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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PLAYS AND LYRICS ***

PLAYS
AND
LYRICS

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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To

IDA M. TARBELL

WITH FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP

PREFACE

This volume contains "Yolanda of Cyprus," a hitherto unpublished play; many new lyrics; some others that appeared in "Song-Surf," a volume whose publishers failed before it reached the public; and "David," which came out in America in 1904. The author's desire has been to include only his best work.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
YOLANDA OF CYPRUS	1
LYRICS—DRAMATIC:—	
JAEI	91
MARY AT NAZARETH	96
OUTCAST	98
ADELIL	100
THE DYING POET	102
ON THE MOOR	105
HUMAN LOVE	107
O GO NOT OUT	108
CALL TO YOUR MATE, BOB-WHITE	110
TRANSCENDED	112
THE CRY OF EVE	113
THE CHILD GOD GAVE	116
MOTHER-LOVE	118
ASHORE	120
LOVE'S WAY TO CHILDHOOD	122
LISSETTE	123
TEARLESS	125
THE LIGHTHOUSEMAN	126
BY THE INDUS	128
FROM ONE BLIND	130
AT THE FALL OF ROME, A.D. 455	131
PEACELESS LOVE	133
SUNDERED	134
WITH OMAR	135
A JAPANESE MOTHER (IN TIME OF WAR)	144
LYRICS—NON-DRAMATIC:—	
SHINTO (MIYAJIMA, JAPAN, 1905)	146
EVOCATION (NIKKO, JAPAN, 1905)	148
THE ATONER	150
INTIMATION	151
IN JULY	152
FROM ABOVE	154
SONGS TO A. H. R.:—	
I. THE WORLD'S AND MINE	155
II. LOVE-CALL IN SPRING	156
III. MATING	157
IV. UNTOLD	158
V. LOVE-WATCH	159
VI. AS YOU ARE	160
VII. AT AMALFI	161
VIII. ON THE PACIFIC	163
THE WINDS	165
THE DAY-MOON	167
TO A SINGING WARBLER	169
TO THE SEA	170
THE DEAD GODS	172
AT WINTER'S END	175
APRIL	176
AUGUST GUESTS	177
AUTUMN	178
THE WORLD	179
TO THE DOVE	180
AT TINTERN ABBEY	182
THE VICTORY	184

SEARCHING DEATH'S DARK	185
SERENITY	187
TO THE SPRING WIND	188
THE RAMBLE	189
RETURN	192
THE EMPTY CROSS	194
SUNSET-LOVERS	196
TO A ROSE (IN A HOSPITAL)	198
UNBURTHENED	199
WHERE PEACE IS DUTY	201
WANTON JUNE	202
AUTUMN AT THE BRIDGE	204
SONG	205
TO HER WHO SHALL COME	206
AVOWAL TO THE NIGHTINGALE	208
STORM-EBB	210
SLAVES	212
WAKING	213
FAUN-CALL	214
LINGERING	216
STORM-TWILIGHT	217
WILDNESS	218
BEFORE AUTUMN	219
FULFILMENT	221
TO THE FALLEN LEAVES	223
MAYA (HIROSHIMO, JAPAN, 1905)	224
SPIRIT OF RAIN (MIANOSHITA, JAPAN, 1905)	226
THE NYMPH AND THE GOD	227
A SEA-GHOST	228
LAST SIGHT OF LAND	230
SILENCE	231
DAVID	233

YOLANDA OF CYPRUS

CHARACTERS

[Pg 3]

RENIER LUSIGNAN *A descendant of the Lusignan kings of Cyprus.*
BERENGERE *His wife.*
AMAURY *His Son, Commander of Famagouste under the Venetians.*
YOLANDA *The Ward of Berengere, betrothed to Amaury.*
CAMARIN *A Baron of Paphos, guest in the Lusignan Castle.*
VITTIA PISANI *A Venetian Lady, also a guest.*
MORO *A Priest.*
HASSAN *Warden of the Castle.*
HALIL *His Son, a boy.*
TREMITUS *A Physician.*
OLYMPIO *A Greek boy, serving Amaury.*
ALESSA
MAGA
CIVA *Berengere's Women.*
MAURIA
SMARDA *Slave to Vittia.*
PIETRO *In Vittia's pay.*
Priests, acolytes, etc.
TIME—*The sixteenth century.*
PLACE—*The island of Cyprus.*

ACT I

[Pg 4]

[Pg 5]

SCENE: *A dim Hall, of blended Gothic and Saracenic styles, in the Lusignan Castle, on the island of Cyprus near Famagouste. Around the walls, above faint frescoes portraying the deliverance of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, runs a frieze inlaid with the coats-of-arms of former Lusignan kings. On the left, and back, is a door hung with heavy damask, and in the wall opposite, another. Farther down on the right a few steps, whose railing supports a Greek vase with jasmine, lead through a chapel to the sleeping apartments. In the rear, on either side, are guled lattice windows, and in the centre an open grated door, looking upon a loggia, and, across the garden below, over the moonlit sea. Seats are placed about, and, forward, a divan with rich Turkish coverings. A table with a lighted cross-shaped candlestick is by the door, left; and a lectern with a book on it, to the front, right. As the curtain rises, the Women, except CIVA, lean wearily on the divan, and HALIL near is singing dreamily,*

Ah, the balm, the balm,
And ah, the blessing
Of the deep fall of night
And of confessing.
Of the sick soul made white
Of all distressing:
Made white!...
Ah, balm of night
And, ah the blessing!

[Pg 6]

The music falls and all seem yielding to sleep. Suddenly there are hoof-beats and sounds at the gates below. HALIL springs up.

Halil. Alessa! Maga! Stirrings at the gates!

(All start up.)

Some one is come.

Alessa. Boy, Halil, who?

Halil. Up, up!
Perhaps Lord Renier—No: I will learn.

(He runs to curtains and looks.)

It is Olympio! Olympio!

From Famagouste and Lord Amaury!

Mauria. Ah!
And he comes here?

Halil. As he were lord of skies!
To lady Yolanda, by my lute!

Maga. Where is she?

Alessa. I do not know; perhaps, her chamber.

Mauria. Stay:
His word may be of the Saracens.

Halil (calling). Oho!

(He admits OLYMPIO, who enters insolently down. All press around him gaily.)

Mauria. Well what, Olympio, from Famagouste?
What tidings? tell us.

Maga. See, his sword!

Olympio. Stand off.

Mauria. The tidings, then, the tidings!

Olympio. None—for women.

Mauria. So, so, my Cupid? None of the Saracens?
Of the squadron huddling yesterday for haven
At Keryneia?

Olympio. Who has told you?

Mauria. Who?
A hundred galleys westing up the wind,
Scenting the shore, but timorous as hounds.
A gale—and twenty down!

Maga. The rest are flown?

Olympio. Ask Zeus, or ask, to-morrow, lord Amaury,
Or, if he comes, to-night. To lady Yolanda
I'm sent and not to tattle silly here.

(He starts off, but is arrested by laughter within. It is CIVA who enters, holding up a parchment.)

O! Only Civa. *(Starts again with HALIL.)*

Civa. How, Olympio!
Stay you, and hear!—May never virgin love him!
Gone as a thistle! *(Turns.)*

Mauria. Pouf!

Alessa (to CIVA). Now, what have you?

Civa. Verses! found in the garden. Verses! verses!
On papyrus of Paphos. O, to read!
But you, Alessa—!

Alessa (takes them). In the garden?

Civa. By
The fountain cypress at the marble feet
Of chaste Diana!

Maga. Where Sir Camarin
And oft our lady—!

Civa. Maga will you prattle?
Read them to us, Alessa, read them, read.
They are of love!

Maga. No, sorrow.

Civa. O, as a nun
You ever sigh for sorrow!—They are of love!
Of valour bursting through enchanted bounds
To ladies prisoned in an ogre's keep!
Then of the bridals!—O, they are of love!

Maga. No, *Civa*, no! of sorrow! see, her lips!

(She points to ALESSA, who, reading, has paled.)

See, see!

Civa. *Alessa*!

Alessa. *Maga*—*Civa*—Ah!

(She rends the parchment.)

Mauria. What are you doing?

Alessa. They were writ to *her*!

Mauria. To *her*? to whom? what are you saying? Read!
Read us the verses.

Alessa. No.

Mauria. Tell then his name
Who writes them, and to whom.

Alessa. I will not.

Mauria. Then
It is some guilt you hide!—And touching her
You dote on—lady *Yolanda*!

Alessa. Shame!

Mauria. Some guilt
Of one, then, in this castle!—See, her lips
Betray it is.

Maga. No, *Mauria*! no! *(holds her)* hush!

(Forms appear without.)

Mauria. O, loose me.

Maga. There, on the loggia! Hush, see—
Our lady and Sir *Camarin*.

Alessa (fearful). It is....
They heard us, *Maga*?

Maga. No, but—

Mauria (to ALESSA). So? that mouse?

Alessa. You know not, *Mauria*, what 'tis you say.

(BERENGERE coldly, as if consenting to it, enters.)

She is seeking us; be still.
(Stepping out.) My lady?

Berengere. Yes.
Your lamps; for it is time
Now for your aves and o'erneeded sleep.
But first I'd know if yet Lord *Renier*—

(Sees their disquiet—starts.)

Why are you pale?

Alessa. I?

Berengere. So—and strange.

Alessa. We have

But put away the distaff and the needle.

(CAMARIN *enters.*)

Berengere. The distaff and the needle—it may be.
And yet you do not seem—

Alessa. My lady—?

Berengere. Go;
And send me Hassan.

(*The women leave.*)

Camarin—you saw?
They were not as their wont is.

Camarin. To your eyes,
My Berengere, that apprehension haunts.
They were as ever. Then be done with fear!

Berengere. I cannot.

Camarin. To the abyss with it. To-night
Is ours—Renier carries at Famagouste—
Is ours for love and for a long delight!

Berengere. Whose end may be—

Camarin. Dawn and the dewy lark!
And passing of all presage from you.

Berengere (sits). No:
For think, Yolanda's look when by the cypress
We read the verses! And my dream that I
Should with a cross—inscrutable is sleep!—
Bring her deep bitterness.

Camarin. Dreams are a brood
Born of the night and not of destiny.
She guesses not our guilt, and Renier
Clasps to his breast ambition as a bride—
Ambition for Amaury.

[Pg 11]

Berengere. None can say.
He's much with this Venetian, our guest.
Though Venice gyves us more with tyranny
Than would the Saracen.

Camarin. But through this lady
Of the Pisani, powerful in Venice,
He hopes to lift again his dynasty
Up from decay; and to restore this island,
This venture-dream of the seas, unto his house.
'Tis clear, my Berengere!

Berengere. Then, *her* design?
And what the requital that entices her?

(*Rises.*)

Evil will come of it, to us some evil,
Or to Yolanda and Amaury's love.
But, there; the women.

Camarin. And too brief their stay.
What signal for to-night?

Berengere. Be in the garden.
Over the threshold yonder I will wave
The candle-sign, when all are passed to sleep.

Camarin. And with the beam I shall mount up to you
Quicker than ecstasy.

Berengere. I am as a leaf
Before the wind and raging of your love.
Go—go.

[Pg 12]

Camarin. But to return unto your breast!

(He leaves her by the divan.)

(The women re-enter with silver lighted lamps; behind them are HASSAN and the slave SMARDA. They wait for BERENGERE, who has stood silent, to speak.)

Berengere (looking up). Ah, you are come; I had forgotten.
And it is time for sleep.—Hassan, the gates:
Close them.

Hassan. And chain them, lady?

Berengere. Wait no longer.
Lord Renier will not come.

Hassan. No word of him?

Berengere. None, though he yesterday left Nicosie
With the priest Moro.

Hassan. Lady—

Berengere. Wait no longer.
Come, women, with your lamps and light the way.

(The women go by the steps. BERENGERE follows.)

Hassan (staring after her). The reason of this mood in her? The reason?
Something is vile. Lady Yolanda weeps
In secret; all for what?—unless because
Of the Paphian—or this Venetian.
(Seeing SMARDA.) Now,
Slave! Scythian! You linger?

Smarda. I am bidden—
My mistress.

Hassan. Spa! Thy mistress hath, I think,
Something of hell in her and has unpacked
A portion in this castle. Is it so?

[Pg 13]

Smarda. My lady is of Venice.

Hassan. Strike her, God.
Her smirk admits it.

Smarda. Touch me not!

Hassan. I'll wring
Thy tongue out sudden, if it now has lies.
What of thy lady and Lord Renier?

Smarda. Off!

(RENIER enters behind, with MORO.)

Hassan. Thy lady and Lord Renier, I say!
What do they purpose?

Smarda. Fool-born! look around.

Hassan. Not till—

Smarda. Lord Renier, help.

Hassan. What do you say?

(Turns, and stares amazed.)

A fool I am....

Renier. Where is my wife?

Hassan. Why, she....
This slave stung me to pry.

Renier. Where is my wife?

Hassan. A moment since, was here—the women with her.
She asked for your return.

Renier. And wherefore did?

Hassan. You jeer me.

Renier. Answer.

Hassan. Have you not been gone?

Renier. Not—overfar. Where is Yolanda?—Well?
No matter; find my chamber till I come.
Of my arrival, too, no word to any.

[Pg 14]

(*HASSAN goes, confused.*)

You, Moro, have deferred me; now, no more.
Whether it is suspicion eats in me,
Mistrust and fret and doubt—of whom I say not,
Or whether desire and unsubduable
To see Amaury sceptred—I care not.

(*To SMARDA.*)

Slave, to your lady who awaits me, say
I'm here and now have chosen.

Moro. Do not!

Renier. Chosen.

(*SMARDA goes.*)

None can be great who will not hush his heart
To hold a sceptre, and Amaury must.
He is Lusignan and his lineage
Will drown in him Yolanda's loveliness.

Moro. It will not.

Renier. Then at least I shall uncover
What this Venetian hints.

Moro. Hints?

Renier. I must know.

Moro. 'Tis of your wife?—Yolanda?

Renier. Name them not.
They've shut from me their souls.

Moro. My lord, not so;
But you repulse them.

[Pg 15]

Renier. When they pity. No,
Something has gone from me or never was
Within my breast. I love not—am unlovable.
Amaury is not so,
And this Venetian Vittia Pisani—

Moro. Distrust her!

Renier. She has power.

Moro. But not truth.
And yesterday a holy relic scorned.

Renier. She loves Amaury. Wed to her he will
Be the elected Governor of Cyprus.
The throne, then, but a step.

Moro. But all too great.
And think; Yolanda is to him as heaven:
He will not yield her.

Renier. Then he must. And she,
The Venetian, has ways to it—a secret

To pierce her from his arms.

Moro. Sir, sir?—of what?

Renier. I know not, of some shame.

Moro. Shame!

Renier. Why do you clutch me?

Moro. I—am a priest—and shame—

Renier. You have suspicion?

(*VITTIA enters unnoted.*)

Of whom?—Of whom, and what?

Vittia (lightly). My lord, of women.

(*RENIER starts and turns.*)

So does the Holy Church instill him.

Renier. You
Come softly, lady of Venice.

Vittia. Streets of sea
In Venice teach us.

Renier. Of what women, then?
My wife? Yolanda?

Vittia. By the freedom due us,
What matters it? In Venice our lords know
That beauty has no master.

Renier. Has no.... That,
That too has something hid.

Vittia. Suspicious lord!
Yet Berengere Lusignan is his wife!
And soon Yolanda—But for that I'm here.
You sent for me.

Renier (sullen). I sent.

Vittia. To say you've chosen?
And offer me irrevocable aid
To win Amaury?

Renier. All is vain in me
Before the fever for it.

Vittia. Then, I shall.
It must be done. My want is unafraid.
Hourly I am expecting out of Venice
Letters of power.
And what to you I pledge is he shall be
Ruler of Cyprus and these Mediterranean
Blue seas that rock ever against its coast.
That do I pledge ... but more.

Renier. Of rule?... Then what?

Vittia (going up to him). Of shame withheld—dishonour unrevealed.

(*He half recoils and stands. SMARDA enters hastily to them.*)

Smarda. My lady—

Vittia. Speak.

Smarda. She!

Vittia. Who? Yolanda? comes?
She's not asleep as you averred to me,
Was not asleep, but comes?... My lord—!

[Pg 16]

[Pg 17]

Renier. I'll stay,
Stay and confront her.

Vittia. Ignorantly? No.

Renier. I'll question her.

Vittia. Blindly, and peril all?

Renier. I will return. You put me off, and off.

(By the loggia, with MORO, he goes; the slave slips out. YOLANDA enters, sadly her gaze on the floor. She walks slowly, but becoming conscious starts, sees VITTIA, and turns to withdraw.)

Vittia. Your pardon—

Yolanda. I can serve you?

Vittia. If you seek
The women, they are gone.

Yolanda. I do not seek them.

Vittia. Nor me?

Yolanda. Nor any.—Yet I would I might
With seeking penetrate the labyrinth
Of your intent.

Vittia. I thank you. And you shall,
To-night—if you have love.

Yolanda. That thread were vain.

Vittia. I say, if you have love.

Yolanda. Of guile?

Vittia. Of her
You hold as mother, and who is Amaury's.

Yolanda. Were it so simple, no design had ever
Laired darkly in you, but to my eyes been clear
As shallows under Morpha's crystal wave.

Vittia. Unproven you speak so.

Yolanda. And proven would.

Vittia. If so, then—save her.

Yolanda. Who? What do you—?

Vittia (with irony). Mean?
It is not clear?

Yolanda. Save her?

Vittia. The surety flies
Out of your cheek and dead upon your heart:
Yet you are innocent—oh innocent?—
O'er what abyss she hangs!

Yolanda. O'er no abyss.

Vittia. But to her lord is constant!

Yolanda (desperate). She is constant.

Vittia. And to his bed is true?

Yolanda. True.

Vittia. And this baron
Of Paphos—Camarin—is but her *friend*,
And deeply yours—as oft you feign to shield her?

Yolanda. He is no more.

Vittia. Your heart belies your lips,
Knows better than believing what you say.

Yolanda. Were, were he then ... (*struggles*) Lord Renier knows it not!
And never must. I have misled his thought
From her to me. The danger thus may pass,
The open shame.
Sir Camarin departed, her release
From the remorse and fettering will seem
Sweet as a vista into fairyland.
For none e'er will betray her.

Vittia. None?

Yolanda. Your tone...!
(*Realising with gradual horror.*) The still insinuation! You would do it!
This is the beast then of the labyrinth?
And this your heart is?

Vittia. No, not ever: no.
But now, if you deny me.

Yolanda. Speak as a woman,
If there is Womanhood in you to speak.
The name of Berengere Lusignan must
Go clean unto the years, fair and unsullied.
Nor must the bloody leap
Of death fall on her from Lord Renier's sword,
A death too ready if he but suspect.
No, she is holy!
And holy are my lips
Remembering that they may call her mother!
All the bright world I breathe because of her,
Laughter and roses, day-song of the sea,
Not bitterness and loneliness and blight!
All the bright world,
Of voices, dear as waking to the dead—
Voices of love and tender earthly hopes—
O, all the beauty I was once forbid!
Yes, yes!—
She lifted me, a lonely convent weed,
A cloister thing unvisited of dew,
Withering and untended and afar
From the remembered ruin of my home,
And here has planted me in happiness.
Then, for her, all I am!

[Pg 20]

Vittia. Or—hope to be?

Yolanda. The price, say, of your silence.—I am weary.

Vittia. And would be rid of me.

Yolanda. The price, the price.

Vittia. It is (*low and ashamed*) that you renounce Amaury's love.

(*A pause.*)

Yolanda. Amaury's love... You then would rend me there
Where not Eternity could heal the wound
Though all the River of God might be for balm!
Cruelty like to this you could not do?

(*Waits a moment.*)

A swallow on the battlements to-day
Fell from the hawk: you soothed and set it free.
This, then, you would not—!

[Pg 21]

Vittia. Yes.

Yolanda. You cannot!

Vittia. Yes.

Yolanda (*wrung for a moment then calm*).

I had forgotten, you are of Venice—Venice
Whose burdening is vast upon this land.
Good-night.

Vittia. And you despise me!

Yolanda. More am sick
That love of him has led your thought so low.
To-morrow—

Vittia. Not to-morrow! But you must
Choose and at once.

Yolanda. Then—

(They start and listen. Approaching hoofs are heard.)

Vittia. Ah! Amaury?—It is?
His speed upon the road? now at the gates?

(The fall of chains is heard.)

What then, what is your purpose—to renounce
And force him from you, or to have me breathe
To Renier Lusignan the one word
That will transmute his wrong to madness?
Say quickly. Centuries have stained these walls,
But never a wife; never—

(Enter BERENGERE.)

Yolanda. Mother?...

Berengere. Amaury
Has spurred to us, Yolanda, from his post,
Secret and sudden. But ... what has befallen?

[Pg 22]

(Looks from one to the other.)

Yolanda. He comes here, mother?

Berengere. At once.

Yolanda. No!

Vittia (coldly, to YOLANDA). Then to-night
Must be the end.

Yolanda. Go, go.

Berengere (as Vittia passes out). What thing is this?

Yolanda. Mother, I cannot have him—here—Amaury!
Defer him but a little—till to-morrow.
I cannot see him now.

Berengere. This is o'erstrange.

Yolanda. Help me to think. Go to him, go, and say
Some woman thing—that I am ill—that I
Am at confession—penance—that—Ah, say
But anything!

Berengere. Yolanda!

Yolanda. Say.... No use.
Too late.

Berengere. His step?

Yolanda. Oh, unmistakable;
Along the corridor. There!

(The curtains are thrown back.)

Amaury (at the threshold.) My Yolanda!

(Hastens down and takes her, passive, into his arms. BERENGERE goes.)

My, my Yolanda!
To touch you is as triumph to the blood,
Is as the boon of battle to the strong!

[Pg 23]

Yolanda. Amaury, no; release me and say why
You come: The Saracens—?

Amaury. Not of them now!

(Bends back her head.)

But of some tribute incense to this beauty!
Dear as the wind wafts from undying shrines
Of mystery and myrrh!
I'd have the eloquence of quickened moons
Pouring upon the midnight magical,
To say all I have yearned,
Now, with your head pillowed upon my breast!
Slow sullen speech come to my soldier lips,
Rough with command, and impotent of softness?
Come to my lips! or fill so full my eyes
That the unutterable, shall seem as sweet
To my Yolanda. *(Lifting her face, with surprise.)*
But how now? tears?

Yolanda. Amaury—

Amaury. What have I done? Too pitiless have pressed
You to this coat of steel?

Yolanda. No, no.

Amaury. My words,
Or silence, then?

Yolanda. Amaury, no, but sweet,
Sweet as the roses of Damascus crusht,
Your silence is! and sweeter than the dream
Of April nightingale on Troados,
Or gushing by the springs of Chitria,
Your every word of love! Yet—yet—ah, fold me,
Within your arms oblivion and hold me,
Fast to your being press me, and there bless me
With breathèd power of your manhood's might.
Amaury!...

[Pg 24]

Amaury. This I cannot understand.

Yolanda (freeing herself). Nothing—a folly—groundless frailty.

Amaury. You've been again at some old tale of sorrow,

(Goes to the lectern.)

Pining along the pages of a book—
This, telling of that Italy madonna
Whose days were sad—I have forgotten how.
Is it not so?

Yolanda. No, no. The tears of women
Come as the air and sighing of the night,
We know not whence or why.

Amaury. Often, perhaps.
I am not skilled to tell. But these—not these!
They are of trouble known.

Yolanda. Yet now forget them.

Amaury. It will not leave my heart that somehow—how
I cannot fathom—Camarin—

Yolanda (lightly, to stop him). No farther!

Amaury. That Camarin of Paphos is their cause.
Tell me—

Yolanda. Yes, that I love thee!

Amaury. Tell me—

Yolanda. Love thee!
As sea the sky! and as the sky the wind!
And as the wind the forest! As the forest—
What does the forest love, Amaury? I
Can think of nothing!

[Pg 25]

Amaury. Tell me then you have
Never a moment of you yielded to him,
That never he has touched too long this hand—
Till evermore he must, even as I—
Nor once into your eyes too deep has gazed!
You falter? darken?

Yolanda. Would he ne'er had come
Into these halls! that it were beautiful,
Holy to hate him as the Lost can hate.

Amaury. But 'tis not?

Yolanda. God shall judge him.

Amaury. And not you?

Yolanda. Though he is weak, there is within him—

Amaury. That
Which women trust? and you?

(BERENGERE *enters. He turns to her.*)

Mother?

Berengere. A runner,
A soldier of your troop within the forts
Has come with word.

Amaury (starting). Mother!

Berengere. It is ill news?
I've seen that battle-light in you before.
'Tis of the Saracens? you ride to-night
Into their peril?

[Pg 26]

Amaury. Come, the word, the word!

Berengere. Only this token.

Amaury. The spur? the spur? (*Takes it.*) They then
Are landing!

Yolanda. How, Amaury; tell your meaning!

Amaury. The galleys of the Saracens have found
Anchor and land to-night near Keryneia.
My troops are ready and await me—
So, no delay.

Yolanda. I pray you (*strangely, with terror*) do not go.

Amaury. Yolanda!

Yolanda. If I am left alone—!

Amaury. Yolanda!

Yolanda (sinking to a seat). I meant it not—a breath of fear—no more.
Go, go.

Amaury. I know you not to-night. Farewell.

(*He kisses her and hurries off.... A silence.*)

Berengere. Yolanda—

Yolanda. Mother, I will go to sleep.

(*She rises.*)

Berengere. A change is over you—a difference
Drawn as a veil between us.

Yolanda. I am weary.

Berengere. You love me?

Yolanda. As, O mother, I love him,
With love impregnable to every ill,
As Paradise is.

Berengere. Then—

Yolanda. I pray, no more.
To-night I am flooded with a deeper tide
Than yet has flowed into my life—and through it
Sounds premonition: so I must have calm.

(She embraces BERENGERE; goes slowly up steps and off.)

Berengere (chilled). What fear—if it is fear—has so unfixed her?
It is suspicion—Then I must not meet
Him here to-night—or if to-night, no more.
Her premonition!—and my dream that I
Should with a cross bring her deep bitterness.

(Thinks a moment, then takes the crucifix from her neck.)

Had Renier but come, perhaps I might ...

(Lays it on table.)

O were I dead this sinning would awake me?...
And yet I care not (*dully.*) ... No, I will forget.

*(Goes firmly from door to door and looks out each. Then lifts, uniting,
the cross-shaped candlestick; and waving it at the loggia, turns
holding it before her.)*

Soon he will come up from the cool, and touch
Away my weakness with mad tenderness.
Soon he will ... Ah!

(Has seen with terror the candlestick's structure.)

The cross!... My dream!... Yolanda!

(Lets it fall.)

Mercy of God, move in me!... Sacrilege!

(Sinks feebly to the divan, and bows, overcome.)

Camarin (appearing after a pause on the loggia).
My Berengere, a moment, and I come!

*(Enters, locking the grating behind him, Then he hurries down and
leans to lift her face.)*

Berengere. No, no! nor ever, ever again, for ever!

(Shrinks.)

Go from me and behind leave no farewell....

Camarin. This is—illusion. In the dew I've waited,
And the night's song of you is in my brain—
A song that seems—

Berengere. Withhold from words. At last
Fate is begun! See, with the cross it was
I waved you hither. Leave me—let me pass
Out of this sin—and to repentance—after.

Camarin. I cannot, cannot!

Berengere. Pity, then, my fear.
This moment were it known would end with murder,
Or did it not, dishonour still would kill!

Leave, leave.

Camarin. To-morrow, then; but not to-night!

(He goes behind and puts his arms around her.)

Give me thy being once again, thy beauty.
For it I'm mad as bacchanals for wine.

*(YOLANDA, entering an the balcony, hears, and would retreat, but sees
RENIER come to the grating.)*

Once more be to me all that woman may!
Let us again take rapture wings and rise
Up to our world of love, guilt would unsphere.
Let us live over days that passed as streams
Limpid by lotus-banks unto the sea,
O'er all the whispered nights that we have clasped
Knowing the heights and all the deeps of passion!
But speak, and we shall be amid the stars.

[Pg 29]

*(RENIER draws a dagger and leaves the grating. With a low cry YOLANDA
staggers down: the Two rise, fearful.)*

Berengere. Yolanda!

Yolanda. Mother, mother!... Ah, his eyes!

Berengere. What brings you here—to spy upon me?

Yolanda. Listen!...
Think not of me—no, hush—but of the peril
Arisen up.... Your husband!

Camarin. Renier?

Yolanda. Was at that grating—heard. And from its sheath,
A dagger—! Ah, he will come.

Berengere (weakly). What does she say?

Yolanda. Find calmness now, and some expedient.

(She struggles to think.)

Berengere. I cannot die.

Yolanda. No, no.

Berengere. My flesh is weak,
Is poor of courage—poverished by guilt,
As all my soul is! But, Yolanda, you—!

Yolanda. Yes, something must be done—something be done.

(CAMARIN goes to the curtains and returns.)

Berengere. The shame ... the shame ... the shame!

Yolanda. There yet is time.

Berengere. You can deliver! you are innocent.

Yolanda. Perhaps. Let me but think.—He came—

[Pg 30]

Berengere. You see?
There is escape? a way from it?

Yolanda. Perhaps.
He came after your words ... yes ... could not see
Here in the dimness ... but has only heard
Sir Camarin?

Berengere. I do not know!

Yolanda. Go, go,
Up to your chamber and be as asleep.
There is a way—I think—dim, but a way.
Go to your chamber; for there yet may be

Prevention!

Berengere. I—yes, yes.

Yolanda. There is a way.

(BERENGERE *goes.*)

Strength now to walk it! strength unfaltering.

Camarin. What do you purpose?

Yolanda. Here to take her place,
Here at the lowest of her destiny.

