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1894

AN UNHISTORICAL PASTORAL
(Glasgow, 1877)

PERSONS

Alardo, King of Belmarie.
Rupert, Alardo's Son.
Conrad, }
Guido, }
Felice, } Nobles of Belmarie.
Bruno, }
Torello, }
Cinthio, Conrad's Son.
Sebastian, a Sea-Captain.
Scipio, }
Ivy, } Rustics.
Green, }
Celio, a Shepherd.
Oberon.
Puck.
Eulalie.
Faustine, Guido's Daughter.
Sylvia, a Shepherdess.
Onesta, Faustine's Maid.
Martha.
Titania.

A Servant.
Fairies.
Mayers.
Officers.

Scene: Belmarie.

In Grenade, at the siege had he be
Of Algesir, and ridden in Belmarie.
Chaucer.

AN UNHISTORICAL PASTORAL

ACT I

SCENE I.—The Sea-Coast.

Enter Alardo and Conrad.

Alardo. Safe, sound, on land, and our own land at last.
How long, Conrad, have we been seafarers?

Conrad. On our disastrous and untimely cruise,
In early spring we merrily embarked.
The trees are greener now than when we sailed,
More softly breathes the air: my lord, I think
About this time last year our ills began,
A honeymoon on ocean's breast gone by.
If I be right—for judgment here is wide,
Since in escapes from icebergs, pirates, perils
Of krakens, quicksands, bloody cannibals,
Storms merciless, and nights of many days—
The married life of those who wed the deep—
All reckoning was lost—hoar, dotting time
Repeats the seasons' epic where our ears
Ceased to attend the world-old history,
One year's discordant interlude between.

Alardo. Well-tempered discord strengthens: if my son
Be but alive and well, life's music glides
In sweeter, richer cadence for this crash.
If in deep ocean's unrobbed tomb, or white
And all unsepulchred, on some bleak coast
His bones lie withering, discord is the theme
Shall din my hearing to eternity.
Do you remember when the envious wave,
Begrudging me so beautiful a boy,
With swift abduction snatched him from the poop,
And swept him from our ken? Mind you his cry
That pierced the howling storm, nor through that shield
Did with a gentler wound transfix our ears?
Saw you his begging hand finger the air,
Then vanish, lastly visible of him?

Conrad. 'Tis deeply graven in my memory.

Alardo. Ay, as a moving picture's strong impress;
But I was of it—you, a looker-on.
I watched the sneaking waves, the subtle waves,
The sly, the pitiless, the sinewy waves,
Swarm from the cuttle-sea like suckers lithe,
And steal my son to feed its hungry maw.

Conrad. Indeed, my lord, not to that tongueless grief
Which seized you then, and held you captive long,
Was I prisoner; but I sorrowed both
For your bereavement and my own past lost.

Alardo. O, you, too, mourn a son!

Conrad. In infancy
One was reft from me.

Alardo. Blessed then are you
That know him in Elysium; but I
Have no sweet sunshine gleaming through my tears.
I would not have mine dead e'en to gain heaven;
But life may now be hell: on yon rude shores
Near which we drifted when my son was lost,
They say that human fiends cavern to prey
On hunted ships the tinchel-waves drive in,
Torturing the voyagers for ransom; some
Transporting slaves to burning Afric climes:
Each imaged pang impales my inmost heart.

Conrad. I said my loss was past, yet, in a sort,
I suffer fresh bereavement every day;
And might with uncurbed fancy harrow up,
As you do yours, my fatherly regard,
But that it boots not to imagine ill,
Where equal chance shows good luck may betide.
My child was lost or stolen, drowned or devoured,
I brood not which; but, in most hopeful mood,
Think soon to see him well; more sluggish thoughts
Would joy to find him any how or where:
And so, piecemeal, my hope is back repulsed
To find content in sure news of his death.

Alardo. Was it a while ago your son was lost?

Conrad. Full fifteen years; his age, one half that sum.

Alardo. Fifteen unsevered years may cool me too,
But grief and I are fresh and all uncloyed;
We drain the utmost sadness that we can.

Conrad. I bore grief just so passionate a love;
But long before you slight her as I do,
Doubt not that dear joy will seduce your heart:
Your quick-found son will give her to your arms.

Alardo. How did you lose your son, good Conrad, say?

Conrad. Indeed I cannot. One soul-sickening night
Nowhere was he discovered. Every haunt
Where curious childhood oft had wandered him
Appeared as wistful for his sight as we;
The mourning echoes called with us his name.
He was my only son—Heaven grant he is!

Alardo. For you conjecture had an airy stretch,
And hope full complement of anchors strong;
My thoughts are hedged, my only grapnel drags.
Your son was lost from vague remembrance; death
Plucked mine with bony grasp from out my eyes.
Seven years you had a son; and twice that term
Has tamed your sorrow's force: my Rupert's eyes
Had viewed a score of summers: by this count
A century should see me bow to fate;
But I'll be traitor till death vindicate
The all-commanding rule of destiny.

Conrad. Permit me, sir: such is your present thought.—
Holds your intent to travel in disguise
Thence to our court: to hear what rumour goes
Concerning us; toward you what mind is borne;
To note your subjects' state; with parent's care
To mark what merits praise, what needs reproof,
And understand the country's inmost soul?

Alardo. I purpose so. Our lives, however short,
And full of toil, have time enough for grief.
Yet stay, my lord: here comes one who shall tell
Which is the pleasantest, most peopled way.
In him, moreover, we will broach the fame
Of our long ventures in a time so brief.—

Enter Cinthio.

Sea-bred or inland, friend?

Cinthio. A shepherd, sir.

Conrad. Where are we, gentle shepherd, by your voice,
And who reigns here?

Cinthio. In Belmarie, not far
From court, kind stranger, where no courtiers be.
This country's king was lost a year ago:
Yet in a longing hope he is not dead,
The heir-apparent but a regent's power
Decreases to exercise for twice four years.
When that date is expired, if no king come,
The prince intends to fill his father's room.

Alardo. His father's, say you? [Aside.] Have I then two sons?
This shepherd dreams.

Cinthio. Yes; King Alardo, once
Of these broad realms; now, king in heaven, I wot.
Even as earth's bower-maid, Spring, in robes of green
Her naked lady, roused from winter's sleep,
Began to deck, five galleys, new-built all,
With sails of taffeta, and masts of gold,
Pushed from this strand bound on adventures far,
The king, his son, and many a noble knight,
With mariners and fighting-men aboard.
Of this armada not a single ship
Has yet returned to us; nor any spar
Of drifting wreckage tells a woeful tale.
The gallant prince right from his father's eyes
Was hurried in a storm, and, blest by fate,
Snatched from that doom which overwhelmed the rest;
For he was washed ashore and nursed to health
By fisher-folk, whom he has made his friends.
And now he has forsaken courtly state
To live in country freedom for a while;
In Dolorosa's vale he spends the spring.

Alardo. And what road must we take to reach this place?
[Aside.] I dare not credit him, or else his tale
Is true of some impostor.

Cinthio. Onward go,
Until that pine-straight pathway radiates
Two branches from its stem, extending still:
That shooting westward winds a mile or two,
And ends in our royal town; the other way,
Toward sunrise, leads to Dolorosa's vale.

Alardo. Thy kindness, shepherd, merits some reward;
But now our purses are as lank as we.
Rest you assured of worthy recompense
From me in Dolorosa.

[Goes out.]

Conrad. If my old eyes
Deceive me not, I've seen you, sir, before.

Cinthio. Maybe, sir; though I, witting, ne'er saw you.

Conrad. [Aside.] I'll question him again.—Shepherd, farewell.
[Goes out.]

Cinthio. What lordly wight was this, who, seeming poor,
Would fee a duteous courtesy? He hides
His beams behind a ragged cloud perhaps.
I'll hope to see him in his majesty.

Enter Sebastian.

I came to see you, captain and good friend.
When do you sail?

Sebastian. When we have made an end
Of lading, and have shipped a proper crew;
Perhaps two days hence. How may this touch you?

Cinthio. Now you impeach my friendship to speak so;
For I would come, and this full well you know,
To clasp my loved Sebastian on the strand,
And drop a tear upon his parting hand,
And fill his sails with breath of heart-felt prayer
To waft him back, outspeeding swiftest air,
Even while his barque degrades into eclipse
Behind the bulging world, as Phoebe slips,
Slackly and slow, over the ocean's rim,
When stars grow bright, and seas and hills grow dim.
But hark, Sebastian, give me careful heed:
Your often-proffered help I sorely need
To aid me in an enterprise of note.

Sebastian. They all are yours—myself, my men, my boat.

Cinthio. Is there, far distant from the sea's highway,
Unwatched by any eye save that of day—
Or if perfection lights unreasoning eyes,
By gentle beasts, and birds of paradise—
A coral isle, old nature's best-loved child
And latest offspring, nursed by waters wild—
Tamed in that nurture—to rare loveliness,
Whose witchery creates a sweet distress;
An islet Venus might have made her home,
Even as, love-mad, she blossomed from the foam;
Where lovers may beneath a bread-fruit tree
Repose on bedded flowers, by harmony
Of birds and waters lulled to slumber deep;
And by like sounds be roused to waking sleep,
To feed upon their couch's canopy,
And watch what may appear with dreamy eye,
Stirring no limb, save for their gentler ease,
For ministry of love, or what they please?
Methinks you told me once of such a gem,
Descried unsought; or is it my own dream?

Sebastian. In stress of storm I found it: tempest-driven
I took the first port, and I lit on heaven.

Cinthio. This isle's felicitous, Edenic state
Lacks of perfection, eyes to appreciate;
These are within your office to supply:
What better watchers than Faustine and I?
O, there's the direst need of flying far!
That envious, and most inveterate star
Whose wanton spite is spent in thwarting love
Has chosen us for signal harm; we strove
Against disaster, but are hemmed to this,
Either to fly, or die upon a kiss.

Sebastian. To die upon a kiss?

Cinthio. Or kiss and die;
For Faustine is a maid of lineage high;
A foundling, and a vulgar shepherd, I.
Her sire's a lordly wight of sternest mould,
Who guides his life and hers by precepts old.
He trains his child in crude simplicity,
That ignorance may foster modesty;
Gives her free scope—in gardens and parterres,
With dowagers and hoary aunts for feres;
So jealous of his name, so mean his measure
Of all feminity, her honour's treasure
He will not trust to any common guard,
But in the night, before her door is barred,
He hides—unchristened trick!—that cloudy dress
Wherein by day her sun-bright nakedness
She mercifully veils from mortal eyes,
To hinder, as he trusts, all enterprise,

Such as we purpose with the treacherous aid
Of that twice-suborned spy, my lady's maid;
Which, with your help, we've sworn to amplify,
Or on an everlasting kiss to die.

Sebastian. Yet wherefore fly to such a far-off isle?
Unbroken time to love, and nature's smile,
With safety unmolested, you may reach
Upon some neighbouring and less dangerous beach.

Cinthio. We have solaced our souls with hope of bliss
In that far isle; not there, then paradise:
Being bound for heaven, not storms, not rocks can fray us,
Yea, dreadless death more swiftly would convey us.

Sebastian. Then nothing moves you. Yet, take tent and think:
They need not drown who still stand on the brink;
And let me tell you, if I rightly deem,
These isles are all as fragile as they seem;
Strong as the spider's web, the poor fly's tomb,
Fixed as the rainbow on a crest of foam,
Stable as any luring bright mirage,
Torn into ribbons by the ruthless wind,
Whelmed by the multitudinous waves' wild dash,
Gone like a dream leaving no trace behind.

Cinthio. If you, my best Sebastian, bear us hence,
We'll prove this doctrine by experience.

Sebastian. Its truth will be expounded by th' event.
Must all things fit that you may sail to-night?

Cinthio. Not until after midnight, for our flight
Must be with stealth, and cautious management.

Sebastian. Love's gentle goddess prosper your intent!
Two hours past night's dark noon I'll meet you here.

Cinthio. Farewell till then.

Sebastian. Farewell, and no ill fear.
Of what I said, dissuading, have no care:
Blow high, blow low, we this adventure dare.
[They go out separately.]

SCENE II.—*Dolorosa. A Room in Guido's House.*

Enter Alardo, Conrad, and Guido.

Alardo. Thus thrice am I the father of one son:
By ordinary geniture and birth;
And by my son's deliverance from death—
Yea, resurrection, for I held him dead;
And now experience within these months
Of our forlorn and shipwrecked wanderings
Has moulded him into a goodly youth,
Refined and brilliant in all inward beauty:
Witness his conduct in the regency:
What prince had nailed such shackles on his power,
Or fixed his bondage for so long a term,
Simply for love of his sire's memory,
Seeing that hope of life there could be none?
This is a certain new-birth; for I feared,
By some hot coltish springs his blood had fetched,
That, boiling high, it might sad trouble brew;
And partly 'twas to coy his restive sprite
I planned that voyage whose conclusion
Had such ill opening, and ends so well.—
Now, heaven forgive my selfishness! Guido,
Go, send out messengers on every coast.
It could not well bechance that we alone
Of all our ship's crew should be now dry-shod:
Yea, and indeed it would be marvellous,
That of five vessels in the self-same track,

Four should be swallowed wholly by the deep.
Bid all the mariners who leave our ports
To pass no ship unspoken they may spy:
We have escaped, so may those who remain:
Till they are landed safe, and not till then
Will I take heart to laugh. Go quickly, sir.

Guido. Your grace's mandate needs no issuing,
For penalties have been already paid
By those who disobeyed the prince in this.

Alardo. He does anticipate our utmost wish.

Guido. He is, sire, a right slip of the old tree
We know well whence his rosy graces spring;
Yet, if you should be pricked in finding out
Among these flowers a thorn, be not surprised.

Alardo. Be not so emblematic, trusty Guido.

Guido. I do not, sire, asperse your dead queen's fame
But she was mother to our noble prince;
Now queens are women, and all women are
But women——

Alardo. 'Tis most true; and spades are spades.
Guard well your tongue. Proceed, sir, and be brief.

Guido. Pardon, your majesty. You are too quick:
I meant not as your jealousy conceives:
But I will stake my head none of their sex
Are better than their sphere of life requires:
This is their utmost character for good.

Alardo. Come, we have heard your doctrine many a time:
And, by the way, how does your vestal daughter?
Still in her cloister mewed from eyes profane?
But without more digression, Rupert's fame
Seems by your blazoning a little blurred.
Record me how a bend sinister comes
To blot the fair field of his character.

Guido. Being a woman's son, unstable motion,
The loose stone in his virtue's strong rampire,
Threatens a downcome to its battled front;
For he pursues with lewd desire or love—
Both in this case disastrous to a prince—
A maiden of the very humblest strain,
Who, by her beauty's unassisted charms,
Or these and spells of necromantic art,
Has found his weakness: this did I smell out
When his companions' younger noses failed.

Alardo. That's not so well; but being a man's son
The youthful blood that warmed his father's veins,
Now briskly runs in his. We'll find a bit
To stay its galloping, or suasion soft
To woo it from from such skittish practices.

Guido. Please it your highness, now to tell me why
I have been honoured first to taste the joy
Of your long-prayed-for presence in your land,
Rather than to delight at once your son.

Alardo. I doubted that he was no son of mine,
But some impostor. 'Twas a foolish fear
With hope twin-born by information scant
That there was cause to hope; so, thinking well
That should I rush to this youth unadvised
The fear would like a hated step-child fare,
And passion nurse the longed-for hope alone,
I wisely verified report in you.
Now, use your wits; devise some plan whereby
I may, myself unknown, confer with Rupert.

Guido. to-day a custom, ancient, all-observed,
But savouring in my mind of pagan rites,

And unbecoming folk of Christendom,
Is followed by our sheepish villagers,
Who in their day and generation act
What by their ancestors has been performed,
In timely order tumbling in the ditch
Some silly, old, bell-wether age first filled.
to-day our youth are met upon the green
To plot a treason licensed by the time,
Which is, to choose a king and queen of May
To reign to-morrow and each holiday;
To whom, alone, they shall allegiance swear
At every festal season of the year.
There Rupert courts his lovely, well-loved quean,
Who will be crowned, if I guess rightly, queen;
And he, most like, so highly throned by birth,
Will reign their monarch on a seat of earth.
In some disguise conceal your royalty;
Go there; inspect your son, and be as free
As though you wore no mask: every degree
Has access to him in this pageantry.

