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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JOAN OF ARC: A
PLAY IN FIVE ACTS ***

JOAN OF ARC:

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS.

BY MRS. J. A. SARGANT.

**LONDON:
JOSEPH RICKERBY, SHERBOURN LANE,
KING WILLIAM STREET, CITY.**

1840.

**LONDON:
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SHERBOURN LANE.**

TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER.

MADAM,

When I first requested permission to dedicate this humble effort to your Majesty, I felt—a feeling I confess which I had no right to indulge—that I should be much disappointed if you were pleased to refuse me; but now that you have graciously condescended to honour me by granting it, a fear of the unworthiness of my offering diminishes the gratification I should otherwise experience, and makes me almost envious of talents which might better have justified your patronage. Let others, however, excel me as much as they may in

those endowments which are supposed to constitute genius, I have at least the comfort of reflecting that none can excel me in dutiful affection to your Royal Person, in profound reverence for your character, and in respectful admiration of those virtues which have long endeared you to all British hearts, and will remain a monument of your goodness when you shall have exchanged time for eternity.

More than this I dare not say, lest it should be imputed to a want of delicacy: less than this I will not say, certain that it would be considered as an omission of duty.

I remain,
With the highest respect,
Madam,
Your Majesty's most dutiful, most
humble,
And most devoted Servant,
J. A. SARGANT.

PREFACE.

In laying this Play before the public some apology is perhaps due. Sensible that it cannot compete with many of the productions of the present day, the author yet pleads for such exemption only from severe criticism, as true humility, and a respect for the opinions of an enlightened and intellectual age, may entitle her to. She has not aimed at any display of originality, nor has she been deceived by a presumptuous estimation of her powers, to attempt that which she may not have more ability than leisure and opportunity to accomplish. Unlike those who write for amusement, or by profession, or in the consciousness of their talents, to gain for themselves competence or fame, her pen is exercised only to soothe anxiety, to refresh exhausted energy, and to vary the monotony of seclusion. She would not, however, be thought indifferent to the praise or censure of her contemporaries. Far from it. No exertion, compatible with higher duties, would be thought too severe to obtain the former, nor any degree of patient labour too lengthened to avoid the latter. She is, however, so circumstanced as to preclude such a dedication of her time, and therefore is it that she ventures to ask for that indulgence which, in another case, she would have deemed it unjustifiable to claim or to expect.

But whilst all attempt at originality is disclaimed, imitation of any one, or assistance from any one is equally disavowed. This play was written before the late productions, which bear the same title, made their appearance. Its defects therefore are its own; its merits—if happily it possess any—are its own also; and standing thus entirely upon its native ground, it is respectfully submitted to the judgment of the public.

J. A. S.

CLAPTON SQUARE,
May, 1840.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

CHARLES.
DUKE OF BEDFORD.
DU NOIS.
JOHN TALBOT.

DUKE ALENÇON.
EARL OF WARWICK.
XAINTRAILLES.
EARL OF RICHEMONT.
VALANÇOUR.
EARL OF SUFFOLK.
CARDINAL BEAUVAIS.
ARNAULT.
LOUVEL.
ARLINGTON.
ABBOT.
AUSTIN.
ARCHBISHOP.
OFFICER.
Soldiers, &c.

WOMEN.

JOAN.
COUNTESS OF WARWICK.
BERTHA.
WIDOW OF CAMOUSE.

JOAN OF ARC.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Chinon.*

ALENÇON. XAINTRAILLES.

ALENÇON. Welcome again to freedom!
France may rejoice, since thou in arms once more
Art seen for her.

XAINT. In arms to little purpose.
Our cause is lost, my lord. Orleans, our best,
Last hope, must fall, and shortly. But I have sought thee,
Eager to know, to learn,—

ALEN. What wouldst thou know?

XAINT. This strange report! this damsel, who, 'tis said,
Is hither come to work such wondrous feats—
Whence doth she spring?

ALEN. From Domremie; her birth
Not less obscure than this her native village.

XAINT. How introduced?

ALEN. She first besought from Baudricour
An escort to the Dauphin; but in vain.
At length, her suit oft urged, fair character,
And lofty words prevailed with him.

XAINT. The prince
Will ne'er demean himself to listen to her?

ALEN. A drowning man will catch, and eagerly,
At weeds uprooted by the storm that wrecked him.
She comes to-day, by order from himself,
Before the council.

XAINT. Hast seen her?

ALEN. I have.

XAINT. Describe her: is she young?

ALEN. Of that sweet age
When girlish smiles assume the dignity
Which conscious womanhood doth first confer:
The rose just blushing to the full.

XAINT. Rustic,
No doubt, and ignorant.

ALEN. Her soul hath stamped her manner
Simple, yet dignified—lofty, yet meek.

XAINT. Ta'en captive—grown poetic.

ALEN. Age like mine
Has little thought of love or poesy;
But yet there is a charm where loveliness
Meets virtue, which it were a shame to slight.
The snow which crowns the old man's head should make
His reason cool, yet need not chill his heart.
But come—the council must be now assembled.

XAINT. One question more—is Richemont here?

ALEN. Not he,
Nor e'en desired. The hate the Dauphin bears him
Continues undiminished.

XAINT. Yet the world
Believes them cordial friends; that with the rank
He craved, the constable of France has lost
All that disgust the Earl of Richemont felt.

ALEN. Charles never will forgive the insult shown
To them he valued most. Du Châtel first,
Then Louvel he required should be dismissed
His service and the council—price of friendship.
The first his interest in his master's sank,
But Louvel's firm adherence to his post,
Bringing Camouse's death.

XAINT. Camouse's death!

ALEN. Ay, 'twas a bloody deed: but more anon,
This maid absorbs all thought.

XAINT. Let's hasten then:
My curiosity is all awake—
And more, I bear an answer from the regent,
Which to the prince and council I must show.

SCENE II.—*Council.*

CHARLES, LOUVEL, VALANCOUR, &C.

CHA. We'll hear no more. Whilst one poor hope remained
We would have hazarded our chance; but now
Tis madness to resist.

Enter XAINTRAILLES and ALENÇON.

Returned! How met
The haughty occupant of our own place
The offer tendered him?

X_{AINT}. As one who holds
The game already in his hands may hear
His adversary's scheme to share the stake.
"I am not one," he said, "to beat the bush
That others may secure the birds. Ere Orleans
Can be sequestered, we must see good title
To execute the deed; Bedford, not Burgundy,
Must hold that city for his liege and lord."

CHA. Fool that we were to court such insolence!
But yet perhaps 'tis only what ourselves
Had, in like circumstances, said more rudely.

A_{LEN}. Will not your grace resent the indignity?

CHA. But how? words are but poor revenge;
And words are all we boast. We will retire
To Dauphiné.

OMNES. To Dauphiné!

A_{LEN}. You jest.
You cannot mean—

CHA. We've said, and mean it too.
Fear not, my friends, we'll lead a joyous life.
War we will have, as dappled deer shall find,
A court midst sylvan shades, not lacking beauty,
Though of but rural kind, to cheer our toils.

A_{LEN}. (*aside*. Will nought correct this levity of speech?
Xaintrailles himself, though not a whit more staid,
Is by his thoughtless master shamed to gravity.)
Your grace forgets the maid from Domremie
Doth wait an audience.

CHA. We much regret,
My lord, our weak compliance with such folly.

A_{LEN}. The royal word is pledged.

CHA. We'll not retract it.
It may at least afford us novelty.
Let her appear.

X_{AINT}. Why not devise some plan
To prove her truth, or to detect the fraud?

CHA. Well thought—but how?

X_{AINT}. To thee she bears this message.
If Heaven, as she asserts, has sent her hither,
He will not fail, by certain proof, to mark
The mission his. Amongst ourselves then mingle,
And let another represent thee.

CHA. Good.
No better representative than thou;
In truth we do but play the part of king,
And thou as aptly as ourself may act it.

[*They exchange places.*]

Enter JOAN.

X_{AINT}. Thou hast an audience asked: thy suit thus granted,
We bid thee fearlessly declare thy will.

JOAN. I seek the royal ear: this is my prince!
And thus with veneration deep—

[*Kneels to Charles.*]

CHA. Not so.
No female at my feet may kneel thus lowly.
Maiden! I own no earthly state which claims
Such reverence; but simply as a man
I stand midst men, protector of thy sex,
Admirer of thy charms!

JOAN. Just is the homage—
But now (*rises*) I stand the delegate of heav'n,
And thus declare my mission. "Go!" said the Mighty,
"Go! tell thy prince deliverance is nigh:
And thine the hand to rid him of his foes!
Thou shalt raise the siege of Orleans!"

CHA. Indeed!
Strong arms, and steeled, have not availed to raise it,
And shall a hand more fitting for the dance—

JOAN. Beware of such a sneer. The mountain lily
Would crush the mountain if 'twere bid to do it;
And midst the mighty ruin it had wrought
Itself would smile in safety. This I pledge thee!
The foe shall fly, the land once more be free,
The sceptre to thy line shall be confirmed,
And holy hands at Rheims shall crown thee.

CHA. Thy bearing
Forbids all thought of fraud, and proves that thou
And falsehood have no fellowship: thou art
Thyself deceived.

JOAN. I know that I may seem
A mere enthusiast, a frail, weak woman:
None think more meanly of me than myself:
But sense of weakness proves me not deceived.
Then scorn me not; if mercy once be spurned,
Indignant Heaven in frowns may hide his face,
And change the dew of blessing to a curse.

CHA. We have declared our will, but even now,
To pass to Dauphiné.

JOAN. Fly from the foe!
Leave thy inheritance! forfeit thy birthright!
Desert the post consigned to thee! the shepherd
Throw thus aside his crook, mean safety seeking,
And leave the hapless flock the fell wolf's prey!
O! France! poor land! then art thou lost indeed,
Though not by Heaven cast off. Thy prince deserts thee—
In evil hour betrays himself and thee.
These are my country's tears; and mark me, prince,
Such tears as these shall, in a sea of woe,
In judgment's awful hour, submerge thy soul.

ALEN. The prince is moved.

CHA. We'll think upon this matter.
Meanwhile thou mayst retire.

[*They withdraw.*]

JOAN. Yet dost thou doubt me?

CHA. And now, sweet maid, we must evince
Our sense of kindness such—(*takes her hand.*)

JOAN. Thou dost mistake me.

CHA. (*aside*, Oh! majesty of virtue! I stand abashed
Before the simple form thou hast assumed,
Still lower than the lowly who reproves me.)
Forgive the offence.

JOAN. It is forgotten;
Thou hast not injured me.

CHA. Thou sayst aright.
The assailer not assailed sustains the injury,
When vice would sully purity. Speak thy wishes.

JOAN. I dare not trust the air with such a secret
As that which trembles here. (*Approaches and whispers.*)

CHA. Who told thee this?
Can Death then ope his mouldy jaws, and speak
Without a tongue?

JOAN. Wouldst thou hear more?

CHA. Forbear!

JOAN. The sword, which in the keeping of that church
Has since remained, must to my hand be given,
And thou must claim it.

CHA. Approach! (*To the court.*)

OMNES. Is there hope?

CHA. Reason and hope are yet at variance;
But instantly to Fierbois we will send,
And prove the truth of words declared to us.
Valancour, the embassy is thine. Haste thee,
Thy failure or success decides our movements.
Louvel protect the maid.—On his return
We will again assemble.

SCENE III.—*Church of St. Catherine de Fierbois.—Midnight.*

ABBOT *and* FATHER AUSTIN.

AUS. Nay, rest awhile, my lord.

ABB. It may not be,
A secret presses here, which ere my soul
Can quit in peace its tenement of clay,
Must be discharged; and on no other spot
May I divulge that secret.

AUS. Aid me then.
Here divers tombs of knights attract my eyes,
But none with such device as thou hast said.

ABB. Look where the eastern window proudly throws
A stream of crimson light, when ev'ning's gloom
Enshrouds all else—in token of respect
To him who sleeps below. Did not the chill
Of age, perhaps of death, benumb my limbs,
My watchful feet, accustomed to the path,
Had led me to the spot.

AUS. 'Tis here.

ABB. Alas!
There then at rest lies he, the brave, the young,
And oh! for kingly shame, for kingly woe,
The murdered, the betrayed.

AUS. Compose thyself.
Here on this mutilated effigy,
(Stern lesson of rebuke for haughty pride,
By warrior felt, rest thee.

ABB.

What sound was that?

Aus. Nought save the wind, which tired of being pent
Within these cloistered aisles, and heavy made
By penitential sighs, doth sullen moan
For liberty, and free access to heaven.

ABB. 'Tis hushed, whate'er it was. Now listen, Austin:—
When 'gainst the legions of the Saracen
The hearts of knights with holy ardour burned,
And kings and nobles left their native land,
The young Montalbert, fav'rite of his prince,
Joined those heroic ranks.

Aus. Montalbert! he
Of whom tradition speaks a royal damsel
Viewed with eyes of love?

ABB. Alas! here secretly
Their marriage vows were pledged.

Aus. He fell in fight.

ABB. Oh! would that it were so. Come nigher, Austin.
That marriage was discovered to the monarch,
And pride, primeval sin of men and angels,
Betrayed the kingly mind, and he—

Aus. Why pause?

ABB. It is a dreadful thing, my son, to drag
Forgotten crime to light, and turn aside
The veil which time hath drawn o'er guilt in pity.
Montalbert secretly was sent to France
On private embassy.—He sought his bride!
His steps were tracked—beneath these walls he fell,
Here breathed his parting groan.

Aus. Hark! midnight strikes!