Camarin. I do not understand.

Yolanda. But wholly shall.
Clasp me within your arms; he must believe
'Tis I and not his wife you have unhallowed,
Your arms about me, though they burn! and breathe me
Thirst of unbounded love as unto her.

(*He clasps her, and they wait.*)

Ah, it is he!

Camarin. No.

Yolanda. Yes, the words; at once!

Camarin (hoarsely). With all my body and soul-breath I love you,

(RENIER *enters with* MORO.)

And all this night is ours for ecstasy.
Kiss me with quenchless kisses, and embrace
Me with your beauty, till—

(YOLANDA *with a cry, as of fear, loses herself, pretending to discover*
RENIER, *who is struck rigid.*)

Moro. My lord, my lord!...
It is Yolanda.

Renier. Then—

(*The dagger falls from him.*)

Why, then—Amaury!

(YOLANDA, *realising, stunned, sinks back to the divan.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SEVERAL DAYS HAVE ELAPSED.

SCENE: *The forecourt of the castle, beyond which is the garden and in the distance the mountains, under the deep tropical blue of morning. On the right the wall enclosing the castle grounds run back and is lost in the foliage of cypress, palm, orange; it is pierced by an arched gate with lifted portcullis. On the left rises the dark front of the castle, its arabesqued doorway open. Across the rear a low arcaded screen of masonry, with an entrance to the right, separates the court from the garden. Before it a fountain, guarded by a statue of a Knight of St. John, falls into a porphyry basin. By the castle door, to the front, and elsewhere, are stone seats. HASSAN is standing moodily by the screen, left, looking out the portcullis. He starts, hearing steps, and as the old leach TREMITUS enters, motions him silently into the castle; then muttering "the old blood-letter," stands as before, while CIVA, MAGA, and MAURIA are heard in the garden, and enter gaily bearing water-jars to the fountain. CIVA sees his look and breaks into a twitting laughter. The other two join her.*

Civa. Look at him! Maga! Mauria! behold!
Was ever sight so sweet upon the world!

[Pg 31]

[Pg 32]

[Pg 33]

His eyes! his lips! a prince!

Mauria (critically). Now, is he not?
With the price of vinegar upon his face.

(All laugh.)

The price of vinegar! who'll buy!—Not I!
Not I! Not I! Not I!

Hassan. Wench.

Civa. Verily!
And not a man! he has discovered it!
You're not a man, Mauria! we were duped.

(MAURIA slaps her playfully.)

But see him now—a mummy of the Nile!
Who died of cholera!

Mauria. Then, a care, he'll bite.
He's been in the grave a long while and he's hungry.
A barley-loaf, quick, Maga!

Civa. To appease him!
But ssh! Beware! There's something of import.

(They stop in mock awe before him.)

What does he think of?

Mauria. Sphinxes and the spheres.

Civa. Or little ants and gnats that buzz about him.

Mauria. And how to make them smart for sauciness.

Civa. Or of Alessa!

Maga. No, no, Civa! come;
Enough of teasing.

Civa. Of Alessa!

Maga. No.
Your pitcher, come. He's troubled by the tale
Of lady Yolanda—
And waits for lord Amaury from the battle.

Civa. The—! heigh! heigh-o! awaits! la, la! he does!

(HASSAN starts at her tone.)

For lord Amaury! does he so indeed?

Hassan. What do you know? Be silent.

Civa. Ho!

Hassan. Itch! would
You have lady Yolanda hear? She comes
Now, as she has this morning thrice, to ask.

(YOLANDA appears on the threshold with ALESSA.)

Lord Renier's gall, remember, if she learns.

(CIVA flouts him, but goes to the fountain. The others follow, fill their jugs, and, singing, return to the garden. YOLANDA then crosses to HASSAN, who waits evasive.)

Yolanda. My want is still the same—words are unneeded.

Hassan. To know of lord Amaury?

Yolanda. Lord Amaury—
He has not yet returned?

Hassan (loathly). I have not seen him.

Yolanda. Nor heard?

Hassan. Nothing.

Yolanda. I cannot understand.

(Goes to the gate, troubled.)

Hassan (low). Liar that I am to say it!

Yolanda. I cannot—cannot!

(Returns.)

[Pg 35]

The Saracens we know were routed to
Their vessels—all the Allah-crying horde.
And lord Amaury—said the courier not?—
Rode in the battle as a seraph might
To the Holy Sepulchre's deliverance.
And yet no word from him.

Hassan. Perhaps—with reason.

(She looks at him quickly—he flushes.)

With reason!... knowing, lady, what, here, now,
Is rumoured of a baron
And lady Yolanda!... Pardon!

Yolanda (slowly). Of a baron
And lady Yolanda.

Hassan. Yes: it is the women
Who with their ears ever at secrecy
Rumour it. But, lady, it is a lie?
This Camarin, this prinker,
Whose purse is daily loose to us.... I curse him!
His father.... Well, my mother's ten years dead
And flower lips breathe innocent above her.
But I'll avenge her shame.

Yolanda. On—him?

Hassan. On him!
And—you, who do not hush this tale of you,
Though it is truthless—hear:
I have a stab for Camarin of Paphos
Whenever he has lived—but say!—too long.

Yolanda (who has listened rigidly. After a pause).
Come here ... look in my eyes, and—deeper.... Shame!

(He is quelled.)

[Pg 36]

Pity alone we owe to sin not blame.
And they who love may stray, it seems, beyond
All justice of our judging.—
Is evil mad enchantment come upon
The portals of this castle?

Hassan. I would serve you.

Yolanda. With murder? no. But if you would indeed,
As oft you have—

Hassan. Lady, I will.

Yolanda. Then watch
The Venetian, and when Amaury comes
Find me at once. What sound was that?... A bugle?
It is! it is! Alessa! *(Overjoyed.)* Do you hear?
His troop! Amaury's! O the silver chime!
Again I breathe, I breathe!
My heart as a bird's in May!
Amaury!... Come! we'll go to him! we'll go!
Before any within Lusignan—!

Alessa. Lady!

Yolanda. At once! it rings again! again! we'll go!

Alessa. And tell him!

Yolanda. Warn! Warn him a fever's here
That he must fend his ear from. 'Twill suffice.
And I again shall see him, hear him speak,
Hang on his battle-story blessedly!
And you, Hassan.... But why do you stand stone?
You know something.... He's dead!

Hassan. No, lady, no.

Yolanda. Not? ah!... then what? 'Twas not his trumpet?

Hassan (after a struggle). No.
And I will lie to you no longer.

Yolanda. You?

Hassan. Though for obedience it be or life;
And at Lord Renier's command.... It is
Not true that lord Amaury from the battle
Has not returned.

Yolanda. But he—you mean—is here?

(Stands motionless.)

Hassan. Here: came on yesterday at dusk. Was led
Up to his chamber....
So much Lord Renier who slipt him in
Revealed, that I might guile you.

Alessa (sharply). And you have?

Hassan. Yes.

Alessa. Though you boasted love to me?

Hassan. Now, woman!

Alessa. Lady, I would have wed him—wed this toad!
Who'd kill the Paphian, too?

Hassan. Yes!

Alessa. Worm! with dust?
Heeling away from him?

Yolanda. Be still, be still.

(ALESSA turns to her.)

These words can wait on what may yet be helped.
This may undo me! First of all I should
Have seen Amaury! Now——!

Hassan. The Venetian!

(They start. VITTIA enters from castle.)

Lady, I will go in.

Alessa. And I; to wait.

(They go.)

Yolanda (suddenly). But I to see Amaury.

Vittia. What?

(Stops.)

Yolanda. To see,
Vittia Visani, who withholds Amaury——
Who came last night at dusk, as well you know.

(*They face, opposed.*)

What have you told him?

Vittia. Hah?

Yolanda. Insolence, false
And feigning! But no matter; lies are brief.
I'll go myself to him.

Vittia. To be repelled?

(*BERENGERE enters.*)

Yolanda. If he could trust you—but he could not.

Vittia. Knowing
A Paphian ere this has fondled two?

Yolanda. You hear, mother? (*To Vittia.*) Out of my way at once.

Berengere. Stay, stay! She has not told him! nothing!... Yes,
I too have been aware and kept you blind.
But, nothing! for he still is overworn.
And now his wound—

Yolanda. Wound! he is wounded?

Berengere. He sleeps.

Yolanda. And is in danger—jeopardy?

Berengere. In none;
If the leech Tremitus has any skill;
And that you know.

Yolanda. I thank ... Madonna ... thee!

(*VITTIA laughs and goes.*)

But you, mother, are come at last to say
Your promises, broken two days, are kept?
You've spoken? won Lord Renier to wisdom?
Pled him to silence which alone can save us?
Dear mother—?

Berengere. Do not call me so again.

(*Turns away.*)

I have not—and I will not.

Yolanda. Oh!

Berengere. I cannot...

Yolanda. But can leave me so laden here within
This gulf's dishonour? Never!... So return
And pledge him but to wait!
For this Venetian has now, I bode,
Something of evil more,
When once Amaury hears all that has passed.
Return!

Berengere. I cannot.

Yolanda (proudly). Then hear, hear me! I
Too am a woman, and the woman wants,
The beauty and ache and dream and glow and urge
Of an unreckoned love are mine as yours.
I will not lose Amaury; but will tell him
Myself the truth.

Berengere. Then—I'll not stay for death,
And wait for shame. But now with Camarin
Will go from here.

Yolanda. Mother!

[Pg 39]

[Pg 40]

Berengere. To some retreat
Away!

Yolanda. Where still pursuit would follow! even,
I fear, Amaury's!—
And overtake you though it were as far
As the sea foams, or past the sandy void
Of stricken Africa. It would be vain.
Vain, and I cannot have you. No, but listen—

*(Breaks off seeing RENIER, on the castle threshold. His look is on her,
but he comes down addressing BERENGERE.)*

Renier. She troubles you too much.

Berengere. My lord?

Renier. Too much.
You cherish her and reap unchastity
For gratitude—unchastity against
Our very son who was betrothed to her.
Yet see her shameless.

Berengere (dully). No; I think you wrong her.

(YOLANDA moves apart.)

Renier. Nobly you pity! But it will not veil her.
Rather the convent and the crucifix,
Matin and Vesper in a round remote,
And senseless beads, for such.—But what more now
Is she demanding?

[Pg 41]

Berengere. Little.

Renier. Not the means
Still to deceive Amaury?

Berengere. Renier ... no.

(Speaks loathly.)

But I have a request that, if you grant,
Will lead peace back to us ... and from us draw
This fang of fate.

Renier. Ah.

Berengere. Yes.

Renier (slowly). And we might be
As those that wedded love?

Berengere. Perhaps.

Renier. That—love!

(A pause.)

Then it shall be, at once ... But no, I first
Have a confession.

Berengere. You?

Renier. A pang!—For days

(Takes her hand.)

Before I found Yolanda on the breast
Of Camarin of Paphos—
I suffered in the furnace of suspicion
The fume and suffocation of the thought
That you were the guilty one—you my own wife.

(She recoils to YOLANDA, who comes up.)

I did; but rue, rue it!...

... Yet—it is just

That you recoil even as now you do

[Pg 42]

From stain upon your wedded constancy....
But Time that is e'er-pitiful may pass
Soon over it—
And leave only forgiveness. And perhaps
Then I shall win you as I never have.—
Now the request.

Berengere. That now ... I cannot plead.

(*Sees YOLANDA harden. Is impelled.*)

And yet I must ... It is that, till I bid
Amaury may not know of this ... not know
This trouble fallen from a night or evil—
Pitiless on us as a meteor's ash.

Renier. Not of it? he? not know?

Berengere. Trust to me.

Renier. How!
And to this wanton's perfidy to bind
Him witless to her—with a charm perhaps—
Or, past releasing, with a philtre? She
Whom now he holds pure as a spirit sped
From immortality, or the fair fields
Of the sun, to be his bride?

Yolanda. Sir, no!... She means
Not I shall wed him! (*Winningly.*) Only that you spare
To separate us with this horror; that
You trust me to dispel his love, to pall
And chill his passion from me. For I crave
Only one thing—innocence in his sight.
Believe!—believe!

[Pg 43]

Renier. I will—that you are mad.
Yet madder I, if to this coil my brain
Were blind.

Yolanda. As it will be! with deadlier dark,
If you attend me not!
And may have destiny you cannot know.
But you will heed?
For somewhere in you there is tenderness.
Once when you chafed in fever and I bore
White orange blossoms dewy to your pillow
You touched my hand gently, as might a father.

(*Caresses his.*)

Once on the tower when alone at dusk
I sang—I know not why—of lost delights,
Of vanished roses that are ere recalling
May to the world, you came and suddenly
Lifted my brow up silent to your kiss.
Ah, you remember; you will hear me?

Renier. No!
Though you are cunning.—Thus you wove the mesh
About Amaury—till he could not move
Beyond you.

Yolanda. For his sake I ask it.

Renier. For
No sake but to o'ersway him with your eyes
In secret, thus, and with
Your hair that he believes an aureole
Brought with you out of Heaven.

Berengere. Again—wrong.

Renier. So deem you and, my Berengere, I grieve,
Desiring much your peace.

Berengere. It grieves you not.

[Pg 44]

Renier. Then not! and half I fear—you here?—it should not.
There's midnight in this thing and mystery.
Does she not love—Camarin?

Yolanda (trembling). Say no more.
Be all—all as you will.

Renier. That brings you low:
But brings to me no light—only again
The stumbling in suspicion.

Yolanda. It should not.

Renier (with a sudden gleam).
To-morrow then, unless Amaury runs
Fitting revenge through Camarin of Paphos,
Your lover, you shall clasp him openly
Before all of Lusigman.

Yolanda. No; no, no!
The thought of it is soil!... Rather ... his death!

Renier. What, what?

Berengere. My lord, she knows not what she says.
The unaccustomed wind of these ill hours
Has torn tranquillity from her and reason.

Yolanda (realising). Yes, as she says—tranquillity and reason.

(*Strains to smile.*)

These hours of ill!

Renier. I'll send her Camarin.

(*Goes, looking steadfastly back.*)

[Pg 45]

Yolanda (turning, then, to BERENGERE).
His mood and mien—that tremor in his throat,
Unfaltering. I fear him.

Berengere. Life is fear.
No step was ever taken in the world
But from a brink of danger, or in flight
From happiness whose air is ever sin.
It sickens me.

Yolanda. Mother!

Berengere. Nothing; a pain
Here in my breast. (*Sits.*)

Yolanda. And it is all through him
Who as a guest came pledged into this house.
Came with the chivalry and manly show
Of reverence and grace, and on his lips
Lore of the east and wonders of the west.

(*CAMARIN appears from garden.*)

Ah, and he seeks us now! unwhelmed of it!
Ready of step, impassive, cold! And see—

(*He bows, then listens rigidly.*)

A flawless courtesy! as 'twere a king's.
Can he not smile too on his handiwork?
Our days were merciful and he has made
Each moment's beat a blow upon the breast.
Honour was here and innocence lies now
A sacrifice that pain cannot consume.

(*Pauses.*)

Camarin. Or death.

Yolanda. Then have you not, unshameable!

A help for it or healing? you who know
So well the world and its unwonted ways!
A man would have, a man.

Camarin. And I am barren.
My brain an arid waste under remorse.
Only—one thing it yields—the love of her
My love has made unholy.

Yolanda. While to me
The shame is left, and silence—no defence,
When it is told Amaury, "See her you
Blest with betrothal and the boon of faith,
Chose as the planet-mate of your proud star!
While, in the battle,
You with the weal of Cyprus on your brow
Dared momentarily peril,
We found her" ... Ah, the memory is fire!—
I will not bear it.

Camarin. Then how? What?... You must.
Though for your suffering I am pitiful.
You must! (*Takes her wrist.*)
For to one thing, one only now I'm bent—
That Berengere be saved.

Berengere. To-day ... no more.

Camarin. Suspicion and the peril-feet of shame
I must keep from her still.

Yolanda. Though driven o'er
My heart they trample the lone flower of hope.

(Shaking off his hand, then, unnaturally wrought up.)

And even now perhaps Amaury hears

And turns away in horror!

Camarin. What? Come, come.
Enough is here without—

Yolanda (as before). I'll go to him!
Despite of them! in to his side and say
That I am innocent—as the first dawn
And dew of Eden!... Yes!

Camarin. A frenzy! Mere
Folly! you wander!

Yolanda (listening). Whose that anguish? whose?

Camarin. Amaury still is many leagues away—

(Hassan appears.)

At Keryneia! Do you hear me?

Yolanda. Hassan!

(Is numb as he hurries down from the castle to her. A pause; then her voice falls hoarsely.)

I hear you, speak. His wounds I know. The rest!
They've told him?

Hassan. The Venetian, who nursed him
Last night, pouring his potions—
She and Lord Renier. They broke his sleep.
He listened to them as one in a grave.
Then they besought of him
Some oath against you, were they right: he would not.
Now he has risen,
Silent and pale and suffering in leash.
He's coming here.

Camarin. Why, you are mad!

Yolanda. Be still.

[Pg 48]

Camarin. Amaury was not then delayed? is—here?

(Voices are heard perturbed within the castle. Then AMAURY, putting aside RENIER and TREMITUS, followed by VITTIA and others, enters down.)

Amaury. I'll not return unto my couch though twice
These wounds and all your wants were urging it!
Yolanda! my Yolanda!—Never, never!

(Takes her to him.)

Until I prove you that a word against
Her that I hold here in my arms is more
To me than any peril.

Tremitus. But, sir—!... Aeih!
My precious physic wasted!

Amaury. Till I prove it!
For ... my Yolanda!...
You who are purity if Mary still
Is mother of God and lighteth Paradise!
You in whose presence I am purged as one
Bathing a thousand years in angel song!
They say, you, who are stainless to my eyes
As is the sacring-bell to holy ears,
So undefiled even the perfect lily
Pendant upon your breast fears to pollute it!
Listen, they tell me you—A fool, a fool
Would know it unbelievable and laugh.

Renier. As now a fool is doing?

Amaury. O, sir, pardon.
You are my father, and, I must believe,
Mean well this monster breath's unchastity,
As does this lady (*of VITTIA*) who has gently nursed me.
But you were tricked; it was illusion swum
Before your sleep. Therefore my purpose is
Now to forget it.

[Pg 49]

Tremitus. Aeih! and to return
Now to my drugs.

Renier. Stand off!—As dogs forget
The lash in hunger of the wonted bone?

(Laughs angrily.)

Amaury. A poison so incredible and dark
You cannot duped inoculate me with.
Trust in my veins makes of it but more love.
And to dispel your minds (*goes to CAMARIN*) I'll clasp his hand
Whom you have so accused.

Vittia. O do, my lord!

(Smiles disdainfully.)

And then embrace him in whose arms three nights
Ago she was embraced.

Yolanda (*to her*). Can you so say!

Vittia. Yes, and will add—

Amaury. Lady of Venice, nothing!
But this to all, I answer!—
There is my mother, see,
Wounded with wonder of this plight, and pity.
Yolanda has dwelt by her
As the fawn
By the white doe on mount Chionodes.
I would as quick believe that she had given
Her holiness up to contamination
As that Yolanda—

[Pg 50]

Yolanda. Amaury, enough!... I know!

Amaury. As quickly!

Yolanda. Then ... quell this delirium!

(*A pause.*)

Out of your thought forever let it fall,
Hear no more of it, ever!
Be deaf to it as to a taunt of doom,
In triple mail to every peaceless word,
Granite against even its memory.
Say that you will, and now!...

Renier. So that you may
Allure him yet to wed you?

Amaury. Sir!

Renier. She would.

Yolanda. No, no! But let him.... Then I will go far
Away from here to any alien air,
To opiate India, a lost sea-isle!
To the last peak of arid Caucasus.

Renier. With Camarin of Paphos?

Yolanda. With whoever
Your peace and this compelling pain ... Ah no!

Renier. With him, with him, I say?...

Amaury. You drive and drain her.
To me her words shall be—me and no other.
So my Yolanda now dissolve the cling
Of this invisible but heavy hydra;
I've striven with it till no more I can.
If any tare has been unseemly sown
Upon the April vision of our love,
Say it at once that I may rend and fling it
Away from us. Say it!

Renier. Vainly implored.—
Yet ask her this, If she three nights ago—

Amaury. I will not so insult her—

Tremitus. Aeih—

Renier. Insult?
She knows what I would bid and does she hurl
Her soul in any disavowal?

Amaury. I
Will speak to her alone. Go all of you
There to the fountain.

Yolanda. Yes, Amaury, then
One searching of my face shall free your fear.
Alone, alone.

Renier. Still to befool him!

Yolanda (warningly). Choose!
I cannot suffer more of this.

Amaury. Nor I
To breathe ever the burning of this mist
Of anguish and insatiate accusal.—
This wound upon my throat, fever it not
With longer fire of doubt, Yolanda.

Yolanda. Ah!

Berengere. I am not well. I will go to my chamber.

(*She passes into the castle.*)

Renier. But I never until this guiler grants
I found her in the arms of Camarin,
Drinking the frenzied wine of passion he
Poured from his soul.

[Pg 52]

Amaury. Yolanda?

Renier. She is silent;
Dumb to deny it.

Amaury. But she will, she will.
You've driven her with dread and awe.

Vittia (lightly). And truth?

Amaury. Have wounded her. But do not fear, Yolanda,
Fiercely disown.

Yolanda. Amaury ... it is true.

(*He staggers slowly back.*)

No, no; I have not been faithless to you—
Even a moment
To the divinity of love high-altared
Here in my breast! to the immutable
Beauty of it!... look, look not on me so—
As I had struck, murdered a little child!
Or palsied one who put a hand to help me;
Or through eternity had desecrated,
Vainly, virginity and trust and truth!
No, my Amaury! I ... do you not see?

(*Hysterically.*)

Not faithless, hear! it is not true! not true!
But only this—

Camarin. Yolanda!

Yolanda. I—

Camarin. Yolanda!

[Pg 53]

(*A moment, then she sinks down, her face in her hands. AMAURY
groans; then starting goes fiercely to HASSAN, and taking his sword
recrosses trembling to CAMARIN.*)

Amaury. The day you first set step in Lusignan
An image of the Magdalen within
The chapel yonder fell—presaging this.
Only your death, your death or mine stands pale
Between us now, awaiting silently.
Draw, and at once.

Camarin. Amaury, I will not.

Amaury. Out, quickly.

Camarin. Do your will. I'll put no more
To the guilt I bear, or to the misery
That guilt has brought upon you.

Amaury. Coward!

Camarin. Strike!

Amaury. You play a part! (*Raves.*) And 'tis that you may live
Still in the love that you a thief have stolen.
So, with your steel—!

Camarin. It stays within its sheath.

Amaury. Then I will not be thwarted though I must
Crush you as one a viper with his heel,
Though I must take your leper throat into

My hands and strangle life from it!
For the same sky you breathe I will not.
The sun that falls upon you shall not foul
My being—
Though I must go down into hell for it.

[Pg 54]

(He starts, frenzied, to strike, but suddenly staggers; then clasps at his throat, drops the sword, and sinks down moaning.)

Yolanda. His wound!

Tremitus. Aeih, aeih! at last.

Yolanda. Amaury! Oh!

(Runs to him. He struggles to his feet.)

Amaury! Amaury!

Amaury. Stand away from me.

(She falls back; he laughs in derision.)

I to believe her pure as my own mother!

Vittia. Had you but trusted me, Amaury.

Amaury. You?

(Looks long at her.)

Henceforth I will.

Vittia. And wholly?

Amaury *(significantly)*. She ... shall do it.

(Starts into the castle.)

Yolanda *(dauntedly)*. Amaury! what is this?

Vittia. That, ere a dawn,
Guileless Yolanda, you shall wed with him
Your paramour of Paphos—

Yolanda. Camarin?

Vittia. And from these gates be led wanton away.

(YOLANDA, for a moment whelmed, tries to laugh scorn; but, turning, her eye meets RENIER'S full of suspicion. He follows AMAURY meaningly into the castle.)

CURTAIN.

[Pg 55]

ACT III

THE SAME DAY.

SCENE: *The Hall and loggia of Act I.; but toward sunset, and afar, on the flushed sea, are seen the fisher-boats returning pale-winged to shore. In the left distance, also, a portion of Famagouste is visible above the waves—its orient walls and towers, white domes and houses, interspersed with tall palms. The interior of the Hall is the same; only the divan is placed to the front and left, the lectern near the balcony leading to the sleeping apartments and to the chapel. SMARDA is lying lithely on the divan, beguiled with her charms and amulets, and from time to time giving a low, sinuous laugh. VITTIA enters, watches a moment, thoughtful, then advances.*

Vittia. Smarda—

Smarda *(springing up)*. Lady ... your slave!

Vittia. I think you are.
Think that you are—if ever the leopard yields.

Smarda. To you, lady? A-ha! let him refuse.
Command!

Vittia. And you will heed it well; I fear not.
But first I have thought of requital.

[Pg 56]

Smarda (avidly). OUIE!

Vittia. Those amulets—

Smarda. Of jade—and sard!

Vittia. And which
You prize so—

Smarda. From my home in Scythia
Across the sea (*darkening*) they came with me.

Vittia. The home
Whence you were torn by the Moor who was your master.

(*Sees SMARDA snarl.*)

Is it not so?

Smarda. The spirits strangle him!

(*Works lividly at the charms.*)

Vittia. Well, if I win to-night what is begun
You shall not want, I think,
Of gold for weightier witchery upon him.

(*The slave's eyes gleam.*)

But listen, every sinew will be needed
Still to achieve this wedding, though we have
Camarin with us, willing. So I've learned
A ship has come from Venice.

Smarda (quickly). Pietro!

Vittia. Yes, Pietro, it must be, has arrived
With papers that will help.

Smarda. Ha! Fortune's touch!

Vittia. It is, but tardy. Therefore I must have
Them instantly.

[Pg 57]

Smarda. Ere he has time, lady,
To vaunt of love in Lusignan and babble.

Vittia. A wooing dolt! but safe—because he fears.—
I shall be in this place with lord Amaury,
Whom I must ... but no matter.
He left me suddenly
A season since, seeing his father's look
Strangely upon his mother: for that doubt,
His father's, still I've been compelled to feed,
To move Yolanda.—
Here I shall be, then, here within this place.

(*She goes engrossedly.*)

Smarda (recalling the pledge; evilly). A-ha! Ha-ha! Ha-ha! If she but win!
A talisman with might upon the Moor!

(*Begins to dance—a charm held up before her.*)

If she but win! a-ha! a curse on him!

(*Whirls faster with a wild grace, swaying to and fro, and chanting softly the while, till suddenly a laugh in the corridor stops her, and PIETRO is heard through the curtains adoring CIVA, who pushes him into the Hall, then runs away laughing.*)

Pietro (after her). Hold, fair one! Stay!

(*Turns.*)

Smarda. Pietro!

Pietro. Slave! (*Vainly.*) I greet you.

(*Bows grandly.*)

[Pg 58]

Smarda. A-ha!... So!

Pietro. I, Pietro, as you see,
Who, you're aware, am sought
Of all the loveliest
Attendant on the lords and high of Venice.

Smarda. Yes.... Ha!

Pietro. "The gentle Pietro," they say.
You may remember.

Smarda. Ha!

Pietro. "Proud Pietro!"
And then they sigh.

Smarda. Sigh. But you've papers—

Pietro. Then—
They weep and pine—until I must console them.

Smarda (*going to where he poses; contemptuously*). And for all this, O prince
of paramours,

(*He is startled.*)

My lady has no doubt bid you to sail
From Venice.

Pietro. Slave?

Smarda. And she will hear with love
That you delay the powers of the Senate
Sent in your keeping to her.

Pietro. She!

Smarda. Oh, with

(*As he twitches.*)

Love and delight—for urgently she waits them!
And then—then of your amorous mouthings yonder!

Pietro. You will not, slave! but quickly take them to her,
The papers ... quickly!

[Pg 59]

(*Fumbles for them.*)

Dear slave, you will—and say if she inquire
That I was led astray
By the little Cyprian with guiling eyes
Who fell enamoured of me at the gate.

Smarda. Civa!

Pietro. The same! I sought to run away,

(*Still searching.*)

O slave, say to her, but I could not for—
For—for a lady by the marble knight,
That is, by the fountain, swooned, as—

Smarda. Swooned!

Pietro. She did.
Out by the fountain.

Smarda. As you came? who? which?
Lady Yolanda? lady Berengere?

(*He stares at her ardour.*)

Did no one say?... My mistress must know this!
The papers, quickly!

Pietro. Slave, you—! By my sins!

(She has seized them, and is gone. He follows amazed. Sunset begins without, crimson and far. AMAURY appears from the loggia, reckless, worn. He pauses, looks about him, troubled.)

Amaury. Not here yet.... There is more in this than seems.

(Goes to divan and sits. VITTIA enters behind.)

[Pg 60]

More, Camarin of Paphos, than is clear!

(Starts up.)

And she must tell me! *(Sees Vittia.)* Lady, you I mean.

(VITTIA advances inquiringly.)

What is beyond this shame upon Yolanda?

Vittia. My lord—?

Amaury. What! It is moving in me clouded,
Deeper than sight but pressing at my peace.
My father's look! you saw it!

Vittia. Ah!

Amaury. And saw
Fear in my mother!

Vittia. Yes, implanted deep.

Amaury. And did not wonder?

Vittia (sits). When I knew its source?
No need, my lord—though your pang too I marked—
For, trust me, ere to-morrow it will cease—
If you are firm.

Amaury. I? who know nought? In what?

Vittia. That do not ask, I pray. *(Deftly.)* Another could
Fitly reply, but I—

Amaury. No other better!

Vittia. Then ... it will cease, my lord—
So as a flail of doubt it should not still
Beat in you—when Yolanda
Is wed with Camarin ... no, do not speak;
The reason for your sake I must withhold.