Alardo. A very feasible and pleasant plot.
Come, Conrad, comrade us: since by our lot
Comrades we have been for so long a spell
In danger and in woe, it chords right well
That we be still in unison for joy;
You saw me lose, behold me find my boy.

Conrad. I will, my lord.—Vouchsafe to call to mind
My dead wife's image.

Alardo. Strange! I am inclined
To think of her full oft within these hours.
I see her now, of many lovely flowers
That graced our youthful court the loveliest;
My sweet, her queen; she, queen of all the rest.
The shepherd whose direction helped us here—
'Tis he recalls your lady's pleasant cheer;
Her voice, her smile, her action, yea, her face,
Stronger, being male, as coy, to suit his place.

Conrad. He is, indeed, the picture of her youth.
Conviction now lacks nothing of the truth.
He'll be among those playful-treacherous ones,
Where let us haste to find two long-lost sons.
[They go out.]

ACT II

SCENE I.—A Room in Martha's House.

Enter Eulalie.

Eulalie. O little heart of mine, why ache you so?

Enter Martha.

Martha. Why, child, why! What a state is this! Come! and you to be
Queen of the May! They say Prince Rupert will himself be king.

Eulalie. And that it is that troubles me.

Martha. And so it should. Trouble! the highest lady in the land would
be so troubled—such a coil would she be in! What kirtle to put on; what
flower, or none; she'd spend six hours, I warrant, over her hair. Then her
stomacher, her kerchief, and her shoes; her sash, gloves, necklace, each
an hour apiece. But what's your trouble, child?

Eulalie. I do not know.

Martha. Who was it said just now Prince Rupert troubled her?

Eulalie. I think 'tis he; for when I first was told
That they would have me for their Queen of May
It pleased me as a new gown pleases me.

When Rupert's name was buzzed about for king,
My heart became a hive of busy things
That hum perplexingly: I know them not,
But fear they may have stings: that is my grief.
I cannot tell if it be joy or grief:
To grieve for joy were far more happily sad
Than ever I have been; if joy unmixed,
Then wherefore am I sad? 'Tis melancholy.

Martha. Melancholy! Why, child, I would laugh if thou didst not look
it. Come; I have that would banish melancholy from a mummy—a new flowered
silken dress and ribbons.

I'll dress thee and thou'lt be the loveliest queen
That ever led a dance upon the green.

[Goes out.]

Eulalie. The mood which I have christened melancholy
Is that, I think, which rules a lonely dove:

It wars with maidhood, yet is not unholy:

I'll rebaptize my melancholy, love:
With dropping tears of virgin purity,
Claiming its soul for spotless chastity.

Re-enter Martha.

Martha. Hurry! There's not a second, child, to spare;
Indeed it is high time that you were there,
Where all the village waits to make you queen;
And that is what your mother ne'er has been.
[They go out.]

SCENE II.—A Garden before Ruperts House.

Enter Felice and Bruno.

Bruno. Think you the Prince's present humour lasting?

Felice. Ay, while the relish smacks. This rustication
Is pleasant to him now, a dainty tasting
Of heather honey; lacking domination
O'er appetite, he'll gorge and surfeit soon
On country pleasures; sick of nature's sweet,
Of making hay, and gazing on the moon,
Of hearing kine low, wool-producers bleat,
Cocks crow, crows caw, doves coo, and goslings gabble,
Of all their junketing and rural sport,
Their ales, mays, harvests, songs and silly babble,
He'll hasten to the spiced and pickled court.
With all due reverence for mighty Pan,
Here's one who wishes we might leave to-morrow;
For, by my beard, I'll soon lose all the man
Hushing my wit, and suckling of that sorrow.
Bruno. I fear it much; mine is at least asleep:
Plague on these blowsy girls and brown-faced knaves,
Who rake their brains and set our jests astleep,
Distilling that which no refining craves,
Concentrating wit's subtle, quaint, quintessence.
In courtly spheres fat dullards feed fine lights;
But brilliant stars wane swiftly from their crescence
When doomed to shine among chaotic wights:
Too much damp fuel quells the strongest fire;
We perish of this plethora of faggots.
Felice. Respect has wrought a transformation dire:
We are dead dogs, these creatures are our maggots.
We, air imperial, burn in this gas,
Which once illumined us, its atmosphere;
I am a beast of burden; you, an ass—
Slaves, where before our lash was held in fear.

By heaven, our pates the jingling cap befits!
We are the clowns; the country louts, the wits.

Bruno. Here comes knave Scipio, the Prince's friend,
Stuck like a wild-flower in his love-lock's shade,
Replacing us, poor withered hothouse blooms.
We'll dust his livery with wordy strokes,
And in his own outspoken chaff deride him.

Enter Scipio.

Felice. By Jove, we will!—Come hither, Scipio. Master of wit, lord of a cabbage-bed, Knight of the cudgel, toady, knave, and clown, Beseech your mightiness to signify To us, your humble servants, what's o'clock? Scipio. The clock's hand points now to that very hour It indexed at the same time yesterday. Felice. Sirrah, you lie, because the clock's gone fast. Scipio. Then is it very adverse to your wit. Felice. And like to yours, for fast is loose: your wit Is dissipated, drunk; 'tis redolent Of sour ale and the smoke of tavern ingles. Bruno. That is as much as to say it is ailing, and lapped in inkle, in flannel. Scipio. Verily, it is ailing, in sore pangs of travail, having been impregnated by yours; yet will you hate your offspring. By the cock and the goose!—which is a Grecian oath, and very religious and philosophic—your wits are mad, stark mad: Democritus, with an acre of hellebore, could not cure them. Gentlemen, I can prove you the maddest fools out of your own mouths. Bruno. Indeed, we are out of our own mouths; for our mouths are within us; but I thought the foolishlest and most unruly member had been in the mouth. Felice. A fool expose fools! Let the blind lead the blind. Scipio. Nay; set a thief to catch a thief. But shall I advise you of your folly? Bruno. Wise men are silent when fools advise. Scipio. Well said; therefore shall I be silent. But no; for that would be for the wise man to follow the fool's advice. Sir, do you seek for anything? Felice. I seek for some ripe grain of wisdom in the desert of your brain. Scipio. And how much do you find? Felice. Not a stalk. Scipio. He is a fool who seeks that he cannot find; and you a superlative fool to seek in a wilderness, where you are jagged and torn by prickly briars, for what you believe cannot, without the miraculous intervention of Ceres, grow there. Pray, sir, do you seek for anything? Bruno. I seek nothing from you. Scipio. What an ass have we here, what a dizzard! He is surely the king of fools who seeks what, being found, will do him no good—namely, nothing: 'tis a folly worthy of that greatest of fools and criminals, old Nick Nemo. Bruno. And who may he be? Scipio. Do you seek to know? Bruno. Ay. Scipio. Then shall I not tell you. Bruno. But you shall, if he were the devil. Scipio. What? Jove help you! Are your wits entirely sublimed, and condensed on the cold sides of the moon like the melancholy bishop's? Now are you—I cannot say how foolish. You would seek to know the devil? O damned fool! who seek to know that which, being found, will do you more harm than good! Out upon you! out upon you! Felice. Fellow, do you seek for anything? Scipio. I seek for something, for something in a special way. I mean I do not seek for nothing; nor do I seek that which I cannot find; nor that which, being found, will do me more harm than good. Bruno, 'Twere a gospel to tell us what you do seek for. Scipio. Sirs, I seek to be rid of you; therefore, farewell. Bruno. This fellow must be whipt. Felice. For being witty? It is very true His words are fitted for the barest need, His jests being like himself, but scantily clad, Of aspect somewhat sour; but this I see Plain-speaking blunts much sharper wits than we. Bruno. I relish not such Spartan-tongued conversers. The Prince approaches, and in company.

Enter Rupert and Cinthio.

Rupert. Ah! do you jest with Scipio? Know him, friends,
A fellow of a right good stinging wit;
Who will not spare a king for sordid ends,
But utter all his mind whoe'er he hit.
This shepherd here is of a different sort;
His present speech will certify you so.—
Cinthio, my mistress is the sole resort,
And temple of the graces; in her grow
A spring of beauties; and Pandora's dower
By heritage she wears even at this hour.
Cinthio. I am a lowly youth, and love a maid
More high than I am low, and oh, so fair!
Her brow might lend the noonday heaven aid
To shine upon the world with richer glare;
Her eyebrows are twin rainbows; and her eyes
Peered suns, excelling all that ever shone,
For they illuminate bright red-rose skies
Of cheeks celestial with a day-long dawn:
Day being ended, scarcely night's blue veils,

Her fringed eyelids, can enshroud their beams:
Setting or rising radiance never fails
To mark their absence in the land of dreams.
Sweet cups of perfumed flowers her nostrils be:
No bees suck there; the odour makes them faint.
Her little chin is bent with dimples three
Beneath rich fruit her summer blood does paint
With brighter hues than apples on their trees:
Alas, to me they are forbidden fruit,
Dearer than apples of Hesperides,
And guarded by as dragonish a brute.
And when her lips do ope they show her teeth
Like pearly seeds in sliced pomegranate
Breathing an air that balmily agreeth
With that delicious fruit. O hapless fate,
That orchards up such dainties to be tasted!
Were I their keeper they should not be wasted.
Felice. Who may this wild hyperbolist be?
Scipio. A shepherd who feeds his sheep upon Parnassus. He gets
admission to the chimney-corner at the Castalian Inn, being very thick
with the Muses, and a minion of mine host, Apollo.
Rupert. In very sooth the damsel of your heart
Seems but a copy of my peerless love,
Fashioned by nature's self-admiring art,
Which yet has failed to equal what it strove,
My goddess' perfect, yet extempore, beauty:
Whereby this breathing picture, uttered now,
Far short, as you will swear—a lover's duty—
Of its exalted theme, must languish low
Beneath the high original I praise,
By two detractions of her copied grace.
Your miniature you finished with her chin;
Look you, where you desisted, I'll begin.
Her neck into her bosom coyly glides;
It have I never seen, but well I know
Beneath the little billowy bodice hides
Costlier treasure than the deep can show:
How white it is I cannot realise,
Because her hands are whiter than the snow
In sunny winters that half-blinds the eyes,
Vesting the swelling hills in satin so.
Her waist is fitting for so rare a maid;
Methinks it was not fashioned for an arm;
In whatsoever garment 'tis arrayed
Too dainty seems it for maternal harm.
The dimples of her cheek and of her chin,
The blue veins of her brow, her lashes long,
Her faultless arms, her fingers lithe and thin—
Sometimes a ring appearing them among,
Looks like the little golden coronal
Round which the petals of the lily cluster:
Her sloping shoulders, and her feet so small,
That hardly can sufficient courage muster,
Even in the circumlocutory shoe,
To show themselves in their entirety,
But like a maid's first love-thoughts from the view
Of her own eyes retire most trepidly.
The limbs above them! Hush, the moonlight pales
Before their splendour white as sunlight seems.
Her hair! The brightest imagery fails
To be a proxy for its rippling streams,
Like shimmering wavelets when the sun has set
Where his pale golden glory lingers yet.
When I am with her I need not to think;

For if she silent sit, or walk, or stand,
My faculties do altogether link
And chain my eyes upon her by command
Of her magnetic power; or if she speak
In tones that Mercury might imitate,
Or through her lips a sounding streamlet break
With rush of sweetest melody, create
Within the coral, pearled grotto of her mouth
In tones that Philomel could not surpass;
Then does deep hearing cause a summer drouth
In sense's welling founts, whose waters pass
Into the yawning ocean of my ears,
Entranced as by the music of the spheres.
Cophetua's bride was humbler than she is;
Yet is she humblest of the maids I know.
Mage Hymen will transmute girl to princess;
My empress love enthroned her long ago.
Scipio. I know this wonder.
Felice. Which the Prince praises?

Scipio. Ay. She is indeed a miracle. Her mother is a woman; and there are those who will swear she was once no higher than her grandam's armchair. It is reported that she eats when she is hungry; her liquor, too, most commonly runs down her throat. Rumour says she is of no kin to graymalkin, for without light she cannot see; yet can her eyes pierce a whinstone as woundily as another's: that she can hear in the night, when she has been known to sleep; that she is often stirring in the day; that when she talks, her organ of utterance is her tongue. Those who should know best will certify that her mouth stands across between her nose and her chin. But the oddest thing about her is her gait; for, look you, when she walks, as the old song goes, one leg or t'other will always be first. Lo, our shepherd has gathered the flock of his thoughts: listen, while he shall tell his tale.

Cinthio. No wealth, power, state, can I bestow upon her,
Who dowers me with herself—that trifles all.
I naught possess save unstained youth and honour;
But could I purchase it, hers were this ball.
Yea, to my queen the universe I'd give,
Fastening her zodiac-girdle with the sun,
Which from its fixture I would swiftly rive
By love's unrivalled power. This being done,
The moon I would assail, and, for a brooch,
Place it between the fair moons on her breast;
Nor would the ornament on them encroach
So pure are they. Nor would I then desist,
But gather all the stars out of their bowers,
And with the most magnate a carkanet
String for her neck; with other heavenly flowers
Bead for her richer hair a priceless net;
And ring her fingers, deck her little ears—
So like their homes, the stars would have no fears.

Scipio. Well said, shepherd! All the world on our side!
Nothing remains but hell.

Cinthio. Not even that; for she with piteous tears
Would quench its sulphurous flames.

Rupert. So it appears
There's naught beneath, on earth, in heaven above,
Remains for me to ornament my love.
And, truly, it needs not; for in her smock
She would outshine your star-bedizened dear.—
But lo, the mayers to the maypole flock!
I am resolved to live no more in fear,
But straightway hasten to that company
Where now my sweetheart is; move her aside;
Tell her I love her heartily and true,

And ask her to become my darling bride.

Then shall she murmur sweetly, 'I love thee.'

I'll kiss her then, and gaze into her eyes;

Appoint a near date for our union too,

And pray for sweet conjunctions in the skies.

[Goes out.]

Cinthio. Permit me, gentlemen, to part from you.

[Goes out.]

Bruno. Willingly, willingly.—A new rival.

Felice. Then is Scipio cut out too. Come, we'll be friends with him.—Scipio, do you know where the Prince is gone?

Scipio. Do I know what kind of beast a lover is? Does he not follow his mistress like a lamb to the slaughter? If she be in the mouth of hell, I warrant you'll find him in the jaws of death, and he be no nearer. The Prince is now upon his way to her.

Felice. And she?

Scipio. Is where he will find her.

Felice. Which is—?

Scipio. Whither I will bring you, if you be so minded; and on the road I will tell you how all the beauteous virginity and lusty bachelory of Dolorosa be even now assembled to choose a May-queen; how thereafter they will go to bed, and sleep till midnight; how they will then journey to the forest accompanied with music and blowing of horns, to gather may-blossoms and birchen boughs, and deck themselves with nosegays and crowns of flowers. What else they may do there I shall also hint at, specifying to what proceedings on the morrow these actions are prelusive.

Felice. Of all this the light of knowledge has revealed to us somewhat; but concerning Mademoiselle Eulalie, the Prince's sweetheart, we are in Egyptian darkness.

Scipio. Behold, her mother is a fisherman's widow, who in her poverty nursed the half-drowned prince, pinching herself and her daughter, who was, if possible, more willing to be starved than the unknown sick gentleman might have dainties. She has no gold but the gold of her hair; and no jewels save her eyes. If beauty be riches, her wealth is incalculable; moreover, it is safely lodged in the bank of health.

Felice. And the Prince, by legal usury, would increase her beauty if she would permit him.

Scipio. Even so. But there is another merchant in terms for this commodity, for such he would make her. He has more bushels of gold than stones of flesh, and more carnality than wisdom. He is as strong as a horse, but a most outrageous braggart, and little better than a coward. He makes great estimation of his personal appearance, and his figure would be passable enough were it not so bent with worshipping his calves. He dresses like a herald or a macer; and grows the eccentricities of fashion into absurdities, lopping such as by their generality have almost become beauties. This great monkey must needs fall in love with my dainty Eulalie; and finding, though he come before her as gaudy as a serpent, that he works no fascination upon her, he has betaken himself to other charms, and hopes to approach her in a shower of gold.

