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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DELUGE, AND OTHER POEMS ***

THE DELUGE AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JOHN PRESLAND

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"MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS," ETC.

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THE DELUGE

"The Sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair."—*Genesis* vi. 2.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

The Seeker after Truth
His Wife
His Mother
Chorus

SCENE I

The wife and the mother spinning

THE WIFE (*sings*)

Love, it is dark among your roses,
The face of the moon is turned away,
The nightingale is silent and lonely;
Lean from your window a little way!—

Lean but a little way towards me,
Out of the window where jasmines twine,
Open the lattice, softly, slowly,
Till the light of your eyes shall gladden mine.

Love, it is dark among your roses;
And how, since the nightingales are fled,
Can I tell your heart how my heart is lowly,
To touch the ground where your sandals tread?

This is your garden; these your flowers;
These stars have seen you; these dews have known;
And now your eyes and your smile you give me—
Give me your love, and be all mine own!

THE MOTHER

Sing that again, the music soothes my ear.

THE WIFE

My husband made it for me ere we wed,
And sang it in my garden; I arose
And leaned down to him, and my fingers gave
To all his kisses. Ah! those days were sweet.

THE MOTHER

Not sweet now?

THE WIFE

I am happy in his love
And thank God for it, nay, propitiate
With vows and offering; I fear a wrath
Called down on too great happiness; I fear—
I know not what—Oh, I possess a gift
So rare and precious, that, like men who go
Laden with rubies, I am grown suspect
Of all the earth and heaven, feel the stars
Peer covetously on me. Every hour
That he is from my side a cloud of woe
Settles upon me like a swarm of bees.
Ah, is it possible that we can sin
In happiness, against a jealous God?

THE MOTHER

Nay, nay, these foolish thoughts! your wits are strayed
With too much brooding: let me bind afresh
The knot of scarlet lilies in your hair;
They fade already, for the sun is high
Towards the noon: Ah, child, what waits for you
But love, and yet more love, and happiness,
And children of delight, and in old age
Respect of all the peoples, and at last
Death in his arms and burial in peace?
Still do you tremble, what is it you fear?

THE WIFE

Can you not feel a something in the air,
A warning, or a presence, or the weight
Of some unguessed-at horror, that, like dust
Impalpable and deadly, clings and kills?
There is some terror—'tis my heart that speaks
And warns me—ah! would God indeed, your son,
(My love and husband) had another father
Than that celestial being. This it is
That puts eternal sadness on his brow,
And shade within his eyes I cannot lift,
Even with kisses; 'tis the angel nature
That makes him sit spell-woven in a trance,
Chin in his hand, and eyes on vacancy,
And lips all bare of love, the while his soul
Struggles against the bonds of finity.

THE MOTHER

Ah, how you love him!

THE WIFE

More because of it,
This kingdom infinite I cannot know
Though loving him.

THE MOTHER

Alas! so did I love.

THE WIFE

Tell me of love.

THE MOTHER

Belovéd, what should I tell
That his lips have not taught you?

THE WIFE

Tell of yours;
So that I may compare your flowers with mine,
Your doubts and times of joy, and how arose
The sudden and sweet passion in your heart;
Did the world burst forth, like a flower from bud,
All suddenly in beauty, when you met?

THE MOTHER

Ah, how your words have wakened memory,
And bitter-sweet, like love itself, it is.

THE WIFE

The first time that you met?

THE MOTHER

Ah, that first time!
It was a night of gods, a night of love.
The earth was still beneath a summer sky
So thickly sown with stars, that it appeared
A vase of ebon in a silver shroud;
No breath there stirred, the hot air seemed to hang
In heavy folds, like silken tapestry,
Clinging, caressing; all the birds were still,
No nightingale with her ecstatic pain
Transfixed the silence; earth was dead asleep,
Sunk in a scented languor; every flower
Steamed all its odour forth, as it would pour
Its soul before the mystery of love.

And I into the night had stolen forth,
Oppressed, with pain or joy, I knew not which,
Knew only that the blood throughout my veins
Did run like liquid fire, head to foot
I tingled with sensation, all my hair
Stirred, as with separate life within itself;
And as I plucked the flowers and wove them in,
Purple and waxen, languorously sweet,
They seemed anticipation of a touch
Should make each thread of hair become a bird,
Fluttering with outstretched wings. From off my breast
I flung my garment back; the soft air wooed
Like sleepy lips ere love is yet awake.
Then, as I lingered in the dusky depths,
All flower-shadowed, blacker than the night,
Blacker than shadows cast by palace walls
Upon a moonlit night, there, in that web

Of close-knit darkness, suddenly there came
The wonder unto me, the god, my love—
Within mine ears there was a silver silence,
And in my heart a golden burst of song,
The darkness burned around me, with a light
Born from the other worlds, and there he stood,
Radiant, godlike, purple were his wings
And splashed with fire, purply-black his hair
And crowned with stars for flowers; in his eyes
My soul sank into passion and was drowned.

CHORUS

Oh, what a pair of birds,
Hidden among the leaves!
He a god and she a maid,
Deathless lips on mortal laid;
(Nothing death retrieves.)

There a son of God
And child of mortal seed
Met and kissed as love with love;
Oh the leaves were thick above,
No stars saw the deed.

No stars, but the eye of God?
Ah, perchance He saw
How a god to mortal prayed
And the fatal compact made
'Gainst eternal law.

Veiled and still the night.
So, a fount of tears
Springs at first unseen, unguessed,
Till at last the flood confessed
Gushes down the years.

Son of a son of God
And the daughter of men too frail!
Union of the nature's twain?
Only sorrow and want and pain,
Striving without avail;

Desire for wings of a god
Tied to the will of a man;
Memory of a boundless space,
(Where stars and spheres their dance enlace)
With the threescore human span

Hung like a bridge, in the gulf
Of God's eternity.
Oh a mind to know and a heart to crave
Beyond the horizon of the grave
To the bounds of infinity!

Yet ever Fate compels
This infinite desire
To match with cramped and finite brain;
And all of heaven earth may gain
Is smoke, where should be fire.