ABB. Beneath this stone his cold remains were laid,
In stately armour clad, as he desired,
That he might lie, as warrior ought to lie,
Prepared at once to start again to life,
When the last trump shall sound. All save his sword,
All in this grave, name, honours, wrongs, revenge,
Were buried deep.

Aus. Why not his sword?

ABB. The screen
Which darkens life ofttimes unveils futurity;
And simple dying men have proved true prophets.
"This sword," he cried, to our good, weeping father,
"First won from holiest tomb in Palestine,
Hath earnest reaped of glorious deeds to come.
Darkness shall cover France: in that her hour
Of utmost peril, blood of mine shall claim it,
And with it work deliverance. Where it lies
Let none ere know, save those who shall succeed thee."
His wish has been obeyed.

Aus. How of his race?

ABB. He left a babe—its fate unknown to me.

Aus. What greater need than that which now afflicts us?

ABB. I have not laid me down to rest, for months,
Without impatient hope I might be called,
Before night visited again these walls,
To yield the sacred weapon.

[Knocking.]

AUS. Hark! that tumult!

ABB. May righteous Heaven forbend no danger nigh.
Let us withdraw behind this massy pillar,
Lest we create suspicion.

Enter VALANCOUR, and Monks.

VAL. To the abbot!—
We have an embassy to him, on which
The fate of France may rest.

ABB. Dost hear? Release me. [Advances.
Who thus disturbs the peaceful hours of night,
And what thy purpose?

VAL. This: in the king's name,
We here demand a sword which in the keeping
Of this house has long been held.

ABB. Wherefore claimed?

VAL. In faith of one, a wondrous maid, who says
She is decreed to save the country.

ABB. What proof
Produced of such a mission?

VAL. This with others—
She has in private told the prince a fact,
Known to himself alone, and challenges
Production of this sword, as pledge and proof
Of her authority.

ABB. Of noble birth
The maid?

VAL. Most humble.

AUS. Crushed the rising hope
Of near deliverance.

ABB. And why? Faint heart,
Why doubt that noble blood doth show itself,
Though severed from its fount by laspe of years?
Hast thou ne'er marked the far and devious course
Of proudest rivers, borne from highest mountain,
Now lost midst rocks; now over beds impure,
Slow, sluggish seen; now hidden from all sight,
And only heard in murmurs low beneath
The shade of dark, impervious boughs; and now
So shallow found, that urchin foot dare tempt
Its depth, and laughing overleap its banks;
Then sudden bursting forth, and scorning bounds,
It pours its sparkling waters in a flood,
Spreads its wide bosom to the smiling sun,
The pride and wonder of the land it feeds?

VAL. We wait impatient thy reply, good father.
Is there such weapon in these walls?

ABB. There is:—
And knowledge of the fact attests the mission
Heaven's work. See where the holy weapon lies,
Beneath yon massy stone.

Chorus of Monks.

Spring from thy resting-place, sword of the brave!
Arm the deliv'rer's hand, destined to save—
France calls on thee.

Chorus of Soldiers.

Give it rejoicing light—see! it is ours.—
Now we defy the foe—England's great pow'rs!—
France shall be free.

SCENE IV.—*Chinon.*

JOAN. BERTHA.

JOAN. Alas! not yet returned?

BER. The way is far.

JOAN. What, if too careful of his charge, the abbot
Coldly deny his suit, some fraud suspecting?
Wouldst know the heaviest ill mortality
Can bear? 'Tis this—suspense. Suspense dries up
The fertile mind, holds captive ev'ry nerve,
The spirit sinks, impedes swift Time's career,
And stays the golden chariot of the sky;
Clothes noon's resplendent face with heavy clouds,
Makes peaceful night laborious, watchful day.
Ill, and its train of ills, may all be borne;
But dire suspense, that canker of the soul,
Like a fell blight encrusts each energy
Of mind and frame, and with unnatural heat
Consumes the oil of life.

BER. Let's cheat the hours
With converse of the past. Sit on this turf,
And here recount the story of thy days.
Sure thou wert deemed, from reason's dawn, a treasure.

JOAN. E'en from my childhood I was never like
Those whom my childhood shared. To be alone
My joy, thoughts undefined my fancy filling.
Sometimes my heart would throb, my young eye swim
With sudden tears; but why I could not tell.
I seemed, e'en then, cast from some other sphere,
Of which sufficient memory was left
To link me closer to a former state!
And make me feel an exile.

BER. Would I'd known thee!
How sweet to mark development of mind
Pregnant as thine!

JOAN. Thou might'st have been as others.
I was not loved. I was not understood.
Some deemed me void of Nature's kindly gifts,
In intellect deficient, and in heart
Most cold. Oh! how they wronged that heart! I loved
Too keen, alas! yet had but few to love,
And fewer still to answer to my love.

BER. I pain thee now.

JOAN. Regret it not; the heart,
Like the swelled ocean, must exceed its bounds,
And find departed calm best in exhaustion.
'Tis past, and I can smile again, dear Bertha.
It was a bitter time, and I, perhaps,
Had been a ruined child, when Heaven first sent
A holy man to shelter in our village.
A warrior he had been, but heavy woes
Had made him change the helmet for the cowl.
In hist'ry's page he deep was skilled. I heard,
And stole beside him. He did not notice me.
Then afterwards he marked my kindling eye,
And soon, amazed, I found myself his favourite.
A new bright world was opened to my view.
He told of ages past, of heroes bold,

Of women too, who, for their country's weal,
Had nobly died. No longer now alone,
I dwelt where mighty spirits dwelt. I heard
Their lofty thoughts, their sentiments sublime,
And lived but in the glorious creation
My fancy had called forth. Had I a sorrow?
'Twas, how mean myself. Had I a hope?
It was that I might emulate their deeds,
And prove as great as them whom thus I honoured.

BER. Strange tissue of events, which Heaven delights
Ofttimes to weave, making the link which seems
Meanest to our poor, erring comprehension,
The chief on which the chain of life depends.

JOAN. Now could I feel the smart of England's yoke,
And now one burning wish my heart consumed—
To save my country and my prince. Day-dreams
Or nightly visions had one single theme.
Whole nights I wept, whole nights I prayed. One day,
Upon a gentle slope I stood. Beneath me
Lay the smiling plain in vernal beauty.
Thence I beheld (how swells my heart e'en now!)
A squadron of the foe passing triumphant.
The trumpet's voice I heard, and the loud laugh
Alternate rang in echoes through the woods.
I gazed; a madd'ning fire, a deadly chill
Seized on my frame. I fled the sound, nor paused
Till at the altar's foot I threw myself,
In agony and spent. Words issued not—
I raised my supplicating hands on high:
Then sank into a trance, as since I find.

BER. Scarce have I drawn my breath, lest one brief word
Should 'scape my ear; and now I gaze on thee
Almost with awe, temp'ring my fond affection.
What followed?

JOAN. As I lay soft music fell
Upon my ear, diffusing calm ineffable,
When thus a voice pronounc'd—"Go, raise the siege
Of Orleans." I awoke. The organ's swell
Filled aisle and vault, and choral voices sang
The hymn of praise; but I could hear alone
The voice which still was thrilling on my ear,
And in a burst of joy I joined the chaunt.
Then forth I rushed to execute my mission.

BER. And that resplendent vision shall not fail—
Thy simple name brightest shall stand upon
The roll of time—the glory of thy sex—
The wonder of thy age.

JOAN. Hark! hasty footsteps!
'Tis Valancour! How hast thou sped?—the sword?

VAL. Is found.

[JOAN *sinks on her knee.*]

BER. Dost hear?

VAL. Forbear.

JOAN. Omnipotent!
Now lead me forth, strong in thy strength, prepared
To meet what thou hast marked for my career;
And though, with gory steps or painful death
I work thy will, so freedom crown the land,
I'll bless thy mercy.

VAL. The prince impatiently
Summons thee in council.

JOAN. I obey.

SCENE V.—*French Camp at Orleans.*

DU NOIS. XAINTRAILLES.

DU N. I tell thee
It is a gross affront, and such he means it.
A woman too to lead my gallant soldiers,
And point the path of duty to myself!
I choke with indignation.

XAINT. Hear but all.

DU N. What more have I to hear? Behold the scrawl
That marks his folly, my disgrace. Canst read,
Or are thy eyes, like mine, made dim and blistered?
Hast nought to say? art dumb?

XAINT. (*reads the letter.*) I own 'tis strange.
That she should supersede thee in command
Is more than I had thought.

DU N. I understand
The cause too well! Charles had not dared insult me
Had I been other than I am.

XAINT. Been other!
Who honour'd as thyself? Whose fame fills Europe?

DU N. I tell thee truth, and this the scourge that lashes me.
The bar of bastardy is on my shield;
The bar of alienation, mock alliance,
Pride trampling on the outraged laws of decency.
Witness me, Heaven! I would prefer to date
Honest descent from humblest parentage,
Than trace within these veins the highest blood
Illegal mixed.

XAINT. Think on thy own brave deeds—
Deeds that—

DU N. More widely spread the guilt that shames me,
Spreading the name of bastard through the world.

XAINT. Why, you've looked on good till 'tis become evil.
Men love distinction, or in camp or state;
And he has fortune won whose kin may serve
As staves to mount ambition's proudest ladder.

DU N. I have no kin. What owe I to their love
That I should claim them such? The life I have?
The debt is cancelled by the shame entailed.
To me my country is both sire and mother;
And I for her such gallant deeds will work,
That should I ever boast the name of father,
My children shall exult in their descent,
And swear by France, by honour, and their sire.

XAINT. No more! She comes! Now smooth thy ruffled brow;
And let thy courtesy, at least, ne'er blush
For thy neglect.

DU N. I will not meet her here.
If I be mocked, 't shall be where all may see it,
And learn with me to ridicule the cheat.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE VI.—*English Camp.*

SUF. Our work is near its end. Yon city's fall
Completes our triumph and ensures repose.

JOHN T. Alas!

WAR. How! does this cause sorrow?

JOHN T. Yes, truly.

WAR. And why? To me the prospect is most welcome.

JOHN T. Because, upon a course of glorious years,
In tented fields, you proudly may revert;
But I—

SUF. Thou'rt spared from sights that might have shocked
Thy wiser manhood. War is a noble game,
But full of much humanity deplores.

JOHN T. But I was never born for dull, still paths;
The trumpet's clang, and the loud din of battle
Suit me.

ARL. Pity such taste cannot be humoured.
With scarce a raw recruit to man his ranks,
The flower of French nobility with us
Conjoined—

JOHN T. Shame on them all! I do despise them.

SUF. Despise! thou dost forget thee.

ARL. Their shame, forsooth?

JOHN T. Are not their arms against their country turned
In aid of foreign foes? Are they not traitors;
Aye, traitors to the land they help to fetter?
These fields may haply drink my heart's life-blood;
But as I hope for glory, ere I die,
(The winding sheet I crave,) I would prefer
To clasp in friendliness the hand which slew me
In brave defence of its own rights and laws;
Than the false caitiff's, fighting by my side,
Those rights, those laws to crush beneath our feet.

WAR. Talbot an advocate for Charles!

JOHN T. Not so.
Yet there is something here that pleads for him.
His mother's hatred drives him from a throne,
Whilst my fond mother's parting kiss still glows
Upon my brow; and when I heard what tears
He shed, when told his father was no more,
I mingled mine with his; and his bereavement
Making my own, I honoured him for all
The grief he show'd, and felt him nobler foe.

Enter OFFICER.

OFFI. My lord, breathless I haste.

SUF. Speak on. What news?

OFFI. A champion for France is on her way.

SUF. A female too! Charles is indeed beset,
To have recourse to aid like this. To arms!
We'll plant the royal standard on those walls
To give her greeting.

SCENE VII.—*Chinon*.

VALANCOUR. ARNAULT.

ARN. Sayst thou the siege is raised?

VAL. Orleans is free.

ARN. And she, the sainted maid, has done the deed?

VAL. Herself! the maid of Orleans henceforth named.
Oh! 'twas a noble sight to see her entrance
Into the city she herself had saved.
Each distant quarter had disgorged itself
Of its inhabitants. Age had forgotten
All its decrepitude; sickness, its pains.
Walls, windows, streets, each edifice and pillar
Seemed as a living mass; and waving hands
And loud acclaims filled the astonished air.
The sun burst forth in joy. Onward she came,
Our civil functionaries at her head,
The wonderous sword and standard borne before her.
The princely Duke Alençon at her side,
His stately countenance impressed alike
With patriotic joy and martial pride.

ARN. And thou wert in the fight?

VAL. I was, and near her;
A proud distinction, for where'er she stood
There hottest battle raged: the foe to crush her,
Friends to rival her. Sight alone of her
Gave spirit to the faint, and kindled courage
E'en to its height. Herself in ev'ry part,
Like lightning's bolt was seen, sudden as fatal.

ARN. The night was terrible. The heavens appeared
To threaten earth with wreck.

VAL. It has no fellow.
Terrific thunders rattled through the sky,
And fiery vengeance hissed upon the ground,
With human gore and heavy rain deep drenched.
"See! Heaven itself doth fight for us!" she cried.
As struck with terror back our troops recoiled.
The happy augury was hailed with shouts,
And victory was ours.

ARN. But yet, methinks,
The hand of woman should be free from stain,
And most from stain of blood: the lamb for innocence,
The kite for prey.

VAL. No blood has stained her hand.
The sword she bears nor forms defence, nor wounds,
But guides the fight. Amidst its loudest din
And fiercest rage she shows a countenance
Most calmly brave, most femininely gentle.

ARN. And he, great Orleans' valiant son, was he—

VAL. Ah! 'twas a curious sight to see how proud
He scorned the maid when first she reached the camp.
His great heart swelled against her, and his gibe,
Keen as his sword, betrayed contempt.

