls him to the ground, then springs on the bench, waving his sword above his head and shouting.*] Back from his body! You men below there, is there one that wears a sword and armor?

Voices. I!--I!--I!

Hans Lorbass. He will break through the lists with me and drive away this robber of Samland!

[*Cries of rage, together with the crashing of the lists*. Hans Lorbass *storms upon the guards, who retreat to one side, and dashes below. The* Queen *comes upon the scene half unconscious, supported by* Anna Goldhair *and her other women. The* Chancellor *and other nobles*. Sköll *has squeezed himself behind the corner pillar on the right.*]

Cölestin [*turning from the* Queen *to a group of men who stand gazing down on the tumult below*]. How goes it now?

Chancellor. That man whose summons hurled the brand of mutiny among us, look how great and small, man and woman crowd around him shouting and hustle the Duke to the door! There, he is gone!--the other left! Who was the devil?

[*The uproar grows fainter and seems to lose itself in the distance.*]

Cölestin. I know not whether he was a devil or an angel; for without his shriek of hate we should still be lying beneath the foot of tyranny, bleeding and weaponless as he who lies below.

[Chancellor *motions to him, pointing towards the* Queen, *who has revived and is looking about*

her wildly.]

Queen. Where is the stranger? Why are you silent? I saw him fall ... did he not conquer?

A Messenger [*comes hurrying up the steps*]. Hail to our Queen! I bring glad tidings: the accursed Duke has fled upon a stolen horse. The people vent their long-stored spleen upon his rascally followers.

Sköll. Woe is me! Alas! [*He slips behind the church door and disappears.*]

Queen. And that youth who smiling received the sacrificial blow for you--think you his life so valueless that no one even remembers him as a poor reward? Why are you silent? Will no one speak?

Chancellor. We know not whether he is dead, or lives, though sorely wounded. In every thrust he far over-reckoned the reach of his sword. A more grievous trouble than this, my Lady Queen, avails to banish our rejoicing; a broken oath is here, an unatoned-for--

Cölestin. Look! What a sight!

[Hans Lorbass *supports the sorely wounded* Prince Witte *up the steps, lets him sink upon the bench to the left, and stands before him with drawn sword, like a guard.*]

Hans. Away from here! Whoever loves his life, whether man or woman, comes not too near!

Queen [*approaching him*]. Not even I, my friend?

Hans [*embarrassed, yielding*]. Thou, Lady,--yes.

Queen [*takes off her veil, and wipes the blood from the face of the* Prince]. Send for physicians that he may be saved.

Hans. He is saved! If he were not, I'd spring in the very face of death for him,--I would spring down death's very throat; death and I, we know each other well.

Chancellor. Thou who breathest out spume and fire as carelessly as though hell itself had brought thee forth, I ask thee who thou art, thou unclean spirit, who hast dared to raise this pious people to revolt by thy furious onslaught, and taught them to poison for themselves and the ensuing race the holy fount of justice?

Hans. And I will answer thee: I myself am that justice. I bear it on my sword's point, I carry it here beneath my cap, I pour it forth in my master's name, who gave it for his glory and his happiness. [*Signs of anger.*] If ye believe it not, then listen trembling to the thousand toned joy that peals from far away like spring thunder quivering in the air, and sweeps throughout the land the joyous message of deliverance: we are free!

Chancellor. Speak, O Queen! Thy soldiers wait below. Methinks this servant of the defeated one has too much confidence,--he speaks as though he were instead our lord and victor.

Queen. Let him speak! He has the right! And even were he a thousand times defeated, this man who lies before us bleeding, if he recover and seek it from me, shall be our lord and conqueror. [*Great confusion and excitement.*]

Prince Witte [*rousing from his unconsciousness and looking about him painfully*]. There lies the heron! I have wrung his neck, I snatch my prize, my salvation ... [*feeling on his head and in his breast with anxious dismay*] where are the feathers?

Queen. What seekest thou, dear one?

Hans. Thou seest, O Queen, he speaks in fever. Do not listen, do not heed his words.

Prince. Hans, Hans!

Hans [*close by him*]. Take care what thou sayest.

Prince [*whispers earnestly*]. I will away from here ... [*with a glance at the* Queen *half complainingly*] I must away!

Hans. When thou canst.

ACT III.

A chamber in the castle. The two farther corners slope away from the front. In the left corner is a bay-window with a platform, to which steps lead up. Burning torches are stuck in the branches of the pillars which flank the steps. In the right corner is a fireplace. One can look beyond into an ante-chamber, and farther on, through a wide door-way whose curtains are drawn back, into a thickly planted garden, which at the end of its middle path shows a little of the surrounding wall. In the middle of the room is a table with seats about it. At the left in front is a couch with furs and cushions on it. At the right is the door to the sleeping apartments.

Scene 1.

The Queen *sits on the platform with her distaff before her, and gazes dreamily into the red glow, which shines through the window. Two old women sit spinning before the fire-place, in which a dying fire glimmers.* Anna Goldhair *and the young* Prince *on the steps of the platform. Through the drawn curtains plays the red evening light.*

The Young Prince. Say, mother, will the father come soon?

Queen. Of course.

The Young Prince. Will he come before my bed-time?

Queen. I do not know.

The Young Prince. The wood is full of darkness, is it not?

Queen. Where our King goes, there is always light!... What, Anna, art thou eavesdropping? Must I blush before thee, because I voiced a cry out of my soul's longing, which envious time would smother?

Anna Goldhair. Beloved Queen.... I know well that I am too young; my little thoughts whisk twittering like swallows through my head,--

The Young Prince. And she pretends to me she is so wise!

Queen. Run, run, my child!

The Young Prince. I will get her by the hair first! [*He tugs at* ANNA'S *hair*. ANNA GOLDHAIR *pushes him off laughing.*] Just wait! [*He runs from her to the spinning-women, and teases them.*]

Anna Goldhair. But if thou hast need of any one to whisper to, in whose breast at the still evening-time to plunge thine overflowing soul--of anyone who if need were, could go for thee to her death as to a feast,--thou knowest, dearest Queen, I am that one!

Queen [*caressing her*]. Yes, deep in my heart I know that thou art mine. [*She rises.*] But if it be death here for any human being, I am that one!

Anna Goldhair [*frightened*]. What troubles thee, beloved Lady? [*Three maidens, young and pretty, have entered shyly.*]

Queen. It is nothing,--nothing!... Why, here! What seek you my children?... What not a word? Have you a favor to be granted, a complaint to make? If you cannot speak, why then you must go away again!

Anna Goldhair. Mistress forgive them. They are of thy train, and they have asked me to plead for them, lest their too eager speech should lose for them the favor they desire.

Queen. Well?

Anna Goldhair. Dear Mistress, there is an old custom that runs thus: when Easter-tide has come into the land, when the thorn bush grows faintly green, when the blue wave shines bluer, when our desire takes wing to sport among the flying things of spring,--that then, upon the coming of the first full moon, the night must be watched out with sport and dance. In a word they would sing.

Queen [*smiling*]. Ah, yes!... But tell me, dear children, if you knew it, then why did this custom vanish from the land so many years?

Anna Goldhair. We honored thy sorrow, my Queen.

Queen. Well, then, go out and dance and frolic and sing together all night long! Know you the song that you should sing?

[*The maidens nod eagerly.*]

Queen. Go out and drink the moonlight as it pours down through the branches; I think we little know how blessed we are.

[*The maidens courtesy and kiss her hands and garments.*]

Queen [*as she turns away smiling*]. Why are you old ones shivering? Why look you so strange? Is it cold? Then you must rake the fire!

One of the Old Women. Mistress, we spin our winding-sheets. Shall we not be cold?

Queen [*drawing the young* PRINCE *to her*]. Do not listen to them! [CÖLESTIN *enters.*]

The Young Prince. Oh, Uncle Cölestin! [*Runs to him.*] What hast thou brought me, Uncle Cölestin?

Cölestin [*lifting him up*]. A great sandman, and a small goodnight!

Queen. The King is come? Thou wouldst announce him?

Cölestin. No, my Lady. We heard his horn in the distance, but it died away again. I come before thee a gloomy messenger. In the great hall beyond there waits the council of the realm....

Queen. Stop! You, my women, seek your rest; my son, to bed!

The Young Prince. And am I not to see the father again till morning? Ah, mother, please!

Queen. If thou canst not sleep, Anna shall take thee up and bring thee here. Is it well so, dear one?

The Young Prince. Yes.

Queen. And goodnight!

[*The* PRINCE, ANNA GOLDHAIR, *and the women go out.*]

Queen. We are alone ... yet what a pity with too cool reason to chill the buds of the May evening, which plunges all the waking soul into sweet sickness.... But speak!

Cölestin. Lady, I know not how I shall begin. The words come stumbling from my lips. Thou

knowest how we love him, and how, since thou hast given him thyself, there is no single life but stands prepared to serve him without a thought of self. And how does he reward us? He shuns our glance, a smouldering suspicion breaks out whenever we would speak in seriousness to him, and throws its shadows on us darkly. The people idolize him. They greet him, great and small, with clapping hands and waving kerchiefs,--why must we stand aloof? Is he ashamed of us?--or of himself? I know not. A mysterious sadness clouds his eye so falcon-bright, and even while our hearts still yearn upon him, he grows a stranger to us, who was never our friend.

Queen. It is your too easily wounded love complains of him.

Cölestin. If that danger--

Queen [*without listening to him*]. I see it, but I scarce can blame it. I blame no one. I have built for myself out of dreams and smiles a strong strong wall, outside of which you wait, thieves of my happiness--nay, my friend, look not so grieved!--and out of which you know not how to lure me, either by cunning or by clamor.

Cölestin. Still, hast thou never come upon that knowledge, deep within thy heart, which tells thee how in everything that is and was and needs must be throughout our lives, a never expiated wrong must weigh us down?

Queen. Never, my friend! In my soul there rings but one harp-tone, one voice, which says: be happy!

Cölestin. And thy oath, Lady?

Queen. My oath?

Cölestin. Didst thou not swear before us all and in the sight of heaven that he who hurled his rival to the earth, not he who lay there shameful in defeat, might dare approach thee as thy lord and king?

Queen. But tell me, my dear friend, did he not conquer?

Cölestin. What madness has so blurred events for thee?

Queen. I know he conquered, for he is here!

Cölestin. Here indeed he is, but with what right?

Queen. The right that raised for him in that dark hour when the cruel wound gaped in his throat, a faithful servant to avenge him; a servant whose brave shout and lifted blade have taught me this one thing: high above the right there stands the sword, and high above the sword stands love!

Cölestin. May this wisdom please the Omnipotent, and may he pity thee, and all of us!

Queen. It was not given to everyone to know it; but it has brought the King to me! Hark, do I hear a horn? How near it sounds! My King is coming! My King is here!

Scene 2.

The Same. KING WITTE, *the* CHANCELLOR *and other councillors and nobles*. HANS LORBASS *stands guard at the door, spear in hand, at ease.*

King [*embraces the* QUEEN *and kisses her on the forehead. Comes forward with her, but turns back irritably*]. What do you want?

Chancellor. My lord, while thou didst tread the forest paths, following the hunt, a fierce onslaught of new trouble came swooping down upon our land.

King. Trouble, always trouble! Mouldy, gray and blear, it lives far longer than one's whole life! Must you, even in the daytime, din your night-song in my ears?

Chancellor. This time--

King [*mocking*]. "This time "--I wager the state will crack in pieces! [*Turning to the* QUEEN.] If they had naught at which to fear, I should have naught at which to laugh!

Queen. Dear one--!

King. Hush! It makes me glow with anger, only to look upon these gray countenances, gloomy as the grave, full of foreboding, heavy with woes, and yet with that little glint of malice in their half-lowered lids. Must I suck in these complaints that fall drop by drop upon me? I might lay about me recklessly--but what am I to dare it?

Queen. All art thou, all darest thou, all hearts bow before thee! Canst thou not guess their dumb entreaties, not understand their timid longings? Look, they give thee so much, they give with open hands; their love enfolds thee, blooms everywhere for thee to pluck! Go down among them, then, step into their hearts, and speak, I beg thee, graciously and kindly.

King [*softened*]. I will try, thanks to thee! Speak, as thou knowest me: why does this anger and this curse fall daily and hourly over me? My friends, mislike me not for my impatience, for one thing I know right well, that I stand deeply in your debt. And now, speak!

Chancellor. My lord, I speak--not trembling, for long necessity has wonted us to terrors as to daily bread--of the fate which I have long seen approaching, and which now stands thirsting for blood before us. Duke Widwolf--

King [*starting*]. Duke Widwolf!

Chancellor. Is mustering an army!

King [*feigning calmness*]. What then?

Chancellor. He makes his boast that when the ice on the northern sea has turned to sheeted foam, he will descend with full a hundred ships and fall upon us like an avenging spirit.

King. The avenging spirit is a worthy part for him to play.

Chancellor. Still thou knowest this once he serves a righteous cause.

King. What sayest thou?

Chancellor. Is not this realm, O King, forfeit to him as a reward of victory?

King. May the word choke thee! As a reward of victory? Oh, stands it so with you, my lords? Do you stare at me? What means the scorn that lurks in your eyes? Have I been here too long? Do you already rue your act?

Chancellor. We rue it not, my King!

King. Say yes, say yes! Why so much pains with one who lay in the dust, whom you so mercifully raised up that everyone might value me as he chose, not as he must? Was it that I should fawn upon you, stroke and caress and flatter you, and die, instead of that one death I owed you, a thousand daily deaths?

Chancellor. Thou hast seen no hatred in us. A reflection of thine own feeling has deluded thee.

Cölestin. And if thou hast heard the word guilt, it was but thus: let me be guilty with thee! [Queen *nods gratefully to him.*]

King. Very fine! Quite beautiful! Accept my thanks! Hans! Come here and tell me what thou sayest to all this.

Hans Lorbass [*comes forward boldly*]. Lord Chancellor and Lord House Marshal, you nobles, councillors, and wise men all, who let yourselves be plagued with doubts like flea-bites,--if you permit it I will say one thing to you: between sin and punishment, between right and wrong, between hate and love, and good and bad, between sand and sea, and swamp and stone, between flesh of women and dead men's bones, between desire and possession, between field and furrow,--he goes, a man of men, straight through,--looking to neither right nor left!

King [*with a smile of satisfaction*]. Good words, for which we shall reward him. Yes, if you all thought with him, then I might bravely, out of the fulness of-- Enough! We each do what befits us and what it was decreed that we should do. We can no more. Time came upon us undesired and unasked,--even to-day. Each of us drags listlessly our weight of humanity unto the grave. Farewell my lords.... Lay by your letters. I will prove, as it stands I will-- Yes, and give your wisdom air, my dear friends, for it grows musty! [Cölestin, *the* Chancellor, *and the other nobles go out.*] Hans, stay!

King. Well, my wife?

Queen. Thou lookest at me so earnestly.

King. I am smiling.

Queen. Yet sorrow looks from all thy features. My friend, I fear that thou canst never learn to yield thyself up to this country.

King. Yield thyself, thou sayest. Belie thyself,--it is the same. To me it is a polished farce, at which I play and play and play myself quite out, entangled sleepily in fog and mist. But sometimes comes a wandering south wind, and plays faintly with its wings upon my wearied soul, striking vague and half-audible dream tones.

Queen. Thou torturest thyself.

King. And thee, my wife,--forgive! I look at thee and know that thou hast long hung in imploring anguish on my neck; it shames me, for see, I love thee!

Queen [*repeats half dreamily*]. I love thee.

The Voice of the Young Prince. Papa.

King. Art thou still awake, my son?

The Voice of the Young Prince. Papa, may I come in?

King. Thou mayst. [*Enter the young* PRINCE *with* ANNA GOLDHAIR.]

The Young Prince [*running to the* KING]. Papa, papa!

King. My boy, didst thou do well to leave thy bed and run with such haste to thy playfellow?

Queen. He begged me, and I let him.

King. So then. [*To himself.*] Now calm, quite calm!

The Young Prince [*running to the door*]. Hans, did they shoot much?

King. Thy name is Anna with the golden hair?

Anna Goldhair [*shyly*]. They call me Goldhair--but--

King. Let it be, it is true. [*To the* PRINCE.] Come here!

The Young Prince. Yes, father.

King. Listen! If thou hast that in thee that seethes and bubbles and strives to burst out, then smother it! When others take to themselves the cream from off thy cup of life, do not curse and slay them! Smile and be calm,--quite calm, there still remains in my breast, I fear, a little of that former passion and unrest; I will employ it to shield this calmness of thine.

The Young Prince. Have I been bad, father? When thou lookest at me so, I am afraid.

Queen. Come!

The Young Prince. The father is angry.

Queen. The father jests.

The Young Prince. Good night!

King. Good night!

Queen. I cannot find the key that harmonizes with thy mood; though once I knew how to resolve into harmony all the dissonance in the world. Perhaps the knowledge will come back again.

King. Perhaps.

Queen. And good night! [*They clasp hands. The* QUEEN, *the* PRINCE, *and* ANNA GOLDHAIR *go out.*]

King. No statue stands in the cathedral gates as stony as thou art. Hatred grazes thee, envy seeks to belittle thy worth. But thou smilest not. Thou movest in silent resignation, so tense, so ... Say, how canst thou?

Hans Lorbass. I serve.

King. Is that the reason?

Hans Lorbass. A servant has no choice. Else had I torn from off its nail my spear which the worms are conquering, burnished my shield and mail, and with a shout of righteous anger which has gnawed its chain for years, I would leap forth--where? Thou knowest, master!

King [*smiling bitterly*]. What use? He serves a righteous cause.

Hans Lorbass. Master, I will not look longer upon this farce! Lay about thee, kindle flames, slay, torture, make a harvest of the people,--but laugh and feel thyself a man once more!

King. A man? A husband! That is the word! That is my office. And my virtue. Wouldst thou soar? Then load a burden on thy back. Art thou hungry? Then toss away thy food. Dost thou hear thy heart clamor within thee after freedom? Seek a prison, and lay thee down therein.

Hans Lorbass. Dost thou hate her so?

King. Hate her? Her--from whose soul a mildness like honey drops on mine? Her, in whose golden beauty the loveliness about her pales to a shadow? If I knew a blot which she had hidden from me, a single grain of dust upon the mirror of her soul, a single pretext however bald or hollow, then I should have a weapon with which to pierce my shame, to free me from this need of speaking out my humility--oh, might I hate her, my God, it would be well for me! But at that glance of sorrowing goodness with which she smiles on all our faults, all trace of defiant courage dies in me, and I am weaponless because she is.

Hans Lorbass. Then come, escape!

King [*smiling wearily*]. True, the door stands open.

Hans Lorbass. And when we have once passed the border, thou canst learn to forget.

King. Perhaps! It may be! But can I learn to hope again? I went forth a conqueror; joyous self-confidence was my companion on the way--my bright horizon stretched itself to the boundless heavens. And now? I wear a sickly crown, which did not fall to me as victor, but fell upon me as I fell myself; and this fall has so sweated it to me that neither help of hands nor curses, but only death itself can tear it from my head.

Hans Lorbass. Well, at least thou hast it; thou hast a crown, thou art king.

King. King am I? Wilt thou mock me? Dost thou think I am so besotted as not to know my state? Yea, I might be king, were not the youth already ripening to maturity for whom I guard his throne from harm until he occupies it!

Hans Lorbass. But every man holds what he has and hopes to have, in security, in pawn, as it were, for his children.

King. Yes, for his own, not for a stranger's.

Hans Lorbass. Then get some of thy own.

King. To beg their bread? Thou knowest that in this whole kingdom of which I am king, there is not a single crust of bread, not a rag, that I may call my own. It is all his.

Hans Lorbass. What is in thy head?

King. Say naught! A man may wear his shame, may panting draw it draggled after him, and yet in spite of it he can hunger, thirst, and draw his sword. But when he must say to himself besides: thou hast squandered thy own happiness in shameful dalliance,--to whom then, dare he show his face? Yes, thou canst do all!... Yet one thing thou canst not do: thou never canst give back to the world its face of bloom. The great festal day that lay red and golden over all the earth, on which I closed my eyes when I lay down to rest, which roused me to joyous labor with its fanfare, which cast on toil itself a glorious light,--that, thou canst never bring back to me. Never.... Never again. The spring-time gleams to-day in vain. In vain the blossoms crowd to show their splendor to me, in vain do autumn's golden apples bow to my hand. Another hand will pluck them, while I descend my narrow path, hedged in with poverty, weighed down with despair, shut in with duties as with graves, and see my own grave stretched across the end. Thus I go on and on, so quietly,--yet all the time I stifle in my throat a cry, a shriek,--oh, save me from my daily burden, friend!

Hans [*to himself*]. A last hope,--but dare I venture it? I must. Lest he languish and slip hither beneath my eye. [*Aloud.*] Master, if thou cherishest a grief, thou hast then forgot the talisman--

King. The what?

Hans Lorbass [*watching him*]. The feathers thou didst once possess.

King [*feeling in his breast. Angrily*]. Be still.

Hans Lorbass. Since thou still wearest them on thy heart, why--

King. Be still, I tell thee, churl!

Hans Lorbass [*bursts out*]. Cursed be the churl that dog-like yields himself to thee. Yet I will be thy dog, that I may howl, for at least I have that right.

King. No one shall speak of them,--neither I nor thou. The door is closed upon the past. All is done, is spent, and these feathers are nothing but a mark of my violent downfall, a monument to my dead longing.

Hans Lorbass. It is dead, then? It lives and cries aloud,--so loud that even the deaf could hear! Have courage, wield the magic power, and call thy unknown bride to thee.

King. Here?

Hans Lorbass. Where else? I trust in the charm thou hast wrung from the witch-wife. I remember it well. [*Repeating*] "The first of the feathers"--no, it is burned. [*Repeating*] "The second feather, mark it well, shall bring her to thee in love; for when thou--burnest--it"-- [*Stops.*]

King. "Alone in the dying glow, she must wander by night and appear before thee."

Hans Lorbass. Well?

King [*in great agitation*]. The thought thou hast thrown out in faring jest, has lain a last hope, deep within my hearts shrinking depths.

Hans Lorbass. Why hast thou when so devil-ridden, not yielded to the strain?

King. Hast thou forgot what else she said?

Hans Lorbass. What she said--she spoke of the third feather.

King [*repeating*]. "Until the third has perished in the flame, thy hand stretched forth shall bless her"--

Hans Lorbass [*going on*]. "but the third burning brings her death"--

King. Suppose she should come now and vanish again?

Hans Lorbass. But why?

King. Ask thyself what it means--my hand stretched forth shall bless her--if I have and hold her? Would fate withdraw her gift a second time and leave me no security? Does a new misery lie in wait behind the dark disguise of these words? Thus I have delayed the deed, hoping I might be new-redeemed, by my own strength, without the laming weakness of enchantment, to see and win the woman of whom my soul has dreamed. All that is past.... The broken pinion can no longer unfurl itself.... [*listening.*] I hear laughter outside. What is it?

Hans Lorbass [*lifting the curtain*]. Only our maidens, who sport outside, modest and chaste as their land's innocence.

King. I will employ this hour of rest, while they dance there beneath the birches, to set the charm to work, and call my long-dead happiness as guest. Now go!

Hans Lorbass. Thou knowest, master, danger often comes from business such as this.

King. Danger--for whom?

Hans Lorbass. Let me stay with thee! Crouched in the farthest corner--

King. The charm says it must be done alone.

Hans Lorbass. Well then! I will hold a watch outside. [*Goes out.*]

The King [*alone. Looks about distrustfully, then draws the feathers from his corselet, puts one back and goes toward the fireplace with the other*]. The fire dies down? Then thou canst strive to brighten it, as thou hast the flames of my will.... Too late! Naught but this lazy, luke-warm heap of sodden ashes. What is to be done now?--The torch, a-flicker there! Though thy dim mocking glimmer has often frightened me in the forest it smiles alluringly at me now. And look, above, the parchments which so long have made my life a hell--now I know how to use you! Out of the paper sorrows of my country I will kindle for myself a glad new morning,--a new sun shall rise for me in their light! [*He hurls the torch among the rolls and they take fire.*] And now! [*He tosses the feather into the flames. A violet lightning flashes high above the stone chimney-piece. A light peal of thunder follows, with a long roll like the noise of rattling chains. The door on the right has sprung open. As the* King *stares wildly about, the* Queen *enters, at first not seen by him, and stands with closed eyes near the door.*]

King [*turning round*]. What wilt thou here?

Queen [*opening her eyes*]. Didst thou not call?

King. I--call thee?... But hush!... No, nothing, nothing! No shadow climbs the starred blue sky ... no light ... only the moon laughs in the green water, and laughs ... and laughs.... The world is drained quite empty. Thou hast done well, Maria ... thou holdest thy watch faithfully. No spy

could have done better.

Queen. I came because thou--

King. Hast called me? Was that it? I knew it well.

Queen. And if thou hadst not called--

King. Thou wouldst still have come, to see that no thief was gliding up the steps of thy throne [*aside*] alone, alas, alone--a thief of fortune, such as pious women like thyself, whose longings form but to be granted, brew spectre-like in their porridge pots. Wouldst thou not?

Queen. For God's sake, what burns there?

King. My manhood! Let it burn, child, let it burn! While I sat piously amid thy flock, there came a flame of piety upon me, burning more fiercely than myself, and burned and burned, until I was consumed with piety.... But thou, woman, that thou mayst know how in this dark hour thou hast snatched the cup of freedom from my longing lips,--I ask thee, woman, what have I done to thee? What have I done, that thy love-longing--I will not mock, else I had said love-lust--should force me, who was naught to thee, to grovel in the dust here at thy feet? Now hast thou what thou wilt. Here stands thy spouse, the second father of thy son,--thy mock, thy love potion and thy sleeping-draught, catch-poll of the great, butt of the small, and to both a vent for every scorn. Yes, gaze upon me in my pride! This am I, this hast thou made of me!--speak, then, and stand not staring into space! Strike back, defend thyself; that is the way with happy married folk.... Well?

Queen. Witte, Witte!

King. Well?

Queen. Witte, Witte!

King. So piteously thou callest me, child! Thus piteously stands thy image in my soul's midst.

Queen. No more.

King. Well, then?