Felice. But she is no Danae, you would say; and that this would-be Jupiter will find. Now, what do you think? Shall we play some trick upon—what d'ye call him?

Scipio. Torello. By Jove, I would give something to see him taken down a peg!

Bruno. We'll peg him. We'll whip him about like a top.

Felice. Then let us, as we wend along, conclude some scheme to harm Torello for his good.

ACT III

SCENE I.—A Road.

Enter Felice, Bruno and Scipio.

Scipio. Yonder he is, puzzling over a paper. Neither of your lordships knows him? Felice. No. Scipio.

It is no wonder. Since he fell in love he affects a kind of bearish melancholy; secludes himself; feeds his passion on fish, and has gross dreams. It will take some angling to catch him, gudgeon and all as he is.

Enter Torello.

Good-day, sir.

Torello. Oh!—good-day.

Scipio. Here are two gentlemen of the Prince's court, who, their ears being infected with your absolute accomplishments, have been plagued by the unsatisfied desire of your acquaintance.

Torello. It is not the first time I have plagued my acquaintance. Gentlemen, who are you?

Felice. Felice is my name; my title, lord; my having, handsome; and my expectation, great.

Torello. O sir, my name is Torello; my figure is at least as handsome as yours; and my expectation is high and sure.—Your name, sir?

Bruno. My figure is as God made it; and my expectation ends in salvation.

Torello. Mine ends in matrimony.

Felice. You are he who loves Eulalie.

Torello. Here is a copy of verses, a sonnet to her. Will you read it? It will tell you.

Felice. Are they yours? Did you write them?

Torello. I scratched them down this morning.

Felice [reading]. My sweetest sweetening, once again I say

With no adornment, simply, 'I love you.'

You ask me for a mint of words mayhap:

I give you none save these, 'I do love you,'

In which is melted all my passion's gold.

Many a white plain have I deluged black

With overflowing, wordy, rhyming streams;

But I have found them all too weak, and so

I simply say and mean, 'I do love you.'

This is excellent.

You ask me why no tears bedim my eyes:

I answer, I have drained them dry already.

Better still.

You ask me why my cheek so rosy is:

I answer, that I keep my health for you.

O, admirable! This cannot fail to win her.

Scipio [aside]. He may have written it after all.

Torello. I will send it to her along with this string of pearls.

Scipio. If I might interest myself so far in your lordship's affairs, I would suggest that, having thus engaged the services of Plutus and Apollo, you now enlist under your love's flag the potent Hecate.

Torello. Ah! I shall consider your counsel.

Felice. It is good counsel.

Torello. Who's this Hecate?

Felice. She is a sorceress, and has her haunt in the wood. She will tell you how you are to discover that you are to marry Eulalie; and this certain knowledge of futurity, stranded with the verses and the necklace, will form a cable that draws her into your arms.

Torello. Into my arms! Let us visit Hecate at once.

Felice. It is too soon. She will not be approached till the moon is up.

Torello. Then come with me, and you shall see Eulalie. But, look you, I will not make her known to you. [Aside.] She knows too many men already.

Felice. It needs not: we will know her by her beauty.

Torello. Ay; but you must not speak to her.

Felice. How if she speak to us?

Torello. Then must you be short in your answers, and by no means attempt to gain her favour; I would have her favour no man but me.

Felice. Fear not us. Courtiers know how to behave, and fishermen's daughters are excellent wenches.

Torello. They are most sweet wenches. Eulalie is a most sweet

fisherman's wench.

Felice. How was he sweet? Did he do business in fresh water only?

Torello. What, he? You start from our subject. Come on, come on.

[Bruno and Torello go out.

Felice. It will work, I think.

Scipio. Assuredly. I know where to get such rig as will pass for a witch's. Bring him along to the place you wot of, and let chance guide our sport.

[They go out.

SCENE II.—An Open Space.

Beneath a hawthorn, Eulalie, garlanded; near her, Rupert, Felice, Bruno, Torello, and Scipio, standing together. Ivy and Green. Alardo and Conrad, dressed like soothsayers, among a crowd of Mayers beside a May-pole. Cinthio, apart.

Green. Prince Rupert shall our May-lord be.

Ivy. Well said!

Mayers. The prince, the prince!

Green [to Eulalie]. Fair queen, entreat the prince.

Eulalie. Be you our lord of May, most gracious prince.

I pray you pardon me if I be bold;

Being but a puppet-queen, my subjects' pupil,

I speak as I am urged.

Rupert. As you are urged?

You are their spokesman, merely?

Eulalie. Queen, they say,

But little more than their spokeswoman, sir.

Rupert. I mean, you are mouthpiece only for them.

Eulalie. Has any other, sir, petitioned you?

Rupert. You will not understand me. This request

That I should share with you May's flowery throne,

Is, say, the utterance of a hundred hearts,

Well-purged and sweetened to the May-queen's prayer,

And she, the hundred first, breathes only air.

Eulalie. Air, only air, prince, for these hundred hearts:

I speak for them; beseech you, be their king.

Rupert. The May-queen would not have me for her consort?

Eulalie. O yes, my lord, I would. My own heart's throbs

Are prayers beseeching you to take it all—

To reign, to tyrannise, to enslave, to kill.

My kingdom's conquered now and factious strife

Of modesty and love quelled and atoned

By your dictation; nobles and populace

Crown you, enthrone you, monarch absolute.

I pray you, speak not to me; I would weep.

The blush upon my cheek will hotly burn

Till flooding penitence has quenched its glow.

You are so pertinent an inquisitor,

Your eyes did burn my resolution through,

Your voice did drown me, and I cried for help.—

My lord of May, speak to the people, now.

[She leads him forward and goes out.

Torello [aside]. Now will I offer it to her. Oh! she has tears in her eyes. No; she must be in a merrier mood to think of love.

Rupert [aside]. Ay, lord of May, and lord of May again!

May-lord this year, lord of this May for aye;

Lord of this flowery season of love's bloom,

Lord of this flower of love, seasonably blown:

Prince am I—King, maybe, of Belmarie,

May-king, and king of sweet May Eulalie.—

Good friends, we thank you for this title new:

Its fresh addition gives us double power,

With which we join our queen's, two-fold as well,

Strong by your suffrage, by her beauty strong:
And in this combined and quadruple might,
We bid you be as merry as you may.

Let study, commerce, labour, for a time—
In truth, three woes—be counted sins in act;
Shame anger, malice, envy, every ill
Back to the devil with loud-laughing mocks;
Drink hail to liberty in rosy wine;
Happy your faces with continuous smiles,
And spend mirth's overflow in jest and song;
Forsake stone walls; re-live the golden age
Among the trees in sweetness and moonlight.

Mayers. We will, we will!

Rupert. Our May-queen gone!

Felice. She has retired to preserve her beauty.

Bruno. Ay, sir, to pickle it, to wash it in brine, to weep.

Rupert. Wept she, indeed?

[They talk apart.

Green. Is it not a noble prince?

Alardo. Truly he seems to be; but by this hue
We may not judge his nature's primal mood;
For princes, in their humours, are chameleons.

Ivy. Camellias, sir, are of different colours.

Our prince is of the spotless dye.

Alardo. Whitewashed—a sepulchre?

Ivy. Sir, do you speak well?

Alardo. Well; I hope I speak as well as other men.

Ivy. But do you mean well?

Alardo. By all means.

Green. For he who speaks ill of the prince here, had need to be his
bosom-friend, or a cur whom no one would waste a kick on.

Alardo. The prince must lie warm-covered in your hearts.

Ivy. You must be a stranger. Know, that this same Prince Rupert is
out of sight and beyond hearing the mightiest monarch in these parts. To
the nobles he is a most egregious tyrant; to the commons, a very brother.
But yesterday he addressed me by the damnations of knave and fellow: he
could not have been more familiar though he had been my own father, who
always calls me rascal. His good qualities are as contemptible as another
man's sins.

Alardo. Then, by your showing, worthy villager,
He is a very white crow of a prince.
But, tell me, is he not Alardo's son?

Ivy. His son, and successor. Indeed, I may say, he is his father, for
he, being without question dead, Rupert is king.

Alardo. Dead without question! You are positive.
How, if I say I know he is alive?

Think you to gain a sire the prince would choose
To lose so mighty and august a throne?

Ivy. Treasonless man! would you dethrone the prince? Ho! lechery and
faith! guard our good prince! His life's in danger.

Rupert. What cry is this?

Ivy. Great prince, it might have been a crying matter; but I, thank
the gods, have been man enough to stifle it.

Rupert. So you have turned approver: renegades I never trust; but
what have you to say?

Ivy. I will prove that this greybeard is the most noteworthy renegade
and trusty traitor these times have seen.

Rupert. Your language is too original for ordinary capacities.—What
are you, old man?

Alardo. A soothsayer.

Rupert. Is he affiliated in your trade?
His dress betokens that. What have you said
That this clod could construe as treasonable?

Alardo. I but suggested that your highness' sire

May yet be canopied by yon blue sky,
With no damp mouldering roof, or watery pall
Between him and the tabernacling air;
That you would joy at loss of sovereignty
To clasp Alardo in your arms once more;
Whereon this loyal sirrah bellowed out,
And laid on me officious needless hands.

Rupert. Ha! those of your profession are not wont
To talk at random even in courtesy.

Approach us nearer; we would speak with you.—

[To Ivy.] For you, sir—there: we pay your blundering faith.

[To Alardo.] Now, summon to thine aid thy powerfullest sprite;

Or if thy demon be unknown, and speed
All unappealed and unannounced, whether
He fly from heaven or mid-aerial limbo,
Subdue all motion and prostrate thy will,
Yea, let thy soul evacuate, that, void,
Thy genius may usurp its empty fane,
And prophesy with scope and native truth.

To question were to slight thy divination;

Therefore say sooth of all I seek to know.

Alardo. Two things by thee desired most

Cannot be thine: one must be lost:

One's forfeit is the other's cost.

Rupert. An oracle. Expound it now, good sage.

Alardo. Remember one, absent and dear;

Think of another, loved and near;

Their interests clash; their clashing fear.

Before the moon does twice upright

The dusky countenance of night,

It shall be past, this bosom-fight.

Rupert. I understand, and half believe, because
On an event so sudden and unlike

As that of King Alardo's re-appearance

Thou stak'st thy fame thus openly. Say more.

Alardo. No more to-day; I am dispirited:

And never twice 'twixt ruddy morn and morn

Are we with visionary prospect blessed.

Your eyes are on my comrade. Brother, speak.

Conrad. Nothing to you, Prince Rupert. There is one
Of lowlier state whom I have news to tell.

He yonder stands and broods with eyes downcast.

Rupert. Cinthio, hither and hear thy fortune told.

Alardo. Prince, I have converse for your private ear.

[They talk apart.]

Cinthio. Soothsayers and augurers of old were held
In high repute for dreams and prophecies.

Their star is waning now, their traffic being

Unto a race, better in being busy,

In barren, fallow fancy, how much worse!

Divine you from the stars, old man; or from

Men's shapes, complexions, palms, dreams and the like?

Scan you a mutton's clean-picked shoulder-blade,

Or have you any visionary aid?

Conrad. I'll tell thee truths about thyself thou know'st not.

Cinthio. Say on.

Conrad. Three lustres has this orb in heaven rung,

Swinging around its vast and vaulted bell

Of measured space, striking its own deep knell

From side to side, a huge and pendulous tongue,

Since thou, then five years' journey to thy grave,

Wast filched most vilely from a lordly home.

Thou shalt not, shepherd, twice Pan's blessing crave,

Morning and evening on thy flock; nor roam

Upon these hills beneath a twice-risen sun
Before thou find'st a father; he, a son.

Cinthio. A mutual treasure-trove. But by what sign
May I believe this bare assertion true?

Conrad. Beneath thy left breast is a crescent mole;
A flame has sealed a kiss upon thy cheek;
A gold chain quaintly wrought hangs round thy neck,
Hidden from every but the second sight.

Cinthio. By heaven, these things are so! Now, who art thou?

Rupert. Presumptuous, meddling fool! A plot, a plot!
Confess who bribed thee. Guido 'twas, I warrant.
Cinthio, what says the other?

Cinthio. He gives me
A noble father at no later date
Than sunset of to-morrow; vouching this
By nominating several private marks
About my body.

Rupert. So; well-planned, indeed!
Wretched dissemblers, bear these wrinkles hence,
That, being hypocrites, for age is wise,
Shame that which they betoken. Quick, begone!
[To Cinthio.] I'll tell thee more anon.—Stand not agape;
Be off, trudge, trot; away!
[Alardo and Conrad go out.]

Good, gentle mayors,
Retire home for a little; lightly sup;
Lightly to bed; at midnight, lightly up,
To welcome May, to banish worldly jars,
And wanton it like twinkling earthly stars,
Outpeering those who then will deftly tread
In joyous, maiden mirth, and all the night
About the pure moon, from whose dark blue bed
Her bower-maids singing sweetly-low aloud
To wake their queen, will, with soft, quaint affright,
Charily cast her coverlet of cloud:
Stars must we all be when shall be displayed
Our May-moon, Eulalie, earth's loveliest maid.
[Mayers go out shouting.]

Felice, Bruno, and Torello follow.

Cinthio. Was not this all too hurried, unripe, green?

Rupert. No; inconsiderate I have not been.
Grant what they prophesied of us should hap,
It proves no science in the heaven's great map,
Nor any other of unearthly mean:
Their boasted foresight is of things past seen,
And their informing spirits, my good lords.
Now, do you scent the plot? In fewest words;
Some certain knowledge of my sire and thine,
Some hint that I would make Eulalia mine,
The haughty stomachs and the fatuous brains
Of my high cabinet, have feared with stains
Upon our line to spring from Eulalie,
Upon their wisdom in permitting me
To have my bent; and so, to change my mind,
Which by their own they fathom, and to bind
Alardo to their penetrating wit,
They taught these two, dismissed, to tempt this hit,
Which, like a boomerang, returns to maim
The flingers, who have made an evil aim.

Cinthio. It seems to me this argument is lame.

Rupert. Lame! Had you heard yon dotard tackle me
About the marring of our family tree;
Predicting sad disaster, ruin, death,
O'erhanging state and king, which loosed by breath

Of vows yet to be sworn to Eulalie
Must thunder on us from the cloudy sky;
No fear of wrong would linger in your head,
No doubt would cripple what I now have said.
Or if I blame too widely, sure am I
'Twas Guido sent these rusty prophets here.
This daughter whom he keeps in turret high,
Making by rarity her beauty dear,
In solitude her soul unsullied blows;
And he upon her lofty virtue builds
A loftier castle than his wisdom knows:
He rushes in, disdainful highest guilds
Of Belmarie's nobility, to mate
His daughter with its prince, himself to make
Most potent minister in all the state—
His prince's king, mayhap, for Faustine's sake.
For any thought save this, I have no mind—
My heavenly love is, like a goddess, kind.
I go to seek her. At some other time
Of these predicts we'll reason, or else rhyme.
[Goes out.]

Cinthio. False prophets, or soothsayers, what care I!
For me the thread is spun and cast the die;
The boat is waiting, and the wind is right.
March past, ye steady hours; lead on, midnight.

Enter Onesta.