ARN. And well
He might be pardoned, if he deemed the thought
Injurious, that a woman should succeed
Where he himself had failed.

VAL. Forth armed she went,
A graceful female, though in martial garb.

He marked her lack of sword and loosed his own;
And with a curled lip and mock humility
He turned the heft, and offered it in silence.
"I may not trust to arms," she calmly said.
His searching eye glanced on her countenance,
He coloured crimson deep, and the proud sneer
Forsook his lip, and, like a lion tamed,
He showed him gentlest where he least intended.

ARN. He must beware: the stream turned suddenly
May suddenly become a torrent. Love,
From hatred sprung, can only be excelled
By hatred born from love.

VAL. (*Aside.*) Why should the thought
Dart agony like this into my heart?

ARN. What next is her intent?

VAL. To pass to Rheims.
Thither, at dawn, the prince departs to join her,
And the army she conducts.

ARN. Heaven speed the journey.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

WARWICK AND ARLINGTON.

WAR. How swift a courier is this winged love!
Why I have made this journey in less time,
Impelled by thought of her, than ere before,
Though martial glory spurred me on the way,
And every proud ambitious hope to boot.

ARL. Our jaded horses prove that truth.

WAR. And yet
They sped not swift enough for my fond wishes.
Say, hast thou ever marked the moon's full beams
Upon the wave, when broken by the breeze?
Such is the image of my heart: joy's rays
Illume its depths and sparkle on its surface;
But all within is restless—bright confusion.

ARL. Well may she wake such love, such fond impatience;
Not breath of closing flowers, not eve's soft beam—

WAR. With nought that marks decline compare my Alice.
She is the blush of morn first caught by earth,
When seraph hands unbar the gates of heaven,
And from its courts bright beams of glory stream.
Fresh as the od'rous breath by zephyr scattered,
When first from dewy flowers he springs rejoicing;
Light as the froth by chafed ocean cast,
When young Aurora, laughing at his suit,
Refuses to retard her rosy steps;
And playful as the changeful hues reflected
Upon its quivering breast.

ARL. She comes.—Farewell.

Love bears no eyes but those he lights to view
The rapture he creates, and turns offended
From the stranger's gaze.

[*Exit.*

Enter COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. My life, my Warwick!

WAR. My own! thus let me clasp thee to my heart.

COUNT. No! let me see thou art indeed my Lord,
And read in those dear eyes the joy of mine.
Thou hast been long in coming.

WAR. Sweetest, no.
Impatient, like myself, thou hast, I see,
Been measuring the hours by love's slow glass,
And made them sad and heavy.

COUNT. Now thou'rt wrong—
Not sad.

WAR. Not sad when Warwick is away?

COUNT. Have I not hope to share the hours with me?
And who can e'er be sad in such sweet fellowship?
Thy last receding step dries up my tears,
For thus she gently whispers to my heart—
"The moment passed that bore him from thy view,
The next but draws him nearer to thy arms."

WAR. But how deceive the intervening moments?
Art thou not lonesome oft?

COUNT. How may that be?
From thee I never am divided. Thought
Personates thyself, and thus I talk with thee,
Sit by thy side, frame answers for thyself
So full of love, so paint thy face with smiles,
Thy eyes with such approval fill, my heart
Leaps with delight: then only am I lone
When some intruder comes intent to cheer me.

WAR. Why thus thou'lt make me jealous of myself,
And envious of the shadow I supply.

COUNT. Then too I sing to thee, or deck myself,
And try which ornament doth suit me best:
Smile at the smiling image I behold,
And bid the vivid blush, which spreads my cheek,
Fade not away, that it may tell my Warwick
'Twas thought of him which makes me value beauty,
And prize the charms that justifies his choice.

WAR. Sweet flatterer! Then thou art happy, Alice!

COUNT. Indeed I do not know what means unhappiness.
E'en from my infancy I have been blessed.
My eyes first opened on the laughing spring,
And all of life, of hope, of fond affection
Has been passed in springtide. I never shed
A tear till my great father died; and those
First tears were wiped away by him whom first
I loved.

WAR. But how! thou dost not even ask
If Salisbury's sad death has been avenged!

COUNT. Contains revenge then ought that may impart
Joy to felicity, or make repose
More tranquil, which already was complete,
That it should be desired?

WAR. Nor yet enquire
How speeds the war?

COUNT. I love not war.

WAR. And yet
Art Salisbury's child, art—

COUNT. Warwick's bride, thou'dst say.
Of him whose gallant heart of war makes pastime,
And who a rival gives me in renown.
And yet I do repeat, I love not war,
And rather in our native woods would stray,
Listening the thrush's early note of love,
Or plucking wild flowers from the bank to crown thee,
Than hail thee, Warwick, conqueror of France.
Ha! there is blood upon thy arm!

WAR. For shame!
Turn pale—a very coward thou.

COUNT. Not I:
But nature is to blame, who doth abhor
The sight of blood: but if I must, as fits
A soldier's wife, enquire of war, then tell me,
Not how many thousands perished, but what
New honours thou hast gained; and better still,
Say, how much nearer is the end of strife.

WAR. My honours gained is not to feel disgraced.
A strange reverse has visited our arms.
Not alone has Orleans been relieved,
And other strong posts fall'n, but at the name
Of Joan of Arc our stoutest cheeks turn pale.
Myself beheld the maid, banner in hand,
March by our troops, with Suffolk at their head,
Not only unmolested, but with dread,—
Such awe hath filled all hearts.

COUNT. Tell me no more.
Unbend that brow, and think alone of me,
And in these smiles forget—

WAR. Aye! all forget
But this—that thou art mine—my own for ever.
Forget that with the dawn I must depart.

COUNT. Oh, no! thou must not go.

WAR. I dare not tarry.
Exasperated by our late reverse,
And fearing that success to bolder deeds
May tempt the foe, the regent hath desired
Lord Scales and Talbot to unite with us—
We wait at Patay for their promised force.

COUNT. No more. Now let love's rosy fingers
Press the swift foot of time and stay his flight.

SCENE II.

RICHEMONT. VALANCOUR.

RICHE. Pass on to Rheims!
E'en through the heart of Bedford's army!
What rashness!

VAL. 'Tis by order of the maid.

RICHE. What folly next, is son as father mad?
Thou canst not mean it.

VAL. 'Tis fact, my lord.
She must behold the crown plac'd on his head.

RICHE. Eternal curses light upon her own.
Thwarted in all my views, fortune but mocks,
Instead of crowning me. These rival states
Should from my fiat take their destiny.
Nor care I whether Charles or Bedford win,
So either make a step for my ascent.

VAL. Yet both have slighted—

RICHE. Me!—'tis false as hell.
They may appear to show me some neglect,
And why? Both fear me, both are jealous of me.
What else could instigate the wary Bedford
To waive my offer to command his host?
What too but envy influences Charles?

VAL. The dauphin's heart is warm—he may feel sore.

RICHE. At what? That I should cause his myrmidons
To shed their forfeit blood! his fav'rites banish?
Yet little have I gained—his present minion
Provokes my stronger hate, and worse contempt.

VAL. But you will grace the fête with your high presence.

RICHE. No: let them play the part of fools without me.
His majesty of Bourges doth well to merge
His title, erst bestowed on him, for one
Still more absurd in folly.

VAL. Think, my lord—
With reverence—

RICHE. Peace! I see the issue.
My own name tarnished by severe defeat
On Beuvron's plains, my promises proved empty,
While hers, though most extravagant, fulfilled,
The fools will honour her, o'erlook myself;
Or worse, most odious contrast may be made
Betwixt successful rashness on her part,
And baffled skill on mine. Not Heaven itself
Shall force me to such chance.

VAL. If fortune's tide
Have met a turn, no matter by what means,
Would it be well to stand aloof, and miss
The way to honour? Will not thy absence
Rather awake impertinent remark,—
Be deemed his will?

RICHE. There's reason in thy words;
And more, so prodigal is he, so reckless,
New honours he may heap on her, and plead
Omission on my part as his excuse.
I'll spare him that pretence.—Prepare for Baugenci.

SCENE III.—*Camp.*

DU NOIS. XAINTRAILLES.

DU N. There is a magic
In the full sweet tones of her impressive voice,
Which heard but once, dwells long upon the ear,
Charmed with the sound; then sinks into the heart,
No more to be forgotten, pleading still
When she herself is mute. How goes the hour?

XAINT. Day's harbinger, with chilly lips, has kissed

The pine's tall top. The camp is locked in sleep
So deep, that yon marauding fox's step
Distinctly may be heard.

DU N. Sleep flies my lids—
For the first time I dread to-morrow's chance.
The attempt is bold, and skilfully conceived,
On Suffolk's ranks to fall, and break his force
Ere Talbot can arrive and strength unite;
But if the project fail!—(*Aside*,) I cannot think
Of her disgraced, without a pang.

XAINT. Should fail!
Who fears defeat in what the maid devises?

DU N. Heaven doth not always smile on those he loves.
Time offers marvels: once the name of Joan
I scorned, abhorred! I do not hate it now,
Though now I've cause. She robs me of renown,
And at her bidding I unsheath my sword.

XAINT. She may be proud!—a victory she has won,
That spirit to subdue. She hath in truth
A charm to make stern hearts most meek, and yet
She is not beautiful, as men count beauty.

DU N. She is the better suited to my taste;
I do despise the doll, where nought of soul
Is ever seen to light the faultless eye.

XAINT. Yet glances have been cast on thee
Which might have thawed the coldest heart, and caused
An angry lance to tremble in its rest.

DU N. Hers is that beauty by the mind conferred,
The outward vestment lumined by the soul,
Which sets respect as centinel to guard
The treasure stored within, and from approach
Too near, restrains those whisperers of nought,
Who throng impertinent around the form,
Which owes to symmetry alone, and feature,
Its power to fascinate. There is a dignity
Withal in her simplicity, which awes
The surer for the company unwont
In which 'tis found. Nature herein has mocked
The cunning artist's skill, who, in a rim
Of purest silver sets his goodliest stone,
Making the metal richer for the gem.

XAINT. Thou lovest her then?

DU N. Are words denied the heart
Of firmest mould, or what enchains my tongue?
If life for life, if soul for soul exchanged,
So honour were retained, be mark of love,
Then love I her.

XAINT. Thou surely wilt not wed her,
When easier terms—

DU N. Now, by my sword's good point,
For that foul thought I could a vengeance take
Which should forbid all chance of like offence.
Ah! witness not these swelling veins, that I
Myself am heir of wanton shame, and worse,
Of broken faith? Sits not the stamp accursed
Of bastardy upon my brow, to dim
The gems that in my coronet might sparkle?
And shall I imitate the vice I scorn,
And wring some breast with anguish like my own?
Hear me, ye mighty Pow'rs above, if e'er,
Through me, should fall the tear of broken virtue;
If cry of babe that may not bear my name,
Ascend, then may that tear consume my heart,

SCENE V.—*An English Camp.*

SUFFOLK, OFFICERS, &C.

SUFF. To arms! sound an alarm!
Summon our chiefs!—each to his post!—away!

Enter WARWICK and JOHN TALBOT.

WAR. War's hounds have slipped again their leash,
And bear upon us.—Hark! the cry is up.

SUF. Be thine then first to meet the foe.

[*Exit WARWICK.*]

JOHN T. And I!
Oh! give me danger's post!—forget my youth;—
Think the father's honour hangs on the son.

SUF. Seek Warwick's side.

JOHN T. My deeds shall thank thee. Father!
Oh! tarry only till this field I've fought.
We must not meet till I have proved this gift,
Whose motto to the sun I now display, ^[A] (*draws his sword,*)
And claim it witness to the truth it speaks.
For my brave sire, old England, and St. George!

[*Exit.*]

[A] Sum Talboti, sur vincere inimicos meos.

SCENE VI.—*Field of Battle.—Thunder and Lightning.*

WARWICK.

WAR. Are earth and heaven again in fury met,
As late on Orleans' fields? The elements
Pour forth their wrath in such tremendous peals,
Such bolts of fiery death illumine the sky,
That earthly weapons seem the lesser ill.
Our soldiers falter.—Ho! look to John Talbot!
Ardour like his will lead him into peril.

[*Exit.*]

Enter SOLDIERS, followed by JOHN TALBOT.

JOHN T. Hold! cowards! when did England's sons e'er turn
Their backs to Frenchmen—seeking mean safety?
Have ye then quite forgot proud Cressy's field,
Poitiers or Agincourt?

SOLDIERS. We will not fight with *her*.

JOHN T. Then back to England, quick, disgrace to men;
Tell there your sons ye fled a woman's arm,
And ask your wives to welcome back their slaves.
Give them your swords, and take instead their distaffs,
And let the colour which has fled your cheeks
Rest in hot blushes on the veteran brows
Of your more valiant fathers.
Away! ye are not worthy of your name;
But in your flight, if ye should meet John Talbot,
As like ye may, tell him, "We left your son
To wipe out our disgrace in his heart's blood!"

SOL. Lead us back!—A Talbot!

JOHN T. Come on! and when they speak of this in England,
Bold ones and brave shall wish they had been with us.

Another part of the Field.

DU NOIS. JOAN.

DU N. New vigour suddenly hath armed the foe,
While our brave troops, fatigued with their own valour,
Now sorely pressed, pause in their course, and deal
Uncertain blows. The fate of this day's battle
Hangs on a point.

JOAN. Is not His promise ours
Who leads the hosts of heaven? Who doubts then victory?
Onward, ye brave! yon lightnings be your guide!
The hand that wields them is the patriot's shield!

Another part of the Field.

SUFFOLK *and* WARWICK.