Amaury. Though as under sirocco I am kept. *(Sits.)*
Sirocco!

(Rises, a pause.)

Yet you speak gently.

Vittia. No; unblushingly!

(He looks surprised.)

Unblushingly to one who knows—though by
A chance—my love to him.

(Turns away.)

And yet I cannot rue
That he awaking sudden from the potion
Surprised the dew of it upon my lips.
No, and I would that gentle words might be
As waters of enchantment on his grief—
But of Yolanda—

[Pg 61]

(Rises.)

Amaury. Still I love her, still!

Vittia (strainedly). As well she knows, so may refuse to wed
With Camarin.

Amaury. She?

Vittia. Since you are Lusignan,
Heir of a sceptred line,
And yet may reach—the realm.

Amaury (pierced). No ... not for that
Her hope was?

Vittia. Were it folly to make sure?

(A pause.)

Amaury. How? speak.

Vittia. Again unshameful? No; one thing
Alone would serve you. That I must not bring
My tongue to falter.

[Pg 62]

Amaury. Be it so.

Vittia. And yet ...

(He has turned away.)

My lord, my lord, I will!
Will ... for you suffer!
Will, though indelicacy seem to soil
What bloom I boasted.

Let her think ... let her,

But for to-day,
That you, for she's aware of my affection,
Have chosen—to wed me.

Amaury. You!

Vittia. For to-day.
To-morrow I return to Venice, then—
Denial.

Amaury (moved). Lady—?

Vittia. Yes.

Amaury. This is most kind.

(She waits repressed—as he struggles.)

Kind; I will do it.

Vittia. Will?

Amaury. Grateful, intent
For the issue's utterance. And this wear you,
This token of our race,

(Takes off his ring.)

For a proof to her of any tie soever.

(He puts it on VITTIA'S finger.)

[Pg 63]

But now—for the sails make home along the sea—
Now of my mother.

Vittia. More, my lord?

Amaury. This only;

(SMARDA glides in.)

To-morrow ... Scythian!

Vittia. Who! My lord?...

(Sees the slave's look, which stirs him.)

Smarda!

Why are you here?... Those papers—but your lips!

(Takes the papers.)

Not these alone have brought you thus; then what?

(Follows SMARDA'S eye.)

Of lord Amaury?

Smarda. Of his mother.

Vittia. How!

Smarda. She swooned of terror at the castle gate.
She lies in danger. Hear—'twas as she fled
The lord of Lusignan.

Amaury. My father?

Smarda. He.

And you are sought below, I heard it said:
Some officer of Famagouste—and men.

(AMAURY turns dazed and goes.)

Vittia (with fervour, then—yet awed).

This is again fortune!... fortune!

Smarda. Lady?

Vittia. Is! though an instant since it seemed disaster.

Smarda. And how?

Vittia. Yolanda, does she know?

Smarda. Nothing.

Nothing. She was returning from the rocks
Where nest the windy gulls (*gloatingly*)
As I came hither. I stole there at noon
To see her suffer.

Vittia. Then.—I can compel her.

She will come here. Go to the curtains, see.
If she is near, the Paphian is in
The bower by the cypress: go, tell him,
The loggia—at once ... Ah!

(YOLANDA enters.)

Yolanda (to herself). "Ah" indeed.

(Her look of purpose changes to one of distrust. But she firmly fronts to VITTIA, as the slave slips out.)

Vittia. My gratitude! I wished, and you are here.

Yolanda. And—for some reason of less honour—you.

Vittia. I, a dear guest? fa!

Yolanda. Were you! and not one

This ne'er-before-venomed air would banish.
(Slowly) One whose abiding
These walls would loathe aloud—had they a tongue
To utter.

Vittia. Yet I may be mistress of them,
Ere all is done—since still it is my purpose.

Yolanda. Gulfs wide as the hate of God for infamy
Would lie preventing; so there is no fear.

(Sits.)

Vittia. A prophesy!

Yolanda. A deeper than disdain.

Vittia. Or than your love of Camarin of Paphos!

Yolanda. Which you would feign, but cannot.

Vittia. Still, before
Evening is done, you will become his wife?

Yolanda. If, ere it come, all under Lusignan
Do not look scorn on Vittia Pisani.

(Rises.)

Vittia. What! how?

Yolanda. Plentiful scorn! (*With joy.*) A thing may still
Be done to lift my hope out of this ruin!
To bring Amaury grateful to my feet!
And I will do it.

Vittia. Tell?... vowing him first
To win his father's lenience?... No ... I see!
You would when she who's guilty
And this enamoured Paphian are fled!

(YOLANDA *turns pale.*)

When they are fled! ha ... And it is too late.

Yolanda. Too—? You by some trick—a trick have—!

Vittia. Hindered? Little
I needed ... Her wings are flightless. She is ill,
Verging—go learn!—to death.

Yolanda. No!

Vittia. To the grave.
And you alone, she knows, can put it far—
Since she is numbed and drained
Momently by the terror of her husband,
Whose every pulse seems to her a suspicion.

Yolanda. And it is you ... you who have urged again
His doubt that would have sunk!

Vittia. It was enough
Merely to sigh—and fear her innocence
Can only seem simple again as dew
If you wed freely Camarin of Paphos.

Yolanda. And that, you could! though in her heart remorse
Trampled and tore!
Though with the wounds of battle he you "love"
Is livid still.

Vittia. And grieves?—Be comforted!
For *he* is—now security has come.

(Shows ring; YOLANDA *falls back.*)

As *he* is, do not fear.

Yolanda. Amaury!... Oh!
He is not! no, Amaury!... He? so soon?—
Ah, you are merciless!

Vittia. Only aware
How to compel your pity to my ends;
For you will spare his mother.

Yolanda. Yielding—still,
And past all season of recovery?
Shattering love for ever at my feet?

No, you are duped. For empty, cold are the veins
Now of submission in me; numb and dead
The pleading of it. And upon you, back,
I cast the burden of your cruelty.

(Slowly.)

And—if she dies in terror of the lips
Of Renier Lusignan—on your peace
The guilt be!

[Pg 67]

Vittia. No.

Yolanda. The heaping mass of horror!

Vittia (moved). No, on her own; for she has sinned.

Yolanda. And suffered!
But you—

Vittia. I say her own. I've done no crime.
And you will wed him.

Yolanda. Were I Venetian!
But am not; so remorse has come in you!
There at the gates that guard your rest you hear
Dim now the risen phantom cries of it,
The presage beat of them like hungry hands
That will o'erwhelm you!
All that I could to spare her I have done;
All that was duty and of love the most.
But you it was who struck and kindled first
Within Lord Renier fire of suspicion.
Then yours the penance!

Vittia. Liar!... ah ... enough.

(Recovers herself.)

A babe I am so to be fed with fright.
You—well I know—will not desert her thus
To ... the medusa of his doubt.

Yolanda. I will not.

(With exultance.)

Will, will not, will not, will not!
But you it is—
For in the worst that live there still is heaven!—
Must null his doubt and ease the sobbing ebb
And flood of her sick spirit; you who must
Go to his fear and with persuasion say
That it is folly of him and of you
So to suspect her, since in Camarin's
Arms I was found. You will!

[Pg 68]

Vittia. And—then go pray?

(Draws out the papers scornfully.)

Rather I'll bring you this:—Authority
Sent me of Venice
To make Amaury lordly over Cyprus,
Or to abase him even of Famagouste;
Which I will do—

(Goes to her.)

Unless I have the pledge that you will wed,
Though not to be his wife and free to leave him,
This Paphian,
And with him from Lusignan hence will pass,

(CAMARIN appears on loggia.)

And he has come now for your answer.

Yolanda. Here!
In league with you! in this!

Vittia. Most loyally;
And ready skilfully to disavow,
With every force, your innocence—if you
Attempt betrayal!—
Enter, my lord of Paphos—

(*CAMARIN enters desperately.*)

[Pg 69]

I have spoken.
She has not pledged to wed you—though the life
Of Berengere Lusignan fall for it,
And though Amaury ... But you may avail.

(*Moves off. YOLANDA stands silently between them. CAMARIN looks at her, falters, then turns on VITTIA.*)

Camarin. As an anchorite for immortality,
Venetian, I covet this—covet!
Yet ... I will not entreat it of her.

Vittia. What!

Camarin. I swore in dread, but will not!

Vittia. Now!

Yolanda (low). Madonna!

Vittia. Now you refuse?

Yolanda. He does—he does!

Vittia. The whole?

Yolanda. Lady of Venice, yes; for very shame!

(*With grave joy.*)

Bitterly tho' it be, he must, for shame!
Though he would waste the air of the world to keep
The breath still in the veins
Of her his love so wronged,
He cannot ask me more than breast can bear
Knowing I have already borne for her
Infection worse than fetid marshes send
From Mesaoria—
Have lost the sky of love that I had arched
And all the stars of it. See, he is dumb!—
He cannot.

[Pg 70]

Camarin (coldly). No; but to your heart I leave her
And to your pity.

Yolanda. Say not pity to me!

(*The word overwhelms her anew.*)

Am I not needy, fain of it, and can
Endurance ever dure!
What have I left
Of joy to ripple in me or of light
To sway me to forgetting—I to whom
Dawn was enchanted incense once, and day,
The least of earth, an ides of heaven bliss.
What to me left! to me!
Who shepherded each happy flock of waves
Running with silvery foaming there to shore,
Who numbered the little leaves with laughing names
Out of my love,
And quickened the winds with quicker winds of hope,
That now are spent ... as summer waters,
Leaving my breast a torrent's barren bed.
Pity and pity! ever pity! No.

(*Enter HASSAN.*)

A nun to pity I will be no more.
But you, cruel Venetian ... Ah, ah,
Mother of God! is there no gentleness
In thee to move her and dissolve away
This jeopardy congealing over us?

(A pause.)

Vittia. You see, none.

Yolanda. Ah, for sceptre and for might
Then to compel you.

[Pg 71]

Vittia. Still, there is none.

Yolanda. None ...

(Sinks to a seat in despair.)

Yet could I think!

Hassan. Lady Yolanda—

(Advances.)

Yolanda. Were
My brain less weary!

Hassan. Lady Yolanda—

Yolanda. Well?

Hassan. There is a means—a might.

Yolanda. Well?

(Is half heedless.)

Hassan. To compel her.

Yolanda. To ... what?

Hassan. If you will dare it.

Yolanda. Will—?

Hassan. I swear.

Yolanda (rising). Your thought! I have no fear.

Hassan. Then ... let me but
Seize her and shut her fast an hour within
The leprous keep, and she shall write whate'er
You order; then upon a vessel quick
Be sent to Venice whence she came.

Camarin. Mad! mad!
Venice would rise!

Hassan. And Cyprus, to be free!—
But 'tis not, lady! and Lord Renier
Shall have a letter of her guile and flight.
Venture it, venture!

[Pg 72]

Yolanda (after a long pause). If it can be done,
It shall be.

Hassan. Ah!

Yolanda. And must be.

Vittia. Fools, to me!

(She stands defensive, as HASSAN prepares to close in.)

Yolanda. Quickly, and take her.

Hassan. Now.

Camarin (with sudden horror). No!... Sateless God!

(His eyes are fixed on the balcony.)

See, see!... Berengere! Oh! fury of hell!

(They look and fall back appalled. For slowly down the steps comes RENIER following BERENGERE, whose eyes turn back in fluttering trance upon him.)

Yolanda. Ah!... he will kill her! Stop, my lord! mother!
Lord Renier!

(Runs; takes BERENGERE in her arms.)

Cold is she, stony pale,
And sinking!... Go away from her, go go!

Renier. No ... she shall tell me.

Yolanda. Mother!... Tell you that
You are her murderer?

Renier. The truth!

Yolanda. The truth!

(Laughs bitterly, and at a loss, as if amazed. Then, almost against her will, led, to the end—)

It is suspicion! is that mad suspicion
That you have had of her.

[Pg 73]

Renier. It is! It is!

Yolanda. And—all because I have these days delayed
To wed with Camarin.

Renier. Delayed?

Yolanda. Because
I show befitting shame that I was here
Found in his arms ... when to Amaury
I was betrothed!

Renier. Power of—! No!

Yolanda. Because
I grieve to leave Lusignan, this my home—
Where I have dwelt as under tented love—
Though I am bidden.

Renier. This can be?

Berengere (faintly). Yolanda!

Renier. I say—only delayed? and you—?

Yolanda. Yes, yes.
Now I will wed him, heedless, wantless, wild.
Send for the priest and for Amaury, for
Laughter and lights and revelry—for all
Within this castle. But first to her bed,
And to tranquillity,
She must be borne, she your cold violence
Has driven here.... Alessa—Tremitus!

(They have entered.)

Lead her within. O mother! piteous mother!—
Ah, it was ruthless, kindless!

Renier. We shall see.

(To HASSAN.)

Bid Moro and Amaury.—As for her,
I soon may come and seek forgiveness.

Berengere. No!

[Pg 74]

(HASSAN goes.)

My brain and breath!... the pall ... where am I ... how
Long must I lie!...

Tremitus. She speaks to visions. So,
So can the blood do—trick us utterly!

(He supports her—with ALESSA—slowly up steps and off. YOLANDA covers her eyes. HASSAN returns with MORO, then, and AMAURY, whose look seeks VITTIA.)

Yolanda (as all stand silent).
Speak, speak, and tell him!

Renier. Yes, Amaury ... you
Are sent for to behold Yolanda wed,
As you commanded,
Here unto Camarin. Shame has till now
Withheld her, but ... what ails you?

Amaury. On; go on.
The sudden blood up to my wounds.

Renier. It has,
I say, withheld her. But she now has chosen.

Amaury. So; and ... it is well. And here are her
Vows I have kept—

(Takes a packet from his breast.)

[Pg 75]

Vows and remembrances ... I shall aspire—

(Hands it; she lets it fall.)

That I may loathe her not o'ermuch; and to
Muffle my sword from him that now she weds.

(His voice breaks tonelessly.)

Come, let it be.

Yolanda. Amaury!

Amaury (angrily.) Priest, be brief!

Moro (before them; as CAMARIN takes YOLANDA'S hand).
The Church invests me and the powers of
This island here to make you man and wife.
Be joined, ye who have sinned,
In soul, peace and repentances for ever.

(He signs the cross. YOLANDA stands dazed. A silence. Then a shuddering cry and all turn toward the balcony, where ALESSA bursts, pale, wild, and striving to speak.)

Yolanda (with dread, awe, premonition). Alessa!

Alessa. Lady Yolanda! you have wed him?

Yolanda (pausing.) Yes.

Alessa. Lady Berengere is dead.

Yolanda. No!... No!

(Chokes rebelliously.)

It cannot be! mother! cannot! awake her!
And tell her I have wed him! mother! cannot!

(Goes trembling, belieflessly, up the balcony. A strange doubt seizes AMAURY. On the rest is silence, consternation, and fear.)

CURTAIN.

[Pg 76]

ACT IV

SCENE: *The Chapel of the Castle—or Chapel of the Magdalen—a few hours later. It is of stone, low-arched, gloomy, and adorned with Byzantine mosaics of gaunt saints on backgrounds of gold. The altar is in the rear, and above it a large window, through which pours the still moon. In front of it, to either side, rise two pillars supporting the roof, and on one of them, halfway up, stands a stone image of the Magdalen. Forward are two other pillars whose bases form seats. The right wall has, set midway, a large door hung with heavy curtains. In the rear are smaller doors leading to a sacristy. The altar lamp and a few tapers burn. ALESSA enters, rubbing her eyes as if to clear them of vision, looks around, then calls uncertainly—*

Alessa. Good father! Father Moro!... He is not here.

(Rubs her eyes again.)

The dead are strange! I knew not all their power.
It is as if her spirit still imprisoned
Hovered beneath the pallor of her face
And strove to speak. Good father!

(Enter MORO.)

[Pg 77]

Ah, you were

There in the sacristy.

Moro. Yes. Your desire?

Alessa. The acolytes summoned from Famagouste
To aid your rites before her burial
Have come, and wait.

Moro. Send hither two.

(Looks closely at her.)

Alessa. At once.

(Is going. He stops her.)

Moro. Woman, this passes silence. There must be
Some question. Do you understand this wedding?
The evil that has risen in this house?
Speak.

Alessa. I may not.

Moro. As says Yolanda, who
Has been to-day impenetrable in all.
But who, now, in a lofty grief above
The misery that blasted her, seems calm,
And answers only,
"God in His season will,
I trust, unfold it soon; I cannot, now!" ...
And yet I heard
Her darkly bid the Paphian be gone—
From here—without her.

Alessa. And he would not?

Moro. No.

(A pause.)

[Pg 78]

Does she not see lightnings now in Amaury,
Plunging for truth? What is't?

Alessa. The acolytes
Are waiting.

Moro. Go ... But if this hour bring forth
What you shall rue—

Alessa. Father!

(Goes quickly, troubled.)

Moro. In blindness still!

For Vittia Pisani, who alone
Seems with these twain to share this mystery
Is silent to all importunity.
Oh, Berengere Lusignan!
But 'tis mine
To pray and to prepare. (*Listens.*) The acolytes.

(*Two enter, sleek, sanctimonious.*)

(*To First.*) Come here ... You're Serlio,
Of the Ascension. You?

2nd Acolyte. Hilarion.
From Santa Maria by the Templars' well,
Which God looks on with gratitude, father.
For though we're poor and are unworthy servants
We've given willingly our widow's mite.
And now we ...

Moro. You are summoned to this place
For ministrations other than the tongue's.
Prepare that altar—masses for the dead.

Hilarion. Man is as grass that withers!

Moro. Kindle all
Its tapers. The departed will be borne
Hither for holy care and sacred rest.
So do—then after
Look to that image of the Magdalen,
Once it has fallen.

Serlio. Domine, dirige!

(*MORO goes. They put off cant and set to work.*)

Hilarion (insolently, lighting a taper).
We'll have good wine for this!

Serlio. The Chian! Hee!
None's like the Chian! and to-morrow, meat!
Last week old Ugo died and we had pheasant.

Hilarion. When we are priests we'll give no comforting
To wife or maid—till we have sipped!

Serlio. And supped!
Though 'tis a Friday and the Pope is dead!

(*Silence. They work faster.*)

Hilarion. There, it is done. Now to the image.

Serlio. Well,
Olympio, the cock who fetched us, said
That image fell first on the day—

Hilarion. Tchuck! tchuck!
Better no breath about that lord of Paphos
Or any here. For till the dead are three
Days gone, you know—! But there's the woman. Feign.

(*As ALESSA re-enters; hypocritically.*)

The blessed dead! in Purgatory may
They briefly bide.

Serlio. Aye! aye!

Alessa (still troubled). What say you?

Hilarion. Ah!
I lay that it is wise never to foul
The dead, even in thinking,
For they may hear us, none can say, and once
My mother saw a dead man who had gone
Unshriven start up white and cry out loud
When he was curst.

Serlio. O Lord!

Alessa (staring). No!... Well, such things
There are perchance. And now they say that Venus,
The Anadyomene, who once ruled this isle,
Is come again.... But you have finished? Soon
They bring her body here.

Hilarion. Now have I, now!
It will not totter again. (*Descends.*)

Alessa Would that it might
Upon the head of — (*catches herself; calmly*)
You are awaited
There in the sacristy.... The chant begins!

(*The acolytes go. She grows more disquieted.*)

Begins! and lady Yolanda still awaits
Heedless, though Lord Amaury's desperate
As is the Paphian!... They near!... The curtains!

(*Goes to them and draws them back. As she does so the chant swells
louder. Then the cortège enters—MORO, the acolytes with tapers;
BERENGERE on a litter, AMAURY, RENIER, VITTIA, the women, HASSAN, and
last YOLANDA. The litter, AMAURY by it, comes to the altar; the chanting
ceases.*)

[Pg 81]

Moro (as AMAURY bows, shaken).
No moan or any toil of grief be here
Where we have brought her for sainted appeal.
But in this holy place until the tomb
Let her find rest.

Amaury. Set down the bier.

(*It is placed.*)

Moro. Lone rest!
Then bliss Afar for ever!

Amaury (rises). Be it so!

(*Turning; brokenly.*)

But unto any, mother, who have brought thee
Low to this couch, be never ease again.
To any who have put thy life out, never!
But in them be the burning that has seemed
To shrivel thee—whether with pain or fear!
And be appeaseless tears,
Salt tears that rust the fountain of the heart.

(*Sinks to a seat. A pause.*)

Moro. My son, relentless words.

Amaury (up again). To the relentless!

Moro. God hear you not!

Amaury. Then is He not my God.

Moro. Enough, enough. (*To the rest.*) But go and for her soul
Freight all of you this tide of night with prayer.

Amaury. Never!

Moro. I bid.

Amaury. And I forbid those who
Have prized her not!
For though nought's in the world but prayer may move,
Still but the lips that loved her
Should for her any sin beseeching lift.

(*Looking at YOLANDA.*)

[Pg 82]

They and no other!

Yolanda. And, you mean—?

Amaury. Not one.

Yolanda. Then, mother—

(*Goes to bier.*)

Amaury. That name again?

Yolanda. While I have breath.
(*Nobly.*) Yes, though you hold me purgeless of that sin
Only the pale arch-angels may endure
Trembling to muse on!
Or though yon image of the Magdalen,
Whose alabaster broke amid her tears
And her torn hair, forbade me with a voice.
And you, whose heart is shaken
As in a tomb a taper's flame, would know
I speak with love.

Camarin. Unswerving love.

Amaury. Then, by
Christ, and the world that craves His blood, I think
She, if she would, or you, could point to me,
Or you, Vittia Pisani,
The reason of this sudden piteous death
Hard on the haunted flight before my father,
Whose lips refuse.

[Pg 83]

Camarin. She knows no shred of it.

Amaury. You lie to say it.

Camarin. Then will, still—if there
Is need.

Amaury. Because you love her?

Yolanda. Peace, peace, peace.

Amaury. A hollow word for what had never being.

Yolanda. Look on her face and see.

Amaury (at bier). Upon her face!
Where not oblivion the void of death
Has hid away, or can, the agony
Of her last terror—but it trembles still.
I tell you, no. Grief was enough, but now
Through it has risen mystery that chokes
As a miasma from Iscariot's tomb.
And till this pall of doubt be rent away
No earth shall fall and quicken with her dust!
But I will search her face ... till it reveals.

Camarin. He raves.

Amaury. Iscariot! yes!

Yolanda. Again, peace, peace!

Amaury. That you may palter!

Yolanda (gently). That she may not grieve.

(*Goes again to bier.*)

For—if 'tis near—her soul with this is wrung.
Near! would it were to hear me and impart
Its yearning and regret to us who live,
Its dim unhappiness and hollow want.
Yes, mother, were you now about us, vain,
Invisible and without any voice
To tell us of you!

[Pg 84]

Were you and now could hear through what of cold
Or silence wrap you, oh, so humanly
And seeming but a veil—
Then would you hear me say—(*suddenly aghast*)
Ah, God!

Amaury. Yolanda!

(*She starts back from the bier.*)

Yolanda!

Renier. Girl, what rends you?

Yolanda. Saw you not?

(*Rushes to bier and shakes it.*)

Mother! you hear me? mother!

Renier. Girl!

Yolanda. She breathes!

(*Consternation. Some fall to their knees.*)

Vittia. What? What?

Yolanda. Mother! Her breast! Mother! She moves!

Amaury. God! God!

Yolanda. Stand off from her ... Mother!

Camarin. Her eyes!...

They open! open!

Yolanda. Mother!...

Amaury. See; her lips!

They strive to speak! O faintly, O so faint!

Can you not hear?

[Pg 85]

Berengere. Yolanda!

Yolanda. Mother!

Berengere. Renier!

Renier. Yes, yes?

Berengere. Yolanda—

Renier. Speak!

Berengere. Christ, save me ... Christ!

Yolanda's innocent, and I ... 'twas I.

Amaury. What? what is it she says?

Berengere. Camarin! Ah!

(*She shudders and dies, amid low-uttered awe. RENIER bends, lays his hand a moment on her breast, then, with a cry of rage, springs from her and draws, and rushes on CAMARIN, who awaits him, desperate.*)

Amaury (*confused, as they engage*).

Yolanda; what is this?

Yolanda. Amaury, in!

Compel Lord Renier back! he cannot live,

You only could against Camarin now!

Wait not to question, but obey me! if

You ever—! (*As he rushes in*) Holy Magdalen, defend him!

(*RENIER falls back.*)

Now, now defend him, if to chastity
Thou'rt vowed in heaven.

Vittia. Fool!—Camarin, strike!

Yolanda. He's wounded!

[Pg 86]

Camarin. Oh!... Berengere!... treachery!

(He staggers and sinks back heavily toward the pillar. There is breathless, strained suspense. Then he strikes the sacred column, and as he does so the image above sways, totters and crushes upon him. A cry, "The Magdalen!" goes up around.)

Hassan *(hurrying to him; after awe and silence)*.
He's dead.

Alessa. The Magdalen!

Hassan. No breath in him.

(A pause.)

Renier *(low, harshly)*.
Bear him without then ever from this place,
That never more shall know a holy rite—
And from these gates, I care not to what tomb.

(To AMAURY.)

Then shall you hear this mystery's content,
That still as a madness measures to your sight.
Bear him without.

(The limp body is borne away. All follow but AMAURY, YOLANDA, RENIER.)

Now you shall hear, with shame,
But with exalted pride and happy tears;
Then come obliteration!
Speak, girl ... Nobility
Had never better title to its truth.

(Kisses her hand and goes.)

Amaury. Yolanda!... he!... this reverence as to
An angel? Speak!

[Pg 87]

Yolanda. Amaury—

Amaury. O pause not!

Yolanda. Then—to save her who's dead—from death and shame,
I took her place within the Paphian's arms.

Amaury. O!... and by me, driven by me, bore this!
(Overcome) Pure as the rills of Paradise, endured?

Yolanda. For you!—and her who sleeps forgiven there,

(With deep abandon.)

Now while her spirit weightless overwingeth
Night, to that Throne whose seeing heals all shame!
For her I did! but oh, for you, whose least
Murmur to me is infinite with Spring,
Whose smile is light, filling the air with dawn,
Whose touch, wafture of immortality
Unto my weariness; and whose eyes, now,
Are as the beams God lifted first, they tell us,
Over the uncreated,
In the far singing mother-dawn of the world!—
Come with me then, but tearless, to her side.

(They go to the bier and stand as in a dream. A pause; then her lips move, last, as if inspired.)

While there is sin to sway the soul and sink it
Pity should be as strong as love or death!

(With a cry of joy he enfolds her, and they kneel, wrapped about with the clear moon.)

LYRICS

J A E L

Jehovah! Jehovah! art Thou not stronger than gods of the heathen?
I slew him, that Sisera, prince of the host Thou dost hate.
But fear of his blood is upon me, about me is breathen
His spirit—by night and by day come voices that wait.

Athirst and affrightened he fled from the star-wrought waters of Kishon.
His face was as wool when he swooned at the door of my tent.
The Lord hath given him into the hand of perdition,
I smiled—but he saw not the face of my cunning intent.

He thirsted for water: I fed him the curdless milk of the cattle.
He lay in the tent under purple and crimson of Tyre.
He slept and he dreamt of the surge and storming of battle.
Ah ha! but he woke not to waken Jehovah's ire.

[Pg 92]

He slept as he were a chosen of Israel's God Almighty.
A dog out of Canaan!—thought he I was woman alone?
I slipt like an asp to his ear and laughed for the sight he
Would give when the carrion kites should tear to his bone.

I smote thro' his temple the nail, to the dust a worm did I bind him.
My heart was a-leap with rage and a-quiver with scorn.
And I danced with a holy delight before and behind him—
I that am called blessed o'er all who're of Judah born.

"Aye, come, I will show thee, O Barak, a woman is more than a warrior,"
I cried as I lifted the door wherein Sisera lay.
"To me did he fly and I shall be called his destroyer—
I, Jael, who am subtle to find for the Lord a way!"

[Pg 93]

"Above all the daughters of men be blest—of Gilead or Asshur,"
Sang Deborah, prophetess, under her waving palm.
"Behold her, ye people, behold her the heathen's abasher;
Behold her the Lord hath uplifted—behold and be calm.

"The mother of him at the window looks out thro' the lattice to listen—
Why roll not the wheels of his chariot? why does he stay?
Shall he not return with the booty of battle, and glisten
In songs of his triumph—ye women, why do ye not say?"

And I was as she who danced when the Seas were rendered asunder
And stood, until Egypt pressed in to be drowned unto death.
My breasts were as fire with the glory, the rocks that were under
My feet grew quick with the gloating that beat in my breath.

[Pg 94]

At night I stole out where they cast him, a sop to the jackal and raven.
But his bones stood up in the moon and I shook with affright.
The strength shrank out of my limbs and I fell a craven
Before him—the nail in his temple gleamed bloodily bright.

Jehovah! Jehovah! art Thou not stronger than gods of the heathen?
I slew him, that Sisera, prince of the host Thou dost hate.
But fear of his blood is upon me, about me is breathen
His spirit—by day and by night come voices that wait.

I fly to the desert, I fly to the mountain—but they will not hide me.
His gods haunt the winds and the caves with vengeance that cries
For judgment upon me; the stars in their courses deride me—
The stars Thou hast hung with a breath in the wandering skies.

[Pg 95]

Jehovah! Jehovah! I slew him the scourge and sting of Thy Nation.
Take from me his spirit, take from me the voice of his blood.
With madness I rave—by day and by night, defamation!
Jehovah, release me! Jehovah! if still Thou art God!

[Pg 96]

MARY AT NAZARETH

I know, Lord, Thou hast sent Him—
Thou art so good to me!—
But Thou hast only lent Him,
His heart's for Thee!

I dared—Thy poor hand-maiden—
Not ask a prophet-child:
Only a boy-babe laden
For earth—and mild.