Onesta! Hangs this gear where it did? Onesta. Alack, alack, it hangs together like a snow-shower in the air. Cinthio. Then is it indeed alack. What has unbound our plot? Onesta. O, we are all unbound! All undone! twelve o'clock will never, never do. Cinthio. How has that hour become refractory which yesterday was most corrigible? Onesta. O, she does not lack courage, but her father, he is fractious. Cinthio. Her father! what of him? Onesta. O, it's all along of him! He goes to bed every night at eleven, as sure as the clock! Upstairs, at every chime creak goes a step, and his stick comes down between, with his other hand on the baluster. And he talks about a new lamp for the landing, as he has done for the last twenty years—not that I remember; but Marjory, who will be seventy to-morrow—that's May-day; and to hear her talking about the May-days when she was young! This very fore-noon she began gabbling, with her toothless old gums, and her beard going wag, wag— Cinthio. For God's sake cease thy gabbling and thy wagging, and tell me how Guido has perverted the good-nature of midnight. Onesta. La! what a temper you have! I'll tell Faustine how wild a lover she has caught. Cinthio. Tell her how wild I am for her dear love, While you stand dallying with our happiness. Onesta. Dallying, forsooth, dallying! I'll dally no more between you! Cinthio. My fair Onesta, carry this kiss to thy mistress, and keep this one to yourself. Twelve o'clock is not suitable, because? Onesta. Because, as I was just beginning to tell you, Guido goes to bed at eleven—I mean, he goes to his chamber then; counts his keys, his money; gets undressed; curses his valet; says his prayers; then a door slams, or a chimney rumbles, or a rat scrapes behind the wainscot, or a loose slate on Signor Guido's own head rattles a noise of its own in his ears, and he yells, 'Thieves! Fire!' and the bell's rung, and the whole household roused up; and every room, every bed, and closet and hole, searched and shook, and hacked and pierced; and out to the garden— Cinthio. And is this a nightly performance? But you knew all this before. What prompted you to have us determine our flight for midnight? It must be then, or sooner. Onesta. It can't be, it shan't be, either sooner, or later. Cinthio. Come, come, remember the crowns. [Aside.] I believe she's sold herself to the other side. Onesta. Perhaps it may be done, perhaps it may: though it's not any more possible now than it was before. Cinthio. How are we to manage? Onesta. Well, it may be done; for when I remember, there are two old travellers staying with us just now. They take up all Guido's time. Everybody is so busy you would think our house was a bazaar of all the trades; there could not be more ado supposing it was for the interment of a king. About eleven they will be drawing to the hinder end of supper, and every guest busier than his neighbour eating and drinking, and all the servants drudging like millers with a good wind. Come then: my lady will be ready; and you must put the dress in by the window, and wait till she gets it on, for she will have nothing but her night-gown. Then she will come down, and—O lord! I wish I knew nothing of it. Cinthio. Can you by no means procure her own apparel? Onesta. It is not to be thought of; for her father would know that she could not come at it but by me. Cinthio. She will have greater ease in man's attire, And no disguise could better suit our flight. The wood that lies between us and the shore Will hide us till Sebastian's hour has come. Eleven is our hour. Let Faustine know If I come not that death has flown with me; Or that old Time himself at length has gone, And doomsday come to righten every wrong. [Goes out.]

Enter a Servant.

Onesta. Where have you been?

Servant. I was sent to invite the prince to sup at our house to-night; and it is good words to ask a man to a good supper. But the prince refused to come, and that is bad words; for it is bad not to choose the good.

Onesta. Belike the prince has chosen a better supper somewhere else.

Servant. Belike he has. Are you going home?

Onesta. Yes. You go before.

[They go out.]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—The Garden of Martha's House.

Enter Eulalie. While she is speaking, Rupert enters behind.

Eulalie. My tongue must heave my bosom's suffering forth,
Or else into my mouth my prisoned heart
Will leap, and pant its desperate passion there.
Wild love has burst upon me like a storm:
The gathered clouds I knew; not their full freight.
O me! my desperate, foolish, high-pitched love!
Is this my fortitude, my deep-sworn muteness?
Now, blabbing tongue, be silent; for, behold,
How many bright-eyed, heavenly beings peer
From countless windows on my blush, self-called,
And, listening, smile the welkin wide across
At me, plaining anew love's endless tale,
So risible, so old, so stale to them:
Poor, weary stars, no wonder 'tis you wink!
But I have dared to tell myself I love,
And madly to confess to him 'tis he.
O daring, swift such madness to conceive!
O madness, with untimely haste brought forth!
Nor will I venture on another thing.
The birds are all asleep; so are the winds;
The trees?—Ah, they have tongues and must have ears.
Dear trees, beseech you, tell no tales on me;
And never, when the wind would have you sing
Chant this sweet name which I will utter now,
Hereafter dreaming nevermore of Rupert.
Nay, gentle trees, you may sigh low his name,
And make all winds in love with that sole word,
Till northern pine-trees rustle it, and know,
As well as southern palmy groves, to teach
Their feathered choirs the syllables I love:
Ye streams and rivers, thou deep-swelling sea,
Confine your far-ranged voices to that theme:
Ye crystal ringing spheres the echo catch.

Rupert [aside]. Now will I kiss her. No, her melting heart
Exhales in words still. Hush, my heart; she speaks.

Eulalie. These are sweet thoughts; as sweet as foolish they. Though
all the myriad voices of the world
Should thunder Rupert far up into space
Until the moon swerved from her circling path
Distracted by the noise, I, bidding now,
'Twould only waste breath and the spheres endanger,
For it could not avail to make him love me.
I wish that it were ever night, and I
Could hold converse with it concerning Rupert.
Poor dreamer! have I not appointed this
For my fantastic, final love-discourse!

Rupert. And of true love's lasting communion first.

Eulalie. O, let me go!—My lord, I did not mean
My treason to be heard by any one.
To princes people are all hypocrites;
And sovereigns all believe that they profess
Which from a true desire to please is said:
This is what should be truth—I love you not.

Rupert. Treason most capital! Lov'st thou not me,
Thy prince, thy king? For this I rede thy doom:
Full twenty thousand kisses shalt thou pay,
And twenty thousand kisses after these,
As many more when these have been discharged,
To be due always, every hour of the day,
To him 'gainst whom thou hast conspired to cheat
Of what thou longest, burnest to bestow.
O, perjured felon, to thyself and me,
Begin fulfilment of this penalty.

Eulalie. Are you so peremptory? Am I lost?
Think that you heard no syllable of mine,
For you did apprehend my thoughts, as they
Transgressed my own decrees, into night's ear,
And must not prosecute their wantonness,
Since I, their mistress, have forgot their crimes—
This, recent, and that past, done to your face—
Not knowing if I have forgiven them.

I pray you, sir, forget them too—I pray you.

Rupert. Ah, thou dost fear the honour of my love!
I will forget. Therefore, fair Eulalie,
Most worshipful and low-adored goddess,
I love thee more than any tongue can tell,
And more than all the world beside can love;
More lovingly, more truly, I love thee
Than any lover that has ever loved.
Dost thou love me, and wilt thou marry me?

Eulalie. I love thee with a love not to be shouted:
It is as huge and glowing as the sun,
And it will burn when that clear lamp is out:
Thou art its infinite vitality:
It is as spacious as the element,
And thou art heaven and earth, and all between.
Marry thee, Rupert, Prince of Belmarie?
I know I dream. Ah me, when I shall wake!

Rupert. I know I dream not: lips so sensible,
So warm as thine, no dreamy spectre bears.

Eulalie. In sleep love's ecstasy's omnipotent.
So sweet a dream as this were best soon done,
That lasting memories may less deplore.
Good-night, fair vision: heaven languishes for thee;
Thine absence has bedimmed its radiance.

Rupert. I am thy true love, and thou dost not dream:
'Tis not thy wraith, but thee thyself I clasp.

Eulalie. O, art thou flesh and blood? Dear love, good night.
I'll not believe I have no filtre quaffed,
And am not wandering in some blissful land,
Where midnight and pale moonshine ever reign,
And lover's wishes are made true events,
Unless I light my lamp in my own room
And see my bed unruffled. Good-night, love.—
Pluck me a rose that I may surely know
It is no waking vision I have seen,
If I should find I have not been asleep.
Exquisite dream, come to the door with me.
[They go out.]

Rupert. [Re-entering] O, I am new-born, fit for highest deeds!
Now, could I, like old Atlas, bear the world

With all its cares upon my shoulders twain,
And say 'twas light, if but my finger-tips
Rested upon my sweetheart's lily hand.
I'll to the woods till Eulalie has found
Our love is true and sweeter than a dream.
[Goes out.]

SCENE II.—An Eminence in a Wood.

Enter Felice, Bruno and Torello.

Torello. May this sorceress be approached safely?
Felice. O, she'll not bite.
Bruno. She'll only give you a bit of her mind.
Torello. I may chance to give her a bit of mine if she be not civil.
Bruno. A bit is good for a jade.
Torello. By Jupiter, she'd best play me no jade's tricks. Shall we on?
Felice. Yes; over this knoll.

Enter Rupert. He does not observe the others.

Rupert. I see thee, moon, in thy high heavenly garden;
Thou walkest like a maid among her flowers.
But thou art not more beautiful, I ween,
Than she who gave herself to me to-night
Within an earthly garden.—Perhaps she sleeps.
O elves unseen, and far away from me,
Who dance upon the shore; and fairies, who
Enamel green hill-tops with little rings
Where merry balls are held; and all ye sylphs
Inhabiting dark shades and rustling bowers;
Ye naiads who make silver streams your haunts,
And ye aerial ones who chant high songs
Against the twinkling of the lyric stars:
From distant vales and hills of Greece o'erskip
The intervening countries at a bound
Ye ancient deities—if ye be dead,
Let your ghosts rise from flowery sepulchres,
Or coral tombs beneath the blue Aegean:
Ye little dwarfs and legendary people
In forest black, or by the oft-sung Rhine,
Or in the moonless caves of furthest Thule,
Desert your homes to-night: and all together,
Quaint, lovely, beauteous, delicate, and droll,
Troop to my lady's chamber: be her dream.
[Goes out.]

Torello. Dragons and scorpions, hippogriffs and asps,
Hobgoblins, and the ghosts of murderers,
And fiery devils in a fierce nightmare
Confound this fellow's folly!

Felice. Are you mad?

Torello. Tell not me! Eulalie loves him. It was her he spoke of.

Felice. Are you mad? What he and she? [To Bruno.] Follow this foolery
with me. We'll persuade him he has not seen Rupert.—What trance were you
in for a minute's space, and, being roused, why do you tear your beard?
What vision have you seen?

Torello. Would you befool me? I'll after, and defy him.

Felice. Defy whom?

Torello. The prince.

Felice. Of the powers of the air?

Torello. Prince Rupert.

Felice. Ha! be careful what you do. But he is within doors just now.

Torello. Within doors! I hear his tread.

Felice. What! Is he coming hither?

Torello. No; he is going hence.

Felice. Let me understand you.

Torello. Understand that I am not deaf; and, having heard Rupert, leaning against that tree, talk like a happy lover, I perceive at once that he must have been accepted by Eulalie: therefore I will challenge him.

Felice. Love has turned his brain. Did you see Rupert, Bruno?

Bruno. Not since he left us.

Felice. Nor I.

Torello. Did you not see him put his shoulder against that tree, fold his arms, gaze at the moon, and talk; then with a skip and a hop caper away as merrily as a schoolboy from school?

Felice. By Luna's horns, but this is wonderful! It cannot be—yet have you not a powerful imagination?

Torello. I scarce know; I think so: I am strong.

Felice. So strong you do not know your own strength?

Torello. I have never found its match.

Felice. That explains this rhapsody, then. Your imagination has been slumbering. Love comes and rouses it, and, like all newly awakened gifts, it attempts great things. Being in keeping with your other qualities, of immeasurable strength, it creates a concretion: you have here, without doubt, suddenly and potently summoned up this apparition of Rupert, its spoken nonsense and ridiculous gait. It must be so. Sir, your imagination is godlike.

Bruno. Torello, my imagination cannot form a metaphor to express the admiration, the reverence, your genius inspires in me. Many a poetical dreamer would thank God on his knees for a tithe of your gift.

Torello. Did you not see the prince?

Felice. With that solemn face! Ha, ha! You carry the jest; but you cannot create a vision for our eyes.

Bruno. Come; deride us no longer. Confess you have befooled us.

Torello. We are all befooled, I think. This sorceress is charming us.

Felice. Love, I say, stirred your imagination to plant this jealous fancy against that ash, and gave it language chiming with your fear, and hath almost persuaded you of its reality. To the witch, and be satisfied.

Torello. Ay, let us to the witch. She may have sent this vision to spur me on. What shall I say to her?—I would swear I saw Rupert.

Felice. We'll teach you what to say as we go.

[They go out.]

SCENE III.—Another Part of the Wood.

Enter on one side Green and Ivy, tipsy; on the other Celio and Sylvia, singing.

Song.

O, the day is loud and busy!

Every blush the sun discovers.

Loud and busy, bright and bold,

Day was never loved of lovers.

Night for nightingales and moonlight!

Many a blush night's mantle covers.

Night for kissing, night for loving,

Night for us, for we are lovers!

Ivy. What singers be these?

Green. A shepherd and his lass.

Ivy. I know a better song than that. It goes this way:

[Sings.] Night and day let us be merry,

And set not by the world a cherry;

For dry bread chokes—

That's not right. I forget it. I could make a better song than either myself; by my soul, I could! None of your sheepish love-songs, but a song to make the stars dance quicker, and the moon multiply itself a score of times. You have only made two moons.

Celio. We did not aim at putting the moon beside herself.

Ivy. I could make a song about the moon. Sir, I have read about the

moon. Her name—hic!—her name is—hic!—

Celio. Hecate.

Ivy. Give a man time to speak his mind. Her name is Hecate, although you say it. I know about the moon: Hecate is the moon—Hecate.

Sylvia. O, come away!

Celio. Make your song, my friend, and show it to me to-morrow.

Ivy. I will, sir; I will.

Celio. Good-night.

[Celio and Sylvia go out.]

Ivy. The song is coming, Green; it's coming. 'By the light of Hecate's lamp'—lamp, lamp—what rhymes with lamp?—Come to some more delusive, poetic spot.—'By the light of Hecate's lamp'—lamp?—Come.—What the devil rhymes with lamp!—Come.

[Ivy and Green go out.]

Enter hurriedly Cinthio, and Faustine dressed as a shepherd-boy.

Faustine. O Cinthio, hearken! We are lost. Alas!

Cinthio. Fear not, my love: all danger we shall pass.

[They go out..]

SCENE IV.—A Room in Martha's House.

Enter Martha.

Martha. Gone with the Prince! I knew 'twould come at last. Well, I shall be a lonely woman soon. To think how many a mother envies me My lovely daughter for her loveliness, And that she has enchanted our good prince, And all the happiness in store for me, When I shall be a prince's mother-in-law.

[Knocking.]

A visit at this time! Who's there?

Enter Onesta.

What now, my lady Faustine's maid? Onesta. The king has sent for you. Martha. The king! Onesta. King Alardo. By the deceit of providence he has come back; and Guido has found out Faustine's escape. He commanded me to go and bring you, because he has heard about Eulalie; for Guido threatened me with flaying and pickling, and buttering and roasting. You are to come at once and meet the king and Guido and another lord at the tree in the gushet where the three roads meet, to go with them to the wood, where Eulalie and the prince, and Faustine and Cinthio are. If I would not tell him all, he would have minced me into collops, else he might have pulled my tongue out before I would have told. The king is going to pack you and Eulalie off this very night. 'The mad, old heifer,' says he, 'to set her low-bred cow to my royal bull.' And Cinthio is to be made into a ram—no, it was a ewe, Guido said: I think it was a ewe, though it struck me he meant an ox; and Faustine is to mew in a nunnery all her life. Martha. The king come back, and Eulalie and I to be packed off to-night; Faustine, made a nun; you, to be roasted Onesta. Haste, haste. I'll tell you more as we go. Martha. More! Save us! You have said more than enough. [They go out.]

ACT V

SCENE I.—An Open Space in the Wood.

Enter Felice, Bruno and Torello.

Felice. Do you remember what you must say?

Torello. I think so.

From Thessaly, that land of incantation,

Tetragrammaton,

Come Hecate and hear my supplication—

Felice. Shemhamphorash.

Torello. Shemhamphorash.

Felice. You must speak this word very loud; its virtue is great; and the greater mouth you give it, the stronger its power. Shout it again exultantly; for with this word properly spoken, a world might be created.

Torello. Shemhamphorash.

Felice. Pronounced in a most redundant *ore rotundo*. No witch that ever culled simples with a brazen knife by moonlight could resist such a summons.