SUF. Our troops at length give way: four times th' attack
Has been renewed; bravely as oft repelled.
If Talbot tarry long the day is lost.

WAR. Our bravest veterans are seized with dread,
Thinking they fight against a power unearthly.

Enter SOLDIERS in flight.

WAR. Back to your ranks, base cowards!

SOL. We fight in vain!—John Talbot—

WAR. What of him?

SOL. Is either dead, or taken prisoner.

WAR. I'll rescue him, or perish!—dead or living
His father shall again behold him.

SCENE VII.

JOAN. DU NOIS. FRENCH OFFICERS.

DU N. The field is ours! the victory complete!
The foe on all sides flies! Talbot is ta'en!

XAINT. The glory be our champion's—

JOAN. Forbear!
Give not the instrument the Giver's meed;
But rather let us imitate his mercy.
Quick! let the carnage cease! and ev'ry tenderness
Show friend and foe. Now let our clarions
Proclaim the joyful news of our success!
Fling wide the sound, ye gales of heav'n! hills, vales
Re-echo it, and tell th' awakened land
Her freedom is begun!—her chains are broken!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Field of Battle.—Moonlight.*

ARLINGTON. OFFICER.

OFF. Here let us rest till morning. Like ourselves,
The foe are glad to seek that needful rest
Which victory and defeat alike demand.

ARL. No, let us on. We yet may find it hard
To reach our friends, and Richemont hovers near us.

OFF. Whate'er the peril, here I swear to rest me.
See! the bright moon looks down upon the field,
As if in scorn to view such waste of life.

ARL. It is a ghastly sight. Not drops of heaven
Bedew the earth, but blood of men; and blood
Has dyed the stream so deep, that thirsty lip
Of death rejects the draught it craved so wistfully.

OFF. Wide is the difference 'twixt the gallant scene
Ere fight begins, and that which marks its close:
Bright shields and dancing plumes, and brighter eyes,
And animating speech abrupt, and tramp
Of martial steed, and neigh, impatient sent,
And spirit-stirring trumpet, and the drum;
The banner waving wide, and heavy sound
Of mighty engines breathing fire, showed life
This morn in brightest mood and proudest pomp;
Now Death sits centinel in horrid silence.

ARL. Our loss is great, and will be greater still
If we continue this unhallowed war:
Many brave men this day have breathed their last:—
Most I regret young Talbot.

OFF. Is he dead?
I saw brave Warwick rushing to his rescue.

ARL. He came too late. From heaps of slain he snatched him,
Then bore him to a distance, yet alive;
But dews of death were gathering on his brow,
And his dim eye betrayed departure near.
He dared not turn him on his side, lest life
From that deep welling wound should 'scape too fast.
He watched the sun go down, and darker shades
O'erspread his face. Impatient now become,
Often he murmured to himself and said,
"It is too late; he will not come, and I
Must die at last without my father's blessing."

OFF. Many brave hearts will mourn for him: he was
A noble scion of a noble stem.

ARL. We thought that he was gone, when the quick step
Of his despairing father sounded near.
Stern death relaxed his hold, and for short space
Allowed his spirit to reanimate
His chilly frame. He raised him on his side,
Clung round his father's neck, and looking on him,
Feebly he said, "Have I done well, my father?
Am I John Talbot's son?" "Too well! too well!
My brave"—was all the father could reply;
But 'twas enough—the young man caught the sound.
And dropping back his head, he smiled and died.

OFF. And his brave sire?

ARL. As if transfixed, he gazed,
And mute—then by the body of his son
He threw him down, kissed his cold lips, and oft,
Midst sobs, he cried, "And art thou gone so soon?
Thy morning ended ere thy noon begun;

And such a noon!" but sudden on his hands
He saw the crimson stain of that dear blood,
And like a lion maddened at the sight,
His grief was checked, and springing on his feet
He seized his massy sword, and wildly rushed
Into the fight.

OFF. See figures in the dusk
Moving apace. (*Two soldiers appear.*)

ARL. Let's draw aside.

OFF. They make
For yonder cottage.

SCENE II.—*A Cottage.*

WIDOW OF CAMOUSE.

WID. Half light, half dark. Oh, would that reason's lamp
Were utterly extinct, and I could lose
The sense that thus I am a tomb to self,
Where the dim taper only shows its gloom.
Then I should feel no more, no longer mourn,
And my poor heart would cease to throb, my head
To burn. One,—three are gone, and now the last.
I have no more to lose!
I'll lay him in the bed these hands have dug,
(I've kiss'd his eyes to sleep,) and then I'll seek
The spirits of my lord and other boys,
And bring them here to see, how, e'en in poverty,
I've made a home fitting Camouse's son.
E'en now I lose myself, and at my folly
Smile while I weep. But hark! what steps are these?
I must within and guard.

Enter TWO SOLDIERS.

FIRST SOL. Stay! we are hungry and thirsty.—What have you to give
us to eat?

WID. My food is woe; and such my appetite
I am not to be cloyed, though e'en to surfeit
I've been supplied.

SECOND SOL. Her words are strange—her manner is stranger still.—
Hunger is not nice, to be sure.

FIRST SOL. I see but little chance of satisfying hunger here.

SECOND SOL. Ho! there is a smell of wine!—produce it!—come! quick!
Our master is at hand.

WID. Those arms upon their shields!
Away! no longer blast me with your sight.

FIRST SOL. When we have got what we wish, we will.—The wine, the
wine, or look, this shall find it. (*draws his sword.*)

WID. Think you I care for threat of you, or yours?
Back with your sword; I fear ye not, I tell you;
And mark! a fiercer thirst ye all shall have,
Nor find one drop to cool your burning tongue.

SECOND SOL. Don't exasperate her; these are strange times, and—

FIRST SOL. Pshaw! the wine we'll have!

WID. Search for it, then—so wondrous keen your longing.
No need have ye of guide[SOLDIERS *enter the inner apartment.*
Does vengeance sleep?

Or will not e'en the dead arise in wrath,
And punish the intrusion? [SOLDIERS *return*.

Why that look?

What have ye seen to discompose ye thus?
A ghastly corpse? What's that to men like you?
Hast found the wine? I see ye have.

[SOLDIERS *shudder—she laughs*.

How now!

What! was it not delicious to the taste?
The flavour surely should have charmed your palate;
Quick to detect its excellence and merit.
Know ye what 'tis? 'Tis blood! blood of my son,
Whose sire your treacherous master slew: for blood
Ye thirsted once, and blood ye now have drunk.

SOL. She's mad! She does not know what she says.

WID. I tell ye truth. If I be mad, 'tis ye
Have made me so.

SOL. 'Tis false! we do not even know you.

WID. No matter if ye don't.
I know you well—too well! Ye're Richemont's slaves.
Yon was my son: time was when I had four;
Where are they now? With him your master murdered!
Do maniacs know what wakes their frenzy?
Why then is madness cursed, accursed doubly.
Saw ye his wounds? gaped they not wide? didst mark?
I would have washed them in the stream hard by,
Had it not crimson flowed, and the foul taint
Of many a blackened corpse corrupted it.
What could I do? I washed them in the wine
I had reserved to cheer his bridal day.
I never, never thought ye would have pledged him
On his cold bier. Now from my sight be gone,
Lest haply I should wither you with curses
Before the time. [Exeunt SOLDIERS.

I am alone—'tis well!

But, oh! this burning brow, the weight that's here!
I'll to the dead—would I were dead also!
But said they not that Richemont too was near?
I'll hang upon his steps, and breathe my vengeance
On his head before I die.

SCENE III.—*Baugenci*.

CHARLES. LOUVEL.

CHA. Oh! fickle hearts of men. Three months ago,
When the prompt aid of fifty men had been
A boon worth warmest thanks, nor threats nor pray'rs
Could move a foot to join us. Now, forsooth,
When less we need it, we have aid abundant.
Towns that but lately would have closed their gates
E'en in our face, if we had asked a refuge,
Fling now their portals wide, and sue our entrance.
Thou know'st the Constable is on his way?

LOUV. With what intent, my liege—a friend or foe?

CHA. It is not known.

LOU. To serve himself, no doubt.
His ev'ry thought is self.

CHA. Well do we know him.
Our fortune hath not forged a chain more galling
Than that which binds us to a man we hate.
Howe'er, his views will quickly now be known:—
The maid is sent to meet him.

LOU. Was this prudent?
Should his intent be mischief, would he scruple,
E'en by the nearest road, to blast our hopes?

CHA. She hath a chosen guard for her protection,
With Xaintrailles at their head. He dare not harm her!
Yet would they were returned: in honour's name,
We rather would forego the crown she promised,
Than ought of evil should befall the maid.

LOU. That none will doubt: she has a double claim;
To thee her sex's charms—

CHA. We charge thee, Louvel,
Breathe not a word like this: her simple grandeur
Checks all idle thought, and spreads around her
The very purity which decks herself.

Enter XAINTRAILLES.

What tidings? say, have swords been interchanged,
Or comes he peacefully?

XAINT. Affection leads him,
Such were his words, to greet your change of fortune.

LOU. True regard has never brought him; but wish
The world should fancy he has set the crown
Upon your grace's head, his favoured presence
Needed.

CHA. Then we will show him he mistakes.
We owe him nothing but most cordial hatred,
And come what may, that day's felicity
Shall not be marred by sight of him.

LOU. My liege,
You surely will not dare refuse!

CHA. Not dare!
The prince too fearful to resent an insult,
Proves oft too mean to recompense a friend.
Relate what passed between the maid and him.

XAINT. Rumour had told him, or his heart suggested,
He might be deemed an enemy. Awhile
He gazed upon us with a fixed regard;
But when he saw the maid, his black lip curled,
And his sharp features grew still more contracted.
Few could have borne that look malign, and fewer
Not quailed beneath it.

CHA. But the maid,—she bore it?

XAINT. AS one completely armed in innocence:
The peace within shed lustre o'er her face,
And sense of merit brightly tinged her cheek.
Alighting gracefully from her proud steed,
She bent her knee, and made low reverence.

CHA. 'Twas rev'rence ill bestowed—she's his superior,
And all that ministers to feed his vanity
Were well to spare. Proceed.

XAINT. Your grace has seen
How, when a storm arises, the dark cloud,
Pregnant with thunder, scowls upon the meadow
Placidly fair, where still the gay beam lingers,
Before its vengeance bursts. He deigned no courtesy.
His chest swelled high, and thus he spake abruptly:—
"Thou hast design, I see, to fight with me;
I know not who thou art, nor who hath sent thee;
Or heav'n, or hell,—but of this be certain,
I fear thee not, and bid thee do thy best,

Or worst, as pleases thee,—it matters not."

LOU. Most insolent! The insult shown to her
Was meant for thee.

CHA. It is not lost. Behold him!

LOU. Smooth thy brow. We must not yet offend one
Who may injure us.

Enter RICHEMONT.

RICHE. I forestall all messages,
And come on duty's wings to tend my homage,
With all expressions of my joy, to offer
On this most happy turn of your affairs.

CHA. Our thanks, as due, are thine.

RICHE. Rumour reports
Your highness means forthwith to pass to Rheims,
And there in state—

CHA. Then rumour speaks the truth.

RICHE. And yet, I crave your grace, a better medium
Might surely have been found, intelligence
Of moment to convey to zealous friends.

CHA. No real friend would claim regard to forms,
In times like these.

RICHE. But yet without advice,
A step of such importance meditate?

CHA. From whom should we or ask, or need advice?
Are we not master of ourself—our actions?

RICHE. Not from the sycophants that court the ear,
Of royalty abused, making their prince
A puppet in their hands, merely to serve
Their selfish aims; but from the wise—

CHA. The counsel
Needed was our own, nor wished we other.

RICHE. Counsel! the imposture's gross. This artful woman,
This low-born tool of more expert deceivers—

CHA. 'Twere well to speak in more befitting terms
Of one who renders services so signal.
It is the will of Heav'n, by her declared,
That we repair to Rheims; and 'tis our duty,
Our pleasure also, to obey the mandate.

RICHE. Your grace is jesting: better far it were
To punish, and severely, her presumption,
Than heed her guilty tales, or idle follies.
What hath she done, this delegate of Heaven,
But what the meanest, youngest of your captains,
Had, in like case, done better?

CHA. Ask the English,
The bravest foe that walks this nether earth,
This lion-hearted, great, and warlike race,
Whose very valour makes it honour to confront them;
To them propose the question, they will answer—
Shook to the centre of their inmost soul
Their stoutest men, their ablest captains beaten.
Ask France herself the same, and she will say—
Restored her to her rank among the nations,
And made it shame e'en to be thought disloyal.
Had other chieftains done but half as much,
No need for aid like hers had then existed.

RICHE. I boil with rage!

CHA. She claims thy gratitude,
As well as mine, my lord.

RICHE. But not the grant
Of royal dignity, I ween. 'Tis said,
The arms of France, by leave express from you,
She partly wears upon her impious standard—
Insult to royal blood.

CHA. What's nobly won
She justly wears. The wanderer, Charles, betrayed
By his own kin, forsaken by false friends;
Scorned, hated, persecuted by his mother,
Chased through his own domains like hunted deer;
Unnatural compacts leagued 'gainst him and France,
Compelled to view the sacrifice of hearts,
Whose only crime was loyalty unshaken—
Now, through that maiden, holds another state,
And can reward his friends, chastise his foes.

RICHE. But to a woman owe a crown!

CHA. Why not?
The prize is sweeter made as woman's gift:
We strengthen ties by woman's aid with kings,
Then why not owe a crown?

RICHE. For insult this?

CHA. If so received.

RICHE. 'Tis well: we met as friends,
Are we to part as foes?

