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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PSYCHOLOGIES ***

PSYCHOLOGIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BOOKS OF VERSE

PHILOSOPHIES
THE SETTING SUN
FABLES

NEW NOVEL

REVELS OF ORSERA

PSYCHOLOGIES

BY RONALD ROSS



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1919

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NOTE

These five studies are parts of a series of which I hope to publish more examples at a later date.

The first two originally appeared in *The Nation* of September 27th and December 13th, 1913. The last piece contains passages from a drama called *Edgar*, published in Madras in 1883. *The Marsh* was intended to be a melodrama, but the music for it has not yet been developed.

My thanks are due to Mr. John Masefield and Mr. Cloudesley Brereton for helping me in the correction of the proofs.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
OTHO	9
THE TRIUMPH	14
EVIL	22
THE MARSH	36
THE BOY'S DREAM	52

PSYCHOLOGIES

OTHO

OTHO.
SOLDIERS.

[After Otho had been partially defeated by Vitellius, his soldiers clamoured to be led again to battle. Otho refused in the manner shown here in brief.]

Soldiers. Once more to battle, Otho!

Otho. No, not for Rome's sake.

Soldiers. Cæsar, once more!

Otho. Is Rome forgotten then?

Soldiers. To battle, Cæsar!

Big Soldier. Hear us, little Cæsar!

Bearded Soldier. Are we, then, dogs that Cæsar will not lead us?

Soldiers. Ah!

Bearded Soldier. Did we fly? Are we mercenaries?

Soldiers. Ah!

Young Soldier. Blood, blood, blood!

Big Soldier. Listen, pretty one, listen!

Soldiers. Once more, Otho, once more!

Centurion. You mongrels, peace!

Small Soldier. I smoke for battle, Cæsar. I'll fail thee no more.

Soldiers. God Cæsar, lead us!

Young Soldier (*beating his shield*). Blood, blood,
blood, blood, blood!

Soldiers. To battle, Cæsar!

Bearded Soldier. Are we Egyptians?

Centurion. Peace!

Big Soldier. Hear, pretty one, hear!

Otho. For this your love these thanks.

For your great hearts my heart. My blood for yours
As yours would flow for mine. This life for all,
And for my country.

Soldier. Let us die for it then.

Another. These kisses for your feet.

Young Soldier (*gashing his arm*). This blood to wash them!

Another (*doing the same*). And this to keep you Cæsar.

Otho. I am that—

And would not be it. For about the world
The warlike pest is blown, and Cæsar stands
Knee-deep in blood, or is not Cæsar. Cease!
Keep me no more with Fortune. She and I
Are wedded-weary of each other.

Soldiers. War! War!

Centurion. Dogs! Listen while great Cæsar speaks.

Soldiers. To war!

Old Soldier. See, Cæsar, how these wounds burst out once more
With blood that clamours to be shed for thee!

Otho. For this great love my thanks, brave hearts. My tears
Do thank you. So my country's bitter wounds
Burst out with blood once more for me. O there!
Too much already have those dreadful wounds
Bled gouts and gushes of black blood for me—
For nothing. What am I—no god, a man—
To loose the life of myriads and to make
Italy a charnel for a name? Enough.
The battle was against us. Let it be.
The gods have spoken, and love not to warn
In vain. I am resolved. I'll war no more.

Soldiers. Ah! Ah!

Small Soldier. We are not vanquish't!

Otho. But not victors.

The omens are adverse. Vitellius wins.
What matter if he win? So let him win.
Shall Rome be river'd with her children's blood
That he or I should wear a purple rag?
What is't to Rome who should be Cæsar? Hear.
We Cæsars rise, and rule, and rot—yet are
But as the names of nothing for a time;
The marks on foolish calendars of days
For farmers' fruit-trees and memorial stones—
Notches on sticks, and gossip for winter nights;
Add not a corngrain to the goodman's store,

A word to wisdom, nor a stave to song;
Nor worth the delving of a ditch to hide
Our bones in, less a dreadful sepulchre
To hold the harvest of a continent.
For which of us shall Italy be more fair?
Will yonder sun more brightly beam for me
Than for Vitellius? Or her labour'd fields
More richly bear, her rivers run, her hills
Brighten the more, for me than for Vitellius?
Upon the sands the silvery waters play;
The deep endellèd woods are rich with flowers;
And all her maidens call. Laughing they call
Amid the morning dew: but not the more
For me than for Vitellius. Let him reign!
I will contend with him in battle no more;
I will contend with him in nobleness.
So let him then give Rome a Cæsar. I
Will give her peace.

Soldiers. Cæsar, Otho, Cæsar!

Young Soldier. Make way there, comrades; I've a word to move him. (*He stabs himself.*)
See, Cæsar, what we dare for thee. If thus
For nothing we die—how shall we die for thee? (*He dies.*)
(*Otho covers his face. Silence.*)

Otho. But ere I give it I must win that peace.
Ah, thou hast taught me how to win it, friend.
Give me his sword that I may kiss his blood.
O Italy, O Rome, if thus for me
Thy children die, how should I die for thee?
(*He stabs himself. The soldiers rage round him.*)

Soldier. O noble Cæsar!

Centurion. Back! let him have more air.

Soldier. He is not dead.

Centurion. Fall back, you dogs!

Soldier. He dies.

Otho (dying). He gives thee Cæsar. I will give thee—peace.

Soldier. I'll see him die at least.

Soldiers. Hack him to death

For breathing Cæsar's air.

Soldier. Cæsar, I follow thee.

Another. And I.

Another. The sun is set with him.

Another. You cowards!

Because you ran in battle he dies.

Another. Who ran?

Another. You.

Another (striking him). Run then after that.

Centurion. Undisciplined dogs.

More air, you curs!

Soldier. He dies.

Soldiers. Cæsar! Cæsar!

(*Otho dies.*)

THE TRIUMPH

THEODORA.

OSTYN.

A Forest of Great Trees. Tempest.

Enter THEODORA, followed by OSTYN waving a sword.

Theodora. Triumph, my friend!

Ostyn. So perish all oppressors!

Theodora. So let them die!

Ostyn. So let them perish all!

Theodora. So let God help us ever!

Ostyn. And for ever!

Theodora. God has been with us.

Ostyn. Let us kneel, dear friend,
And thank Him. Aye, before this bleeding sword,
As at an altar, let us kneel to Him.

Theodora. Whose justice, smiting in your hand, laid low
My children's murderer!

(They kneel before the sword, laid on the grass. The tempest pauses for a moment. The sun gleams on the sword.)

From this dungeon'd world,
Where death and madness fill the dark with shrieks,
We thank Thee, uttermost God, for that Thy light
Hath smitten one moment for us. From Thy throne
The lightning came; the bright exceeding flash
Came down and smote him; the lightning of Thy wrath
Devour'd him.

Ostyn. Fearless he stood aloft, and strong;
Fearless of death and lord of many crimes.
Men crept beneath him. He was terrible
And took them by the scruff and flung them down
For pleasure.

Theodora. For he was fill'd with hate and love;
And where his love fell, fell his hate also,
Like thunder blasting that it kisses.

Ostyn. Mighty,
His people groan'd beneath him; for he slew
A pathway to his passions.

Theodora. My lord he slew,
Beloved; my children, for I scorn'd him.

Ostyn. Herself,
Like that dark angel leaping down from heaven,
He visited.

Theodora. Like that dark angel came.

Ostyn. But she made ready the hidden sword. O God,
Hear! She made ready the sword. Hear, O God.
The sword she laid in secret. God of Wrath,
Be with us for our cause was just.

Theodora. He fell;
Not like a tyrant in the poison'd night;
Not like a victim of the shuddering dark;
But front to front with anger in his eyes,
And arm'd to smite again. Triumph!

(Tempest. They raise their arms.)

Ostyn. He died!

Theodora. He perisht!

Ostyn. Let the world triumph!

Theodora. Let it shout!

Ostyn. Hear us, O God of Wrath!

Theodora. O God of Love,
Hear us, Thy children, and forgive!

(They rise.)