But this one Thou hast given
Seems not for earth—or me!
His lips flame truth from heaven,
And vanity

Seem all my thoughts and prayers
When He but speaks Thy Law;
Out of my heart the tares
Are torn by awe!

I cannot look upon Him
So strangely burn His eyes—
Hath not some grieving drawn Him
From Paradise?

For Thee, for Thee I'd live, Lord!
Yet oft I almost fall
Before Him—Oh, forgive, Lord,
My sinful thrall!

But e'en when He was nursing,
A baby at my breast,
It seemed He was dispersing
The world's unrest.

Thou bad'st me call Him "Jesus"
And from our heavy sin
I know He shall release us,
From Sheol win.

But, Lord, forgive! the yearning
That He may sometimes be
Like other children, learning
Beside my knee,

Or playing, prattling, seeking
For help,—comes to my heart....
Ah sinful, Lord, I'm speaking—
How good Thou art!

[Pg 97]

[Pg 98]

OUTCAST

I did not fear,
But crept close up to Christ and said,
"Is He not here?"

They drew me back—
The seraphs who had never bled
Of weary lack—

But still I cried,
With torn robe, clutching at His feet,
"Dear Christ! He died

So long ago!
Is He not here? Three days, unfleet
As mortal flow

Of time I've sought—
Till Heaven's amaranthine ways
Seem as sere nought!"

A grieving stole
Up from His heart and waned the gaze
Of His clear soul

Into my eyes.
"He is not here," troubled He sighed.
"For none who dies

Beliefless may
Bend lips to this sin-healing Tide,
And live alway."

Then darkness rose
Within me, and drear bitterness.
Out of its throes

I moaned, at last,
"Let me go hence! Take off the dress,
The charms Thou hast

Around me strown!
Beliefless too am I without
His love—and lone!"

Unto the Gate
They led me, tho' with pitying doubt.
I did not wait

But stepped across
Its portal, turned not once to heed
Or know my loss.

Then my dream broke,
And with it every loveless creed—
Beneath love's stroke.

[Pg 99]

[Pg 100]

ADELIL

Proud Adelil! Proud Adelil!
Why does she lie so cold?
(I made her shrink, I made her reel,
I made her white lids fold.)

We sat at banquet, many maids,
She like a Valkyr free.
(I hated the glitter of her braids,
I hated her blue eye's glee!)

In emerald cups was poured the mead;
Icily blew the night.
(But tears unshed and woes that bleed
Brew bitterness and spite.)

"A goblet to my love!" she cried,
"Prince where the sea-winds fly!"
(Her love!—it was for that he died,
And for it she should die.)

[Pg 101]

She lifted the cup and drank—she saw
A heart within its lees.
(I laughed like the dead who feel the thaw
Of summer in the breeze.)

They looked upon her stricken still,
And sudden they grew appalled.
("It is thy lover's heart!" I shrill
As the sea-crow to her called.)

Palely she took it—did it give
Ease there against her breast?
(Dead—dead she swooned, but I cannot live,
And dead I shall not rest.)

[Pg 102]

THE DYING POET

Swing in thy splendour, O silent sun,
Drawing my heart with thee over the west!
Done is its day as thy day is done,
 Fallen its quest!

Swoon into purple and rose—then sink,
Tho' to arise again out of the dawn.
Sink while I praise thee, ere thro' the dark link
 Of death I am drawn!

Sunk? art thou sunken? how great was life!
I like a child could cry for it again—
Cry for its beauty, pang, fleeting and strife,
 Its women, its men!

For, how I drained it with love and delight!
Opened its heart with the magic of grief!
Reaped every season—its day and its night!
 Loved every sheaf!

Aye, not a meadow my step has trod,
Never a flower swung sweet to my face,
Never a heart that was touched of God,
 But taught me its grace.

Off, from my lids then a moment yet,
Fingering Death, for again I must see
Miraged by memory all that I met
 Under Time's lee.

There!... I'm a child again—fair, so fair!
Under the eyes does a marvel not burn?
Speak they not vision, song, frenzy to dare,
 That still in me yearn?...

Youth! my wild youth!—O, blood of my heart,
Still you can answer with whirling the thought!
Still like the mountain-born rapid can dart,
 Joyous, distraught!...

Love, and her face again! there by the wood!—
Come thou invisible Dark with thy mask!
Shall I not learn if she lives? and could
 I more of thee ask?...

Turn me away from the ashen west,
Where love's sad planet unveils to the dusk.
Something is stealing like light from my breast—
 Soul from its husk ...

Soft!... Where the dead feel the buried dead,
Where the high hermit-bell hourly tolls,
Bury me, near to the haunting tread
 Of life that o'errolls.

[Pg 103]

[Pg 104]

[Pg 105]

ON THE MOOR

1

I met a child upon the moor
A-wading down the heather;
She put her hand into my own,
We crossed the fields together.

I led her to her father's door—
A cottage mid the clover.
I left her—and the world grew poor
To me, a childless rover.

2

I met a maid upon the moor,
The morrow was her wedding.
Love lit her eyes with lovelier hues
Than the eve-star was shedding.

She looked a sweet goodbye to me,
And o'er the stile went singing.
Down all the lonely night I heard
But bridal bells a-ringing.

3

[Pg 106]

I met a mother on the moor,
By a new grave a-praying.
The happy swallows in the blue
Upon the winds were playing.

"Would I were in his grave," I said,
"And he beside her standing!"
There was no heart to break if death
For me had made demanding.

[Pg 107]

HUMAN LOVE

We spoke of God and Fate,
And of that Life—which some await—
 Beyond the grave.
"It will be fair," she said,
"But love is here!
I only crave thy breast
Not God's when I am dead.
For He nor wants nor needs
 My little love.
But it may be, if I love thee
And those whose sorrow daily bleeds,
He knows—and somehow heeds!"

OH, GO NOT OUT

Oh, go not out upon the storm,
Go not, my sweet, to Swalchie pool!
A witch tho' she be dead may charm
Thee and befool.

A wild night 'tis! her lover's moan,
Down under ooze and salty weed,
She'll make thee hear—and then her own!
Till thou shall heed.

And it will suck upon thy heart—
The sorcery within her cry—
Till madness out of thee upstart,
And rage to die.

For him she loved, she laughed to death!
And as afloat his chill hand lay,
"Ha, ha! to hell I sent his wraith!"
Did she not say?

[Pg 109]

And from his finger strive to draw
The ring that bound him to her spell?—
But on her closed his hand—she saw ...
Oh, who can tell?

For tho' she strove—tho' she did wail,
The dead hand held her cold and fast:
The tide crawled in o'er rock and swale,
To her at last!

Down in the pool where she was swept
He holds her—Oh, go not a-near!
For none has heard her cry but wept
And died that year.

[Pg 110]

CALL TO YOUR MATE, BOB-WHITE

O call to your mate, bob-white, bob-white,
And I will call to mine.
Call to her by the meadow-gate,
And I will call by the pine.

Tell her the sun is hid, bob-white,
The windy wheat sways west.
Whistle again, call clear and run
To lure her out of her nest.

For when to the copse she comes, shy bird,
With Mary down the lane
I'll walk, in the dusk of locust tops,
And be her lover again.

Ay, we will forget our hearts are old,
And that our hair is gray.
We'll kiss as we kissed at pale sunset
One summer's halcyon day.

That day, can it fade?... ah, bob, bob-white,
Still calling—calling still?
We're coming—a-coming, bent and weighed,
But glad with the old love's thrill!

[Pg 111]

[Pg 112]

TRANSCENDED

I who was learned in death's lore
Oft held her to my heart
And spoke of days when we should love no more—
In the long dust, apart.

"Immortal?" No—it could not be,
Spirit with flesh must die.
Tho' heart should pray and hope make endless plea,
Reason would still outcry.

She died. They wrapped her in the dust—
I heard the dull clod's dole,
And then I knew she lived—that death's dark lust
Could never touch her soul!

THE CRY OF EVE

Down the palm-way from Eden in the moist
Midnight lay Eve by her outdriven mate,
Pillowed on lilies that still told the sweet
Of birth within the Garden's ecstasy.
Pitiful round her face that could not lose
Its memory of God's perfecting was strewn
Her troubled hair, and sigh grieved after sigh
Along her loveliness in the white moon.
Sudden her dream, too cruelly impent
With pain, broke and a cry fled shuddering
Into the wounded stillness from her lips.
Then, cold, she fearfully felt for his hand,
While tears, that had before ne'er visited
Her lids with anguish, stinging traced her cheeks.

"Oh, Adam!" then as a wild shadow burst
Her moan on the pale air, "What have I dreamed?
Now do I understand His words, so dim
To creatures that had quivered but with bliss!
Since at the dusk thy kiss to me, and I
Wept at caresses that were once all joy,
I have slept, seeing through Futurity
The uncreated ages visibly!
Foresuffering phantoms crowded in the womb
Of Time, and all with lamentable mien
Accusing thee and me!
And some were far
From birth, without a name, but others near—
Sodom and dark Gomorrah ... from whose flames
Fleeing one turned ... how like her look to mine
When the tree's horror trembled on my taste!
And Nineveh, a city sinking slow
Under a shroud of sandy centuries
That hid me not from the buried cursing eyes
Of women who gave birth! And Babylon,
Upbuided on our sin but for a day!

[Pg 114]

Ah, to be mother of all misery!
To be first-called out of the earth and fail
For a whole world! To shame maternity
For women evermore—women whose tears
Flooding the night, no hope can wipe away!
To see the wings of Death, as, Adam, thou
Hast not, endlessly beating, and to hear
The swooning ages suffer up to God!
And O that birth-cry of a guiltless child!
In it are sounding of our sin and woe,
With prophesy of ill beyond all years!
Yearning for beauty never to be seen—
Beatitude redeemless evermore!
And I whose dream mourned with all motherhood
Must hear it soon! Already do soft skill,
Low-babbled lulls, enticings and quick tones
Of tenderness—that will like light awake
The folded memory children shall bring
Out of the dark—move in me longingly.
Yet thou, Adam, dear fallen thought of God,
Thou, when thou too shall hear humanity
Cry in thy child, wilt groaning wish the world
Back in unsummoned Void! and, woe! wilt fill
God's ear with troubled wonder and unrest!"

[Pg 115]

Softly he soothed her straying hair, and kissed
The fever from her lips. Over the palms
The sad moon poured her peace into their eyes,
Till Sleep, the angel of forgetfulness,
Folded again her wings above their rest.

[Pg 116]

THE CHILD GOD GAVE

"Give me a little child
To draw this dreary want out of my breast,"
I cried to God.
"Give, for my days beat wild
With loneliness that will not rest
But under the still sod!"

It came—with groping lips
And little fingers stealing aimlessly
About my heart.
I was like one who slips
A-sudden into Ecstasy
And thinks ne'er to depart.

"Soon he will smile," I said,
"And babble baby love into my ears—
How it will thrill!"
I waited—Oh, the dread,
The clutching agony, the fears!—
He was so strange and still.

Did I curse God and rave
When they came shrinkingly to tell me 'twas
A witless child?
No ... I ... I only gave
One cry ... just one ... I think ... because ...
You know ... he never smiled.

[Pg 117]

[Pg 118]

MOTHER-LOVE

The seraphs would sing to her
And from the River
Dip her cool grails of radiant Life.
The angels would bring to her,
Sadly a-quiver,
Laurels she never had won in earth-strife.

And often they'd fly with her
O'er the star-spaces—
Silent by worlds where mortals are pent.
Yea, even would sigh with her,
Sigh with wan faces!
When she sat weeping of strange discontent.

But one said, "Why weepest thou
Here in God's heaven—
Is it not fairer than soul can see?"
"'Tis fair, ah!— but keepest thou
Not me depriven
Of some one—somewhere—who needeth most me?"

[Pg 119]

For tho' the day never fades
Over these meadows,
Tho' He has robed me and crowned—yet, yet!
Some love-fear for ever shades
All with sere shadows—
Had I no child *there*—whom I forget?"

[Pg 120]

ASHORE

What are the heaths and hills to me?
I'm a-longing for the sea!
What are the flowers that dapple the dell,
And the ripple of swallow-wings over the dusk;
What are the church and the folk who tell
Their hearts to God?—my heart is a husk!
(I'm a-longing for the sea!)

Aye! for there is no peace to me—
But on the peaceless sea!
Never a child was glad at my knee,
And the soul of a woman has never been mine.
What can a woman's kisses be?—
I fear to think how her arms would twine,
(I'm a-longing for the sea!)

So, not a home and ease for me—
But still the homeless sea!
Where I may swing my sorrow to sleep
In a hammock hung o'er the voice of the waves,
Where I may wake when the tempests heap
And hurl their hate—and a brave ship saves.
(I'm a-longing for the sea!)

[Pg 121]

Then when I die, a grave for me—
But in the graveless sea!
Where is no stone for an eye to spell
Thro' the lichen a name, a date and a verse.
Let me be laid in the deeps that swell
And sigh and wander—an ocean hearse!
(I'm a-longing for the sea!)

[Pg 122]

LOVE'S WAY TO CHILDHOOD

We are not lovers, you and I,
Upon this sunny lane,
But children who have never known
Love's joy or pain.

The flowers we pass, the summer brook,
The bird that o'er us darts—
We do not know 'tis they that thrill
Our childish hearts.

The earth-things have no name for us,
The ploughing means no more
Than that they like to walk the fields
Who plough them o'er.

The road, the wood, the heaven, the hills
Are not a World to-day—
But just a place God's made for us
In which to play.

LISSETTE

Oh ... there was love in her heart—no doubt of it—
Under the anger.
But see what came out of it!

Not a knave, he!—A Romeo rhyme-smatterer,
Cloaking in languor
And heartache to flatter her.

And just as a woman will—even the best of them—
She yielded—brittle.
God spare me the rest of them!

Aye! though 'twas but kisses—she swore!—he had of her.
For, was it little?
She thought 'twas not bad of her,

Said I would lavish a burning hour full
On any grissette.
A parry!—and powerful!

But—"You are mine, and blood is inflammable,
Flaunty Lissette!"
My rage was undammable....

Could a stiletto's one prick be prettier?
Look at the gaping.
No?—then you're her pitier!

Pah! she's the better, and I ... I'm your prisoner.
Loose me the strapping—
I'll lay one more kiss on her.

[Pg 124]

[Pg 125]

TEARLESS

Do women weep when men have died?
It cannot be!
For I have sat here by his side,
Breathing dear names against his face,
That he must list to were his place
Over God's throne—
Yet have I wept no tear and made no moan.

No! but to lids, that gaze stone-wide,
Grief seems in vain.
Do women weep?—I was his bride—
They brought him to me cold and pale—
Upon his lids I saw the trail
Of deathly pain.
They said, "Her tears will fall like Autumn rain."

I cannot weep! Not if hot tears,
Dropped on his lips,
Might burn him back to life and years
Of yearning love, would any rise
To flood the anguish from my eyes—
And I'm his bride!
Ah me, do women weep when men have died?

THE LIGHTHOUSEMAN

When at evening smothered lightnings
Burn the clouds with opal fires;
When the stars forget to glisten,
And the winds refuse to listen
To the song of my desires,
 Oh, my love, unto thee!

When the livid breakers angered
Churn against my stormy tower;
When the petrel flying faster
Brings an omen to the master
Of his vessel's fated hour—
 Oh, the reefs! ah, the sea!

Then I climb the climbing stairway,
Turn the light across the storm;
You are watching, fisher-maiden,
For the token flashes laden
With a love death could not harm—
 Lo, they come, swift and free!

One—that means, "I think of thee!"
 Two—"I swear me thine!"
Three—Ah, hear me tho' you sleep!—
 Is, "Love, I know thee mine!"
Thro' the darkness, One, Two, Three,
 All the night they sweep:
Thro' raging darkness o'er the deep,
 One—and Two—and Three.

[Pg 127]

[Pg 128]

BY THE INDUS

Thou art late, O Moon,
Late,
 I have waited thee long.
The nightingale's flown to her nest,
 Sated with song.
The champak hath no odour more
To pour on the wind as he passeth o'er—
 But my heart it will not rest.

Thou art late, O Love,
Late,
 For the moon is a-wane.
The kusa-grass sighs with my sighs,
 Burns with my pain.
The lotus leans her head on the stream—
Shall I not lean to thy breast and dream,
 Dream ere the night-cool dies?

[Pg 129]

Thou art late, O Death,
Late,
 For he did not come!
A pariah is my heart,
 Cast from him—dumb!
I cannot cry in the jungle's deep—
Is it not time for Nirvana's sleep?
 O Death, strike with thy dart!

[Pg 130]

FROM ONE BLIND

I cannot say thy cheek is like the rose,
Thy hair ripple of sunbeams, and thine eyes
Violets, April-rich and sprung of God.
My barren gaze can never know what throes
Such boons of beauty waken, tho' I rise
Each day a-tremble with the ruthless hope
That light will pierce my useless lids—then grope
Till night, blind as the worm within his clod.

Yet unto me thou are not less divine,
I touch thy cheek—and know the mystery hid
Within the twilight breeze; I smoothe thy hair
And understand how slipping hours may twine
Themselves into eternity: yea, rid
Of all but love, I kiss thine eyes and seem
To see all beauty God Himself may dream.
Why then should I o'ermuch for earth-sight care?

AT THE FALL OF ROME

A.D. 455

Drink to Death, drink!
He's god o' the world.
Up with the cup—
Let no man shiver!
Up with the cup—
Let no man shrink!
Drink to death,
He's lord o' the breath
Of mortals hurled from the world
Into Oblivion's river!

Drink to Death, aye!
And then—to the dust!
Fill with a will—
And quaff like a lover!
Fill with a will—
Who dares a Nay!
Drink to Death!...
He lies who saith
That life is just—'tis a crust
Tossed to a slave in his hover!

[Pg 132]

Drink to Death!—So!
Who recks for the rest?
Love is above—
Or Hate, what matter?
Love is above—
Or Hell below.
Drink to Death,
For vile is the peth
Of Rome, and Shame is her name!
Then drink, and the goblet shatter!

[Pg 133]

PEACELESS LOVE

I say unto all hearts that cannot rest
For want of love, for beating loud and lonely,
Pray the great Mercy-God to give you only
Love that is passionless within the breast.

Pray that it may not be a haunting fire,
A vision that shall steal insatiably
All beauteous content, all sweet desire,
From faith and dream, star, flower, and song, and sea.

But seek that soul and soul may meet together,
Knowing they have for ever been but one—
Meet and be surest when ill's chartless weather
Drives blinding gales of doubt across their sun.
Pray—pray! lest love uptorn shall seem as nether
Hell-hate and rage beyond oblivion.

SUNDERED

God who can bind the stars eternally
With but a breath of spirit speech, a thought;
Who can within earth's arms lay the mad sea
Unserverably, and count it as sheer nought—
With His All-might can bind not you and me.

For though he pressed us heart to burning heart,
Knowing this fatal spell that so enthralls,
Still would our souls, unhelpably apart,
Stand aliens—beating fierce against the walls
Of dark unsympathies that 'tween us start.
Stands aliens, aye, and would! tho' we should meet
Beyond the oblivion of unnumbered births—
Upon some world where Time cannot repeat
The feeblest syllable that once was earth's.

WITH OMAR

I sat with Omar by the Tavern door
Musing the mystery of mortals o'er,
And soon with answers alternate we strove
Whether, beyond death, Life hath any shore.

*"Come, fill the cup," said he. "In the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling.
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing."*

"The Bird of Time?" I answered. "Then have I
No heart for Wine. Must we not cross the Sky
Unto Eternity upon his wings—
Or, failing, fall into the Gulf and die?"

*"So some for the Glories of this World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
But you, Friend, take the Cash—the Credit leave,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"*

"What, take the Cash and let the Credit go?
Spend all upon the Wine the while I know
A possible To-morrow may bring thirst
For Drink but Credit then shall cause to flow?"

*"Yea, make the most of what you yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust unto Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!"*

"Into the Dust we shall descend—we must.
But can the soul not break the crumbling Crust
In which he is engaged? To hope or to
Despair he will—which is more wise or just?"

*"The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers: and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone."*

"Like Snow it comes—to cool one burning Day;
And like it goes—for all our plea or sway.
But flooding tears nor Wine can ever purge
The Vision it has brought to us away."

*"But to this world we come and Why not knowing
Nor Whence, like water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the waste,
We know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing."*

"True, little do we know of *Why* or *Whence*.
But is forsooth our Darkness evidence
There is no Light?—the worm may see no star
Tho' heaven with myriad multitudes be dense."

*"But, all unasked, we're hither hurried Whence?
And, all unasked, we're Whither hurried hence?
O, many a cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence."*

"Yet can not—ever! For it is forbid
Still by that quenchless soul within us hid,
Which cries, 'Feed—feed me not on Wine alone,
For to Immortal Banquets I am bid.'"

*"Well oft I think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled:
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely Head."*

"Then if, from the dull Clay thro' with Life's throes,
More beautiful spring Hyacinth and Rose,
Will the great Gard'ner for the uprooted soul
Find Use no sweeter than—useless Repose?"

[Pg 136]

[Pg 137]

"We cannot know—so fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regret and future fears:
To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow we may be
Ourselves with yesterday's sev'n thousand Years."

[Pg 138]

"No Cup there is to bring oblivion
More during than Regret and Fear—no, none!
For Wine that's Wine to-day may change and be
Marah before to-morrow's Sands have run."

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door wherein I went."

"The doors of Argument may lead Nowhither,
Reason become a Prison where may wither
From sunless eyes the Infinite, from hearts
All Hope, when their sojourn too long is thither."

"Up from Earth's Centre thro' the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravelled by the Road—
But not the Master-knot of Human fate."

"The Master-knot knows but the Master-hand
That scattered Saturn and his countless Band
Like seeds upon the unplanted heaven's Air:
The Truth we reap from them is Chaff thrice fanned."

"Yet if the Soul can fling the Dust aside
And naked on the air of Heaven ride,
Wer't not a shame—wer't not a shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?"

[Pg 139]

"No, for a day bound in this Dust may teach
More of the Saki's Mind than we can reach
Through aeons mounting still from Sky to Sky—
May open through all Mystery a breach."

"You speak as if Existence closing your
Account and mine should know the like no more;
The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has poured
Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour."

"Bubbles we are, pricked by the point of Death.
But, in each bubble, hope there dwells a Breath
That lifts it and at last to Freedom flies,
And o'er all heights of Heaven wandereth."

"A moment's halt—a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reached
The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!"

"And yet it should be—it should be that we
Who drink shall drink of Immortality.
The Master of the Well has much to spare:
Will He say, 'Taste'—then shall we no more be?"

"The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

[Pg 140]

"And—were it otherwise?... We might erase
The Letter of some Sorrow in whose place
No other sounding, we should fail to spell
The Heart which yearns behind the mock-world's face."

"Well, this I know; whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath—consume me quite,
One flash of it within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright."

"In Temple or in Tavern 't may be lost.
And everywhere that Love hath any Cost

It may be found; the Wrath it seems is but
A Cloud whose Dew should make its power most."

*"But see His Presence thro' Creation's veins,
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Mah to Mahi; and
They change and perish all—but He remains."*

"All—it may be. Yet lie to sleep, and lo,
The soul seems quenched in Darkness—is it so?
Rather believe what seemeth not than seems
Of Death—until we know—*until we know.*"

*"So wastes the Hour—gone in the vain pursuit
Of This and That we strive o'er and dispute.
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter Fruit."*

[Pg 141]

"Better—unless we hope the Shadow 's thrown
Across our Path by glories of the Unknown
Lest we may think we have no more to live
And bide content with dim-lit Earth alone."

*"Then, strange, is't not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too?"*

"Such is the ban! but even though we heard
Love in Life's All we still should crave the word
Of one returned. Yet none is *sure*, we know,
Though they lie deep, they are by Death deterred."

*"Send then thy Soul through the Invisible
Some letter of the After-life to spell:
And by and by thy Soul returned to thee
But answers, 'I myself am Heaven and Hell.'"*

"From the Invisible, he does. But sent
Through Earth where living Goodness though 'tis blent
With Evil dures, may he not read the Voice,
'To make thee but for Death were toil ill-spent'?"

*"Well, when the Angel of the darker drink
At last shall find us by the river-brink,
And offering his Cup invite our souls
Forth to our lips to quaff, we shall not shrink."*

[Pg 142]

"No. But if in the sable Cup we knew
Death without waking were the fateful brew,
Nobler it were to curse as Coward Him
Who roused us into light—then light withdrew."

*"Then thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my fall to sin."*

"He will not. If one evil we endure
To ultimate Debasing, oh, be sure
'Tis not of Him predestined, and the sin
Not His nor ours—but fate's He could not cure."

*"Yet, ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that on the branches sang—
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows?"*

"So does it seem—no other joys like these!
Yet Summer comes, and Autumn's honoured ease;
And wintry Age, is't ever whisperless
Of that Last Spring, whose Verdure may not cease?"

*"Still, would some winged Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister or quite obliterate!"*

"To otherwise enregister believe
He toils eternally, nor asks Reprieve.
And could Creation perfect from his hands
Have come at Dawn, none overmuch should grieve."

[Pg 143]

So till the wan and early scene of day
We strove, and silent turned at last away,
Thinking how men in ages yet unborn
Would ask and answer—trust and doubt and pray.

[Pg 144]

A JAPANESE MOTHER

(IN TIME OF WAR)

The young stork sleeps in the pine-tree tops,
Down on the brink of the river.
My baby sleeps by the bamboo copse—
The bamboo copse where the rice field stops:
The bamboos sigh and shiver.

The white fox creeps from his hole in the hill;
I must pray to Inari.
I hear her calling me low and chill—
Low and chill when the wind is still
At night and the skies are starry.

And ever she says, "He's dead! he's dead!
Your lord who went to battle.
How shall your baby now be fed,
Ukibo fed, with rice and bread—
What if I hush his prattle?"

[Pg 145]

The red moon rises as I slip back,
And the bamboo stems are swaying.
Inari was deaf—and yet the lack,
The fear and lack, are gone, and the rack,
I know not why—with praying.

For though Inari cared not at all,
Some other god was kinder.
I wonder why he has heard my call,
My giftless call—and what shall befall?...
Hope has but left me blinder!

[Pg 146]

SHINTO

(MIYAJIMA, JAPAN, 1905)

Lowly temple and torii,
Shrine where the spirits of wind and wave
Find the worship and glory we
Give to the one God great and grave—

Lowly temple and torii,
Shrine of the dead, I hang my prayer
Here on your gates—the story see
And answer out of the earth and air.

For I am Nature's child, and you
Were by the children of Nature built.
Ages have on you smiled—and dew
On you for ages has been spilt—

Till you are beautiful as Time
Mossy and mellowing ever makes:
Wrapped as you are in lull—or rhyme
Of sounding drum that sudden breaks.

This is my prayer then, this, that I
Too may reverence all of life,
Beauty, and power and miss no high
Awe of a world with wonder rife.

That I may build in spirit fair
Temples and torii on each place
That I have loved—O hear it, Air,
Ocean and Earth, and grant your grace!

[Pg 147]

[Pg 148]

EVOCATION

(NIKKO, JAPAN, 1905)

Weird thro' the mist and cryptomeria
Booms the temple bell,
Down from the tomb of Iëyasu
Yearning, as a knell.

Down from the tomb where many an aeon
Silently has knelt,
Many a pilgrimage of millions—
Still about it felt.

Still, for see them gather ghostly
Now, as the numb sound
Floats as unearthly necromancy
From the past's dead ground.

See the invisible vast millions,
Hear their soundless feet
Climbing the shrine-ways to the gilded
Carven temple's seat.

And, one among them—pale among them—
Passes waning by.
What is it tells me mystically
That strange one was I?...

Weird thro' the mist and cryptomeria
Dies the bell—'tis dumb.
After how many lives returning
Shall I hither come?

Hither again! and climb the votive
Ever mossy ways?
Who shall the gods be then, the millions,
Meek, entreat or praise?

[Pg 149]

[Pg 150]

THE ATONER

Winter has come in sackcloth and ashes
(Penance for Summer's enverdured sheaves).
Bitterly, cruelly, bleakly he lashes
His limbs that are naked of grass and leaves.

He moans in the forest for sins unforgiven
(Sins of the revelrous days of June)—
Moans while the sun drifts dull from the heaven,
Giftless of heat's beshriving boon.

Long must he mourn, and long be his scourging,
(Long will the day-god aloof frown cold),
Long will earth listen the rue of his dirging—
Till the dark beads of his days are told.

INTIMATION

All night I smiled as I slept,
For I heard the March-wind feel
Blindly about in the trees without
For buds to heal.

All night in dreams, for I smelt,
In the rain-wet woods and fields,
The coming flowers and the glad green hours
That summer yields.

And when at dawn I awoke,
At the blue-bird's wooing cheep,
Winter with all its chill and pall
Seemed but a sleep.

IN JULY

This path will tell me where dark daisies dance
To the white sycamores that dell them in;
Where crow and flicker cry melodious din,
And blackberries in ebon ripeness glance
Luscious enticings under briery green.
It will slip under coppice limbs that lean
Brushingly as the slow-belled heifer pants
 Toward weedy water-plants
That shade the pool-sunk creek's reluctant trance.

I shall find bell-flower spires beside the gap
And lady phlox within the hollow's cool;
Cedar with sudden memories of Yule
Above the tangle tipped with blue skullcap.
The high hot mullein fond of the full sun
Will watch and tell the low mint when I've won
The hither wheat where idle breezes nap,
 And fluffy quails entrap
Me from their brood that crouch to escape mishap.

[Pg 153]

Then I shall reach the mossy water-way
That gullies the dense hill up to its peak,
There dally listening to the eerie eke
Of drops into cool chalices of clay.
Then on, for elders odorously will steal
My senses till I climb up where they heal
The livid heat of its malingering ray,
 And woingly betray
To memory many a long-forgotten day.