CHA. As suits thy humour.
We sought not to detach thee from our cause,
Nor care we for the loss of what has been
So haughtily conceded. To be plain—
Monarch acknowledged as we soon shall be,
Henceforth, my lord, we reign our own free master—
Thou shalt retain the station justly thine;
But not, as heretofore, forgetting ours,
Shalt thou exert undue authority.
Nor at our coronation shalt thou aid us—
Our will is said. Farewell.

[Exit.

RICHE. What have I heard?
Dares he address such words as these to Richemont?
Not at his coronation to appear!
Fling in my face defeat!—shake off control!
Shall I submit to such indignity?
Cringe to the man who thus has wounded me?
No, never.—I will be revenged on her—
On him, though my own ruin be the issue.
If there be strength on earth, or artifice
In hell—thou shalt repent this outrage.

SCENE IV.—*Chapel.—Rouen.—Evening.*

JOAN.

JOAN. What means this tumult in my soul? Restless,
Irresolute, or sad, I shun each eye,
Yet fly from solitude to fly from self.
Mysterious pow'rs! twelve times that full-orbed moon
Has scarce o'erspread these towers with silver light,
And I have lived more years than weeks before.
'Twould seem, indeed, I never lived till now,

Though now existence is beyond myself.
How strange the knowledge thus of self obtained!
Astonished o'er the deep of my own heart,
First to my startled view revealed I stand,
And almost trembling ask—Can this be so?

Enter Du Nois.

Du N. How ill in unison the sounds I fly
With that which passes here! This calm may soothe me.
Ha! 'tis herself. Shall I advance? She sees me.
Forgive, if inadvertently my steps
Have led me to intrude.

JOAN. Du Nois! thou'rt welcome.
Intention like my own, no doubt, hath brought thee
Here to plead the peace of our loved country.
We've fought for her, have bled for her together;
Meet then our prayers together should arise
For her prosperity.

Du N. Together, saidst?
Together! (word awakening strange delight
In hearts where love has hidden him.) For thee,
As her I would implore all Heav'n can give;
But ere my willing lips may frame such prayer,
I must forgiveness ask of thee.

JOAN. Forgiveness!
All that the noblest nature shows most nobly
I owe to thee!

Du N. Yet do I need thy pardon—
Thou once, of all that bears my Maker's impress,
Thou wert my scorn, aversion. Canst forgive—
Forget?

JOAN. Oh! sweeter far the kindness felt
Than injury atoned. I know thee but
As thou hast seemed, nor wish to know thee other.
Now on yon altar's steps.

Du N. Before the altar!
Knows't thou what thou sayest?

JOAN. What place so meet?
Give me thy hand that thus—why dost thou tremble?

Du N. Wilt thou indeed then plight, wilt vow with me,
To share through danger's hour, through sunny days—
What mean those tears?

JOAN. I know not more than thou.
Some pang inexplicable called them forth,
Waked, it may be, by some prophetic feeling.
The soul hath intimations of the future,
Sep'rate from all corporeal impressions,
And now, perhaps, some hov'ring spirit whispers
That in my parting hour thou wilt be near me,
And the unbidden drops that fill my eyes
Will then be welcomed in thine own. Promise
Thou'lt lay me in a grave whose mould is free.

Du N. So Heaven be true to me! I thought to pledge
Another, happier vow. My spirit's chill'd,
And the bright hope just called to life is faded.
Footsteps approach. Farewell.

[Exit.

Enter BERTHA.

BER. Why here alone?
Why, when thy hopes have nearly gained their height,
Is thus thy cheek so pale, thy look so pensive?

JOAN. Hast thou then never felt that bliss approached
So near as just to meet the grasp, becomes
Extreme of pain?

BER. May not a softer cause—
Turn not thy cheek away—some noble knight—

JOAN. The dove of my desire may find no place
On earth to rest her chilled and weary foot.
I feel that Heaven has marked me from my kind,
From social life, from all endearing ties,
And dare not harbour thought of tender bliss.

BER. Banish the fear, and with myself believe
The treasures of thy heart shall be the prize
Of kindred worth.

JOAN. My lot is cast, and lone
I must pursue my path till it be ended.
For common love too proud,—too mean, alas!
To win such love as only could delight me.
Above e'en kindred ties, whose modest worth
I prize, but no assimilation find,
The gushing tide of fond affection checked,
I boundless pour upon my native land;
But no returning stream the waste supplies,
To make me richer for the theft from self.

BER. No common love is seeking thy acceptance—
Look at yon banner, waving in the wind.
Ah, wherefore start? How at the sudden sight
Of ought connected with the form we love,
The conscious heart stops in its full career!
Pale grows the cheek, but swift through ev'ry vein
The blood with force accelerated speeds,
And dyes with crimson blush the pallid skin.

JOAN. Fled from the precincts of my heart the secret
Which I had hoped e'en from myself to hide.
O traitor heart! why hast thou failed me thus?

BER. Wherefore hath anguish thus o'erspread each feature?

JOAN. Condemn me not. Would thou couldst read this breast!
Here no emotion dwells thou couldst reprove.
As angels view the charge to them consigned,
As o'er their forms with outstretched wings they lean,
Speechless with love, and only bent to serve
The appointed object of their holy vigils,
So I his form behold, such feeling share.

BER. Why should I censure thee, sweet friend, for that
Which is but honour to himself, as thee,
And marks the worth of both? Such love as thine—

JOAN. Oh no! I dare not, cannot call it love.
As well might the poor wren, that nestles there,
Become enamoured of the mountain bird,
As I fond thought of him might entertain.

BER. Nay, say not so: 'tis no offence to love.
Doth not the woodbine climb the loftiest tree,
With fond endearment clasp its stately trunk,
Smile midst its boughs, and shed her soft perfume
In token of delight, and fear no frown,
No censure for her daring?

JOAN. Soothing words
Fall like the dew upon the sterile soil,
Mocking the want it never can supply—
I am what I must be—he e'er the same.

BER. Thou art unjust to him as to thyself,
Bride of Du Nois.

JOAN. Du Nois! Thou art deceived.
Not he,—alas! I have betrayed myself.

BER. I see it now. O'er his a prouder ensign
Waves wide its ampler folds—the staff of France,—
The royal Charles has gained.

JOAN. Oh! do not frown.
Nought harbours in this breast that may provoke
Or scorn from him, or just rebuke from thee.
Yet have I shrunk from ev'ry eye, and now
I shrink from thine—think not unkindly of me,
And spare allusion to this painful hour.

[*Exit.*]

BER. No, no, it cannot be. She doth mistake.
Love is no passion in her breast. It is
But sentiment refined, sustained and fed
By her own heart; the offspring of events,
Wherein so strange a part she hath performed.
Her country is her idol, centre, hope:
She knows no other passion but this one—
The love of her own land.

SCENE V.—*Interior of the Cathedral of Rheims.—The Coronation.*

ARCHBISHOP. CHARLES. JOAN.

ARCH. Faithful the promise.
'Twas spoke, 'tis done. France now demands her king;
Scion of ancient root, hope of her line:
And here in sight of her assembled chiefs,
'Tis mine to set this crown upon thy head,
And with this oil, from Heaven first brought, anoint thee.

JOAN. Stand I indeed on earth? Is this no dream?

ARCH. Mark well the circle which must bind thy brow!
Emblem of ceaseless duty and reward.
Look on these gems—so be thy virtues bright.
Tears from thy people drawn, by ill-stretched power,
Will dim their lustre; while the grateful smiles,
By kindness waked, will brilliancy impart,
And show that Heaven approves and dwells with thee—
A curse or blessing shall this circlet prove,
Fetters in hell, a fadeless crown in heaven.

[*The crown is placed on the head of Charles.*]

Sound the loud trumpet! Let the organ's swell
Re-echo through these walls! Long life to Charles!
Joy to the rightful, to the usurper shame!

JOAN. I cannot pray: bliss hath engrossed my soul,
And wrapt each sense in agony of joy.

ARCH. Approach, and pay your just allegiance.

[*The nobles involuntarily draw back and make way
for Joan, who throws herself at the king's feet.*]

JOAN. My sovereign liege—my king—accept—these tears.

CHA. Here to my heart I clasp thee, friend, preserver.
This chain shall bind thee to thy king, thy country—

[*Takes the chain from his neck and places it on Joan's.*]

Wear it in token of this hour—

JOAN. My liege!
When it shall be restored, 'twill tell that life
And I are parted. (*To the Archbishop.*) Now complete my mission.
Here at thy feet, sword, banner, I depose,
And consecrate his own to Him who armed

At first my hand.

ARCH. The lofty strains repeat!
And with the monarch's name, beloved, now join
The holy maiden's.

[*Joan sinks on her knee.*]

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Council.*

CHARLES, &c. JOAN.

CHA. A monarch now confirmed by holy rite,
Our earliest duty is to recompense
All those who in our cause have been most zealous.
Thee above all, (*to Joan,*) to thee our realm we owe.
We would thy merit mark as may become
Ourself and thee: but pause to name award
As to thyself shall be most pleasing. Louvel,
'Tis thine to learn her wish, our joy to grant it.

LOU. Such gracious speech may well embolden thee.
Name freely thy desire. Is wealth thy wish?

CHA. How her eye kindles!

JOAN. Sell my heart's blood for gold!
Hazard each desperate chance, die ev'ry hour,
Deprive poor nature of her due, food—rest,
Make the vile flesh lord of the daring mind,
For sordid heaps of dross! Perish the thought!
I am not to be bought e'en by my country—
Toil, hardship, life, all she approved in me,
A free gift was bestowed, and must remain—
If she the present scorn, I scorn them too.

LOU. Then, wherefore, peril life? Hope of reward,
The state's high honours, riches, rank, and greatness,
Justly make spirits bold, and wake brave action.

JOAN. The voice of Heaven first drew me from obscurity,
And no reward I seek but its approval.
Oh! never, for the hope of gain, could I
Have served my country. Claims she not by right,
All love, disinterested faith, all service?
Not hers the debt to recompense her sons,
Though, like fond mother, she delights to grant it;
But theirs the debt of gratitude first due
To her, which only thus can be discharged.
Then mark eternal shame upon his brow,
Though brave his deeds, though prodigal of toil,
Who honour, glory, high renown, or wealth,
Seeks for himself alone, and sheds the blood
She justly claims for selfish hope or aim.

LOU. Ambition is the offspring of all hearts
In which a germ of noble passion dwells.
None who in secret feel themselves above
The sphere of those with whom they move, but sighed
For greatness—rank.

JOAN. What is it to be great?

To live in tapestried halls, beneath gay domes,
To sleep on beds of down, eat costly food,
Midst trembling slaves, who watch the stern command;
To call those friends who bow and cringe and fawn,
And flatter loud the vice they should condemn?
This is dependence, nought but servile pomp,
And this I scorn. To rise above the wants
Of this low state, to hold each appetite
In justest bounds, in native freedom both
Of mind and frame to dare all ills but vice,
And fear no danger but a tainted name;
Glory's own self to love, and not th' applause
Which follows open-mouthed amongst her train;
To walk the earth as one whose home is heaven,
And prizing life, yet view in death a friend,
Or clothed in frowns, or robed in smiles,—this, this
Alone is to be great:—then needs there rank
To make me such?

ALEN. The brave lives not for to-day.
He thinks of generations yet to come,
And trusts his ashes e'en will speak his praise,
And bid his memory live.

JOAN. No eye must read,
On tablet proud, what recompense were mine,
Lest it mistake the cause which prompted me.
In history's living page let me appear,
Simply as Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans.

CHA. And wilt thou have it seen in that same page
Thy king ungrateful proved?

JOAN. Stain thy fair name!

CHA. Then be our will obeyed, and this day's grant,
In rank, as erst in deed, shall make thee noble.
Countess of Lys, with fair demesnes and wide,
Assume thy proper seat, and grace a court
Which yet upon thyself confers no lustre—
To night a splendid fête we give, and there
Thy king, and all who honour him, shall show
Their just respect.

[Rises. Joan throws herself at his feet.]

JOAN. My leige.

CHA. What wouldst thou? Speak.

JOAN. Forgive my suit. Oh! deem me not ungrateful:—
Cancel the word, and let me sink again
Into obscurity.

CHA. It cannot be.
Still with our host remain, and lead us forth
To victory. Of this anon. Pleasure
Now claims the hours. All here must join the fête.

SCENE II.—*Palace.*

ALENÇON. DU NOIS.

ALEN. Met in good time! If I may augur right,
The maid, our nation's pride, will need, ere long,
Support from her best friends.

DU N. What hath she done?

ALEN. Awoke the bitter malice of the base,
Who dare not emulate a noble deed,
And feel its just reward their own reproach.

Du N. That she is envied can provoke no wonder;
Nothing may shine without attendant shade:
But that she yielded to receive such honour,
This indeed surprises me.

ALEN. It need not.
Hardly the point was gained, if gained at all:
Still she entreats permission to depart,
Lowly as when she left her native vale.

Du N. And what is there in this to waken malice?
Whose heart is large enough to envy it?

ALEN. You do forget, no words give more offence
Than those which mark the speaker's higher worth.
Her noble sentiments this day expressed,
Have wrought her many foes; nor does the fête,
Proposed this eve, yield greater satisfaction.

Du N. The news I bring must break upon these joys:
I seek the king, and must not pause a moment!

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter VALANCOUR.

VAL. He here! and wherefore come? To own his love,
No doubt, since now in rank she equals him.
There's madness in the thought! Accursed chance!
Why did I slight the counsel Richemont gave,
Withheld by paltry fears of blighted honour!
Shall I turn villain? disappoint his hopes?
I want the resolution to be base,
Yet have not courage to be just.

SCENE III.—*Gardens illuminated.*

XAINTRAILLES. LORDS.