Torello. Will she indeed come forth to this?

Felice. Like a cat from the water.

Torello. What shall I say then?

Felice. The witch will question you and you must answer her.

Torello. What questions? Will she use a book? I could never learn catechism.

Felice. Answer anything. It matters little what, so it be spoken reverently. This is the stone; place one foot on it; take off your hat; hold your sword high above your head; place your other hand upon your haunch: now, begin 'From Thessaly.'

Torello [prompted by Felice].

From Thessaly, that land of incantation,

Tetragrammaton.

Come Hecate and hear my supplication,

Shemhamphorash.

On broomstick ride to grant what I shall ask,

Tetragrammaton;

Simple to thy skill will be the task,

Shemhamphorash.

Enter Scipio dressed like a witch.

Scipio. Thou comest to know if she whom thou lovest will be thine. Swear by oak and ash and thorn to perform what rites I shall direct, and thou shalt know.

Torello. I swear.

Scipio. The oak is Jove's tree; thou hast sworn by Jove:

Mars' lances, Cupid's arrows are of ash;

To witness therefore hast thou summoned them:

The thorn is Mercury's; he binds thine oath.

Among the flags that, like a rushy curb

The streaming brook rein to an ambling pace,

With hands fast bound and eyes from light swathed close,

In upright patience shalt thou take thy stand.

If she thou lov'st loves thee, fate drives her here

Thy bondage to release, or rather change

To wedded slavery in rose-linked chains

That shackle willing lovers mutually.

Torello. What if she come not?

Scipio. Why, some other then,

Or man, or maiden will enfranchise thee.

If man, thy doom of single life is sealed;

If maid, in her behold a wife revealed.

Jove, Cupid, Mars, Mercury bless this rite;

Fail in the least, they curse thee from to-night.

[Goes out.]

Torello. Need I do this? Stay! Gone—without a gift, too! An inhuman witch! [Aside.] Am I mocked, I wonder? That can hardly be. I must go on: it were cowardly to be afraid. Yet would I watch these two.—Well, sirs, you heard the witch.

Felice. It is a strange ceremony. Having sworn, you cannot evade it.

Torello. Tie my hands and bind my eyes.

Felice. It is a most infallible test. I knew a knight who was scarce in the water before his mistress came and unbound him.

Torello. Do you laugh?

Bruno. Who? I? No; I am as solemn as a hangman.

Torello. How deep is this stream?

Felice. It cannot reach above your knees, being so shallowed by its width. Are you ready? Come along, then.

Having pinioned and blind-folded Torello they lead him into the stream.—Celio and Sylvia enter, and

pass into a grove.

Bruno. [Aside.] Two mayers.

Torello. Is there any one coming?

Felice. You must not speak. We will withdraw among the hazels. Let faith and courage console each other, and your spirit may have that comfort which your body lacks.

Re-enter Scipio.

Scipio. How do you like the leeches' element? Have you made the acquaintance of any insinuating eels? Felice. [Aside.] Hush! you must treat it solemnly. It is a dull nose that cannot scent hartshorn. He begins to sniff. Torello. Leeches, eels! I pray you, how stand I for getting out should any evil thing attack me? Felice. Your back faces the only safe way; the stream is deeper before you than on your right; to the left the muddy bed would smother you; you stand on a stone. Cry on us if you are assailed. Torello. I will. Go not far away. Felice. A speedy deliverance to you. [Felice, Bruno and Scipio withdraw to the back of the stage. Torello. Thanks.—Lord, lord, what love will make a man do! Here am I—Eulalie, when thou findest me thus thou wilt love me. Felice. Now, if we had a leash of hounds to loose on him, or a troop of charitable imps to pinch him for us.

Enter Cinthio and Faustine.

Bruno. More noctambulators.

Felice. This is the prince's shepherd, and his sweetheart: if they observe Torello, they may help our plot.

Cinthio. Bright-pinioned night now slacks her onward flight
And hovers towards its mid stage, to alight,
Furling her wings, one instant on the earth,
Ere emptying heaven for Aurora's birth,
That gladdens every morn. Here will we rest
Till night has sped a little further west.
O that we might recline between her wings,
And sail for aye her heavenly voyagings!

Faustine. I would we might, but we must navigate
A vessel and an ocean less elate.
How far are we from thy Sebastian's boat?

Cinthio. An hour will take us where it lies afloat.

Faustine. Is this the forest's most secreted spot?

Cinthio. Yes; none save shepherds visit it. Do not
Fear anything; and we will reach the shore
By pathways that are their peculiar lore.

Enter Rupert and Eulalie.

The prince and his beloved!

[Cinthio and Faustine conceal themselves.

Rupert. Sit, Eulalie; this tree-trunk bids us rest.

Hush! hark! the nightingale, the lover's bird,
The throbbing pulse of night, panting its joy.
About this season he expects his mate,
And spends all day and night in rapturous toil
Upon a bridal-song to greet her with.
I think those twinkling midnight birds up there,
The stars, that seem to nestle in the leaves,
Utter such dulcet strains could we but hear.—
Now, tell me softly; did'st thou dream to-night?

Eulalie. Thou should'st have first inquired if I did sleep.
Whether I slept or not, I dreamt a dream,
The most entrancing and most lovable.

Rupert. Did'st thou indeed! What was it all about?

Eulalie. I laid me on my bed, and couched the rose
That thou had'st given me in my bosom. Then
Its odour, packed with semblances of bliss,
Far-off delights, remembrances of songs,
And nameless sweets, all woven in a charm
Of strange awakening scent alone bestows,

Grew brightly visible; and in that halo
Sleep realised a shining rainbow crowd
Of gay unearthly beings, who, to notes
That never lark or nightingale imagined,
Tripped in the mazes of a wildering dance—
A poem in mute show.—Hark! some one comes.
[Rupert and Eulalie retire.

Re-enter Celio and Sylvia. They seat themselves on the tree vacated by
Rupert and Eulalie.

Torello. Sweet voices! Methought I heard Eulalie's. O, come my love!
Shemhamphorash.

Sylvia. Had any one save thee told me this tale
Discredit would have paid his waste of breath.
So dark that grove is, and its air so full
Of night's fantasticism, thy whispers low
May have been rounded to a meaning big
With sense that had no birth in thy intendment.
Did'st thou not tell me of a peopled star?
If there be such a jewel in the heavens,
Point out its light.

Celio. That magnate brilliant,
Gleaming, opalesque, red, white, and blue,
Quivering and shuddering in its loveliness,
That star's inhabited.

Sylvia. It is, indeed,
A bright, first-water sphere. And in it dwell
Oberon and Titania, and their elves.
Did'st thou say that?

Celio. I said it, and it's true.

Sylvia. King Oberon, a many years ago,
Divining that this grass-green, sea-green earth,
This emerald that sets off the golden sun,
Should be by mankind sadly under-priced;
That this fair hanging garden, swung for elves
And men to revel in, this glorious stage
In heaven's theatre, so gallantly
Hung out and decked for elves and men to grace,
This temple, wherein all might minister,
Should be o'er-rioted, abused, profaned;
That this globe, frescoed round by Nature's art,
Should lose its beauty in the sight of men—
Men's eyes being jaundiced by a golden lust
To prize much more the hills' bright excrement,
Than their elate and sun-gilt brows of strength;
That men, like children wearied of a toy,
Would spoil its loveliness, in pieces rending
To put it to some use, or ravish out
The useless secret of creation: he,
The fairy king, slow-winged and sad of heart,
Searched out a new home from the host of heaven,
And chose that star for him and his to dwell in.

Celio. I said so.

Sylvia. And, beside, that this strange science
Impart to thee a darling fairy did—
One of a company that roam the earth
To happy and inspire such clay-clad souls
As recognise their heavenly geniture,
And separate them from the loathly world:
And that this spirit visits earth to-night
To revelate some pleasure new to thee,
Which thou, sweetheart, art going to share with me?

Celio. Hark to that singing! 'tis the fairy's voice.

Rupert. We overheard you here unwillingly,

But with wills well inclined would now remain.

Celio. That's as the fairy pleases. Here he comes.

Cinthio [To Faustine]. All are engrossed: no fear of our discovery.
We'll wait awhile, then slip unseen away.

Felice [To Bruno]. Here be miracles about to be.

Enter 1st Fairy.

1st Fairy. Song.

On the mountain's crown,
When the sun goes down,
You may see me robed in the bright crimson.
In the still mid-night
When the moon shines bright,
I shimmer down on a beam of light.

I guide the mariner's crazy craft,
When the billows are raging high.
I glide before the wandering boor,
And lead him safe to his own house door
For love of charity.

I hover near the poet's ear,
And haunt him till he sings:
The minstrel's hand my unseen wand
Guides o'er the throbbing strings.

Whatever is joyful and makes the world glad,
That is my lot to do.
I never am weary, I never am sad,
For my work my play is too.

Celio. He smiles; our number does not anger him.

List; he will tell us now unheard-of news.

Torello. Felice, Bruno! are you by?

Felice. We are here. Whisper softly, or you may break the spell.

Torello. Who are those that talk and sing?

Felice. I hear no talking and singing. The charm is acting: these voices which we cannot hear herald the approach of your deliverer.

Torello. I hope so; but perhaps it is my imagination. Have you really heard nothing? There were first several who spoke, and Eulalie's voice among them, and then an angel sang. O, that some one would come! It is horribly cold standing here.

Bruno. Patience, patience.

Scipio. Patience, sir, is a great virtue.

Torello. But love is a greater; for were I not in love, I would have no patience.

1st Fairy. The pleasance of our starry residence,
In human, bald speech inenarrable,
Transcends your dreams of Arcady and Eden.
Yet every year we all descend to earth,
Because our memories are steeped in joy,
Which was our ancient mundane element
When men were heroes and the world was young,
And life was laughter, love, and noble spleen:—
Alas, for you, poor actors! in Heaven's sight
Ye play an after-piece abjectly low!—
Also, because there are—how few they be!—
Who love true riches and despise the false,
We leave our unimagined paradise
Upon the first night that fair Pleiad, May,
Begins her soft ascendance o'er the year,
And bringing summer with us, visit earth.
Even now I see our elfin nation come,
Descending like a shower of frosty snow
For lightness, and for loveliness like Iris

Speeding in rainbow colours through night's gloom.
Look how the lightning or the light doth pass:
So have the fairies travelled from their star;
They left a minute since, and here they are.

Enter Oberon, Titania, Puck, and the Fairies. The Fairies dance and sing.

Song.

Weave the dance and sing the song;
Subterranean depths prolong
The rainy patter of our feet;
Heights of air are rendered sweet
By our singing. Let us sing,
 Breathing softly, fairily,
 Swelling sweetly, airily,
Till earth and sky our echo ring.
 Rustling leaves chime with our song;
 Fairy bells its close prolong,
 Ding-dong, ding-dong.

 Philomel, sing loud and high,
Leader of our minstrelsy;
No owl hoot, or raven cry;
All glad sounds join harmony,
And let no faintest discord sigh.
 Crickets chirrup merrily,
 And grasshoppers cheerily,
Till our echo thrill the sky.
 Rustling leaves chime with our song:
 Fairy bells its close prolong,
 Ding-dong, ding-dong.

Eulalie. This is the harmony that filled my dream.

Rupert. Perfumes of lilies, roses, violets—
Sweeter far than they: such a rich gust
Of warmth and scent they flood the air withal.

Celio. That is Titania with the golden hair,
And wreath of moon-flowers pale, which shows, methinks,
Like lightning round the sun.

Sylvia. And see, her robe!
It's a new colour. O, it aches my eyes!

Rupert. And Oberon's a king, a very king.

Eulalie. My dream—this is my dream!

Rupert. And to thy dream

I'll tell thee how I played god Morpheus.

But now with these good neighbours let us talk.

Eulalie. No; let us feast our eyes and then our ears.

Torello. More music and voices! This is no imagination: it is the
charm's doing. I will say it again profounder. Shemhamphorash.

Rupert. Moonlight and madness! What a howl was that!

Celio. What stands in the mid-stream?

Sylvia. A man, bound, blinded.

Eulalie. It is Torello, sure.

Rupert. And I see two

Who know full well how he comes in this plight.

What's Puck about?

[Puck liberates Torello.

Torello. O hell! art thou the devil? Felice, Bruno, take this imp
away. Ha! what sights are here? Angels, and fairies, and Eulalie and
Rupert! Perdition! O perdition!

Felice. Be calm. Who unbound you?

Torello. This little grinning demon.

Felice. Where?

Torello. Here, on my shoulder. Do you not see him? And all this
crowding crowd, and Rupert and Eulalie? Do you not? Do you not see them?

Ah me! you cannot; for it is a vision. I will not suffer it. My doom is sealed. Farewell, fair Eulalie, farewell. Avaunt thou hairy fiend! Thou shalt not have me. O, you pinch me! Oh! oh!

[Torello runs out tormented by Puck.

Puck re-enters shortly.

Rupert. This is the wildest prank; we'll hear its source another time.

Celio. Should not our queen of May interview the Fairies?

Rupert. Well bethought.

Eulalie. Then I'll begin with thee. What elves are these, Thou seem'st to lead in ordered companies?

2nd Fairy. That the fairy army is,
Clad in rose-leaves, bravely worn;
Pollen far outshines gold lace;
Their helmets bright are husks of corn;
Quivers of the adder's slough;
Bows of legs of spiders slain;
A cob-web string is strong enough
For a spear-grass arrow's strain,
With the sting of hornet tipped,
In the dew of hemlock dipped.

Eulalie. And what are you, ye varied, restless ones?

3rd Fairy. We the fairies are who sleep,
Blanketed and pillowed deep
In the golden, blooming folds
Of nightly-cradled marigolds.
Some with evening's blushes meek
Tinge the peach's downy cheek.
Feathers stolen from butterflies
Make our pencils: all the dyes
Of all the flowers we fairies know
How bright daffodils to gild
In the saffron sunrise glow;
To launder lilies in the snow;
When midnight all the air has filled
We dip in purple gloom the pansy;
When Cupid over-rules our fancy
For our loves we make incision;
The daisies with our blood we dight,
Loosened from its veined prison;
When we haste upon our mission
In a moonless, starless night,
Fireflies, glow-worms lend us light.

Eulalie. Come hither, little brownie, dark and green.

I prithee, tell me what thy fellows bin.

4th Fairy. Wood-elves they, in russet dressed,
And they love the lindens best.
Hark, they hum our antique rune!
A human fiddler learned the tune,
And played it at a merry-making:
Still he plays; the clowns still dance
In a jolly, jigging trance;
For them to rest there is no waking,
Till that fiddler learn to play
Backward our elfin melody.

Eulalie. And what are ye so beauteously dressed?

5th Fairy. River-spirits, golden-tressed,
With blue eye, and light-blue vest.
None can sing so sweet as we,
Joyfully or mournfully;
And our chant is ever ringing:
Such a spell is in our singing,
Every listener hears aright
His own thought from the water-sprite.

Eulalie. And ye?

6th Fairy. We are sea-nymphs, sea-green-haired,
Liquid-voiced and liquid-eyed.
We will float with bosoms bared
On old Neptune's happy tide;
There our filmy smocks to bleach
In the sun, and soft west wind;
Mortals, gazing from the beach
Think them foam-crests, fairy-blind.

Eulalie. And ye, the fairest of all the fairies?

7th Fairy. We are most ethereal sprites,
Draped in merging rainbow lights.
Perfume is our dainty food;
Ever varying is our mood.
Sometimes in a rose we shine;
Now a girl's face make divine
For her sweetheart, lying hid
In her blush, or her eyelid:
Unfelt we swing upon a hair:
To be lovely's our sole care.

Sylvia. Titania waves her wand. O, will she speak?

Titania. All manner of delight attend your loves:

That you are lovers tasks no intuition:
And we rejoice to think Cythera's son
His ancient craft plies with unbated skill,
Though there be some who hold he fled long since
For ever from his earthly hunting-ground,
While a usurper courses his preserves—
A hideous dwarf, disguised, who blindness feigns
And shoots forged bolts that are indeed of gold,
But cast in Hades, of no heavenly ore,
Lacking love's temper, and sweet-poisoned barb.
Truth has its part herein, sad sooth to tell;
For many a fight has Cupid with his foe,
And much the issue of their war is feared
In skyey quarters: well it is for you
That ye are lovers orthodox and true.
Every good wish is in this that I say—
May you be lovers till your dying day.
Wilt thou say something to them, Oberon?