There I shall rest within the woody peace
Of afternoon. The bending azure frothed
With silveryness, the sunny pastures swathed,
Fragrant with morn-mown clover and seed-fleece;
The hills where hung mists muse, and Silence calls
To Solitude thro' aged forest halls,
Will waft into me their mysterious ease,
 And in the wind's soft cease
I shall hear hintings of eternities.

[Pg 154]

FROM ABOVE

What do I care if the trees are bare
And the hills are dark
And the skies are gray.

What do I care for chill in the air,
For crows that cark
At the rough wind's way.

What do I care for the dead leaves there—
Or the sullen road
By the sullen wood.

There's heart in my heart
To bear my load!
So enough, the day is good!

SONGS TO A. H. R.

I. THE WORLD'S, AND MINE

The world may hear
The wind at his trees,
The lark in her skies,
The sea on his leas;
May hear the song rise
From the breast of a woman
And think it as dear
As heaven tho' human.
But I have a music they can never know—
The touch of you, soul of you, heart of you. Oh!
All else that is said or sung 's but a part of you—
Ever to me 'tis so!

II. LOVE-CALL IN SPRING

[Pg 156]

Not only the lark but the robin too
(Oh, heart o' my heart, come into the wood!)
Is singing the air to gladness new
 As the breaking bud
 And the freshet's flood!

Not only the peeping grass and the scent—
(Oh, love o' my life, fly unto me here!)
Of violets coming ere April's spent—
 But the frog's shrill cheer
 And the crow's wild jeer!

Not only the blue, not only the breeze,
(Oh, soul o' my heart, why tarry so long!)
But sun that is sweeter upon the trees
 Than rills that throng
 To the brooklet's song!

Oh, heart o' my heart, oh, heart o' my love,
(Oh soul o' my soul, haste unto me, haste!)
For spring is below and God is above—
 But all is a waste
 Without thee—Haste!

III. MATING

[Pg 157]

The bliss of the wind in the redbud ringing!
 What shall we do with the April days!
Kingcups soon will be up and swinging—
 What shall we do with May's!

The cardinal flings, "They are made for mating!"
 Out on the bough he flutters, a flame.
Thrush-flutes echo "For mating's elating!"
 Love is its other name!"

They know! know it! but better, oh, better,
 Dearest, than ever a bird in Spring,
Know we to make each moment a debtor
 Unto love's burgeoning!

IV. UNTOLD

[Pg 158]

Could I, a poet,
Implant the truth of you,
Seize it and sow it
As Spring on the world.
There were no need
To fling (forsooth) of you
Fancies that only lovers heed!

No, but unfurled,
The bloom, the sweet of you,
(As unto me they are opened oft)
Would with their beauty's breath repeat of you
All that my heart breathes loud or soft!

[Pg 159]

**V.
LOVE-WATCH**

My love's a guardian-angel
Who camps about thy heart,
Never to flee thine enemy,
Nor from thee turn apart.

Whatever dark may shroud thee
And hide thy stars away,
With vigil sweet his wings shall beat
About thee till the day.

**VI.
AS YOU ARE**

[Pg 160]

Dark hair—dark eyes—
But heart of sun,
Pity and hope
That rill and run
With flowing fleet
To heal the defeat
Of all Life has undone.

Dark hair—dark eyes—
But soul as clear,
Trusty and fair
As e'er drew near
To clasp its mate
And enter the gate
Of Love that casts out fear.

Dark hair—dark eyes—
But, there is seen
In them the most
That earth can mean;
The most that death
Can bring—or breath
There—in the bright Unseen!

**VII.
AT AMALFI**

[Pg 161]

Come to the window, you who are mine.
Waken! the night is calling.
Sit by me here—with the moon's fair shine
Into your deep eyes falling.

The sea afar is a fearful gloom;
Lean from the casement, listen!
Anear, it breaks with a faery spume,
Spraying the moon-path's glisten.

The little white town below lies deep
As eternity in slumber.
O, you who are mine, how a glance can reap
Beauties beyond all number!

"Amalfi!" say it—as the stars set
O'er yon far promontory.
"Amalfi!" ... Shall we ever forget
Even Above this glory?

[Pg 162]

No; as twin sails at anchor ride,
Our spirits rock together
On a sea of love—lit as this tide
With tenderest star-weather!

And the quick ecstasy within

Your breast is against me beating.
Amalfi!... Never a night shall win
From God again such fleeting.

Ah—but the dawn is redd'ning up
Over the moon low-dying.
Come, come away—we have drunk the cup:
Ours is the dream undying!

VIII. ON THE PACIFIC

[Pg 163]

A storm broods far on the foam of the deep;
The moon-path gleams before.
A day and a night, a night and a day,
And the way, love, will be o'er.

Six thousand wandering miles we have come
And never a sail have seen.
The sky above and the sea below
And the drifting clouds between.

Yet in our hearts unheaving hope
And light and joy have slept.
Nor ever lonely has seemed the wave
Tho' heaving wild it leapt.

For there is talismanic might
Within our vows of love
To breathe us over all seas of life—
On to that Port above

[Pg 164]

Where the great Captain of all ships
Shall anchor them or send
Them forth on a vaster Voyage, yea,
On one that shall not end.

And upon *that* we two, I think,
Together still shall sail.
O may it be, my own, or may
We perish in death's gale!

[Pg 165]

THE WINDS

The East Wind is a Bedouin,
And Nimbus is his steed;
Out of the dusk with the lightning's thin
Blue scimitar he flies afar,
Whither his rovings lead.
The Dead Sea waves
And Egypt caves
Of mummied silence laugh
When he mounts to quench the Siroc's stench,
And to wrench
From his clutch the tyrant's staff.

The West Wind is an Indian brave
Who scours the Autumn's crest.
Dashing the forest down as a slave
He tears the leaves from its limbs and weaves
A maelstrom for his breast.
Out of the night
Crying to fright
The earth he swoops to spoil—
There is furious scathe in the whirl of his wrath,
In his path
There is misery and moil.

The North Wind is a Viking—cold
And cruel, armed with death!
Born in the doomful deep of the old
Ice Sea that froze ere Ymir rose
From Niflheim's ebon breath.
And with him sail
Snow, Frost, and Hail,
Thanes mighty as their lord,
To plunder the shores of Summer's stores—
And his roar's
Like the sound of Chaos' horde.

The South Wind is a Troubadour;
The Spring, his serenade.
Over the mountain, over the moor,
He blows to bloom from the winter's tomb
Blossom and leaf and blade.
He ripples the throat
Of the lark with a note
Of lilting love and bliss,
And the sun and the moon, the night and the noon,
Are a-swoon—
When he woos them with his kiss.

[Pg 166]

[Pg 167]

THE DAY-MOON

So wan, so unavailing,
Across the vacant day-blue dimly trailing!

Last night, sphered in thy shining,
A Circe—mystic destinies divining;

To-day but as a feather
Torn from a seraph's wing in sinful weather,

Down-drifting from the portals
Of Paradise, unto the land of mortals.

Yet do I feel thee awing
My heart with mystery, as thy updrawing

Moves thro' the tides of Ocean
And leaves lorn beaches barren of its motion;

Or strands upon near shallows
The wreck whose weirded form at night unhallows

The fisher maiden's prayers—
"For *him!*—that storms may take not unawares!"

So wan, so unavailing,
Across the vacant day-blue dimly trailing!

But Night shall come atoning
Thy phantom life thro' day, and high enthroning

Thee in her chambers arrassed
With star-hieroglyphs, leave thee unharassed

To glide with silvery passion,
Till in earth's shadow swept thy glowings ashen.

[Pg 168]

[Pg 169]

TO A SINGING WARBLER

"Beauty! all—all—is beauty?"
Was ever a bird so wrong!
"No young in the nest, no mate, no duty?"
Ribald! is this your song?

"Glad it is ended," are you?
The Spring and its nuptial fear?
"Freedom is better than love?" beware you
There will be May next year!

"Beauty!" again? still "beauty"?
Wait till the winter comes!
Till kestrel and hungry kite seek booty
And there are so few crumbs!

Wait? nay, fling it unbidden,
The false little song you prate!
Too sweet are its fancies to be chidden,
E'en of the rudest fate!

TO THE SEA

Art thou enraged, O sea, with the blue peace
Of heaven, so to uplift thine armèd waves,
Thy billowing rebellion 'gainst its ease,
And with Tartarean mutter from cold caves,
From shuddering profundities where shapes
Of awe glide through entangled leagues of ooze,
To hoot thy watery omens evermore,
And evermore thy moanings interfuse
With seething necromancy and mad lore?

Or, dost thou labour with the drifting bones
Of countless dead, thou mighty Alchemist,
Within whose stormy crucible the stones
Of sunk primordial shores, granite and schist,
Are crumbled by thine all-abrasive beat?
With immemorial chanting to the moon,
And cosmic incantation dost thou crave
Rest to be found not till thy wild be strewn
Frigid and desert over earth's last grave?

Thou seemest with immensity mad, blind—
With raving deaf, with wandering forlorn;
Parent of Demogorgon whose dire mind
Is night and earthquake, shapeless shame and scorn
Of the o'ermounting birth of Harmony.
Bound in thy briny bed and gnawing earth
With foamy writhing and fierce-panted tides,
Thou art as Fate in torment of a dearth
Of black disaster and destruction's strides.

And how thou dost drive silence from the world,
Incarnate Motion of all mystery!
Whose waves are fury-wings, whose winds are hurled
Whither thy Ghost tempestuous can see
A desolate apocalypse of death.
Oh, how thou dost drive silence from the world,
With emerald overflowing, waste on waste
Of flashing susurrations, dashed and swirled
'Gainst isles and continents and airs o'erspaced!

Nay, frustrate Hope art thou of the Unknown,
Gathered from primal mist and firmament;
A surging shape of Life's unfathomed moan,
Whelming humanity with fears unmeant.
Yet do I love thee, O, above all fear,
And loving thee unconquerably trust
The runes that from thy ageless surfing start
Would read, were they revealed, gust upon gust,
That Immortality is might of heart!

[Pg 171]

[Pg 172]

THE DEAD GODS

I thought I plunged into that dire Abyss
Which is Oblivion, the house of Death.
I thought there blew upon my soul the breath
Of time that was but never more can be.

Ten thousand years I thought I lay within
Its Void, blind, deaf, and motionless, until—
Though with no eye nor ear—I felt the thrill
Of seeing, heard its phantoms move and sigh.

First one beside me spoke, in tones that told
He once had been a god,—"Persephone,
Tear from thy brow its withered crown, for we
Are king and queen of Tartarus no more;

And that wan, shrivelled sceptre in thy hand,
Why dost thou clasp it still? Cast it away,
For now it hath no virtue that can sway
Dull shades or drive the Furies to their spoil.

Cast it away, and give thy palm to mine:
Perchance some unobliterated spark
Of memory shall warm this dismal Dark.
Perchance—vain! vain! love could not light such gloom."

[Pg 173]

He sank.... Then in great ruin by him moved
Another as in travail of some thought
Near unto birth; and soon from lips distraught
By aged silence, fell, with hollow woe:

"Ah, Pluto, dost thou, one time lord of Styx
And Acheron make moan of night and cold?
Were we upon Olympus as of old
Laughter of thee would rock its festal height.

But think, think thee of me, to whom or gloom
Or cold were more unknown than impotence!
See the unhurlèd thunderbolt brought hence
To mock me when I dream I still am Jove!"

Too much it was: I withered in the breath;
And lay again ten thousand lifeless years;
And then my soul shook, woke—and saw three biers
Chiselled of solid night majestically.

The forms outlaid upon them were unwound
As with the silence of eternity.
Numbing repose dwelt o'er them like a sea,
That long hath lost tide, wave and roar, in death.

"Ptah, Ammon, and Osiris are their names,"
A spirit hieroglyphed unto my soul,
"Ptah, Ammon, and Osiris—they who stole
The heart of Egypt from the God of gods:

"Aye, they! and these;" pointing to many wraiths
That stood around—Baal, Ormuzd, Indra, all
Whom frightened ignorance and sin's appall
Had given birth, close-huddled in despair.

Their eyes were fixed upon a cloven slope
Down whose descent still other forms a-fresh
From earth were drawn, by the unceasing mesh
Of Time to their irrevocable end.

"They are the gods," one said—"the gods whom men
Still taunt with wails for help."—Then a deep light
Upbore me from the Gulf, and thro' its might
I heard the worlds cry, "God alone is God!"

[Pg 174]

[Pg 175]

AT WINTER'S END

The weedy fallows winter-worn,
Where cattle shiver under sodden hay.
The plough-lands long and lorn—
The fading day.

The sullen shudder of the brook,
And winds that wring the writhen trees in vain
For drearier sound or look—
The lonely rain.

The crows that train o'er desert skies
In endless caravans that have no goal
But flight—where darkness flies—
From Pole to Pole.

The sombre zone of hills around
That shrink in misty mournfulness from sight,
With sunset aureoles crowned—
Before the night.

APRIL

A laughter of wind and a leaping of cloud,
And April, oh, out under the blue!
The brook is awake and the blackbird loud
In the dew!

But how does the robin high in the beech,
Beside the wood with its shake and toss,
Know it—the frenzy of bluets to reach
Thro' the moss!

And where did the lark ever learn his speech?
Up wildly sweet he's over the mead!
Is more than the rapture of earth can teach
In its creed?

I never shall know—I never shall care!
'Tis, oh, enough to live and to love!
To laugh and warble and dream and dare
Are to prove!

AUGUST GUESTS

The wind slipt over the hill
And down the valley.
He dimpled the cheek of the rill
With a cooling kiss.
Then hid on the bank a-glee
And began to rally
The rushes—Oh,
I love the wind for this!

A cloud blew out of the west
And spilt his shower
Upon the lily-bud crest
And the clematis.
Then over the virgin corn
Besprinkled a dower
Of dew-gems—And,
I love the cloud for this!

AUTUMN

I know her not by fallen leaves
Or resting heaps of hay;
Or by the sheathing mists of mauve
That soothe the fiery day.

I know her not by plumping nuts,
By redded hips and haws,
Or by the silence hanging sad
Under the wind's sere pause.

But by her sighs I know her well—
They are like Sorrow's breath;
And by this longing, strangely still,
For something after death.

THE WORLD

Vox desperans.

The World is a wind—on which are blown
All mysteries that are.
Out of a Void it sprang—and to
A Void shall spring, afar.

Vox sperans.

The World is Visible God—who is
Its Soul invisible.
There is no Void beyond that He
Abiding fills not full.

TO THE DOVE

1

Thy mellow passioning amid the leaves
Trembles around me in the summer dusk
That falls along the oatlands' sallow sheaves
And haunts above the runnel's voice a-husk
With plashy willow and bold-wading reed.
The solitude's dim spell it breaketh not,
But softer mourns unto me from the mead
Than airs within the dead primrose's heart,
Or breath of silences in dells begot
To soothe some grief-wan maid with love a-mort.

2

On many sylvan eves of childhood thou
Didst woo my homeward path with tenderness,
Woo till the awing owlet ceased to caw
With his chill screech of quavering distress.
At phantom midnight wakened I have heard
Thy mated dreams from the wind-erie elm,
And as a potion medicined and myrrhed,
As an enchantment's runic utterance,
It would draw sleep back to her lulling realm
Over my lids till day should disentrance.

[Pg 181]

3

A priestess art thou of Simplicity,
Who hath one fane—the heaven above thy nest;
One incense—love; one stealing litany
Of peace from rivered vale and upland crest.
Yea, thou art Hers, who makes prayer of the breeze,
Hope of the cool upwelling from sweet soils,
Faith of the dark'ning distance, charities
Of vesper scents, and of the glow-worm's throb
Joy whose first leaping rends the care-wound coils
That would earth of its heavenliness rob.

4

But few, how few her worshippers! For we
Cast at a myriad shrines our souls, to rise
Beliefless, unanointed, bound not free,
To sacrificing a vain sacrifice!
Let thy lone innocence then quickly null
Within our veins doubt-led and wrong desire
Or drugging knowledge that but fills o'erfull
Of feverous mystery the days we drain!
Be thy warm notes like an Orphean lyre
To lead us to life's Arcady again!

[Pg 182]

AT TINTERN ABBEY

(JUNE, 1903)

O Tintern, Tintern! evermore my dreams
Troubled of thy grave beauty shall be born;
Thy crumbling loveliness and ivy streams
Shall speak to me for ever, from this morn;
The wind-wild daws about thy arches drifting,
Clouds sweeping o'er thy ruin to the sea,
Gray Tintern, all the hills about thee, lifting
Their misty waving woodland verdancy!

The centuries that draw thee to the earth
In envy of thy desolated charm,
The summers and the winters, the sky's girth
Of sunny blue or bleakness, seek thy harm.
But would that I were Time, then only tender
Touch upon thee should fall as on I sped;
Of every pillar would I be defender,
Of every mossy window—of thy dead!

[Pg 183]

Thy dead beneath obliterated stones
Upon the sod that is at last thy floor,
Who list the Wye not as it lonely moans
Nor heed thy Gothic shadows grieving o'er.
O Tintern, Tintern! trysting-place, where never
Is wanting mysteries that move the breast,
I'll hear thy beauty calling, ah, for ever—
Till sinks within me the last voice to rest!

[Pg 184]

THE VICTORY

See, see!—the blows at his breast,
Abyss at his back,
The peril of dark that pressed,
The doubts in a pack,
That hunted to drag him down
Have triumphed? and now
He sinks who climbed for the crown
To the Summit's brow?

No!—though at the foot he lies,
Fallen and vain,
With gaze to the peak whose skies,
He could not attain,
The victory is, with strength—
No matter the past!—
He'd dare it again, the dark length,
And the fall at last!

SEARCHING DEATH'S DARK

When Autumn's melancholy robes the land
With silence and sad fadings mystical
Of other years move thro' the mellow fields,
I turn unto this meadow of the dead
Strewn with the leaves stormed from October trees,
And wonder if my resting shall be dug
Here by this cedar's moan or under the sway
Of yonder cypress—lair of winds that rove
As Valkyries from Valhalla's court
In search of worthy slain.
And sundry times with questioning I tease
The entombed of their estate—seeking to know
Whether 'tis sweeter in the grave to feel
The oblivion of Nature's flow, or here
Wander as gleam and shadow flit her face.
Whether the harvesting of pain and joy
Ends with the ivied slab, or whether death
Pours the warm chrism of Immortality
Into each human heart whose glow is spent.
Nor do my askings fall on the chill voids
Of unavailing silence. For a voice
Of sighing wind may answer, or it leaps,
Though wordless, from a marble seraph's face.
Or sometimes from unspeakable deeps of gold
That ebb along the west revealings wing
And tremor, like ethereal swift tongues
Unskilled of human speech, about my heart—
Till, youth, age, death ... even earth's all, it seems,
Are but wild moments wakened in that Soul,
To whom infinities are as a span,
Eternities as bird-flights o'er the sun,
And worlds as sands blown from Sahara's wilds
Into the sea....

[Pg 186]

Then twilight bells ring back
My wandered spirit from the wilderness
Of Mystery, whence none may find a path
To the Unknown, and like one who upborne
Has steered the unmeasured summer skies until
Their calm seems God, I turn transfigured home.

[Pg 187]

SERENITY

And could I love it more—this simple scene
Of cot-strewn hills and fields long-harvested,
That lie as if forgotten were all green,
 So bare, so dead?

Or could my gaze more tenderly entwine
Each pallid beech or silvery sycamore,
Outreaching arms in patience to divine
 If winter's o'er?

Ah no, the wind has blown into my veins
The blue infinity of sky, the sense
Of meadows free to-day from icy pains—
 From wintry vents.

And sunny peace more virgin than the glow
Falling from eve's first star into the night,
Brings hope believing what it ne'er can know
 With mortal sight.

TO THE SPRING WIND

Ah, what a changeling!
Yester you dashed from the west,
Altho' it is Spring,
And scattered the hail with maniac zest
Thro' the shivering corn—in scorn
For the labour of God and man.
And now from the plentiful South you haste,
With lovingest fingers,
To ruefully lift and woingly fan
The lily that lingers a-faint on the stalk:
As if the chill waste
Of the earth's May-dreams,
The flowers so full of her joy,
Were not—as it seems—
A wanton attempt to destroy.

THE RAMBLE

Down the road
Which asters tangle,
Thro' the gap
Where green-briar twines,
By the path
Where dry leaves dangle
Down from the ivy vines,

We go—
By sedgy fallows
And along
The stifled brook,
Till it stops
In lushy mallows
Just at the bridge's crook.

Then, again,
O'er fence, thro' thicket,
To the mouth
Of the rough ravine—
Where the weird
Leaf-hidden cricket
Chirrs thro' the weirder green—

[Pg 190]

There's a way
O'er rocks—but quicker
Is the best
Of heart and foot,
As the beams
Above us flicker
Sun upon moss and root!

And we leap—
As wildness tingles
From the air
Into our blood—
With a cry
Thro' golden dingles
Hid in the heart of the wood.

Oh, the wood
With winds a-wrestle!
With the nut
And acorn strown!
Oh, the wood
Where creepers trestle,
Tree unto tree o'ergrown!

[Pg 191]

With a climb
The ledging summit
Of the hill
Is reached in glee.
For an hour
We gaze off from it
Into the sky's blue sea.

But a bell
And sunset's crimson
Soon recall
The homeward path.
And we turn
As the glory dims on
The hay-fields' mounded math.

Thro' the soft
And silent twilight
We come,
To the stile at last,
As the clear
Undying eyelight
Of the stars tells day is past.

[Pg 192]

RETURN

Ah, it was here—September
And silence filled the air—
I came last year to remember,
And muse, hid away from care.
It was here I came—the thistle
Was trusting her seed to the wind;
The quail in the croft gave whistle
As now—and the fields lay thinned.

I know how the hay was steeping,
Brown mows under mellow haze;
How a frail cloud-flock was creeping
As now over lone sky-ways.
Just there where the cat-bird's calling
Her mock-hurt note by the shed,
The use-worn wain was stalling
In the weedy brook's dry bed.

And the cricket, lone little chimer
Of day-long dreams in the vines,
Chirred on like a doting rhymer
O'er-vain of his firstling lines.
He's near me now by the aster,
Beneath whose shadowy spray
A sultry bee seeps faster
As the sun slips down the day.

And there are the tall primroses
Like maidens waiting to dance.
They stood in the same shy poses
Last year, as if to entrance
The stately mulleins to waken
From death and lead them around:
And still they will stand untaken,
Till drops their gold to the ground.

Yes, it was here—September
And silence round me yearned.
Again I've come to remember,
Again for musing returned
To the searing fields assuaging,
And the falling leaves' sad balm:
Away from the world's keen waging—
To harvest and hills and calm.

[Pg 193]

[Pg 194]

THE EMPTY CROSS

The eve of Golgotha had come,
And Christ lay shrouded in the garden's tomb:
Among the olives, Oh, how dumb,
How sad the sun incarnadined the gloom!

The hill grew dim—the pleading cross
Reached empty arms toward the closing gate.
Jerusalem, oh, count thy loss!
Oh, hear ye! hear ye! ere it be too late!

Reached bleeding arms—but how in vain!
The murmurous multitude within the wall
Already had forgot His pain—
To-morrow would forget the cross—and all!

They knew not Rome before its sign,
Bending her brow bound with the nations' threne,
Would sweep all lands from Nile to Rhine
In servitude unto the Nazarene.

Nor knew that millions would forsake
Ancestral shrines great with the glow of time,
And lifting up its token shake
Aeons with thrill of love or battle's crime.

With empty arms aloft it stood:
Ah, Scribe and Pharisee, ye builded well!
The cross emblotted with His blood
Mounts, highest Hope of men against earth's hell!

[Pg 195]

[Pg 196]

SUNSET-LOVERS

Upon how many a hill,
Across how many a field,
Beside how many a river's whispering flowing,
They stand, with eyes a-thrill,
And hearts of day-rue healed,
Gazing, O wistful sun, upon thy going!

They have forgotten life,
Forgotten sunless death;
Desire is gone—is it not gone for ever?
No memory of strife
Have they, or pain-sick breath,
No hopes to fear or fears hope cannot sever.

Silent the gold steals down
The west, and mystery
Moves deeper in their hearts and settles darker.
'Tis faded—the day's crown;
But strange and shadowy
They see the Unseen as night falls stark and starker.

[Pg 197]

Like priests whose altar fires
Are spent, immovable
They stand, in awful ecstasy uplifted.
Zephyrs awake tree-lyres,
The starry deeps are full,
Earth with a mystic majesty is gifted.

Ah, sunset-lovers, though
Time were but pulsing pain,
And death no more than its eternal ceasing,
Would you not choose the throe,
Hold the oblivion vain,
To have beheld so many days releasing?

[Pg 198]

TO A ROSE

(IN A HOSPITAL)

Why do I love thee?—
Not because thy wak'ning lips
Were wooed to bloom by minstrel wind
Of Araby or Ind.

Not because thy fragrance slips
Into my soul—as if thou must
Be sprung of a mother's dust.

Not because *she* gave her breast
To thee for one long night—she whose
Pure heart I ne'er shall lose.

But when I lay in sick unrest
Afar from those who are my own,
Thou camest from hands unknown:
Therefore I love thee!

UNBURTHENED

Not pain nor the sunny wine
Of gladness steepeth my still spirit as
I lift my gaze across the winter meads
Engarmented in stubble robes of brown.
For, as those solitary trees afar
Have reached unbudding boughs
To the dim warmth of the February sun,
And melted on the infinite calm of space,
So I have reached—and am no more distraught
With the quivering pangs of memory's yesterday.
But the boon of blue skies deeper than despair,
Of rests that rise
As tides of sleep,
And care borne on the plumes
Of swan-swift clouds away to the sullen shades
Of quelled snow-storms low-lying in the west,
Have lulled my soul with soft infinitude.
And now ... down sinks the sun,
Until, half-arched above the marge of earth,
It hangs, a golden door,
Through which effulgent Paradise beyond
Burns seeming forth along the path of those
Who, crowned by Death with Life, pass to its portal.
How soon 'tis closed—how soon! The trumpeting
Of seraphs whose gold blasts of light break o'er
Purplescent passing battlements of cloud,
Sound clear ... then comes the dusk!

[Pg 200]

[Pg 201]

WHERE PEACE IS DUTY

Dimming in sunniness, aerily distant,
Valley and hillside float;
Up to me wavering, softly insistent,
Wanders the wood-brook's note.

Anchored beyond in azure unending
Cloud-sails await wind-tide.
Oh, for the skylands where soon they'll be wending—
And, unabiding, bide.

Where Time aflow thro' infinite spaces
Stays for no throttle of pain!
Where the stars go at eve to their places;
Where silence never shall wane!

Where there's no sense but of beauty's wild sweetness,
Thought but of sweetening beauty!
Where wanting's stilled in unwanting's completeness—
Where peace is duty!

WANTON JUNE

I knew she would come!
Sarcastic November
Laughed cold and glum
On the last red ember
Of forest leaves.
He was laughing, the scorner,
At me forlorn
Than any that grieves—
Because I asked him if June would come!

But I knew she would come!
When snow-hearted winter
Gripped river and loam,
And the wind sped flinter
On icy heel,
I was chafing my sorrow
And yearning to borrow
A hope that would steal
Across the hours—till June should come.

[Pg 203]

And now she is here.—
The wanton!—I follow
Her steps, ever near,
To the shade of the hollow
Where violets blow:
And chide her for leaving,
Tho' half, still, believing
She taunted me so,
To make her abided return more dear.

[Pg 204]

AUTUMN AT THE BRIDGE

Brown dropping of leaves,
Soft rush of the wind,
Slow searing of sheaves
 On the hill;
Green plunging of frogs,
Cool lisp of the brook,
Far barking of dogs
 At the mill;
Hot hanging of clouds,
High poise of the hawk,
Flush laughter of crowds
 From the Ridge;
Nut-falling, quail-calling,
Wheel-rumbling, bee-mumbling—
Oh, sadness, gladness, madness,
Of an autumn day at the bridge!

SONG

Her voice is vibrant beauty dipt
In dreams of infinite sorrow and delight.
Thro' an awaiting soul 'tis slipt
And lo, words spring that breathe immortal might.

TO HER WHO SHALL COME

1

Out of the night of lovelessness I call
Thee, as, in a chill chamber where no ray
Of unbelievable light and freedom fall,
Might cry one manacled! And tho' the way
Thou'lt come I cannot see; tho' my heart's sore
With emptiness when morning's silent gray
Wakes me to long aloneness; yet I know
Thou hast been with me, who like dawn wilt go
Beside me, when I have found thee, evermore!

2

So in the garden of my heart each day
I plant thee a flower. Now the pansy, peace,
And now the lily, faith—or now a spray
Of the climbing ivy, hope. And they ne'er cease
Around the still unblossoming rose of love
To bend in fragrant tribute to her sway.
Then—for thy shelter from life's sultrier suns,
The oak of strength I set o'er joy that runs
With brooklet glee from winds that grieve above.

3

But where now art thou? Watching with love's eye
The eve-star wander? Listening through dim trees
Some thrilled muezzin of the forest cry
From his leafy minaret? Or by the sea's
Blue brim, while the spectral moon half o'er it hangs
Like the faery isle of Avalon, do these
My yearnings speak to thee of days thy feet
Have never trod?—Sweet, sweet, oh, sealing sweet,
My own, must be our meeting's mystic pangs.

[Pg 207]

4

And will be soon! For last night near to day,
Dreaming, God called me thro' the space-built sphere
Of heaven and said, "Come, waiting one, and lay
Thine ear unto my Heart—there thou shall hear
The secrets of this world where evils war."
Such things I heard as must rend mortal clay
To tell, and trembled—till God, pitying,
Said, "Listen" ... Oh, my love, I heard thee sing
Out of thy window to the morning star!