FIRST LORD. What vain extravagance! None may deny
That she hath served the state; but truest service,
Suppose hers such, may yet be overpaid.

SECOND LORD. Others have nobly planned, and nobly fought;
But all their glory is eclipsed in hers.
I sicken of the name!

XAINT. For shame! true glory
Never can be eclipsed. Is not yon planet
Distinct in its own splendour, though the moon
Sheds more and brighter beams? Well hath she earned
The honour she receives: a soul like hers
Has nature's patent, fairer than a monarch's.

FIRST LORD. Soon will she feel she hath uneasy place
Among the nobles of the land, and find
Wide difference between a court and camp.

XAINT. Away with such surmise! Let us not mar
The gay festivities by churlish murmurs.
Many our toils to come, and if we slight
The present, pleasure in despite may shun us.

Enter VALANCOUR and BERTHA.

BER. Urge me no more.

VAL. Nay, hear what I would say.
Such is the madness of my passion for her,
She must, and shall be mine! and thou must aid me!

This night decides my fate!

BER. Oh! ask me not!

VAL. In tears! and why? Loves she then another?

BER. Look not so wildly!

VAL. Speaks she of Du Nois!

BER. Who does not speak of him! the brave! the noble!

VAL. She loves him, then?

BER. I said not so!

VAL. What trifling!
Has then Du Nois declared?

BER. I may not break
The confidence reposed in me.

VAL. Most cruel!
Wilt thou do nought for me? Hast thou forgot
A brother, once my friend?

BER. Alas! that name,
I may not dare withstand!—begone! Oh! spare me!

VAL. Thou wilt comply then? Go—I'll wait thee yonder.
[Exit BERTHA.]

Enter RICHEMONT and Attendant.

RICHE. Thou knowst the wretch who followed us
When late we passed to Baugenci?

ATT. But now I saw her.

RICHE. Lead her hither.
[Exit Attendant.]

VAL. Earl Richemont here!

RICHE. He is!
But would be known by none. Thou hast my secret:
Silence I demand!

VAL. It is thine, but much
I marvel to behold—

RICHE. The sovereign's scorn
Infects thee, then?

VAL. None owns respect
More deep than I; my wonder only rose
To see thee here, whom I believed in Normandy;—
So the maid besought!

RICHE. The maid besought!
Is insult then annexed to gross injustice?
The charge was mean enough, without such aid.
Where will the folly end? But well it suits
With that which now so speedily will follow.
Thou hast companion been in arms, and fought
With Orleans' bastard son, and knowst, no doubt,
That he, forsooth, must shortly play the fool,
And wed, to please the royal will, the maid.
The prospect charms thee, sure!

VAL. (The royal will,
It is his own request! *aside.*) The proud Du Nois?
It cannot be. Not so. (Has hell worse torture? *aside.*)

RICHE. Du Nois! the proud, unbending, stern Du Nois!
He with Alençon now is with the king,
On weighty news from Compeigne, which he brings:
The governor beseeches instant aid,
And who but the redoubted maid must lead it?

VAL. She has resigned her arms, and has declared
Her mission closed.

RICHE. What then? she may be gained,
And will be gained. Who trusts a woman's word,
Which varies with her varying mood? The hand
Of Count Du Nois will be the recompense
Of her consent; and is not this a prize
To tempt the breaking of a word she ne'er
Intended to observe? If this concern thee,
Meet me at midnight by yon temple. (Fool!
He yet shall prove a useful instrument. *Aside.*)

[*Exit.*

VAL. Some fiend, but just escaped his doom, hath cast
His brand into my heart. Whom do I see?
Herself and Bertha! In this shade I'll hide me,
And there from her own lips the truth discover.

Enter JOAN *and* BERTHA.

JOAN. Forbear!

BER. Hear me. Where native worth exists,
Esteem will surely kindle into love,
And gently ripen into purest bliss!

JOAN. Beware that fallacy. The solemn vow,
Before the altar pledged, but sanctifies
The love which first was gendered in the heart,
But ne'er creates; a golden link to bind
The fonder heart—a chain that galls the cold!

BER. But thou wert born to bless! ay, to be blessed!
A heart like thine must find—

JOAN. I do believe
That nought on earth may hold fond thought from me.
The love which in another would have nourished
What most it prized, has but in me proved fatal,
And wrought its ruin.

BER. Thou dost chase a shade,
To wither ev'ry flower within thy path.
No bliss can rise through him, while Valancour—

JOAN. I cannot love, and therefore will not wed him.
What noise was that?

VAL. Cursed be the ear that heard,
The tongue that uttered such determination.
I'll hear no more! Now, hate, revenge befriend me.

[*Exit.*

BER. 'Twas but the rustling of the scattered leaves,
Or bird disturbed. Ah! tears are in those eyes,
And I perhaps the cause. Come, chase past thought
By sweet enjoyment of this lovely scene.
Sound, fragrance, air, celestial seems, and wakes
A gentle bliss.

JOAN. I'm sick at heart: the bird
Hath lost its melody, the flower its scent,
Creation's self to me is now a blank.

BER. That tone! those words! say, what has caused this change?

JOAN. The agony the firmest e'en must feel,
Who having crushed, with desperate hand, his bliss,
Stands o'er the wreck, and in destruction reads
What he has lost. I leave for Domremie
To-morrow.

BER. Leave the court! refined society?

JOAN. Society has charms alone for one
Whose heart's at ease. All converse to the sad
Is as the pressure of the felon's fetter,
Pricking the deadened sense to active pain.
The glare of lights, gay sounds, and voice of men,
Mock misery's sense, and shock as knell of death.

BER. Can lonely woods and dells restore then peace?

JOAN. Alas! I may not so deceive myself.
Too well I know what I must soon endure.
My charm of life is gone. My full, bold pulse
Has learnt to swell with mighty hopes, my mind
On food of such excitement has been fed,
That common, quiet life will be a load
Too heavy for endurance. Mem'ry too
Will goad with bitter thoughts!

BER. Oh! say not so;
Joy is the rainbow of this weeping life,
From deepest gloom of sorrow first awoke:
But mem'ry is that secondary arch
Where each bright shade is seen distinct and clear,
Though softened and subdued, and dear to sight,
As faithful copy of the dearer truth.
Be but thyself—forget but him!

JOAN. Forget!
As clings the woodbine to the new-felled tree,
I cling to him, though not a hope remains.
But how shall I forget? My very prayers
Are holy thoughts of him. Leave me awhile.

BER. I obey thee. Ah, why should this be so?
Alas! the heart is e'er a wayward thing,
Loving too oft that most which loves it not.

[Exit.

JOAN. For the last time I see you, beauteous scenes!
The last! oh, word of heaviest sense,
Where all that's lovely finds one common grave.
Light footsteps soon shall tread these gay parterres,
And sighs, but not like these, shall mingle bliss
With bliss. None will regret me here; the proud
Who envied, or the brave who shared my fame,
Alone will recollect that I have lived.
And he!—he'll never give one thought on me
When I am gone:—the great, the beautiful
Will share his smiles, or soothe his cares, while tears
Shall stagnate in these eyes; and lovely forms
Shall charm his gaze, when the pale eye of night
Alone shall view the spot where I am laid,
And weep for me.

Enter WIDOW.

WID. Where dost thou speed so fast?
Shall not the net be spread in vain before
The simple bird, and wilt thou rush to peril?
Seest thou yon star? Observe how dim it shines,
How its wan disk is overspread with spots.
Those spots are blood!—that fading star thine own!
Fainter and fainter still it quivers.—Now
'Tis gone! I've cast thy horoscope, and read
Thy fate is linked with mine! Beware thee, maiden!
If e'er on earth we meet again, 'twill be—

To meet the spectre king.

[*Exit.*

JOAN. What may this mean?
Awe steals upon my mind, and my faint heart
Beats heavily!

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATT. Haste! the king calls thee!
The council is assembling—danger presses.

JOAN. Hath then the unchanging voice of destiny
Indeed been heard, and I and death in league?
He hath bade farewell—shall I refuse?—no!—
Protect me, Heaven!—Lead on!

SCENE IV.—*Gardens.*

RICHEMONT. ATTENDANT.

RICHE. Hast found the wretch?

ATT. She stands hard by.

RICHE. Summon her!
I must be rid of thee, maid of Orleans!
The cup or poniard were an easy way!
But this were simple vengeance—poor revenge!
Disgrace! yes infamy must stain her glory,
Shame, public hate. But much I fear her firmness,
High belief of Heaven's consenting will.
Yet shall she yield! To Compeigne, not to Domremie
Must she depart. The hag must aid me then.
Persuade her to depart—their meeting known,
Shall stamp suspicion first of foulest crime;
And in the event of victory or defeat
Shall work her ruin!

Enter WIDOW.

WID. Am I then so near him?
Lie still, my heart, lest these convulsive throbbings
Mar my last wish.

RICHE. Time wears—dares she delay?
(*perceives her.*) I sent for thee.

WID. And I, at risk of life,
Am come. What wouldst thou have from me?

RICHE. Respect.

WID. I give it where 'tis due: never where not.

RICHE. Wretch! knowst of what thou art accused?—of arts
Which make obedient slaves and friends of devils.

WID. And thou of hell's worst crimes—of pride, of murder.
Richemont, I know thee, who thou art and what!
Put up thy ready dagger; I despise it—
Ay, mock thy wrath! my misery is my safeguard;
None care, not even thou, to murder one
Who would most gladly die!

RICHE. What thus unnerves
My arm and chains my tongue?

WID. Thy wishes too,
Thy aim I know. The maid has roused thy hate,

And thou wouldst work her fall:—'tis worthy thee.
There is no need of aiding hand of thine—
Her lamp burns dim, to utter darkness dim.

RICHE. (*aside*. Ha! that were worth belief! but true or false
They must be seen together, and report
Be spread the fiend himself had tempted her.)
Not hate, mine is good will. France needs her arm,
Yet doth she hesitate. Go, seek her quick!
(I will secure thee,) win her to comply,
And richly paint the glory which awaits her.

WID. Thinkst thou that she will heed what I might say?
She cannot if she would; none may avoid
Their fated hour!—thine too is fixed, and mine!
And, oh, that it were come!

RICHE. Dost thou refuse?

WID. I neither do refuse nor promise thee;
My inclination is my law, and mark!
None else will I obey.

RICHE. Dost seek a bribe?
If hunger pinch, or thirst provoke desire,
This purse—

WID. Perish thy gold! back with thy dross!
Nor dare again insult the misery
That thou and thine have wrought. I called thee murderer!
And such thou art! Will gold redeem the dead?
Bribe the cold grave? Have these poor weeds so changed me,
Has frenzy so deformed what once was fair,
That recollection of me has escaped thee?
Then thus I'll shriek into thy ears—I was
Camouse's wife—was mother of his sons;
Those sleepers in the bloody grave thou gav'st them.
What am I now?—suspected and a wanderer!
Am mad—and worse than all,—I know I'm mad!
Look not on me—thy glance inflames my brain,
And dries the curses on my parched tongue
I long have sought to utter to thy face.
Blasted of Heaven! I will not meet thee more
Till I shall meet thee *there*. (*pointing to heaven*.)

[*Exit WIDOW.*]

RICHE. Ho! seize the wretch!
And let fierce tortures—gone!—still do I hear her—
Still I shudder. Is conscience then no tale
To frighten coward hearts, and is there truth
In retribution?

Enter VALANCOUR.

Ha! what has delayed thee?

VAL. But now I've left the council.

RICHE. The result!
The maid! has she then consented?

VAL. She has!

RICHE. 'Twas sure she would; and yet I guess not easily.

VAL. Compliance was most hardly wrung from her.
Remonstrance, argument, entreaty failed:
Her constant answer was—"What Heaven gave charge
To do, is done—I may no more essay
In warrant of his will." In vain Du Nois
Appealed to love of martial fame: she heard,
Though not unmoved, yet resolutely firm:
But when the king, half angered, turned away
Half sorrowful, and thus reproachful said,

"Then thou too wilt desert me in my need,"
Sudden she stayed her step, (for she was passing,)
One look inexplicable cast on him,
Then springing to his feet she sobbed convulsed,
"Though all the world desert thee will not I!"—
She leaves at dawn.

RICHE. Du Nois?

VAL. Will follow us.
Xaintrailles, myself, are ordered to attend her.

RICHE. Fortune doth smile on thee! the friend of both,
Sharer of their toils!—needs of their felicity:
The foe dispersed, the nuptial feast succeeds,
And grateful to thy heart the thought, thy arm,
Thy blood their fondest, gentlest wishes aided.

VAL. Forbear, my lord! the subject is no jest.

RICHE. What envy thou wilt raise! Friendship's just claims
Must too be thine—to aid in his espousals.

VAL. (*aside.*) He racks my heart.

RICHE. First in his train appear
With smiling face, yielding alone to him
In bliss.

VAL. No more.

RICHE. What joy to hear the vow
That makes her his, and read the rapt'rous look
Returned.

VAL. Hold! hold! she never shall be his!

RICHE. Then heed the counsel I have given thee.

VAL. It is too late.

RICHE. A better chance awaits thee;
She meets the foe!—meets!—when shall she return?

VAL. Dip my hand in blood of her! I cannot.

RICHE. Nor hast thou need. Du Nois must be detained:
My former counsel take. Thou knowst the plan.
Urge the attack—lead where escape is none!

VAL. My soul recoils at such a damned deed!

RICHE. Then play the gentler part—attune the lyre,
Forthwith prepare thy gayest suit—be first
To hail her bride of Count Du Nois! I leave thee,
Fully to enjoy the blissful prospect.

[*Exit* RICHEMONT.]