SCENE II

THE SEEKER

The air is heavy, all the winds are still
So that my own breath hangs about my head
Like incense o'er an altar. Now the earth
Lies in a swoon, and all the flowers droop
Weighting their stems, ranged in their brazen pots
Without the house: the very petals lie

Like languid limbs relaxed; this crimson rose
Looks as if blood-steeped, almost to my sense
Smells of the same, the lilies are like death.
There is a taint of sickness in the air
Through all the noonday light—like fever chill
In fever burning,—and the sky is brass;
The very tinkle of the fountain spray
Is dead and tuneless, even the fresh springs
Have lost their freshness, run from off my hands
In drops of lead, and all my spirit seems
Weighed and confined with fetters of decay.
Because I have loved beauty more than most
And striven to pluck out the heart of it;
Because I have such sense of lovely things
That I can pour my soul in thankfulness
Before a leaf God makes to grow aright,
A unit of perfection; 'tis ordained
Because I love most still I most must lack
Love's satisfaction, quietude of soul—
Still must I find such void disparity
Between the false and true, and yet they grow
Together, intermingled; true is false
Itself, by sometime seeming, who shall find
The point where false and true are reconciled?

The very flower that we stoop to smell
Grows from a dunghill, look but in its roots,
And what obscene and hideous blind life
Goes teeming; sickened then we shrink aback
From rose's velvet petals. So the soul
Holds best and meanest in a common cup.
Yet must there be a law in things that are
Seemingly lawless, purify the sight
And truth must surely then be visible,
Disparity made clear; the eye of God
Sees good in everything, thereto I strive,
To see with God's own vision, be more clear
In speech, than God, to asking human hearts.
Then is the tangle straightened, and the world
Lies in perspective, as before me lie,
Traced through the shimmering heat, the palaces,
Towers and temples, gardens and granaries,
Of this fair City, melting far away
Into the sunlight-flooded hills at last.

Yet must I sit here for a little while,
Where many columns make a heavy gloom,
And with the trickle from the water-jars
Of unfresh water, cheat myself awhile
With thought of evening freshness. Oh my soul
Is wearier than my body with the toil,
It aches with length of watching. I have strained
My spiritual eyes to catch a glimpse of dawn
And nothing seen but blackness. Let me rest
As rest the quiet dead from doubt and toil;
Like silver feathers from the wings of God
Sleep fans my senses——

[He sleeps.]

THE CHORUS

Sleep, and forget, forget the aching toil,
The disappointments, and the long delays,
The watches of the night-time and the morn,
The lonely hours, unrewarded days;
Sleep, and forget.

In death we all are equal, great and small
Brought to the common level of the dust;
There is no glory that survives the years,
Nay, nay, alike we shall be as we must;
Sleep and forget.

In sleep we are omnipotent as gods,
Beyond our furthest wish we can attain,
Unfettered by the chain of circumstance;
Sleep then; or waking, turn and pray again
A little more to sleep and to forget.

SCENE III

Enter the MOTHER to the WIFE

THE MOTHER

Ah me, your fears have settled on my heart;
I fear the very day, there is a strange
Portentous look o'er all the earth, my hand
Stretched in the sunlight seems to throw no shade
As if the natural laws had all stood still—
I breathe as in a nightmare, breath oppressed;
I start at every sound, but fear no sound
So much as stillness, which descends on us
Like a great mantle choking out our hearts.

THE WIFE

Give me your hand, what is it makes you fear
And shiver like plane trees before the rain?

THE MOTHER

As I lay in the shadow of the court
During the noonday fierceness, watched the rays
Chequered between the lattice window work,
And listened to the fountain in the grove
Of orange trees go singing to itself—
Behold, all suddenly before me stood
My lover-god, the angel ever dear,
And radiant as that first night years ago,
There stood he; where the marble touched his feet
It glowed translucent like a sunlit gem,
The perfume of his hair had made me swoon
Had not his eyes compelled me. Grave he looked,
Where gravity in such a beauteous thing
Could find occasion, and his voice was low
And troubled, warning me. "Let not your son
Tempt God too far, He will not brook affront
Though son of mine should dare it; be assured
The secret of this riddle universe
Shall ne'er be known on earth, man was not made
For too much knowledge, mankind ceases then
When man too much aspires. Speak to him
Lest he should bring destruction on your head
And on the world." Thus spoke he, nothing more,
And ere my eyes could hold him he was gone.

THE WIFE

Ah, let us go in to my husband then
And warn him quickly.

THE MOTHER

I have warned, alas!
And he has heard with the unheeding smile

One gives to children's prattle. "Now at last
The hours bear fruit, and shall I hold my hand,"
He answered, "for your vision? I have waited,
Now is the time when hope is justified;
Truth dawns, not even God Himself can stand
Between the light and me and shadow it."

THE WIFE

Ah God! ah God! to whom shall be appeal?

THE MOTHER

Look where he comes.

THE WIFE

With what an air fulfilled.

Enter the SEEKER AFTER TRUTH, inspired

THE SEEKER

Now do I stand upon the very brink
Of my desire; as a soul released
And purified by passing through the rays
Of white Eternity, I view the world.
Now am I all at peace; the heart that yearns
In bitter loneliness through midnight hours
Yet cannot voice its longing, brain that weaves
Its subtle web around the central thought
Yet never can absorb it; and this form,
The visible pride of body, all complete
Are one in union; the body knows
Its uses and its worths and has no fear,
The heart no more is empty, I have found
Eternal love to fill it, and no more
Gropes the blind brain for the Great Definite.
Away from me, my people, lest the sight
Of loving faces blunt the senses keen,
Hovering on the pain of a new birth.

THE MOTHER

My son, my son, it is not well to tempt
The thunders of Jehovah; He who placed
Man on this earth, and gave him such a form
And such a nature never did intend
The form or nature to be changed.

THE SEEKER

Enough,
Is it not parcel of the nobleness
Of His conception thus to place us here
Low in the scale; that we, by effort's worth,
May reach to Him and equal Him at last?

THE MOTHER

Oh man was born for failure, not success,
To strive and strive, and evermore to fail,
And failing still strive ever; therein lies
The nobleness that equals him to God
Though linked to insufficient means for God.
Why will you hope to change appointed fate?

While still in man the sad twi-nature dwells,
Godhead and manhood, still as dark and light
The eternal war goes on. It is our lot,
Accept it, spare us last catastrophe.

THE WIFE

Alas! alas! you see he marks you not,
His eyes are fixed on distance, and his lips
Move to the cadence of a song or prayer,
I know not which; and ever and anon,
His forehead, vivid with the teeming brain,
Rests in his hollow hand. He marks you not;
No more than raindrops plashing on a roof,
Whereto perhaps one listens for a space
And says "It raineth"—then again to sleep.