[Pg 208]

AVOWAL TO THE NIGHTINGALE

Though thou hast ne'er unpent thy pain's delight
Upon these airs, bird of the poet's love,
Yet must I sing thy singing! for the Night
Has poured her jewels o'er the lap of heaven
As they who've heard thee say thou dost above
The wood such ecstasies as were not given
By nestling breasts of Venus to the dove.

Oft I have watched the moon orb her fair gold,
Still clung to by the tattered mists of day
And look for thee. Then has my hope grown bold
Till almost I could see how the near laurels
Would tremble with thy trembling: but the sway
Of bards who've wreathed thee with unfading chorals
Has held my longing lips from this poor lay.

None but the sky-hid lark whose spirit is
Too high for earth may vie for praise with thee
In aery rhapsody. And since 'tis his
To sing of day and joy as thou of sorrow
And night o'erhovering singest, thou'lt e'er be
More dear than he—till hearts shall cease to borrow
From grief the healing for life's mystery.

[Pg 209]

Then loose thy song! Though no grave ear may list
Its lyric trouble, still 'tis soothing sweet
To know that songs unheard and graces missed
By every eye melt on the skies that nourish
Us with immortal blue; and, changed, repeat
Their protean loveliness in all we cherish.
For beauty cannot die, howe'er 't may fleet.

[Pg 210]

STORM-EBB

Dusking amber dimly creeps
Over the vale,
Lit by the kildee's silver sweeps,
Sad with his wail.

Eastward swing the silent clouds
Into the night.
Burdens of day they seem—in crowds
Hurled from earth's sight.

Tilting gulls whip whitely far
Over the lake,
Tirelessly on o'er buoy and spar
Till they o'ertake

Shadow and mingled mist—and then
Vanish to wing
Still the bewildering night-fen,
Where the waves ring.

Dusking amber dimly dies
Out of the vale.
Dead from the dunes the winds arise—
Ghosts of the gale.

[Pg 211]

[Pg 212]

SLAVES

A host of bloody centuries lie prone
Upon the fields of Time—but still the wake
Of Progress loud is haunted with the groan
Of myriads, from whose peaceful veins, to slake
His scarlet thirst, has War, fierce Polypheme
Of fate, insatiately drunk Life's stream.
We bid the courier lightning leap along
Its metal path with spaceless speed—command
Stars lost in night-eternity to throng
Before the magnet eye of Science—stand
On Glory's peak and triumphingly cry
Out mastery of earth and sea and air.
But unto War's necessity we bare
Our piteous breasts—and impotently die.

WAKING

Oh, the long dawn, the weary, endless dawn,
When sleep's oblivion is torn away
From love that died with dying yesterday
But still unburied in the heart lies on!

Oh, the sick gray, the twitter in the trees,
The sense of human waking o'er the earth!
The quivering memories of love's fair birth
Now strown as deathless flowers o'er its decease!

Oh, the regret, and oh, regretlessness,
Striving for sovranity within the soul!
Oh, fear that life shall never more be whole,
And immortality but make it less!

FAUN-CALL

Oh, who is he will follow me
With a singing,
Down sunny roads where windy odes
Of the woods are ringing?

Where leaves are tossed from branches lost
In a tangle
Of vines that vie to clamber high—
But to vault and dangle!

Oh, who is he?—His eye must be
As a lover's
To leap and woo the chicory's hue
In the hazel-hovers!

His hope must dance like radiance
O'er the shadows
Of clouds that fling their threatening
On the stubbly meadows!

And he must see that Autumn's glee
And her laughter
From his lips and heart will quell all smart—
Of before and after!

[Pg 215]

[Pg 216]

LINGERING

I lingered still when you were gone,
When tryst and trust were o'er,
While memory like a wounded swan
In sorrow sung love's lore.

I lingered till the whippoorwill
Had cried delicious pain
Over the wild-wood—in its thrill
I heard your voice again.

I lingered and the mellow breeze
Blew to me sweetly dewed—
Its touch awoke the sorceries
Your last caresses brewed.

But when the night with silent start
Had sown her starry seed,
The harvest which sprang in my heart
Was loneliness and need.

STORM-TWILIGHT

Tossing, swirling, swept by the wind,
 Beaten abaft by the rain,
The swallows high in the sodden sky
 Circle oft and again.

They rise and sink and drift and swing,
 Twitterless in the chill;
A-haste, for stark is the coming dark
 Over the wet of the hill.

Wildly, swiftly, at last they stream
 Into their chimney home.
A livid gash in the west, a crash—
 Then silence, sadness, gloam.

WILDNESS

To drift with the drifting clouds,
And blow with the blow of breezes,
To ripple with waves and murmur with caves,
To soar, as the sea-mew pleases!

To dip with the dipping sails,
And burn with the burning heaven—
My life! my soul! for the infinite roll
Of a day to wildness given!

BEFORE AUTUMN

Summer's last moon has waned—
 Waned
As amber fires
 Of an Aztec shrine.
The invisible breath of coming death has stained
The withering leaves with its nepenthean wine—
 Autumn's near.

Winds in the woodland moan—
 Moan
As memories
 Of a chilling yore.
Magnolia seeds like Indian beads are strewn
From crimson pods along the earth's sere floor—
 Autumn's near.

Solitude slowly steals,
 Steals
Her silent way
 By the songless brook.
At the gnarly yoke of a solemn oak she kneels,
The musing joy of sadness in her look—
 Autumn's near.

Yes, with her golden days—
 Days
When hope and toil
 Are at peace and rest—
Autumn is near, and the tired year 'mid praise
Lies down with leaf and blossom on her breast—
 Autumn's near.

[Pg 220]

[Pg 221]

FULFILMENT

A-bask in the mellow beauty of the ripening sun,
Sad with the lingering sense of summer's purpose done,
The cut and searing fields stretch from me one by one
 Along the creek.

The corn-stooks drop their shadows down the fallow hill;
Wearing autumnal warmth the farm sleeps by the mill,
Around each heavy eave low smoke hangs blue and still—
 Life's flow is weak.

Along the weedy roads and lanes I walk—or pause—
Ponder a fallen nut or quirking crow whose caws
Seem with prehuman hintings fraught or ancient awes
 Of forest-deeps.

Of forest deeps the pale-face hunter never trod,
Nor Indian, with the silent stealth of Nature shod;
Deeps tense with the timelessness and solitude of God
 Who never sleeps.

And many times has Autumn, on her harvest way,
Gathered again into the earth leaf, fruit, and spray;
Here many times dwelt rueful as she dwells to-day,
 The while she reaps.

[Pg 222]

[Pg 223]

TO THE FALLEN LEAVES

I hear the moaning rains beat on your rest
In the long nights of Winter and his wind—
And Death, the woeful, guilty of your fall,
Crying that he has sinned.

MAYA

(HIROSHIMA, JAPAN, 1905)

Pale sampans up the river glide
With set sails vanishing and slow;
In the blue west the mountains hide
As visions that too soon will go.

Across the rice-lands flooded deep
The peasant peacefully wades on—
As in unfurrowed vales of sleep,
A phantom out of voidness drawn.

Over the temple cawing flies
The crow with carrion in his beak.
Buddha within lifts not his eyes
In pity or reproval meek;

Nor, in the bamboos, where they bow
A respite from the blinding sun,
The old priest—dreaming painless how
Nirvana's calm will come when won.

"All is allusion, *Maya*, all
The world of will," the spent East seems
Whispering in me, "And the call
Of Life is but a call of dreams."

[Pg 225]

[Pg 226]

SPIRIT OF RAIN

(MIYANOSHITA, JAPAN, 1905)

Spirit of rain—
With all thy ghosts of mist about the mountain, lonely
As a gray train
Of souls newly discarnate seeking new life only!

Spirit of rain!
Leading them thro' dim torii, up fane-ways onward
Till not in vain
They tremble upon the peaks and plunge rejoicing downward.

Spirit of rain!
So would I lead my dead thoughts high and higher,
Till they regain
Birth and the beauty of a new life's fire.

THE NYMPH AND THE GOD

She lay by the river dead,
A broken reed in her hand,
The nymph whom an idle god had wed
And led from her maidenland.

The god was the great god, Jove.
Two notes would the bent reed blow,
The one was sorrow, the other love,
Enwove with a woman's woe.

She lay by the river dead,
And he at feasting forgot.
The gods, shall they be disquieted
By dread of a mortal's lot?

A SEA-GHOST

Oh, fisher-fleet, go in from the sea
And furl your wings.
The bay is gray with the twilit spray
And the loud surf springs.

The chill buoy-bell is rung by the hands
Of all the drowned,
Who know the woe of the wind and tow
Of the tides around.

Go in, go in! O haste from the sea,
And let them rest—
A son and one who was wed and one
Who went down unblest.

Aye, even as I whose hands at the bell
Now labour most.
The tomb has gloom, but O the doom
Of the drear sea-ghost!

He evermore must wander the ooze
Beneath the wave,
Forlorn—to warn of the tempest born,
And to save—to save!

Then go, go in! and leave us the sea,
For only so
Can peace release us and give us ease
Of our salty woe.

[Pg 229]

[Pg 230]

LAST SIGHT OF LAND

The clouds in woe hang far and dim:
I look again and lo
Only a faint and shadow line
Of shore—I watch it go.

The gulls have left the ship and wheel
Back to the cliff's gray wraith.
Will it be so of all our thoughts
When we set sail on Death?

And what will the last sight be of life
As lone we fare and fast?
Grief and the face we love in mist—
Then night and awe too vast?

Or the dear light of Hope—like that,
O see, from the lost shore
Kindling and calling "Onward, you
Shall reach the Evermore!"

SILENCE

Silence is song unheard,
Is beauty never born,
Is light forgotten—left unstirred
Upon Creation's morn.

[Pg 232]
[Pg 233]

DAVID

CHARACTERS

SAUL	<i>King of Israel.</i>
JONATHAN	<i>Heir to the throne.</i>
ISHUI	<i>His brother.</i>
SAMUEL	<i>The Prophet of Israel.</i>
ABNER	<i>Captain of the Host of Israel.</i>
DOEG	<i>An Edomite; chief servant of Saul, and suitor for Michal.</i>
ADRIEL	<i>A Lord of Meholah, suitor for Merab.</i>
DAVID	<i>A shepherd, secretly anointed King.</i>
ABISHAI	<i>A follower of David.</i>
ABIATHAR	<i>A priest and follower of David.</i>
A PHILISTINE SPY.	
AHINOAM	<i>The Queen.</i>
MERAB	
MICHAL	<i>Daughters of Saul and Ahinoam.</i>
MIRIAM	<i>A blind prophetess, and later the "Witch of Endor."</i>
JUDITH	
LEAH	<i>Timbrel-players of the King.</i>
ZILLA	
ADAH	<i>Handmaiden to Merab.</i>
	<i>A Chorus of Women. A Band of Priests. Followers of David. Soldiers of Saul. People of the Court, &c.</i>

DAVID

[Pg 236]
[Pg 237]

ACT I

SCENE: *A Hall of Judgment in the palace of SAUL at Gibeah. The walls and pillars of cedar are richly carven—with serpents, pomegranates, and cherubim in gold. The floors are of bright marble; the throne of ivory hung with a lion's skin whose head is its footstool. On the right, by the throne, and on the left are doors to other portions of the palace; they are draped with woven curtains of purple and white. In the rear, which is open and supported on pillars, a porch crosses a court. Through the porch, on the enviroing hills, glow the camp-fires of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. Lamps in the Hall burn low, and on the floor JUDITH, LEAH and ZILLA are reclining restively.*

Judith (springing to her feet impatiently). O for a feast, pomegranate wine and song!

Leah. Oh! Oh!

Zilla. A feast indeed! the men in camp!
When was a laugh or any leaping here?
Never; and none to charm with timbreling!

[Pg 238]

(She goes to the porch.)

Leah. What shall we do?

Judith. I'll dance.

Zilla. Until you're dead.

Judith. Or till a youth wed Zilla for her beauty?
I'll not soil mine with sullen fear all day
Because these Philistines press round. As well
Be wenches gathering grapes or wool! Come, Leah.

(She prepares to dance.)

Leah. No, Judith, I'll put henna on my nails,

(Sits down.)

And mend my anklet.

Zilla (at the curtains). Oh! Oh! Oh!

Judith. Now, hear her!
Who, who, now? who, who is it? dog, fox, devil?

Zilla. All!

Judith. Then 'tis Ishui! (*Bounding to curtains.*) Yes, Ishui!
And fury in him, sallow, souring fury!
A jackal were his mate! Come, come, we'll plague him.

Zilla. Shall we—with David whom he hates?

Judith. Aie, David!
The joy of rousing men to jealousy!

Leah. Why hates he David, Zilla?

Zilla. Stupid Leah!

Judith. Hush, hush, be meet and ready now; he's near.
Look as for silly visions and for dreams!

(*They pose. ISHUI entering sees them. JUDITH sighs.*)

[Pg 239]

Ishui. Now, timbrel-gaud, why gape you here?

Judith. O! 'tis
Prince Ishui!

Zilla. Prince Ishui! Then he
Will tell us! he will tell us!

Leah. Yes!

Judith. Of David!
O, is he come? when, where?—quick, quick. And will
He pluck us ecstasies out of his harp,
Winning until we're wanton for him, mad,
And sigh and laugh and weep to the moon?

Ishui. Low thing!
Chaff of the king!

Judith. The king! I had not thought!
David a king! how beauteous would he be!

Ishui. David?

Judith. Turban of sapphire! robe of gold!

Ishui. A king? o'er Israel?

Judith. Who, who can tell?
Have you not heard? Yesterday in the camp,
Among war-old but fearful men, he offered
Kingly to meet Goliath—great Goliath!

Ishui. What do you say? to meet Goliath?

Judith (laughing in his face). Aie!

(*Thrust from him, she goes, dancing with ZILLA and LEAH.*)

Adriel (who has entered). Ishui, in a rage?

Ishui. Should I not be?

Adriel. Not would you be yourself.

Ishui. Not? (*Deftly.*) You say well.
I should not, no. Pardon then, Adriel.

[Pg 240]

Adriel. What was the offence?

Ishui. Turn from it: I have not
Bidden you here for vapours ... tho' they had

Substance as well for you!

Adriel. For me?

Ishui. Who likes
Laughter against him?

Adriel. I was laughed at?

Ishui. Why,
It is this shepherd!

Adriel. David?

Ishui. With his harp!
Flinging enchantment on the palace air
Till he impassions to him all who breathe.

Adriel. What sting from that? He's lovable and brave.

Ishui. Lovable? lovable?

Adriel. I do not see.

Ishui. This, then: you've hither come with gifts and gold,
Dream-bringing amethyst and weft of Ind,
To wed my sister, Merab?

Adriel. It is so.

Ishui. And you've the king's consent; but she denies?

Adriel. As every wind, you know it.

Ishui. Still denies!
And you, lost in the maze of her, fare on
Blindly and find no reason for it!

Adriel. How?
What reason can be? women are not clear;
And least unto themselves.

Ishui. Or to their fools.

(Goes to curtain, draws out ADAH.)

Your mistress, Merab, girl, whom does she love?
Unclench your hands.

Adah. I hate her.

Ishui. Insolent!
Answer; I am not milky Jonathan,
Answer; and for the rest—You hear?

Adah. She loves—
The shepherd David!

Adriel. Who, girl?

Adah. I care not!
She is unkind; I will not spy for her
On Michal, and I'll tell her secrets all!
And David does not love her—and she raves.

Ishui. Off to your sleep; be off—

(Makes to strike her.)

Adriel. Ishui, no.

(ADAH goes.)

Ishui (gnashingly). Then see you now how "lovable" he is?
I tell you that he stands athwart us all!
The heart of Merab swung as a censer to him,
My seat at table with the king usurped!
Mildew and mocking to the harp of Doeg
As it were any slave's; the while we all

Are lepered with suspicion.

Adriel. Of the king?

Ishui. Ah! and of Jonathan and Michal.

Adriel. Hush.

[Pg 242]

(Enter MICHAL, passing, with MIRIAM.)

Michal, delay. Whom lead you?

Michal. Miriam,
A prophetess.

Adriel. How of the king to-night?

Michal. He's not at rest; dreads Samuel's prophecy
The throne shall pass from him, and darkens more
Against this boundless Philistine Goliath
Who dares at Israel daily on the hills,
As we were dogs!

Adriel. Is David with him?

Michal. No;
But he is sent for—and will ease him—Ah!
He's wonderful to heal the king with his harp!
A waft, a sunny leap of melody,
And swift the hovering mad shadow's gone—
As magic!

Ishui. Michal.... Curst!

Michal. What anger's this?

Ishui. Disdaining Doeg and his plea to dust,
His waiting and the winning o'er of Edom,
You are enamoured of this David too?

Michal. I think my brother Ishui hath a fever.

(She goes, calmly, with MIRIAM.)

Ishui. Now are you kindled—are you quivering,
Or must this shepherd put upon us more?

Adriel. But has he not dealt honourably?

Ishui. No.

Adriel. Why do you urge it?

Ishui. Why have senses. He
With Samuel the prophet fast enshrouds
Some secret, and has Samuel not told
The kingdom from my father shall be rent
And fall unto one another?

Adriel. You are certain?

Ishui. As granite.

(Voices are heard in altercation.)

Yonder!

Adriel. The king?

Ishui. And Samuel
With prophecy or some refusal tears him!

(They step aside. SAUL, followed by SAMUEL, strides in and mounts the throne.)

Saul. You threat, and ever thunder threatening!
Pour seething prophecy into my veins,
Till a simoon of madness in me moves.
Am I not king, the king? chosen and sealed?

[Pg 243]

Who've been anathema and have been bane
Unto the foes of Israel, and filled
The earth with death of them?
And do you still forbid that I bear gold
And bribe away this Philistine array
Folded about us, fettering with flame?

Samuel. Yes,—yes! While there is air—and awe of Heaven
Do I forbid! A champion must rise
To level this Goliath. Thus may we
Loose on them pest of panic and of fear.

[Pg 244]

Saul. Are forty days not dead? A champion!
None will arise—'tis vain. And I'll not wait
On miracle.

Samuel. Offer thy daughter, then,
Michal, thy fairest, to whoever shall.

Saul. Demand and drain for more! without an end.
Ever vexation! No; I will not.

Samuel. Then,
Out of Jehovah and a vast foreseen
I tell thee again, thou perilous proud king,
The sceptre shall slip from thee to another!

(He moves to go.)

Saul. The sceptre....

Samuel. To another!

Saul. From me! No!
You rouse afar the billowing of ill.
I grant—go not!—I grovel to your will,
Fear it and fawn as to omnipotence,

(Snatching at SAMUEL'S mantle.)

And vow to all its divination—all!

Samuel. Then, Saul of Israel, the hour is near,
When shall arise one, and Goliath fall!

(Goes slowly out by the porch, Saul sinks back.)

Ishui (after a pause, keenly). Oh,—subtle!

Saul. Thus he sways me.

Ishui. Subtle!—subtle!
And yet I must not speak; come, Adriel,

(As if going.)

No use of us is here.

[Pg 245]

Saul. Use? subtle? Stand!

Ishui. No, father, no.

Saul. What mean you?

Ishui. Do not ask....
Yet how it creeps, and how!

Saul. Unveil your words.

Ishui. Do you not see it crawl, this serpent scheme?
Goliath slain—the people mad with praise,
Then fallen from you—Michal the victor's wife....

Saul. Say on, say on.

Ishui. Or else the champion slain—
Fear on the people—panic—the kingdom's ruin!

Saul. Now do the folds slip from me.

Ishui. And you see?
Ah, then, if one arise? If one arise?

Saul. Death, death! If he hath touched this prophet—if
Merely a little moment!—

Ishui. I have seen
Your David with him.

Saul. Death! if —— Come here: David?

Ishui. In secret.

Saul. Say you?

Ishui. Yes.

Saul. The folds slip further;
To this you lead me—hatred against David!
To this with supple envy's easy glide!

Ishui. I have but told—

Saul. You have but builded lies,
As ever you are building and for ever.
I'll hear no more against him—Abner!—no.

[Pg 246]

(*To ABNER, who enters.*)

David, and with his harp.

Abner. My lord—

Saul. Not come?
He is not come? Forever he delays!

(*Remounts throne.*)

Abner. Time's yet to pass.

Saul. There is not. Am I king?

(*A harp is heard.*)

See you, 'tis he!... 'Tis David!... And he sings!

David (bravely, within).

Smiter of Hosts,
Terrible Saul!
Vile on the hills shall he laugh who boasts
None is among
Great Israel's all
Fearless for Saul, King Saul!

(*Entering with people of the palace.*)

Aye, is there none
Galled of the sting,
Will at the soul of Goliath run?
Wring it and up
To his false gods fling?...
None for the king, the king?

(*He drops to his knee, amid praise, before the throne.*)

Saul (darkening). Forego this praise and stand
Away from him; 'tis overmuch.

(*To DAVID.*) Why have
You dallied and delayed?

[Pg 247]

David. My lord, delayed?

Saul. Do not smile wonder, mocking!

David. Why, my lord,
I do not mock. Only the birds have wings.
Yet on the vales behind me I have left

Haste and a swirl, a wonderment of air,
And in the torrent's troubled vein amaze,
So swift I hurried hither at your urgency
Out of the fields and folding the far sheep!

Saul. You have not; you have dallied. (*Motions rest out.*) You have dallied.

(*Comes down indeterminate.*)

And now——

David. And now the king with darkness foams,
With sheeted passions like to lightning gusts.

(*All have gone.*)

Shall I not play to him?

Saul. You shall not, no.

(*Slowly draws a dagger.*)

I'll not be lulled.

David. But show a tiger gleam?
Terrible fury stealing from the heart
And crouching cold within the eye, O Saul?

Saul. I'll not endure. They say that you——

David. They say?
What is this ravage in you? Does the truth
So limpid overflow in palaces?
Never an enemy to venom it?
Am I not David, faithful, and thy friend?

[Pg 248]

Saul. I'll slay you and regretless.

David (unmoving). Slay, my lord?

Saul. Do you not fear? And brave me to my breast?

David. Have I done wrong that I should fear the king?
Reed as I am, could he not breathe and break?
And I should be oblivion at a word!
But under the terror of his might have I
Not seen his heart beat justice and beat love?
See, even now!...

Saul. I will not listen to them!

David. To whom, my lord, and what?

Saul. Ever they say,
"This David," and "This David!"

David. Ah, my harp!

Saul. But think you, David, I shall lose the kingdom?

David (starting). My lord!...

Saul. Pain in your eyes? you think it? Deem
I cannot overleap this destiny?

David. To that let us not verge; it has but ill.
Deeper the future gulf is for our fears.
Forget it. Forget the brink may ever gape,
And wield the throne so well that God Himself
Must not unking you, more than He would cry
The morning star from Heaven! Then, I swear it,
None else will!

Saul. Swear?

David. Nay, nay!

Saul. You swear?

[Pg 249]

David. But words,
Foolishly from the heart; a shepherd speech!
Give them no mood; but see, see yonder fires
Camping upon the peace of Israel,
As we were carrion beneath the sun!
Let us conceive annihilation on them,
Hurricane rush and deluging and ruin.

Saul. Ah, but the prophecy! the prophecy!
It eats in me the food of rest and ease.
And David, nearer: Samuel in my stead
Another hath anointed.

David. Saul, not this!
This should not fall to me, my lord; no more!
You cannot understand; it pains beyond
All duty and enduring!

Saul. Pains beyond...?
Who is he? know you of him? do you? know you?
You sup the confidence of Samuel?
I'll search from Nile to Nineveh—

David. My lord!

Saul. Mountain and desert, wilderness and sea,
Under and over, search—and find.

David. Peace, peace!

(*Enter MICHAL joyously.*)

Michal. O father, father! David! Listen!... Why
All here is dark and quivering as pain,
And a foreboding binds me ere I breathe!
David, you have not been as sun to him!

David. But Michal will be now.

Saul. Child, well, what then?

Michal. Father, a secret! Oh, and it will make
Dawn and delight in you!

Saul. Perhaps; then, well?

Michal. Oh, I have heard...!

Saul. Have heard!—Why do you pale?

(*She stands unaccountably moved.*)

Now are you Baal-bit?

David. Michal!

Michal (in terror). David!... the dread
What does it mean? I cannot speak! It shrinks
Shivering down upon my heart in awe!

David. And numbs you so?—Let it rush from your lips!
Can any moving in the world so bring
Terror upon you! Speak, what is it?

Michal. Ah!
I know not; danger rising and its wing
Sudden against my lips!

David. To warn?

Michal. It shall not!
There—now again flows joy: I think it flows.

Saul. Then—you have heard...?

Michal. Yes, father, yes! Have you
Not much desired discovery of whom
Samuel hath anointed?

Saul. Well?

Michal. I've found—

(DAVID *blenches.*)

Almost have found! A prophetess to-day
Hath told me that he is a—

[Pg 251]

(*Realises.*)

Saul. Now you cease?

(*She stands horrified.*)

Sudden and senseless!

Michal. David!—No!

Saul. God! God!
Have I not bidden swiftly! Ever then
Vexation? I could—Ah. Will she not speak!

Michal. I cannot.

Saul. Cannot! Are you flesh of me?

David. My lord, not anger! Hear me ...

Saul. Cannot?

David. Hear!
Her lips could never seal upon a wrong.
Sudden divinity is on them, silence
Sent for the benison of Israel,
Else were it shattered by her love to you!
Believe, in all the riven realm of duty
There's no obedience from thee she would hold.
If it seem other—

(*Enter ABNER hurriedly.*)

Abner. Pardon, O king. A word.

Saul. I will not. Do you come with vexing too?

Abner. The Philistines—some fury is afoot;
A spy's within our gates—and scorns to speak.

Saul. Conspiracy of silence!... Back to him.

(ABNER *goes.*)

(*To DAVID and MICHAL.*) But you—I'll not forget.
I'll not forget.

[Pg 252]

(*Goes trembling, his look bent backward still upon them.*)

David (*casting off gloom, then joyful*). Forget! anointing peril! What are they
all?

Michal!—for me you have done this, for me?

(*She stands immovable.*)

I'm swung with joy as palms of Abila!

(*Goes to her.*)

A princess, you! and warm within your veins
Live sympathy and all love unto your father,
Yet you have shielded me?

Michal. You are the anointed?

David. I am—oh, do not flint your loveliness!—
I am the anointed, but all innocent
In will or hope of any envious wrong,
As lily blowing of blasphemy! as dew
Upon it is of enmity!

Michal. Anointed!
You whom the king uplifted from the fields!

David. And who am ever faithful to him!

Michal. You,
Whom Jonathan loves more than women love!

David. Yet reaches not my love to Jonathan!

Michal. You—you!

David. But, hear me!

Michal. You, of all!

David. O hear!
Of my anointing Jonathan is 'ware,
Knows it is holy, helpless, innocent
As dawn or a drift of dreaming in the night!
Knows it unsought—out of the skies—supernal—
From the inspired cruse of Samuel!
For Israel it dripped upon me, and
For Israel must drip until I die!
Or till high Gath and Askalon are blown
Dust on the wind, and all Philistia
Lie peopleless and still under the stars!...
Goliath, then, a laughter evermore!...
Still, still you shrink? do you not see, not feel?

[Pg 253]

Michal. So have you breathed yourself about my heart,
Even as moonlit incense, spirit flame
Burning away all barrier!

David. But see!

Michal. And all the world has streamed a rapture in,
Till even now my lids from anger falter
And the dew falls!

David. Restrain! O do not weep!
Upon my heart each tear were as a sea
Flooding it from all duty but the course
Of thy delight!

Michal. Poor, that I should have tears!
Fury were better, tempest! O weak eyes,
When 'tis my father, and with Samuel
You creep to steal his kingdom!

David. Michal!... God!

Michal. Yes, steal it!

David. Cruel! fell accusal! Yea,
Utterly false and full of wounding!
(*Struggling, then with control.*) Yet,
Forgive that even when thy arrows sink
Deeper than all the skill of time can draw,
I spare thee not the furrowed face of pain ...
Delirious wings of hope that fluttered up,
At last to fall!

[Pg 254]

(*Moves to go.*)

Michal. David!

David. Farewell!

Michal. ... You must not!

David. Peace to you, peace and joy!

Michal. You must not go!

(*He turns. She sways and reaches to him her arms. As they move together DOEG and MERAB appear, but vanish from the curtains as MICHAL utters dismay.*)

Michal. Merab and Doeg!

David (has sprung to her). Yet what matter, now!
Were it the driven night-unshrouded dead!
Under the firmament is but one need,
That you will understand!

Michal. But Merab! ah,
She's cunning, cold and cruel, and she loves thee;
Hath told her love to Ahinoam the queen!
And Doeg hates thee—since for me he's mad!

David. Then be his hate as wild, as wide as winds
That gather up the desert for their blast,
Be it as Sheol deep, stronger than stars
That fling fate on us, and I care not, care not,
If I am trusted and to Michal truth!
Hear, hear me! for the kingdom, tho 't may come,
I yearn not; but for you!

[Pg 255]

Michal. No, no!

David. For you!
Since I a shepherd o'er a wild of hills
First beheld you the daughter of the king
Amid his servants, leaning, still with noon,
Beautiful under a tamarisk, until
All beauty else is dead——

Michal. Ah, cease!

David. Since then
I have been wonder, ecstasy and dream!
The moulded light and fragrant miracle,
Body of you and soul, lifted me till
When you departed——

Michal. No, you rend me!

David. I
Fell thro' infinity of void!

Michal. No more!

David. Then came the prophet Samuel with anointing!
My hope sprung as the sun!

Michal. I must not hear!

David. Then was I called to play before the king.
Here in this hall where cherubim shine out,
Where the night silence——

Michal. David!