Ostyn. My friend,
You weep—altho' we triumph. That must be,
Alas! But wipe this horror from you now,
Nor let it ache for ever, like some despair
Whose secret hamper to the soul we feel
But name not. Wipe it from you—like this blood,
Which thus I purge from off th' untarnisht steel
Once and for all. Come, we must take the time,
And move. The servants of that evil man
Will seek him. Yonder too another storm,
Ere yet the trees have shed their scope of tears,
Stands muttering in the zenith. Come then, friend.
I have an aged cousin living in the city,
And she will shelter you. As for myself—
If't please you that I may remain with you,
Your servant, I'd be glad indeed. That once
I loved you ere you wedded (and do still),
If such a poor humpt creature as myself
Dare call his sighing love, will not disgust you
Who know it—for I never have conceal'd it.
You are the noblest woman in the world;
But my poor love is such a thing to laugh at,

You need not heed it. Now you are alone,
I may indeed give up my life to you
And be your servant.

(*The tempest pauses. Silence.*)

Theodora. Your sword is clean, you say,
But look upon those startled flowers there,
Those innocent flowers—what smeared stains of death
Would make them seeming-guilty. What have they done?
Not they have pierced a man's heart, poor white things,
That yet look unwasht murd'ers; while the sword
Gleams icy pure, like some fire-eyed angel
New-born in Heaven.

Ostyn. What of it?

Theodora. I am the sword;
You are the flowers. The load of guilt I had
Is smear'd on you, who to your dying day
Shall wear such stains no rain of mercy ever
Can wash from off you.

Ostyn. What guilt?

Theodora. The guilt I had,
But like the noblest woman of the world
Have smear'd upon another.

Ostyn. I do not take you.

Theodora. My friend, I should have done the deed alone,
Or let him kill me!

Ostyn. That would have been clear murder.
Now, he being slain in combat, we are pure.

Theodora. Reason acquits me, but my heart is sour.

Ostyn. Except one thing, I laugh at it.

Theodora. What is that?

Ostyn. Oh nothing—no matter.

Theodora. Tell me, friend.

Ostyn. Oh leave it.
The thing is done—what matter.

Theodora. Except what thing?

Ostyn. This, that you toucht his arm. That was not wise,
And lends some colour to peevish conscience.
Tho' huncht and small, believe it I am strong;
And sober-blooded; tuned with exercise
Which ever to ennoble this frail form
I have used. Single, I knew myself his match.
You needed not have toucht him.

Theodora. He was a soldier.

Ostyn. Rather for that I scorned him.

Theodora. I fear'd for you.

Ostyn. Did I not wound him ere you toucht his arm?
I saw it in his eye he dreaded me—
As venomous-narrow'd as a guilty moon
Shrinking against the sunrise.

Theodora. Was that murder,
To touch his arm?

Ostyn. No, truly, I would have kill'd him
Anyway.

Theodora. Oh, oh!

Ostyn. You noble woman, cease!
Let not your heart be weaker than your mind.
It is a curse to have a heart that boils
When reason bids be calm.

Theodora. Is reason in it?

Ostyn. Yes, yes.

Theodora. Where does the reason dwell then—here,
Or here?

Ostyn. Come, my dear mistress, this is vain.
You work yourself to it.

(*She looks around.*)

Theodora. Where is the wind that blew?
What is this silence?—Ah! I dare not speak!
Each leaf here hangs its head at seeing me.

Ostyn. 'Tis but the hush before another storm.
Look there, how thund'rous black it comes upon us.

Theodora. Hush, hush, hush. O forever
Henceforth to hush, to whisper in secret, lest
All things may hear and hang their heads at me!

Ostyn. Now, now!

Theodora. O God, my children, my children!

Ostyn. There.

God is their Father now.

Theodora. Their father's dead.

Ostyn. Come, come; give me your hands. You are atremble.
Why do you stare about you so?—till now
As tall and tearless as some Roman dame
Who flincht not ever? He fell in fight I say—
Full fair (would I had run him thro' and thro'
A dozen times). Fear not. The town is close,
And that dead tiger's dogs will never dare
To hunt you in it. This little storm will pass.
Look how the dull face of the forest mere
Whitens beneath th' approaching rain. Come now;
Here is a hollow-hearted tree will hide you.
Best safety lies in hollow-heartedness—
The full heart bursts the sooner. Presently
There will be thunder, sure. You will not fear it?
Come, keep your spirit firmer. I believe
The thunder sets a sign twixt fools and wise,
Since only fools do fear it. Come now, arise.
Seek shelter here. You have no cloak with you.

Theodora. What feet are these I hear stealing around me?
(*Large raindrops fall.*)

Ostyn. Feet!—raindrops sure; rain on the russet bracken.

Theodora. What spirits are those yonder that smite their brows
With horror?

Ostyn. Spirits?

Theodora. Where he lieth dead.

Ostyn. Ah, trees on th' other shore of this most wild
And desolate mere. Mark you the coming storm
Has not yet reacht us quite; but there he rages.
The shrieking trees grow ashen in their fear,
Like spirits—yes. But now enough of this.
You must be still. (Great God! She's woman again!)
Here is my cloak. Come, let us move. (Great God!
What if it thunders?) There, I'll hold your hands.
I think the thunder comes; but what of that?
Poor rumbling thunder, threats of empty clouds!
I love it, foolish thunder. (She is wild!)

(*Thunder.*)

Theodora. Away! Help, help! Smite me not black, O Heaven!
Hide in the wood—it is too open here!
Murder!

Ostyn. 'Tis only I who hold you, dear!

Theodora. They murder me—Heaven murders me!
Away!

Ostyn. You'll fall!

Theodora. God's thunder smites me black!

Oh, oh!

Ostyn. The water draws her.

Theodora. He walks upon the water.

There is a cavern in his breast—there, there!
A crimson cavern in his breast he points at.
It is my husband. Let me go. My husband.
No, no, no. It is *he*.

Ostyn. Alas!

Theodora. My children, my children.

Ostyn. Heaven, she is dying.

The heart breaks. Look, how pale.

(*She dies in his arms.*)

(*The storm ceases.*)

Thou wert too noble for the world, sweet woman,
In thinking thyself too base. No more for me
My wakeful watches for her holy sake,
And vision'd vigils under sleepless stars

Against the world. I conquer'd—yet she died.
The goings of my life are barr'd by this,
And this pale body at my threshold lies
For ever; therefore I must close the door
And end. Would it be too much sacrilege,
Once ere I die, to open this white throat
And kiss it where the shapely column springs?
Or these dead hands? Or this death-smoothèd brow,
Where sat thy soul serene? O, in that fashion
The boy dream'd to have held thee, the man holds
And dies. Enough to've held thee dead, and die.
(*He gathers the body in his arms.*)

Thou sawest thy lord walk on the waters there.
Come, I will take thee to him.
(*He wades into the mere.*)

Spirit, hear!

I bring thee to thy children and thy lord.
(*They sink under the water.*)
(*The rain falls.*)

EVIL

DANSBERG.
ICELIN.
GORM.

A Forest.

Enter COUNT DANSBERG, *led in by his granddaughter,*
ICELIN.

Dansberg. It was a very merry story. Ha, ha, ha!
Icelin (*looking back*). He comes not.

Dansberg. "Be wed," says he, "but give me dinner.
Be wed and hang'd then"—so the old man said
When we had bound him in his chair with kerchiefs,
And starved him for some two days. Icelin!

Icelin. Well?

Dansberg. You do not listen. "Go marry and be hang'd,"
He shouted. Ha, ha, ha! He could not move.
You are not listening.

Icelin. Could he not call the servants?

Dansberg. High in the wind-rockt turret we had bound him.
The careless servants thought him sick, and she
His nurse. And so we wrung the writing from him
And got us married. Oh the merry jest!
Ha, ha, ha. Hough, hough, hough.

Icelin. A devil's trick.

Dansberg. Yes, was it not a very clever trick?

Icelin. I say, an evil trick.

Dansberg. Why, so say I—
A very able trick. When we were wed
The old man curst us till he laugh'd himself,
And then he blest us. She was beautiful,
Your grandmother.

Icelin. I am like her.

Dansberg. Yes, yes, yes.
She was a crimson-mouthèd piece of snow.
Her lips would often bleed, so red they were—
Altho' her skin so white.

Icelin. You say so?—Why,
My lips are bleeding.

Dansberg. Then you're thinking evil.
Her lips would bleed when she had evil thoughts.
Hough, hough.

Icelin. Were you a page, then, when you wedded?

Dansberg. My age?
Icelin. A page.
Dansberg. Yes, yes. So I became
Lord of these valleys.

Icelin. Had you been more noble
My blood had been the richer.

Dansberg. Who is richer?

Icelin. Was it because you were not nobler born
The old man would not let you wed her?