VAL. Fierce madness fires my brain! Assist me, Heaven,
Or, better still, ye fiercest spirits aid me,
Bride of Du Nois! myself despised, or worse,
Pitied perhaps by both! held in contempt
By Richemont too, and taunted for my weakness!
Sooner shall earth engulph, or lightnings blast me!
Farewell remorse!—farewell to pity!

[*Exit.*]

WIDOW *at the back.*

WID. No!
Not by such villainy shall her career
Be ended. I'll follow her, and save her!

As sent from thee.

[*Exit.*

JOAN. We must not lose such friend,
Nor let his gallant bearing shame ourselves!

XAINT. None here dispute thy wish: lead on!

[*Exeunt.*

Enter DU NOIS, &c. &c.

DU N. She's lost
If but a single step she venture further.
Tenfold the force the enemy assembles.
A rescue!

[*Exit* DU NOIS.

Enter VALANCOUR.

VAL. To the trench! Mark well the signal;—
Let the enemy approach—then retreat—
The gates that ope to us will close to her.

Enter WIDOW.

WID. Back! ye proceed no further!

VAL. Who art thou?

WID. One who will be obeyed!

VAL. What chains your feet?
Pass on!

WID. Ye pass not here, unless ye force
A passage through my heart.

VAL. Then take thy fate.
So perish all hell's crew! Forward! secure her!

WID. And thou art come at last, O lovely death!
And I shall die as died my lord, my boys,
By bloody sword! there's joy in that. Strength fails,
Yet must I see her.

Enter JOAN, &c.

Stay!

JOAN. Thou on this field!
Release thy hold! one moment lost we lose
A friend!

WID. A foe! tool of a baser villain!
He seeks thy death. A weary way I've sped
To gain thy speech, and now life ebbs so fast—
See! they have pierced my side—that scarce the tale—
Richemont has sold thy life, and Valancour—
I told thee, if we met—

[*Dies.*

JOAN. Man, man abandons me,
Not Heaven! we are betrayed, but not by thee!
And see! the beauteous bow his hand hath bent,
And token made of peace, where mercy sits
To smile away despair. My spirit's free,
And my heart beats as formerly 'twas wont.
Forward, ye brave! Remember Orlean's walls,
And let us pluck, if not the conqueror's crown,
A wreath to deck the grave our land shall hallow.
For the last time, Xaintrailles, wilt follow me?

XAINT. Wherever thou shalt lead—be it to death!

[*Exeunt.*

Enter ENGLISH OFFICERS *and* SOLDIERS.

Make prisoner of the maid! touch not her life
Unless compelled. Ne'er quail and look aghast!
She waves no consecrated banner now!
See Valancour retreats!—now hem her round.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter XAINTRAILLES *and* JOAN.

XAINT. Thou'rt wounded!

JOAN. Heed it not! tarry no longer;
'Tis of slight moment. Du Nois!—this faintness—
Leave me here. Cut through thy way to join him,
And all may yet be well!

XAINT. 'Tis our last chance.

JOAN. Save him, Heaven! never more shall I behold him!
Oh! I am faint almost to death!

[*Leans on a tree.*

Enter ENGLISH OFFICERS *and* SOLDIERS.

OFF. 'Tis she!
Yield thee our prisoner!

JOAN. Never whilst strength
Remains. (*Shields herself.*)

OFF. Seize her!

JOAN. Stand off! nor dare to touch me!
My life, if Heaven have so decreed, be yours;
Free have I lived! free will I die!

[*As she is beaten on her knees* VALANCOUR *enters.*

VAL. Forbear!

JOAN. It is too late! deserved I this? I pardon—
[*Faints—the Soldiers bear her off.*

Enter DU NOIS.

DU N. Turn, traitor! villain!
Stand on thy guard!

VAL. Seekst thou revenge!—'tis thine!
Here in the shout that rings upon my ear,
Here in the glance that curst me with forgiveness.
I will not fight with thee, Du Nois! nor will
I face an honourable man again.

[*Exit.*

DU NOIS. Go to thy fate!
While I will never sheathe this sword till I
Have rescued or avenged her!

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

CHARLES. LOUVEL. BERTHA.

CHA. We need no supplication from a friend:
Thine own desire to pluck her from such fate
Is not more strong than ours. But what devise?

LOU. In truth, your grace, I know not what to urge.

BER. Thou wilt not leave her! Make not one attempt!

LOU. Pardon, my liege, the vehemence of grief:
Terror will oft, unconscious of offence,
Start forth before respect.

BER. Oh! forgive me.

CHA. Shame on the heart that needs excuse for words
Drawn forth by sudden anguish. Banish fear.
If aught within our power can rescue her,
No matter what the cost, she shall be freed!
Ourself will write to Bedford.

LOU. But in vain.

CHA. That shall be proved. The offer we will make,
E'en policy like his may scorn the slighting.
Retire;—rely upon thy monarch's word:—
Doth this not comfort thee?

BER. Alas! the hope
Such promise brings burns bright, but quickly dies!

CHA. And is our honour doubted?

BER. No, my liege,
The fault lies here. I would, but cannot smile,
Yet bless thee for the hope which finds no home.

[Exit.

CHA. Prepare a faithful messenger, and charge
He give the packet into Bedford's hands.
Lose not a moment—this concerns us much.
If by her loss or death our crown we buy,
Would that our brow had never felt its pressure.

[Exit.

LOU. No; never here must she return. My own
Disgrace or death would be the consequence.
I dread her growing influence with the king,
The evil will of disappointed minds,
Who now exult in her captivity.
Yet hath she borne the glory she has won
With such humility—so well hath won it.
So little love of self hath ever shown;
And with such noble heart distinctions waved,
Which others would have sold a soul to purchase.
No matter—when Ambition wakes, then Justice
And Pity too must sleep. No packet leaves
These walls, nor intercessions reach thee.

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Keep at Rouen.*

BEDFORD. BEAUVAIS.

BEAU. But good, my lord, the interest of the state—
Justice demands.

BED. I question not the policy—
No, nor justice of the step: be it so;
It is enough for me, my word is pledged.

BEAU. But pledged to whom? a guilty, low-born woman.

BED. Whether to monarch or to slave, all one,
'Tis pledged, and I'll not break it. Honour fled
From common breasts, must shelter in the noblest.

BEAU. (*Aside.* Proud, haughty prince!) Why generous by halves?
Why not then grant her all,—ease, liberty,
With means again to lord it over those
Whose path 'tis outrage she should dare to cross?
Richemont hath offered well, and reasoned wisely.

BED. And wouldst thou move me to a coward's deed
To soothe his wounded vanity? Shame on 't!
Talk of ambition, love of fame, revenge,
Aye, e'en of avarice, and call them selfish,
Prodigal of life, cruel; why vanity,
That vice of little minds, out-tops them all!
Cold, selfish, marble-hearted vanity!
Whose god is self, whose greedy appetite,
Fed still on self, is gorged but never full.
Never again shall she behold the light
Of sun. I promised life on one condition—
That she be never clad in armour more.
That condition honoured—she shall live.

BEAU. Broken?

BED. She shall die.

[*Exit.*

BEAU. Then hast thou sealed her doom. Richemont
I thank thee for the hint.

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the same.—Two Soldiers bearing
Armour.*

FIRST SOL. What does it mean?

SECOND SOL. What mean!—that she must die,
And some new charge too must be found against her,
Let her but wear this once again, and—

FIRST SOL. Folly!
How's this to tempt her?

SECOND SOL. How! Do we not hang
The captive linnnet who denies to sing,
In sight of his own fields and native woods,
To cheat him into song?

FIRST SOL. A cursed deed
Is this, and 'tis the curse of villany
To be a villain's tool—an honest man
Had ne'er received such charge.

SECOND SOL. Fool—lay it down.
See what dents are in this breastplate!—observe
How bloody 'tis within: a foul wound.—

FIRST SOL. Peace!
A choking's in my throat, a swelling here
I might mistake for pity, if, damned thought,
Pity and I had not too long been strangers.
The prey comes!—See, the tiger's to his lair!

Enter BEAUVAIS.

BEAU. Begone. (*Exit* SOL.) She hath withstood all former trials.
All fails to move her. Weary hours I've passed
Within her dungeon, urging all arguments,
Painting all horrors, sundry deaths to fright her.
Confession she denies—all ghostly aid,
(Sold though to hell,) and all reproof rejects.
Baffled as yet in each attempt to snare her,
This shall succeed, or be she fiend or woman.

Enter JOAN.

[BEAUVAIS *conceals himself.*

JOAN. What may this mean? Hath pity touched their breast?
Why has the dungeon's gloom been changed for light
That cheers, for air that wakens life, not chills?
Oh, beauteous light! oh, sweet and balmy breeze!
Thy Maker's smile, thy Maker's breath art thou,
And I am in His presence. Tears! the dungeon
Scarce forced one drop, one sigh of sorrow;
But now for very happiness I weep.
Surely I never felt till now the luxury
That conscious being can confer. Oh, death!
I've looked upon thee till thy form's familiar;
E'en till thy ugliness had almost vanished,
So well hath darkness and thyself agreed;
But now this gentle gale, these sunny beams,
This perfumed scent of flowers do tell a tale
Of home—of loved companions, and I sigh
To be, as I was once, a joyous child;
Although I would not live my life again
For all that sight or smell or hope could offer.
And, hark! the sound of trumpet clanging shrill—
I hear the tramp of martial feet—of horse!
My spirit bursts these walls! My country's voice
Is echoed in that swell, and my full heart
Heaves with tumultuous force to answer her.
Hours of past glory, are ye gone for ever?
Crowd ye upon my mind alone to torture me,
Or are ye pledge of wonders yet to come?
Ha!—armour here!—would that—it is my own!
Welcome, thrice welcome!—But how dimmed its brightness!

[BEAUVAIS *advances.*

And the vile spider's cast her web across it.
Off, off, and let me wipe this rust away.
I gaze, and the whole field is now before me—
Proud steeds and gallant forms, war's panoply!
Oh! happy hours, when thus I clasped thee on me—
Thus kneeling, prayed for thee, my king, my country,
Thus rising bade—defiance to the foe!

BEAU. Offspring of hell, accursed, shame of thy sex!
Incorrigible wretch! Guards, to the council,
Thus arrayed, conduct her. Hence!

JOAN. Oh! hear me!

BEAU. Not if thou wert to plead.

JOAN. I plead for nought.
Think not, howe'er, I cannot now decipher
What thy malice had suggested. I see it;
See it and pity thee.

SCENE IV.

COUNCIL. BEDFORD. BEAUVAIS, &C. &C. JOAN.

BED. Advance!
Thou knowest the conditions upon which

Thy life was spared—thou hast presumed to break them—
Thine are the consequences. Found in arms,
A rebel's doom deferred now justly waits thee.

JOAN. That I have erred, I own with deepest sorrow;
But 'twas through weakness: with like justice might
The poor, fond bird, unwitting of deceit,
Be blamed because it fell into the snare
The cunning fowler laid for its destruction.
It was a cruel deed—but let it pass:
Not so thy charge of rebel—I repel it.
Here silence would be guilty fear—not innocence.
Who rears his country's standard 'gainst the foe—
'Gainst the usurper, claims a nobler epithet.
The God of heaven approves the patriot's aim,
And sanctifies the deed. Not mine, not mine
The traitor's guilt, the traitor's doom: I die,
As I have wish'd to die,—in proof, in seal
Of my fidelity.

BEAU. Think'st thus to die?
More weighty crimes deserve more weighty punishment.
Whence this boldness, unnat'ral to thy sex?
Whence but in strength of some infernal spell,
Of the foul prompting of some lying fiend?
Remember thy connexion with the hag
Who fell on Compeigne's field, men's awe of thee—
Confess the truth—declare what witchery used.

JOAN. What witchery used! the witchery which a mind,
Bent on one single project, can exert,
When fitting opportunity doth meet
The master-passion which has fed its fires:
That witchery, harsh man and most unjust,
By which insulted virtue makes thee crouch,
As now thou dost, beneath a prisoner's eye,
Though deemed forsaken and alone.

BED. No more!
Thou dost but aggravate the guilt too clear.
Hear thy dread sentence, and prepare to meet it—
Convicted of the cursed crime of witchcraft,
Thou diest at noon to-morrow.

BEAU. This subdues her.
The blood has left her cheek, and as a statue,
Transfixed, she stands. One might dispute she breathed
But for her quivering lip. See! she would speak,
But the words die.

JOAN. The bitter cup is full!
Believed a reprobate and leagued with hell,
My name, my memory held in destestation!
Die as accursed of Heaven! (*to BEAU.*) 'Tis false! most false!
And on thy head a deeper crime shall rest,
Than this so foul thou lay'st to me—the weight
Of guiltless blood. Thou may'st condemn me here;
But think, once more before the judgment-seat
Of Him who all shall judge, we must again
Each other meet. How wilt thou meet me there?
This charge unjust shall scathe thy shudd'ring soul,
And sight of me shall blast thy hopes of heaven.
Prince, thou'rt of gallant race.

BED. I'll hear no more.

JOAN. Oh! there are those who on this hour will think
With bitterness, when princely honour goes,
And noblest blood proves no defence.

BEAU. (*to Bed.*) She threatens!
Beware lest some malign, some fatal influence—

JOAN. Blind Man! the dumb e'en now have found a voice

To curb injustice. The poor worm itself
Will, by its very writhings, plead its wrongs,
And show the cruelty of him that crushed it.
Oh! not for life I plead—death hath no terror,
Existence scarce one charm to cheat my eyes.
Grant me the doom thou threat'st—nor passing sigh,
Nor murmur shall escape me; but to die
On this most monstrous charge! I kneel to thee
And thus would stir the soldier in thy breast,
The patriot, the upright man, if not the judge.