Oberon. Bless you, fair lovers—*benedicite*.

Kind damsels, let me kiss you.

Titania. Nay—why, then,

If thou wilt kiss the maids, I'll kiss the men.

[They do accordingly.]

Oberon. Mortals, farewell for ever and a day.

To-night we fairies wend the wide world round;
And this our visitation each new May
To summer sweetness mellows air and ground.
The winds kiss from our lips a perfumed spoil,
And store the pillaged wealth in woods and bowers;
Each fairy footstep swift impregns the soil,
And in our wake we leave a foam of flowers.
In orchard blossoms from our odoured hair
We shake rich drops that flavour all the fruit;
Nor lacks the grain our much-availing care!
Each thing is blessed where comes a fairy foot:
We bless all bridals true, all love that's chaste.—
Now, fairies, to the sea with utmost haste!

[Oberon, Titania, and the Fairies go out.]

Puck. Every trick that erst I played
On horse or ox, on man or maid,
On jealous husband, grandam old;
On timid wight, or braggart bold,

On lazy slut, or busy lass—
To whom I through the keyhole pass,
Pinching slattern black and blue,
A tester dropping in thrift's shoe—
To-night I merrily repeat,
And all sight and hearing cheat.
Willy-wisp, spoorn, hag, or faun,
Urchin, changeling, pixy, pan,
All these shapes and names I bear,
Pressing like a dread nightmare
Full-fed losels, half-awake,
Rustling like the fierce fire-drake,
Shouting loud the whole night long
Witching spell or laughing song.
Voice. Come, come, come along!
Puck. Hark! 'twas Oberon who cried
From the sandy wet seaside.
Voice. Come, come, come away!
Puck. I'll be with you, princely fay,
Ere again those words you say.

[Goes out.

Eulalie. Hush!

Felice. This sport is o'er. We must go seek Torello.

[Felice, Bruno, and Scipio go out.

Cinthio. Come, Faustine; this bright mask is played and done.

Fair pioneers, we'll follow you anon.

[Cinthio and Faustine go out.

Enter Green and Ivy, tipsy.

Ivy. By the light of Hecate's lamp—lamp, lamp? What rhymes with
lamp! Scamp? cramp?

Green. Damp.

Ivy. Damp? Good.

By the light of Hecate's lamp,
May all poetry be damned;
And each stupid poet-scamp,
May his invention take the cramp!

There! that's genius!

Sylvia. O Celio, come! I cannot bear these fools.

[Celio and Sylvia go out.

Ivy. Here be people!

Green. And here be more!

Enter Alardo, Guido, Martha, Onesta, and Mayers, with Cinthio and
Faustine, guarded.

Eulalie. Mother, what do you here?

Martha. You'll see anon.

Onesta [to Faustine]. O, my lady, you must not blame me! I could not
help it. My lord your father—

Guido. Peace, well-named hypocrite! [Aside to Alardo.] This is your
son,

With that low maid on whom he would devolve
The varied riches of his royal blood.

Alardo. Refer to his decree your daughter's case,
Thereby to see how far his judgment's warped.

[To Conrad.] Reveal not yet your parentage, I pray.

Rupert. Why, how now, Guido? Sir, what mean you thus
With all this mob to break upon us here?

Guido. My gracious prince, these two but now confessed—
What fear of torture from my daughter's maid
Had riven ours already—that to-night,
Faustine, having 'scaped by practices most vile,
Meant with this silly shepherd to elope,

He having stolen her heart from me, her sire;
Though by what means they interchanged their loves,
How spake, how saw each other, passes skill:
And both with fixed intent to rob your land
Of their two bodies and hidden wealth of issue,
In that same ship, whose captain is Sebastian
(Riders we have despatched to fetch him here),
Purposed themselves to carry off—fine caskets
Of so high value and unpriced contents,
All to your grace, and all to Belmarie,
And a fair moiety to me, belonging.
This knowing, and that, until time should serve
They here did hide, thinking the wood more safe
Than our exposed and pirate-haunted shores,
I, with these lords, came hither. On the way
We trained along with us these unbid Mayers,
Who must excuse themselves if they offend;
Though for their help in finding out this haunt,
Subserving thus the law, they might be shrived.
A strange and most sweet music led us on;
And we supposed to find the minstrels here,
And know from them of those love-guided truants.
In perpetration of their triple crime
We caught our night-errant lovers. Upon them
Immediate justice I do here demand
In your name, mine, and in that of the land.

Rupert. Which thou and it and they shall surely have.

Stand from the shade, ye social rebels. What!
My Cinthio! thou should'st have trusted me.—
This is the final doom that I decree.
Guido, take thou thy daughter in one hand,
Her lover in the other. Mother mine,
Here is my hand and here is Eulalie's.
Lord Guido, thou next best blood to the throne,
Surrender here into this shepherd's arms
Thy well-beloved and only daughter, Faustine.
Good Martha, of the very lowliest stock,
On me, King Rupert, thy sweet child bestow.
I now revoke my first decree, and take
That title, which is mine, to make this right;
For kings are higher than all laws but love.
Do as we bid, lord Guido; join their hands,
As Martha now unites my love's and mine.
Do it, I say; or else by Hymen's torch
I'll marry thee to Martha, and so make
Three marriages, by which a king becomes
A peasant's husband, and a subject's son;
Obtains a mother—a poor fisher's widow—
Who brings with her a lordly father-in-law,
A gentle sister, and a simple brother:
Thus I, a king, beget more new affection
Than love, which not incites this my election.

Alardo. Rash boy, forbear.

Rupert. My father!

Alardo. Yes, Rupert.

No ghost, in health, and likely long to live.
Leave go her hand; and you, girl, let his go.
Woman, be you more careful of your child.
We wait to be obeyed.

Rupert. I'll not obey:

I owe no duty, know no king, but love.

Eulalie. Farewell, dear Rupert. Rupert and farewell
I say now finally: yet kiss me once.
My dream dispels before your father's frown:

Those fairies which we saw we did not see;
I am still half asleep: when I awake
My cheated eyes will weep their own deceit,
Viewing my chamber's walls so falsely real.
Go to your father, prince; I'll to my mother.

Faustine. I have no father, and I have no king
Save thee, my Cinthio, and my dearest love.
I see her heart is almost split in twain;
But if they rive my body from thine arms,
My heart entire will stay there: I shall die.

Alardo. I had forgot: you two need not to part;
Conrad will speak the barrier away.

Cinthio. I do remember now two soothsayers.

Rupert. I see them in my father and this lord.

Conrad. You see aright. Shepherd, thou art my son.

I here have watched thee with a lynx's eyes,
And noted every motion of thy limbs,
Thy heart's each flutter and thy tongue's each word,
And every act; and in thy very sighs,
Thine eye's upturning, there is limned past doubt
A faithful copy of thy heaven-homed mother.
But let me see the chain that's round thy neck.
Thou art my son!

Cinthio. My father!

Guido. Go, Faustine,

Go to him. Royal sir, my word is proved,
That women are but governed by their bloods.

Alardo. And dogs, and men, and angels I presume.—
But what to do with my sad son I know not.

Martha. I'm going to disown thee, Eulalie.

Please it your gracious highness and fair prince,
This gentle lady is no child of mine.
Her parents both were noble: how they died,
And she, an infant, of her heritage
Was cozened by an uncle, I'll make plain
By names, dates, papers, birth-marks, jewellery.
I reared her as my own in low content,
And meant not to destroy her happiness
By telling her of her nobility,
Till she might claim her land with power to take.

Alardo. Prove what thou sayest, and they may wed to-morrow.

Rupert. Thanks, gracious father. It is true, I know.

What, Eulalie! hast thou no energy?
Art thou struck dumb? Wilt thou not spring to me?
How! Would'st thou have me woo thee o'er again?
A high delight! Then high-born maid, be coy.

Eulalie. O no, I need no wooing; but I fear
Thou'lt love me in a manner different.
A lady I would be to marry thee;
But with thy former love, pray love me still.

Rupert. With that, and every kind of love, I will.

Thou art—O what thou art I cannot say!
I love thee, nor can tell how lovingly.

Ivy. I'll make a ballad of this, a proper ballad—a ballad that would
draw tears from a frog in the heart of a rock. By Hecate, I will!

Enter Officers with Sebastian.

Officer. This is the captain we were sent to take.

Alardo. Canst thou say aught by way of an excuse?

Sebastian. King, I behold such happy faces here,
Glowing like stars in the grey morning air,
That I have little fear to say, I cannot.
It seems indeed that every star of heaven
With most auspicious aspect earthward turns.

I bring such tidings as will raise your brows
Much more than this new amity I see
Constrains surprise in me. Your appetites
Shall, when they have fed full of wonderment,
Fall to a second feast of happiness,
Admiring, welcoming and hearing told
The ships, their crews, and unconceived escapes.

Alardo. What ships, crews, 'scapes?

Sebastian. Those galleys four, ornate,
With all the gallant, living human freight
That sailed forth in the five, with wealth untold
Of bullion, spices, silks, and rarities,
Gathered in many lands and many seas,
Are in the harbour safe arrived but now.

Alardo. I cannot speak. Kind Heaven, my knees I bow.

Mayers. Long live the King! Long live Prince Rupert! Long live our
May-Queen!

Green. Let us to the shore.

Ivy. Ay, that's the word! Come, lads and lasses! There shall we have
sight of ships we thought never to see, and shake hands that we thought
death had shaken, and hear voices that we thought were singing with
mermaids. O, there will be kissing and embarrassment, and sobbing and
lacrimony! I will end my ballad with it.

Cinthio. Sebastian, all our voyaging is past.

Sebastian. And paradise attained at home at last.

Ivy. Good captain, lead us on.

Sebastian. I pray you, wait.

Ivy. Sir, we have waited a year and a month, and can tarry no longer.
Come.

Mayers. Away, away!

[Green, Ivy, Sebastian, and Mayers go out.]

Alardo. Behold, the blinking dawn with sleepy eyes
Peers from her cloudy lattice in the skies,
Early astir to see if it be time
For Phoebus to awake and make day's prime.
Be glorious in thy rising, day-god bright,
For thou wilt usher us to that delight
We hardly dared to pray for: mark this day
With thy most splendid, most benignant ray;
For fate has blessed it, and time seems to make
A new departure—yea of life to take
A fresh lease: so, henceforth, our years shall date.—
Follow us lovers linked in hands and hearts
Like true love-knots that strength or skill ne'er starts.

[Alardo, Conrad, and Guido go out.]

Martha. Eulalie!

Eulalie. Dear mother!

Rupert. And mine too.

Cinthio. Now, let us wash our faces in the dew.

Rupert. O, I forgot th' observance of the day.

All hail my mistress and my Queen of May!

Eulalie. I am afraid that all our joys but seem,
And I shall yet awake out of a dream.

Rupert. Have no such fear, my love.—Behold us, then,
Two happy maidens and two happy men.
Lo, wakened by the lark, his bellman true,
Armed with a torch that merrily doth shine,
Arrayed in saffron of the deepest hue,
The sun, like Hymen, comes with smile benign!
As long as his resplendent light shall burn,
May our love-tides increase, but never turn.

A ROMANTIC FARCE
(Edinburgh, 1878)

PERSONS

Earl Edmund.
Sir James Montgomery.
Antinous.
Clown.
Captain Mercer.
Ringan Deane, a boy.
Lady Montgomery.
May Montgomery.
Mary-Jane.
Bellona.
Herminia.
Annie Smith, a girl.

Scene: A Country Town in Scotland.

ACT I

SCENE.—A Room, opening off a Ballroom.

Enter a lady dressed as an Amazon, and a gentleman dressed as a Clown; both masked.

Clown. Fair warrior, how speed you in a fight,
If all fordone after the second waltz?

Amazon. My soul is tired of folly, not my limbs.
Good clown, of your light wit enlighten me
Concerning somewhat cloudy.

Clown. Certainly.
My light wit if it may dispel your night,
Will flaunt as proudly as the sun. Behold!
[Unmasks.

Amazon. You are too hot. I would not, sir, be scorched:
Becloud your beams again. Your eyes burn bright—
Oh!—like the round holes carved in turnip-lamps,
Lit up by boys on witching hallow-e'ens
To fright their sisters and the serving-maids:
I am afraid: clap to the shutters, pray.
[Clown masks.

Now, like the hollowed orbs of the baboon
Your eyes gleam furtively—like rush-lights dim
That steal into the night through secret chinks
Of steep-thatched huts in lonely highland glens.

Clown. I might enlarge upon the periods
On either side your nose, that put an end
By saucy looks to any parleying
Save that of sharp-edged words: but haste me now
To know the darkness which I must illumine.

Amazon. What wight is he, as gentle Sidney dressed,
Who casts his wit about like pearls—I mean
Like pearl-less oysters, which the crowd accept,
Unskilled or unconcerned, as worth mirth's price,
While you and I perceive them what they are,
Sad fish indeed, old, stale, unsavoury?

Clown. I've marked him well, but know not who he is:
He seems to be acquaint with comic writers.
Know you the nymph that danced with him but now—
She, with the rosy garland—only hue
About her white robe save her golden hair—
With frank blue eyes that always seem to ring
With peals of fairy laughter, summer's queen?

Enter a gentleman dressed as a Corsair, and a lady dressed as a Contadina; both masked.

Amazon. Hush!

Clown. Ah! I noted these in the last waltz.

Amazon. She's my full cousin; he, a highland one.

I think they be in love.

Enter a gentleman dressed as an Elizabethan Courtier, and a lady dressed to symbolise Summer. After them runs in hurriedly a lady dressed as a Scotch Peasant-girl. They are masked. The Courtier shuts the door and puts his back against it.

Clown. Our cynosures!

Amazon. Indeed! Pray, let me out.

Courtier. Superb she-warrior, rest you here a space:

Nay, frown not, most redoubted amazon:

I have a thing to say: I'll say it now.

That which the world calls folly is my trade,

Unwitting that its trade is only folly.

I neither crave the statesman's rancid fame,

The sailor's vogue, the soldier's red renown,

Nor care I to discover: Africa

Agrees not well with my adventurous sprite;

The negress is not lovely—that's the die:

Nor is the Arctic climate amorous.

I wrote a book—Good lack, the solitude!

But first the woe by which I was confined!

O Luna, of thy tenderness I pray

Let me no more be fructified by woe!

The highway?—Fie on steam and liveried lightning!—

Whate'er I fancy if I may I do.

A happy notion fills me now; give ear,

Gentle and lovely ladies, gentlemen,

Sprightly and handsome. Will you hearken it?

[They assent.

It is my earnest hope to make you mad.—

These gala robes wherein we now are dressed

Why should we cast for good and all to-night,

To don the wintry worldling's dingy slough,

Returning sadly to the chrysalis?

Fashion, propriety, convention?—Tush!

Let us like noble heretics protest

Against all dogmas false and fashionable,

And, if need be, with righteous resignation

Attest our faith in glorious martyrdom,

Tied to opinion's stake, and burned by tongues

Of scandalous fire, blazing from faggot hearts.

Then, gentle friends, since such is our resolve,

We can do nothing nobler than attack

Fashion's mainstay, the discipline of dress.

I swear that you may well with less ado

Worship the sun, keep harems, or, like France

When liberty became beside herself,

Extend the week from seven days to ten—

Yea, set apart and consecrate each day

To traversing with all your might and main,

In order, Moses' ten "commandments,"

Than steadfast be in non-observance brave

Of the great ordinance of dressing all

In fashion's right religious uniform.

So, shall we dare the world? Who says with me,

To wear this fancy dress to-morrow too

In the sun's kindly, and the world's ill, eye?

Amazon. Suppose we do, what issue do you see?

Courtier. Whatever fantasies our minds may don

We shall expound with these our fancy clothes.

There is none here, I think, to whom I'm known,
Nor do I know a single one of you;
So I propose that each assume some name
To complement the dress worn, to be used
While we are in this mood.