Dansberg. Hough.
My birth was good enough.

Icelin. Yet Gorm is noble.

Dansberg. What, what! An evil child—a cunning child!

Icelin. I am a woman.

Dansberg. You are not sixteen.

Icelin. But that is woman.

Dansberg. Hough, hough, a wicked child!
Gorm is a scheming knave and you a child.
I say a child, a child, a child. Look you,
You first shall murder me ere you marry Gorm.
Do you not see I tremble? When I tremble
I'm angry. Hough hough, hough.

Icelin. What would you say then
If we should play a trick on you?

Dansberg. A trick!
What Jansen there!—Where's Jansen?

Icelin. Lagging after.

Dansberg. Then I will wait for him.
(*He sits down on a log.*)

Tell me, where are we?
We should be near the castle gate; and yet
I feel too many dead leaves on the sword.

Icelin. The storm that blew last night has blown them here.

Dansberg. There should be wind upon this vision'd height.

Icelin. There is no wind.

Dansberg. Yes, yes, there is no wind.
What is the rustling that I hear?

Icelin. The trees.

Dansberg. There are not many near the castle gate.

Icelin. There are not many, but they make the sound.

Dansberg. Is it the oak-tree or the fir?

Icelin. The fir.

Dansberg. I think I feel a something over my head.

Icelin. Great clouds have come and settled in the sky.

Dansberg. Is't rain or tempest, think you?

Icelin. Storm, I think.

Dansberg. Between the greater clouds what do you see?

Icelin. Patches of blue. (*She smiles.*)

Dansberg. And in the patches, what?

Icelin. Enamels of pale pearl.

Dansberg. Beneath the clouds,
What is there?

Icelin. Nothing.

Dansberg. Tut, you are a woman,
And note not anything. Under those great clouds,
Are there no ragged runners on the wind?

Icelin. I think I see them.

Dansberg. Being sunset now,
What colour'd splendours are there? What great shades?

Icelin. The clouds are rosy.

Dansberg. Faugh, you're blind. Look, look.
Do not the curling thunders heap the sun?—
Or does he rip them and stare out with rage
Upon the east?

Icelin. The sun is sinking.

Dansberg. But say;

Beneath the clouds the wild swans trail along,
And kestrels, soaring to the vantage point,
Slide down upon the storm-wind—do they not?

Icelin. I see some things like sparrows in the sky.

Dansberg. What do you see then?

Icelin. The winding of the river,
And the blue mountains on the verge.

Dansberg. At this hour
Hills are not blue. Say, is there light?

Icelin. 'Tis light.

Dansberg. I feel that it is dark. Is it not cold?

Icelin. Not very cold.

Dansberg. I feel that it is cold.
I feel as if we were in some great forest,
And that you do not see the things you say.
The ground is soft and all the dead leaves crack
Beneath the feet. Where are we?

Icelin. Just at the gate.

Dansberg. Roars not the river at his hundred eyots?
What colour is the foam?

Icelin. As white as snow.

Dansberg. You lie, you lie; you see it not, you lie!
The storm-flood sweeps the river, and its foam
Runs tawny as the sand.

Icelin. I do not lie.

Dansberg. Come, lead me home. These two hours I have walkt,
And all my blood is water. I am old—
So old and blind. I wonder, is the fire lit,
This autumn evening, and my supper ready?
Hough, hough. Where is my stick—my stick?

(She takes the stick from beside him.)

Icelin. Say, then,
When shall I marry Gorm?

Dansberg. Hough, hough, hough, hough.
Let us go in and think o't.

Icelin. Tell me now.

Dansberg. Then give me first your arm to help me rise. *(Rises.)*
A good girl—so. Your arm is thin but firm—
Thinner but firmer than your mother's. Tut!
Poor daughter, daughter. Dead, dead, dead, so long!
When that my blindness first did seize upon me,
How she would run to me to help me on,
And kiss me oft that saw her not—until
I felt the hot tears on my hand. I chid her;
Telling her not to weep that was not blind,
As I that had no eyes could have no tears:
And thus I cheer'd her. But at last she died.
And my old falcon died, and my old horse;
And last of all the dog. But Jansen lives.
Jansen, Jansen!—where is he?

Icelin. He is coming.

Dansberg. I do not hear him. It is bitter chill.
We should be at the gate, but that I feel
As walking in a wood. I think I smell
The ground-ferns and damp mosses, and the scent
Of puff-balls on the rotting trees. Hark there!
I hear the bull-frogs croaking.

Icelin. I don't hear them.

Dansberg. You're deaf. There are no bull-frogs near the castle.

Icelin. Ah, yes. It is two silly ravens croaking.

Dansberg. Raymond, you say?

Icelin. Ravens.

Dansberg. Ravens! ravens!

O God! The ravens of my house! O God!
Give me a stone—my stick—they visit us—
When we must die.

(He falls sitting on a log.)

Jansen, Jansen, I say.

Icelin. See, there he comes.

Dansberg. You lazy rascal,
How dare you lag so?
(*Enter GORM.*)

His gait is strange. Look, child,
What ails him? Is he drunk? Oh, oh, 'tis Gorm.
I know him by his breathing.

(*ICELIN leaves DANSBERG and goes to GORM. They whisper together. DANSBERG sits trembling.*)

Icelin. You're late.

Gorm. I have run.

Icelin. We shall be miss'd.

Gorm. It is not done?

Icelin. Not done!

No; but to be done.

Gorm. I hoped to find it done.

Icelin. Ye gods! what I alone?

Gorm. Why not? 'tis easy.

Icelin. Are you so pale?

Gorm. Pale? me!

Icelin. A man like you!

Gorm. Like who?

Icelin. Are you a man and pale?

Gorm. I'm not.

It is the twilight.

Icelin. Do you stagger too?

Are you afraid?

Gorm. I, Gorm, afraid! A soldier!

Icelin. A soldier and my love.

Gorm. Your love indeed!

Icelin. You think I am too young to be your love?

Gorm. You are divine!

Icelin. What shall we do with him?

Gorm. Aye, what?

Icelin. The thing I told you—tie him here.

Gorm. What, all night long?

Icelin. No matter.

Gorm. He will die.

Icelin. I'm sick of walking with him. And besides
He will not let me wear my mother's clothes
That are in lavender.

Gorm. Tush!

Icelin. Her jewels, too.

Gorm. I thought that you'd have done it; and I came
To end the jest and win his thanks—and you.

Icelin. I want his wealth for you.

Gorm. He will die soon.

Icelin. He lives for ever.

Gorm. That is true.

Icelin. I want it—

Now.

Gorm. No, no, no. Hush, he will hear us.

Icelin. Never.

And he is maudlin too.

Gorm. I madden for you.

Fie, what is this upon my lips? Not blood?

Icelin. And on your face. My lips bleed often thus.

Gorm. Oh, oh.

Icelin. You know the way home after this?

Gorm. Oh, yes.

Icelin. That's right then. We have nought to do
But wait and watch him.

(*Dansberg rises.*)

Dansberg. How their whisperings run
Like hissing of live snakes. Where am I then?
I must be cunning. If I could find my stick
I could escape. I think they look not this way.

Icelin. Nay, let him be. You need not fear my lips—
'Tis but a little bleeding.

Dansberg. Now is the time.
Quick now! Sneak off!

(*He knocks against a tree.*)

A tree. Pest on these leaves,
They crackle so. Again.
(*He knocks against another tree.*)

A wood, a wood!
O this means murder!

Gorm. Poor old man!

Icelin. The fool!—Stand still there!

Dansberg. Yes, good daughter, yes.
Hough, hough. I would but stroll—hough, hough, hough—
But stroll a little.

Icelin. Stroll then very little—
There is a pit there.

Dansberg. Then I'll not stroll far,
Believe me. Hough, hough, hough.

Icelin (*to GORM*). I brought him here
Because I know the pit. Let's wait a little.
I'll hear him shriek first.
(*She goes to DANSBERG.*)

When shall I marry Gorm?

Dansberg. I am too old to set myself against you.
Yet your young life I would not give to him—
My daughter's daughter. Hough. But lead me home.
Enough the jest. To-morrow I will grant it.
I am too old, too old to struggle with you.
The cold is bitter in this mildewy wood,
And my feet numb. Why will you linger still?
Am I not blind?

Icelin. Then I may marry him?

Dansberg. Yes.

Icelin. And may I have my mother's silks you keep
In lavender?