Queen. It is past. It must be past. Alas, how many a night have I pictured myself thy happiness, thy refuge, thy solace,--oh, pardon me! I had so much love to give to thee, so wholly lay my trembling soul within thy hand, such streams of light and glory leaped and played about me,--how could I know that what was so precious and so dear to me was naught at all to thee? Now I know how I have deceived myself; it grieves me sorely, and for many a year must I endure and sorrow. But to thee I grant the one gift left for me to give,--thy freedom. Take it, but ah, believe, I love thee!

King. Shall I be free, Maria?

Queen. Free; and more than that; thou shalt be happy. I shall know thee so glad, so radiant, so buoyantly poised heaven-high above all black necessity, whether here or far away, so

unfalteringly turned toward the light upon the eagle wing of thy desire, that a reflection of thy radiance shall laugh into my lonely darkness.

King [*takes her head between his hands and gazes at her steadily*]. Listen, Maria! Should I say: I thank thee,--how raw 'twould sound!... And yet I feel thy meaning; as I drank in thy words, there slipped away and fell from my breast a ... Maria, thou art weeping!

Queen [*smiling*]. What slipped away, what fell? Thou art silent again.

King. Look, what thou givest, thou Lady Bountiful, is not thine to give. But thou hast given so freely of thy kindness, that at thy words something like happiness itself flowers out of black necessity itself, whose slave I am. I may not be free in very truth; but thou hast so generously hidden my chains, so mercifully forborne all blame of my weak struggle for self-redemption, that freedom's self seems near. I welcome her, and feel new blood course through my tainted and empoverished frame.

Queen. Why should I judge thee, and not rather love? For why else am I thy wife?

King. Come here! Come to me! Sit down--nay, here!... How strange it is! I thought to flee before thee, and only fled with all my pain straight to thy arms.

Queen. So shouldst thou! And so long as thou needest me, so long will I be at thy side.... But when thou sayest: "Enough! I ride abroad to seek my happiness," then all silently will I vanish from thy path.

King. And thus thou gavest me thy life, without condition or return; and with sweet service snatched me from the grave. But when I was whole once more, I felt so confined within the hedge thy tenderness had built about me, so twined about with thy gentle arms, so dazed by weakness and by shame, that I seized eagerly, as on a penance, upon thy offered throne. My deed seems voluntary now, and like a weak submission to the fate that bore me, the faithless one, here to thy feet. Thou art no less than I its victim,--then forgive me if for a moment I rebelled at the sight of my last hope strewn to the winds.

Queen. We sit here hand in hand, and, third in our company sits misery.

King [*shaking his head*]. Nay, if a man has found a friend whose voice is gentle, whose soul speaks harmony and keeps sweet accord with his in that holy hour which turns our griefs to calm, whose love rings true in sorrow and in joy,--such a man is far from deepest misery.

Queen. Thou speakest so gently now, and yet thou couldst speak so cruelly before! Nay, I mean no reproach, no blame. I have hung so long upon the hope of being thy happiness, that even the smallest change upon thy face has become to me a consciousness of some fault of mine. And when I saw a laugh in thine eye, a smile, or even a single friendly beam, the whole broad world lay straightway in sunshine. Yet do not tell me that I am too fond. It is not that ... or only a very, very little. For look, I have a child; and my heart has the same gift for him. Thou canst believe there was a struggle there. And just because I yearned for thee so deeply, there fell a shadow over thine ... it was the child's!

King. No.

Queen. I thought that he was dear to thee.

King. That he is. Yes.

Queen. How many times hast thou beguiled the time in play and frolic with him, at all the little dreams that make his. Thou hast poured into his the strength of thy own soul.

King. Let the child be. I love him, thou knowest it. A little unwillingly, but what is that? He is not of my blood.... Let be. Speak of thyself. With every word thou drawest a thorn out of my soul.

Queen. What shall I say? Am I so powerful, then? And yet--I am! Thou gavest my power to me! Nay, before that--I learned it from a gray-haired man. Still half a child, I owed my love to him; and gave it, though as yet I knew not how to love.

[*The swinging maidens outside have begun to sing.*]

King. Hark! What is that? Some one is singing. How their voices exult together, as if they mocked the sound!... The air thrills as with the tremulousness of virgin bells on Sunday from a far-off lonely height.

Queen [*who has drawn aside the curtain. On the moonlit sward the white-robed maidens are singing*]. Are they not fair, thy singing land, thy moonlit house?

King. Come back! Let the curtain fall! Give me thy hand, and I will drink therefrom a draught of deep forgetfulness. Lay it upon my burning forehead, ah, so coolingly! So rests the snow upon the slopes in my childhood's home.... My home ... what is it to me now?... A balmy wind blows over me ... it rises from a blue flower-besprinkled spot, far, far away, where happiness begins ... it seems so very long. I have not slept. I think ... [*He sleeps.*]

Queen [*after she has tenderly pillowed and covered him*]. I hold thee to my breast, beloved prisoner; at this hour thou art mine, even if tomorrow thou wouldst tread me in the dust. Until tomorrow is a long respite, to have thee and to hold thee, to give to thee a thousand golden gifts--if thou desirest them. How many joyous fountains might leap to the light of day from their deep sleep in my heart's depths. Alas that no word breaks their enchantment! They must sink back again from whence they came. Never will sunshine build its seven-hued bridge between my dream and the reality, between to-day and happiness. Thou wilt go from me, I must see but cannot hinder it; but tonight thou still art mine,--I may protect the slumber of my sleeping child.

[*Before going out, she draws the curtain so that the moonlight streams in*. HANS LORBASS, *spear in hand and quite motionless, is visible for a moment, and steps aside at the approach of the* QUEEN.]

ACT IV.

A vaulted tower in the castle. In the centre of the background is a landing with stairs going up and down. Beyond, a corridor that loses itself in the distance. In the left foreground a window, and next to it a vaulted passage. In the right foreground a door bound with iron, and next to it a chimney-piece. In the middle of the room is a table with the remains of a feast upon it. Overturned goblets, burned-out lights, stringed instruments, garments, etc., about. On the left side of the stage is the throne, with the King's arms hanging upon it. Night, and half-darkness. The wind wails faintly in the chimney.

Scene 1.

ANNA GOLDHAIR *cowering with covered face in the shadow of the throne*. HANS LORBASS *and* CÖLESTIN *enter from the landing.*

Hans Lorbass. Master!... No answer.

Cölestin. His lair is empty. The hall seems forsaken. Nothing, but the sighing of the autumn wind. Not even a trace of the women that herd with him.

Hans Lorbass. And before the door, the foe.

Cölestin. We are to suffer for his sins.

Hans Lorbass. Pah!--We!

Cölestin. Since he so far betrayed morality as to draw to his lustful embraces the young maid with the golden hair, even from the very feet of his most virtuous spouse, it has gone ill with him and us. For half a year this shameless wanton bond has blazoned itself beneath this roof.

Hans Lorbass. If I choose to cry him down, why it is my affair. I advise thee, old man, to let it be.

Cölestin. Have I ever yet mingled with the crowd that boldly raise their heads against him? But now the foe hangs at our very heels,--and he, instead of showing fist in need, buries a thorn in our own flesh;-- must I still be silent?

Hans Lorbass. Gabble or not, as thou choosest. Dost thou think the slime out of thy old mouth can make him slippery enough to--

Cölestin. Hark! [*A muffled drum-beat*]. The morning signal of the foe!

Hans Lorbass [*stretching out his arms*]. Come, mighty hour!

Cölestin. There is one way ... some one might ... with more influence than I ... seek out the King and fetch him here. The tardy day still lies in heavy sleep . . wilt thou go? [HANS LORBASS *nods.*]

Cölestin. Good! [*Going out.*] I am cold.

Hans Lorbass. What? All empty?... Thou shadow there, give answer what thou art. What, Goldhair, thou? Asleep here on the stones? Where is the King?... The King, where is he?

Anna Goldhair [*gets up trembling*]. I do not know.

Hans Lorbass. Is he asleep somewhere?

Anna Goldhair. No.

Hans Lorbass. Where have the women gone, then,--those wanton flaunting blossoms of his?

Anna Goldhair. He sprang up from the table to-night and drove them out with scourging.

Hans Lorbass. How was he before that?

Anna Goldhair. His greeting long since stiffened into silence and sternness. All night long his feet have wandered up and down the echoing passages.

Hans Lorbass. And to-night--which way did he go?

[ANNA GOLDHAIR *motions towards the left.*]

Hans Lorbass. Give me a light.

Anna Goldhair [*as she takes a taper from the table and gives it to him*]. Hans!

Hans Lorbass. Well?

Anna Goldhair. Hans--dost thou know what the Queen says of me?

Hans Lorbass. Queens are no friends of thine; the women will have none of thee now. Thou'dst best befriend thyself, and be thine own queen. [*He goes out.*]

[ANNA GOLDHAIR *cowers down again in the shadow of the throne. Then, from behind, the* KING.]

King [*coming forward*]. When I was yet a little boy I loved to put my ear down to the earth and shudder at the danger coming toward me in the thunder of the horses' hoofs. Even so now, the voice of the north wind wails aloud in the chimney how grim-visored death stands threatening upon my outer wall.... Was it for this the sea once rolled in music to my feet, for this my drawn sword thrilled in my hand, for this a woman beckoned me from out the clouds,--that here in this corner my young and lusty body should rot away to naught? Patience yet! I know my revenge! Though every broil burst out here, though my life itself were forfeit, though I became a very brute, scurvy and bleeding, goaded to despair, yet justice should be done! Only wait! I will die right joyfully, but fight--I will not. [*He sees* ANNA GOLDHAIR.] What, Goldhair, thou awake? Come here!--Come, I command thee! Thou wast no joyous guest at the feast, I warrant. Nor I.... Do not speak, Goldhair.... Hush! Lest they believe I vaunt my sin. But then, what they believe is naught to me. Come, give me thy hand. Thou art fettered to me,--yet thou wast only a plaything, only a splinter of glass wherein I saw my image, only the last string of a broken lute.... Lean down. I will entrust something to thy care: here, under my doeskin corselet I carry a treasure. It is not much to see, neither gold nor precious stone,--only a feather. I won it once, it was a prize,--that was long since.... Enough, that it was precious to me. If I should come to harm to-day, take it and throw it in the fire. Wilt thou?

Anna Goldhair. Yes, sire.

King. I thank thee. [*Caressing her.*] Why dost thou shroud thy pretty hair with a grey veil? It is

still golden. Dost thou thus seek to shroud dreams of the past? What look'st thou at so? [*Whispers.*] Is thy sorrow for thy Queen.

[ANNA GOLDHAIR *hides her face in her hands, shuddering.*]

King. Then cease thy grief ... methinks the sword already clangs without to bring thee peace.

Hans Lorbass. Master.

King. Thou, Hans, here in my tower, which thou hast so avoided? What brings thee here?

Hans Lorbass. We are attacked. The Duke has surrounded the castle by night with a thousand men. The battering-ram and beam had even begun their cursed work, when suddenly there came a lull, and by the glow of torches we saw upon the plain a white flag held aloft upon a lance-point. We held communication a spear's length from the camp. There he stood, murder in his glance, and there stood Sköll and Gylf, and all the other vermin that have crawled to his feet; and he rolled his eyes, gnashing his teeth like a nut-cracker--Heaven send we're not the nut!

King. What offer did he make?

Hans Lorbass. A respite until day-break, in which time to yield thyself and me into his hands.

King. Me, Hans, and alone.

Hans Lorbass And if they yield he will allow his heart to melt with pity; he will butter on both sides the bread of all the people who will shout for him. That is his way; all innocence, like the rest of us.

King. And if?

Hans Lorbass. If not? He swore,--and here his spleen burst out--that let a single sword be raised against him, a single spear be laid in rest, and he would hang and quarter every living, breathing thing, without mercy. This he calls choking rebellion in the seed.

King. And what was the decision of the people?

Hans Lorbass. The people will fight.

King. Will fight? Will fight? This flock of nestlings, lacking in every sort of strength, inspired by no courage-breeding fire, wanting in power, in discipline,--

Hans Lorbass. Like their King himself.

King. Like their King himself. Quite true. The shadow of a King, set on the throne by woman's love, is not the man to lead a forlorn hope.

Hans Lorbass. Though his people offer themselves to the sword for him.

King. Take care; I have outgrown thy scorn. [*Knocking on the door to the right.*]

Cölestin [*outside*]. Open the door for the King's son.

Hans Lorbass. Shall I?

King. Thou must. This house is his; and if he chose to, he could drive me hence.

[Cölestin *enters, leading in the young* Prince *by the hand. It is gradually growing light.*]

The Young Prince [*running to* Anna Goldhair]. Anna! Ah, Anna, art thou here? The mother told me thou wast dead. Say. Anna, art thou vexed with me? I eat my supper all alone, I say my prayers and go to bed all alone. I sing alone, I play alone,--and oh, the mother weeps so much! They said my father had been cruel to her,--how sorry he would be to see her weep! Anna, dear Anna, come and help us, for we are so sad!

[Anna Goldhair *kneels down before him and sobs on his neck.*]

King. What now?

Cölestin. My Prince, my little Prince!

King. Well?

Cölestin. Nay, with her thou canst have no concern. Thou knowest to whom thy mother sent thee, and what she graved so deep upon thy heart.

The Young Prince [*timidly approaching the* King]. My mother called me very early, and bid me come to thee before my breakfast with Uncle Cölestin, and kneel down here before thee, and ask thee--something,--I forget.

Cölestin. Then, my lord, according to the measure of my wisdom I must speak here for this child, who in his innocence cannot comprehend how basely thou hast forsaken thy people. I must embolden myself to speak a last warning to thee. I speak not of the sins that now already weigh thee down: eternal God shall judge them, for thou mayst not sin and not atone. But even now thy spirit, corroded with rancorous spite, hast turned the edge of our ancestral sword against thy honor and thy manhood. Lo, there it glistens in thy burning grasp; and to that all-avenging sword I make my prayer: to the arm where still resides our safety: to the eyes from which looks out an unquenched thirst of fighting: that thou wilt lead to victory thy broken people, who surround the tower and call upon thee in their need.

King. The sword that I unthinking raised--led thereto by occasion only--I will lay down still clean. Thou callest it the all-avenging; and it shall win that praise itself. Let the foe mow you down in sheaves, it shall be naught to me,--it comes too late.

Cölestin. Good! Though thou so hatest thy people--

King. I hate ye not.

Cölestin. As to appease thy long-cherished revenge by scornful laughter in their hour of need, yet one thing I shall never think, sir King,--that thou wilt yield without a struggle, and give up thy weaponless body to the slaughter.

King. What can I otherwise? In whose blood shall I dip this body to make it consecrate? With what right shall I plunge this sword into fiery service? He who stands without there serves a righteous cause. So sayest thou. The Chancellor, likewise. You all agree. Therefore I counsel thee: be wise, rescue your country and make clean your house. There is still time ... the storm yet lulls. The Duke has need of me; deliver me to him.

Cölestin. All my strength is broken against this madness, which destroys itself.... And the hour presses.... What can I do? The crowd shrieks lamentations in my ear. Kneel down, my child, stretch out thy arms,--perhaps, that silent picture will reach this heart. [*He makes the young* PRINCE *kneel down.*]

King. Stand up. . . Come here. . . Thou hast stood in my way, and yet I loved thee. A madness, an absurdity! [*Aside.*] Suppose: if thou wert not,--if in this coming hour I might but strike a blow for my own throne.... Where now?

The young Prince [*clinging to* HANS]. I am afraid.

Hans Lorbass [*gazing at the* KING]. There is the pinch. [*Going up to him, aside*]. And if---

King. If--what?

Hans Lorbass. If through some chance, quite unforseen, this land should all at once become thine own, entirely thine?

King [*bewildered*]. What dost thou mean?

Hans Lorbass. Well then, if that should disappear that stands in thy way? [*Bursting out.*] Then wouldst thou take thy sword in both thy hands and storm exulting on the foe?... Well?

King. I understand thee not.

Hans Lorbass. Then--

King. Silence, silence! Thou knowest I have quenched the last embers of my desires. Thinkest thou to kindle a new blaze thereon by victory and sin? A fire must run from heaven, must mount from hell, to light a new life in my fading course. A thing of horror must first come to pass; whence it came would be as naught to me, if it could but rise wonder-like upon my sight. Alas, from out these ashes no miracle can rise for me! I can no longer hope and struggle.... The door stands open to the upper room.... Once more I mount up to the height, once more behold the gray dawn turn to gold in rosy glory--

Hans Lorbass. Wilt thou come back?

King. Nay, didst thou not think so? I--[*As Cölestin with the young Prince puts himself in the way.*] Away with the child!--I must die! [*Goes out.*]

Hans Lorbass [*to himself*]. "A thing of horror must first come to pass." And then, "If I might strike a blow for my own throne." "If thou wert not." And looked at him with such eyes!--Cölestin, if I had something to ask--thou knowest, perhaps, the King will yield to me--more than--in short, I am beloved by him--

Cölestin. Good reason for it.

Hans Lorbass. Yes. Then what if I knew how to goad him into harness, so that even before the hour had struck, he had the Bastard by the throat with your all-avenging sword?

Cölestin. It would be possible? Thou couldst?

Hans Lorbass. Yes. But I need the Prince.

Cölestin. The Princeling,--why?

Hans Lorbass. With him by the hand I would sit there on the landing and hold watch till he came down.

Cölestin. And then?

Hans Lorbass. Then, Major-domo,--that is my affair.

Cölestin. The Queen left him in my care. But I know, Hans Lorbass that thou lovest him. Wilt thou, my little Prince?

The Young Prince. Dost thou ask me? I love to stay with him,--he teaches me to fight. [*He runs to him.*]

Cölestin. And may God bless thee in thy task.

Hans Lorbass. Much thanks. [*Turning to* Anna Goldhair.] I do not want her. Take her with thee.

Cölestin. Come, poor wench.

The Young Prince. May Anna stay here, too?

[Hans Lorbass *hushes him.*]

Anna Goldhair. Oh, Cölestin, if I could hide somewhere, and see my dear Queen pass by just once!

Cölestin. Spare me thy plaints.... Well, wait, I will hide thee here behind the curtains of the door; stay there, and do not move, and when she goes to the cathedral--come, come!

[CÖLESTIN *and* ANNA GOLDHAIR *go out.*]

Hans Lorbass [*grimly*]. My Prince!

The Young Prince [*tenderly*]. My Hans!

Hans Lorbass. And still it grips me cruelly hard.

The Young Prince. What is it thou grumblest in thy beard? Come, let us fight.

Hans Lorbass. Let us fight, child! If thou knewest how to fight indeed!

The Young Prince. How strange thou art to-day? Say, Hans, is it true that a cruel enemy stands before the gate?

Hans Lorbass. Quite true.

The Young Prince. Will he come inside?

Hans Lorbass. Not yet. Before long.

The Young Prince. How long?

Hans Lorbass. Until the drums sound the attack.

The Young Prince. Soon?

Hans Lorbass. Very soon.

The Young Prince. Oh, that is splendid! And why did the father go up to his tower?

Hans Lorbass. Because ... If I knew whether this young blood would be poured out in vain. To every foulness God created he has given a tongue to shriek: "Behold my purpose!" And such a deed as this to-day ... but no! "If thou wert not!"

The Young Prince. If I were not,--what then?

Hans Lorbass. Wha--? Why? His sick desires, his failing deeds, the dreams that mock his brain, that make the right seem wrong,--if he might see a wish of his become a fact, as if by magic

power, perhaps that knowledge of renewed strength might scatter his gloom to its accursed source and set him free. Now show thy worth and bleed here quietly on my breast--what dost thou there!

The Young Prince [*playing about meanwhile has drawn the sword from its sheath*]. I am learning to carry the King's sword. Forward! Hasten, the foe will come! Very well. Then I shall be the victor.

Hans Lorbass. Put it down!

The Young Prince. Ah, no!

Hans Lorbass. Put it down!

The Young Prince. Oh-oo! That is sharp!

Hans Lorbass. Thou knowest who alone may carry that?

The Young Prince. The King.

Hans Lorbass. Well then.

The Young Prince. But he left it there!

Hans Lorbass [*sternly*]. To take it up again. [*Draws his sword.*]

The Young Prince. Wait! I will kill thee! [*He has grasped the sword in both hands, and thrusting at Hans, who does not see him, he wounds him on the hand.*]

Hans Lorbass [*laughing grimly*]. The fiend torment--

The Young Prince. Thou bleedest--O me!

Hans Lorbass. The very weakness of this child avenges itself in death.

The Young Prince. Wilt thou not scold me! [*Unfastening his neckerchief*] Take my kerchief,--ah, please! Wrap it about thy hand. Quick!

Hans Lorbass. Is it intended for a sign to me to turn back in my path? The wish was there, but who knows when he cherished it, whether he was not so rent by torment, so quite unmanned as to harbor a thought that sprang therefrom? He must ... Yea, and I must. The hour will slip away.... [*Drums sound in the distance.*] Hark, hark! There it is,--the time has come. [*Drums.*] Again!

The Young Prince. Is that the signal?

Hans Lorbass. What signal?

The Young Prince. For the attack?

Hans Lorbass. Yes. For the attack and--

The Young Prince. What happiness! Is it not, Hans! If I were grown! If I were a man!

Hans Lorbass. Come here!

The Young Prince. Why dost thou look at me so sternly? Just like the father.... Wouldst thou strike me? No, thou shalt not.... I am a king's son.

Hans Lorbass. Come here!

The Young Prince. I am not afraid. [*Goes to him.*] Just think, the people say the father hates me. I believe it not. Whatever he should do, I know right well he loves me,--even as much as thou, my Hans. [*Throws his arms around him.*]

Hans Lorbass. How dost thou know?

The Young Prince. What, Hans?

Hans Lorbass. About the father.

The Young Prince. Listen! One night, quite lately, when I had been a little while in my bed, and was all alone, only think!--he came very softly within my chamber. I was afraid, because I had not seen him in so long, and all the people said: "The King is wicked." But he stood there before my bed and looked at me,--Hans, what is all that noise?

Hans Lorbass. Hasten,--thou knowest not what it means to thee!

The Young Prince. And looked at me so stern and wild that I was frightened and pretended that I slept. Then he leaned over me, so low that I had nearly died of fright, and then,--only think, my Hansel,--he kissed me. Here on my forehead, on my hair and both my cheeks, and then very softly went away.

Hans Lorbass. Thy good angel put the words into thy mouth! Could he do so, my little man, then 'twas a fever in his blood that spoke to-day,--no hate of thee!... It seems as though thou wert even dearer to me now,--and yet my thoughts have scarce deserved it. [*Clasps him to him.*] Now let me, let ... There below they call upon thy father, and he ... I have it! I will take thee in my arms and show thee to the leaderless throng below, him who shall lead them when his form rears itself kinglike and his brow darkens. Come then! Friend, if thy King fights not for thee to-day, then fight thou for thy King! [*He raises him in his arms and hurries with him down the steps.*]

Scene 2.

ANNA GOLDHAIR *comes timidly from the right, pushed into the room. After her, the* CHANCELLOR, CÖLESTIN, *nobles and ladies, who stand so as to form a passage. Then, the* QUEEN. *After her, other ladies.* ANNA GOLDHAIR *in a shrinking attempt to hide herself, crouches near the door, behind those coming in.*

Chancellor. Away, lest the Queen see thee! Out of the way, wench!

Queen [*observing that someone is concealed from her*]. Who--? [*She motions them to let her see. The group separates. She looks silently down upon the kneeling* ANNA, *whose face is bowed to the earth, and strokes her hair.*] Much evil has come upon us both; therefore be it unto thee according to thy sorrow, not according to thy deed. [*She raises her and gives her over to her women.*]

Chancellor [*meanwhile aside to* CÖLESTIN]. Send above to the King straightway. I cannot yet forbear to hope that when he--dost thou hear?

Cölestin [*who is looking in anxious search toward the background*]. Where is the Prince?

Murmur of Voices. The King comes.

[*The* KING *comes down the steps.*]

King [*startled, bewildered*]. Why do ye stand there so amazed? Do ye not know me? I am he, your King, your much-loved King, he with whose hero-tread treason has entered in your flock, into your hearts.

Queen [*coming forward*]. My King!

King [*reeling back*]. Thou! Thou hast come here,--into this den where lust holds sway? Burst open all the windows wide! Perfume the air with fine resin! Fetch sage and thyme and peppermint, that the fumes of this place may not attaint her breath! Hasten! Faded and withered, let them--

Cölestin [*whispers*]. My lord, where hast thou left the Prince?

King. What? Who? The--the--am I the Prince's keeper?

Queen. My King, the battle rages now already about the castle walls. The door still holds. The people wait, counting their heart-throbs till thou comest, trusting in thee still. There is yet time. There lies the kingly sword and waits for thee.

King [*to himself*]. If Hans understood me rightly--

Queen. Stoop to it. It is worth the stooping for.

King. Thinkest thou?... Still?... And that this hand is worthy, too, to raise it?

Queen. I trust in it as in immortal life.

King. Believest thou also that miracles still come to pass?

Queen. I believe in thee.

King. Then--[*he stoops, but starts back with a shriek.*] Blood! There is blood on it! Cölestine! Approach, lean down. Nearer. Thou hast asked me just now, only in pretence, where I ... I ask thee, with whom hast *thou* left the Prince?

Cölestin. Hans Lorbass was with him.

King. Alone?

Cölestin. Alone.

King. Yes?... It is well.... See how the red shines bright on the gray steel! The life that coursed within this blade cannot die--it lives--it lives and drags me down, a death-devoted man, unto a doubly shameful end.

Chancellor [*to the* QUEEN]. Speak again before this madness gains upon him!

Queen. My King.

King. Ha! The angel of destruction broods over us.... Where is thy child? Where is thy child?

Queen. I know that he is safe, for the most faithful of the faithful guards him. Think of thyself and of thy sword.

King. An hour since was this blade still clean.... I seemed too great--nay, nay, too small--to wield it; doubted and cursed myself and you and all the world. And yet defiance still blazed high in me; I could be a warrior, perhaps a hero, and knew it not ... ah, cursed fool!... Now I gaze in envy at that man, could even kiss his feet, who with accusing conscience and hand yet free from blood-guiltiness, stood a transgressor here within this hall. O were this sword still clean, how might I wield it! What miracles exultingly perform! But for me now no saving miracle can come to pass ...

[*The smothered tumult in the court becomes suddenly louder.*]

Two Nobles [*at the window*]. God be merciful! Fly!--Save yourselves!