David. Strung me tense,
I waited, shepherd-timid, and you came,
You for the king to try my skill! you, you!

Michal. Leave me, ah leave! I yield!

[Pg 256]

David. And often since
Have we not swayed and swept thro' happy hours,
Far from the birth unto the bourne of bliss?

Michal. And I——

David. To-night you did not to the king
Reveal my helpless chism, give me to peril.
Say but the reason!

Michal. David!

David. Speak, O speak!

Michal. And shall I, shall I? how this prophethess
Miriam hath foretold——

David. Some wonder? speak!

Michal (*springs up the throne, then down*). No, no! horror in me moans out
against it.

Wed me with destiny against my father?
Dethrone my mother? Ah!

David. Not that—no wrong!

Michal. Then swear conspiracy upon its tide
Never shall lift you!

David. Deeper than soul or sea,
Deep as divinity is deep, I swear.
If it shall come, the kingdom—

Michal. "If!" not "if."
Surrender this anointing! Spurn it, say
You never will be king though Israel
Kingless go mad for it!

David. I cannot.

Michal. Guile!

David. I cannot—and I must not. It is holy!

Michal. Then must I hate you—scorn you—

David. Michal!

Michal. And will.
But to reign over Israel you care,
Not for the peace of it!

David. Thus all is vain;
A seething on the lips, I'll say no more....
Care but to reign and not for Israel's calm?
I who am wounded with her every wound?...
Look out upon yon Philistine bold fires
Lapping the night with bloody tongue—look out!

(A commotion is heard within.)

As God has swung the world and hung for ever
The infinite in awe, to-morrow night
Not one of them shall burn!

Michal. You pall me!

David. None!

Michal. What is this strength! It seizes on me! No,
I'll not believe; no, no, more than I would
From a boy's breath or the mere sling you wear
A multitude should flee! And you shall learn
A daughter to a father may be true
Tho' paleness be her doom until she die!

(She turns to go. Enter JONATHAN eagerly.)

Jonathan. David!

David. My friend—my Jonathan! 'Tis you?

(They embrace. MICHAL goes.)

Jonathan. Great heart, I've heard how yesterday before
The soldiers you.... But Michal's gone! No word?

David. The anointing.

Jonathan. Ah, she knows?

David. All.

Jonathan. And disdains
Believing? tell me.

David. No, not now—not now.
Let me forget it in a leap of deeds.

(The commotion sounds again.)

For there is murmur misty of distress,
What is it? sprung of the Philistines? new terror?
This sounding giant flings again his foam?
Jonathan, I am flame that will not wait.
What is it? I must strike.

Jonathan. David....

David. Tell me,
And do not bring dissuasion more, or pause.

Jonathan. The king comes here.

David. Now?

Jonathan. With a spy who keeps
Fiercely to silence.

David. Then is peril up!
Jonathan...!

Jonathan. David, you must cool from this.
Determination surges you o'erfar.
I will not see you rush on perishing,
Not though it be the aid of Israel.

David. I must.... I will not let them ever throng,
Staining the hills, and starving us from peace.
Rather the last ray living in me, rather
Death and the desecration of the worm.
Bid me not back with love, nor plea; I must!

Jonathan. But think——

David. No thought!

Jonathan. 'Twere futile—

David. Hear; the king!

Jonathan. The madness of it!

David. No, and see; they come.

Jonathan. Strangely my father is unstrung.

David. They come.

*(Enter SAUL, with SAMUEL; soldiers with the spy, AHINOAM with ABNER;
and all the court in suppressed dread.)*

Saul (to SAMUEL). He will not speak, but scorns me, and his lips
Bitterly curve and grapple. But he shall
Learn there is torture to it! Set him forth.

(The spy is thrust forward.)

Tighten his bonds up till he moan.

(It is done.)

Aye, gasp,
Accursed Philistine! Now wilt thou tell
The plan and passion of the people 'gainst us?

Spy. Baal!

Saul. Tighten the torture more.... Now will you?

Spy (in agony). Yea!

Saul. On, then, reveal.

Spy. New forces have arrived,

(General movement of uneasiness.)

Unless before to-morrow's moon one's sent
To overthrow Goliath ... Gods! the pain!

Saul. Well? Well?

Spy. Then Gibeah attacked, and all,
Even to sucking babes, they'll put to sword!

(A movement of horror.)

Ahinoam. All Gibeah!

A Woman. My little ones! No, no!

(She rushes frantically out.)

Samuel. Then, Saul of Gibeah, one thing and one
Alone is to be done. A champion,
To break this beetling giant down to death!

Saul. There is none.

Samuel. Is none! Call! I order it.

Saul. Then who will dare against him!
(A silence.) See you now.

Samuel. You, Abner, will not?

Abner. It were death and vain.

Samuel. Doeg, chief servant of the king?

Doeg. Why me?
Had I a mother out of Israel?
I am an alien, an Edomite.

David. My lord, this is no more endurable!

(Steps forth.)

Futile and death? Alien? Edomite?
Has not this Philistine before the gates,
With insult and illimitable breath
Vaunting of vanity and smiting laughter,
Boasted and braved and threatened up to Baal?
And now unless one slay him, Israel
From babe to age must bleed and be no more!
I am a shepherd, have but seized the lion
And throttled the bleating kid out of his throat;
Little it then beseems that I thrust in
Where battle captains pale and falter off;
But this is past all carp of rank or station.
One must go out—Goliath must have end.

Doeg. Ah, ah! and *you* will!

Ishui. *You?*

Jonathan. No, David!

Saul. *You?*

David. Sudden you hound about me ravenous?
Have I thrown doom not daring to your feet,
Ruler of Israel, that you rise wild,
Livid above me as an avalanche?

Doeg. A plot! it is a plot! He will be slain—
From you, my lord, dominion then will fall!
Or should it not ...

Samuel. Liar! it is no plot.
But courage sprung seraphic out of night,
Beautiful, yea, a bravery from God!

Michal (behind the throng). Open! and let me enter! Open!

(She enters.)

Father!

It is not false? but now, the uttermost?
To-morrow, if Goliath still exult,
There's peril of desolation, bloody ruin?

[Pg 262]

Samuel. I answer for him; yea.

Michal. Then to your will,
Father, unto will of yesterday
I bend me now with sacrificial joy.
Unto Goliath's slayer is the hand
Of Michal, the king's daughter!

David (joyously). Michal! Michal!

Doeg. See you, my lord? Do you not understand?

Ishui. It is another coiling of their plot!

Michal. Coiling of plot? What mean you?

Merab. Ah! You know
Not it is David offers against Goliath?

Michal. David? *(Shrinking.)* David?

(A low tumult is heard without. Enter a Captain hurriedly.)

Captain. O King, bid me to speak!

Saul. Then speak!

Captain. Fear is upon the host. There will
Be mutiny unless, Goliath slain,
Courage spring up anew.

David. My lord, then, choose!
Ere longer waiting fester to disaster.

Samuel. Yea, king of Gibeah, and bid him go,
And Michal for his meed! or evermore
Evil be on you and the sear of shame—
And haunting memory beyond the tomb!

Saul. Then let him—let him. And upon the field
Of Ephes-Dammin. But I am not blind!

(To ABNER.)

[Pg 263]

Let him, to-morrow! Go prepare the host.
Yet—I am king, remember! I am king!

(SAUL goes; murmurs of relief ... All follow, but MICHAL, past DAVID with joy or hate.)

David. Michal!

(She struggles against tears, but, turning, goes. He stands and gazes after her. Then a trumpet sounds and soldiers throng to the porch.)

David (thrilled, his hand on his sling). For Israel! For Israel!

(Goes toward them.)

CURTAIN.

[Pg 264]

ACT II

SCENE.—*The royal tent of SAUL pitched on one hill of the battlefield of Ephes-Dammin. The tent is of black embroidered with various warlike designs. To one side on a dais are the chairs of SAUL and AHINOAM; also DAVID'S harp. On the other side, toward the front, is a table with weapons. The tent wall is lifted along the back, revealing on the opposite hill, across a deep narrow valley, the routed camp of the*

Philistines; before it in gleaming brazen armour lies GOLIATH slain. Other hills beyond, and the sky above. By the small table, her back to the battlefield, sits MERAB in cold anger. AHINOAM and several women look out in ecstasy toward DAVID, SAUL, JONATHAN, and the army, returning victorious, and shouting.

First Woman. See, see, at last!

Second Woman. They come!

Third Woman. An avalanche!
Over the brook and bright amid hosannas!

Second Woman. And now amid the rushes!

First Woman. And the servants!
Goliath's head high-borne upon a charger!
The rocks that cry reverberant and vast!
The people and the palms!

[Pg 265]

Third woman. Yea, all the branches
Torn from the trees! The waving of them—O!

Second Woman. And David, see! triumphant, calm, between
The king and Jonathan!... His glory
All the wild generations of the wind
Ever shall utter! Hear them—
(*The tumult ascends afar.*) "David! David!"
O queen! a sea of shouting!

Ahinoam. Which you crave?
Then go and lave you in this tide of joy.

(*The women go rapturously. AHINOAM turns.*)

Merab. Mother!

Ahinoam. My daughter?

Merab. Well?

Ahinoam. They all are gone.

Merab. And Michal, where?

Ahinoam. I do not know, my child.

Merab. Why did my father pledge her to him? you
Not hindering?

Ahinoam. She is your sister. You
Are pledged to Adriel.

Merab. And as a slave!
And if I do not love him there is—riches!
If he is Sodom-bitter to me—riches!

Ahinoam. But for the kingdom.

Merab. For my torture! What
Kingdom is to a woman as her love?

Ahinoam. And David still enthralles you?

Merab. Though he never
Sought me with any murmur or desire!
Though he is Michal's for Goliath's death!
Michal's to-day, unless—

Ahinoam. Merab, a care!
Too near in you were ever love and hate.

(*The tumult nears. AHINOAM goes to look out. DOEG enters to MERAB.*)

Doeg (low). News, Merab!

Merab. Well?

Doeg. A triumph o'er him, yet!

[Pg 266]

The king is worn, as a leper pent, between
Wonder of David and quick jealousy
Because of praise this whelming of Goliath
Wakes in the people.

Merab. Then? the triumph?

Doeg. This.

(The tumult, nearer.)

I've skilfully disposed the women
To coldly sing of Saul, but of our David

(Watches her.)

With lavish of ecstasy as to a king.

Merab (springing up). Then I will praise him!

Doeg. David? you?

Merab. As he
Was never—and shall never be again.

(Takes a dagger.)

Doeg. But—

Merab. Give me the phial.

Doeg. The poison?

Merab. Come—at once!

Doeg. What will you do?

Merab (seizes phial). At once with it.

(Dips dagger in.)

Doeg. You'll stab him?

Merab. As any fool? Wait. And the rest now, quick.
This timbrel-player, Judith?

Doeg. She is ready
And ravishing!

Merab. Well, well; then—?

Doeg. We will send her
Sudden, as Michal is alone with David,
To seize him with insinuating kisses,
And arms that wind as they were wonted to him.
Michal once jealous—and already I
Have sowed suspicions—

(Laughs.)

Merab. May it be their rending.

(The tumult near.)

But come, come, we must see; and show no frown.

(They go to look out. Shouts of "David! David!" arise, and timbrelers, dancing and singing, pass the tent opening; then priests with the Ark and its cherubim of gold. DAVID, SAUL, JONATHAN, ISHUI, and the court then enter amid acclamations. Before them the head of Goliath is borne on a charger, under a napkin. SAUL darkly mounts the throne with AHINOAM, to waving of palms and praise.)

A Woman (breaking from the throng). Our little ones are saved! Hosannah!
joy!

(She kisses DAVID'S hand.)

Jonathan. Woman, thy tongue should know an angel-word,

Or seraph syllables new-sung to God!
Earth has not any rapture well for this!
David, my brother!

David. Jonathan, my friend!
While life has any love, know mine for you.

Jonathan. Then am I friended as no man was ever!
And though my soul were morning wide it were
Helpless to hold my wonder and delight!
O people, look upon him!

People. David! David!

Jonathan. Never before in Israel rose beauty
Up to this glory!

David. Jonathan, nay——

Jonathan. Never!

(Looses his robe and girdle.)

Therefore I pour him splendour passionate.
In gold and purple, this my own, I clothe him.
David, my brother!

Saul (livid). Brother!

Ahinoam. Saul?

Saul. Thou fool!

Jonathan. Father?

Ahinoam. My lord?

Saul. Thou full-of-lauding fool!
Of breath and ravishment unceasing!

Ahinoam. Saul!

Saul. Is it not praise enough, has he not reached
The skies on it?

David. O king, my lord——

Saul. Had Saul
Ever so rich a rapture from his son?
Ever this worshipping of utterance?

David. My lord, my lord, this should not fret you.

Doeg (derisively). Nay!

David. 'Tis only that the soul of Jonathan,
Brimmed by the Philistines with bitterness,
Sudden is joy and overfloweth——

Doeg. Fast——

David. Upon his friend, thy servant, David.

Doeg. Aie!

(He turns away laughing.)

Saul. Why do you laugh?

Doeg. "Thy servant David!"

Saul. Why!

A Woman (without). King Saul has slain his thousands!

Doeg. Why, my lord?

Woman. But David his ten thousands!

Doeg. Do you hear?

King Saul has slain his thousands, David ten!
Thy servant, is he? servant?

David. Yea, O king!...
Therefore be wielded by no venom-word,
As a weed under the wind!

[Pg 270]

Saul. 'Tis overmuch!
I'll burst all bond of priest or prophesy.
Nor cringe to threatening and fondle fear.

(He seizes a javelin.)

I'll smite where'er I will.

David. No!

Jonathan. Father!

David. No!
For rapid palsy would come on thy hand,
Awful and sceptre-ruined lord of men,
An impotence, a shrivelling with fear,
Avenging ere thou shed offenceless blood!

(Saul's hand drops.)

Is this thy love, the love of Saul the king,
Who once was kindlier than kindest are?
For but a woman's wantonness of word
And idle air, my life?

Ahinoam. Saul, Saul!

Jonathan. The shame!

David. Some enemy—does Doeg curve his lip?—
Hath put into her mouth this stratagem
Of fevered, false-impassioned overpraise.

(SAUL, tortured, sweeps from the tent, entreated of JONATHAN. Many follow in doubt, whispering.)

Doeg (at door, to David). This is not all, boy out of Bethlehem.
Goliath's dead—

David. But not all villainy?

(Only MICHAL and MERAB are left with DAVID; he waits.)

[Pg 271]

Merab (after a pause, then as if in shame). I burn for it!

David. For what, and suddenly?

Merab. My father so ungenerously wroth!
And wrought away from recompense so right.
Can you forgive him?

David. Merab?

Merab. Is it strange
That even I now ask it?

David. Merab's self?

Merab. Herself and not to-day your friend; but now
Conquered to exultation and aglow
To wreathe you for this might to Israel,
Beautiful, unbelievable and bright!
Noble the dawn of it was in your dream,
Noble the lightning of it in your arm,
And noble in your veins the fearless flow
And dare of blood!—so noble that I ask
As a remembrance and bequest for ever,
In priceless covenant of peace between us,
A drop of it—

(She draws dagger and offers it to him.)

Upon this sacred blade ...

David. Such kindness? in all honour?

Merab. Poor requital
To one whose greatness humbles me from hate.

David (slowly). Then of my veins whatever drop you will
But, no ... (*Pauses.*) You do not mock me?

[Pg 272]

Merab. Rather upon
Its edge one vein of you—than priceless nard.

David. Or perfume out of India jewel poured?

(*He searches her eyes.*)

Or than—I may believe?—a miracle
Of dew, were you a traveller upon
The illimitable desert's thirst? Or than—

(*He draws his own dagger, pricks his wrist, and hands it her.*)

Than this?

Merab. Shepherd!

David (quickly). Treachery? treachery, then?
Under a sham of tribute poison?

Michal. Poison?

David. And I of vanity should prick it in?
I a mere shepherd innocent of wile!
A singer music-maudled and no more?...
The daughter of King Saul has yet to learn.

(*She goes. He turns to MICHAL.*)

But you, fairest of all my hopes, what word!
The vaunting of this victory is done.
We are alone at last.

Michal. Yes.

David. That is all?...
For Israel I've wrought to-day—and for
You, ever round about me as a mist
Of armèd mighty angels triumphing.

Michal. Yes: It was well.

David. To you no more? to you
Whom not a slave can serve unhonoured?

[Pg 273]

Michal (struggling). Nothing.

David. Empty of glow then seems it, impotent,
A shrivelled hallowing ...
Ashes of ecstasy that burned in vain.

Michal. No, no! I—

David. Michal?

Michal. No, divine it was!
And had I cried my praise the ground had broke
To Eden under me with blossoming.
Where was so wonderful a deed as this,
So fair a springing of salvation up?
Glory above the heavens could I seize,
Wreathing of dawn and loveliness unfading,
To crown you with and crown!

David. O lips!

Michal. With but
A sling, a shepherd's sling, you sped the brook,
Drew from its bed a stone, and up the hill

Where the great Philistine contemning cried,
Mounted and flung it deep upon his brain!

David. This is the victory and not his death!
Tell, tell thy joy with kisses on my lips!
Thy mouth! thy arms! thy breast!

Michal. No no!

David. Thy soul!

(*Clasps her.*)

Too much of waiting and of severance,
Of dread and distance and the deep of doubt!
Now must I fold you, falter all my love
And triumph on your senses till they burn
Beautiful to eternity with bliss.

[Pg 274]

Michel. Loose, loose me!

David. Nay, again! immortal kisses!

Michal. A frenzy, 'tis a frenzy! From me! see!
This irremediable victory
Over Goliath severs us the more.

(*The tumult, again, afar.*)

Hear how the people lift you limitless!
Almost to-day and in my father's room
They would that you were king.

David. But ere to-morrow
Dim shall I be, and ere the harvest bend
Less than a gleam in their forgotten peril!

Michal. O were it, were it! But all silently
Jehovah fast is beckoning the realm
Into thy hands.

David. Then futile to resist
The gliding on of firm divinity.
And yet whatever may be shall be done.

Michal. All, all?

David. That for thee reverently may.

Michal. That anointing, then——

David. Of that!... not that!

Michal. Yet grant
It may be told my father; that I may
Say to him all the secret!

David. And provoke
Murder in him, insatiable though
I fled upon the wilderness and famine?

[Pg 275]

Michal. He would not!

David. Nay.

Michal. I'll plead with him.

David. In vain.

Michal (coldly). Then ... it is as I thought.

David. You are distraught.

Michal. This stroke to-day (*pointing to GOLIATH'S head*) no love of me had in it.

David. A love, a passion fervid through me as
The tread and tremble of seraphic song
Along the infinite.

Michal. You use me!

David. Use?

Michal. A step to rise and riot in ambition!

David. So bitter are you, blind? even in all?

Michal. You snared me to you!

David. Michal!

Michal. Cunningly
With Samuel netted fears about my father,
Till I am paltrily unto you pledged.

David. Enough.

Michal. Too much.

David. No more: the pledge I fling
Out of my heart, as 'twere enchantment dead,
And free you; but no more.

(He moves from her.)

Michal. As if it were
Enchantment dead.... Ah then 'tis true—there is
Another—is another!

[Pg 276]

David. Now, what fever?
A gentleness clad once your every grace.

Michal. There is some other that you lure and love.

David. It is not Michal speaking; so I wait.

Michal. Then you will learn.... Who's that?

(JUDITH glides in.)

(To her.) Why are you here?

Judith (to DAVID, with a laugh, as if with amorous joy).
Brave, it was brave, my love! beauteous! brave!

David. Woman?

Judith. The Philistine, a brazen tower,
A bastion of strength, fell to the earth!

David. Woman, who are you?

(She clasps and kisses him.)

Take away your flesh.
(Free.) Take it away, the heat and myrrh of it.

Judith. So cold?

David. Hireling!

Judith. It is no longer fair?
(Wantonly.) Oh! Ah! I understand! the princess! Oh!

(Goes laughing and shaking her timbrel wickedly.)

Michal. A dancer, then, a very timbrel-player!

David. Until this hour I never looked upon her.
It is chicanery of chance or craft.
You who are noble, though in doubt adrift,
Be noble now!

Michal. And loving? Oh, I will—
Now that I know what should be done. Be sure!

[Pg 277]

David. You mean ... that Saul—? You would not, no!

Michal. Rest sure.

(A hand is seen at the door. AHINOAM enters.)

Ahinoam. David, the king ... But what is this?

(MICHAL goes.)

David. O queen ...
It is but life.

Ahinoam. Nay.

David. Life that ever strings
Our hearts, so pitifully prone for it,
To ecstasy—then snaps.

Ahinoam. I love thee, David.

David. Then gracious be, and question here no more,
Where words are futile for an utterance.
But of the king—the king——?

Ahinoam. He's driven still.
And hither comes again, and must be calmed.
The harp take you, and winds of beauty bring,
And consolation, as of valley eves
When there is ebb of sorrow and of toil.
Oh, could you heal him and for ever heal!

David. Then would I be——!

(Breaks off with great desire. Takes the harp and seats himself.)

Ahinoam. At once, for he will come.

(A strain of wild sadness brings SAUL, and many, within. He pauses,
his hand to his brow, enspelled of the playing; then slowly goes up the
dais.)

Ahinoam. My lord, shall David sing—to ease us?

[Pg 278]

Saul. Let him.

David (with high sorrow).
O heart of woe,
Heart of unrest and broken as a reed! (Plays.)
O heart whose flow
Is anguish and all bitterness of need! (Plays.)
O heart as a roe,
Heart as a hind upon the mountain fleeing
The arrow-wounds of being,
Be still, O heart, and rest and do not bleed!

(Plays longer with bowed head.)

O days of life,
Days that are driven swift and wild from the womb! (Plays.)
O days so rife—
Days that are torn of trouble, trod of doom!

(Plays. MICHAL enters.)

O days of strife—
Days of desire on deserts spread unending,
The burning blue o'erbending,
O days, our peace, our victory is the tomb!

(He plays to a close that dies in anguished silence.)

Saul (rising in tears). David!

David. My lord?

Saul. Thy song is beauteous!
Stilling to sorrow!... Oh, my friend, my son!

David. To me is this? I do not dream? The king
Again is kind and soft his spirit moves?

Saul. To you!

[Pg 279]

David. How shelter o'er me then will spring
And safety covering!

Saul. It ever shall.
Loveliest have you been among my days,
And singing weary madness from my brain.

(*DAVID starts toward him.*)

How I have wronged thee!

Michal. Wronged him? (*in fury*).

David. Michal!

Saul. Girl?

Michal. You have not wronged him!

David. Michal!

Michal. No! but he
Is jeopardy and fate about you! drive
Him from you utterly and now away!

(*Murmurs of astonishment.*)

Saul. What mean you?

Ishui. Speak.

Saul. What mean you?

Michal. This!

David. No word!

Michal. I'll not be kept!

David. But shall be; for to tell
Would rend silence for ever from you—pale
Your flesh with haunting of it evermore!
All, all your being would become a hiss,
A memory of syllables that sear,
A living iteration of remorse.
I—I myself will save your lips the words
Of this betrayal leaping from your heart.

[Pg 280]

(*Nobly before SAUL.*)

You seek, my lord ... you seek whom Samuel
Anointed.

Saul. Yes.

David. Then know that it is I.

(*Consternation.*)

Saul. You!

David. Guiltless I, no other!
I, though I sought it not and suffer, though—

(*SAUL seizes a javelin.*)

I would it had not come and fast am sworn
Never against you to lift up—

Merab. Hear, hear!
Now he will cozen!

Doeg. He, "thy servant!"

Ishui. Hear!

(*GOLIATH'S head is upset.*)

A voice. A thousand Saul hath slain! but David ten!

Saul (choking). Omnipotence shall not withhold me more.

(Lifts javelin.)

Die, die!

Jonathan. No, father ... hold!

Michal (as SAUL flings). What have I done?

(Reels.)

Jonathan. David, unhurt? Away, the wilderness!

Saul (with another javelin). He shall not, no!

David (aflame). Strike, strike, then! strike, strike, strike,

(Rushes up throne.)

Murderous king, afoam with murder-heat.
Strike me to darkness and the waiting worm!
But after be your every breathing blood!
Remorse and riving bitterness and fear!
Be guilt and all the hideous choke of horror!

(SAUL trembling cowers, the javelin falling from him. DAVID breaks through DOEG and ISHUI and escapes by the door. MICHAL sinks to her knees, her face buried in her hands.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE: *A savage mountain-cliff in the wilderness of Engeddi. On either side grey crags rise rugged, sinking away precipitously across the back. Cut into each is a cave. The height is reached by clefts from all sides. Between the crags to the East is the far blue of the Dead Sea; and still beyond, bathed in the waning afternoon, stretch the purple shores of Moab. During the act the scene grows crimson with sunset and a thundercloud arises over the sea. Lying on a pallet of skins near the cliff's verge, DAVID tosses feverishly. Three of his followers and a lad, who serves him, are gathered toward the front, ragged, hungry, and hunted, in altercation over a barley cake.*

David. Water! the fever fills me, and I thirst.
Water!

First Fol. Listen.

Second Fol. He calls.

David. Water! I thirst.

The Lad. Yes, yes, my lord. *(Takes up a water-skin.)* Ah, empty, not a quaff! They've drunk it all from him! My lord, none's left.
I'll run and in the valley brim it soon.

(He goes. DAVID sinks back.)

Second Fol (to FIRST). You drank it, then.

First Fol. And should I thirst, not he?
Give me the bread.

Second Fol. If it would strangle you.

First Fol. I'll have it.

Second Fol. Or betray him? spitefully?
It is the last. Already you have eat.
And we are here within a wilderness.

First Fol. Be it, but I'll not starve.

Third Fol. He utters right.
Why should we but to follow a mere shepherd
Famish—over a hundred desert hills?

[Pg 281]

[Pg 282]

[Pg 283]

The prophecy portending him the throne—
Folly, not fate! though it is Samuel's.
I'll trust in it no more.

First Fol. Nor I.

Third Fol. And Saul
Has driven us from waste to waste—pressed us
Even unto the Philistines for shelter,
And now unto this crag. And is not David's
Thought but of Michal, not of smiting him
And, with a host, of leaping to the kingdom?

(DAVID *stirs to rise.*)

First Fol. He moves; peace!

Third Fol. Let him.

Second Fol. Peace.

Third Fol. And fawning too?

David (sufferingly). Men—men, we must have news. Perpetual,
Implacable they stare unto each other,
This rock and stony sky.... We must have news.

[Pg 284]

(*Rises and comes down to them. They are silent.*)

Longer is death. 'Tis over many days
Of sighing—and remembered verdancy;
Nor any dew comes here or odour up.
Who will go now and bring us word of Saul?

Third Fol. Have not Abishai, Abiathar,
And others gone?

David. Bravely.

Third Fol. And none returned!

David. Not one of all.

Third Fol. Well, then, we are not swine;
And life's but once.... So we will follow you
No longer hungered and rewarded never,
But perilously ever.

David. It is well.

(*He looses a bracelet from his arm.*)

This was a gift from Saul. In it is ease.

(*Gives it to THIRD FOLLOWER, who goes.*)

This ring was Jonathan's. The jewel tells
Still of the sunny haven of his heart.
Upon my hand he pressed it—the day we leapt
Deeper than friends into each other's love.

(*Gives it to FIRST, who goes.*)

This chain—

Second Fol. I want it not.

David. You have not thought;
'Tis riches—such as Sidon marts and Tyre
Would covet.

Second Fol. I care not.

David. None else is left.

Second Fol. No matter.

David. Then—?

[Pg 285]

Second Fol. There was of Gibeah
A woman—dear to me. Her face at night ...
Weeping among my dreams....

The prophesy
Is unfulfilled and vain!

David. And you would go?

Second Fol. The suffering—this cliff.

David. I understand.
(*Motions.*) So, without any blame, go—to content.

(*The SECOND, faltering, goes.*)

(*Quietly.*) A desolation left, of rock and air,
Of barren sea and bitterness as vast.
Thou hast bereft me, Saul!... and Michal, thou!

(*He moves up cliff, gazes off, then kneels as to pray.*)

My flesh cries for oblivion—to sink
Unwaking away into the night ... where is
No tears, but only tides of sleep....
No, crieth

Not for oblivion and night, but for
Rage and revenge! Saul! Saul!... My spirit, peace.
I must revenge's call within me quell
Though righteously it quivers and aflame.
As pants the hart for the water-brook, so I!

[Pg 286]

(*He bows his head.... MICHAL enters in rags with the lad. She sees
DAVID rise and wander into cave, right.*)

Michal. This is the place, then, this?

Lad. Yes, princess.

Michal. Here
So long in want and sickness he hath hid?
Under the livid day and lonelier night?

Lad. I brought him water, often.

Michal. Little lad!
But he has heard no word from me?—not how
My father, Saul, frantic of my repentance,
Had unto Phalti, a new lord, betrothed me?
How then I fled to win unto these wilds?

Lad. He heard not anything—only the tales
I told of Moab, my own land.... But, oh!

(*DAVID plays within.*)

It is his harp.

Michal. And strains that weep o'er me!...
I'll speak to him ... and yet must be unknown!
A leper? as a leper could I...?

Lad. Why
Must he not know you?

Michal. Ask me not, lad, now;
But go a little.

Lad. Yes.

(*He sets down the water-skin and goes.*)

[Pg 287]

Michal (*delaying, then in a loud voice*). Unclean! Unclean!

(*Conceals her face in her hair.*)

David. Who crieth here?

Michal. Unclean!

David (appearing). Who cries unclean?
Poor leper in these wilds, who art thou?

Michal. One
Outcast and faint, forlorn!

David. Then you have come
To one more bitter outcast than yourself—
One who has less than this lone void to give,
This sterile solitude and sun, this scene
Of leaden desolation that makes mad;
Who has no ease but cave or shading rock,
Or the still moon, or stars that glide the night.
One over whom——

Michal. Yet, pity!