[*Kneels to* BEDFORD.]

BED. We owe the act in justice to ourselves
And to our veterans' arms.

JOAN. Welcome that thought. [Rises.
I have no more to ask: rightly thou sayst.
A woman's hand hath dimmed thy splendid name,
And writ upon thy soldier's brow—defeat,
And in a woman's blood wash out the stain.
But oh! injurious prince, of this be sure—
Thou never wilt regain what thou hast lost.
The land is free, her chain for ever broken;
Nor force of arms nor policy shall wrest
The sceptre from the hand that wields it now.
But hark! what means that agonizing shout,
That wail of lamentation, noise confused,
The braying of the battle? A frantic matricide
The mother is become, and drunk with blood
Of sons of France, now slakes unnat'ral thirst
In the red fountain of her children's veins—
Showing in all her cruelty and rage,
From whom she took the cup of retribution.
(*To Bedford.*) And thou, thou art disgraced—this unjust deed
Shall sully thy fair name to latest time—
Shall wrest from England's son a blush for thee—
A proud acquittal for myself.

SCENE V.

WARWICK. COUNTESS.

COUNT. Hail, lovely May!
Thou month of flowers, sweet hopes and rapt'rous song;
Young zephyrs kiss thy steps and scatter bliss.
But how! thou dost not answer, dost not heed me.

WAR. This cheerful sky ill suits this day's proceedings.
The maid this morning is condemned to die.

COUNT. Canst thou not save her? If my Warwick plead,
None may resist him.

WAR. Bedford, Burgundy,
Have not, my gentle Alice, hearts like thine.
As well might I essay to win, by words,
The ravening tiger to relax his hold,
When the first taste of blood is on his tongue,
As these to mitigate the maiden's doom.

COUNT. She must not die—so young, and, I could say,
Although it scents of war, so brave; and, ah!
Perhaps some gallant knight has won her heart.
It must be so! woman was born to love—
The mean, some mean companion to divide
Her joys; the noble, one than self more noble—
That heavy sigh!

WAR. A hateful task is mine.
The barbarous sentence I must see enforced.
Oh! would we were upon the banks of Avon!—

COUNT. Would that we were! my arm fast lock'd in thine,
Not clad in steel, but—

WAR. Hark! the bell has struck
That calls me to my duty.

COUNT. I did not hear it.
The wind, more kind than thou, has shook its wings,
And the unwelcome sound dispersed in pity.
Nay, thou mayst linger yet.

Enter ATTENDANT, followed by DUNOIS.

WAR. Whence this intrusion?

DU N. Bid him retire. (*Raises his vizor.*)

WAR. Du Nois! what madness brings thee?

DU N. That which hath turned the fate of empires, kings—
Mine now is in thy hands.

WAR. Explain. (I tremble.)

DU N. This is no time for words—less for concealment.
This day—a deed—

WAR. Oh, heaven!

DU N. What wouldst venture
For sake of yon sweet form should ill assail her?

WAR. My life were worthless in such cause.

DU N. Couldst see her
Dragged from thy arms to meet a horrid death?

WAR. Earth's potentates combined should fail to part us.

DU N. Warwick! there was a time when ice had bound
These lips, and easier 'twere to die than speak.
I felt ashamed it should be thought I loved;
But now, with equal agony and pride,
I own—I love.—

WAR. The maid! unhappy friend!

DU N. Thou hast not, then, forgot thy former pledge—
The pledge thou gav'st, when from my hands redeemed,
"Should ever need be thine—remember Warwick."
I claim it now.

WAR. Name ought I can concede,
But spare, oh, spare what honour must forbid
Du Nois to ask, or Warwick grant.

[Going,

DU N. Stay! hear me!
Give but the word, the countersign agreed,
And by the holy fount of truth I swear
No blood of thine shall flow this day through me.
Nay, more, if ought of blame attach to thee,
I swear to place myself in Bedford's power.
Let me not plead in vain. By all that justice,
By all that mercy, all that pity wakes,
By all that thou hast sworn of love to woman,
Grant my request!

WAR. Cease! cease! a cruel strife
Thou raisest in my breast.

[Countess kneels to WARWICK.

DU N. Ah! see who pleads!

Canst thou resist that look? By this joint act—

WAR. Du Nois, my Alice, rise—spare me this trial.

DU N. End this suspense.

WAR. It must not, cannot be.
Witness, O Heaven! what this denial costs.
But honour's laws forbid what feeling prompts—
The friend would grant—the soldier must deny.

[*Going, he returns.*]

Wouldst see her once again—here is my signet—
Thou needst not pity less than I. Farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

DU N. Cut off from ev'ry hope!—friend, foe alike—
Has Heaven itself forgotten to be just?
Oh, curse of courage, impotence of strength,
Panting to dare the worst, denied the means.
But I shall see her once again—Oh, joy!
Oh, agony! can ye indeed thus meet?

SCENE VI.—*Prison.*

JOAN.

JOAN. How in its terrors hath the tempest raged!
'Tis misery's privilege alone to hear
The crash of warring elements unmoved,
And coldly tranquil press the iron couch.
These drops are but the remnant of the storm,
Cast by the pitying spirit as he fled,
His work of vengeance done, his fury quenched.
So fall the tears of fond regret, that bathe
The mourner's cheek, when time hath partly soothed her;
Large but not frequent, sad but not acute,
Sure proof of anguish past, not sorrow nigh.
And see, the young dawn from the sable couch
Of her more ancient spouse, now softly steals,
All bright and lovely, though in tears bedewed,
Silent to watch the rising beams of him
Beneath whose glance she melts, but must not wed.
Her love is set too high, and night, all foul,
As he appears in her averted eyes,
Again shall clasp her in his chilly arms,
And loathing claim her his. Her fate is mine,
And death, cold death, the bridegroom by whose side
I soon shall rest.

Enter Du Nois.

DU N. This then is thy abode!
This iron bed thy couch, this straw thy pillow!

JOAN. Whose voice—

DU N. Knowst me not, Joan?

JOAN. Du Nois! thou here?
Oh say, what brings thee to this sad abode?
Alas! has evil too befallen thee?

DU N. The anguish of a mind that ne'er has learnt
To bear a load exertion may not soothe.
My life was set to see thee once again,
Though in the gloom, the horrors of a prison.

JOAN. Thou dost not deem me then accursed, forsaken,
Stained with foulest crime?

DU N. Thee cursed, forsaken!
Oh, yes! thou'rt cursed indeed with too much merit,
And greater crime is none.

JOAN. By thee acquitted!
Oh! happiness! oh! unexpected bliss!
I yet possess a friend!

DU N. (Burst, heart, thy bonds!)
Doth friendship's sacred garb clothe friendship only?
Recall the past, remember Orleans' walls,
The battles fought, the warring perils shared,
The blessings joined—how have I wounded thee?

JOAN. I stand upon the confines of the grave,
And must not, dare not think upon the past.
The reed hath bounds, and by the tempest spared,
May sink beneath an insect. I've borne much,
And this unlooked-for kindness overpowers me.
But one request.

DU N. Name it—give me some share
In thee, though in the giving it must cease.

JOAN. The seal of death is on me now. This chain, the king—
'Twill tell its own sad tale—but say to him—
No—down throbbing heart—farewell. Oh! leave me!
Yet let me gaze once more upon a friend,
Ere I and earthly comfort part for ever.
Thou'lt sometimes think of me when I am gone,
And midst the shouts of victory, perhaps,
Will hear the voice, will see the form of her
Who often shared those triumphs by thy side,—
Wilt mark the vacant place with kindly sorrow?
Once more I'll press this valiant hand—and then—
Farewell, for ever.

Enter COUNTESS.

COUNT. Du Nois.

DU N. Ha! who calls?

COUNT. Behold this scroll: here read what you would know.
Haste! haste! from Warwick I have stol'n unseen,
And trait'rous been to him whom most I love,
In love's own cause.

DU N. And thou, for this disloyalty,
Shall be absolved—this pure and holy act
Shall win approval e'en from Heaven itself,
And plead for thee when other deeds may fail thee.

COUNT. Blame not my Warwick for his stern resolve:—
Firm as he is, he has a tender heart.
Had not his face been buried in his arm,
To hide the tears he shed, I had not thus
Escaped him unperceived.

DU N. Yet is there hope.
Ah! say, couldst thou be plucked from this dread fate.

JOAN. Delude me not with erring thought of bliss,
Nor yet deceive thyself—ere morrow's dawn
The dews will bathe the spot where earthly suffering
Hath found an end. No hand, though brave as thine,
Can pluck me from it.

DU N. Never has it failed me,
Nor shall it fail me now—nay, doubt me not;
I swore to lay thee in a grave that's free—
Rouen is cursed by the usurper's foot,
And here thou shalt not die, so hear me Heaven!—
But not another moment may I linger.

Du N. By yonder church. The narrow turn must break
In part the line. Upon the signal given
Rush through the guards, promptly secure the maid,
And whilst confusion reigns we'll force a passage
To the eastern gate. I have already gained it.

XAINTE. The time?

Du N. The first deep toll of yonder bell.

XAINTE. Enough! all hearts are in the cause.

[*Exeunt.*]

Another part of the Street in front of the Prison.

Enter SPECTATORS.

FIRST SPECTATOR. What crowds collect! each avenue is filled,
And every street appears a solid mass:
E'en to the topmost ridge each house is crammed
With earnest gazers; not an eye but turns
Towards the black prison-walls; yet 'tis an hour
Ere the gates open for the sad procession.
Are scenes of death and agony so pleasant
That such a throng of eager witnesses
Should press to view them?

SECOND SPEC. Such a death is new,
And thoughts of men are differently moved.
Some deem the maid condemned a tool of hell,
And some a chosen instrument of Heaven.
Fain would they see which will assert its claim;
Whether the fiend will leave her to her fate,
Or some great miracle be worked to save her.

Enter several of Du Nois' FRIENDS.

FIRST VOICE. What sound is that?

SECOND VOICE. It is the abbey bell.
None can mistake its toll.

THIRD VOICE. It cannot be;
'Tis not the hour.

Enter XAINTRAILLES.

XAINTE. The governor suspecting
Treason perchance, or some attempt at rescue,
Has changed both hour and route. The walls are manned,
And every part is thronged with bristling spears.

[*The Procession partly seen in the distance.*]

Enter Du Nois.

Du N. Lose not an instant, or the maid is lost!
Hurry down yonder avenue: by this
We meet you at the church.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII.

Enter Du Nois.

Du N. The guards, it seems, suspected me, and made
Access impossible.

Enter XAINTRAILLES and others.

XAINTE. Turn, turn Du Nois!

Make for the eastern gate!

DU N. Is she then safe?

XAINT. It is no time for words: we must be gone.

DU N. Is the maid safe? I ask. Du Nois doth ask.

XAINT. Canst thou be ignorant?

DU N. Say on, or deep
Within thy breast—speak!

XAINT. Thy grasp doth choke me.
Release thy hold!

DU N. Now answer me, and quickly.
Where is the maid?

XAINT. Look on yon rising cloud:
Safe in its breast her spirit mounts to heaven,
That mercy to implore which man denied her.

[DU NOIS *sinks on his knee, and continues to watch
the cloud.*]

OFFICER *to* XAINT. How calm he is become!

DU N. One speck alone—
Now not a trace remains. (*rises.*) How died the maid?
Suppress no circumstance, no word, no look.

XAINT. Thou hast beheld her in the shock of battle,
Midst dangers calm, when stoutest bosoms shook.
Hast often seen, how in such fearful times,
She would upraise her speaking eyes to heaven,
And stand in silence, while her countenance
Reflected beams she thence appeared to catch;
Such was her bearing then. Her step was firm,
Yet modest, as might properly become
One, who in presence of her mighty Judge
Must quickly stand. Nor had her wonted smile
Forsook her lip, but lingered, loath to part,
Its former sweetness mixed with heavenly hope.
Nor scowling eye, (for savage looks were there,)
Nor piercing gaze, nor pity's tender glance,
Nor urgent priest's dire threats to fright or force
Confession from her lips, she heeded once:
Save when to the accursed pile fast bound,
He pointed to the smoking heap around her,
And bade her timely think what hotter flames
Awaited one who had been leagued with devils.
Then passed a sudden flash o'er her pale cheek,
And in those tones so often proved resistless,
"Blessed," she said, "is he who hath reserved
All judgment to himself. May thy injustice
Be forgotten when thou most needest mercy."
A hideous shout was raised—my blood with horror—

DU N. Thou couldst not longer look?

XAINT. I shuddering fled.
The sound of crackling blaze, the trumpet's wail,
The groan of thousands ringing in my ear,
In dread of what to thee—

DU N. And she is gone,
In ignorance of all I felt for her,
Or could have done! And nought remains of her
That I might see how lovely even death
Can show himself, when to the lovely joined;
Might cheat my soul awhile she did but sleep,
And seal a last, first kiss upon her brow!
Earth not a particle now holds of her,
O'er which these stranger drops might fall!

X_AINT.
Can this be so?

Du Nois!

Du N. I do not hide my face
Ashamed thou shouldst behold Du Nois can weep;
Or show how grief can bend e'en his stern spirit:
But when in after days you speak of this,
And I perchance have found a bloody grave,
Say, nought in life he dared, so awful seemed,
As sight of agony which wrung his heart,
And sank the soldier in the man.

X_AINT. Assist me.
Let's bear him hence.

THE END.

Joseph Rickerby, Printer, Sherbourn, Lanc.

The original text has been presented as such with the exception of minor punctuation corrections and formatting changes.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JOAN OF ARC: A
PLAY IN FIVE ACTS ***

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