[HANS LORBASS, *the young* PRINCE *in his arms, rushes up the steps.*]

Hans Lorbass [*breathless*]. Here--take the child! The foe is close at hand--within the court!

King [*in frenzied joy throwing himself upon the* PRINCE]. My miracle!

Hans Lorbass. If you would save yourself, barricade this door, strengthen it ten-fold with beams, break off stones from the roof, roll them down and heap them up--

King. Thou art wrong, my friend. The door--fling open!

[HANS LORBASS *tears open the door with a joyous shout. They hear the approaching battle-cry of the enemy.*]

King [*who has seized the sword and shield*]. To me, man of the righteous cause!

[*The* DUKE *rushes on the* KING *with a shout of laughter, behind him his men, among them* SKÖLL, OTTAR, GYLF, *held in check by* HANS *with upraised sword, stand crowded together at the door. Short conflict. The* DUKE *falls.*]

King [*to the crowd, his foot upon the prostrate body*]. On your knees. [*The foremost sink upon their knees, the rest shrink back.*]

King [*during a long silence looks furtively at the* QUEEN, *and the councillors. Then to the crowd*]. Carry this man's body outside the door.... Let everyone submit himself unto the peace of God, which henceforth only he who courts his death will violate. Before we part, I will come down to you, and under the free air of heaven I, your Duke, will receive your oath and your allegiance. Away!

[*The* DUKE'S *men seize the body and hurry out.*]

Hans Lorbass [*tickling* SKÖLL *under the nose with his sword-blade*]. Who has it now, thou clown?

Chancellor [*approaching hesitatingly*]. My gracious Lord and King, I would say: Forgive us, but the strength of all our words must break against thy glorious victory. I only say: We are returned to thee. No reproaches or regrets shall cheapen our return; we only ask [*with a glance at the* QUEEN] that honor be spared, and once again, after the cruel conflict of to-day, we offer thee our country's throne in faith and loyalty.

King. I thank you noble lords, and put it from me.

Chancellor. A second time thou turnest thy happiness and ours to lamentation.

King. Stay! Let not a poisoned word pollute this moment, for now at last the riddling clouds of fate prepare to fall. I may slip the fetters from my body, which weakness, shame, unwilling gratitude, sorrow, and mistaken kindnesses, combined to weave about me. I dare to speak, for now the sword has freed me.... For that I have shrunk from thee, my wife, forgive me. Didst thou know how shudderingly I sent myself into an exile of inexpiable guilt! From thence I now return, love-empty; and still the harmony of thy grace, the breath of thy self-forgetful love, wafts like a summer breeze about my head, heavy with blessings. Yes, if I dared to stay, how much of all I have ... Hush!... I know not the path that I must choose. I only know the end. I only know that faint and far away there sounds a voice reproaching my delay. It calls me back into the eternal gray,--that boundless country where thy blessing ends, where no guiding star rises to lead me on. Farewell. Forgive me if thou canst. If not ... I know no word to say that can lift the load of guilt from off my soul.... I must endure and bear it with me silently.

Queen. Nay, my friend.... If thou hast laden thy life with guilt so heavily, then must thou give me of thy burden a share to bear. I think that all we leave unspoken to-day will burn our souls forever; and therefore I make free confession: I have failed thee sorely. I saw thy misery, I saw the torture growing on thy pale brow, and yet I had but one thought; one alone; how to beguile him from that path on which his soul delays and hesitates, but whither his stumbling feet turn of themselves,--that he might leave me never again, whether in love or hate ... this was my thought ... and as a bridal pair stand at the altar and exchange their rings, while the deep church-bells lull them into a smiling dream, so we in parting near each other, and offer, smiling, guilt for guilt. [*She reaches out her hand to him with a faint smile, and sinks back into the arms of her women.*]

King [*kissing her hand, overcome with feeling*]. I thank thee.

The Young Prince [*timidly*]. Papa!

King [*recovering himself*]. Thou too, my son! Come here! I made thee poor return--and had he not [*motioning toward* Hans] known me better than I myself ... give him thy hand; for thanks to him, I lay down undefiled this borrowed sword. [*Gives the sword over to the* Chancellor.] Hans!

Hans Lorbass. Here, master! [*He hands the* King *his old sword, which he seizes eagerly.*]

King. Farewell.

ACT V.

The scene of the first act. Early spring. March. The trees and bushes are still bare, but tipped with the delicate red of young leaf-buds. In the background, upon the slopes, is still snow, in the foreground fresh young grass. The church-yard has grown larger. The crosses and headboards reach back to the sand-hills. Sun-set. A blue haze hangs over the sea.

Scene 1.

Out of a freshly dug grave on the right an invisible hand throws clods of earth, but stops as Cölestin *enters on the right, led by two young men. Behind them,* Miklas *and an old* Fisherman.

Fisherman. This is the place, my lord.

Cölestin [*much aged and broken*]. I thank thee, friend! That is the tower?

Fisherman [*nodding*]. And above it cross on cross.

Cölestin. Let me rest a little, I am dizzy. The way hither was hard. Yet I rejoice to know that worn-out as I am, I still may serve our young Prince. And more than him, our dear and holy lady, our Queen. Else surely I had--remained at home.

Fisherman [*has meantime shaken the door of the tower*]. The tower seems empty. The door is barred. There was a storm quite late.... Who knows where she wanders now, scouting for new graves.

Cölestin. Who speaks of graves? Fie! The hour will ripen all too soon for us to yield our withered sinful bodies to the worms. Build a fire for me, since we must wait. The evening lowers and this March wind blows cold on me. Make haste. [*To the old* FISHERMAN.] Run thou to our sovereign Lady, who so honored thee as to share thy hut, and tell her I beg her wait therein until we come to fetch her as she said.

Fisherman. Yes, my lord. [*Goes out.*]

Cölestin [*to* MIKLAS *while the young men build the fire*]. And thou, Miklas, tell us thy story again and on thy faith. It was last night the strangers knocked at thy door?

Miklas. Yes, my lord.

Cölestin. How many?

Miklas. Two.

Cölestin. And thou didst open it?

Miklas. Yes. I had lain a long time in bed, but I arose. The moonlight fell bright through the window-bars. I saw them and was afraid.

Cölestin. Why?

Miklas. The first had long white hair hanging all wild and shaggy about a gloomy brow. One leg was hacked off, and a wooden one replaced it.

Cölestin. Thou will still--?

Miklas. Whoever looked into that eye, must know, my lord: Hans Lorbass stood before me.

Cölestin. And the other?

Miklas. It is hard to say.

Cölestin. Still thou knowest him?

Miklas. As I know myself, my lord.

Cölestin. Consider. Full fifteen years have flown since that hour when he slew the cruel Duke.

Miklas. Yes, my lord. His step indeed was heavier, his face was paler; and a gnawed and ragged beard hung about his mouth, stiffened with blood and sweat. Yet it was he, our King, our star, at very thought of whom our hearts must leap, to whose heroic deed we sing triumphant songs,--it was he, and that I swear by God the Father.

Cölestin. Go on.

Miklas. Yet, mindful of what happened once, I made as though I had never seen the two; and when they asked whether there was a path that led to the sea and to the Burial-wife, and did not touch at town or capital, I said: "Oh, yes; yet it is difficult to follow it, and not wander lost by night among the bushes. Come in and sleep beside my hearth, and I will play the host and spread the straw for you, and early in the morning, for your sake and for God's sweet service my son will lead you to the witch-wife." It was said and done. The fire of pine chips had scarcely burned to ashes,--heigho!--I ran to the stable and flung the saddle on the horse; and when the early dawn of the March morning lay abroad white and misty on the hedges, I held my rein before your castle,--"To the Queen" my cry. Thou wert with me for the rest.

Cölestin. Thinkest thou thy son--?

Miklas. Set thyself at rest, My son has always been a clever youth and I answer for it they will be upon the spot before the sun there dips beneath the sea. Yes, if I mistake not ... but wait! [*He runs to the top of the hill, looks to the right and motions furtively.*] Come here! But crouch down well, that they may not spy us.

Cölestin. My God, my God, how my old limbs do tremble! It is joy! [*He goes up the slope, assisted by his attendant.*] I see three coming.

Miklas. The small one is my boy. The other two--thou knowest them?

Cölestin. My eyes have failed me a little, else I might. [*Coming back down.*] My God, if it were they! If the evening of my life might shine so clear that before I closed my eyes in death they might rest upon the Queen, their heart, their light, pleasured in happiness without alloy! At such a sight I think I could not die.... Come, come! Let us announce what we have seen; then may that bond once so shamefully severed in wrong and need, be solemnly renewed, before we turn our joyous bark toward home. Come, come! [*They all go out at the left.*]

[*The* KING *and* HANS LORBASS *come in at the right from above, both unkempt and in rags like two wayfarers*. KING *grown gray, lean, and sallow, comes down forward silent and gloomy.*]

Hans Lorbass [*with hair grown quite white, and a wooden leg, carrying a sack on his back, calls into the wing*]. There, take it, rascal, it is the last! And leave! [*Coming down.*] The clown has led us twelve whole hours without a path through bushes and morass. He knew well enough why he did it!

King. Dost thou think--

Hans Lorbass. Oh let it be, no matter!

King. Here is a fire. Is there corn in the sack?

Hans Lorbass [*opening the sack*]. Wait.... Yes.

King. Good! I am hungry.

Hans Lorbass. I am not, too?

King. The corn was dear. Sometimes it costs us money, sometimes blood.

Hans Lorbass. We do not pay the blood.

King. We pay more. We give out bit by bit from our own souls for our lives' nakedest necessities, and pay for each mouthful with a shred of joy--if indeed there be joy in clinging like a pitiable miser to one's last vacant remnants of hopeless hope.

Hans Lorbass. If it be not happiness it is life.

King. What a life!

Hans Lorbass. Our wants are over now. I wager if I climbed up to the top of the hill, I should find not one but three ships to take us to Gotland.

King. Cook us our supper first.

Hans Lorbass. Good, good! [*During the foregoing he has been fetching cooking utensils, partly from the sack and partly from the outer wall of the tower, where they lie among tree-stumps, etc.*]

King. I shall come soon enough to Gotland, and soon enough shall see that refuge whence I once bore to save them those most daring wishes of my powerless youth.

Hans Lorbass. Until a heron came.

King. Hans, be still!

Hans Lorbass. How can I, here in this place, where the sea and churchyard, yes, even the sea-wind itself, that strips the boughs with knife-like tongue, all vie with each other to tell us of that day when an old doting witch-wife with her cursed chatter, betrayed thee from thy confident path, to pause and play the hero?

King. Where is she hiding, that I may rip that shriveled skin of hers about her ears?

Hans Lorbass. She who played our fate in the world is not at home when we come back so worsted by it.

King. Burial-wife!

Hans Lorbass [*laughs mockingly*]. Yes, call away, my friend!... Come here instead and sit down on this tub. The fire is singing,--the water will soon boil; come warm thyself.

King. Thou art right. This cold sea wind pants like a bloodhound through the gorge. [*He sits down by the fire.*] The country-people say that spring is coming. Is it true, I wonder?

Hans Lorbass. What?

King. Why, that spring is coming.

Hans Lorbass. Then I believe it, for my leg that I lost begins to pain me.

King. Listen! Back in the hedge a shepherd pipes upon his willow whistle. The streams are beginning to thaw and run down hill.... Brown buds come out on all the branches. The very sunsets are different. Look, high up in the blue the wild geese fly in their triangle. Northward they go. Not I.... I must. We both must, Hans, for we have grown old.

Hans Lorbass. Because our heads are white? Thou art wrong, master. I dare venture many a conflict lies in our path before thou goest to thy fathers' lofty house, and anointest thyself with thy fathers' honors.

King. Honors are the mail-coat of the weary. I have need of them.

Hans Lorbass. Thou?

King. More than thou thinkest for. [*Goes up, laughing bitterly.*]

Hans Lorbass. Whither now?

King. Do not ask.

Hans Lorbass. Thou lookest toward the south,--what seekest thou there? Hast thou not known it all long since? That sunny land, those blue, flower-sown havens, whither thy hasting step once fled? Thou knowest they are full of stench and lamentation. Those beauteous women, fairest of the fair,--or passing as the fairest,--to bow in whose impious slavery once compassed all thy thoughts? Thou knowest they are all as empty as drained-out casks. And so, because the desire was lacking in thee to fill them with thy own soul, thou hast sourly turned away and sought perfection farther on. Thou hast come hither over lands and seas, and climbest up into the star-teeming void. Yet thou wilt never, never reach thy star. And that vailed enchanting distance itself, if it would once unmask and let thee reach it, how miserable it would look! Every conflict there would seem only a wrangle, every woman but a doll! Come now, lay aside thy shoulder-belt stretch thyself out and eat thy supper.

King. Let be, old grumbler! I seek naught in the distance.... But near by, floating in the haze of the spring evening, I think I see a dim shape of white battlements.

Hans Lorbass. It may well be. The town is only three miles farther on, and the air is clear. Still I advise thee, do not think upon the past.

King. Why?

Hans Lorbass. It was an evil-omened year. The worst of all, I think. It taught thy wild untrammeled spirit to circle-hopping in a cage, to limp instead of fly.

King. Thou art wrong, my friend. Something wakes in me at sight of those roofs.... There the wings of happiness once grazed my cheek, there, though in the midst of torture joy ripened to summer in my heart. Let me gaze on the place where imploring trustfulness once confessed itself to me by joyous sacrifice, and the purest of womankind yielded herself up in sweet urgency, and an oppressed country confided in me as a master; where even victory surrendered me her standard; let me gaze upon the spot, and then, instead of stretching forth my kingly hand in love and gratitude, I must slip past it outlawed, like a beggar or a thief. I stand here now and gaze through tears at that white glow of light, and gnaw my lips to bleeding.

Hans Lorbass. Master!

King. It is nothing,--nothing! All I have ever desired, all my soul's treasure, all I could not attain, can be spoken in one word. And that I may not speak. In silence I decide, and put it from me. I tear it from my breast, where it has clung so long; and with it all my longing pain blows like a faded leaf a world away.--Now I will lie down and sleep; for I am weary.

Hans Lorbass. And do thy pains and desires all come to an end thus? Look! Above there, where the sandy turf broadens among frozen clods past the sun-pierced snow. The wisest of womankind has prepared a bed for pilgrims such as we. Look!

King [*going toward the open grave*]. I see. It is just suited to a guest like me. Here, where--[*He starts back in alarm.*] Hans!

Hans Lorbass. What is the matter?

King. Come here. The grave is ready, but it is not empty. Look down and tell me what thou callest it, crouched there gray in the sand, that leers at me with staring eyes. Is it a corpse? Is it a spirit?

Hans Lorbass. Oh look at it! The badger is at work. Thou hast her now.

King. The Burial-wife? [Hans Lorbass *nods.*]

King. Out with her!

Hans Lorbass [*stopping him*]. Listen to me. Thou knowest I have known her longer than thou. Leave her alone. She was wont to lie thus for hours and days, and heed no words nor prayers; but seemed as dead. She is proof then against all summons and all blows; but when her time comes, then her limbs will stir, and she will come up out of the grave.

[Cölestin *and the train with the young* Prince *enter.*]

Cölestin. There they stand!

King [*turning fiercely and raising his sword*]. What do you want? A quarrel? We two are snarling dogs. We blindly seize on everybody near. Now come on! Speak!

The Young Prince. My father!

King. Wha--?

The Young Prince. My King!

King You would mock the man that fled from you?

The Young Prince. Down on your knees and honor him as I do!

King [*dazed*]. Hans!... But stand up!... Am I King? A hapless wretch,--naught but my man, my sword, and that pot of soup there, to call my own. I have no more. My very crown, the gloomy throne of Gotland must be fought for anew; stand up my son. [*He raises him, and will embrace him, but suddenly pales, staring past the men in great agitation.*] Hans! Dost thou see who stands there in the twilight of the wood--how spirit-like, how severed from this world--[*He shrieks.*]

[*Enter the* Queen. *Behind her at a short distance, two of her women.*]

Queen. Witte!

King. Go! I know thee not. And yet--I know thee. Thou art my--peace. Thou art ... Naught art thou more for me.... My body withers and my strength is fallen asunder. Therefore I may not say: "Thou art." ... Only "Thou wast." Still thou wast once of a surety--my wife.

Queen. I am to-day--I am a thousandfold! Hast thou forgot what I promised thee the day thou gavest thyself with hesitation to my service? I search thy face. I know thou turnest wearied back to thy northern home. Dost thou forget then where a balsam is prepared to heal thy bruised feet, dost thou forget where a thousand arms reach out to greet their loved one? Knowest thou not where thy home stands and calls to thee? Knowest thou not how well-nigh breathless with its joy my smile says unto thee: "I charm thee not?"

King. Nay, charm me not. I am not worthy. Life has seared me, and put a shameful kiss upon my brow.

Queen. Then let me cool it with my health-bringing hand, and thou wilt never feel the scar again.

King. How can I feel that scar or even the happiness after which I longed, now that those hours are past which knew thy love for me?

Queen. In no other have I trusted. I guarded thy son for thee; and still thy throne stands empty, waiting its master.

King. Then thou hast waited fifteen years and sorrowed not. So shalt thou learn my mystery. Two kingdoms I have won, to pleasure me; the first has vanished into air, the second is my shame. Justice became a mock,--all gifts a usury; and everywhere I turned a murderous laugh

pursued me. Then purity plunged in the mire, then honor mocked its own best gift: all this the magic of the heron wreaked upon me.... Yea, now thou knowest; a charm was all my crime and all my fate, year after year. It blinded me to love and life, to wife and child; it hunted me away from thee, and drove me from place to place; and when a lucent flight of happiness sprang up from heaven after my downfall, it drowned its glory in a flood of tears. Behold! [*He tears open his gorget and draws out the last of the heron's feathers.*] The enchantment's last beguiling pledge I hold here in my hand. When this feather shrivels in the flame there sinks an unblessed woman to her death, that woman whose wraith stood in the heavens for me to gaze upon,--that woman whom I sought and never found! Behold! I bury the madness in its grave, and with the act I put the longing from me. [*He tosses the feather into the flames. There is a flash of lightning, and a roll of thunder follows it.*]

Queen [*sinks down, whispering with failing strength*]. Now are we two protected from all mischance.... I still ... have been thy happiness ... even in ... death. [*She dies.*]

Prince. Mother! Speak one word to me!

King. It was thou? It was thou? [*He throws himself upon her body.*]

The Young Prince [*in tears*]. Ah, Mother!

Cölestin. She has gone, and I, the shadow of a shadow, stay behind.

The Men [*murmur among themselves*]. His is the blame! Tear him from off her body! [*They draw their swords to attack the* KING.]

Hans Lorbass [*blocking the way with drawn sword*]. Away there!

[*The Burial-wife mounting solemnly out of the open grave.*]

Burial-wife. Children, cease your strife! Can you not see his spirit wanders far? He is wrapped about with the whisperings of eternity. The message of death is on the way, the stone of sacrifice doth reek for blood. Long has this man belonged to me; and now--[*she raises her arm and lets it fall*]--I come into my own. [*The* KING *breathes heavily, stirs, and dies.*]

Hans Lorbass [*kneels down beside him with a cry*]. Master, master!

Burial-wife. Thus from lust and guilt and sorrow have I cleansed his soul. To both of them it shall be as though they had not been. Wrap them about with linen, bear them to my dark abode; then go in silent thought from hence, for my work is done.

Hans Lorbass [*rises, in anguished bitterness*]. Mine must begin anew. How gladly have I ever braved fresh dangers as my darling's slave! That service, too, is past; but now his kingdom calls loudly on my sword for aid. [*Pointing seaward.*] Northward there lies a land debauched, crying from out its shame for justice, for a righteous law, for vengeance, for salvation; for a master,--and that shall the man become!

Translated by Helen Tracy Porter.

MARAH OF SHADOWTOWN.

The days pass by in Shadowtown
Wearily, wearily;--
And Bitter-Sweet Marah of Shadowtown
Sighs drearily, drearily.

"Mother, tell him to come to me
While my hair is gold and beautiful
And my lips and eyes are young
While the songs that are welling up in my heart
May still be sung.

"The days go by so wearily
Like crooked goblins, eërily,
Like silly shadows, fast and still,
Wind-driven and drearily.

"Like the gray clouds are my eyes gray, mother,
Like them, heavy as things grown old
Only the clouds' tears are but dream-tears--
Lifeless, cold.

"Last night I had the strangest dream,--
It seemed I stood on a barren hill
Where the wings of the ragged clouds went by
Hurrying and still.

"And all of a sudden the moon came out
Making a pathway over the down,--
And turned my hair to a gold mist, mother,
To light the way to Shadowtown.

"But when I did not see him coming,
And because the clouds grew dark and gray
I walked through the shadows down the hillside
To help him better to find the way.

"And in some wise I came to a forest
When all around was so strange and dim,--
That I thought, 'If I should be lost in the darkness,
How could my hair be light for him?'

"But groping, I found I was on a pathway
Where low soft branches swept my face,--
When suddenly, close beside, and before me
I knew dim forms kept even pace.

"They were so cowering, shivering, white
That I felt some ill thing came behind
And I heard a moan on the wind go by
'Ah, but the end of the path to find!'

"Then I looked behind, and saw that near
Like a wan marsh-fog, came a cloud
Hurrying on,--and I knew it wrapped
A dead love--as a shroud.

"And guiltily the figures went,
Like coward things in a guilty race
And not one dared to look behind
For fear he knew that dead love's face.

"Then suddenly at my side I knew
He I loved went;--but, for my hair,
Shadowed and blown about my face,
He knew me not beside him there.

"And he, too, cowered with shaking hands

Over his eyes, for fear to meet
Haunting and still, my pallid face
In that strange mist of winding-sheet.

"So on the shadowy figures went
Hurrying the loathéd cloud before,--
Seeking an end of a fated path
That went winding evermore.

"Oh, Mother, that path was hideous,--
Long and ill and hideous--
And the way was so near to Shadowtown,--
Fairer to Shadowtown--
But the gold of my hair shall not light the way
For anyone else to Shadowtown."

Gray-eyed Marah of Shadowtown
Turns away wearily, wearily
Weaving her gold hair back and forth,
Thus she sings, and drearily--
"Little Love, when you shall die, then so shall I,
Ha, merrily!

"Then let them put us in some deep spot
Where one the growing of trees' roots hears
And you at my heart, all wet with tears,
All wet with tears.

"Your wings are draggled and limp and wet,--Little Love,--
From what rainy land have you come, and far,--
Or who that has held you was crying so,--
Who, little Love--?
My eyes are heavy and wet with tears
Whose eyes besides are heavy so--?
--Oh, little Love, how dumb you are!--

"Then, poor Love, that has lived in my heart
Come, take my hand, we will go together,
Hemlock boughs are full of sleep
Out of the way of the weather.

"For a cavern of cold gray mist is my heart
Will not the hemlock boughs be better
Over our feet and under our heads
Keeping us from the weather?"

Her gold hair duskily glints in her hands
Marah of Shadowtown sings--"Together,--
You, little Love, and I, will go
Into the Land of Pleasanter Weather."

Anne Throop.

DIES IRAE.

Go fight your fight with Tagal and with Boer,
Cheer in the lust of strength and brutal pride;
Beat down the lamb to fatten up the fox,
Shout victory o'er the prostrate shape of truth.

Take cross and pike and gold and sophistry,
To pray and prod and purchase, wheedle, wile;
Stamp out the roses in a waste of weeds,
Shout while the trembling voice of truth is hushed.

Shatter with iron heel the poet's dream,
The prophet's protest, and the ages' hope,
Of brotherhood and light and love on earth--
Of peace and plenty and a perfect race.

Tear down the fabric of ten thousand years,
The world's best wisdom woven in its woe;
Lift ruthless hands to rend the fairy fane
That holds the heart hopes of humanity.

Let loose greed, envy, lust, and avarice,
The myriad throated dragon of desire;
Let might rule, riot, batten on the meek,
The tyranny of man o'er man seem right.

Forget the Lord Christ smiled, forgave, and died;
Frowned down every appeal to brutish strength;
Bade man put up the sword, lest by the sword
He perish; prayed evil might be paid by good.

Forget he turned cheek to the coward blow,
Cried "Pardon!" yes, seven and seventy times! "Judge not;
Do not condemn; give coat as well as cloak;
Resist not evil, wrong's not made right by wrong."

Forget each drop of blood burns in the race,
Cries for atonement while the last man lives;
That murder for the state is murder still,
The gilded not less guilty though more great.

Forget, and flay and flame; in din grow deaf
To piteous cries without, and voice within;
Conquer, triumph, and when the world is won,
Turn terroring towards the demon in your heart.

William Mountain.

GEORGE MEREDITH ON THE SOURCE OF DESTINY.

If, as has so often been said, literature is an expression of life, surely we may study literature to discover the laws of life. Not all our writers, but all our masters, have given us records from which we may learn what has been discerned and accepted concerning life by the race.

The scientific study of our day has led men to consider genius from the modern point of view. Is genius a natural product? If so, whence comes it, and what are its laws? These are among the most interesting questions of the present time. Formerly, men contented themselves with calling the literary faculty a "gift," the result of "inspiration." Of late we have been told that it is a natural race impulse which finds expression in some individual. Personally, we believe genius to be the heated, pregnant condition of a great mind under the influence of a great enthusiasm. However our definitions of genius may differ, on one point we all agree. We are all sure that genius is true to life, that genius teaches us the truth.

In its formed philosophical theories it may err, but not in its perceptions of life. Shelley may teach atheistic views in 'Queen Mab,' and he may err, for intellectual belief is a matter of opinion. Nevertheless Shelley's inspired interpretation of life can but be accepted as real. George Meredith may teach in his 'Lord Ormond and his Aminta' doctrines of free love, resulting from an attempt to separate what can not be separated in our human lives,--the physical and the spiritual loves; and in doing this he may err. Nevertheless, in his inspired representations of life and character, coming not from thought alone but from his whole nature, Meredith cannot err.

Those of us who read thoughtlessly, without formed theory, accept literature as real. Have you never, when asked: "Did you ever know of a case of love at first sight?" answered carelessly: "Oh, yes! There's Romeo and Juliet, you know?" Or have you never instanced, as the most persuasive oration you ever heard, Mark Antony's speech in 'Julius Cæsar?'