THE MOTHER

Speak you to him, if he may hear his wife!

THE WIFE

Ah me, my lord, what is it I can say
That will excuse the saying? Words are few
When hearts are fullest. On my wedding night—
Do you remember?—you did take my hand,
(As I take yours now) lay your lips on it,
(See, here I lay my lips) and all the love
Your heart would fain express and tongue could not
I read in eyes and kisses, being well skilled
In love's translation.

THE SEEKER

Who is this that speaks?
Your words come through my musing, like the call
Of quails across the desert, troubling me
With a strange stirring of the peaceful heart.

THE WIFE

It was my soul and not my words that called.

THE SEEKER

My hand is wet with tears.

THE WIFE

They are my prayers.

THE SEEKER

Why do you weep when all the world should be
Poised on the outspread wings of happiness?
Ah! just a little moment loose your hold,
While strips my soul for last and fiercest struggle
That gives us victory.

THE WIFE

Nay cease, ah cease.
Why must you venture to the wrath of God
For a mere idle fancy? Is not love,
My love, and youth and joy enough for you?
Roses are beautiful to bind one's brow,
Why must one grasp at stars? Ah, if my tears,
Barren as dew that falls upon the sand,
Cannot incline you to forgetfulness
Of all save love, you are inexorable,
You love me not.

THE SEEKER

I make an end of tears.

THE WIFE

Nay, rather tears enough to drown the world

THE MOTHER

Again, he lapses in his trance.

THE WIFE

Ah me,
I can no more, we wait on God's event.

THE SEEKER

There have been summer nights so exquisite
The soul in me did pant with pain,
And with its efforts vain
To grasp the beauty of the infinite;
When 'twixt my senses and the silent stars
The world of forms was purged away,
And all creation lay
Intense, eternal, without bounds or bars;
And all my yearning soul
Reached up to, strove for, failed to grasp that Whole.

Ye who have felt the ache
Of visible beauty burning through your brain,
And vainly tried to break
Through forms of beauty, Beauty to attain;
Ye who have felt the weight
Of much desire in a little space;
God in your narrow brain, and in the face
Of mortals the large lineaments of Fate;
Ye who have felt the pang,
Even in love's most full communion
Of the soul's loneliness, which may not hang
For all its love, another soul upon;

Draw near, draw near to me now, ye who long
Above the common things,
For truth approaches us on flaming wings
And all life's tangle shall be straightened now,
And right shall rise triumphant over wrong,
And nought be great or little, weak or strong,
But all Creation share in knowledge vast
As in design; with neither first nor last.
A moment let the waiting heart be dumb,
Last silence ere the revelation come—
The truth! the truth!

[*He is struck dead.*]

THE MOTHER

Alas! the Wrath of God
Flashing upon us from the angry skies,
Ah woe! this is destruction.

THE WIFE

Let it be,
Since low he lies, struck by a meteor,
With truth upon his lips.

THE MOTHER

No meteor that;
His father, my god-lover, struck him down.

THE WIFE

Since end must be what matter how it come?
Here will I sit, his head upon my breast,
Where it has lain in sleep, my arms about
His kingly body, sit, and wait the end,
Mocking at God.

THE CHORUS

Alas! alas! alas!
The skies are torn, the heavens crash,
From pole to pole in terror rending,
Mountains against mountains dash,
The blinding lightnings blaze and flash,
And are shaken the foundations
Of the earth, for earth is ending.

Black the air and black the waters,
Lifeless the life-giving sun;
Woe upon earth's sons and daughters,
For the Wrath is now begun.
Ah, too late you clamour wildly,
Earth is blind, and earth is dumb,
You by earth and earth by you
Child and mother are undone;
Let your cry to God ascend,
For from God the terrors come.

Now the father is destroyer
And the mother is the grave,
Woe is us for God forsakes us
And 'tis God alone can save.
Oh, a union of destruction
Sons of God and nature's daughters,
Seed of terror, seed of evil,
Nurtured for the hungry waters.

Is there help now? Oh beseeching,
Raise for help impotent hands.
While the frenzied winds are roaring,
Hound-like loosened from their bands,
And the waters' tumult reaching
To the stars, where quiet stands
God contemplative. Destruction,
'Tis the uttermost destruction he demands!

Now the waters are uprising
And the mountain summits bend,
Headlong all the turrets hurling,

Towers and temples now descend;
All in black confusion whirling
Earth and heaven rocking blend,
In the waters wildly swirling
To annihilation's end.
Alas! alas! alas!
Neither foothold, hand-hold, safety
For the body nor the soul.
Cracks the earth, the heavens rend,
And the waters of despair consuming roll.

SONNETS

TO J. F. W.

We've touched the borderland of death and life
And come back to the primroses again,
And see with different eyes the slanting rain
Buffet the larches in a short-lived strife;
With different eyes, for we have looked on death,
And know what life is for; we felt the hand
Of that sad Lady of the other Land,
And now, with her released, we draw our breath.

Life is for gladness, not for mulish days
Between the galling shafts of commonplace.
See, now, the willow tassels all ablaze
Against the background of the windy blue!
And in the dusk the crocus glimmers through
The footsteps of Persephone we trace.

TO ANDREW CHATTO

It is your thin, ungracious wine that runs
Within a year of bottling, to your tongue,
The noblest wine is somewhat harsh when young;
Lay it aside for many moons and suns,
Send it, if so you will, its "wander-year,"
A-battling with the ocean's storm and strife,
Then open it, when ripe are wine and life,
And see what mellow sunshine you have there.

Here is another year to crown that head
So full of years and honour, dear old friend,
Whose wisdom makes a constant, quiet balm
For tricks and trials of life, whose age doth blend
Young-heartedness with philosophic calm,
And sunshine on this generation shed.

NOVEMBER

There is a gleam of sunshine on the earth
After so many weary days of rain,

A break of yellowing clouds, which offers plain
The sun's veiled disc (a very shadow-birth,
But still the sun, with sun's November worth);
The sky is of a Turner lived again,
Such colours through the misty greyness gain
They almost seem to touch with spring the earth.

How should we not be glad, when this one day
Out of the saddest of all months, appears
Suddenly beautiful? A single ray
Of sunlight strikes through cloud, and clears
The whole drear countryside of grey;
So may one word dispel a cloud of tears.