Dansberg. Hough, hough, hough. You wicked girl!
She was an angel, and you shall not have them—
Hough, hough—at least until I've sorted them.
(*She slaps him.*)

Icelin. Sort that then!

Dansberg. Someone strikes me.

Icelin. That, again!

Dansberg. Someone has struck me! Shame!—a poor old man!

Icelin. Let your cheeks burn for it then.

Dansberg. You struck me, sir.
You cowardly dog.

Gorm. Hold, *Icelin*.

Icelin. I am sick
At sight of him. It was I who struck you.

Dansberg. Yes.
'Twas she who struck me.

Icelin. And I will again.

Dansberg. Then I will turn to you my other cheek,
You have not struck yet.

Icelin. There, then!

Dansberg. See, O God!

Gorm. She is a wolf.

Dansberg. God is not blind as I am.
(*A pause.*)

My daughter's daughter struck me. Therefore I know
That she would kill me. Kill me, then, and quickly,
That I may go to God with branded cheeks
To plead compassion for me—for I've done
Sins in this world. But who would punish me—
More—after this? Now let me die. I wait.

(*Silence. A gust of wind blows through the forest.*)

Come, kill me then. I am no coward. Hush!
No answer. What if they have left me here
To die in th' wood? And yet I dare not move.
She said there is a pit beside me close,
Where I might fall. If I could find my stick,
I could escape, perhaps, and follow them.
(*He gropes for his stick.*)

(*A second gust of wind blows through the forest.*)

Oh, evil, evil! She has hid it—O!—
I hear a sigh that shudders thro' the air.
'Tis night. I have no eyes and yet can see
The night. Oh, it is night for me for ever.
Night, night and age, and endless weight of silence,
Save but for far low voices faintly heard.
Great age, great age! and bright scenes long ago,
Seen like the sunshine at a cavern's mouth
To one endungeon'd there for ever. Ah!
That vision too must end.
(*A third gust of wind.*)

Sigh, shuddering Wind
Sigh for the old man sightless. Sigh, O Wind,
Sigh for the old man sightless. Sink and die,
And pass away.

Icelin. Let's push him now.

Gorm. Enough!

Have you no heart?

Icelin. A heart? What is a heart?

I have a lump of ice here in my breast
That freezes me. Except for you—for you.
(*She kisses GORM.*)

You tremble! Do you tremble?

Gorm. Yes, I tremble.

Icelin. Are you a coward?

Gorm. Yes, a coward. See!

Dansberg. Help! Jansen there! They murder me! Hough, hough.
I cannot shout, for when I shout I cough.
Help, help! Hough, hough.
(*He staggers to and fro.*)

Icelin. Come, father, here's my arm.

Why do you shout?

Dansberg. I shout because I die.

Icelin. I am your daughter.

Dansberg. Are you my daughter, 'Linde?

My daughter's spirit?

Icelin. Yes.

Dansberg. I know your voice!

(*She leads him toward the pit.*)

No! You are not my daughter. Your arm's too thin!
Help, God! Make me a miracle now to save me,
Since man will not; or I will cry aloud
There is no God in all this black, black world.
Send me a flash to light me out of this,
Here where I stagger thus in solid night,
Like some dumb creature in the huntsman's pit.
Send fiery-urgent lightnings to mine aid,
Revealing Heaven, until this forest stands,
Each tree a flaming angel for a torch.
Oh! oh! the air is full of murder!—Not yet,
O Death, not yet! I am too young to die!
See, Heaven, my heart is beating still with blood.
When that the heart is bloodless, 'twill be time
To die!

Icelin. Come, father, come; why do you shriek
So much?

Dansberg. I shriek because I die.

Gorm. Beware!

There is a pit there!

Dansberg. Oh, He answers not!

In my youth's days I did forget Him; now
In this mine age He hath forgotten me.
(*A pause.*)

Away! God or no God, I'll save myself!
(*He runs forward wildly and falls into the pit.*)
(*Silence.*)

Icelin. Down there. Down. Down. Mark now, I pushed him not.
He ran from me and fell. You saw it. I knew
That he would die like this. You called me child.
Am I so young then? I am no child—a woman!
See with what skill I've brought you to your fortune.
Now I shall wear those silks and damascenes,
And all these lands be yours. Thus, with this kiss
I seal it.

Gorm. Away!

Icelin. What?

Gorm. Wolf!

Icelin. What?

Gorm. Wolf, wolf, wolf!

Your teeth are white but pointed like a wolf's.
Your face is white but both your lips are red—
So bleeding red! I have my sword—away!
Or I will stab you! Even by this light
There's blood upon your lips—and some of it
Burns on me now. Your race's blood is poison—
His, yours, and all your race's. You're a witch;
A wolf, a witch, a witch! I have my sword—
So follow not! A witch, a witch, a witch!
Your blood is poison and your heart is ice!
(*He flies into the forest.*)

(*ICELIN remains standing. The ravens perch on the boughs above her head.*)

(*She shrieks.*)

Icelin. My blood is poison and my heart is ice!
A witch, a wolf, a witch, a wolf, a witch!
My teeth are pointed like a wolf's. A witch!
My face is white, my lips are bleeding red,
My blood is poison, and my heart is ice.
A witch, a wolf, a witch, a wolf, a witch,
A wolf! I follow then! I will devour you!
I'll follow you about the world—and eat you!
(*She bounds into the forest after GORM. The ravens follow her.*)

THE MARSH

MELFORT.

EVAID.

THE CHORUS OF THE MARSH.

A Marsh. Midnight and the setting moon.
Enter MELFORT, plunging about in water.
(*A cry is heard.*)

Melfort. Who cries! In the night and the silence—who cries!

Chorus. Súmph, súmph, súmph, súmph.

Melfort. What was it?

I hear but the whine of the wind
And the croak of the frogs in the grass. No more?

Chorus. Súmph, súmph, súmph, súmph.

Melfort. It was a sound of the pestilent fen;
The cry of a leveret lost from his lair,
Or scream of an adder-stung toad.

But soft.

The moon dies, and I sink each step
More deeply, and have missed my way.
The temperate candles of the town
Are lost, and I but see around me

The hectic fen-fires dancing. Ho!
What ho!

Chorus. Súmph, súmph, súmph,
Súmph.

Melfort. No answer; no one comes.
It is the marsh, and I am in it
Right to the knees. This pays me well
For thinking of the bonny bride
And all her train of rosy maids,
When I should mark the way. But on—
Though my poor wedding shoes be done for
Ah, pah!—my brain is full of wine,
And all my being ripe for love.
Wine, wine, and marriage, and I best-man;
And liquor goes badly under the stars.
Young; rich for a farmer—well, who knows
But I too, myself, may be wedded soon.
(*A shriek is heard.*)

Who shrieks?

Chorus. Súmph, súmph, súmph,
Súmph.

Melfort. My God, it was behind me!
That sobers me!—Ho there, who shrieks?—
It is too near. What, am I drunk?
Am I sick? Do I reel?—The acid cry
Ran like a curdle through the blood.
Soft, soft, I must enquire here more.
A murder!—There, I am afraid
And wither where I stand; unarm'd—
But yet I'll venture further. So!
A woman's cry, touching the quick.
A friend! I come!

Frogs. Kilkillutty cluck,
Clickutty cluck, clickutty cluck,
Click, cluck.

Melfort. No answer.
Ho!

A friend! Give answer. Let me hear you
That I may find you.

Frogs. Hiccutty hac,
Hiccutty, hucutty, hiccutty hac.
Hiccutty.

Melfort. Strange; nothing replies.
I plunge here like a dog at loss;
And all the sleeping startled pools
Exclaim against me, and the flowers—
Deep-drowsèd water-lilies—wake
In nodding wonder.

A friend! I come!

Give answer! Ho!

Efts. Tiu, Tiu,
Tiu, Tiu.

Melfort. No one replies.
Pools, pools, and water everywhere,
And midnight and the dying moon!
I am afraid, and my knees tremble.
No answer. Hush. There's nothing stirs,
Save only the frogs in bubbled mire
And yonder swaying bulrushes
That by battalions beckon each other
In the murky moon. Look how—look how
The ghostly globes of fairy fire
Ooze from the marsh-mire and creep up
Their callow stems and leap in air,
Becoming fen-fires. Listen! Hark!
The croaking chorus of the fen.

Toads. Glick, gluck, glickutty gluck,
Glickutty, glickutty, glickutty gluck.