Thinkers who claim a natural mental origin for the literary gift must believe in its reality as a matter of course. Those who speak reverently of its "inspiration" claim a spirit of truth, not of error, for its parent. Even those who enjoy comparisons of the states of genius and insanity, ranging from Shakespeare, with his words: "The fool, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact" to the masterly modern treatment of John Fiske, agree that the sharp division line of truth and error separates the two. They confess that while the insane mind may accept hallucinations, the mind of genius deals only with the truth. The results of both are imaginative; only those of insanity are imaginary.

All thinkers, then, accept the masterpieces of literature as among life's real phenomena. Whether Meredith's novels hold this high place is at present a matter of opinion. For men do not know Meredith very well. A knowledge of his position on this question of Destiny will help us to learn whether or not he ranks among the elect.

In our great literature there has always appeared a close sequence between wisdom and success, righteousness and happiness, and, on the other hand, between the choice of moral evil and suffering. This sequence has been not merely expressed in words, but built into the very structure of the plot through the workings of the imagination kindled by genius. The law of this succession, and its relationship with other laws, philosophers have always been seeking. It is this search that has led men into the mazy discussions of freedom and fatalism. For in this law lies the crucial point of the question of human destiny.

'Beowulf,' our first epic, tells us not only much of the manner of life of our rude Saxon ancestors, but also much of their thought. The note of fatalism in its chord of life is no weak one. "A man must bear his fate," the hero says when about to go into a dangerous combat. Yet even in 'Beowulf' we find the contrasting element, the character choice appearing.

As a child boldly states a problem as though it were a solution, Beowulf naïvely says: "Fate always aids the undoomed man, if his courage holds out." This expression side by side of the two elements of the question has never been surpassed, and is, in its way, matchless.

Have we learned much more to-day? We cannot fail to recognize the duality of the truth, but have we been able yet to join the two sides into one, to discover the unity that surely lies behind the seeming contrast?

Each side of the question has been largely developed. Some, in a narrow spirit, have echoed merely Beowulf's, "Fate always aids the undoomed man"; while others, often as narrowly, have answered, "A man succeeds, if his courage holds out." Ever in our greatest literature the two elements have appeared side by side. The mystery has always been recognized.

That even Shakespeare is reverent before fate, yet believes in the influence of character on a man's life can easily be seen from words like Helena's in 'All's Well that Ends Well':--

> "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
> Which we ascribe to heaven; the fated sky
> Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
> Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull."

'Macbeth,' with its successive steps of unhappiness following one critical evil choice is sufficient proof of Shakespear's belief in the determining power of character. 'King Lear,' with its sad result of folly shows his belief in the influence of the critical foolish decision. In the uncrowned king's conversation with his fool, occur these words:

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

In Robert Browning literature has brought even up to the present time the old mystery, the ever continuing struggle between fatalism and freedom. But to him, as to most thinkers of his day, fate has become the instrument of a God, a divine Providence rules the world, while man, too, has his little realm of choice.

At the present time this discussion is carried to a greater extent than ever before. The one side finds its expression in our modern idealistic philosophy, the other in our modern sceptical science. Idealistic philosophy, since Kant, has been trying to lay the responsibility for all life upon the free moral choice. It has been seeking to prove that the spiritual is the source of life.

Modern science, on the other hand, with its keen, wide-opened eyes, has tried to lay all the necessary sequence of law, forgetting at times that law is but the explanation of the phenomena. Science sometimes refuses to consider such phenomena as require a new point of view, beyond the physical and mental,--a moral point of view. By this refusal to recognize the spiritual part of man, science attempts to avoid a second mystery. The mystery of the union of the physical and mental realms it has been forced, long since, to accept. It would shun the moral realms because that, too, entails its mystery of connection.

Once accept physical life, and science is, in so far, free from impassable gulfs. Once accept mental life and that realm also becomes capable of study. Let the free moral nature once be accepted, and again we shall have reached firm footing. But to cross between these realms by law, by reason, is impossible; for life, any kind of life, is its own only explanation.

While the problem of freedom becomes simple for one who, like Meredith, will take this view, there are many who will not or cannot do so, and the very impossibility of the question from reason's point of view makes the path a very labyrinth for them. We all try to solve the question, and different personalities arrive at different answers; but all are partial. They vary from the logical, but dead outcome of Swinburne: "There is no bad nor good," to the struggling faith of Omar Khayyam:

"The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But here or there as strikes the Player goes;
And he that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all--He knows--He knows."

At such a time as this of ours it is especially helpful to study a writer like George Meredith, who far from ignoring the many sides of the problem, yet clings firmly to his faith in character. With no doubtful accent, he tells us that Character is the Source of Destiny.

As any great writer of the day must do, Meredith accepts much in the arguments of the fatalists. He does not refuse to see that nature and circumstances are strong to mould life. He recognizes the great power of environment and the absolute power, within its realm, of heredity. Like Beowulf, like Shakespeare, like Browning, he is reverent before human destiny. Yet in spite of all this, he accepts the moral with its necessary result of freedom. He declares that, although the laws of necessity rule up to the crisis of the moral choice, that very choice sets all the laws of intellect and body working according to itself.

All the stronger for his acceptance of life's necessity becomes his belief in life's freedom. All the stronger for his concessions becomes his final dictum. The more intricate the machine, the greater its master's mind. The narrower the realm of choice, the greater power must that choice have, to move life as it does.

To show that the same peculiar mixture of belief in fatalism and in the determining power of character on life exists in Meredith's writings as in Beowulf and in Shakespeare, let me quote a few words from 'Evan Harrington':

"Most youths, like Pope's women, have no character at all, and indeed a character that does not wait for circumstances to shape it, is of small worth in the race that must be run."

Again he says:

"When we have cast off the scales of hope and fancy, and surrender our claims on made chance: when the wild particles of this universe consent to march as they are directed, it is given them to see if they see at all that some plan is working out: that the heavens, icy as they are to the pangs of our blood, have been throughout speaking to our souls; and, according to the strength there existing, we learn to comprehend them."

That Meredith, although very reverent before human destiny, is not, on the other hand, one of those who lay the responsibility for their own lives on "the stars," or "fate," or "Providence," may be shown by a study of the characters into whose mouths he puts such sentiments.

In 'Rhoda Fleming' who is it but Algernon, "the fool," who says:

"I'm under some doom. I see it now. Nobody cares for me. I don't know what happiness is. I was born under a bad star. My fate's written."

It is of Algernon, likewise, that the author says:

"Behind the figures he calculated that, in all probability, Rhoda would visit her sister this night. 'I can't stop that,' he said: and hearing a clock strike, 'nor that.' The reflection inspired him with fatalistic views."

In 'The Tragic Comedians,' who is it but Clotilde, "the craven," who lays the successive steps which lead to the tragedy in her life, now to fate, now to other people's power or lack of insight, now to Providence? She reaps, as Meredith plainly shows us, simply what she sows.

In 'Sandra Belloni,' it is Mr. Barrett, that sentimentalist of the better order, of which class the author says: "We will discriminate more closely here than to call them fools," who lets his whole life be crushed with the melancholy thought that he is under the influence of some baneful star. His death, which he lets chance bring or keep away, is a fitting conclusion to his story. He shuts two pistols up together in the same case overnight, knowing that one of them is loaded, the other not. In the morning he takes out one, prepared to fire it upon himself, in case his beloved does not keep tryst. She does not come, he fires, the pistol happens to be loaded, and so comes death.

It shows that the "star" of which he thought was not a real star burning clear in the high heavens. It was rather but a will-o'-the-wisp, born of the marshy exhalations of his own morbid brain. Meredith reverences the real star. He kindly ridicules the will-o'-the-wisp.

But there is still another class of fatalists in Meredith's novels. He recognizes also the fatalism of youth. Such is that of the young Wilfrid in 'Sandra Belloni,' concerning whom the author informs us that we "shall see him grow." Meredith is too great a thinker not to see that this tendency toward fatalism does not belong merely to the "fool," the "craven," and the "sentimentalist," but that it is a tendency of our youth. We are all weak when we are growing, he assures us. Is not ours preëminently a growing age?

But we must not linger too long on the negative side of Meredith's belief. We have seen that he is willing to recognize that there is a wonderful, mysterious power governing human destiny. We have seen, also, that he does not side in the least with those who lay the responsibility for their own lives on fate. Let us seek for his positive message.

In the 'Adventures of Harry Richmond' he says:

"If a man's fate were as a forbidden fruit, detached from him, and in front of him, he might hesitate fortunately before plucking it; but, as most of us are aware, the vital half of it lies in the seed paths he has traversed."

This is certainly a very definite statement of a strong belief in a man's choice of his own destiny. Again, in 'Modern Love' we find the following:

> "In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be! Passions spin the plot;
> We are betrayed by what is false within."
> "I take the hap
> Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails
> Propels; but I am helmsman. Am I wrecked,
> I know the devil has sufficient weight
> To bear; I lay it not on him, or fate.
> Besides, he's damned. That man I do suspect
> A coward, who would burden the poor deuce
> With what ensues from his own slipperiness."

The main issue between freedom and fatalism lies in just this question: Is a man's life determined by what he is or by what he does? Does his nature, received through inheritance, moulded by circumstance, determine his acts and so his life? Or does his moral choice determine these?

Extreme fatalists declare that the former is true. Moralists, idealists, believers in freedom, support the latter view.

Now Meredith leaves us no doubt as to his position on the point. Again and again we see his characters choosing their lives. And their choices rest on no inherited nature, but on character. Thus our author declares, by his plots, as in plain words, that "Our deathlessness is in what we do, not in what we are."

As we have said, a writer's thought of life can be best understood from his plots. He builds life, consciously or unconsciously, as he believes that nature builds it. Does he let the righteous perish and the evil man prosper in the end? Then he either does not believe in this law of ours, or in its present successful working. Perhaps, like Victor Hugo, he teaches a higher law, that of self-sacrifice. Perhaps, like some little modern writers, he teaches a lower law of the temporary success, at times, of hypocrisy and deceit. Whatever he believes in and likes to think of, his structure will disclose.

Now one very marked thing about Meredith's structure is the agreement of the two crises, that of character and that of circumstances. When any one of his characters chooses for good or evil, for wisdom or folly, at that very time, and by that very choice, he decides his future happiness and success, or unhappiness and failure. Therein lies the decision of the question whether that particular novel shall be a tragedy or a comedy.

When Dahlia Fleming chooses evil, she chooses unhappiness. No kind Providence intervenes to save her from her harvest. How many of our little writers of to-day would have caused her marriage with Edward to take place in the end! Is not Meredith's conclusion far more true to life?

When Diana of the Cross-Ways resists Percy's temptings and is led by her hatred of his evil to betray his secret, she chooses for her own happiness in the end. The storms through which she goes to reach it are the natural result of her impulsive, unbalanced mind.

Stronger still is the teaching in 'The Tragic Comedians.' When Clotilde chooses the craven's part to play, she chooses also the craven's reward.

It is in his scientific insight into moral life that Meredith's growth beyond Beowulf, Shakespeare, and even Browning appears. We of the nineteenth century would be sorry to think that we had not one master who goes even deeper into our modern life than these. We believe that, as men of the later twentieth century look back upon our day, they will call George Meredith our greatest literary exponent.

Beowulf asserts the general truth that Circumstance and Character determine Destiny.

Shakespeare has not gone very much farther in the philosophy of life. He teaches that character determines character, and that circumstance determines circumstance; and that, in some way, circumstance obeys character.

Browning would advance a step and teach us, as his age taught the world, that the dependence of the external upon the spiritual comes about through the agency of a personal God.

But Meredith takes up the cry of our scientific age, and says: "The god of this world is in the machine, not out of it."

This is no irreverent teaching, for Meredith is not irreverent. It is simply the search for primary causes. It is the result of the same tendency that leads us to be dissatisfied with calling typhoid fever a "dispensation of Providence," and to lay it to bad drains. Like evolution in the physical world, this theory does not tend to remove God, but to explain more fully his agency and methods. It is no new theory. But the manner of its teaching is as new as this latter nineteenth century of ours.

If one were to compare Meredith with Shakespeare on this subject, one would naturally coordinate Macbeth and Rhoda Fleming, Diana of the Cross-Ways and King Lear.

'Rhoda Fleming' is, like 'Macbeth,' a tale with a moral purpose. The dependence of fate on the moral choice is its chief thought. The book gains force, as all these novels do, from its striking characterizations. We see Dahlia, the fair-haired one, whose great failing is weakness,--the fault of a negative character. And we see plainly the long process of pain to which she thereby subjects herself in the course of her purification.

Rhoda, her sister has, on the other hand, the defects of the positive character. She is head-strong, over-proud. It is from these characteristics that she suffers or leads others to suffer. "The Fates that mould us, always work from the main-spring."

In her relations with Anthony Hope, Rhoda takes the part of the tempter. The interview between the two shows such wonderful insight into character that from this passage alone Meredith might be ranked as great. Rhoda discovers that she has sold her sister in marriage to a brute. In her head-strong desire to buy her off from him, she goes to her uncle to beg for a large sum of money. Anthony, although a poor man in reality, has always delighted in deceiving his brother and his nieces on that point. Rhoda finds him struggling with the greatest temptation of his life. He has carried home money belonging to the bank of which he is a trusted employee. His love of money, his former deceit, make him very weak before Rhoda. So he falls. She is allowed to take with her the money she wants. As the reader looks back over the story, he sees that the money will prove useless for her ends, and that his fall will ruin her uncle's life. Meredith here shows himself a master of tragedy.

The life of the strong, impulsive, young Robert is not so dependent upon the crises of temptation. For he knows himself and lives with a constant purpose to conquer himself. His purpose is stronger than his passions. In respect to his obedience to Socrates's favorite maxim, he is a man rare even in our self-conscious age. What shall we say of Edward, "villain and hero in one"? Like Dahlia he loses his life's happiness through his besetting sin. Several times a courageous word said that ought to be said, or a brave deed done that should have been done might have saved him. And each time he proves himself a coward, until it is too late. Like the children of Israel he would not enter the promised land for fear of the inhabitants thereof. Like them too, he atoned by spending his forty years in the wilderness, and there laying down his life.

We must not neglect the "fascinating Peggy Lovell,"--a coquette whose charm even a woman can feel. Avarice and love of pleasure are her besetting sins. And avarice leads her to her fate. She has chosen to sow her wild oats and to accrue her debts. These she pays, as we all must in one way or another, with herself. Her way is to marry the man who can pay them rather than the man she loves.

One and all, major and minor characters, they come to the crises of their destinies. One after another chooses according to his character his life. This is Meredith's teaching.

But our author is not always sounding the very depths of life. He is no preacher, but a painter of human nature. The power of mind has a large place in his books. "Drink of faith in the brains a full draught," he tells us; and again:--"To read with a soul in the mirror of mind Is man's chief lesson."

'Diana of the Cross-Ways' teaches the partial failure, the temporary unhappiness, that result from lack of mental balance. It is the story of a charming, brilliant, but impulsive woman who makes many mistakes and who suffers from them. Diana is capable of loving one unworthy of her,

and for such lack of wisdom she pays dearly. Yet she holds firmly and purely to the right and so wins happiness in the end. She is foolish sometimes, but she is not a fool. Hence her story is not a tragedy.

This novelist-philosopher has taught us, then, that folly tends to bring failure, but that righteousness is stronger than folly. He is not content to stop in his teachings even here. In 'The Tragic Comedians' he goes still further, and deals with the interrelations of the moral and intellectual. For character rules intellect, as intellect reacts upon character.

'The Tragic Comedians' begins with the birth of a love. With Clotilde, daughter of a highly respectable, but very conventional citizen, Alvan, a Jew and demagogue, a man of widespread and somewhat notorious reputation, falls in love. Clotilde is a beautiful, bright woman; interesting, but cowardly. Like all Meredith's heroes and heroines, she has her besetting sin.

To this sudden, overpowering new love Clotilde yields her heart, but will not yield her actions. She is afraid. While Alvan would go at once to her parents to ask for her hand, Clotilde, seeing only too plainly how little hope there is of obtaining their consent, prefers to dally with matters, and insists on his postponing the interview. Alvan's straightforward nature cannot understand such half-way measures. He leaves her unsought for a time, and begins to fade out of Clotilde's mind. Suddenly, when in the mountains with a friend, she hears that Alvan is near. She wants him then, and goes to seek him. Again he misunderstands her. This time he asks her to run away with him, but she refuses, seeming not so much shocked as afraid. She answers, not in a womanly, straightforward way, but with an evasion. Then she consents to let him speak to her father and mother. She addresses them first on the subject, but is met with a torrent of angry words. The poor thing cannot stand that. In her weakness she makes her next great mistake, and runs away to Alvan, beseeching him to marry her secretly. The woman who would not listen to his request for this very thing but a day or two before now begs for it. She finds that it is too late. Her lover, in his pride, has determined to meet her parents on their own ground. He will win her, he now declares, by conventional methods. So he takes her to a friend's home. It is there that the chief crisis of the book takes place, a crisis which is one of the most interesting I know in literature. It is a moral crisis.

Clotilde has come to it through various steps of weakness. Alvan has reached it through pride and its reaction from his former shady life to a desire for conventionalism. A strong man who had before obeyed conventional rules might there have thrown them aside. To Alvan, on account of their long disuse, they seemed more precious than they need.

So Alvan meets the crisis overconfident in his strength. Clotilde meets it afraid, cowering in her weakness. Of her state Meredith says:

"Men and women alike, who renounce their own individuality by cowering thus abjectly under some other before the storm, are in reality abjuring their idea of that other, and offering themselves up to the genius of Power in whatsoever direction it may chance to be manifested, in whatsoever person. We no sooner shut our eyes than we consent to be prey, we lose the soul of election."

Alvan handed Clotilde back to her parents. She meekly did what he said. She was hurt. She could not understand his action. Had she but stood up against this mistake, he might have had pity on her even yet. Or, had he not changed his own rigid determination, the action might have prevented that worst result, the weakening of her belief in him. There is nothing like cowardice to destroy one's faith in others. There is nothing like courageous action to clear away those mists of doubt. Clotilde's "craven" will began to demoralize her mind.

But her chance is not over yet. She may still cling to Alvan. Doubtless he will seek her, he has not given her up. Ah, but circumstances were too strong. For the craven they are always too strong. By a short imprisonment, by family storms and prayers, Clotilde is reduced to external subjection. The disorder of her mind increases.

While submitting to her father's command, while writing words of dismissal to Alvan, and even accepting the attentions of a former suitor, she still says in her heart of hearts that she will always be loyal to him. How peculiar seems the twisting, "serpentine" nature! She still waits for Alvan to save her from the chains she daily forges for herself. Meanwhile Alvan does his best. He uses all means,-- conventional and otherwise. He finally forces permission from Clotilde's father to hold a free interview with Clotilde. She is to tell him openly and freely whether she will marry him or not. So he hopes to free her of coercion.

So far as circumstances are concerned, there is now nothing to prevent a happy ending; but from moral causes it is impossible.

The chains she has forged for herself are too strong. Her fancies have become diseased by long straining to a cowardly deceit. She think's Alvan's messengers deceitful too.

So she refuses. She throws away thereby her last chance. And yet--can we believe it?--she still hopes. Alvan has done his best and has failed. His friends have tried to help him. Circumstance has given away before them. And she has thrown away their help--yet she still hopes. Alvan sends a challenge to her father. Prince Marko accepts it, and now her shuddering trust is in Providence.

Marko will be killed. Now Alvan shall have her hand. But "Providence" does not save her. Alvan is killed, and Prince Marko returns Clotilde cannot understand it. She is stunned, but recovers sufficiently to marry Prince Marko.

"Not she, it was the situation they had created which was guilty," she had thought.

"The craven with desires expecting to be blest is a zealot of the faith which ascribes the direction of events to the outer world."

Of Alvan's death, Meredith says some very characteristic words. Let me quote once again:

"He perished of his weakness, but it was a strong man that fell."

"He was 'a tragic comedian,' one of the lividly ludicious, whom we cannot laugh at, but must contemplate, to distinguish where their character strikes the note of discord with life; for otherwise, in the reflection of their history, life will seem a thing demoniacally inclined by fits to antic and dive into gulfs."

This, then, is George Meredith's message. We have eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the power to choose between the two has entered into our souls. We are under the rule of a great overhanging law. Destiny's wheels we cannot stop, but through our capacity for moral choice, our hands lie on the button that moves the whole machine in its relation to our own individual lives.

This is a great lesson. How strong in its likeness to the teachings of our great masters of the past! How needful in its new scientific form to-day! How suggestive as to the universe! Does it not follow that as our lives are planned so is this universe planned in which we live! Does it not follow that the spiritual is the central life upon which all else depends? It is the teaching of the childhood of the race, broadened through knowledge of life's passion, humbled and heightened through sight of God's hand, strengthened and widened through the opening of our eyes in modern science to a fuller and clearer knowledge, not only of the machinery of the universe, but also of its motive power.

Emily G. Hooker.

THE TRAGEDY OF OPHELIA.

RENUNCIATION.

The "Tragedy of Hamlet" has its origin in the murder of Hamlet's father, its development in Hamlet's preparation for revenge, and its consummation in the murderer's death. It is well summed up in the Anglicized title of the old German play, 'Fratricide Punished,' ('Hamlet,' Variorum Edition, Furness, Vol. II., p. 121). In the progress of this tragedy Ophelia's own sad story has no part or lot. She is in it, but not of it, and her relationship to it is an episode. Like 'The Murder of Gonzago,' however, it is a tragedy within the tragedy, but it turns wholly upon the loves of Hamlet and Ophelia, their interruption, and its result. For this reason it is greatly shorn of detail, and therefore doubtless it has always been regarded as a mystery.

"The Tragedy of Ophelia" opens with a narrative of Hamlet's ardent pursuit of Ophelia with vows of love, the surrender of her maiden heart to him, and their free and bounteous interviews thereafter. Here the action of the drama begins, and her father, doubting the integrity of Hamlet's purpose, forbids her further reception of his attentions, and, apparently without explanation made to Hamlet, she obeys him. Of what Hamlet thinks or says of this we are not in terms informed, and can only infer it from his conduct towards her afterwards. But that conduct was of a most extraordinary character, seeming to many students of the play to be inexplicable. The explanations of others may be resolved into three theories, each of which deserves a passing notice. It has been claimed that insanity will account for it, and indeed Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia has been the chief argument advanced in proof of his insanity; but it is incredible that Shakespeare should have devoted the only two interviews which he had with her, and which had so important an influence upon her life, to the mere vaporings of a madman. It has been suggested that he is putting on "an antic disposition," as he had foretold he would, with a view to deceiving the King concerning his intentions, and such conduct would have been fitting with the temptress in Belleforest's 'Hystorie,' (*Ibid.*, 91); but Shakespeare has transformed the creature of that story into Hamlet's gentle sweetheart, and so to lacerate her soul by way of subterfuge would have been an act of unjustifiable brutality, of which he could by no means have been guilty. It has been urged that his mind's eye is jaundiced by his mother's gross behavior, and that thereupon he turns distrustfully from womankind; but long after his mother's wicked marriage,

perhaps a month afterwards, he is reveling in Ophelia's love,--a balm that gracious Nature often pours on bleeding hearts. And further, from either of these points of view, the sudden and extravagant change in Hamlet's feelings towards Ophelia, the cruel harshness of his speech to her soon after, and his subsequent complete indifference to her, are beyond the requirements of the situation, and the theories therefore seem rather to perplex than to explain.

Undoubtedly the cause of this is that they seek the solution of the riddle in the effect on Hamlet's relations to Ophelia of prior incidents in the play, his father's murder, his mother's marriage to the murderer, and the ghostly mission of revenge. But there are in the situation at the end of Act I of 'Hamlet' and wholly unconnected with these incidents, all the elements of a tragedy, few and simple, but profoundly significant. Thus, we have a prince who is an ardent lover, a court lady who has as ardently returned his love, the lady's sudden and unexplained refusal to see or hear from him, her ambitious and time-serving courtier father, and for a King a "remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain." Let but a spark of jealous suspicion reach such a mixture, and there must be an explosion; with a war-hardened Othello-like titanic rage and murder, but with the softer Hamlet renunciation and reproach, and with poor Ophelia, who represses her feelings always, heart-break, insanity, and death.

Now, Hamlet is pictured as one of the most suspicious of men, and in particular at this juncture about his mortal enemy the King. In addition, he is very proud and very revengeful, as he admits, and there is every indication that he has been passionately fond of Ophelia. When therefore she persistently denies herself to him in private, though doubtless a regular attendant at the functions of the court, his suspicions are excited, his pride wounded, his anger aroused; and, with "the pangs of despis'd love" in his heart, and in his mind a tumult of conflicting thoughts, he suddenly presents himself before her, resolved to know the truth. "What damned moments counts he o'er Who dotes, yet doubts,--suspects, yet fondly loves." In Quarto I she says: "He found me walking in the gallery, all alone"; that is, in the gallery of the King's palace,--(compare lines 673 and 803),--and of course within reach of the King; and, though Shakespeare afterwards transferred this scene to her chamber in her father's house, it may not be overlooked that the remarkable interview of which Ophelia tells was conceived originally as occurring on the impulse of the moment and under stress of feeling caused apparently, by Hamlet's unexpected and dumbfoundering discovery:

"He took me by the wrist and held me hard.
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long time stayed he so.
At last--a little shaking of my arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down--
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And with his head over his shoulder turned
He seemed to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me."

In that harsh grip is anger, in that long study of her face the search for truth, in his silence the wounded pride that cannot utter his suspicions, in the triple nod the confirmation of their verity, in the sigh the efflux of his love, in the hand-shaking a farewell, and in the retroverted face a hope yet lingering but doomed to disappointment. For Ophelia still utters no word of explanation, and Hamlet the lover leaves her forever.

The renunciation of Ophelia at this interview is generally conceded, but the reason assigned for it is the incompatibility of Hamlet's passion for her with his mission of revenge;--a most unsatisfactory explanation, because after the Ghost's command was laid on him he still pursued her, for it was after that that she says: "I did refuse his letters and denied his access to me." There is apparently an interval of two months between Acts I and II of Hamlet, and during this period Hamlet has evidently been brooding over his father's murder and considering the means of executing his dread command, and he has doubtless been vexing his soul over the conduct of Ophelia until he can stand the strain no longer. In immediate sequence in the play his silent interview with her follows upon her denial of herself to him, and an echo of the bitter feeling then aroused in him is subsequently heard, when he tells her that the prologue to the players' scene is brief "as woman's love";--sometimes mistakenly supposed to refer to the Queen, whose defection did not occur for more than thirty years after her marriage. If Hamlet's belief in an intrigue between her and the King be assumed, it fully explains his conduct before, at, and after his renunciation of Ophelia, and it would seem that no other theory can explain it adequately.