TO A ROBIN IN DECEMBER

In Paradise there is no sweeter song
Than that thin music that the robin makes
On short December afternoons, and takes
The winter woods, with utterance frail, yet strong;
Till all the barren fields, and ruined brakes,
The flowerless gardens, and the hedges bare
Dream of the spring, and all the rainy air
Seems soft and mellow as the summer lakes.

More precious than the treasures of the East,
(Guarded by silver-footed antelope,)
Or all the nightingales that haunt the grove
Of Persian gardens; silver pipe of hope!
That Nature gives us when her gifts are least,
Sing to our hearts, oh, little voice of love.

A JANUARY MORNING

How strangely shone the crescent of the moon
In the grey twilight dawning o'er the sea;
A star, that seemed of stars a memory,
(As faint as lilies on a sultry noon)
Ebbd in the chilly waxing of the morn;
The sea was rest in motion; hardly stirred
Its waves upon the beach; there was no bird
To break its undersong of silence born.

The misty shadows lay upon the trees,
Whose colour was but echo of the tone
That earth and sky were wrapped in, harmonies
Of wedded hue were visible alone,
—And over all a breath of memory blown,
Of other dawns upon other seas.

FEBRUARY

Can there be aught to touch the sleeping dead
To consciousness; can love still call to love
Across that dark abyss; can feeling move
Dead heart and brain, that once with blood were fed,
To stir and quicken in their narrow bed,
For that which yet is living? We believe

Such force has love, that it may still retrieve
Its heart's Eurydice among the dead.

I shall awake, then, shall awake my soul—
Not when full summer beautifies the earth,
But with the first sweet stirring of the sap,
Ere yet the fields are green or leaves unroll:
I shall but sleep awhile in Nature's lap,
To be reborn with February's rebirth.

TO APRIL

I

'Tis not alone the loveliness of spring
That makes spring lovely; there's a sense behind
Of wonders, deeper than the eye can find
In daffodils, or swallows on the wing;
A subtler pleasure than the sense can bind
When on the dusty roads the rain-drops sing
As March turns April, and the hours bring
Songs to deaf ears, and beauty to the blind.

April is secret nature's treasure room,
Which she unlocks to us who love her well
In magic moments; then indeed we see
The wonder of all spring-times, from the gloom
Of world-beginnings, long ere Adam fell—
And all the beauty of all springs to be.

TO APRIL

II

There will be other days as fair as these
Which I shall never see; for other eyes
The lyric loveliness of cherry trees
Shall bloom milk-white against the windy skies
And I not praise them; where upon the stream
The faëry tracery of willows lies
I shall not see the sunlight's flying gleam,
Nor watch the swallows sudden dip and rise.

Most mutable the forms of beauty are,
Yet Beauty most eternal and unchanged,
Perfect for us, and for posterity
Still perfect; yearly is the pageant ranged.
And dare we wish that our poor dust should mar
The wonder of such immortality?

TO DANIEL MANIN

If that most noble soul, which, here on earth,
Was known as Manin, yet have consciousness
Of what is, and what is not, being not less
Than here he was, in courage and in worth,
Seeing the world whereon we sweat and strive;
Shall he not know his Italy, and bless,

And in his own heart praise the steadfastness
That held him to his purpose when alive?

Shall he not have reward for all his pain,
Who, dying with his incompleting aim,
Saw failure only, and the bitter toll
Of loved ones lost, and lost, it seemed, in vain?
Must not that heart still keep his country's name,
Though o'er him all death's waters heave and roll?

TO THE LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES

January 1910

"A people's voice, we are a people yet."
—TENNYSON'S *Ode on Death of the Duke of Wellington*.

Think on your birthright, England! On that voice
Which sounded first the ringing clarion note
Of freedom, and the ears of mankind smote
With that brave speech, whose hearing does rejoice
The angels (in his starry sphere remote
Each sitting). Think upon your past, my land;
The heart to wish, the will to dare, the hand
To do the right, though round the senses float
The Protean shapes of evil. We have struck
To free the slave, against a world in doubt;
Have raised the grovelling from their muddy ruck
And made them men; our foes once put to rout
We give them justice; we have scorned to truck
In gold for blood, and fatten on such spoil—
To others be the gain, to us the toil.
Oh, once more, England, let that voice ring out!

Alas! thou now dost hide thy Titan self
In a drab's clothing, lies; whilst, false and shrill,
Thy people squabble for the dirty pelf
Of office, at the hustings; while they fill
Our streets with lies, that, from the naked walls,
Mouth blatantly upon us, open shame;
While throughout Europe goes thy honoured name,
Grimacing in a mask of Party brawls.

Bethink you, Leaders! How will history place
Your name beside her others, if you fight
With such-like weapons? Oh, be bold to face
The conflict, tell the truth, as in your sight
It does appear, with nothing false or base,
—The nation's heart will know to choose aright—
Be brave! Be true these days! Will you forget
You are our Leaders, we, a people yet?

CONSOLATION

"Is there a pain to match my pain
In all this world of woe;
When to and fro on a barren earth
My weary footsteps go?
When no day's sun shall give me mirth
And no stars blessed be;
Because my heart goes hungry and lone
For one who turns from me?"

Hear what the voice of all Sorrows saith

From out the ages dim:
"As melt the snows your passion goes,
And as dew it vanisheth.
Take up, take up your burden of woe,
Unblenching on your journey go,
For man was born to reap and sow
That earth might fruitful be."

"Is there a pain to match my pain,
Who watch the small dead face,
With the folded lips, and the folded lids
And the cheek the dimples grace;
Where they will come no more, no more?—
Oh, small soft hands that hold
So quietly, in rosy palms,
My heart that's dead and cold."

Hear what the voice of all Sorrows saith:
"Though still the little feet,
Though the hands are chill, and the sweet form chill,
And gone the childish breath;
Take up, take up your burden of woe,
For you were born to sorrow so,
To bear in anguish, and lose in pain,
That earth might be fulfilled."

"Is there a pain to match my pain
Who loved all men on earth,
Who saw the Godhead, through the shell
That burdened them at birth;
Who strove for right, who strove for good,
Since love must win at last?
—This hour they lead me out to die,
With cords they make me fast."

Hear what the voice of all Sorrows saith:
"They lead you out to die;
For the love you gave they will dig your grave,
And their thanks to you is death.
Take up, take up your burden of woe,
And proudly to your scaffold go,
For men were born to suffer so,
That mankind might be great."