Melfort. See, see, my soul! O what is this?
A snake?—A steel that gleaming lies!
O my unerring ears—a dagger!

Frogs. Kil, kul, kil, kul,

Killlutty, kul.

Melfort. The dagger is bloody!
The villain has stolen away his victim!
Stay, murderer, villain!

Frogs. Hic, huc,
Hiccutty huc.

Melfort. Here's a deed!
But look you now upon this thing
Here by the livid moonlight seen.
Strange that this dagger so should drip
With blood yet be as bloody still
As 'twas before! It runs for ever.
See from the point a bloody stream
Runs on for ever, soaking earth!
I am enchanted! Ha, I gasp!
Are these but frogs that cry around—
Ten myriad frogs and toads that cry—
"Kill kill, kill, kill"—Whom should I kill?

Frogs. Kil, kul, killlutty kul,
Kil kil kil, kil kil kul.

Melfort. See, see in the moonlight—there on the bank—
A horror that lies!

O pitiful God!
Look here! O pitiful sight!—dead, dead!
A maiden; and murdered and so pale!
What, here in the marsh!—A maiden—dead!

Chorus. Súmph, súmph, súmph, súmph.

Melfort. So beautiful, young, and yet so dead?
They have robbed her—the villains—and gone!

See here,

A pitiful wound in the lovely breast;
And under the wound, among the grass,
A little glow-worm—as if it were
Her soul dropt out among the flowers—
Her soul dropt out of the wound!

Frogs. Quuck,
Kilutty kullutty quickutty quuck.

Melfort. The marsh flowers that spring about her
Are busy to hide her in their arms,
With open mouths kissing her delicate flesh!

Toads. Huncutty hincutty huncutty hic,
Killlutty quickutty kill, quick.

Evaïd. Ah me!

Melfort. She is alive, and lifts
Her loaded lids!

Evaïd. Ah me, I die.

Melfort. A witch! a fairy thing!—See here
A chaplet of flowers upon her brow—
Of lilies and daisies on her brow!

Evaïd. Ah me, alas!

Melfort. She looks at me—
And O the swooning light of her eyes!
If you will die thus beautifully,
Die thus for ever!

Evaïd. O the pain!

Melfort. Am I a fool, a senseless stock,
To have thus the while she dies!
Come, I will hide you in my coat,
Enwrap you here and hide you thus;
And press my kerchief to your wound.
(O beautiful breast; O bitter wound;
O cruel, carvèd, bitter wound.)
Come, courage, come. Come lay your head
Here. Do not moan, for I will go
And fetch you succour from the town.
(She is not cold, but burns like fire—
For all her ebbing blood doth flow
In guilty oozing from her breast.
What, wounded in water, yet so warm!)

Evaïd. I am dying. Let me be.
Let me perish, let me be.

Melfort. No, no, you shall not perish, dear,
For I will bring you succour soon.
So courage, my child—I will return.

Evaïd. Do not leave me, do not grieve me,
Do not leave me ere I die;
If you leave me I shall perish;
Linger by me while I die.

Melfort. I must go and bring some aid for you,
Or you will die here in the marsh.
(Heavens, how she clings upon my arm;
Heavens, how her fingers cling upon me;
And O the swooning light of her eyes!)
What, shall I take you in my arms, then,
And bear you to the town?

I dare not.
What, do you clasp your arms about me,
Who should be dead by now! (Alas!
The languid head, the dying eyes!—
Yet she is warm; not chill, not cold,
Not like a corpse!) Hold up your head.
Why do you cling upon me? (God,
The slender, beautiful, long arms!)

Evaïd. If you leave me, I shall perish;
If you grieve me, I shall die.
O the trembling and the torment,
O the trembling and the cold!
O the paining, O the pining,
O the paining in my wound!

Melfort. Come then, I'll bear you.

No, I will not.

What is it I hear?—the accursed frogs
That cry!

I will not carry you—
Not take you in my arms. I see
Some magic here. Maids crown'd with flowers
But dying wounded are not found.
See now I stand away. For listen!
They cry, "kill, kill." The squatting toads
And gulping frogs do croak it forth,
And the lip-licking efts of the pool,
And worms, come out of the earth to cry it—
"Kill, kill; kill, kill."—Whom should I kill?
The misty glammers of the moon
Amaze me; and you die not yet,
Who with that wounding should be dead.
There is some dire enchantment on me.
Why do you die not, being wounded—
And in the heart? When you are dead
I'll carry you. Till then, lie there.

Evaïd. Will you leave the poor one dying,
Lying dying, lying dying,
Lying in the cold cold water,
Sighing, dying all alone?

Melfort. Nay, then, I'll take you—though I die.
The moon is magical and the marsh
Peopled with voices. So—your head
Upon my shoulder: thus. So, so;
And put your arms about me—so.
You may have trust in me—I'm honest,
And have a sister lives with me,
And she shall tend you. All the land
Shall follow to-morrow your murderer . . .
So there . . . your weight is but a child's . . .
But stay, I have forgot the dagger—
The dagger that gleams on the glistening grass.

Evaïd. No, no, leave it there;
Leave the dagger where it fell;
Leave the dagger burning bright;
Leave the bitter biting steel.

Melfort. No . . . I'll take it. Now come on.

(*He lifts her.*)

Chorus. Sumph, sumph, sumph, sumph;
Sumphity, sumphity, sumphity sumph.

Melfort. So, so, sure and slow;
Where's the way, I do not know.

Chorus. Sumph, sumph, sumph, sumph;
Glumphutty, glumphutty, glumphutty glumph.

Melfort. So, so, slow and sure;
Set the teeth hard, dumb and dour.

Frogs. Click, cluck, clickutty cluck.

Melfort. Now I'm stumbling, now I'm stuck.

Toads. Glick, gluck, glickutty gluck.

Melfort. Glory to mud and glory to muck.

Chorus. Ho, ho, hinkutty hong.

Melfort. No, no, not for long;
I am steadfast, I am strong.

Chorus. Ho, ho, hinkutty hong.

Melfort. Nothing can let me—not for long.
Now I'm free—we'll go along.

See the pollards growing there
Like a row of dancing dwarfs;
How they listen, how they peer,
Look and listen, laugh and leer,
Black against the shrunken moon,
That will now be sinking soon,
Sinking in the sucking mud,
Yellow as evil, yellow as sin,
Like a murderer drown'd in blood.
See, see, see, see,
See the water-weeds that are
Frosted all with phantom fire
Oozing from the bubbling mire;
And on every reed a star,
Blue, blue, blue, and blear
Like a devil seated there.

Chorus. Ho, ha, hinkutty hong,
Sinkutty sonkutty sinkutty song.

Melfort. Damnèd, damnèd, damnèd be
The fingers that hold me, foot and knee.

Chorus. Hing, ho, hinkutty hong,
Sing, song, sinkutty song.

Melfort. Damnèd, damnèd, damnèd be
The time of the rhyme of the frogs of the marsh;
Damnable diapason of frogs . . .
Tune of the croon of the frogs of the fen . . .
Drumming and droning of the fen . . .
Beating and booming in my blood . . .

Evaïd. Hear me, hear me, hear me, hear;
Shall I whisper in your ear?
Hush, hush, hush, hush;
Do not listen, do not hear.

Chorus. Sumph, sumph, sumph, sumph;
Sumphity, sumphity, sumphity sumph.

Evaïd. Hear me, hear me, hear me, hear;
Shall I say it in your ear?
If I tell you do not hear,
Do not listen, do not hear.
Sigh, sigh, sigh, sigh,
Weep for the poor one who will die.
Dew-drops glisten so and die . . .
Die, die, die, die . . .
Do not listen, don't reply.

Little Frog. Hi, ho, hinkutty han,
Here's a foolish floundering man.

Bull-Frog. Hing, hong, strike up a song,
Strike up a chorus, strike up a song.

Evaïd. If I tell you that I'm dying,
You will kiss me, softly sighing—
Kiss the poor one who is dying,
Dying, dying, dying, dying.
Shall I whisper, shall I tell you?

No, the sparkling stars will hear me—
Cold, keen, cruel stars—
They will hear me, hear me, hear me,
Hear me sighing, crying, dying.
O the paining, O the sorrow;
You'll be sad for me to-morrow.

Melfort. Yes, tell me.

Evaïd. Tell me, tell me, tell me.

Melfort. Tell me, I say.