When Othello is brooding over the supposed delinquencies of Desdemona, tortured by commingled love and hate, in his wrath he strikes her. Afterwards he demands: "Let me see your eyes; look in my face"; and as she does so, and he searches there for her innocence and finds it not, he bitterly adjures her: "Swear thou art honest," though all the while assured that she is "false as hell." And he weeps and laments over her at the very moment that he determines upon

an eternal separation. Othello's interview with Desdemona and this interview of Hamlet's with Ophelia are identical in outline, and they differ in detail only as the character of the two men differ. Shakespeare has told us in words that Othello is jealously suspicious of Desdemona, and with equal faithfulness he has depicted jealous suspicion in the acts of Hamlet.

This mute interview between Hamlet and Ophelia reminds one of the "Dumb Shew," which precedes the scene from the drama of 'Gonzago's Murder'; and as in the latter instance the Duke and Duchess afterwards put into words the thoughts which the pantomime foreshadows, so on examination will this be found to be the case in the second interview between Hamlet and Ophelia, which immediately follows upon his great soliloquy.

This second interview concludes Scene i of Act III in Quarto II and in the Folios, but in Quarto I it is in Act II, and logically it belongs there. Act I of 'Hamlet' was designed to disclose the relation of the several characters to each other, and the command imposed on Hamlet to avenge his Father's death upon the King; and Act II was originally intended to exhibit Hamlet erratically making ready to obey the Ghost's command, and the various artifices which the King employs to detect his hidden purpose. When Ophelia tells her father of Hamlet's wordless interview with her, Polonius promptly goes to the King with the story of their amours and his termination of them, and with the announcement that Hamlet is mad for his daughter's love; and, after hearing his reasons for this opinion, being impressed by them, naturally the first thought of the King is: "How may we try it further?" To this Polonius replies: "I'll loose my daughter to him" during one of his walks in the gallery here, whilst you and I, unseen but seeing, will witness their encounter. In Quarto I the meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia follows at once, and when it fails Polonius undertakes to board him, and when that fails Rosencrantz and Guildenstern assay him. Afterwards Shakespeare saw fit to change the order of these scenes, but this particular scene may properly be considered now, and before others which it logically precedes.

In the interpretation of this interview, as of the former, commentators have been misled by the assumption that it is in some way connected with Hamlet's mission of revenge, and consequently they have found it, as has been suggested, a veritable *pons asinorum*. Apart from the three theories above referred to, there is an attempt to explain it on the hypothesis that when Hamlet meets Ophelia in the palace, whither he has been sent for by the King for the express purpose of meeting her, but "as 'twere by accident," he at once suspects the ruse, and therefore talks in the extraordinary manner recorded of him; that is, that he is rude and brutal, and refuses to yield to his feelings of affection, in order to deceive the King, who he well knows is within hearing, or to punish Ophelia, who he is assured is spying on him. But this theory seems to be wholly without support in the text. In the first place, there is not a word which indicates that he suspects the King's presence, and, on the contrary, the delivery of the soliloquy, the admission that he is revengeful and ambitious, and the covert threat to kill the King, all tend to prove that he does not suspect it. Further, such a suspicion could reasonably originate only in the fact that the King had sent for him, and that instead of the King he found Ophelia, but it is to be remembered that in Quarto I the King does not send for him, and that the meeting is in fact accidental. Conceding the suspicion, however, for argument's sake, whilst it might induce Hamlet to be reticent or cautious in his speech, it does not explain why Shakespeare put into his mouth the denunciatory language he employs, and this is after all the vital question. It cannot have been in order to deceive the King by concealing his love for Ophelia, for such concealment must necessarily undeceive him; the King, Queen, and Polonius are all deluded into believing him mad for Ophelia's love, and this test is expected to confirm them in it; but we know that in fact the King is undeceived, for his comment is: "Love! His affections do not that way tend; Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little, Was not like madness." Were he profuse in his protestations of love, the King might indeed be deceived into believing that it is not his conduct, but Ophelia's, which troubles Hamlet; for herein the situation differs from that narrated by Belleforest, the lady there being a mere vulgar temptress, whose preconcerted blandishments Hamlet shrewdly refuses to yield to. As for Ophelia's spying on him, it is untenable; for she also expects that Hamlet will exhibit affection for her, and, were he to do so, instead of betraying his secret, she would aid him in concealing it. It seems plain from his inquiry that Hamlet sees Polonius during the interview, but it is not probable that he believes Ophelia to be cognizant of his presence; her answer is a denial of such knowledge, and Hamlet's succeeding sarcastic speech is meant for the conscience of Polonius, not for hers. The worst that he could say to her is said before the discovery of her father, and before her falsehood, and hence the discovery and the falsehood do not serve to explain it. Nothing can explain it satisfactorily, but Hamlet's conviction that she has transferred her affections to the King.

After Hamlet has for some time been in the King's chamber, whether it is with or without the King's request, he meets Ophelia there, and he finds her apparently waiting for some one, and whiling away the time by reading. So it has been pre-arranged, and so it seems to him. Plainly she has not been waiting for him, for, though he himself has been waiting, she has not addressed him, and in the end he first accosts her. Indeed, it has been planned that their meeting shall seem to him to be "by accident," and, so seeming, the idea of her waiting for him is precluded. Hence to him, already suspicious of her integrity, she must have come to meet the King. But he has before this been convinced of such an intrigue, as above shown, and because of it has renounced her; and accordingly he petitions her lightly, if not ironically: "Nymph, in thy orisons Be all my sins remember'd." Their meeting is on the same day as, or certainly not more than one day later than, the speechless interview; but Ophelia ignores that, and ignores his petition also, and inquires into the state of his health "for this many a day,"--that is, since Polonius has

separated them,--to which he responds gravely, and without show of affection. Thereupon ensues the following conversation:

"*Oph*. My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed long to redeliver;
I pray you now receive them.

"*Ham*. No, not I;
I never gave you aught.

"*Oph*. My honor'd lord, you know right well you did, And with them words of so sweet breath compos'd As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost, Take them again; for to the noble mind Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind."

It seems clear that Ophelia returns these remembrances in pursuance of her father's orders, express or implied; that Hamlet repudiates them because, proud and sensitive, he would blot their old associations from his memory; and that Ophelia insists on their return with a sad and tender recollection of those music-vows of love that he has made so often. But why she should accuse him of unkindness towards her is not so clear, since it is she who has broken off their intimacy. Her meaning is not doubtful in Quarto I, where this reference to Hamlet's unkindness follows upon his comments on her honesty, and evidently refers to them. But in Quarto II Shakespeare changes the order of the conversation, and so apparently intends to make Ophelia's suggestion of unkindness refer to Hamlet's visit to her closet. Hence he had not only frightened her at that interview, as she informed her father, but he had hurt her, she realizes that he had renounced her, and in this gentle way she now upbraids him. But Hamlet, wrought to sudden fury by the reminiscence, like Othello, can see nothing but the supposed wrong which she has done him, and, like Othello, charges her with unchastity, without indicating the suspected man:

"*Ham*. Ha, ha! are you honest?

"*Oph*. My lord?

"*Ham*. Are you fair?

"*Oph*. What means your lordship!

"*Ham*. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit of no discourse to your beauty.

"*Oph*. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

"*Ham*. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd, than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof."

Though expressed figuratively, there can be no doubt of Hamlet's intention in this passage to warn Ophelia against some temptation then assailing her, which is attacking her virtue through the medium of her beauty, and which will probably prevail over it. It concerns her "honesty,"--a virtuous woman being honest in respect of others who have claims on her, and chaste in respect of herself,--and undoubtedly it refers to the temptation which assails all women who win unscrupulous admirers by their charms, and to which they sometimes succumb. In Ophelia's case it has been to Hamlet an impossible possibility that she could prove unfaithful to him, but here and now, since he has discovered her secret visit to the King, it has become reality.

Then, as the scene proceeds, Hamlet in a breath admits and denies his former love for her, thus plainly repudiating any present affection. (This conclusion is entirely consistent with his declaration "I lov'd Ophelia" in the grave-yard scene). Here he renounces her in words, as formerly he had renounced her by signs. Then he denounces himself and his "old stock" as being without virtue, and concludes the subject by declaring: "We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery." Here he unmistakeably warns her against the King, for of that old stock only they two are left. To the blandishments of both she has yielded, as he supposes, and since Hamlet no longer loves her, and the King but lusts after her, her only safe retreat is in a nunnery. In those old days a nunnery was often the only refuge for a woman who was fancied by a king, if she would retain her purity.

At this juncture Hamlet discovers Polonius, as is evident by his suggestion that he had better remain at home when he desires to play the fool; if the remark were not intended for his ear, it would be absurd. Of course he realizes that Polonius has been listening to their conversation, but he does not betray his knowledge, though the rest of his comments are perhaps more particularly intended for Polonius's ear. His words turn "wild and whirling," Ophelia notes the change, and her responses change in tone accordingly. He protests that though she marries she must lose that immediate jewel of her soul of which Iago prates, or that she will transform her husband into the horned monster of Othello's fears. And then he inveighs against wanton womankind in general, but in such terms as might befit the woman he supposes that she has become. He puts on "an antic disposition" for the benefit of Polonius, but under it all is the pointed notice to Ophelia that their past relationship can never be renewed, and the masked charge that it is her adoption of the ways of her frail sisters that has made him mad,--as her words indicate that she supposes him to be,--and that has wrecked the future happiness of both of them.

When Hero is charged by Claudio with unchastity, she fancies that something must be wrong with him, and says: "Is my lord well, that he doth speak so wild?" Of Othello's accusation Desdemona thinks that "something, sure, of state ... Hath puddled his clear spirit." In a similar frame of mind Ophelia entreats: "Ye heavenly powers restore him," and bewails the overthrow of Hamlet's reason. These three tender hearted women are singularly alike in their mental attitudes under the accusation, and but too willing to extenuate the cruel blow and to forgive it. But both Hero and Desdemona defend themselves against the charge, whilst Ophelia, maintaining her habitual reticence, neither admits nor denies anything, and Hamlet's conviction of her wrongdoing with the King remains unchanged.

Thus far Hamlet has made no direct charge of the transfer of Ophelia's affections from him to another, but he seems to do this at their next interview, which takes place at the time of the play of 'Gonzago's Murder.' There is a bitterness towards her in his speech, a brutality in his obscene allusions, and a degree of heartlessness in it all, which can be excused--if indeed it be deemed excusable--only on the theory that he believes her to have herself become a heartless, wicked woman. When he is commenting on the facts of the play, and Ophelia suggests that he is "as good as a chorus," he snarlingly replies: "I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying." Everything which Hamlet says is pregnant with meaning, and Ophelia evidently regards this as a keen thrust at her, which it plainly is. Both of them know that they two are no longer lovers, and each of them therefore understands that the allusion is to some other man with whom she treads "the primrose path of dalliance." As usual Ophelia does not deny the charge, and it would not be singular if Hamlet were to accept her silence as an admission of its truth. To whom she thinks that he refers does not appear, but there can be no doubt that his conviction is that her new lover is the King.

The next incident indicating this conviction is the interview in which Polonius undertakes with much complacency to "board" the Prince:

"*Pol*. Do you know me, my lord?

"*Ham*. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

"*Pol*. Not I, my lord.

"*Ham*. Then I would you were so honest a man.

"*Pol*. Honest, my lord?

"*Ham*. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

"*Pol*. That's very true, my lord.

"*Ham*. For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion--Have you a daughter?

"*Pol*. I have, my lord.

"*Ham*. Let her not walk i' the sun. Conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to it.

"*Pol*. How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter. Yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger. He is far gone, far gone." [*aside*].

There has been much discussion of this passage, but no satisfactory solution of it. It is a good sample of the enigmatic style of speech characteristic of Hamlet, which presumably the audiences of Shakespeare's day comprehended, which of course the astute Polonius did not understand, and which puzzles later generations because they have lost the ancient significance of certain words. Polonius is so prejudiced in favor of his theory that it was "the very ecstacy of love" that troubled Hamlet, that he does not even attempt to fathom his allusions. And yet Hamlet's last remark, warning him about his daughter, rivets his attention, and he demands to know what is meant by it; but it is only for an instant, his illusion again diverts him from the matter, and the chance of explanation thus escapes.

Malone says that "fishmonger" was a cant term for a "wencher"; and in Barnabe Rich's 'Irish Hubbub' is the expression "senex fornicator, an old fishmonger." Possibly this is its primary significance in Hamlet's mind, for shortly afterwards he satirically says of Polonius to the players: "He's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps." In several instances Shakespeare similarly alludes to "fishing"; as in 'Measure for Measure,' i, 2, 91: "Groping for trouts in a peculiar river"; 'Winter's Tale,' i, 2, 195: "And his pond fish'd by his next neighbor"; and possibly in 'Antony and Cleopatra,' i, 4, 4: "He fishes, drinks, and wastes the lamps of night in revels." The word "monger" in compound words, as used by Shakespeare, does not always mean a trader in the article, but sometimes one who merely indulges in the act; as in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' ii, 1, 253: "Thou art an old love-monger"; in 'Romeo and Juliet,' ii, 4, 30: "These strange flies, these fashion-mongers"; and in 'Measure for Measure,' v, 1, 337: "Was the Duke a fleshmonger?" In common usage the word has this double significance, indeed, dependent upon whether its adjunct refers to a thing or to an act; as, for example, cheesemonger and scandalmonger, and other similar compounds which will readily suggest themselves. Hence "fishmonger" means both one given to "fishing" and a trader in fish. And doubtless the latter is its most important significance in Hamlet's mind, when Polonius denies that he is a fishmonger, namely that he is a trader in a food which from time immemorial has been supposed to be an aphrodisiac. Wherefore we are to

understand Hamlet as meaning that Polonius is not so honest a man as the fishmonger that Polonius has in mind, or the senex fornicator that he originally had in mind, but that he is a fleshmonger,--a pander, as Tieck puts it;--"traders in flesh" such persons are termed in 'Troilus and Cressida,' v, 11, 46. It is supposed by Tieck that the allusion is to the way in which Polonius threw Hamlet and Ophelia together, by Friesen that it refers to his pandering to the desires of Claudius and the Queen before the old King's death, and by Doering that it points to his promotion of the o'er-hasty marriage of the King and Queen. But the foregoing discussion shows that the secondary thought in Hamlet's mind is that for some personal end Polonius permits Ophelia to accept the King's attentions, knowing the necessary effect of her youth and beauty on his licentious nature; for at his last interview with her he saw her father also, though apparently hiding from both of them, and therefore believes that he was cognizant of the fact that she had gone to the palace privately to meet the King. It is evidently this belief which inspires him with the contempt which he afterwards exhibits towards Polonius.

His next speech manifests this contempt in a notable degree, but it has been unappreciated because of the failure to perceive the significance of the word "sun." It is an argument intended to enforce what he had already said, and, supplying the omitted portion, the whole runs thus: You are not honest, and you cannot be honest; "for if the sun (in the sky) breed maggots in a dead dog, being a (heavenly) god kissing carrion," even so will the sun of this realm (the King) engender misdeeds in you, a corrupt man caressed by an earthly god. In characteristic fashion Shakespeare uses "sun" in a double sense, as he has just used "fishmonger," and again the occult reference is to Polonius as a procurer for the King.

And Hamlet follows this up by the warning concerning Ophelia; "Let her not walk i' the sun (shine of the King's favor); conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive (if she does so)." "Sun" in this passage means "sunshine" or "sunlight," as in ordinary usage it often does, but it is the light of the sun of royalty that he has just mentioned.

Hamlet's meaning is made so plain by this construction, that it scarcely needs argument to enforce it. It may however be remarked that, assuming its correctness in respect of the declaration that Polonius is not so honest as a fishmonger, its correctness as to the sun's breeding maggots in carrion and causing conception in Ophelia necessarily follows. The three enigmatical statements, thus interpreted, complement and explain each other, and therefore tend to prove each other; and the proof is strengthened by the fact that they are the sequelae of a single thought, namely, his belief in an intrigue between Ophelia and the King. On the other hand, conceding such a belief, a man of Hamlet's character would most naturally think these thoughts, and utter them in characteristic style to Ophelia's father:--The King breeds corruption in you as does the sun in a carrion dog, you are risking your daughter's honor to win his favor, and the experiment will probably end in her dishonor. Hence Hamlet's alleged belief, deduced from his three interviews with Ophelia, and these three resulting comments tend to prove each other's correctness.

Again, the sun is plainly credited by Hamlet with a double function, namely, corruptly breeding life in a dead dog and in a living woman, and the only possible means of harmonizing the two' statements, and of making sense out of the latter, is to assume that some man is typified by the second sun. It is generally admitted that an uncompleted argument is introduced by the particle "for," and, such being the case, it is a fair assumption that that also shall contain a reference to "the sun" as doing something which a man may do. On such an assumption, the argument is readily followed up: "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog," so must "the sun" breed dishonesty in you, and so may "the sun" cause your daughter to conceive. These three propositions are consistent, the logical connection between them is perfect, and their reason and purpose is clear, if the term "sun" may figuratively indicate "the King."

Now, it is to be observed that Shakespeare not infrequently refers to kings as suns, and likens them to gods. When the King has pardoned her son, the Duchess of York exclaims: "A god on earth thou art"; 'Richard II,' v, 3, 136. "Kings are earth's gods," says Pericles; 'Pericles,' i, 1, 103. And again he says of the King, his father, that he "Had princes sit like stars about his throne, And he the sun, for them to reverence," *Ibid.*, II, iii, 40, In 'Henry VIII,' i, 1, 6, Buckingham, referring to the meeting of the Kings of England and France on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, styles them "Those suns of glory, those two lights of men." And Norfolk tells of the wondrous deeds done there, "when these suns (For so they phrase them) by their heralds challenged The noble spirits to arms"; *Ibid.*, i, 1, 33. Again, adverting to the manner in which Cardinal Woolsey overshadows all other men in the King's favor, Buckingham says: "I wonder That such a keech can with his very bulk Take up the rays o' th' beneficial sun, And keep it from the earth"; *Ibid.*, i, 1, 56. When the Cardinal has procured the King to arrest him, Buckingham foresees his speedy death, and again uses this metaphor in a passage which has been much misunderstood, *Ibid.*, i. 1, 236: "I am the shadow of poor Buckingham, Whose figure even this instant cloud puts on By dark'ning my clear sun"; that is, whose body was even that moment entombed by the darkening of the King's countenance against him; he was already a dead man. (Compare the thought: "Darkness does the face of earth entomb When living light should kiss it"; 'Macbeth,' ii, 4, 10).[1] In like manner, in 'King John,' ii, i, 500, the Dauphin of France refers to himself as King, when he says to his father that his shadow, visible in the eye of the Princess, "Becomes a sun and makes your son a shadow." In Richard II,' iii, 2, 50, the King, likening himself to the sun, says that, as the "eye of heaven" reveals the dark deeds of night when he fires the proud tops of the eastern pines, "So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke ... Shall see us rising on our throne, the east, His

treasons will sit blushing in his face." And again, *Ibid.*, iv, 1, 260, transferring the metaphor to Bolingbroke, he wails: "O, that I were a mockery King of snow Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke, To melt myself away in waterdrops." In '1 Henry IV,' iii, 2, 79, the King speaks of "sunlike majesty, When it shines seldom in admiring eyes." In 'Richard III.' i, 1, 1, Gloster says, referring to the King: "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York." In 'Hamlet,' i, 2, 67, the King asks Hamlet: "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" and he ironically replies: "Not so, my lord, I am too much i' the sun." Here again "sun" means "sunshine," and Hamlet, choosing to understand the King literally, and referring to the fact that clouds are dissipated by a genial sun, sneeringly protests that he is too much in the sunshine of royalty to have clouds hanging about him. Referring to a different effect of the sun's warmth, Prince John speaks of "The man that sits within a monarch's heart And ripens in the sunshine of his favor"; '2 Henry IV,' iv, 2, 12. There are other similar uses of the word "sun," which need not now be cited.

The last reference to Ophelia's supposed relation to the King occurs when Polonius comes to announce the presence of the players:

"*Ham.* 'O Jephthah, judge of Israel,' what a treasure hadst thou!

"*Pol.* What treasure had he, my lord?

"*Ham.* Why 'One fair daughter, and no more, the which he loved passing well.'

"*Pol.* Still on my daughter [*aside*].

"*Ham.* Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

"*Pol.* If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

"*Ham.* Nay, that follows not.

"*Pol.* What follows then, my lord?

"*Ham.* Why, 'As by lot, God wot.'"

Here Hamlet again mystifies Polonius about his daughter, quoting from an old English ballad. Jephthah is pilloried in history as the man who sacrificed his daughter in payment for his worldly success. Shakespeare also refers to him in '3 Henry VI,' v, 1, 91: "To keep that oath were more impiety than Jephthah's when he sacrificed his daughter." Hamlet dubs Polonius "Jephthah," because he believes that he has paid for political preferment by yielding his daughter to the King. And when Polonius says that, if he is to be called Jephthah, he admits that like Jephthah he loves his daughter, Hamlet replies in characteristic vein, "Nay, that follows not"; meaning that it follows instead that like Jephthah he has sacrificed her. But when Polonius presses him to say what does follow, he conceals his real meaning, as his custom is, and diverts the old man's mind by answering the line from the ballad. As was the case with regard to Ophelia, Hamlet is reluctant to make the open charge against her father.

Thus in every instance in which Hamlet comes in contact with Ophelia, or refers to her, his actions and his words consistently point to the fact that he renounces her because he believes her to have thrust him aside while engaging in an intrigue with the King. And the fact that from this point of view there is a connected story of their relations told by the several interviews above discussed, that Hamlet's conduct and language in them all are adequately explained, and that a single belief of his accounts for each of them, is strong confirmation of the theory's correctness. It is in harmony with the general scheme of the drama also, all of whose important movements hinge on "purposes mistook"; and it furnishes Hamlet with an adequate motive for his treatment of Ophelia, and removes from him the stigma of mere brutishness or insanity. Coleridge well says that there must have been "some profound heart truth" under the story, and the theory herein advanced seems to disclose it.

David A. McKnight.

WASHINGTON, D. C., February 26, 1898.

CLEWS TO EMERSON'S MYSTIC VERSE.

(THIRD PAPER.)

"When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward

child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room."--*Touchstone*.

The phantasmal lords of life of the poem 'Experience,' which we considered at the close of the last paper, were presumably suggested to Emerson by the following lines from Tennyson's 'Mystic,' published in 1830 (Emerson imported these early volumets of young Tennyson, and never tired of praising them to his friends):--

> "Always there stood before him, night and day,
> Of wayward vary-colored circumstance
> The imperishable presences serene,
> Colossal, without form, or sense, or sound,
> Dim shadows but unwaning presences
> Four-faced to four corners of the sky."

The "silent congregated hours," "daughters of time, divinely tall," with "severe and youthful brows," in this same poem of Tennyson gave Emerson his "daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days," congregated in procession. Tennyson's mystic, who hears "time flowing in the middle of the night" recalls Emerson's 'Two Rivers,' in which the living All, the Infinite Soul, is figured as a stream flowing through eternity:--

> "I hear the spending of the stream,
> Through years, through men, through nature fleet,
> Through love and thought, through power and dream."

At the close of the poem 'Wealth' there is a bit of scientific nature-ethics which is a little obscure. The greater part of the poem is a series of graphic pictures, detailing the process of world-development through the geologic ages down to the advent of man. Suddenly, at the end,--just as at the end of the prose essay on the same subject,--he remembers his manners and makes his bow to the august Soul, kindles a light in the Geissler tube of nature, sets it aglow interiorly with spiritual law:--

> "But, though light-headed man forget,
> Remembering Matter pays her debt:
> Still, through her motes and masses, draw
> Electric thrills and ties of Law,
> Which bind the strength of Nature wild
> To the conscience of a child."

The logical link connecting this part with the rest has dropped out in the poem, but is clear enough in the essay. The lines mean simply this: that, though man may forget to obey the laws of the universe, Nature never forgets her debt of obedience; she bites and stings the transgressor and caresses and soothes him who obeys. In her own submission to law she has that artlessness and quasi-moral sense that affines her to the moral nature of a child. The "awful victors" and "Eternal Rights" of 'Voluntaries' are only "remembering Matter" in another mask: with all their innocent obedience they are themselves terrible executors:--

> "They reach no term, they never sleep,
> In equal strength through space abide;
> Though, feigning dwarfs, they crouch and creep,
> The strong they slay, the swift outstride."

In the following high pantheistic strain the seer chants the old rune that God is all:--

> "The living Heaven thy prayers respect,
> House at once and architect,
> Quarrying man's rejected hours,
> Builds therewith eternal towers;
> Sole and self-commanded works,
> Fears not undermining days,
> Grows by decays,
> And, by the famous might that lurks
> In reaction and recoil,
> Makes flame to freeze and ice to boil;
> Forging, through swart arms of Offence,
> The silver seat of Innocence."

When the Living Universe builds a house, it builds it out of its own soul substance; while man sleeps and loiters, the Unconscious ceaselessly toils. In the phrase "grows by decays," Emerson embodies, I believe, the law of the conservation of energy. The magazine of divine power is exhaustless; does energy sink out of sight here, it is only to reappear yonder; the tree decays, but out of its fertilizing substance new plants may spring up; the coal under the steam boiler of the locomotive is consumed, but the swart goblin has lost no whit of his might: he just slips darkling up into the steam, makes the driving-rods his swift-shuttling arms, and, grasping with his steel fingers the felloes of the wheel, whirls you half a thousand miles over the green bulge of the earth ere set of sun, The mystic Power grows by decays; and also, by "the famous might that lurks in reaction and recoil," reconciles apparent antinomies and opposites, and is the agent that visits evil upon the head of the evil doer and mercy upon the merciful. If a heavy body be rolled up an inclined plane, it acquires potential and kinetic energy just equal to the force expended in getting it there, and in reaction develops such a famous might that, if massive enough, it will knock you down if you stand in its way. If you lift the big pendulum of the clock in the corner, you also confer latent, or reactionary, energy upon it. Only it is of course hyperbolical for the poet to say that reaction is potent enough to actually freeze flame and make ice boil your kettle. That is only one of Emerson's rhetorical Chinese crackers, his startling thaumaturgic way of illustrating his thesis.