TAPESTRY

God the omnipotent wearied of space,
And the void of endless blue,
And the light of eternity in His face,
And eternity's emptiness round the place
That the presence of Godhead knew.

So He wove Him a piece of tapestry
O'er all infinity drawn,
And out of His brain and its subtlety
Were the suns that stand, and the comets that flee,
And the paths of the planets born.

No plan too great, no design too small,
For the fingers of God the Lord,
The joy of invention lived through all,
From the orbit curve of the earthly ball
To the shell where sound is stored.

And all continued as they were made,
Clean cast from Perfection's brain,
Not a beam of light from its circle strayed,
But the whole the heavenly laws obeyed,
—God looked, and wearied again.

So He wove Him a piece of tapestry
With fingers thrice refined,
And He mingled the threads with subtlety,
The threads of our human destiny,
And the light with the dark He twined.

For shadow and shine were mingled there,
And white was matched with red,
And the thread of the silver gleamed more fair
For the gloom that, surrounding, made it rare;
And God in His wisdom said:

"Of my handiwork but the human soul
Can suffer the laws of change,
That only errs from my set control,
And takes in pleasure, and pays in toll,
The whole of its passion's range.

"But who shall judge or who condemn
This work that my hands have made,
For the thread that here appears a gem,
—So have I mingled and twisted them—
Is there the gleam of a blade?

"Nor evil nor good exists for me,
As I mingle strand with strand;
The past is the visible tapestry,
The present I weave, and the destiny
Of the future is in my hand.

"And the past and the future both are met
In the present's history;
For the thread I hold is unbroken yet,
And the thing I weave is unguessed at yet,
In this human tapestry."

WISDOM AND YOUTH

In the depths of the forest Merlin dreamed;
The shuttle of noon wove light and shade
Over the moss and around the trees,
And a network among the branches made.

He sat with his back against a tree,
Grey as himself, and gnarled, and old;
The lichen was grey as the ragged beard
Over his friezen mantle's fold.

Still he sat, like an ancient stone
That time has forgotten to wear away—
While streamed the forest's green and gold,
Like banners on a windy day.

And Merlin watched, as watches a tree,
A sombre oak of antiquity,
The myriad life that seethes and hums,
Around its immobility.

Around himself, himself had made
A monstrous and a mystic spell,
Weblike, wherein he sat and dreamed;
—So in its mesh may spider dwell!

His silence heard the things that grow
In underwood of tangled green;
His vision penetrated deep,
Beneath the common surface screen;

The roots of things were plain to him,
He saw the crowded under-earth,
Where every life fought ceaselessly,

To bring a future life to birth;

For him the stirring of the leaves
Beneath a listless passing breeze,
Spoke with a manifolded tongue
From all the thickly growing trees;

For him the beetles and the mice
Made magic of desires and fears,
The bumble bee's slow rhythmic hum
Seemed like the passing of the years.

And where a curving bramble-branch
Lay half in shade and half in light,
The universe's giant curves
Were all discovered to his sight;

All things were all things' complement,
For what the oak left unexpressed
In line and hue, the silver birch
Continued, in completion's quest.

There was no moss, nor stone, nor leaf,
Nor lingering small drop of dew,
But he resolved to harmony,
And in the mystic mind-web drew.

So sat he, abstract as a god,
The greatest wisdom of the world,
While on his head the sunshine played,
And round his robe the shadows curled.

Till, through the forest's green and gold,
And through the magic afternoon,
—Strange, as moonlit waters are,
Sweet, as cowslip-fields in June:—

Oh, summer-footed Vivien came!
And through the web of dreaming broke;
And on her silver clarion note
Of laughter, the great Sage awoke.

She sat her down beneath the tree,
—Oh! fair her youth his age beside!—
She plucked the boughs to make her shade.
She pulled the flowers far and wide,

To deck her hair; and while the glades
Re-echoed to her laughter gay,
She leaned to Merlin, kissing him,
And stroked his beard, unkempt and grey.

And he forgot the voice of trees,
And of the silent undergrowth,
To hear her merry lilting song,
And watch, reposed in summer sloth,

Vivien dance upon the sward,
As children dance, alone, at ease;
Till breathlessly she cast her down
And laid her head upon his knees.

And with his hand among her hair
The magic of his mind was rent,
And captive to her shadowed eyes,
Behold! the Master-Thinker went.

A VILLA ON THE BAY OF NAPLES

The crescent's single line of white
Above the pointed cypress tree,

Was all there was of any light
Upon the earth and on the sea;
(Black was the bay of Naples.)

"And ah," she said, "why have you come
Unbidden on my balcony,
This midnight hour, close and dumb;
What is it you would have of me,
Here by the bay of Naples?"

"Now having knit, untie the knot,"
Said he; "you drew me from afar,
Or having willed or willed it not,
Your face shone on me like a star
Above the bay of Naples.

"Oh, know you not, fair star of love,
The thought of you is like new wine,
Or strong sweet air on heights above,
For mortal senses too divine——"
(Black was the bay of Naples.)

Her lamp beside the window set
The woman, and the light shone out
A yellow glimmer in the jet
Of darkness, that lay all about
The outstretched bay of Naples.

But "Nay" she said, and laughed with scorn.
And also with a little pride;
"My lover comes before the morn,
And, if he find you, woe betide
Beside the bay of Naples.

"Now get you gone in very deed,
While time is yet for you to go,
Behold, I beg you at my need;
How black the chilly waters flow
Around the bay of Naples!"

"Ah, do you think I am afraid,"
Said he, "of man that sees the light?
If God himself command had laid
To leave you, I should stay to-night."
(Black was the bay of Naples).

The trouble grew within her eyes,
She seemed to feel, as in a dream,
The ruling force in love that lies;
She veiled the lamplight's yellow gleam
From the black bay of Naples.

"Ah me," she said, "you tarry yet,
And late and chilly grows the night,
To-morrow shall my lamp be set
To guide you hither with its light,"
Across the bay of Naples.

"To-morrow then, to-morrow's years.
I will be yours, but go to-night."
And dimly through the mist of tears
She saw the crescent's line of white,
High o'er the bay of Naples.

"To-morrow for to-morrow be!
To-night is all I ask and need,
I cannot loose love's core," said he,
"Once to my hand it has been freed"
(Black was the bay of Naples).

"Nay, death may follow love! 'Tis fit
That life being empty, should be cast
Carelessly into darkness' pit,
Be one with all the life that's past"
(Black was the bay of Naples).