Evaïd. No, no;

You will die, O you will perish
If I tell you that I love you.
I'll not tell you that I love you.
Me though chillèd none shall cherish,
None would save me though I perish.
O the paining, O the sorrow;
None shall weep for me to-morrow,
Morrow, morrow, morrow . . .

Melfort. Speak not!—

Or speak more harshly—for my heart
Swoons at the sweetness of your tongue.

Chorus. Hinkutty, hunkutty, hinkutty hunkutty,
Hing, ho, hing, ho.
This is the rhyme that goes in time,
Sing, ho, sing, ho—
The bold uproarious gladdening glorious
Jinketting, junketting, maddening rhyme.

Melfort. Are you dying so, yet singing?

Dying, dead, yet sing of love?
See your tender fingers clinging,
See your long locks lying gleaming,
Over all your beauty streaming,
In the moonlight, faint and low,
Let me leave you, let me go;
For you have enchanted me
With a moonlight-mystery,
And a dew-fire's on your head;
But your weight is weight of lead;
And I cannot see your eyes,
Cannot see your faery eyes . . .
Let me linger, let me ken,
Let me view thee, peerless one—
Queen of the Marsh, Queen of the Fen—
Gaze my fill by the mystic moon,
Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful one.

Evaïd. Lover, lover, lover dear,
Shall I whisper in your ear?
Hush, hush, hush, hush;
Do not listen, do not hear.

Melfort. On your brow the dangling flowers
Die; but I will gather you more,
Gather you more, gather you more . . .
See your blood and burning gore
Soaks and scalds me to the core . . .
See I struggle, see I sink,
See I settle more and more.
There's no solid ground that's meet
Here to rest my aching feet—
Only isles of mocking reeds,
And the tendrils of the weeds,
Dragging me down, dragging me down;
And your weight is weight of lead . . .
But I love you madly now,
Love and kiss your magic brow,
Suck the sweetness from your lips
As the bee his honey sips . . .
Yet I know my day is done,
Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful one.

Little Frog. Who slew the Wandering Jew?

Bull-Frogs. Mighty King Mud, mighty King Mud.

Melfort. Sadly, badly, madly I go,
Stumbling, tumbling, grumbling go,
Wearily wander, wearily go.

All my blood is weak and slow;
Heavily beats my heart below;
And it will be darkness soon,
For the night devours the moon.

Chorus. Down, down, down, down,
See the red moon drop and drown.

Bull-Frogs. Ho, ha, hinkutty hong,
Keep up the chorus, boys, keep up the song.

Frogs. Now for the jolly tune, now for the joy;
There's no moonlight to annoy.

Crayfish. Hunch, munch, crickutty crunch,
Here's a dead man for our lunch.

Snails. Hurry up, mate, or you'll be late;
Things that are pleasant are soon out of date.

Efts. With our noses out of the flood,
We can sniff the delicate mud.

Mice. Creak, creak, creak, creak,
Some can sing and some can squeak.

Insects. Sum, sum, sum, sum,
We can make the marish hum.

Worms. In the day we creep along,
Trampled, weak, and suffering wrong;
But at midnight, in the mire,
Glow with phosphorescent fire.

Adders. For at night, night is light,
Bright is dark and dark is bright.

*

Melfort. Ah!
See, see, see, see.
See the silver stars above me;
Now the magic moon is sunken,
See them flash their flaming fires.

Evaïd. O, O, O, O,
Hide me from them, hide me from them,
Hide me from their hateful eyes.

Melfort. See the dagger, silver bright.
Glitter in the starlight white.

Evaïd. No, no, no, no;
Drop the dagger, drop the steel.

Melfort. See the dagger, clean and bright.
Gleaming in the starlight white.

Chorus. Hinkutty, honkutty, hinkutty han,
Kill her, kill her—if you can.

Bull-frogs. Ho, ha, yes—if you can.

Chorus. Yah, ho, yes—if you can;
Kill if you dare to, kill if you can.

Evaïd. I was wounded, I was dying,
Like a broken lily lying,
Sighing, dying, I was lying . . .

Chorus. Kill, kill, kill, kill,
Kill if you dare to, kill if you can.

Evaïd. "Put your head upon my breast;
I will bear you; be at rest;
I will bear you; I'm a man,
Man, man, man, man . . ."

Chorus. Hinkutty hoy, hinkutty han,
Kill her, kill her—if you can.

Evaïd. "I will save you, never leave you,
I will heal you, never grieve you . . ."

Melfort. Now I see it, now I know it,
Know the meaning of the chorus,
Of the cursèd croaking frogs.

Evaïd. Press, press, press, press.
Press to your bosom, press to your heart;
Kiss and cure the cruel smart.
Or, if you'll not kisses give,
I will kiss you, so, and live.
They who kisses ne'er receive,

Kisses give, kisses give.

Melfort. I must slay you, kill you, slay you.
Plunge the dagger in your heart,
Or you'll drown me in the darkness,
Madden'd with your magic kisses;
For I know you now, my darling,
Haunter of the horrible fen.
O my Beauty, O my Darling,
I am drunk with love of you;
But I'll stab you with this dagger;
I must kill you or I perish.
Do not shudder, do not shriek,
Do not shudder when I stab you,
For you are a faery thing.

Evaïd. O no, no, no!
Do not kill me, do not stab me—
O, O, the burning steel.
See I love you, see I kiss you,
See I bind my arms about you.
Take the sharp point from my breast.

Melfort. Thus, thus, thus I stab you,
Kiss you, stab you, give you death;
Give you kisses, give you death;
Kiss your dying lips delicious,
Stab you in your tender breast.

Evaïd. O, O, O, O,
Take away the steel tormenting!
Will you slay the poor thing dying?
She has kissed you, never harm'd you,
O the poor, poor dying thing . . .
Kiss her then and kill her so . . .
Lover, lover, lover dear,
Let me whisper in your ear—
Now I'm dying you may hear—
How I love you. Hush, hush,
Hush, hush, hush, hush;
Now I'm dying, I am dying.
O the paining, O the torment.
You'll to-morrow hear the birds sing:
I shall never, I shall never.

Melfort. She is fading, melting, dying,
Melting, turning into water.

Evaïd. Hush, hush, hush, hush;
I am dying, I am dead.

*

The Dawn-Wind. Sisters of the field awake,
Sweet children of the meads and rills
And of the wind-blown hills,
Flowers, little flowers!
O you that sleep in slumber deep,
Kissing and turn'd together
Between the sheltering heather,
Awake!
For the day-break.

Stars. Behold, the silver dawn is here,
Pearling the east with a light clear.
Our watch is ended; let's begone;
The sun will follow soon anon.
Say, brothers, went your watching well? . . .
All's well, all's well.

Melfort. I wake! why, have I slept?—I hear
The fine shrill clarion of the cock.
I am alive then. O sweet Dawn,
Pearl of the sky, that makest clear
The old grey steeple in the east,
Wash from my soul this terrible night.
I breathe, I live; the air is pure.

50

51

*A boy sleeps on the wooded bank of a small river running
out upon the seashore. A night in spring.*

Oberon. Well met by starlight, my Titania.

Titania. For thrice a hundred years we have not met!

Oberon. But drug'd by some mad magic have drowsed away
Three centuries in a night.

Titania. The charm is broken.

Oberon. Thee in a crystal-cavern'd isle that weeps
Embargo'd on the bosom of a lake,
It caught in slumber mid thy maiden fays;
And in a blasted, bent, and strippen willow,
Pleading his bleach'd bones over a festering pool
In a black forest, me; and all our train,
So wont to win the air on wanton wings,
Imprison'd in the caves of bears or boles
Of mouldy oaks, in age-long lethargy—
Half dead, but for their beating hearts, that fright
The furry denizens dwelling there.

Titania. And so
The stars have spill'd their silvery beams in vain,
Teeming the flowers' chalices with light,
But not for us; nor have we ever heard
The tree-top throstle clarioning the Spring.

Oberon. But million'd men, rid of our sooth control,
Like chattering magpies in a frozen field,
Or eyeless emmets pestering in the mire,
Have fought for foolish gods, and furrow'd earth,
And fed the sea, or sop'd the soil with blood,
All about nothing.

Titania. Who strew'd the spell? Some Sage?

Oberon. Rather some fool! For fools, 'tis writ, have power
To clamp the whole world in inviolate chains
Whene'er they wish!

Titania. O dreadful law! But say,
My love and king, what curst particular fool
So persecutes us?