Clown [to Amazon]. If that were fixed
You should be called war's bride, Bellona bold.

Bellona. Bellona would be bold to call you clown.

Corsair [to Contadina]. I'll call you—what? Some lingering name: Herminia!

Herminia. Herminia!

Corsair. What name for me, Herminia?

What word, however harsh, would by your lips
Be sweetened to a note of Syren strength,
That, whispered, should have force to summon me
From Iceland to Ceylon. Tell me, Herminia.

Herminia. I think Antinous should be your name.

Courtier [to Summer]. And you, sweet summer—Flora?

Summer. I'd be called,

And for no other reason than I would,
Not Flora, no, nor Maud, but Mary-Jane.

Courtier [to Peasant-girl]. Sweet lowland lass—alas, without a lad!—
Will you be of us and yourself re-christen.

Peasant-girl. I harboured here to shun a horrid man
Whom I saw, like a pirate, bearing down
To rob me of a dance. I'll sport with you.

Courtier. What name, then, lassie?—Effie, Jeanie, Katie?

Peasant-girl. No; call me May Montgomery, if you please.

Courtier. What? May Montgomery! Why choose that name?

None of the rest have been extravagant
To take a surname's luxury.

May. Let me—

Nay, for I will: I'll not be in the fashion:
And it will be a pleasing penance, too.

Courtier. A pleasing penance! Can you tell us how?

May. I scarcely like. But, sir, I like your play,
Because I would be called Montgomery.

Courtier. Then, May Montgomery, tell us your romance.

May. Alas, the speed I have to tell my tale
Is slow as melancholy thoughts can be,
That strike as often as a passing-bell:
A bitter-sweet confession I must make.
O ladies, do not fit your faces, pray,
For some iniquity! Sadly, 'tis this.
In Paris, where I lived a year ago,
A youth fell sick in love for worthless me:
I marvel now, though then I thought it due:
Yet love creates, being a divinity,
What it affects; and his most holy love
Inspired poor me with beauty not my own,
Though still I wonder that what grace I have
Could be enriched with such induement sweet
As he cast over it; for at that time
He lacked his passion's courage, so he wrote
A tender tale whose heroine was me,
But metamorphosed to a deity.
The book is throbbing like his fiery heart;
This I have learned with memorising it:
And now it is my only orison,
My only literature, my only joy.
I lull myself to sleep low-murmuring it,
And in my dreams its sweetest scenes enact;
I waken smiling in his tender arms,
And sob to find mine clasped about myself.
After his book he came to hear his doom:

Trembling he stood: I, wanton, doomed us both—
Him to his grave, for then I loved him not;
Myself, to love him now most hopelessly.
And May Montgomery in his book I am:
Pray, call me so; it is a lovely name.
Courtier. And is your lover dead?

May. I fear it, sir.

Courtier. Now, are we named anew, all except me.
How will you call me? Come, give me a name.
What in his story is your lover hight?

May. Earl Edmund; and the whisper went that he
By right was lord of many lands and towers
In Scotland here: but that I do not know.

Courtier. I pray you, bid me take that name.

May. O no!

Earl Edmund! That were blasphemy!—But yes!
I will be glad to speak it out aloud.

Edmund. Speak it, I pray, as often as you choose.—
Well, I am tired of barring up this door.
So, on the morrow, by the stroke of noon
Be all together, dressed as now we are,
Assembled at the distant, dusky end
Of that most pleasant pathway of the glen,
Where lovers, shaded by a green arcade,
Wander toward eventide, slow, silently.

May. The Alley of Sighs.

Edmund. So is it called, I think.

Bellona. What there to do, I pray you?

Edmund. I know not:

Plan nothing, and you'll see a wondrous plot.
Meantime, unmask, and let us see ourselves.
[They unmask.

Now, call our names.

They go out, repeating their new names. Mary-Jane and May Montgomery re-enter immediately.

May. Sweet mother, do you know how well you look?
They all think you at least as young as I.

Mary-Jane. My darling, it is you who keep me young:
The world is young while you are fresh and fair.
I was eighteen when you were born, my dear:
I'm more than twice your age, for you're sixteen.

May. Which no one will believe.—To think that I
At fifteen should be loved with such a love
As poor Earl Edmund's was!—Now, Mary-Jane,
Do you intend to play in this new game?

Mary-Jane. I think they merely mean a passing joke.

May. O no! it is to be an earnest joke.
Do let them call me May Montgomery!
Besides, he whom I am to call Earl Edmund
Has got his eyes and voice—indeed he has.

Mary-Jane. Well, we will go to-morrow to the glen:
I like the company of sprightly men:
And you will have this earl to clarify
The sorrow-shaded cheek and tear-dimmed eye.

May. O Mary-Jane, I am a widow too!
I'll never wed another; nor will you.
[They go out.

Re-enter Earl Edmund.

Edmund. She looks at me perplexed and wistfully;
But I am certain that she knows me not.
How should she! When her memory might have caught
A faithful copy of me, love, unrisen,

Shrank from the dawn: and so it is that now
When love has flooded all her life, the shape
Conceived of me within her inmost heart
Must be the picture of a false ideal:
I dread to think how fine a thing she loves.
I'm glad she cannot pierce my sanguine mood,
And find the haggard child of pain and care,
Who, pain being dead, and in pale care's despite,
Has laughed himself to pleasant looks and strength.
Of my identity the sudden news
Would to my suit hardly be suitable:
Wherefore I'll fall upon some easy course,
And gently glide unfelt into her heart.
[Goes out.]

ACT II

SCENE.—The Alley of Sighs.

Enter Ringan Deane and Annie Smith.

Ringan. What is the meaning of your face to-day?
Will you not speak? Then sit down here awhile.
[They sit. She gives him a daisy.
But Annie, speak. This flower is very well:
Now let me have some blossoms from your tongue.
What are these roses struggling in your cheeks,
And withering with your waxing, waning smile,
Which something means and yet is that thing's veil?
Is it love's sun that rises? Is it love
Beginning to embalm your heart's sweet flood,
And dyeing deep the roses that now die,
Now flourish in your cheeks?—If you'll not speak,
Then here's a thing to do. Read this aloud.
[Gives her a paper.

And read it in your softest, dreamiest tones;
Clothe with your voice my verses' skeletons.

Annie [reading].

Where have you been to-day, Annie Smith,
Where have you been to-day?
By the shore where the river becomes a frith?
Or up on the hills, away,
By purple heather and saffron broom
Like clouds at the sunset hour,
And all the well-kent flowers that bloom
In each breezy hillside bower?

Were you there, Annie Smith, that your face is so gay
And your eyes so laughing and blue?
Was it there that you spent the whole of the day?
Or, tell me, darling, were you
In the leafy wood where the grass grows thick
With the fairies at their play?
Did you flirt with Oberon, dance with Puck,
That your face, Annie Smith, is so gay?

Where have you been to-day, Annie Smith,
That you smile so gaily on me?
By the shore where the river becomes a frith?
Or were you upon the sea?
Did you sail in a pearly shell, Annie Smith,
With your hair flying free?
Do your laughing blue eyes tell, Annie Smith,
Such a happy tale of the sea?
Or were you down in the caves, Annie Smith,
With the mermaids under the sea?

Did the mermen beneath the waves, Annie Smith,
Try to catch and keep you from me?
Or did you fly through the air all the day?
Did you frolic with the wind?
Did you dine with the man in the moon, I pray,
That your face and your eyes are so laughing and gay?
Come, Annie, Annie, be quick and say
Where you have been the whole of the day,
In your body or in your mind?

ii.

Where have you been, Annie Smith, to-day,
That your face and your eyes are so calm?
Did you hear in the church the minister pray?
Did you join in the holy psalm?
Did he tell of the solemn joys of the blest,
That your face is so calm and serene,
That you seem to have ended each earthly quest?
In the church, Annie Smith, have you been?

Or did you stand on the shore, Annie Smith,
And gaze away to the west?
Did you stand where the river becomes a frith,
With your hands folded over your breast,
And gaze at the golden skyey gate
As the sun passed through sublime?
Did you get this shadowy light of fate
On your face at the sunset time?

Or are you an angel, Annie Smith,
For a time from your blessedness riven,
To guide me over the cold, wan, frith
Of death to your happy heaven?

Ringan. O, you might precept Mercury's elocution,
And teach the Muses and the Sirens singing.
Annie. And do you love me, then?
Ringan. You know I do.
Annie. I love you—and I love you, Ringan Deane.

Enter Clown.

O, what a curious-looking gentleman!
Clown. A pretty pair, indeed!—And who are you?
Annie. He is a poet, and I am his sweetheart.
Clown. A poet is he, sweetheart! Lack-a-day!
Bid him go hang or drown without ado;
And in Elysium while you live, he'll pray
For showers of blessing to descend on you,
Whose high behest despatched him to that clime
Of peaceful pleasure and warm purple dusk,
Ere rained calamity and mouldering time
Could rot his spirit in its carnal husk.
Or if you needs must keep him, be prepared
For daily infidelity, my dear,
For you will find your part in him is shared
By every beauty he may see or hear;
Whether it be of seas, of flowers, of skies,
A wind, a woman, or a music note,
His hungry passion hugs it till it dies,
Leaving him happy with a new-born thought.
Annie. He being a poet, must it be so with him?
Clown. It is the poet's health and his disease,
His joy, his sorrow, his belief and whim,
His bane and blessing, and his itch and ease,
His night and day, his pestilence and breath,

His summer, winter, heaven, hell, life, and death,
This passion, shackled to its own desire,
 Unchained, unchainable within that range,
 Stateless, bateless, changing without change,
Consuming beauty after beauty, higher
To toss its blood-stained, heaven-scaling fire.

Enter Edmund.

Good-morrow, noble earl. What, you look pale!
By every gentle oath that is not stale
You are a votary of Cupid's throng,
And have been keeping vigil all night long
At some high window, or in some lone grove;
For it is still the doom of those in love—
O cruelty, most condign and refined!—
To watch with Dian and her nymphs unkind,
And, like chameleons, take the stars' wan hue,
The while their purple hearts love's fire burns through.
Last night you seemed unharmed of Venus' son.
What! has your cheeks' red radiance trickling gone
Out by a broach of last night's archery,
When Cupid volleyed shafts from many an eye?

Edmund. Late hours, good clown, late hours: I swear that's all.

Clown. No; you are in love: I am sure of it. Now, take a little
advice from me. Do not addle your brain by imagining that you love a
particular lady. You are in love: that's all, and that's enough. O these
romancists! It is womankind you love: and these wonderful ladies, if it
were not for novels and poetry and tradition—and heredity perhaps—would
never dream of bestowing their affections on an individual. The world's a
mere expansion of Adam and Eve: I look upon it as one man and one
woman—as manhood and womanhood: and I believe, if you sounded the
thought of the world, you would find that is how it regards itself.

Edmund. I know a lady who will never regard the world in that light.

Clown. O, unsophisticated youth!

Edmund. A maid whose bosom is a nunnery chaste
Where spotless thoughts like votaresses dwell.

Clown. There is not a maid, wife, or widow, whose fancy any man, if
he set himself to it, could not conquer; nor any man whom any woman could
not subdue if she chose.

Edmund. One single fancy like an upright king
Sways her most constant loyalty: my love
Conceives not that there is in all the world
Another man save me; and I, no maid.

Clown. I would undertake to make your saintly lady love me, and
forget you altogether.

Edmund. O, rather would I have my lady hear
The hiss of serpents and the howl of hell,
Than have the rose-bud beauty of her ear
Sullied by such a tale as you would tell!
For though a pure portcullis' instant fall
Would cut your foul breath from her cloistered brain,
On the pink portal like a sooty pall,
I fear its filthiness might long remain.

If you dared ope your lips and let them hold
Most distant parley with a noisome theme,
Her eyes would lighten out their glance of gold,
And strike you dumb for ever. O, you dream!

Clown. You talk, you talk. Honestly I admire your youthful
enthusiasm. But these clear-starched opinions, which young men collar
themselves with in the first moon of manhood, will soon soil, and be
washed and wrung to a rag. But truly, I am in love myself.

Edmund. With whom?

Clown. She wears the habit of an amazon,
And flings her limbs as though they ne'er had moved

In Chinese steps within a frock's confine;
Whistles, lays hand on hip, laughs at her ease,
And seems to signify of two things, one—
Come, kiss me if you choose, or, if you dare.

Enter Antinous, Herminia, May Montgomery, Mary-Jane, and Bellona.

Edmund. Good morning, and good morning, gentle friends.

Bellona. And who are these?

Clown. A sweetheart and her poet.

May [to Annie]. Tell me your name, and I will tell you mine.

[May and Annie talk apart.

Ringan [to Mary-Jane]. O lady, summer's essence, centuries
Of sunlight from your eyes my being flood.
The sweetest damask of a season's bloom
Of roses dyes your cheeks, your tender breath
Is sweeter than their scent, and in your hair
There shines more gold than ever July spent
In gilding leagues of wheat.

Mary-Jane. Ha, ha! good boy.

You'd better deem me dressed as winter, though.

Ringan. O, were you in a snow-drift clad, and hung
With icicles about, a glance would tell
That you were summer masquerading. Lo!
You are the summer, and you could not hide,
No more than Venus with her girdle on
Could pass for Hecate. And I love you, lady.

Mary-Jane. Now, you are foolish, sir.

[Crosses to Edmund.

Ringan. I fear I am.

[Lies down under a tree.

Bellona. Have you ever been in love?

Clown. I am not such a fool.

Bellona. Not such a man, you mean. You are all fools till you be in
love—great, lubberly, ill-bred, selfish clowns. And when the selfish
passion seizes you, then—then—O then!

Clown. Why, what then?

Bellona. Then you become ten times great, lubberly, ill-bred, selfish
clowns. Men are all and always fools.—Earl Edmund, we are here. What then?

Edmund. Impatient amazon, thus then it is:

This hour you must complete as best you can;
When it is sped, here gather all again,
And on the grass partake a sylvan feast:
There shall not want for music; if for song,
The blame be with yourselves. Be happy, all.—
Sweet May Montgomery, will you walk with me?

[Edmund and May go out.

Bellona. I'll walk alone.

[Ringan rushes forward.

Well, boy, you look distraught.

Ringan. O incarnation of what nymph soe'er,
I knew not what it is to love till now;
For never have I seen in any maid
So much to love as in this heaven appears.
Some maidens are like night, and some like day,
But hear me swear, since day and night began
There has not overhung a thrilled, hushed world
A night so bossed with points of admiration,
As o'er my soul is imminent in you,
Studded with stars of love-enforcing power;
Nor has there shone a day so bounteous
Of every largesse to a thankful world,
But that the joyous motion you instil
Throughout my life transcends its benefice:
Wherefore, vouchsafe to hear me cry, I love you;

And frown not, for the night should never frown
Upon the humble flower that yields its scent,
Its sole ability of offering;
The day should never lower upon the lake
Exhaling tears, which is its grateful life.
O, be not angry that the life of love
Which you infuse in me, here at your feet,
For further inspiration or for blight,
Lies lowly, and the ground you tread on kisses.
[Falls on the ground.]

Bellona. But what of that fair girl, your sweetheart there?

Ringan. Talk not of her. I never loved her. No!

I thought I did, for she was prettiest:
But having seen you I have seen the sun,
And never more will languish for a star.

Bellona. You are a foolish boy.

Ringan. What shall I do?

[Goes out.]

Annie. O, he has left me! O, my heart will break!

Herminia. His haste forgot his love. You should not weep.

Annie. It was not haste. These ladies! O, my heart!

Clown. I told you what to look for.

Bellona. Out on you!—

Come, we'll devise a way to bring him back.

[Mary-Jane, Bellona, and Annie go out. Clown follows.]

Antinous [singing].

The bee sucks honey from the flower

Because the sweets are there:

I love a maiden in her bower,

Because the maiden's fair.

The morning flower turns round his head

To greet the rising sun;

My love turns all to you, sweet maid,

And so my song is done.

[Antinous and Herminia go out.]

ACT III

SCENE.—A Garden.

Enter Lady Montgomery and Captain Mercer.