The key-thought of the essay 'Spiritual Laws,' to which the occult lines we are considering were prefixed, is, Be noble; for, if you are not, your face and life will, by the law of reaction and return, publish your lapse. Punishment and reward are fruits that ripen unsuspected in the deeds of men.

The pertinency and application of many of Emerson's titles are not at once apparent.

In 'Merops' the bard affirms that in his high philosophical soarings he cares not whether he can at once ticket his intuitions and perceptions with names or not. Merops was changed into an eagle, says Ovid, and placed among the constellations,--hence, I suppose, is selected by Emerson as a good type of the kind of soaring thinker he is describing. That he also has in mind that Merops was the putative father of Phaëthon is shown perhaps by the allusion (in the last stanza) to Phaëthon's mishap:--

"Space grants beyond his fated road
No inch to the god of day,
And copious language still bestowed
One word, no more, to say."

'Alphonso of Castile' is a dramatic monologue containing a whimsical suggestion for compounding a Man out of ordinary weak-timbered manikins by killing nine in ten of them and "stuffing nine brains in one hat." It is put into the mouth of Alphonso, King of Castile, born in 1221, called *El Sabio*, "The Wise." He was a man who suffered much in his life. He wrote a famous code of laws, and first made the Castilian a national language by causing the Bible to be translated into it. Emerson chooses him as the vehicle of his own whimsey about the condensed homunculus chiefly on account of one famous sentence attributed to him: "Had I been present at the creation, I could have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe." Emerson, in his rhymed soliloquy, put into Alphonso's mouth, sarcastically twits Nature with her depleted stocks, her run-out strains of lemons, figs, roses, and men. The remedy proposed in the case of man, and outlined above, has the true Emerson-Swift bouquet, is colored and veined with a right Shakespearian scorn of the mob.

'Mithridates' is a monologue put into the mouth of Mithridates the Great, King of Pontus, who is said to have discovered an antidote for poisons which made him poison-proof against his many enemies:--

"I cannot spare water or wine,
Tobacco-leaf, or poppy, or rose;
From the earth-poles to the line,
All between that works or grows,
Everything is kin of mine.

Give me agates for my meat;
Give me cantharids to eat;
From air and ocean bring me foods,
From all zones and altitudes."

As late as 1787 "mithridate" was the name for an antidote against poison included in the London pharmacopœia. In Jonson's 'Every Man in his Humour,' Kitely, thinking he is poisoned, calls for mithridate and oil. It was composed of many ingredients and given in the form of electuaries. In our modern pharmacopoeias we have plenty of antidotes against virulent poisons;

e. g., atropine for the deadly amanita mushroom. And counter-poisons are often used, as the tincture of foxglove for aconite, atropine for morphia, or morphia for belladonna. According to the tradition, Mithridates gradually inured his system to counter-poisons, and became poison-proof. At any rate, Emerson uses him for his metaphor, which, in untropical speech, is this: "lam tired of the nambypamby and goody-goody; give me things strong and rank; give me evil for a change and a spur.

"Too long shut in strait and few,
Thinly dieted on dew,
I will use the world, and sift it,
To a thousand humors shift it,
As you spin a cherry.
O doleful ghosts and goblins merry!
O all you virtues, methods, mights,
Means, appliances, delights,
Reputed wrongs and braggart rights,
Smug routine, and things allowed,
Minorities, things under cloud!
Hither! take me, use me, fill me,
Vein and artery, though ye kill me!"

In brief, "I have run the gauntlet of experience, sounded all the depths of passion, joy, woe, evil. I am dipped in Styx, more invulnerable than Siegfried, and strong now to use the world and be used by it." The mood of the poem is the wild longing that sometimes comes over the good man to break loose and have his fling, come what may, cry, *Vive la bagatelle!* or run amuck and tilt at all he meets. It is needless to say that the staid Emerson never carried this mood farther than to smoke a cigar now and then, or take an Adirondack outing. His contemporary, the untrammelled Whitman, could both preach and practise (within the bounds of reason) the Mithridatic doctrine; and he was a more many-sided and symmetrical man in consequence.

The last two lines of 'Mithridates,' as printed from the autograph copy, were,--

"God! I will not be an owl,
But sun me in the Capitol."

These lines Emerson wisely dropped.

'Forerunners' ("Long I followed happy guides)" mean one's brave hopes and ideals of good to come, our dreams and aspirations. The lines

"No speed of mine avails
To hunt upon their shining trails"

Thoreau evidently utilized as text for his well-known fable in 'Walden' of the lost hound, bay horse, and turtle-dove.

The portrait of Hermione, the patient-sweet wife of Leontes in 'The Winter's Tale' of Shakespeare, serves Emerson, in his poem 'Hermione,' as the model of a perfect wife, and a more acceptable one to this age than Chaucer's abject Griselda. Such a lady as Shakespeare's Hermione, beautiful in person and of rare self-control and virtue, is an adumbration or epitome of the universal beauty. Looking at nature, the American poet finds the features of his Hermione there: "mountains and the misty plains, Her colossal portraiture." I suppose that this sketch, tender and delicately toned as if with a silver point, is autobiographical, and is a shadowing forth of the character of Emerson's first wife, the ethereal souled Ellen Tucker, who died of consumption after only a year and a half of married life. When her "meteor glances came," he says, he was "hermit vowed to books and gloom," and dwelling alone. In the lines

"The chains of kind
The distant bind;
Deed thou doest she must do,"

he anticipates (does he not?) the telepathy of our days,--kindred minds seeking similar places and thinking like thoughts, although in this case, to be sure, the kindred soul is thought of as merged with the inorganic world,--the winds and waterfalls and twilight nooks.

Search the whole world through, you shall find no predecessor of Emerson the poet. The only verse resembling his in general style is that of the enigmatic 'Phoenix and the Turtle,' attributed to Shakespeare, and much admired by Emerson:--

"Let the bird of loudest lay,
On the sole Arabian tree.
Herald sad and trumpet be,
To whose sound chaste wings obey."

Emerson's verses have also a slight Persian tinge now and then, caught from his studies of Saadi and Hafiz. In his fine lyric cry 'Bacchus,' in which he calls for a wine of life, a cup of divine soma or amrita, that shall sinew his brain and exalt all his powers of thought and action to a godlike pitch,--

"Bring me wine, but wine which never grew
In the belly of the grape,
. . . .
That I intoxicated,
And by the draught assimilated,
May float at pleasure through all natures;
. . . .
Quickened so, will I unlock
Every crypt of every rock,"--

he unconsciously gave his lines, I think, the outward form of some verses by Hafiz, in which that singer intimates that, give him the right kind of wine, and he can perform wonders as if with Solomon's ring or Jemschid's wine-cup mirror. Emerson himself in one of his early editions gives a spirited verse translation of Hafiz's poem. Mr. William R. Alger ('Specimens of Oriental Poetry,' Boston, 1856) translates Hafiz thus:--

"Bring me wine! By my puissant arm
The thick net of deceit and of harm
Which the priests have spread over the world
Shall be rent and in laughter be hurled.
Bring me wine! I the earth will subdue.
Bring me wine! I the heaven will storm through.
Bring me wine, bring it quick, make no halt!
To the throne of both worlds will I vault.
All is in the red streamlet divine.
Bring me wine! O my host, bring me wine!"

'Etienne de la Boéce' gets its title (with Emersonian variations) from the name of one of Montaigne's most intimate friends,--Estienne de la Boëtie. Montaigne tells us about him in Chapter xxvii of his Essays, affirming that he would have accomplished miracles, had he lived. He died when only thirty-three at Bordeaux (1563). His scholarship was solid, his translations from the Greek excellent. He was so eager to read Greek that he copied whole volumes with his own hand. A French critic says, "Les qualités qui brillaient en lui imprimaient à toute sa personne un cachet distingué et un charme sévère." Yet he seems to have been something of an imitator of his great friend; and it is in this aspect of his life that Emerson regards him, using him, perhaps somewhat unjustly to his powers and developing genius, as the type of a too imitative disciple:--

"I serve you not, if you I follow,
Shadowlike, o'er hill and hollow;
. . . .
Vainly valiant, you have missed
The manhood that should yours resist."

Probably most Americans, if asked to explain the relevancy of the title of Emerson's poem 'Guy,' would be unable to answer offhand. The verses celebrate the lucky man:--

"The common waters fell
As costly wine into his well.
The zephyr in his garden rolled
From plum-trees vegetable gold.
Stream could not so perversely wind
But corn of Guy's was there to grind."

The reference, of course, is to a man well known in England,--Thomas Guy (d. 1724), founder of Guy's Hospital in London. He was the George Peabody of his day. Beginning life as a bookseller, he made a good deal of money in printing Bibles, but acquired most of his enormous fortune by financial speculations. He was extremely economical; for example, always ate his dinner on his shop counter, first spreading out a newspaper to catch the crumbs. His charities were boundless.

To his hospital he gave $1,000,000; and at his death his will was found to contain an enormous number of special benefactions, including bequests to over ninety cousins. Emerson in his poem compares Guy to Polycrates, who was King of Samos some five hundred years before Christ. He says that Polycrates "chained the sunshine and the breeze"; that is, the very elements seemed to be in his pay. This run of luck was without a break up to his death; his fleet of a hundred ships was the largest then known; he conquered all his enemies, and amassed great treasure. His ally, Amasis, King of Egypt, was so alarmed at his prosperity, fearing the envy of the gods, that he advised him to make some noteworthy sacrifice. The story goes that Polycrates accordingly threw his emerald signet-ring into the sea, but it came back to his kitchens in the belly of a large fish, as in the Arabian Nights story. The fears of Amasis were finally justified; for the Persian satrap Orœtes enticed Polycrates to the mainland, and crucified him.

'Xenophanes' embodies poetically the doctrine of the earnest old Greek agnostic and monist of that name, that God, or the All, is uncreated, immovable, and one,--not immovable in its parts, but as a whole, and just because it is all. Xenophanes saw the grandeur and incomprehensibility of the universe, he violently opposed what seemed to him the disgraceful polytheism of Homer, and anticipated the modern atomic theory and the doctrine of the unity of life as revealed by the spectroscope and the discovery of the conservation and mutual convertibility of forces. Or, as Emerson puts it in his haunting numbers,--

"By fate, not option, frugal Nature gave
One scent to hyson and to wall-flower,
One sound to pine-groves and to waterfalls,
One aspect to the desert and the lake.
It was her stern necessity."

The title of the poem 'Hamatreya' seemed at first to baffle a perfect and indubitable explanation. The word can be found in no English or foreign dictionary that the largest libraries afford. We are indebted, however, to Col. T. W. Higginson (*The Critic*, Feb. 18, 1888) for not only giving us a clew to the title, but for pointing out the portion of the Vishnu Purana (Wilson's translation, 1840) on which Emerson based his 'Earth Song' in 'Hamatreya,' and, in fact, got the hint for the whole poem; namely, at the close of Book IV. Maitreya is a disciple of Parasara, who relates to Maitreya the Vishnu Purana. Among other things he tells Maitreya of a chant of the Earth, who said, "When I hear a king sending word to another by his ambassador, 'This earth is mine: immediately resign your pretensions to it,' I am moved to violent laughter at first; but it soon subsides in pity for the infatuated fool." Again, the Purana says, "Earth laughs, as if smiling with autumnal flowers, to behold her kings unable to effect the subjugation of themselves"; which is Emerson's

"Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs."

And again: "These were the verses, Maitreya, which Earth recited, and by listening to which ambition fades away, like snow before the sun." Here are Emerson's lines:--

"When I heard the Earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave."

Colonel Higginson suggests that Emerson may also have had in mind, in writing 'Hamatreya,' Psalm, xlix. 11. As he rightly says, the title evidently is meant to give a hint of the Hindoo source of the argument of the poem. It is in line with the uniform custom of Emerson in giving historical catch-words, especially proper names, as his titles. After an exhaustive search through all the Hindoo scriptures, I have reached a conviction which approaches absolute certainty that Hamatreya is Emerson's imperfect recollection of Maitreya or that he purposely coined the word. Emerson, it is nearly certain, read the Vishnu Purana, translated by H. H. Wilson (a large and costly work), by the copy then in the Harvard Library or the Boston Athenaeum, perhaps taking brief notes, but omitting to write down "Maitreya." In his exhaustive index of proper names, appended to the Vishnu Purana, Wilson has no such word as Hamatreya, nor does it occur anywhere in the book. To clinch the argument, Prof. Charles R. Lanman, the well-known Sanskrit scholar of Harvard University, writes me that "Hamatreya is not a Sanskrit word." "The Atreyas," he says, "were the descendants of Atri." "It is an easy mistake to make *Hamatreya* out of *Maitreya*. I really think you will have to assume a simple slip here."

Emerson is not wilfully obscure. But he comes dangerously near to being so in the demand he often makes upon his readers for out-of-the-way knowledge. 'Casella' is the title of an Emersonian quatrain,--

"Test of the poet is knowledge of love,

For Eros is older than Saturn or Jove.
Never was poet, of late or of yore,
Who was not tremulous with love-lore."

The reference is to Dante's friend Casella ("Casella mio"), whom he meets in Purgatory, and who sweetly sings (as of yore on earth he was wont) a canzone by Dante himself,--"*Amor, che nella mente mi ragiona*." Emerson's favorite poet, Milton, in his sonnet to Henry Lawes, alludes, as Mr. Norton points out, to this friendship:--

"Dante shall give fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory."

The title ἀδάκρυν νεμόνται αἰῶνα [Transliteration: adakrun nemontai aiona] is from Pindar, I believe. Emerson took it from *The Dial*, where (July, '43) it appears as the motto to a poem by Charles A. Dana on 'Manhood.' It means, literally, "They pass a tearless life"; or, very freely rendered, "They live a life of smiles,"--a sentiment explained by the first lines,--

"A new commandment, said the smiling Muse,
I give my darling son, Thou shalt not preach."

Even in so slight a matter as choosing a name for his verses 'To Rhea,' Emerson's philosophical belief is glimpsed; for Rhea was the mother of gods, and such he believed all women to be. The thought of this remarkable poem, which its author feigns to have received from the thousand chattering tongues of the poplar-tree, is extremely subtle and somewhat difficult to formulate. The analysis is this. If you, a wife, have lost your supremacy in your husband's affections, take a strange and noble revenge, not by hating, but, in a kind of calm altruistic despair, endowing him with all the gifts and blessings at your command. The poem is headed 'To Rhea' (Rhea being the wife of the cruel Saturn, who devoured his own children) as to a wife whose husband had merely "drank of Cupid's nectar cup," married her from sex-instinct alone, and then, the "bandages of purple light" fallen from "his eyes," treated her with indifference. But she continues to love him; and more the poet gives her the advice just noted, illustrating by the supposed case of a god loving a mortal maid, and warily knowing that she, with her inferior ideals, can never adequately requite his love, yet nobly endowing her with all gifts and graces, which are the hostages he pawns for freedom from "his thrall." He does this in an altruistic spirit, in order by her to "model newer races" and "carry man to new degrees of power and comeliness." But what thrall? We must walk warily here. In order not to seem to give his verses an autobiographical cast (although the god, the "wise Immortal," of them is really such a type as the seer Emerson himself), he withdraws into dim recesses and speaks in subtlest metaphors. The thrall, I think, is the bondage a lover or husband is in to his beloved, in whom the solecisms and disenchantments of possession have supplanted the poetic illusions of romantic love. The man of supreme wisdom, by the magic of self-sacrifice and boundless profusion of gifts turns the trap or prison in which nature has caught him into a bower of Eden. By the road of generosity he escapes. He cunningly builds up in her mind gratitude and friendship in place of the lost romanticism. There is in this treatment of love a touch of the coldblooded philosophy of the Emersonian critique of friendship. But if it is not a marriage of ideal kind, such as that of the Brownings, which he celebrates, he at least embodies in his verse the shrewd love-philosophy of the practical-poetical Englishman, united to the average woman for the furtherance of the ends of the species.

Mr. George Brown, in his Emerson primer, thinks that the key-thought of 'Rhea' is in these lines from 'The World-Soul' about the gods:--

"To him who scorns their charities
Their arms fly open wide."

But the parallelism somewhat halts. For mark: In the one case Napoleon's maxim is embodied, that God is on the side of the strongest battalions. The one who scorns the favoritisms and alms of Heaven, and yet, will he nill he, receives its aid, is really the strong God himself in mask, the noble and resolute man executing his will in time and space. But in the case supposed in 'Rhea,' of husband and wife, the ones who scorn love are those not deserving of gifts at all (although Nature finds her account in them), but persons who receive gifts in charity from one altruistically nobler than themselves. It is just this idea of sublime self-sacrifice that gives to 'Rhea' its strange subtlety and its uniqueness among poems on love. There is a consolatory under-thought in the palimpsest, too. By his illustration of the god and the mortal maid the poet wishes Rhea to divine that, if wives make moan over husbands' lost love, husbands no less often have reason to lament the cooled affection of wives.

The central idea in 'Uriel' is that there is no such thing as evil. This thesis is put into the mouth of Uriel, one of the seven archangels, because he was the "interpreter" of God's will. So

Milton says, in the *locus classicus* on Uriel in Book III of 'Paradise Lost.' He also says he was

"The sharpest-sighted spirit of all in heav'n."

His station was in the all-viewing sun. Uriel, in Milton, tells how, when the universe was yet chaos,

"Or ever the wild Time coined itself
Into calendar months and days,"

he saw the worlds a-forming,--earth, sun, and stars. Emerson (or "Sayd") takes Milton at his word, and leads us back into that dark backward and abysm of time, and lets us overhear a conversation between Uriel and the other seraphs. At his speech "the gods shook," because if there is no sin, if all comes round to good, even a lie, then good-bye gods, hells and heavens, and their punishments. But note that, though the All turns your wrong to good in the end, yet you, an individual, suffer for your wrongdoing.

In a genial paper in the *Andover Review* for March, 1887, Dr. C. C. Everett says that Dr. Hedge suggested to him that 'Uriel' probably took its origin in the discussions of the Boston Association of Ministers on the theme (then rife), "There is no line in nature": all is circular, and by the law of reaction every deed returns upon the doer. At any rate, it was written in 1838, soon after his Divinity School Address. ('Emerson in Concord,' by Edward Emerson.)

The god of boundaries in ancient Rome--Terminus--gives his name to the cheeriest of monodies or anchoring songs sung by the gayest of old sailors on the sea of eternity, and at last approaching port. Terminus, like Hermes, the Greek god of bounds, was shown in his statues without hands or feet, to indicate that he never moved. Was Emerson a little rusty in his classical lore, or did he boldly and knowingly defy classical verities when he says the divinity came to him "in his fatal rounds"? He seems to have attributed to Terminus patrolling functions like those of his own New England village fence-viewers. Or, rather, speaking in noble and more adequate terms, has he not added to the world's mythologies a new and poetical deity,--the god of the bounds of human life, a kind of avant-courier or Death's dragoman to announce to men their approaching end? 'Terminus' was written about 1866, when Emerson was in or near his sixty-third year, and sixteen years before his death. *William Sloane Kennedy.*

A DEFENCE OF BROWNING'S LATER WORK.

If a defence of Browning's work were to include all he has written since the date when Edmund Gosse said his books were chiefly valuable as keeping alive popular interest in the poet, and as leading fresh generations of readers to what he had already published, it would needs begin as far back as 1868; and considering the amount of work done since that time would require at least a volume to do the subject justice.

Fortunately it has long been admitted that Homer sometimes nods, though not with such awful effect as was said to attend the nods of Jove--Hence, in spite of Mr. Gosse's undoubted eminence as a critic, we may dare to assume that in this particular instance he fell into the ancient and distinguished trick of nodding.

If Mr. Gosse were right, it would practically put on a par with a mere advertising scheme many poems which have now become household favorites. Take, for example, 'Hervé Riel.' Think of the blue-eyed Breton hero whom all the world has learned to love through Browning, tolerated as nothing more than an index finger to 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin!' Take, too, such poems, as 'Donald,' whose dastardly sportsmanship is so vividly portrayed that it has the power to arouse strong emotion in strong men, who have been known literally to break down in the middle of it through excess of feeling; 'Ivan Ivanovitch,' in which is embodied such fear and horror that weak hearts cannot stand the strain of hearing it read; the story of the dog Tray who rescued a drowning doll with the same promptitude as he did a drowning child--at the relation of whose noble deeds the eyes of little children grow eager with excitement and sympathy. And where is there in any poet's work, a more vivid bit of tragedy than 'A Forgiveness!'

And would not an unfillable gap be left in the ranks of our friends of the imaginative world if Balaustion were blotted out? The exquisite lyric girl, brave, tender and with a mind in which wisdom and wit are fair playfellows.

As Carlyle might say, "Verily, verily Mr. Gosse, thou hast out-Homered Homer, and thy nod hath taken upon itself very much the semblance of a snore."

These and many others which might be mentioned as having appeared since the date when Mr. Gosse autocratically put up the bars to the poet's genius are now so universally accepted that any defence of them would be absurd.

There are again others whose tenure of fame is still hanging in the balance like 'The Red Cotton Night-cap Country,' 'The Inn Album,' 'Aristophanes' Apology,' 'Fifine at the Fair'; but as they have had already some able defenders, I shall not attempt any defence of them further than to say, in passing, that the longer I know them, and the more I read them, the more I am impressed with their masterly portrayal of human motives as they either reflect a given social environment or work contrary to it. Only a genius of the greatest power could have grasped and moulded into palpitating life beings of the calibre of the brilliant complex and illogical Aristophanes, or the dunderheaded, well meaning and equally illogical Miranda and set them to act out their little parts in a living historical environment--one in decadent Athens with her petty political and literary rivalries and dying religion; the other in ultramontane France where superstition and materialism were fighting for the mastery. Such art as is illustrated in these poems on in 'Fifine at the Fair' or in 'The Inn Album,' may not be of the kind to give one direct ideals for the conduct of life; but it represents the most splendid realism from which as from life itself deep moral lessons may be drawn. There is an actuality of realism in these poems of Browning's that puts into the shade, that of the great apostle of realism, Zola, for his realism too often presents what I venture to call obverse idealism--evil apotheosized, not evil struggling toward good as it invariably appears in life.

Among the poet's later works, 'Ferishtah's Fancies' and 'The Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day' have perhaps been more obscured by mists of non-appreciation than any others. I shall, therefore, confine myself for the present to making here and there a rift in these mists in the hope that some glimpses of the splendor of the giant form behind them may be gained.

Without particularizing either critics or criticism, it may be said that criticism of these poems divides itself into the usual three branches,--one which objects to their philosophy, one which objects to their art, one which finds them difficult of comprehension at all. This last criticism may easily be disposed of by admitting it as in part true. The mind whose highest reaches of poetic inspiration are ministered unto by such simple and easily understandable lyrics as 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' might not at once grasp the significance of the Parleying with George Bubb Dodington. Indeed, it may be surmised that some minds might sing upon the starry heights with Hegel and fathom the doctrine of the equivalence of being and non-being and yet be led into a slough of despond by this same cantankerous George.

But a poetical slough of despond may be transfigured in the twinkling of an eye--after a proper amount of study and hard thinking--into an elevated plateau with prospects upon every side, grand or terrible or smiling.

Are we never to feel spurred to any poetical pleasure more vigorous than dilly-dallying with Keats while we feast our eyes upon the wideness of the seas? Or lazily floating in a lotus land with Tennyson, say, among the meadows of the Musketaquid, in canoes with silken cushions? Beauty and peace is the reward of such poetical pleasures. They fall upon the spirit like the "sweet sound that breathes upon a bank of violets, stealing and giving odor," but shall we never return from the land where it is always afternoon? Is it only in such a land as this that we realize the true power of emotion? Rather does it conduce to the slumber of emotion; for progress is the law of feeling as it is the law of life, and many times we feel,--yes--feel--with tremendous rushes of enthusiasm like climbing Matterhorns with great iron nails in our shoes, with historical and archaeological, and philosophical Alpen-stocks in our hands, and when we reach the summit what unsuspected beauties become ours.

Advancing a step more seriously into the subject, I may say that these two series of poems form the key-stone to Browning's whole work. They are like a final synthesis of the problems of existence which he has previously made analyses of from myriad points of view in his dramatic presentation of character. It has been said that in these poems his philosophy loses its intuitional and assured point of view, to become hard-headed and doubting. But does not a careful comparison with his early work disprove this assertion?

In his two early poems, 'Pauline' and 'Paracelsus,' before the poet's personality became merged in that of his characters, he presents us with his poetic creed and his theory of the universe in no mistakable terms. In 'Pauline' we get a direct glimpse of the poet's own artistic temperament, and may literally put our fingers upon those qualities which were to be a large influence in moulding his work.

As described by himself the poet of 'Pauline' was

> "Made up of an intensest life
> Of a most clear idea of consciousness
> Of self, distinct from all its qualities,

From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;
And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all:
But linked in me to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create and rule and call
Upon all things to minister to it."

This sense of an over-consciousness is the mark of an objective poet--one who sympathizes with all the emotions and aspirations of humanity,--interprets their actions through the light of this sympathy, and at the same time keeps his own individuality distinct. The poet of this poem discovers that he can no longer lose himself with enthusiasm in any phase of life; but what does that mean to a soul constituted as his? It means that the way has been cleared for the birth of that greater, broader love of the fully developed artist-soul which, while entering into sympathy with all phases of life, finds its true complement only in an ideal of absolute Love.

This picture of the artist aspiring toward the absolute by means of his large human sympathy may be supplemented by the theory of man's relation to the universe involved in 'Paracelsus' where it is shown that the Absolute cannot be fully realized by mankind either through knowledge or love. Aprile's doctrine has an element of fatalism in it. He sees and loves God in imperfection, but does not seem to have much notion of progress. On the other hand, Paracelsus sees God only in perfected Mankind, until he is really made wise to know that

"Even hate is but a mask of love's
To see a good in evil and a hope
In ill success,"

and so is led to combine his own former standpoint with Aprile's by perceiving God and God's love in progress from lesser to ever greater good, and that evil and failure are the spurs that send man onwards to a future where joy climbs its heights "forever and forever."