Oberon. First the fool who made
God in his own image, and pent us up
A hundred years; and then a lower lown
Who taught us, all are equal; and a third,
That every raff should have his rights. Between them
Two centuries more they thrall'd us. Such the woe
When meddling men made Heaven so and so,
And Folly like a fitful gale essay'd
To blow predestined ocean from his bed.

Titania. But so think I.

Oberon. Why then your creed prevails!
But it is scathless: fools are always males!—
So now that every sot has said his say,
Wisdom and we may get again our day,
To tell men if they live with love and mirth,
The earth is Heav'n indeed, and Heaven earth.
So, Fairies, come; and keep our old-time revel;
And let those ghosts go die to haunt the devil!

Puck. Hush, master! See a mortal lying near.
If he's a fool, perchance he'll overhear
And lock us up another hundred year.

Oberon. Go, then, my gentle Puck, and see
Who sleepeth there on yonder lea.

Puck. I vow, a truant boy from school,
And therefore not at all a fool.

Oberon. Be careful, friend, and do not err:
He may be a philosopher.

Puck. O, scarcely such a thing abhorrèd:

I see indeed he has a forehead.

Oberon. Perchance he is—'tis my suspicion—
A prophet or a politician.

Puck. I gather neither: for he's young,
And has not yet full-grown his tongue.

Oberon. A boy at midnight not abed,
Is either fairy-fain or dead.

Puck. I take the former—for he sleeps.
Three pennies in a pouch he keeps,
A mouse, a beetle in a box,
A candle, and some bits of rocks.
What's here? A diamond? No, alas,
Only a piece—of pure glass!
My lord, I vow by this I know it,
Here's not a fool, but but a poet.

Oberon. So then we're safe. Let him sleep on,
And ride from Troy to Helicon.

Titania. Once more we breathe the summer-sweeten'd air.
Night, and the still stars, and the world are fair.

Oberon. Immortal; and the grumbling clouds descend,
Mingle with mists upon the verge, and end.

Titania. Now wearied Winter, with her aged eyes,
Sunk on a drift of last year's dead leaves, dies;

Oberon. Earth opens, and green-spangling Spring leaps forth,
Laughing his warm breath to the unfrozen north.

Titania. Now even the airs of night are hot with balm,
That buds be heard uncurling through the calm;

Oberon. And o'er black banks of bryony and brier
White planets blaze like beacons guttering fire.

Titania. Now mystic, warm, the rich-enrobèd Moon
Foots forth the eastern meads on silvery shoon.

Oberon. The rushes in the stream she rings aglance,
Like Indian maids, with anklets for the dance.

Titania. And the new-budded trees, like laughing girls,
Step forth from night, attired in her pearls.

The MOON

Come all creatures of delight,
Beauty's brightest in the night.
I am Beauty, and I bear
Emeralds in my amber hair,
And a crystal gemmary
To adorn earth, air, and sea.
I am watching Wisdom too,
For, while others dream, I do;
Light the world to let men know
Where's the way for them to go.
I am Love, for I behold

All things ever and of old;
Stars with eager eyes, new-born;
Blind ones wandering forlorn;
Watch the evening, watch the morn,
Without envy, without scorn.
New things may be bright or dull;
Only old things, beautiful;
Ever changing, aye the same,
Still I bear my orbèd flame—
Embers of thick fire won
From the planet-scarfèd Sun.
They that utter brightness burn;
Happier we who bear the urn;
So, content, I follow him,
Happier, lovelier, though more dim.

SAPHENIX

See now how the Fairies rise
From all parts of earth and skies,
Like a throng of fire-flies;
Boasting Elves of full thumb-size;
Stately Sprites with minuets

Frightening field-mice into fits;
Nadir-Gnomes who mushrooms bear
To screen off the starlight-flare;
Lissome light-bathed Ariel
Kissing modest Pimpernel;
Puck, the mischief-monster too,
Putting stones in Phœbe's shoe;
Kings of Rats and Mice are here;
Kings of Insectdom appear;
Emperor Moth the air doth skim,
Blundering Beetle following him;

Gulping Frogs and long-ear'd Crickets
Croak and chirp in grass and thickets:
While beneath the nether world
Sol's asleep with large wings furl'd—
Oft his glowing form supine
Having bathed in star-dew wine.

Rout of FAIRIES Dancing

Our mistress is the Moon;
The glow-worm gives our firing;
About, about, with song and shout
We dance all night untiring.

The cricket keeps the treble;
The midge he blows the horn;
The beetle drums his droning base;
The frog croaks all forlorn.

The frog forlorn's a lover—
He loves the changing Star;
We kick his kibes and dig his sides,
But still he loves the star.

Tulik, tuluk! in measure
We stamp the sliding air,
And when we're hot we drink the dew
The cupped grasses bear.

And when we're plagued with dancing,
We clap for mischief all:
We put the beetle on his back
And laugh to see him sprawl;

We catch the dullard mothling,
And lay him clods among;
And if he sham a silly death,
Roll out his curling tongue;

We draw the pricking spear-grass
Across the drunkard's nose;
We cuff the dangle daffodil
And kick the rueful rose;

We make the peevish night-gnat
Pipe on his thin bassoon;
We catch the hairy flitter-mouse
And fly on's back to th' moon.

Our queen is dress'd in spangles,
Our king with a butterfly's wing;
We are the boldest fairy-folk
That ever danced in ring.

The RILL

From the grass, hear me;
Pause nor pass, but hear me;
I'm the rill that turns the mill
With a will under the hill,
Tinkling all the day and all the night.

But no one regards me,
Many a one retards me;
Flowers bend towards me;
But no one rewards me,
Though I labour all the day and night,
Working still with a will,
Turning the mill under the hill,
Tinkling all the——

59

Puck. Pray be still;
You sing ill; we've had our fill,
And brook no singers here who're out of sight.

PUCK and an ELF

Elf. I am the strong Gogogginbras.

Puck. What midget ronyon this? Whence come,
Thou pippin pip?

Elf. From hanging gnats
By th' neck, I come, fat wurzel king.

Puck. What, cobbold, crack your fleas i' my face!
Speak, or you troll the trenchers round,
And supperless serve where you would sit.

Elf. Why then, in thick and throaty words
I'll tell my tale, so rot the heav'ns.

Puck. So rot you too, you atom ouphe.

Elf. Deep in a forest of fell grass
A black and felon ant I found——

Puck. Fit foe for you.

Elf. With cunning base,
He gript me by the breeks behind.

I, not in quick distraction lost,
Made seizure of his armour'd throat
With the left gauntlet; with the right,
Feeling to where mine urgent blade,
Yclept by fame Yglaramene,
Slapt at my sinewy thigh, I drew it,
And flasht it in the pensive Moon.
Record me now what then befell!
The sickening stars waxt pale with fear;
The moon, tost in a sea of clouds,
Was nauseate; and the giant hills
Lookt and shock-headed grew with fright;
Eyed meteors stood in air dissolving,
And blankly stared themselves to nought;
The horrent trees, pencil'd with fire,
Agued, shook down their dewy wealth;
The bat and screech-owl whirring clasht
In mid-air; exhalations thin,
In which the mad fires dance at night,
Wasted; from stream and shimmering pool,
The fatling water-babies peept;
The wavering mazes that on lakes
Fairies do keep, the swinking toil
Of trolls within the ribbèd earth,
Were ceased when my mad falchion blazed;
That, like the picking lightning, then
Smote the black dragon in his den.

Puck. 'Twas brave!—Now on yon peering puffball
Kneel and with daisy stalk I'll dubb you.
Rise up, Sir Goggamene.

Saphenix. See now!
Like lofty-clustering cloudlets bright and boon,
Good fairies climb to court th' enthronèd Moon;
But in the argent dark of shadowèd earth,
What evil elves emerge to moil our mirth.

The FEN-FIRES

Jack-o'-Lantern. Good-night t'ye, brother. What's afoot?
How many dudheads have ye got?

Will-o'-the-Wisp. A many million is my quot.

Jack. What is your fire?

60

Will. I brew it hot
 From politicians' reek and rot,
 Who call me Fairy Lot-for-Lot.
 And I bear it in my chafing-dish
 That all may have whate'er they wish.
 If mortal wants what he has not,
 He chases others who have got;
 And so indeed I drown the lot,
 Like gasping gudgeons in a pot.