"Only compress the joy of years,

Summers and seasons, nights and noons,
To these short hours, where there appears,
As of a mighty god that swoons,
The sea's black arm round Naples.

"Oh, black beneath us are the trees,
And black the weary line of hills,
With all life's joy, and light, and ease,
This room your radiant presence fills"
(Black was the bay of Naples).

"And ah," said he, "I'll give my soul
To lie beneath your foot in hell,
That you may walk unscorched and whole—
Can other lovers love so well?"
(Black was the bay of Naples).

She took his hand and drew him in.
She quenched the lamplight's yellow gleam;
The moon was like a sabre thin,
The one white thing in all that dream
Of black that lay on Naples.

A SONG

What if the rose should bloom,
And the sunset deepen and fade,
If we are penned in the gloom
By close-barred shutters made?

What of the birds and the sun,
And the moon-rise behind the trees,
To the eyes and ears of one
Who neither hears nor sees?

What of the world of love,
Its fragrance, and light, and bloom,
To the soul that cannot move
Out of a loveless room?

Were it better the rose were dead
In a black December frost,
That no more skies were red,
That lovers' ways were lost?

Ah no! The wood must shrink,
Bar closely as you may,
And between the shutters' chink
Slips in the sunlight's ray.

So that the prisoner knows
It is June in the world outside,
And his heart is glad for the rose,
Though to him it is denied.

For the love of lovely things
Must quench all bitterness,
And whilst the robin sings
No heart is comfortless.

THE BALLAD OF A SEA-NYMPH

Where the water meets the sands
All alone sat she,
Wrung her hair with chilly hands

That glimmered mistily.

Phosphorescent were the drips
From her hair she wrung,
And like moonlight on her lips
Were the words she sung.

White she was, as white as foam
'Neath a moonlit sky,
And the treasures of her home
On her brow did lie.

There he found her, he, a man,
Wandering by the sea,
And desire through him ran—
Misty-white was she.

There he wooed her, wooed her long,
Till, within her eyes,
Where were erst moonshine and song,
Dawned in slow surprise

Mortal pain and mortal doubt,
Shades of misery,
And she turned her round about,
Facing from the sea.

In his hand her hand she laid,
As to land they turned,
And her hand of sea-foam made
'Neath his fingers burned.

On they went then, he and she,
Walking toward the East;
And her sisters of the sea
Their bewailing ceased

As it paled towards the dawn,
From the light they fled;
But she laughed with joy new-born.
"Is this life?" she said.

There was labour of the day,
Dust upon her feet,
Scorching of the shadeless way,
Clamour of the street;

All a human want and pain,
Laughter fraught with tears,
Toil, when toil we know is vain,
Hope, when hopes are fears;

Till this creature of the sea
At the last became
Human, in her misery,
Joy, and pride, and shame.

With a word he left her then
"Woman that you are,
Mystery attracts us men
Draws us from afar.

"Sea-nymph as you were, a thing
Intangible, unknown,
Like the light the sunbeams fling,
Where the spray is blown,

"Sea-nymph have you ceased to be,
Forfeited the whole
Of that moonlight poetry,
Cherished by man's soul;

"Still we seek the dim Ideal
As the moth the star,
How for women can we feel
That our seekings bar?"

Where the water meets the sands,
All alone sat she,
With her head between her hands,
Facing from the sea;

From her forehead pushed her hair
Drooping wearily,
Shivered by the water there:
"Oh, soul's a curse," said she.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Oh, what a dainty negligence you show
Outspreading all your petals' coquetry,
As careless of restraint as poetry,
Although, like poetry, you surely know
That by the laws of beauty you must grow.

There is a pure and virgin fantasy
In your curled petals, white as driven snow,
And wayward as the unbound locks that blow
Around a maiden's head, when, mad with glee,
With outstretched arms she dances by the sea.

Yet in your glad abandon still you show
The wildest beauty sorrow-touched must be,
To give it worth; your leaves curve tenderly
In subtle arches; so the heart may know
Within the dancing maid the roots of woe.

A COURTLY MADRIGAL

Between the eyebrow and the eye
Such uncounted beauties lie,
Plain it is 'tis Cupid's pleasaunce only.
There he makes his court and seat,
There lets all his graces meet,
Leaves a loveless world, bereft and lonely.

Oh, fair straight brows that brood above
The eyelid, as the nesting dove
Broods upon her treasured young;
In rosy flesh the veins of blue
Do softly, dimly glimmer through,
To lose themselves the eyelashes among.

Such eyelashes! More darkly sweet
Than where the serried treetops meet
Above the forest's undiscovered waters;
Where scarce the stars peep o'er the edge,
(Fringed round about with darkling sedge,
And thickly-growing reeds, fair Syrinx' daughters).

IN ARCADIA

See how Pan through the forest goes,
The forest of Arcadia,
Giving a sidelong leer at the rose,

Trampling the daisies with hairy toes,
And wrinkling his ugly gnarled old nose,
In the forest of Arcadia.

Evil and ugly, Pan is bored,
In the forest of Arcadia;
Tired of hours with honey stored,
What diversion can it afford
The whole green forest of which he's lord,
The forest of Arcadia?

Till suddenly, the glimpse of a face
In the forest of Arcadia!
In the verdant depths where leaves enlase,
And dapple with shadow the body's grace—
And Pan, with a snort, gives the Dryad chase,
In the forest of Arcadia.

She is off, on the nimblest of little feet,
In the forest of Arcadia;
Light as a bird where the treetops meet,
For with sudden terror her pulses beat,
And desire has made the old god fleet,
In the forest of Arcadia.

Milk-white down the long green avenues,
In the forest of Arcadia,
Like a dove she flies, and he pursues,
Like a hungry hawk when its prey it views—
—And Zeus, on Olympus, prepares a ruse
For the forest of Arcadia.

Nearer draws Pan, with outstretched hand,
In the forest of Arcadia,
To grasp her long hair's floating strand;
—But Zeus, with Olympian wink, had planned
That another form for the girl's should stand
In the forest of Arcadia.

And the poor old sinner who thought to seize,
In the forest of Arcadia,
The daintiest thing that sense could tease,
Found only a satyr if you please,
As like himself as peas to peas,
In the forest of Arcadia.