David. The pale hours
Flow dead into eternity.

Michal. Ah, yet...!

David. My cloak, then, for thy tattered limbs. Or, no—
This chain of Ophir for thy every need.
Once it was dear, but should be so no more.
(*Flinging it to her*). Have it, and with it vanish memory
Out of my breast——

Michal. No, no.

David. And from me fall
Link upon link her loveliness that bound.

Michal. Oh, do not!

David. Woman...?

Michal. Nothing. A chain like this
I once beheld wind undulantly bright
O'er Michal the king's daughter.

David. Woman, the king's?

Michal. Pity!

David. Who are you?

Michal. Stay! Unclean!

David. A spy?
A spy of Saul and hypocrite have crept
Hither to learn...?

Michal. Have heed—unclean!

David. How, then
Wandering came you here?

Michal. Unclean! Unclean!

David. My brain is overfull of fever, mad.
Almost and I had touched thy peril, held
Thy hideous contagion.

Michal. Wrong!

David. Then who
Art thou to know and speak of her, of Michal?

Michal. One who has served the king.

David. And you have seen
Michal, you have beheld her?

Michal. Once, when she
In face was fairer and in heart than now
They say she is.

David. And heard her speak?

Michal. A night
Under the leaves of Gibeah—when she
Sang with another—David.

[Pg 289]

David. Say no more.

Michal. And from afar, under the moon, blew faint
The treading of the wine-presses with song.
David she loved, but anger-torn betrayed,
Unworthy of him.

David. Speak of her no more,
Nor of her cruelty, unless to pray
He she has ruined may forget her.

Michal. Yet
If deep she should repent?—if deep she should?

(A cry interrupts. They start.)

David. A jackal? *(Listens.)* No, the signal! Word at last!
(To MICHAL.) He who is near may prove to thee less kind.

(She goes. He leaps up the cliff.)

Abishai? Abiathar?... It is!
But staggering and wounded? breathless? torn?
The priest with bloody ephod, too, and wild?

(Watching, then springing to meet them as they reel in.)

Abishai, what is it that you bring?
Abiathar, up! answer!

Abiathar. Water!

David. Up!

(He brings the water-skin. They drain it fiercely.)

What is it now so fevered from you stares,
And breathing, too, abhorrence? Gasp it out.

Abiathar. I stifle—in a universe—he still—
Has breath in.

David. Saul?

Abiathar. Ill scathe him! Scorpions
Of terror and remorse sting in his soul!

David. If you have tidings, not in words so wild.

Abiathar. Then ask, and hate shall calm me.

David. Ask?

Abiathar. On, on!
Seek if he lives!

David. Who?

Abiathar. Seek if prophecy
Founts yet in Judah!

David. Samuel...?

Abiathar. Is dead!
Dead—and of tidings more calamitous.

(A pause.)

David (hoarsely). Tell on. I hear.

Abiathar. Saul gloating to believe
The priests who gathered sacredly at Nob,
Plotted assisting you, hath had them—

David. No...!

[Pg 290]

Abiathar. Slain at the hands of Doeg—murdered, all!

David. But he—your father?

Abiathar. Was among them; fell.

(He stands motionless.)

David (gently). Abiathar, my friend!... Appeaseless Saul!

Abiathar. Hear all, hear all! Thy father, too, and mother,
Even thy kindred, out of Israel
Are driven into Moab; and this king,
Delirious still for blood as a desert pard,
With Merab, whelp of him, and many armed,
Is near us now—a-quiver at Engeddi
For your destruction:

[Pg 291]

(DAVID struggles for control.)

And yet you will not strike.

David (low). No, but of Michal, tell me good at once,
Lest unendurable this lot, I may—
Mounting o'er every oath into revenge.

Abiathar. Ha—Michal!

David. She withholds her father's wrath?

Abiathar. She's well.

David. Not if you say no more.

Abiathar. I know
Nothing of her.

David. Your look belies.

Abiathar. Perhaps:
As did her love.

David. That is for me.

Abiathar. Well, what?
A woman who betrays?

David. Speak, not evade;
And judge her when earth has no mystery.

Abiathar. Then from your craving put her—wide; she is
Unworthy any tremor of your veins.

David. Dawn-lilies under dew are then unworthy,
And nesting doves are horrible to heaven.
I will not so believe. Your reason?

[Pg 292]

Abiathar. Saul
Has given her—and she will wed him, aye—
To Phalti, a new lord.

David. Untrue of her!

Abiathar. Cry. Yet you will believe it.

David. Not until
The parable of verdant spring is hushed
Ever of bloom, to prove it. Never till
Hermon is swung into the sea! until
The last void of the everlasting sky—

(Looking up, falters, breaks off, and is strangely moved.)

Abiathar. Now what alarm?

Abishai. What stare you on?

Abiathar. He's mad?

(Then, suddenly seeing.)

No, no!... an eaglet!...

David. Pierct!

Abishai. Pierct?

David. Falling here ...
And beating against death unbuoyantly.

(The bird drops at their feet.)

A destiny, a fate in this is hidden!

(Bends to it.)

Abiathar. And—why?

David. The arrow!—His! *(Starts back.)* His and no other's!
Quick, no delay. Efface all trace of us.

(Takes water-skin.)

Abiathar. Be clear, clearer.

David. We are discovered—near
On us is death. Open the secret chamber
Within the cave, for from the bow of Saul
Is yonder bleeding—from no other.

Abiathar. Saul's?
But how; was any here?

David. To-day, to-day.
A leper wandering.

Abiathar. We are betrayed.

(ABISHAI hastes to cave, right, DAVID and ABIATHAR listen. Noise of approach is heard.)

David. They near.

Abiathar. And many.

David. King of Israel!
Inexorable!

Abiathar. O, rebuke him, do!

David. Almost I am beyond this tolerance.

Abiathar. In truth. Therefore it is you rise and shake
Out of his power the sceptre!

David. Tempt me not!
Mercy and memory almost are dead,
And craving birth in me is fateful ire.

(They follow into the cave: but hardly have done so when, at a shout, pour in SAUL and his men, bloodthirstily, from all sides, DOEG and ABNER leading.)

Saul. On, to him! search the caves! in, in, and bring
Him to my sword and Michal with him.

(Pacing.)

They

Shall couch upon eternity and dust.
(Weakly.) I am the king and Israel is mine....
I'll sleep upon their grave, I'll sleep upon it,
And hear the worm...!

(To a soldier re-entering from one cave.)

Where is he? Bring him.

[Pg 293]

[Pg 294]

Soldier. O king—

Saul. You've slain him and you tremble! Say it.

Soldier. No.

Saul. Then hither with him; hither!

Soldier. He's not here.

Saul. A treachery! You cunningly contrive
To aid him, so....

(To a soldier from the other cave.)

Bring me his head.

Soldier (fearfully). My lord,
He is not there....

Saul. I tell you it is lies—
Because you deem that he shall be the king,
And treasure up reward and amnesty.

(Rushes wildly to caves in turn, then out among them.)

From me ill-fruited ineffectual herd!
Away from me, he's fled and none of you
Is servant and will find and for me seize him!
From me—I'll sleep—I'll rest—and then—

(As they cringe, going.)

I'll sleep.

(ABNER and DOEG remain. SAUL enters cave, left.)

Abner (to DOEG, significantly). The Evil Spirit.

Doeg. Yes; upon him swift
It came as never before—as drunkenness.

Abner. Then—safe to leave him?

Doeg. Will he brook denial?

Abner. And Merab, too, will soon be here.

Doeg. Well, come.

Abner. I'll go and look upon him.

(Goes.)

(Returning.) Already he sleeps.
So we may seek us water; (then suddenly) no, abide!

(Is held by MICHAL entering.)

Woman, who are you, who?

Michal (quaking). Unclean! away!

Doeg. Unclean? a leper? in this place? Are there
No stones to stone you? Hence! And had I not
A brother such as thou—

Michal. Pity! Unclean!

(She quickly goes, then they. A space; then she returns, trembling and fearful.)

I'll call him! I will save him! David! David!—
I his discomfiture and ruin!—David!

(Searches.)

Hear, David! hear me! David!

(Sees SAUL.)

The king! My father!
I cannot—am not—whither shall I, whither...?

(Flees, as a scuffling is heard and DAVID'S voice.)

David. Loose me, I say. 'Twas Michal, and she called!

(Appears, withheld by ABIATHAR.)

[Pg 296]

(Breaking free.) I say that it was she!

Abiathar. Foolhardy, no
Return into the cave, and ere too late!

(MERAB, veiled, enters behind them.)

David. 'Twas Michal and no other.

Abiathar. You are duped.

David (searching). The breathing of archangels could not so
Have swung the burden from me as her ... Ha!

(Sees MERAB; slowly recoils.)

Merab. It is not Michal.

David. No—it is not Michal.

(Motions the priest aside.)

Merab. Yet it is one who—

David. Need not lift her veil,
Or longer stay. The path she came is open.

Merab. I'm here—and here will speak! I've hither stolen,
Yearning—I say it—yearning—and I will.

David. These words I do not know.

Merab. Because you will not.
More all-devouring than a Moloch is
This love within me—

David. Love and you are twain,
As sun and Sheol.

Merab. False. I am become
For want of you as famine-wind, a wave
In the mid-tempest, with no rest, no shore.

David. I do not hear the unashamed words
Of one who has but recently another,
Adriel, wedded.

Merab. You refuse me, then?

David. I beg you but to cease.

Merab. Goaded, chagrined?
No, but this will I do. The Philistines,
For long at rioting within their walls,
Gather again and break toward Gilboa....

David. Merab of Saul!

Merab. To-morrow must my father
Return from hunting you and arm for battle.
But—many would that you were king.

David. Were...?

Merab. King!

David. I do not understand your eyes.

Merab. I will
For love of you arouse rebellion up,

[Pg 297]

Murmur about the host your heaven-call,
And lift you to the kingdom.

David. To the — Stay!
Your words again.

Merab. The kingdom.

David. Awful God!

Merab. What is your mien? you will not?

David. Twice the words—
Full from her lips—and to betray her father.

(ABIATHAR *discovers* SAUL.)

Merab. You will not? answer!

David. Odious utterly!
As yonder sea of death and bitter salt!
As foam-girt Joppa of idolatry,
As Memphian fane of all abhorrencies!

[Pg 298]

(*A pause.*)

Morning would move with horror of it, noon
A livid sepulchre of shame span o'er,
And night shrink to remember day had been!

Merab. You scorn—you scorn me?

David. Jonathan! your sister!

Merab. Then Saul shall rend you dead. And Jonathan!...

(*She laughs shrilly.*)

Perchance you had not heard that Jonathan
Knows to the Philistines you fled—and loathes you!

David. I have not heard.

Merab. Nor have not, ah? how Michal
Is given to the embraces of another?

(DAVID *shrinks.*)

You desperately breathe and pale at last?

(*She laughs more bitterly.*)

To me for aid, to me you yet shall come.

(*She goes. DAVID lifts his hand to his brow in pain. Then ABIATHAR abruptly descends from SAUL'S cave to him.*)

Abiathar. David—

David. Leave me.

Abiathar. Not till you know—and strike!

David. I tell you, go.

Abiathar. I tell you 'tis the king.

David. Who breaks forbearance—yes.

Abiathar. Who lieth yonder.
And sleeping lieth—for a thrust to end.

[Pg 299]

David (his sword quickly out—struggling).
Then shall there be an ending—of these wounds
That wring me—of this wail
Under the deeps of me against his wrongs.
Saul, Saul!... Michal!... Oh, never-ceasing ill!

(*Flings down the sword in anguish.*)

Abiathar. You will not come?

David. The sun is set.

Abiathar. Has Saul
Hunted you to this desert's verge?

David. Enough!

Abiathar. Has he pursued you, all his hate unleashed?
Are Samuel—the priests, not slain? my father?
The kingdom is not in decay, and falls?
You are not prophesy's anointed one?
Seize up the sword and strike—or I myself!

David. Or—you yourself?...

(Puts them aside, takes sword, and goes to SAUL'S cave.)

Abishai. What will he do?... listen

MICHAL enters unseen.

Abiathar. If Saul cries out—

Abishai. Be ready.

Michal (to them). What is this?

*(DAVID re-enters—haggard and worn—from the cave, a piece of SAUL'S
cloak and the sword still in his hand.... The pause is tense with
emotion.)*

Michal (at last, with a cry, as David clenches).
Ah, you have slain—have slain him! Wretch! thou wretch!
And sleeping as he was!

[Pg 300]

David. And it was you...?

(Rage takes him.)

In lying rags?

Michal. Have struck him in his sleep!
And merciless! And now will kill me, too?

David. The leper, you! The faithless leper, you,

(Grows frenzied.)

Who drove me a prey upon this wilderness!
Upon the blot of it and death and sear!
The silence and relentless burning swoon!
You are the leper, who have broken troth
And shut the cry of justice from your breast!
Who've stifled me with desolation's woe,
Who've followed still and still have me betrayed!

Michal. Betrayed? No, loose me!

David. Slain thy father? slain?

(Flinging the piece of SAUL'S cloak at her feet.)

See how I might—see, see you, yonder he lies,
A king who quits the kingdom, though a cloud
Of Philistines is foaming toward Gilboa;
Jeoparded leaves it, undefended, for
Pursuit of me and pitiless harrying!
A king who murders priests ...

Michal. Priests?

David. Stifles God
With penitence that He has shaped the world!
Have slain? have slain him! I have slain him! Ah!
Ah, that I had thy falseness and could slay him!

Michal. David...!

[Pg 301]

David. Nevermore near me! never with
That quivering and tenderness of lure.
Those eyes that hold infinity of fate,
That breathing cassia-sweet, but sorcery!

Michal. Oh ...

David. Never thy presence pouring beauty, swift,
And seething in the brain as frantic wine!
I'll be no more enspelled of thee—Never!
I will not hear thee and be wound by words
Into thy wile as wide as Ashtoreth's,
Back into hope, eternity of pain!

*(He goes in agony—the priest and ABISHAI after. MICHAL stands gazing
tearless before her as SAUL, awakened, comes slowly from the mouth
of the cave down toward her.)*

CURTAIN.

[Pg 302]

ACT IV

SCENE: *The house of MIRIAM, the "Witch of Endor," by Mount Gilboa—where
SAUL is encamped against the Philistines. It is of one story, built
rectangularly about an inner court, which is dimly lighted. Under the
gallery which ranges around the court are doors leading to the
sleeping and other apartments; before one of these a lattice. On the
left is the gate opening to the street. At the back to one side, the
teraphim, or image of divination; on the other side a stairway mounts
to the roof. Above is the night and vague lightning amid a moan of
wind. During the act comes dawn. Forward on a divan sits MIRIAM
alone, in blind restlessness.*

Miriam. Adah!... The child is sunken in a sleep.
Yet would I have her near me in this night,
And hear again the boding of her tale.
Unto the blind the vision and the awe
Of the invisible sway ever in,
The shadow of nativities that lead
Upon fatality.

Girl! Adah! girl!

[Pg 303]

(The wind passes. ADAH enters from a chamber, rubbing her eyes.)

Thou art awake?

Adah. I slumbered.

Miriam. Stand you where
Fathoming I may feel within you. Now,
Again—you've hither fled your mistress Merab,
In fear of her?

Adah. Yes.

Miriam. At Engeddi Michal
By Saul was apprehended? Merab now
Plotteth against her—she and Doeg?

Adah. Still.

Miriam. And 'twas in Merab's tent you heard, the king
Despairing of to-morrow's battle, comes
Hither to-night to bid me lift the spirit
Of Samuel out of the dead and learn
The issue?

Adah. Doeg said it.

Miriam. And—you hear?—
Many within the army urge for David,
Would cry him king, if Saul were slain?

Adah. O many.

(A knock at the gate. They start up fearful.)

Miriam. Who seeks blind Miriam of Endor's roof,
Under the night and unextinguished storm?
Come you a friend?

David (without). A friend.

Miriam. As knows my soul!

(*Throws open the gate. DAVID enters and ABIATHAR cloaked.*)

Thy voice again!—this blindness of my eyes—
If it be David, speak.

David. Yes, Miriam.

Miriam. David of Jesse, Israel's desire!
Let me behold thee (*her hands go over him*) with my fingers' sight,
And gather in them touch of thee again!
Thy voice is as dream-dulcimers that stir
Quivering myrrh of memory and joy.
But, aie! why are you here? You have been *there*?

David. Yes—in the camp of Saul.

Miriam. In spite of Death!
Do you not know—

David. I know—that Saul would rather
O'er-trample me than a multitude of foes.
That it is told him I who shun his ire—
Though death were easier, if dutiful—
Am come up with the Philistines to win
The kingdom. That he would slay me though I fought
For Israel!—But, Michal!—

Miriam. Aie—

David. What brews?
She was not in the camp.

Miriam. Men all are mad!
And you who should be never.

David. She is in
Some peril.

Miriam. You, in more! And must from here
Swiftly away, for Saul is—

David. I must see her.

Miriam. Unholy!

David. Yet unholier were flight.

Miriam. You are the anointed!

(*A heavy knock at the gate.*)

Ah, calamity!
You would not heed—'tis Saul!

David. Here?

Miriam. He is come
That I shall call up Samuel.

David. You, you—
The awful dead?

Saul (calls). Woman of Endor!

Miriam. Hide!
The lattice yonder!

Saul. Woman of Endor! woman!

(*DAVID and ABIATHAR withdraw. The knocking hastier.*)

Woman of Endor! Woman of Endor! Woman!

Miriam. Who crieth at my gate?

Saul. Unbar and learn.

Miriam. To danger?

Saul. None.

Miriam. To thieves?

Saul. To rueing it
You tarry!

(She lets him in, with ISHUI and ADRIEL.)

[Pg 306]

Miriam. Whom seek you?

Saul. Witch of Endor, you,
Who of the fate-revealing dead divine.
Out of the Pit you call them!

Miriam. What is this?

Saul. I say that you can raise them!

Miriam. You are come
With snaring! knowing well that Saul the king
Is woe and bitterness to all who move
With incantation.

Saul. He is not.

Miriam. Depart!

Saul. I must have up out of the Awfulness
Him I would question.

Miriam. Perilous!

Saul. Prepare
Before thy teraphim. No harm, I swear,
Shall come of it. Bid Samuel appear.
The battle! its event!

Miriam (with a cry). I know thee now!
Saul! thou art Saul! the Terror!

Saul. Call him up.
Ready is it, the battle—but I am
Forsaken of all prophesy and dream,
Of voices and of priest and oracle,
To augur it.

Miriam. A doom's in this!

Saul. He must
Hold comfort, and the torrent of despair
Within me stay and hush.

[Pg 307]

Miriam. Then must it be.

(She turns to the teraphim, amid wind and pallid lightning prostrating herself.)

Prophet of Israel, who art beyond
The troubling and the terrifying grave,
Th' immeasurable moan and melancholy
Of ways that win to Sheol—Rise! Arise!

(She waits ... Only the wind gust. Then springing up, with wide arms, and wild blind eyes.)

Prophet of Israel, arise! Not in
The name of Baal, Amon, Ashtoreth,
Dagon or all the deities that dream
In trembling temples of Idolatry,
But of Jehovah! of Jehovah! rise!

(An elemental cry is heard. Then wavering forms rise, vast, out of the earth, in continuous stream. MIRIAM, with a curdling shriek, sinks moaning to her knees.)

Saul. Woman, I cannot—dare not—look upon it.
Utter thy sight.

(The Spirit of SAMUEL begins to take shape through the phantoms.)

Miriam. I see ... ascending
Forms as of gods in swaying ghostliness,
Dim apparitions of a dismal might,
And now is one within a mantle clad,
Who looketh—

Saul. Samuel!

Miriam. Who looketh with
Omniscience in his mien, and there is chill
And cling about him of eternity!
His eyes impale me!

[Pg 308]

Saul. Spirit, give me word!

(He falls heavily to the ground.)

Samuel (as afar). O evil king! and wretched king! why hast
Thou brought me from the quietness and rest?

Saul. The battle on the morrow—

Samuel. Evil thou art
For underneath this night thou hast conspired
Death to thy daughter Michal—if at dawn
The battle shall be lost—lest she may fall
Into the hands of David—

David (in horror). O!

Ishui. Whose cry?

Samuel. I tell thee, Saul, thy sceptre shrivels fast.
The battle shall be lost—it shall be lost.

(The Spirit of SAMUEL disappears. A wail of wind.)

Adriel. Ishui, true? Is Michal to be slain?

Ishui. This is no hour for fools and questioning.

Saul (struggling up). The battle, Ishui, at once command
It shall begin! To Jonathan and say it.

(ISHUI goes.)

No prophecy shall sink me and no shade.
I am the king, and Israel, my own.

(Frenzied he goes. A silence.)

David (breaking forth). Michal to die and Israel to fall!
Prophet of prophets, Samuel, return!
Out of the Shadow and the Sleep, return,
Compassionate, and tell me where she is
That I may save. Again appear and say
That Israel to-morrow may not fall—
Not fall on ruin!

[Pg 309]

Adriel. David? is it thou?

David. Meholah's Adriel, your conscience asks.

Adriel. You were concealed?

David. And I have heard. Cry then
Out unto Saul! Betray me, cry you out!

Adriel. Betray?

David. Is the word honey? Is it balm?

Adriel. David, I've wronged you—

David. Haply!

Adriel. Jealously.
And ask now no forgiveness—not until
Michal is won from peril!

David. Do you know
More of her? still?

Adriel. Saul—

David. Saul—?

Adriel. Has given Doeg
Power of this.... And to some spot of Endor
Here he has brought her.

David. God!

Adriel. And now himself,
David, himself cannot be far away.

David. Ahaste, and bring him then by force or guile,
In any way, that we may from him win
Where she is prisoned.

[Pg 310]

(ADRIEL *goes.*)

The quivering
Quicksands of destiny beneath her stir.
Is heaven a mocking shield that ever keeps
God from our prayers?

Miriam. David, contain thy heart.

(*A faint uproar begins afar; and dawn.*)

David. The battle! on the wind. Abiathar,
Speed out upon the mountain-side and cull
All that befalls.

(ADAH *opens the gate. The priest goes.*)

Adah (*springing back*). Oh!

David. Child, why do you quail?

Adah. My mistress, Merab!

David. Girl?

Adah. I saw her—she—
Is coming hither! Do not let her—she—
I fear—I fear her!

David. Hither coming?

Adah. She!

(*The gate is thrown open fiercely.*)

Merab (*entering*). Woman and witch, did Adriel, my husband,

(*Sees DAVID.*)

Come to you with the king?

David. Unnatural,
Unkind, most cruel sister!

Merab (*shrinks*). You are here?

David. Once me you would have poisoned, but the coil
Within your bosom I beheld. And now
Michal your sister is the victim.

[Pg 311]

Merab. I—
Know not your meaning.

David. The battle burning yonder,
If it adversely veers, the king has planned
Michal is not to live lest she may hap
Unto my arms.

Merab. That Michal shall be slain?

(The tumult again.)

David. Almighty, smite, and save to Thee thy people!
And save Thy altars unto Israel!

(He bows his head. A stir comes at the gate.)

Merab. David, 'tis Adriel!

Adriel. Ope! open, you!

David. At last the word.

Merab. Girl, Adah, draw the bar.

(DAVID throws a cloak to his face, as ADAH obeys. ADRIEL enters, and DOEG, who pauses in quick alarm, as DAVID goes between him and the gate.)

Doeg. What place is this? Why do you bar that gate?
Merab, 'tis you? Why do you gaze, rigid?
And this is the blind witch, Miriam?

David. It is.

(He throws off the cloak.)

Doeg. Lured? I am snared? a trap?

David. Where have you Michal?

Doeg (drawing). No closer!

David. If she is an atom harmed—!—
Where is she?

Doeg. I was the servant of the king,
I but obey him.

David. And thy horrible heart.
Then speak, or unto frenzy I am driven.

Doeg. I'll drive you there with—

(Breaks off with low laugh.)

David. Tell it!

Doeg. Unto your
Soft sympathy—and passion? *(Laughs.)* She is dead.

David (immovable, then repressed).
If it is so, the lightning, that is wrath
Within the veins of God, should sink its fang
Into thy bosom and sear out thy heart.
If it is so, this momentary calm,
This silence pouring overfull the world,
Would rush and in thee cry until thy bones
Broken of guilt are crumbled in thy groans.
Dead, she is dead?

Miriam. No, David, my lord, he lies!

(Strangely, as in a trance.)

To wound you, lies!

David. Not dead?

Miriam. I see her eyes!

(All listen amazed.)

I see her in a vision. She is near—
Is in a cave—is bound—and is alone.
I will go to her—quickly bring her.

[Pg 313]

Doeg. Not

(Lunges at her.)

If this shall reach you.

David. Ah, to pierce a woman!

(MIRIAM finds her way out.)

You've plotted, have been false and bloody, foul,
And as a pestilence of midnight marsh
Have oozed corruption into all around you.
The kingdom thro' you is in brokenness,
Within its arteries you flow, poison,
Incentive of irruption and unrest,
Of treachery and disaffection's sore,
Till even the stars that light it seem as tares
Sown hostile o'er the nightly vale of heaven.

(Draws firmly. Coldly, skilfully approaches for attack.)

Doeg (retreating). No farther!

David. Unto the end! unto the end!

(He rushes in; they engage; DOEG is wounded.)

Your villainy is done.

(Quickly forces him under. The gate then opens and ABIATHAR hurries in.)

Abiathar. David, the battle—!

(Sees DOEG and stops, pale.)

David. Fetter him.

Abiathar. Only fetter? (His dagger out) the murderer
Of priestly sanctity and of my father?

David. Abiathar! You know obedience?

(DOEG is sullenly bound and led aside. Then a panic is heard afar, and dim laments. DAVID, who has sunk to a seat, springs anxiously up.)

[Pg 314]

Listen! that cry!

A voice. Woe! woe!

David. What is its wail?

The Voice. The battle's lost!

David. Abiathar—?

The Voice. Saul flees!

David. Abiathar, is lost?

Abiathar. I fear it.

David. Then (pointing to DOEG)
Off with his armour for me, I will go
Forth and may backward, backward bend defeat.
Duty to Saul is over.

Adriel. You must not.
A fruitless intrepidity it were.

Abiathar. Remember your anointing!

Abishai. The prophesy!

And Michal! (*The gate opens.*) Michal who lives! who lives! who lives!

(*DAVID has turned and sees her enter with MIRIAM.*)

Hosanna!...

Adriel. Ever!...

Miriam. David—

Michal (*pleading, to him*). It is I.

Miriam. The cords were cruel, hungrily sank in
Her wrists and ankles.

Michal. David! look on me.

David. My words must be alone with her—alone.

Adriel. Come, all of you—the battle.

(*They go out the gate.*)

Michal. My lord!... my lord!

(*He is silent.*)

I ask not anything but to be heard—
Though once I would not hear. Has all of life
No glow for me?

David. Betrayers should have none.

Michal. I was a woman—the entanglement
Of duty amid love we have no skill
To loosen, but with passion.

David. You too late
Remember it is so.

Michal. Nobility
All unbelievable it seemed that you
Could innocently wait on time to tide
You to the kingdom. Then forgive, I plead.

David. But in the wilderness, your perfidy!

Michal. Doubt of it wellethe thro' your voice. No, no,
To save you strove I—!

David. Michal?

Michal. Not to betray!
From Saul, my father, penitent I fled,
Seeking you in Engeddi's wild.

David. And Phalti?

Michal. 'Twas wedding him I loathed.

David. Say true!

Michal. This knife
Unfailingly into my breast had sunk
And spared me, had not flight.

David. This—this can be?

(*A great joy dawning in him.*)

Beyond all hope it is, even as day's
Wide empery outspans our littleness.
A tithing of thy loveliness were beauty
Enough for earth. Yet it is mine, is mine?

[Pg 315]

[Pg 316]

Michal. David—for ever!

(She starts toward his arms. But cries and confusion of cries beat back their joy. Then the gate is flung open and ADRIEL enters, shaken. He looks from one to the other.)

David (at last). Adriel! Adriel!
What have you?

Adriel. Saul—is slain!

Michal. My father?

Adriel. Slain!
And Jonathan—

David. No!

Adriel. Fell beside him down ...
The fray was fast—Israel fled—the foe
Fierce after Saul, whom Jonathan defended.

Michal. My father!

David. And my brother Jonathan!
If I believe it will not miracle
Alone bring joy again unto my pain?

(The wailing again, and deeper groans.)

O Israel, the Infinite has touched
Thy glory and it changes to a shroud!
Thy splendour is as vintage overspilt,
For Saul upon the mountains low is lying,
And Jonathan beside him, beautiful
Beyond the mar of battle and of death.
Yea, kingly Jonathan! And I would give
The beating of my life into his veins.
Willing for it would I be drouth and die!...

[Pg 317]

(As the wails re-arise.)

Peaks, mountains of Gilboa! let no more
Dew be upon you, and as sackcloth let
Clouds cover you, and ashes be your soil,
Until I bring upon Philistia
And Gath and Askalon extinguishing,
And sorrow—and immensity of tears!

(MICHAL goes to him. He folds her in his arms.)

But we must calm the flowing of this grief.
Though yet we cannot mind us to remember,
Love will as sandal-breath and trickling balm
O'erheal us in the unbegotten years,
Too headlong must not be our agony.
Hush now thy woundedness, my Michal, now.
See, o'er the East the lifted wings of Dawn.

(They climb the stair to the house-top. As they look away toward the battle's rout the clouds part, and over them breaks the full brightness of the sun....)

THE END.

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[Pg 318]

Transcriber's Notes:

Simple typographical and spelling errors were corrected. Considerable latitude was provided the dialogue and poetry.

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