From this point in his work Browning, like the Hindu Brahmah, becomes manifest not as himself, but in his creations. The poet whose portrait we get in 'Pauline' is the same poet who sympathetically presents a whole world of human experiences to us, keeping his own individuality for the most part intact, and the philosopher whose portrait is drawn in 'Paracelsus' is the same who interprets these human experiences in the light of the great life-theories therein presented.

But as the creations of Brahmah return into himself, so the human experiences Browning has entered into artistic sympathy with return to enrich his completed view of the problems of life, when like his own Rabbi Ben Ezra, he reaches the last of life for which "the first was planned" in these 'Fancies' and 'Parleyings'.

Though these two groups of poems undoubtedly express the poet's own mature conclusions, they yet preserve the dramatic form. Several things are gained in this way. First, the poems are saved from didacticism, for the poet expresses his opinion as an individual and not as a seer, trying to implant his theories in the minds of disciples. Second, variety is given and the mind is stimulated by having opposite points of view presented, while the thought is infused with a certain amount of emotional force through the heat of argument.

It has, of course, been objected that philosophical and ethical problems are not fit subjects for discussion in poetry. It should be remembered, however, that there is one point the critic of Æsthetics has not yet learned to realize; namely, that the law of evolution is differentiation, in art as well as in cosmic, organic, and social life. It is just as prejudiced and unforeseeing in these days to limit poetry to this or that subject, or say that nothing is dramatic that does not deal with immediate action, as it would have been for Homer to declare that no poem would ever be worthy the name that did not contain a catalogue of ships.

These facts exist! We have dramas dealing merely with action, dramas, in which character development is of prime importance; dramas, wherein action and character are entirely synchronous; and those in which the action means more than appears upon the surface, like Hauptmann's 'Sunken Bell,' or Ibsen's 'Master Builder,' then why not dramas of thought and dramas of mood when the brain and heart become the stage of action instead of an actual stage. Surely, such dramas are a natural development of this Nineteenth Century. As the man in 'Half Rome' says

"Facts are facts and lie not, and the question 'How came that purse i' the poke o' you admits of no reply.'" Art has a great many forms of drama in its poke already, so we would better be careful how we make authoritative statements on the subject.

Another advantage, gained from the dramatic form and this is most important, is that the poet has been enabled by means of it to hold the mirror up to the turmoil of thought that has racked the brains and hearts of the last half of the Nineteenth Century. Victorian England in its thought phases lives just as surely in these poems as Renaissance Italy in its art phases in 'Fra Lippo Lippi,' 'Andrea del Sarto,' 'Pictor Ignotus' and 'The Bishop orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's;' and

this is true though the first series is cast in the form of Persian Fables and the second, in the form of Parleyings with worthies of past centuries.

We who have grown up under the dispensation, so to speak, of the doctrine of evolution, now acknowledged to be the guiding principle in every department of knowledge find it hard to enter into the spirit of that mid-century Sturm and Drang period which resulted upon the publication of Darwin's 'Origin of Species.' This book is the landmark of the century, and commemorates at once the triumph of knowledge, and its failure. The triumph of science in the realm of phenomena, its failure to pierce into the ultimate causes of these phenomena. What a hard fight scientific methods of investigating the phenomena of nature and life had had up to that time, in the teeth of opposition from the less instructed religious world, has been summarized for us in the fascinating pages of Andrew D. White's 'Warfare Between Theology and Science.' One by one, Science won the outposts held by prejudice and conservatism. It had to be admitted that the earth was not flat and that it did not float upon an infinite sea supported on the back of a tortoise. It had to be admitted, even, that it did not occupy the chief seat in the synagogue of the firmament, but went rolling about the sun like any common little asteroid. Finally, the great guns of science were trained upon man himself and he was forced to retire from his lofty position of Lord of Creation to the much more humble one of outcome of creation.

To a large proportion of mankind it seemed as if, should these things be admitted as truth, the whole fabric of society must fall to pieces and religion become a mockery. Those who felt so fought, as for their life, against the conclusions of science. There was a large minority, however, which, intellectually constrained to accept the conclusions of science, yet differed much in temperament and were by consequence, affected in very different ways by the new truths. There were men like Matthew Arnold who no longer believed in the revelations of the past, yet who clung to the beauty of religious forms, in despair at the thought of the wilderness life would be without them. There were others like George Eliot, who became positivists, and gained comfort only in the thought of a religion of humanity and an immortality of nothing more tangible than human influence. There were those like William Morris who accepted cheerfully this life as being all and who devoted their energies to making it as lovely as possible and working to make it more lovely for the future. There were still others, like Clifford, entirely hopeless, but who like Childe Roland put the slug horn to their lips, and lived brave, noble lives in the certainty of coming annihilation; a divine melancholy seized upon some, such as we see reflected in much of Tennyson's verse.

But there were a few who beheld the triumph of science undismayed, for they saw that her sway could not pass beyond the realm of phenomena, that the failure of the intellect to penetrate behind the mysteries of nature and life must be the saving of religion. Herbert Spencer is among scientists undoubtedly the greatest of this type of mind. Whatever misunderstandings and vituperations he may have been subjected to, from the positivist who thinks him inconsistent for his religious tone to the religionist who dubs him an atheist, the fact still remains that his was the genius that stood out against the advancing flood of materialism saying "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." He it was who declared that underlying phenomena was an Infinite power that transcended all human faculties of imagination, and that this fact was the most certain intuition of the human mind.

So great an upheaval of thought, changing, as it finally has, man's whole outlook upon the universe from one more or less static with fixed codes of morals and standards of art to one that is dynamic and progressive, brought in its wake the consideration of many ethical as well as philosophical problems.

Nothing bears upon the grounds of moral action more disastrously than blind fatalism, and while there have been many evil forms of this doctrine in the past there has probably been none worse than the modern form because it seems to have scientific sanction in the doctrines of the conservation of energy, the persistence of heredity and the survival of the fittest, and tends to positive atrophy of the will. Even wise and thoughtful men now-a-days take such a philosophic view of events that they hesitate to throw in their voice on either side in the solution of a national problem because things are bound to follow the laws of development either way. This is equivalent to admitting that you are simply a heap of burnt out ashes in the furnace of life, and that you have no longer any part to play in the combustion that leads to progress. In the first of 'Ferishtah's Fancies,' a strong plea is made for those human impulses that lead to action. The will to serve the world is the true force from God. Every man, though he be the last link in a chain of causes over which he had no control, can at least have a determining influence upon the direction in which the next link shall be forged. Ferishtah appears upon the scene, himself, a fatalist, leaving himself wholly in God's hands until he is taught by the dream God sent him that man's part is to act as he saw the eagle act, succouring the helpless, not to play the part of the helpless birdlings who were taken care of. Another phase of the same thought is touched upon in 'A Camel Driver.' The discussion turns upon punishment and the point is, if, as Ferishtah declares, the sinner is not to be punished eternally, then why should man trouble himself to punish him. The answer amounts to this. Man must regard sin from the human point of view as something evil and to be got rid of and must, therefore, will to work for its annihilation. It follows then that the sinner should be punished as that is a means for teaching him to cease sinning.

Another doctrine upon which the Nineteenth Century belief in progress as the law of life has set its seal is that of the pursuit of happiness, or the striving for the greatest good of the whole number including oneself. With this Browning shows himself in full sympathy in 'Two Camels,'

wherein Ferishtah contends that only through the development of individual happiness and the experiencing of many forms of joyousness can one help others to happiness and joyousness, while in 'Plot Culture,' the enjoyment of human emotion as a means of developing the soul is emphasized.

The relations of good and evil have also had to be re-considered in the light of Nineteenth Century thought, the dualism of the past not being compatible with the evolutionary doctrine that good and evil are relative, a phrase which we sometimes forget must be understood in two ways:--first, that good and evil are relative to the state of society in which they exist, and what may be good in one phase of society, may become evil in a more developed phase. Second, were it not for evil, we should never be able to appreciate the superiority of good and so to work for good, and in working for it to bring about progress. To his pupil worried over the problem of evil Ferishtah points out in 'Mihrab Shah' that evil in the form of bodily suffering has given rise to the beautiful sentiments of pity and sympathy. But though it be recognized that good comes of evil, shall evil be encouraged? No! Ferishtah declares, Man bound by man's conditions is obliged to estimate as "fair or foul Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty adjudges such," therefore the man will do all he can to relieve the suffering of poor Mihrab Shah with a fig-plaster. The answers, then, that Browning gives to the ethical problems of the century growing out of the acceptance of modern scientific doctrines, are, in brief, that man shall use that will-power of which he feels himself possessed, and which really distinguishes him from the brute creation, in working against whatever appears to him evil; while the good for which he shall work is the greatest happiness of all.

What of the philosophical doctrines to which Browning gives expression in the remaining poems of the group? We find it insisted upon in 'Cherries', 'The Sun', in 'A Bean Stripe also Apple Eating', and especially in that remarkable poem 'A Pillar at Sebzevar' that knowledge fails. Knowledge the golden is but lacquered ignorance, as gain to be mistrusted. Curiously, enough, this contention of Browning's has been the cause of most of the criticisms against him as a philosopher, yet as far as I have been able to discover, there has been no deep thinker of this century, and there have been many in other centuries, who has not held in some form or another the opinion that intellect was unable to solve the mysterious problems of the universe. Even the metaphysicians who build very wonderful air castles on *à priori* ideas declare that these ideas cannot be matters of mere intellectual perception, but must be intuitions of the higher reason. Browning, however, does not rest in the assertion that the intellect fails. He draws immense comfort from this failure of knowledge. Though it is to be distrusted as gain, it is not to be mistrusted as means to gain. "Friend" quoth Ferishtah in 'A Pillar at Sebzevar'

> "As gain--mistrust it! Not as means to gain:
> Lacquer we learn by: cast in firing-pot,
> We learn,--when what seemed ore assayed proves dross--
> Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
> I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
> Clarified up to test of crucible.
> The prize is in the process: knowledge means
> Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
> That victory is somehow still to reach."

For men with minds of the type of Spencer's, this negative assurance of an infinite ever on before is sufficient, but human beings, as a rule, will not rest satisfied in such cold abstractions. Though Job said thousands of years ago "Who by searching can find out God," mankind still continues to search.

Now comes Browning and says that it is in that very act of searching that the absolute becomes most directly manifest. From the earliest times of which we have any record man has been aspiring toward God. Many times he has thought that he had found God, but later discovered it to be only God's image built up out of his own human experiences. This search is very beautifully described in the Fancy called 'The Sun,' under the symbol of the man who seeks the prime giver that he may give thanks where it is due for a palatable fig. This search for God Browning calls Love, meaning by that the moving, aspiring force of the whole universe, and many are its manifestations, from the love that goes forth in thanks for benefits received, through the aspirations of the artist toward beauty, of the lover toward human sympathy, even of the scientist toward knowledge, to the lover of humanity like Ferishtah, who declares "I know nothing save that love I can boundlessly, endlessly."

The poet argues from this that if mankind has with ever increasing fervor aspired toward a God of Love, and has ever developed toward broader conceptions of human love, it is only reasonable to infer that in his nature God has something which corresponds to human love, though it transcend our most exalted imagining of it. In John Fiske's recent book 'Through Nature to God' he advances a theory identical with this, evidently unaware that Browning had been before him, for he claims it as entirely original. Fiske's originality consists in his having based his proof upon analogies drawn from the evolution of organic life in following out the law of the adjustment of inner to outer relations. For example, since the eye has through aeons of time gradually adjusted itself into harmony with light, why should not man's search for God be the gradual adjustment of the soul into harmony with the infinite spirit. Other modern thinkers have

advanced the idea that love was the ruling force of the universe; nor need we confine ourselves to the moderns, for like nearly every phase of thought, it had its counterpart or at least its seed in Greek thought. Thus we find that Empedocles declared that the ruling forces of the universe were Love and Strife and that the conflict between these was necessary for the continuance of life. As far as I know, however, no other thinker or poet has emphasized with such power the thought that the only true basis of belief is the intuition of God that comes from the direct revelation of feeling in the human heart, and which has been at once the motive force of the search for God and the basis of a conception of God's nature. A natural corollary of such a theory is that every conception man has had of the Infinite had its value as a partial image since it grew out of the divine impulse planted in man, but that in the Christian ideal, the highest symbolical conception was attained through the mystical unfolding of love in the human soul.

The thought of the 'Fancies' is optimistically rounded out in 'A Bean Stripe also Apple Eating' in which Ferishtah argues that life, in spite of the evil in it, seems to him on the whole good, and he cannot believe that evil is not meant for good ends since he is so sure that God is infinite in love.

From all this it will be seen that our poet accepts with Spencerians the negative proof of God growing out of the failure of intellect, but adds to it the positive proof derived from emotion.

It was a happy thought of the poet to present such problems in Persian guise, for Persia stands in Zoroastrianism for the dualism which Ferishtah denies in his recognition of the part evil plays in the development of good, and through Mahometanism for the Fatalism, Ferishtah learned to cast from him. The Persian atmosphere is preserved throughout not only by the introduction constantly of Persian allusions traceable to the great Persian epic the Shah Nameh, but by the telling of fables in the Persian manner to point the morals intended. With the exception of the first Fancy, which is derived from a fable of Bidpai's, we have the poet's own word that all the others are inventions of his own, but they are none the worse for this. These clever stories make the poems lively reading, and we soon find ourselves growing fond of the wise and clever Ferishtah, who like Socrates is never at a loss for an answer, no matter what bothersome questions his pupils may propound.

If we see the thoughtful and brilliant Browning in the 'Fancies' proper, we perhaps see even more clearly the emotional and passionate Browning in the lyrics which add such variety and charm to the whole. This feature is also borrowed from Persian form, a beautiful example of which has been given to English readers in Edwin Arnold's 'Gulistan' or 'Rose Garden' of the poet Sa' di. In fact Sa' di's preface to his 'Rose Garden' evidently gave Browning the hint for his humorous prologue, in which he likens the poems to follow to an Italian dish made of ortolans on toast with a bitter sage leaf, symbolizing sense, sight and song

> "Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent--so's a quince:
> Eat each who's able!
> But through all three bite boldly--lo, the gust!
> Flavor--no fixture--
> Flies, permeating flesh and leaf and crust
> In fine admixture.
> So with your meal, my poem masticate
> Sense, sight, and song there!
> Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
> Nothing found wrong there."

Similarly Sa' di says "Yet will men of light and learning, from whom the true countenance of a discourse is not concealed, be well aware that herein the pearls of good counsel which heal are threaded on strings of right sense; that the bitter physic of admonition is constantly mingled with the honey of good humor, so that the spirits of listeners grow not sad, and that they remain not exempt from blessings of acceptance."

A further interest attaches to these lyrics because they form a series of emotional phases in the soul-life of two lovers whom I think, we may be justified in regarding as Mr. and Mrs. Browning themselves. I always think of them as companion pictures to 'The Sonnets from the Portuguese.' In these the sun-rise of a great love is portrayed with intense and exalted passion while the lyrics in 'Ferishtah's Fancies' reflect the subsequent development of such a love, through the awakening of whole new realms of feeling, wherein love for humanity is enlarged, criticism from the one beloved, welcome; all the little trials of life dissolved in the new light; and divine love realized with a force never before possible. Do we not see a living portrait of the two poets in the lyric 'So the head aches and the limbs are faint'? Many a hint may be found in their letters to prove that Mrs. Browning with just such a frail body possessed a fire of spirit that carried her constantly toward attainment while he, with all the vigor of splendid health could with truth have frequently said "In the soul of me sits sluggishness." These exquisite lyrics which, whether they conform to Elizabethan models or not, are as fine as anything ever done in that line, are crowned by the epilogue in which we hear the stricken husband crying out to her whom twenty years earlier he had called his "lyric love" in a voice doubting, yet triumphing in the thought that his optimism is the light radiating from the halo which her human love had irised round his head.

In 'The Parleyings' the discussions turn principally upon artistic problems and their relation to modern philosophy, four out of the seven being inspired by artist, poet, or musician. The forgotten worthies whom Browning rescued from oblivion, make their appeal to him upon various grounds that connect them with the present. Bernard de Mandeville evidently caught Browning's fancy because in his satirical poem 'The Grumbling Hive' he forestalled, by a defence of the Duke of Marlborough's war policy, the doctrine of the relativity of good and evil. One might have imagined that this subject had been exhausted in 'Ferishtah's Fancies,' but it seems to have had a great fascination for Browning, probably because the idea was a new one and he felt the need of thinking his way through all its implications. Fresh interest is added in this case because the objector in the argument was a contemporary of Browning's--Carlyle, whose well-known pessimism over the existence of evil is graphically presented. Browning clenches his side of the argument with an original and daring variation upon the Prometheus myth led up to by one of the most magnificent passages in the whole range of his poetry, and probably the finest example anywhere in literature of a description of nature as interpreted by the laws of cosmic evolution. He describes the effect of the sun-light in developing the life upon the earth, tracing it as far as the mind of man. But the mind of man is not satisfied with the purely physical and phenomenal.

> "What avails sun's earth-felt thrill
> To me? Mind seeks to see,
> Touch, understand, by mind inside me,
> The outside mind--whose quickening I attain
> To recognize--I only."

But Prometheus offered an artifice whereby man's mind is satisfied. He drew Sun's rays into a focus plain and true. The very sun in little: made fire burn and henceforth do man service. Denuded of its scientific and mystical symbolism Browning makes the Prometheus myth teach his favorite doctrine, namely that the image of love formed in the human heart by means of the burning glass supplied by sense and feeling is a symbol of infinite love.

Daniel Bartoli, an extremely superstitious old Jesuit of the 17th century is set up by Browning in the next poem, simply to be knocked down again on the ground that all the legendary saints he worshipped could not compare with a real woman the poet knows. The romantic story of this lady is told in Browning's most fascinating narrative style, so rapid and direct that it has all the force of a dramatic sketch. Her claim upon his admiration consists in her recognition of the sacredness of love which she will not dishonor for worldly considerations, and finding her betrothed love incapable of attaining her height of nobleness, she leaves him free. This story only bears upon the poet's philosophy as it reflects his attitude toward human love, which he considers so clearly a revelation, that any treatment of it not absolutely noble and true to the highest ideals is a sin against heaven itself.

George Bubb Dodington is the black sheep of these later poems and gives the poet an opportunity to let loose all his subtlety and sarcasm; and the reader a chance to use his wits in discovering that the poet *assumes* to agree with Dodington that when one is serving his state, he should at the same time have an eye to his own private welfare, that he *pretends* to criticise only Dodington's method of attaining this-- which is to disclaim that he works for any other good than the state's, nobody would ever believe that. He then gives what purports to be his own opinion on the correct method of successful statesmanship--that is, to pose as a superior being with a divine right to rule, treating everybody as his puppet and entirely scornful of their opinion of him. If he will adopt this attitude he may change his tactics every year and the people instead of suspecting his sincerity will think that he has wise reasons beyond their insight for his changes. Browning is said to have had Lord Beaconsfield in mind when he described this proper method for the statesman. Be that as it may the type is not unknown in this day. Having discovered all this, the wit of the reader may now draw its inferences--which will doubtless be that the whole poem is a powerful, intensely cynical argument, against what we to-day call imperialism and in favor of liberal government which means the development of every individual so that he will be able to see for himself whether this or that policy be right instead of depending upon the leadership of the over-man, whose intentions are unfortunately too seldom to be trusted.

The poet Browning calls out from the shades is Christopher Smart, who was celebrated for having only once in his life composed a great poem, 'The Song of David,' that put him on a par with Milton and Keats. Perhaps we might not altogether agree with this decision, but critics have loved to eulogize its great beauties and whether Browning actually agreed with their conclusions or not makes little difference, for the fact furnishes him with a text for discussing the problem of beauty versus truth in art. Should the poet's province simply be to record his visions of the beauty and strength of nature and the universe, that come to him in moments of inspiration such as that which came once to Christopher Smart? "No," says Browning, whose feet are always firmly based upon the earth. These visions of poets should not be considered ends in themselves but the materials for greater ends. He asks such poets if they would

> "Play the fool,
> Abjuring a superior privilege?
> Please simply when your function is to rule--
> By thought incite to deed? Ears and eyes

Want so much strength and beauty, and no less
Nor more, to learn life's lesson by."

He goes on to insist that the poet should find his inspiration in the human heart and climb to heaven by its means, not investigate the heavens first. He evidently does not sympathize with Emerson's attitude that the poet has some mysterious connection with the divine mind which enables him to become at one bound a seer who may henceforth lead mankind. Rather must the poet diligently study mankind and teach as a man may through this knowledge. Space does not permit me to dwell on the beautiful opening of this poem which recalls the imaginative faculty of the visions in 'Christmas Eve' and 'Easter Day.'

In 'Francis Furini' the subject is the nude in art, and Browning vows he will never believe the tale told by Baldinucci that Furini ordered all his pictures of this description burned. He expresses his indignation vigorously at some length, showing plainly his own sympathies then makes Furini pray a very beautiful prayer, then deliver before a supposed cultured London audience a long and decidedly recondite speech containing an attack upon that species of agnosticism that allies itself with positivism and Furini's refutation. The upshot of it all is that Furini declares the only thing he is certain of is his own consciousness and the fact that it had a cause behind it, called God.

"Knowledge so far impinges on the cause
Before me, that I know--by certain laws
Wholly unknown, what'ere I apprehend
Within, without, me, had its rise: thus blend
I, and all things perceived in one effect."

Readers of philosophy will recognize in this an echo from Descartes. This fact of the human consciousness he further develops into an argument that the painter should paint the human body, just as it was argued the poet should study the human heart.

A Philippic against Greek art and its imitation is delivered by the poet in the 'Parleying with Gerard de Lairesse' whom he makes the scape-goat of his strictures, on the score of a book Lairesse wrote in which was described a walk through a Dutch landscape transmogrified by classic imaginings. To this good soul an old sepulchre, struck by lightning became the tomb of Phaeton, and an old cart wheel half buried in the sand near by, the Chariot of the Sun. In a spirit of bravado Browning proceeds to show what he himself could make of a walk provided he condescended to illuminate it by classic metaphor and symbol, and a remarkable passage is the result. It occupies from the eighth to the twelfth stanzas. It is meant to be in derision of the grandiloquent, classically embroidered style but so splendid is the language, so haunting the pictures, the symbolism so profound that it is as if a God were showing some poor weakling mortal how not to do it--and through his omniscience must perforce create something wondrously beautiful. The double feeling one has about this passage only adds to its interest. After thus classicizing in a manner that might make Euripides himself turn green with envy, he nonchalantly remarks--

"Enough, stop further fooling,"

and to show how a modern poet greets a landscape he flings in the perfectly simple and irresistible little lyric

"Dance, yellows, and whites and reds."

The poet's strictures upon classicism are entirely in line with his philosophy, placing as it does the paramount importance on living realities.

"'Do and no wise dream,' he exclaims
'Earth's young significance is all to learn;
The dead Greek lore lies buried in its urn
Where who seeks fire finds ashes.'"

The 'Parleying with Charles Avison' is more a poem of moods than any of the others. The poet's love for music is reflected in his claiming it as the highest expression possible to man; but sadness comes to him at the thought of the ephemeralness of its forms, a fact that is borne in on him by the inadequateness of Avison's old March styled "grand." He finally makes of music the most perfect symbol of the evolution of spirit of which the central truth remains always permanent, while the form though ever changing is of absolute value to the time when the spirit found expression in it.

Even this does not quite satisfy the poet's desires for the supremacy of music, and his final conclusion is that if we only get ourselves into a proper historical frame of mind, any form will reveal its beauty, This is a truth which needs especially to be recognized in music, for we too

often hear people objecting to Haydn or Mozart and even Beethoven because they are not modern, never realizing that each age has produced its distinctive musical beauty.

But Browning means it of course to have the largest significance in relation to all forms of truth and beauty of which every age has had its living example--thus--his last triumphant mood is, "Never dream that what once lived shall ever die."

I have been able to throw out only a few general suggestions as to these late masterpieces. There are many subtleties of thought and graces of expression which reveal themselves upon every fresh reading, and each poem might well be made the subject of a special study.

I have said nothing about the Prologue and Epilogue to the Parleyings, not because I love them less, but because I love them so much that I should never be able to bring this paper, already too long, to a close if I once began on them. I hope, however, I have said enough not only to prove the point that these poems give complete expression to the thought of the age, but that Browning appears in them, to borrow an apt term from Whitman, as the "Answerer" of the age. That he has unquestioningly accepted the knowledge which science has brought and recognizing its relative character, has yet interpreted it in such a way as to make it subserve the highest ideals in ethics, religion, and art, and that far from reflecting any degeneration in Browning's philosophy of life, these poems put on a firmer basis than ever the thoughts prominent in his poetry from the first, and which constantly find illustration indirectly and sometimes directly in his dramatic poems.

I am just as unable to find any fault with their subject matter as with their form. The variety in both is remarkable. Religion and fable, romance and philosophy, art and science all commingled in rich profusion. Everything in language--talk almost colloquial, dainty lyrics full of exquisite emotion, and grand passages which present in sweeping images now the processes of cosmic evolution, now those of spiritual evolution, until it seems as if we had indeed been conducted to some vast mountain height, whence we could look forth upon the century's turbulent seas of thought, into which flows many a current from the past, while suspended above between the sea and sky like the crucifix in Simons' wonderful symbolistic picture of the Middle Ages, is the mystical form of Divine Love. *Helen A. Clarke.*

SCHOOL OF LITERATURE.

GLIMPSES OF PRESENT DAY POETS: A SELECTIVE READING COURSE.

II. A Group Of American Poets.[2]

1. Edmund Clarence Stedman.

Readings from Stedman:--'Hebe,' 'A Sea Change.' New York Scenes: 'Peter Stuyvesant,' 'Pan in Wall Street,' 'The Door Step.' A Sheaf of Patriotic Poems: 'The Pilgrims,' 'Old Brown,' 'Wanted a Man,' 'Treason's Device,' 'Israel Freyer,' 'Cuba.' (In 'Poems' Household Edition. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. $1.50.)

Query for Discussion.--Are Mr. Stedman's local and patriotic themes inconsistent with the highest degree of lyric grace, or does his poetic gift appear to best advantage when enlivened by familiar home interests?