A BALLAD OF KING RICHARD

1. The Banner

King Richard wiped the wine from his lips
And laughed full scornfully;
"Oh, I care not a bit for King Philip's wit,
Nor the honour of France," quoth he;

"And I care not a straw for Austria's wrath,
And little of Templars reck;
If I lead not this host, by the Holy Ghost,
May my head be struck from my neck."

King Richard drank, and swore in his cups
—And a mighty man was he—
"Let the mongrels yap, I care not a rap,
I am Richard the Lion," quoth he.

The news went forth to the King of France
And the Dukes of high degree,
How Richard had sworn that no man born
Should lead the armies but he.

The Kings were wroth at King Richard's words

That were carried to them that day;
"Does he make a mock of our ancient stock,
This king of an hour?" quoth they.

"This bastard son of a bastard sire
The standard first would plant
On the city's walls when Jerusalem falls;
Must we this honour grant?

"Not so; if Christ would have Richard lead,
Let Christ give grace to his arms.
We will stand aside from the battle pride
And the fury of war's alarms.

"Our men are sick and outnumbered sore,
And words from home reveal
That our country cries for our governance wise;
We will look to our country's weal.

"For we came to fight for a Holy Cause,
Not dance to an upstart king;
The cause must wait for Richard the Great,
For our weapons down we fling."

Breathless and hushed the messengers spoke
As they told King Richard the news
How the kings were set and the council met,
And the kings to fight refuse.

Louder than ever laughed the King
In the depths of his golden beard.
"God rest my soul, I will reach the goal,
And show if Richard's afeared;

"I will plant my flag amidst this camp
As a token seen of all;
Nor Austria's lance, nor the frown of France,
Shall make its splendour fall."

So the sultry breezes of Ascalon
Saluted the lions three,
And Austria frowned from his camping ground,
And cursed right bitterly.

"Shall this bastard son of a bastard sire
Boast he o'erruleth me?
By the Holy Cross, be it living loss,
This shame shall never be."

So he planted his banner firm and fast,
And it floated high and free,
On the selfsame mound in the Christian ground
Flew eagle and lions three.

Word they brought to Richard the King
Where in his tent he lay,
"Lo, Austria's hand on the lion's land
Has loosed the eagle," said they.

Richard arose and strode in haste
—Oh the banners floated free—
"Ill eagles fare in the lion's lair,
Take down your banner," quoth he.

But word for word the Archduke gave.
He answered, "Eagles fly;
Let the lion keep to the fields and sheep,
To the eagle leave the sky."

"Do you give me words?" cried Richard the King;
"Ho, now, at your words I laugh."
And he tore the flag like a worthless rag,
And he wrenched and splintered the staff,

And he set his foot on the silken flag,
His foot on Austria's fame;
With a swordless hip, yet a smiling lip,

He mocked the eagle's shame.

(Oh, Richard the Lion, woe is me
For the sorrow your deed shall bring,
For the dungeon walls, and the gloom that falls
On the heart of Richard the King;

For the long despair of the prison dark,
And the traffic in lordly things,
When the Austrian sold for an Emperor's gold
The son of the English kings.)

But Richard laughed in the noonday sun
That beats on Palestine.
And Leopold turned, while in hate he burned
Against Plantagenet's line;

He trusted not in his own right arm,
But justice cried from France,
And France spake fair, but he did not dare
Withstand King Richard's glance.

Sullenly Austria turned from the Kings
And back to his tents went he;
And the lions of gold above Richard the bold
Floated alone and free.

2. *The Imprisonment*

Word they brought to Leopold,
Spake in Austria's ear;
"Rejoice this day that brings your prey,
Your enemy Richard is here;

"Now is revenge for an ancient grudge
Given into your hand,
He mocked aloud 'mid the allies' crowd
And is now alone in your land."

Leopold started out of his seat;
"Good be the news indeed!
Now quickly bring to me hither the king,
He shall sue to me in his need."

Richard the King is before the Duke,
Garbed in a mean disguise,
Yet kingship claim the mighty frame
And the glance of the kingly eyes,

And the Jove-like head with its close-cut hair,
And the flowing golden beard;
No rags can hide the huge limbs' pride,
In kingly cradle reared.

Gay, and kingly, and debonair
The Lion-hearted stood.
"Fair come to land, by this right hand,
Your welcome shall be good."

"Fair thanks to you, our cousin the Duke,"
Said Richard, no whit beguiled;
"I thought not to prove the worth of your love
When I entered your land," he smiled.

"Being in haste to return to my land,
I passed in this disguise,
For I would not stay the rich display
Your ducal bounty supplies."

Leopold snarled like an angry wolf.
"How came you hither?" said he;
"No choice of mine, but by rule divine,"
—Said Richard—"I came by sea,

"Travelling in haste from Palestine

To assure me England's throne;
But a storm arose, and my fears suppose
That I was saved alone."

"Now bind his hands," cried Leopold,
"For he comes as a spy, I see."
The King's eyes blazed in wrath amazed,
"A ducal greeting," quoth he.

"These bonds are unfitting, Duke Leopold,
Both mine and your degree,
Nor consorts my fame with a spying name,
In your throat let your own words be."

Amazed were they all at Richard's taunts,
But he smiled with easy pride.
"Now what prevents that my fury vents
Itself?" the Austrian cried.

"Now what prevents that I kill you straight
And your corpse to the ravens fling?
'Twere easy to say you were ocean's prey."
"But you dare not," said Richard the King.

Leopold turned to his feudal lords,
Who stood in wondering;
"Now prison me straight this runagate,"
Said he, "let us lodge this King!"

They have taken Richard the Lion-heart
And fettered him fast and sure,
In a narrow cell they have chained him well
With chains that shall endure.

And even Richard's stout heart fails
When he hears the great doors clang,
And he knows at last that they have him fast,
Whose fame through Europe rang.

"Oh, what prevents the crafty Duke
From poison or secret knife,
For no one knows that Richard goes
In disguise, in fear of his life;

"My brother John will well believe
That I was drowned at sea;
Nay, he scarce will ask, but will take the task
Of kingship gleefully;

"And my people will easily forget
Their monarch so little seen,
And almost my name will be lost to fame,
I shall be as I ne'er had been."

Many a weary week and month
Must darken prison walls;
And the King's eye dims, and his mighty limbs
Waste, as the leaf that falls.

And his face is blanched, and sorrow sits
Carven upon his brow,
And his right arm slacks for the battle-axe,
The warlike field to plough.