Jack. For me, I bear a nobler flame,
 That crowns me King in Heaven's name.
 Whene'er I call, each patriot
 Follows me forth to die and rot;
 And mortals call me Shot-for-Shot.
 Ho, ho!

Will. So, so! Let's join the dance.

The Dance of the FEN-FIRES

Round about and in and out
 The rushes dark and damp—O!
 We dwindle and bloat; on mischief we gloat;
 We frisk and frolic and flicker and float,
 With our shimmering, glimmering lamp—O!

Ho, ho!

Whence do we come?
 From foetid marsh and miry slum.

Our mischief whom deceives?
 Boors and their belly'd beeves:
 These it deceives.

They die by the dying Moon,
 Behind the moaning shallows;
 The weak winds creak and croon

Above them in the shallows;
 But we care not a jot for the floundering lot!

Ho, ho!

But in and out and round about
 Amid the rushy damps—O!
 We glisten and glance and prattle and prance,
 And over their bodies join hands and dance,
 From the centre retire and again advance,
 Like all the dull stars gone mad in a trance,
 With our bickering, flickering lamps—O!

Ho, ho!

But we hate the halloing wind.
 He hustles us and bustles us—
 We hate the harrying wind.

Song of the SOUTH WIND

I am the Madcap Breeze
 That wakes the Summer Seas
 From sullen slumber into froth and ripple;
 And I bring the bumper showers
 For the banquets of the Flowers,
 And laugh to see them bib the brimming tippie.

I pipe my merry staves
 Unto the surly Waves,
 And whistle as I walk the green sea-furrows;
 And I rough his feathery jowl
 To mock the moody Owl,
 And moan to fright the Coney in his burrows.

I fill the Mariner's sails
 With quick but gentle gales
 Until the water wakes around his rudder;
 And I tell my rattling jokes,
 To the hearty old gay Oaks,
 And make the delicate lady Aspens shudder.

Though they may pout and frown,
 I laugh their chiding down,
 And kiss the coy Sea-Maidens in their caverns;

But I pull the Mermen's hair
Until they swap and swear
And swill their rage off in the deep sea-taverns.

In ivied casements I
Make pattering minstrelsy,
And I rock the puffed Mavis in his dreaming.
I ruffle the dozing trees,
And by their long locks seize
The felon mists from caked quagmires streaming.

When down sinks the Sun,
In a blue Cloud I run,
To cool the bubbling cauldron of his setting;
And I send a pearly haze
To brighten the Starry Blaze,
And veil the beauteous Moon in a silver netting;

Then earthward, downward, down,
I seek some tower'd town
To bear the barter of Love's sighs and praises;
But when Fen-Fires I descry,
I blow their flames awry,
And hustle them o'er the moors and marshy mazes.

PYNTHANIX *and* SAPHENIX

Pynthanix. So then the evil creatures fly!—
But tell me, gentle sister, why?

Saphenix. For Evil hath but a single eye,
And cannot see but only spy;
If others with two eyes come near,
Away he scuttles full of fear.

Pynthanix. I thank you for advice to hand,
Which even I half understand.
But tell me now who sleeps below
In silver star-beams dreaming so?

Saphenix. Who has no cash can always owe it;
And who no wit, become a poet.

Pynthanix. But why do the gnat-wing'd fairies peer
About him, whispering in his ear,
Or lightly dancing round him weave
Their revels?

Saphenix. For he can achieve
Perfections others scarce conceive.

Pynthanix. And why do glow-worms so surround him,
Like stars of blue fire that have found him?

Saphenix. For so within a single spark
He gathers the glory of the dark.
But now the Great Change cometh—hark!

Pynthanix. What Spirit this that cleaves the air
With lightning eyes and streaming hair!

The SPIRIT

Wake!
Ye Sleepers, awake!
Hear ye not the far symphonic swell
Of the Starry Choirs?

Saphenix. Hark, listen, hush!—the distant swell
Of the Starry Choirs,
Whose flickering fires
Do candle the abyss to deepest hell,
The while to Heaven
Their incense-fumes are given!

The STARS

Ev'n as we from highest heaven,
All things witness and be wise;
Great is he who much hath striven;
Joy and Toil together rise;
Heroes, gods, and visions golden

Throng before the earnest eyes;
Stars may be by thought beholden
E'en through common daylight skies.

Saphenix. And hark now, ere the dim dawn breaks
Each drowsy flower a moment wakes
 And sings her tiny strain;
Then sinketh into sleep again.

The FLOWERS

Still, O still, O still and ever
 Fill with joy and drink the wine.
All may pall, but beauty never;
 When love dies life doth decline.
Let us bend like guardians o'er thee,
 With our full lips kissing thine;
Thought alone is worthless for thee;
 Buds about thy heart entwine.

Pynthanix. See, see, the Spirit that clove the air
With lightning eyes and stormy hair,
His mission done and soaring far,
Hath now become the Morning Star!

Saphenix. The clouds grow clear in the east, and high
The pearl of dawn o'erspreads the sky.

The LARK

Wake! Wake!
I spy from my eyrie up here in the sky
That Night the old Beldam is turning to fly—
 Wake! Wake!
With her crutch and her cloak and her movable eye.
 Wake! Wake!
Her raiment of darkness is tatter'd and torn:
She weeps as she creeps away, old and forlorn;
The Gods in their chariots o'er whelm her with scorn;
And the Stars on their cloud-thrones are praising the Morn.

The COCK

Wake! Wake!
That impudent plagiarist always must try
To imitate me, like a cock of the sky.
All night for your safety my vigil I've kept,
While you, my dear spouses, so quietly slept—

The HENS

What kindness, what sacrifice, wonderful bird!

The COCK

All night for your safety my slumber I scorn;
Now when I would utter my ode to the morn
He mimics my melody with his fog-horn.
 Wake! Wake!
I spy from my eyrie up here on this heap
That I am myself and the world is asleep.

The ASS

The style of these birds is too fine for to-day;
I see I must waken the world with my bray.

The PIGS

All night we have starved—not a crust, not a crum
And lain awake thinking of breakfast to come;
If we grunt all together, perhaps we'll get some.

The HUNTER

I spring from my bed like one from the dead,
I leap from my lair like the fawn;

The still stars are flashing their fires overhead,
And lo the white light of the dawn.

I rise from my dreams to plunge in the streams;
I run in the rainbows of dew;
I bathe in the wind and the warm sunbeams,
And drink of the light of the blue.

I am strong, I am wise; there is fire in my eyes;
My thews are of marble and blood;
I am that that I am, whate'er may arise;
I am Might, I am Man, I am God.

The PHILOSOPHER

Still weary, I wake to watch the dawn break,
Victorious o'er all unawares;
For wisdom is born 'twixt the night and the morn
On the lips of the passionate stars,
As they faint at the gray pale face of day
Peering through cloudy bars.

With my hands so old I gather the gold
Of the flowers around me spread;
For every one is sprouted and spun
From the bones of a wise man dead;
And I plant them again with wisdom and pain,
Until they be perfected.

I am weak, I am old, but I gather the gold
From the sifted sands of the sod,
To crown man a king over everything
On a pinnacle yet untrod;
And when I have done then Heaven is won:
I am Mind, I am Man, I am God.

(The Sun rises with a thunder-clap of light.)

The SUN

From the throng'd and thick world under,
I arise with step of thunder.
Through the mantle of my fire,
Through my flaming locks of hair,
Glow the form that all desire,
But more bright than they can bear;
For although I make men see,
None can dare to gaze on me.
Whether I rise in fire or blood,
Mortals hail me lord or god.
Then, before my battling knees,
Bubbling boil the surging seas,
And the clouds are writhing brent
By my fiery chastisement.
With my right hand held on high,
I let Life, the Angel, fly;
With my left, I grip and quell
Death, the Old Man, drag'd from hell.
But ye men, who bow so low
At my gorgeous orient, know
That for ever in chains I go.
I am lord for I am slave;
Conqueror because I save;
Master for I must obey;
God because I burn away.
Though my lordly planets pace,
Peers before my sovran face,
In them every grain of sand
Governs me with like command.
So within my empery,
Only he who serves is free
And shall win the victory.

The Boy awakes

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Transcriber's Notes:

Punctuation has been corrected without note. Other errors have been corrected as noted below:

Page 18, As venemous-narrow'd as a ==> As [venomous](#)-narrow'd as a

Page 19, You are at tremble. ==> You are [atremble](#).

Page 70, is by ar the most ==> is by [far](#) the most

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