2. Louise Chandler Moulton.

Readings:--'A Quest,' 'The House of Death.' Sonnets: 'The New Day,' 'One Dread,' 'Afar,' 'Love's Empty House,' 'The Cup of Death,' 'Before the Shrine,' 'As in Vision,' 'Though We Were Dust,' 'Were but My Spirit Loosed Upon the Air,' 'The New Year Dawns,' 'Aspiration,' 'The Secret of Arcady,' 'Her Picture.' (The first two selections and first three sonnets are in 'Swallow Flights.' New edition of poems of 1877 with additional poems; the four following are in 'The Garden of Dreams'; and the four last sonnets and the other poems in 'At the Wind's Will.' Boston: Little, Brown & Co. $1.25 each. For general review of work see, also, 'The Poetry of Louise Chandler Moulton.' Contemporary Writer Series in *Poet-lore*. Vol. IV. New Series. Opening Number, 1900, pp. 114-125.)

Query for Discussion.--Is Mrs. Moulton too narrowly restricted to emotional themes and emotional means of expression for bounteous poetic cheer, or is the perfect alliance of her emotional range and workmanship the very source of her lyric excellence.

3. Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

Readings:--'Unsung,' 'Nameless Pain,' 'Quits,' 'Andromeda,' 'Baby Bell,' 'An Untimely Thought,' 'Bagatelle,' 'Palabras Carinosas,' 'On an Intaglio of Head of Minerva.' Sonnets: 'Books and Seasons,' 'The Poets,' 'On Reading William Watson's "The Purple East."' (In Poetical Works. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. $2.00.)

Queries for Discussion.--Does Mr. Aldrich escape the usual penalty for laying emphasis on delicacy of finish so that the result is satisfying in its happy precision? Or does he seem cold and elaborately superficial? Does he, so to speak, carve cherry-stones oftener than he engraves cameos?

4. Louise Imogen Guiney.

Readings:--'Peter Rugg,' 'Open Time,' 'The Still of the Year,' 'Hylas,' 'The Kings,' Alexandrina, I, x, and xiii. 'The Martyr's Idyl,' 'Sanctuary,' 'Arboricide,' 'To the Outbound Republic,' 'The Perfect Hour,' 'Deo Optimo Maximo,' 'Borderlands.' (From 'A Roadside Harp' are selected the first five poems and the Alexandrina, from 'The Martyr's Idyl and Shorter Poems' the others. $1.00 each. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)

Queries for Discussion.--Is Miss Guiney's scholasticism too dominant in her work? Does she lack human warmth? Or are her restraint and good taste the index of deeper feeling? Does her cultured thought and chaste concentrated power of expression lift her above the ranks of the minor poets?

5. Richard Hovey.<

Readings:--'Spring,' an Ode, 'The Wander-lovers.' 'Taliesin,' Second, Third, Movements. Sonnets: 'Love in the Winds,' 'After Business Hours,' Act V from 'The Marriage of Guenevere.' ('Spring' first published in *Poet-lore*, is included in 'Along the Trail' ($1.25), which also contains the sonnets here selected. 'Taliesin' also originally published in *Poet-lore*, Vol. VIII, old series, January, February, and June, 1896, pp. 1-14, 63-78, 292-306, is recently published in 1 vol. uniform with 'The Marriage of Guenevere' ($1.50). 'The Wander-lovers' appears in 'Vagabondia.' Boston: Small, Maynard & Co. A general review of Hovey's work will be the second of the 'Contemporary Writer Series' in next *Poet-lore*.)

Queries for Discussion.--Has Hovey's way of telling the story of Guenevere and Launcelot an advantage realistically over Tennyson's, but none either poetically or ethically? (See on this query, 'The Disloyal Wife in Literature: Comparative Study Programme,' *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., new series, pp. 265-274, Spring Number, 1897.) Does Hovey attain greatness by his liveliness and human quality joined to varied and skilful metrical effects? Is 'Taliesin' his best work, or is his best work done in his short pieces?

6. Bliss Carman.

Readings:--'Spring Song,' 'A More Ancient Mariner,' 'Envoy,' 'Beyond the Gaspereau,' 'Behind the Arras,' 'The Cruise of the Galleon,' 'A Song before Sailing,' 'The Lodger,' 'Beyond the Gamut,' 'The Ships of St. John,' 'The Marring of Malyn.' (The first, second, and third are in 'Vagabondia'; the fourth in *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., new series, pp. 321-329, Summer Number, 1897; the next five in 'Behind the Arras' ($1.50); the others in 'Ballads of Lost Haven' ($1.00). Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.)

Query for Discussion.--Is Carman better in his earlier descriptive lyrics, or better in his later symbolical lyrics because these being richer in interest are stronger to hold the deeper reader?

7. Hannah Parker Kimball.

Readings:--'Revelation,' 'The Smoke,' 'The Sower,' 'Consummation,' 'Glory of Earth,' 'Primitive Man,' 'Man to Nature,' 'Eavesdroppers,' 'Social Appeal,' 'The Quiet Land Within,' 'The Saving of Judas Iscariot.' (The first four of the poems named are in 'Soul and Sense,' 75 cents; the last in *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., new series, pp. 161-168, Spring Number, 1897; the others in 'Victory and Other Poems.' Boston: Copeland & Day, now Small, Maynard & Co.)

Queries for Discussion.--Does Miss Kimball's portraiture of Judas Iscariot reveal a capacity for dramatically creating development in character? Are her lyrics too grave, or is it their especial blend of high seriousness and intellectual insight with unforced expression which gives them unusual richness?

The Editors.

SONGS FROM THE GHETTO AND A VISION OF HELLAS.

Conceived amid the heat and discomfort of the sweating-shops, born in poverty and squalid surroundings, growing up with hunger and despair and failure, and at last an honored guest at the table of ease and culture--such is the history of the 'Songs from the Ghetto' by Morris Rosenfeld. Mr. Rosenfeld was born of poor parents in Poland in 1862. Wandering in search of work in England and Holland, he at length found a scanty means of support as a tailor in the sweating-shops of New York. Of miserable origin, poorly educated, struggling for the barest necessities of life, there was yet in him a poet's soul, struggling for expression.

The poems of Mr. Rosenfeld, written in the Judeo-German dialect, which he has brought to great literary perfection, have been collected, translated into English prose and edited by Professor Leo Wiener, instructor in Slavic languages at Harvard.

The songs in this little volume are very beautiful, but whether they sing of labour or nature, of the shop or the country, there is in every one a strain of sadness, the melody of each is broken with tears. For the beauty of which the poet sings, the birds and the flowers, are only dreams from which he wakes to the misery in his life. It is not the bitter sadness of hate and rebellion, but the sadness of the Jewish race, resigned and oppressed, expecting no happiness among an alien people, but looking for a life of peace in a new Jerusalem.

"Again your lime will be fragrant, and your orange will gleam," he comforts the wanderer, "again God will awaken and bring you thither. You will sing Shepherd songs as you will herd your sheep; you will live again, live eternally, without end. After your terrible wanderings you will again breathe freely; there will again beat a hero's heart under the silent mountain Moriah."

The songs are not all of labour, or of the sorrows of the Jews. In lighter vein is 'The Nightingale to the Labourer,' 'The Creation of Man'--which contains the pretty idea that the poet alone was given wings, and an angel stood always "ready day and night to attach the wings to him whenever his holy song will rise."

The last song in the little volume, called 'In the Wilderness,' is typical of the poet's spirit; but not, we believe, of his place in the world. For the world is always ready to listen to a song that carries with it the impress of truth and beauty.

"In a distant wilderness a bird stands alone and looks about him, sadly, and sings a beautiful song.

"His heavenly-sweet voice flows like the purest gold, and wakens the cold stones and the prairie wide and deserted.

"He wakens the dead rocks and the silent mountains round about,--but the dead remain dead, and the silent remain silent.

"For whom, sweet singer, do your clear tones resound? Who hears you, and who feels you? And whose concern are you?

"You may put your whole soul into your singing. You will not awaken a heart in the cold, hard rock!

"You will not sing there long,--I feel it, I know it: your heart will soon burst with loneliness and woe.

"In vain is your endeavour, it will not help you, no! Alone you have come, and alone you will pass away!"

'A Vison of New Hellas' is one of the books that is destined to be more important than interesting, more noteworthy than popular. The conception is certainly very beautiful and very wonderful even if the author does not always reach the height of expression towards which he aims. But it is a book which can only appeal to the few, who are ready to search beneath the covering of fantastic imagery and strange verse forms which clothe a high poetic purpose and ideal. Even those who come to the work with a knowledge of the songs of old Hellas and the philosophy of Plato must feel deeply grateful for the elucidating of the meaning of the book in an argument which the author has kindly supplied to forestall the vain imaginings of the uninitiated.

The poet's aim is as serious as was that of Milton or Dante--"to realize as best he can such visions of beauty as may be vouchsafed to him," that through his work he may "make richer the human world in things of the spirit that quicken and delight."

In contemplation the poet rises above the mists of sordidness which rise from the struggle of trade and industry, beyond the clouds of pessimism and religious doubt, and on the Pisgah heights of Hellenic culture he sees a vision of the new life that shall come to man.

Through the beautiful world-myth, the story of Demeter and Persephone and Dionysus, the poet is taught the lesson of the immortality of the race, of its ceaseless progression toward a nobler and more beautiful future. To celebrate their happiness at the discovery that Aidoneus, dread King of Death, is none other than the Lord of Life "leader of the blessed to the highest

heaven," they resolve to bring about the redemption of the world.

This is made possible through the union of Aphrodite, Beauty of Form, with Apollo, Light of the Mind. From them shall spring a new race of Gods, typifying the new ideals which shall uplift man until he is fitted for fellowship at the banquet of the Immortals. Thence will rise "a nobler, a larger mankind," wakened at length from "the night of toil, unhallowed by joy in the task." Through Aphrodite will come "feeling and loving--and art that bids death defiance," and through Apollo "seeing and knowing and man's life-mastering science." Thence shall come

> "The lover's rapture Elysian,
> The poet's fury, the prophet's vision,
> The serene world-sight of the thinker."

This vision typified the future regeneration of America and through her of the race. From the sordid reality of present conditions man must advance ever nearer to the "eternal ideal"; from mean conditions, inspired by lofty emotions and holy enthusiasms, shall come new standards of life and of art.

Mr. Guthrie's work indicates in its form some of the characteristics of the new literary art. Though his theories are undoubtedly good, the expression is as yet too crude to form much idea of its possibilities. Whatever may be the age of the author, his work indicates a certain inexperience and lacks the grasp and finish of the skilled workman. His work is too reminiscent; he has not sufficiently assimilated his sources and impressed them with his own individuality, giving them a distinctive unity of conception and expression. Though we are quite willing to accept his assurance that he "did not intend his work to resemble any known performance," we are continually reminded of passages in other writers who had inspired him. At times we are struck with admiration at his power for catching the very trick of his model.

His work is as "oddly suited" as was Portia's lover. For he suggests to us--Homer and the Greek tragedians of course in theme and expression; Milton and Dante with their lofty ideals; Piers Ploughman dreaming about his "fair field full of folk." For the conception he owes much to Shelley's 'Prometheus,' whose theme is very similar, but his methods are more modern, with verse theories of Whitman, philosophy of Browning, a Wagnerian idea of rhythm, making each rhythmical theme represent a peculiar mood or image, which is frequently very effective but sometimes forced.

Harriott S. Olive.

(Songs from the Ghetto, by Morris Rosenfeld. With Introduction, Prose Translation, and Glossary. By Leo Weiner, Instructor in the Slavic Languages at Harvard University. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.--A Vision of New Hellas--Songs of American Destiny. William Norman Guthrie. Clarke Publishing Company. Chicago: $2.50.)

COL. HIGGINSON'S 'CONTEMPORARIES' AND MRS. HOWE'S 'REMINISCENCES.'

Colonel Higginson might have added to his 'Contemporaries' as a sub-title: 'Our Nineteenth Century Roll of Honor,' for he makes mention, either brief or extended, in his book, of nearly all the men and women of the age who would be entitled to a place on such a roll. It gives one's patriotism a thrill, on looking down the list, to see how long and splendid a one it is, to note what fine thoughts, emotions, and achievements stand representative in the brief sketches of the period of our national existence which the author has observed and shared in. Patriotic fervor for the past, and, arguing from the past, a renewed hope in the national future, are the dominant feelings the book begets. Not that the author has emphasized the bequests of statesmen and reformers to the country, to the neglect of other influences. The volume contains nineteen sketches; and the poet, the philosopher, the scientist, the man of private though beneficent life, have all places therein; yet all is woven into a whole with one aspect, the national one.

All of the sketches are, as the preface states, reprinted pieces first published in different periodicals any time during the past fifty years. Since from this point of view the volume can have little or no consecutiveness, it is noteworthy that a picture of the times is nevertheless obtained unbroken in its continuity. Every sketch, however fragmentary a part of the life of its subject, has the vigor of its surroundings; and the papers upon the men and women of the Abolitionist period

and the Civil War, though most of them have been somewhat revised for their present publication, have the heart-beats of the "times that tried men's souls" throbbing in them true and loud.

One paper, upon John Brown's Household, printed in 1859 and quite unaltered, preserves by the splendid restraint of its simple language the very spirit of the iron endeavor and concentred force it describes.

The value of an author's judgment upon his contemporaries, is unquestioned; the advantage of a personal share in the lives and actions of the men who form his theme, added to our already confidence in his critical judgment, give it worth over other proved biography. On the deeds of many of the men whose work he commemorates, Fame has yet to pronounce lastly: their services are too recent for a perfect judgment. But testimony such as this will surely have value in a decision.

One feels a little inclined to quarrel with the author that there is so little "I" in his book, that there are so few really personal glimpses, but of course this is too much to ask of a book which is really a compilation of scattered sketches; and perhaps Colonel Higginson will remedy the lack in the future.

It is seldom that one has the pleasure of reading so satisfying and delightful a piece of autobiography as Mrs. Howe's 'Reminiscences.' One hardly knows, when the last page is turned, which of two capacities of the mind has been more completely filled and brimmed over: that of intellectual appreciation, or the well where abides the feeling of delighted enthusiasm which is inspired by our friend. We respond to the pleasure the reading gives us with a really personal sense of gratitude.

The subject matter of the book could not have been of other than deep interest. Mrs. Howe's long and beautiful life has been lived in surroundings of the highest culture of her time; the events of which she has written are those which will take their place in the history of the century just closing; and finally, the men and women who were her friends and in whose labors she shared, were the men and women whose opinions have largely moulded the events. But it is not all this, of unfailing interest though it must be, that gives the book its finest quality, and that makes one wish to read it over the moment one has read it through. It is, instead, that we have learned so much of a beauty-gifted and beauty-giving life in words at once so simple and so satisfying. Cheeriness and healthiness--if by the latter word one may express a certain poise and normalness of outlook--are the characteristics of the narrative. The great and the small of life each receive their just due; perhaps it is by her treatment of the small that we are best assured we have read into an intimacy with Mrs. Howe. That perennial question as to the feminine lack of humor, which has lately been re-threshed in the newspapers, should receive final and silencing reply--had it ever deserved a reply at all--in the 'Reminiscences.' The narrative twinkles with keen appreciation of the humorous, the ludicrous, even of the deliciously nonsensical; also abounding in that larger sort of humor which does not consist in seeing the point to a joke, but which makes life bearable and judgments tender under conditions least likely to keep them so.

Assuredly Mrs. Howe did not put together the recollections of her life with primarily didactic purpose, just as assuredly she did not write them down primarily for the benefit of the American young woman. Yet in view of the cause to which she has given the work of her latter years, it is permitted me to say that no greater encouragement could be given it for the future than the words from which we learn her personal services to it and to the other causes which she has aided with brain and hands throughout her life.

Helen Tracy Porter.

(Contemporaries, By Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1899. $2.00. Reminiscences: Julia Ward Howe. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Boston and New York. $2.50.)

LIFE AND LETTERS.

----The last scenes in the present-day epoch of commercialism promise to be like the last scenes in the old-time epoch of feudalism, picturesque, violent, and significant rendings and tearings of the whole body politic prior to a re-formation on the basis of a larger unity. Then they portended the unification of England under the Tudors, or the unification of France under the

eleventh Louis. Now they portend--what?

Some larger, more spiritual unity, it may be guessed, that shall quietly and with unprecedented swiftness make use of the materialistic objects which the short-sighted leaders of commercialism now have in mind, and after a manner they no more dream is implied in their success than the royal dynasties of England and France dreamed that the bloody heads of kings would be the fruit of the new nationality.

----To the leaders of the commercial world-movement, their materialistic objects are ends in themselves, very substance of very substance. But the Time-spirit already laughs them to scorn and tosses them, as mere tools out of place, to some more convenient corner of her spacious work-shop, where they make but one with a mass of other such tools awaiting the mastery of her history-shaping hand.

The tumults of South Africa and China are but signs of the vaster tumult in which these tumults shall be devoured and assimilated.

----In the world of faith, too, how restless is the aggregate organism! Ruptures and dissolutions are splitting and fusing orthodoxies and heterodoxies.

And in the withdrawn and secret world of the human consciousness the ferment of new desires and potencies, opposed by all the organized and settled forces of opinion, is permeating thought, and stirring the slumbering soul to try the unguessed faculties of its idealism, as if the real king of the total Unquietness held there his throne.

The world of politics and commerce, the world of faith and intelligence tend, it would seem, already, towards that synthetic development foreseen in 1855, by one whom the obtuse world may yet have reason enough to recognize as one of the clearest-brained statesmen of the nineteenth century, though her trade was poetry not politics--Elizabeth Barrett Browning, when she said of the future:

"What I expect is a great development of Christianity in opposition to the churches, and of humanity generally in opposition to the nations."

GOETHE'S IPHIGENIE AT HARVARD.

It is an age of the universality of genius. Not only the treasures of our own literature in our own day, but the best that has been written in all lands in all ages, the best that is being thought and sung in every tongue to-day is ours. And the test of what is good is no longer that it appeals to the people of a certain period or race, but that it appeals to and expresses the spirit of humanity, that it fills a place in a *Welt-Litteratur*.

A striking instance of the power of the present to interpret the spirit of the past was the performance of Goethe's Iphigenie at Harvard on the sixty-eighth anniversary of Goethe's death. Professor Kuno Franke, writing in the New York Evening Post speaks of Iphigenie as "the worthiest production of artistic genius to represent German ideals to a distinctly academic audience at the foremost of American universities." This it seems to us Iphigenie emphatically is *not*. In conscious imitation of Greek tragedy in the literary form and expression, as well as in the details of the story, it is Greek; in its psychological treatment, in the idea that personal salvation comes only through self-sacrifice, it is distinctively modern, but not German, in subject, expression or treatment.

Although the choice of Iphigenie as a representative German play was not justified, certainly nothing could have better expressed the genius of the greatest of German poets. The greatness of Goethe!--that was the fact of all others demonstrated by the performance of Iphigenie. He has given us a play which realizes the ideals of the Greek poets and sculptors, a play instinct with the deepest reverence of the Greek religion, yet at the same time a play which expressed the deepest emotions of a great spiritual revolution in his own life; a play which may be considered as a presentation of the very spirit of that Christianity which findeth its soul in losing it. One of its leading critics says of Iphigenie--"its ideals are not those of Greece or of Germany, or of any nationality or time, but rather the realization of the highest and noblest aspirations of mankind in all lands and all tongues."

A universal literature is but the child of a universal religion, of that yearning toward the good and beautiful and true which has been the guiding star of man since the world began. The struggle in his own soul; the mystic meaning of a pagan faith, that in passing has touched all succeeding ages with some measure of its radiant beauty; the poet's vision of the future spiritual

triumph of the race; all these Goethe united in one artistic expression, and the result is one of the great poems of the world.

The presentation of the play at Harvard was a marvellous exhibition of the power of a great artistic conception to carry an audience with it in enthusiastic appreciation of the spirit, without the necessity for an understanding of the medium of expression. Back of all expression is the spirit of its author, and as a beautiful voice interprets the meaning of the song written in an unknown tongue, so these German actors by the power of an art statuesque in its beauty, musical in expression, deeply spiritual in its interpretation of the poet's soul, revealed to the audience the wondrous charm of Iphigenie. In a foreign tongue they portrayed the emotions of mythical heroes long dead in a distant land, and as we watched and listened the mythical dead became living mortals, and we understood their suffering and their heroism, saw the agony of the spiritual struggle, realized the force of the great temptation, knew the joy of the final victory.

A great poet, a drama of transcendent power and beauty, actors of consummate art, an enthusiastic audience,--nothing was lacking to make the event a memorable one. *H. S. O.*

----At a recent debate at the 'Philadelphia Browning Society' Miss Mary M. Cohen, the founder and first president of the Society and now one of its vice-presidents, opened the discussion with the following bright paper written to the question:--

Is Browning to be ranked as a legitimate member of the Victorian School?

Certainly he is. If any one tries to prove that he is not entitled to the claim, it must be because the poet has so much more of brilliant mental make-up than most of the Victorian writers that the critics are dazzled.

They want to cut and fit a man's ability and achievement to a particular class of work, to press him down, as it were, into a jelly-mould and say, "There, take that shape and mind, not a drop of you is to spill over!" It is a good deal like a woman when asked her age; she often says, "I am twenty"; so she is, dear thing, and frequently much more, besides. Our poet is a Victorian poet and gloriously transcends them all. "If this be treason, make the most of it." My opponent is no doubt carefully writing down this challenge with a view to crushing me later, but unlike my sex in general, I do not want the last word, if I can only get the first. "He laughs best who laughs last" has always had rather a prejudiced sound in my ears; on the contrary, he who makes the first score has often a tremendous advantage. A charming young artist, a friend of mine, has thrown a certain light upon the subject of this debate: She said, "Victorian always suggests to me something housekeepery and mutton-choppy: Is Browning mutton-choppy?" I suppose that the adversary will answer this.

In one of the popular manuals of English literature, we find Tennyson and Browning described as the two masters of Victorian poetry. My definition of a poet of the Victorian School would be that he should combine a musical versification with ethical, philosophical and artistic thought. I believe that Tennyson is generally received as an example. If Shelley be accepted as a Victorian School poet, then it is absolutely certain that Browning, having absorbed Shelley until poetic inspiration was fused to a white heat, may be held to represent the Victorian School in gigantic and overwhelming form. Although it has been said that "until late years Browning has been entirely at variance with the tendencies of his time and for nearly forty years represented that opposition to the poetry of the age which has recently been made prominent by a small band of poetical innovators of whom Swinburne is the most extreme," still I feel justified in my claim. Browning incorporated the introspective philosophy of his period in his work, and also displayed in many of his writings the musical sweetness which is supposed especially to mark the Victorian poets. Think of his poem of 'Saul,' forceful, yet melodious, suffused with the intense interest of the Biblical story, glorified by the superb imagery of a mind dwelling in a time of psychological inquiry. Almost the whole of 'Asolando' is musical. Remember the poem 'Reverie':

"I know there shall dawn a day
  --Is it here on homely earth?
Is it yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth
That Power comes full in play?"

Note the influence which contemporary events must have on a man like Browning: in 1851 the great Exhibition, the first of the series held later in different countries, and stimulating in its effects upon the intellectual, social and spiritual culture of the poet: in 1854 the Crimean War, conducted with France against Russia who had appropriated the Turkish principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, and made famous by such battles as Alma, Balaklava and Inkermann. In 1853 came Florence Nightingale with her reform in hospital service. In 1858 the Atlantic cable was laid. In 1888 came the "Philadelphia Browning Society." No one of the Victorian poets was mentally organized by these events, the last excepted, as was Browning. The critic Alexander has

said "A man's work is determined not only by the character of his genius, but also by the conditions of his age. Homer would not write a great epic, were he alive now, nor Shakespeare great dramas."

'Prospice' is another instance of melodious verse, expressing thought exalted, philosophical and spiritual.

Who is not impressed with the strength and sweep of 'Cristina'?

"There are flashes struck from mid-nights, there are fire-flames noon-days kindle,

Whereby piled-up honors perish, Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle."

We cannot ignore the graceful flow of 'Confessions':

"How sad and bad and mad it was--
But then, how it was sweet!"

I must also quote what seems to me a very vital tribute to his genius:

"Browning is one of the very few men--Mr. Meredith excepted--who can paint women without idealization or degradation, not from the man's side, but from their own; as living equals, not as goddesses or as toys." His poetry has been described as "superb landscape painting in verse." Swinburne differentiates Browning's work as marked by decisive and incisive faculty of thought, sureness and intensity of perception, rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. 'The Ring and the Book' is the masterpiece of this great Victorian master.

If then it be remembered that Browning ranks high as a humorist, that he has brilliant and subtle qualities, that he could appreciate and translate into poetry the stirring events of both sacred and profane history; that he drew Religion in all shapes to his side, that Mythology and Orientalism were his boon companions; that he moulded Art to his purpose, allured Music by his call, won Philosophy by his gaze, looked Truth in the eyes; there can be little or no doubt that he was the greatest of all the poets of the Victorian School and in his single person united all the highest characteristics of his literary contemporaries. Through him the Victorian School was raised to a height and deepened to a depth that without him it never would have had.

Mary M. Cohen.

----Is there anything that so forcibly brings home to us the foreign point of view or rather the point of tongue and point of ear that makes a Frenchman's expression alien to ours, than to see how he explains the proper English pronunciation of English? Here is the way, for example, that he elaborately spells out the sound of 'Much Ado About Nothing' in a dictionary of Foreign Names and Phrases: "Meutch a-dou a-boutt' neuth' igne." And of course our point of ear is quite as droll to him.

FOOTNOTE:

Footnote 1: In 'The Broken Heart,' John Ford, 1633, Calantha, addressing the dead body of her betrothed husband, says: "Now turn I to thee, thou shadow Of my departed lord." Antony refers to his dead body as "a mangled shadow"; 'Antony and Cleopatra,' iv., 2, 27. Shakespeare elsewhere refers to disembodied spirits as "shadows"; as in 'Richard III,' i, 4, 53; *Ibid.*, v, 3, 216; 'Cymbeline, v, 4, 97; and 'Titus Andronicus,' I, 1, 126.

Footnote 2: For 'I. A Group of British Poets' see *Poet-lore*, Vol. III. (New Series), End Year Number 1899. Pp. 610-612.]

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