And yet and anon comes Leopold
His captive lord to see,
And revenge to taste, as he sees him waste,
"How fares the Lion?" cries he.

"Cousinly questioned," says the King,
And kingly flashes his eye;
"Let the hog beware of the lion's lair,
Though the lion couchant lie."

And then gives back Duke Leopold,
And his laugh has a hollow ring;
Once more he goes, and the shadows close

Round the head and the heart of the King.

Then word comes suddenly, flying fast,
"Masters, the King is found!"
And from distant lands the poet stands
At last upon English ground.

"I have found him, Blondel de Nesle!
As I wandered, harp in hand,
Through breadth and length of Austria's strength,
I saw a tower stand,

"And nearer drew, I knew not why,
Till I heard a man's voice sing
With something of skill, and my heart stood still—
'Twas the voice of Richard the King,

"Singing a fitte that we both had made
Once in a banquet hall,
When his heart was light, of a captive knight
Who out upon Fate did call.

"Then I took up King Richard's words
And sang the fitte again,
And did descry—Oh! hope was high!—
That he of it was fain.

"So I struck my harp and sang once more
Of a minstrel wandering far,
Till he reached the strand of a distant land
Where trusty yeomen are,

"Where hearts will swell with joy to hear
Of their dear and distant King,
And burn for shame of his knightly fame
And the false imprisoning—

"And Richard sang from his mighty throat
'Oh Blondel, blessed be thou,
Thy star of birth makes glad the earth,
Thy wit shall save me now.

"Oh tell my people that I am woe
For my absence long and drear,
When the land did bleed under wolfish greed
And the shepherd was not near."

(Sullen and black was the brow of John
Like an angry thunder-cloud,
But the poet recked not in his respect,
His message spake aloud.)

"And tell my people Richard sends
His heart in the minstrel's hand,
And my eyes shall yearn until they turn
On the cliffs of my loyal land.

"And this do I add at night and morn,
When I pray for the fall of Zion:
To my people send a better friend,
Oh God, than Richard the Lion!"

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

What can death render us commensurate
With what it takes away; the voice of birds
On sweet spring mornings, and the face of spring;
And lush long grass around the browsing herds;
And shadows on the distant hills the flying rain-clouds fling?

What is there brighter in the world to come

Than white-winged sea-gulls, flashing in the sun
Above the blue Atlantic; what more free,
Yet what more stable, than those white wings, strung
All motionless, against a wind that whips the racing sea?

Yea, and if these things yet may be the soul's—
The summer moon above the garden flowers
Dew-drenched, and the slow song of nightingales—
Yea, and if all these after death be ours,
More beauty yet, and peace from strife, yet still the debt prevails.

For what can ever give us back again
The dear, familiar things of every day;
The loved and common language that we share;
The trivial pleasures; and, when children play,
Their laughter, and the touch of hands; and jests; and common care?

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"An excellent drama.... The verse is always flexible, and at the right moment rises into the atmosphere of poetry in which Shakespeare moves with such freedom.... Joan is the soul and centre of the play, and the author has done nobly by her. We catch, as we read, some of the infection that fell upon men's souls from her presence ... which simply means that Mr. Presland has realised his historical characters so well as to make them seem living.... What we have written is sufficient to show with what dramatic truth and poetic sympathy the dramatist has approached his great subject, and with what success he has handled it."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"Mr. Presland has put some excellent workmanship into this new dramatic picture of the Maid of Orleans.... The action never flags. The verse is fluid, natural, yet dignified, and adapts itself easily to the varying requirements of the situations.... A play which leaves in the reader's mind a picture that grows upon him. One forgets everything but Joan, and that not because of any lack of proportion in the composition, but because of the naturalness and force of her beautiful character."—*Bibliophile*.

"At once good drama and good poetry.... The well-known story is deftly treated. The verse is easy and vigorous—above all, it is dramatic."—*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*.

"Mr. Presland's play shows how impressive Joan of Arc may be made as the central figure in a 'history.' ... Written with faithful adherence to Shakespearean traditions of form, it follows out in an interesting sequence of scenes the several stages in the career of the Maid of Orleans.... The piece is all the more impressive because it does not bring in any invented theatrical love interest, or anything of that sort, to confuse the simple lines of the accepted story."—*Scotsman*.

"Written in language which will commend itself to all educated people, who will certainly not only be entertained, but instructed thereby. The author has done his work excellently in every way."—*Road*.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.

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MANIN AND THE DEFENCE OF VENICE

EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS

"... The play is genuinely dramatic, and its impressiveness is heightened by the dignity of the blank verse. There is poetry on every page, but the effects are gained, not by flaunting rhetoric, but by simplicity of language, which is forcible through its truth.... We can only advise those who love English verse to read this play; they will see that poetry is still a living thing among us."—*Oxford Magazine*.

"Mr. Presland follows up his dramas 'Joan of Arc' and 'Mary Queen of Scots,' with a picture, at once moving and terrible, of the siege of Venice by the Austrians in 1849.... He has once more

proved himself a dramatist of that high poetic order which we have so often been told died out with the eighteenth century."—*Literary World*.

"His new work condenses into four acts of vigorous and flexible blank verse, always animated in movement, and skilfully wrought together into a fine unity of action.... Mr. Presland's *Manin* is an impressive, pathetic figure, and the play one which cultured readers should follow with unqualified interest."—*Scotsman*.

"... The poetry never clogs the action and the whole play is tense with the struggle in the soul of the hero.... The play thus becomes the tragedy of a city but the triumph of a man, and the interplay of the two ideas is finely wrought out. It is not all sombre, but even the gayest of its characters throbs to the heart-beat of Italy, and helps to give unity to the drama."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"Written in blank verse, that is both flexible and dramatic, the author gives an effect of spaciousness, combined with tense feeling."—*Publisher's Circular*.

"In the unfolding of the story, Mr. Presland shows much greater genius than he did in either of his two previous dramatic works.... The verse is most flexible, and practically all through he moves with great freedom and reaches real dignity; the action seldom flags, and the whole work is truly dramatic. Especially might we pick out the last act as extremely powerful."—*Sheffield Telegraph*.

"Throughout this admirable piece of dramatic work there is clear evidence of the author's extraordinary power as a delineator in poetic drama of human character in its many phases. His '*Joan of Arc*' was a work which one could not fail to remember by reason of its striking characteristics; but we are convinced that remembrance of the '*Defence of Venice*' will be equally, if not more, indelible."—*Cape Argus*.

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