Mercer. I'm glad we've met. How long ago was that?

Lady M. Since she was stolen it is fourteen years;

Yet in that time no tears have wet my eyes:

For when we knew the darling child was lost,

My husband all his other hopes gave up—

His office, and advancement, whose sure strides

Pursued him constantly, dogged as time;

His friends and schemes political; his fame,

Which years and dignity bore shoulder-high:

He gave them all to buy this little pearl

Whose price exceeds the value of the world.

O, in our heart her dainty shape is shrined,

And keeps it pulsing; and she goes not out

Till wintry death expel her summer reign,

And freeze that ruddy home to be his house.

Mercer. Why, fourteen years ago I lost a wife,
The sweetest girl that ever blessed a man.

Some happy months, and then I crossed the seas:

I sailed from Naples, and she went to Rome.

When I returned my friends in Rome were gone,

Whither I found not. Then my wife had died,

I thought, in child-bed, and looked up the news.

I did not there discover what I feared,
But found in place a most conflicting tale
Of brigandage; and murders had been done.
Some ransomed, some let go, some corpses found,
Left unaccounted for a child and woman.
I searched until my purse and I were lank,
In hope to find these two; then, back to sea.
Having made many voyages and much wealth
I still pursued my calling, for in it
I found from sorrow, refuge; though, alone,
In midnight watches I have often wept
To hear the waves with melancholy tongues
Lapping my ship, to see the crowded stars
Rejoicing like a family in heaven.
And so I marvel that you, being a woman,
From weeping should refrain since love so great
Beats in your heart for such a priceless loss.

Lady M. The war of hope and fear made desolate
The wine-press of our tears immediately;
And since the imminence of our great loss,
Our constant, wearisome world-wandering
Has all unqualified our eyes for tears:
I tell you we have gone through all the world.
First every city, town, Italian croft,
All hermitages, and all robbers' dens,
From wintry Blanc to fiery Aetna's base,
We searched, or sharpened others' eyes with gold
To ransack for our treasure: if two beings,
Having between them for their inspiration
One soul alone, might lose it, and yet move
To seek their riven life, with wanner looks,
With ghostlier, more eagle-sighted eyes,
Than those with which we glanced through Italy,
They could not pierce the region that they haunt:
Obscurity was all revealed to us.
Thereafter every morn a measured space
Of weary world our gaunt eyes oversee:
Round with the day from east to west we go.
Twelve years, now past, from Rome we westward hied;
And here, grown old, foot-sore, heart-sore, and poor
In earthly gold, but rich in hope's bright coin
We wander west again.

Mercer. Most noble souls!
You shall not lack for gold while I have wealth.
O, you administer a chastisement
To my unwinged proceedings in my search
For wife and child, which should have distanced yours
Who travel only for a daughter.

Lady M. No;
She is our niece, but loved more than a daughter.

Mercer. I never heard, nor read, of such a love.

Lady M. O, but you never saw, nor shall behold,
So lovable a creature! I would more
Lose her and pine for her than be the dame,
The happy dame, of seven lusty boys
Like any I have seen—the loveliest.

Mercer. What kin is she?—your husband's or your own?

Lady M. Her father was my husband's elder brother;
His wife died when our little one was born.
I reared her, loved her, and her infancy
Laid hold upon my husband. Six years passed;
And then her father wished her back again.
Upon that news a sickness of my husband's
Became a malady that claimed my care,

Dividing so my grief. A worthy priest,
Once chaplain to her father, leaving us—
We spent the summer in the Apennines—
We trusted our one jewel to his care.
But on the way a brigand regiment
Killed him and others who would not submit.
The captives being ransomed, she was missed,
She and her nurse; and fourteen years reveal
But little further light. Her father's dead;
She is our ward; and we, her only friends.

Mercer. What news is this! A woman and a child
In both our stories unaccounted for!
You spoke of further light.

Lady M. Hope not too much.
We met one, Julio, twice among the hills,
Where he confessed he led the robber-band
That wrought our woe; but of the nurse and child
Professed whole innocence and ignorance.
When he was captured and condemned to die
He asked to see my husband. Penitent,
He told him all he knew, a dreadful tale.
While others plundered, he had marked a maid
Who carried in her arms a lisping child:
Seizing his fancy, her he laid hold upon;
She struggled hard; he in his greedy haste—
For though the leader, if he took her not
And any other were possessed of her,
He might not claim her—the loud-screaming babe
Tore from her, bent to kill; but on its breast,
Its clothing being rent, there gleamed a cross
Of gold, whereon in diamonds quaintly set
Christ hung on ruby nails with ruby blood:
It turned aside his purpose. Nigh them knelt
Another woman, wringing of her hands,
And weeping o'er another infant dead.
Afraid to desecrate the symbol blest,
He pressed the child, from early earthly death
Saved by the cross, into this Rachel's arms,
And swung the maid, discumbered harshly so,
Upon his horse, and kept her for his own.
The other woman with the cross-saved child
Escaped, and took with her a store of gold.

Mercer. This woman who escaped must be my wife:
It is my wife! Resource was still her forte;
By countless proofs her sleight of head she showed,
Nor were her hands less cunning in their kind.
I have not known in any clime of earth,
Where trade constrained, or pleasure led me on,
One of her sex likelier for such a deed
As this checkmating of the brigand band:
And with it all a girl most feminine;
The deepest scrutiny would never dream
What strength lay sleeping with an open eye
Beneath her melting gaze and rosy mouth,
Like fire that underburns a flowery mead.
Pardon me, pray, I have not talked of her
To any one alive for many years.
Why she should travel in that company,
Not leaving word, nor sending any news,
I can but marvel.

Lady M. Here my husband comes.

Enter Sir James Montgomery.

Sir James. News, news!

Lady M. O heaven!
Sir James. I'll tell you as we go.
[They go out.

ACT IV

SCENE.—A Wood.

Enter Edmund and May.

May. Where is your bubbling mirth that overflowed
In fresh, fantastic volume yester-eve?
If doleful thoughts should shadow any face,
My past might countenance such mirroring,
And see, I laugh; yea, by all merry things
Light-hearted am I! 'Tis the sun, I think.
Why are you sad? If you still raise your brows,
And stare so, like a spaniel, and unslack
The pressure of your lips, I'll think, indeed,
You mean to mimic my lost love, and steal
With stolen looks my heart.

Edmund. Am I like him?

May. When you look sad you are, and when you laugh,
I think he would have laughed so if he could.

Edmund. You think him dead.

May. Sometimes, and sometimes not.

Edmund. Say you were certain of his death, what then?

May. In weeds that widows wear I'd hide myself
In some far lonely land, and mourn for him
Among the hills and streams; and read his book;
And, feeding seld and spare, woo fickle death,
Who flirts with weaklings and bears off the strong,
For one cold kiss to take my soul to him.

Edmund. There is no man that's worthy of such love.

May. I think not of his worth or want of worth;
I love him. But if gentle manliness,
Beauty, and honour, and unsounded passion
Deserve a maid's devotion, my poor love
Is but a scanty tribute to his worth;
And—woe, alas!—its date of payment past,
And the robbed creditor far hence or dead,
Its garnered hoard weighs heavy on my heart.

Edmund. Fear not, fear not. There's something whispers me
Your love will be rewarded, in so far
As to possess your sweetheart can amend
The lengthy woe you suffer for his sake.—
Now, here's a thing to do to make you glad.
Suppose that I'm the true and true-loved earl:
I'll go into that grove, and suddenly
Emerging, light on you; and you will know me,
Or I will know you, or we'll know each other,
Or let our unthought act the instant mould.

May. O, in his story there's a scene like that!
I'm sitting reading in my sweetheart's book
A passage where he finds me reading it.

Edmund. A curious notion!

May. Shall we act that scene?

Edmund. Yes, if you please. But have you got the book?

May. Yes; here it is. Now hide; and I will change
To suit the place the passage.

Edmund. Very well.

[Goes out.

May [reading]. "Now it chanced that May Montgomery was resident in
this town at the very time of Edmund's arrival. One afternoon the
love-sick girl took her book to the glen, and sitting down in the shadow

of a tree endeavoured to alleviate her passion by reading aloud the scene wherein her lover had represented her in just such a situation, and so engaged. She had read over the description of herself lying on her mossy couch, and her cheek was flushed with the anticipation of the interview about to ensue in the narrative between her lover and herself, when the branches rustled behind her and a voice——"

Edmund [within]. May Montgomery!

May. O Heaven! Deceitful ears! "—and a voice whispered 'May Montgomery.' She accused her fancy of cheating her, and proceeded with her reading——"

Edmund [within]. May Montgomery!

May. O me! this voice is agonising! Fancy, you will make me mad! "—when the voice again whispered her name. She exclaimed on fancy for torturing her so, and laying the book upon the ground, was about to stretch herself, leaning on her elbows with her fingers in her ears, when a shadow came——"

Good my eyes have you leagued with my ears, then?

There is a shadow! Oh!

Re-enter Edmund.

Edmund. Turn not away.

Your hands late held my book. Take now the hand
That wrote the book.

May. Are you a ghost, a ghoul,
A vampire, come to plague me for my sin
In killing him with scorn whose form you bear?
I beg no mercy, for the doom is just.
But no; you are an angel; it must be:
No spirit foul could harbour in your shade:
And you have come to tell me I'm forgiven.

Edmund. I'm neither ghost, nor ghoul, nor angel, May:
I am your lover in carnation true,
A bodiment much better than of yore,
Edmund, with health restored and joy complete,
Since it is crowned with what he never hoped,
The freely-given diadem of your love.

May. I think you surely are the devil, sir.
This acting is too good: you're like him too.

Edmund. Him!—whom?—the devil?

May. O, no! Earl Edmund.—Love, I know you now.
[He offers to embrace her.

No, sir; I will go to the grave unloved by any man, if I do not find the true Earl Edmund. I think I must begin and search for him. I wait and wait, and time is all that comes and goes. When I think that on every hour I bestow a treasure of hope, and that some day I may have entertained so many hours as to have spent all my fortune in that kind; and when I remember that all this expense may be waste, for my love may be in heaven; and when I think that if he be alive every hour removes my memory further from him; that he may love another, that he may be married, then I cling to the skirts of every parting hour, and sigh at the knell that tolls its departure and the advent of the next.—But let us act again.—

O yes, I know you, Edmund, and I love you.
But can you then forgive me for my scorn?

Edmund. Forgive—forgive? There's nothing to forgive.

May. O, I was very foolish, very young!
I did not know how great a thing love is:
That woman's love is like the spacious sea,
And man's love like the mirroring of the sky.
O, I knew nothing! Yet, I should have known.
Now, I know all; your book has been my school,
My manual, my cyclopaedia:
It tells me of the all in all of love,
And teaches that its soul cannot be told,
That action is its highest eloquence.

Edmund. The silence of your lips, my gentle love,
Is richer, rosier, than the ruddiest gold;
The diamonds and the rubies of your speech
Become them well.

May. You act too warmly, sir.

Edmund. I do not act at all; I am myself.

May. Nay, then, I think you are beside yourself.
Be moderate, sir.—You uttered only words;
And words are breath; and then, a lover's breath!
Hot, gasping, poisonous air!

Edmund. O no, my May!
Love's breath is hot and healthy as the breeze
That floats the summer from the sunny south,
With merry crews of nightingales and swallows,
As sweet and swift as are the words of love.

May. O words and songs and sounds are merely stones,
When love is as an empty hungry gulf.

Edmund. Ay, but when love is certain of a feast,
Then words and songs and sounds are spicy whets.

May. Yes, yes; dear love, dear love. Speak on, speak on.

Edmund. Say after me what I will say to you,
The words that are the sweetest in the world,
And are an act when all a soul is in them.
You are the cause that makes me whisper them,
And, being said, from you claim like effect.
If what I say be of such worth to you,
As, said by you, 'twill hold in my esteem,
Then this will be a changing gold for gold:
I love you.

May. I love you.

Edmund. The only words
Worth learning, speaking, writing, singing, graving.
The middle word, the linking word, the 'love'
Is like eternal space; and 'I' and 'you'
Mark out a sky and earth, and gather in
Time, heaven, and hell.

May. O, happiness alone!
We hedge about an Eden, I and you.

Edmund. Eden, indeed! Adam I envy not
His grand originality; for when
I say to you, 'Sweet May Montgomery,
I love you,' I speak words I seem to make.
As sweet and strange they are as when first said
By Adam when he first beheld his Eve.
I feel within, about me, and above
The freshness of creation. Everything
Is new, and every word a white-hot poem:
I am a poet, too, as great as Adam;
To speak, as in his time, is to invent.
'I,' 'you'—O, these are words new-forged and bright!
And herein am I happier than he—
I love, not Eve, but May Montgomery.

May. O me! I would that I could find my love!
You are in love, too, for your speech betrays you.
Pray, tell me of your love; I told you mine.

Edmund. Not now; the hour is past. Come; we must run.
How they will mock us!

May. We've been happy, though.
[They go out, running.]

ACT V

SCENE. The Alley of Sighs. A table set out.

Enter Clown and Bellona.

Clown. O Amazon, victorious and proud,
More dread than is your bow your eyebrows are,
Upbending to discharge darts keener far
Than fill your quiver or the thunder-cloud.
You jest at me, you mock my heartfelt love;
You put me off and on even as a glove.
O gentle, noble, bitter amazon,
I would that you could see into my heart!
Bellona. I've seen; it is an empty nut, good clown.
Clown. Thenceforward I will play a silent part.

Enter Mary-Jane.

Bellona. What is to be done?

Mary-Jane. Herminia is dressing Annie Smith like a bride in satin and lace; and she and Antinous will lead her into the presence of the mad boy, whom we are to have here. As it was our dresses as much as our maturity that caught his fancy, I have no doubt that, mistaking Annie for a new goddess, he will fall at her feet with some hyperbolic apostrophe, as he did at yours.

Bellona. A very likely thing. I hope he may not recognise her.—Clown.

Clown. Your will?

Bellona. Fetch hither Ringan Deane.

Clown. Where is he?

Bellona. Find him.

[Clown goes out.]

Mary-Jane. Have you two quarrelled?

Bellona. O no! He's a patient, strong man, that clown.

Mary-Jane. He's a handsome fellow.

Bellona. I have eyes.

Enter Edmund and May Montgomery.

May [aside]. We're not the last: we're safe from mockery.

Edmund. Why, where are all the rest, good amazon?

Bellona. Why, where's your wondrous plot, good earl?

Edmund. Fate knows.

Bellona. Fate!—how you startle me! I brooded once
On destiny, and thus said with myself:
I will not do as other women do,
Marry a man, and be one couple more;
I will not be as other women are,
Whom the world praises, and who deem themselves
Happy as earth can make them: I will be
Unwomanly, and scorn what women love.

Edmund. A new Diana.

Bellona. No, a thousand times!

Why will you think what may be must have been?
My thought—But I'll not tell you; for to tell
Would kill it; then I could not give it shape.
Always I read of fate and talked of it,
Of birth-stars, and our own polarity,
And of the orient, iron dooms-day book,
Of former lives that we have led, whose deeds
Determine this, of unrelenting life—
The ecstasy that with the flowers we share,
The crisis that for ever shakes the world;
And I would ebb and flow with hope and fear,
But mostly breast the adamant with waves
Of seething blood, I curbed, I quelled—How's this?
You spoke of fate, and struck a resonant string.

Edmund. Then, you're a fatalist.

Bellona. I fear I am.

Edmund. You speak more truly than you think. Your fear

Is just; for brooding souls that talk of fate,
And of their helpless, brute plasticity
In mighty, thoughtless hands, bring down the woes
They dread and should defy: the timid blood
Is first to be diseased; and winged death
Falls on the shrinking quarry. Amazon,
Face fate and stare it down. Why, this is fate,
This only: other slave we cannot have
Than these same hands and feet of circumstance.
Master it, master it; or fire and flood
Are drowned and scorched like moths and drops of dew!
The Arab fisher's jinn; unsealed, diffused,
He fills and suffocates the universe;
Inurned, a plaything, or a marshalled host.
You see, I know the western prophet, too.
 May. O, let us lie and talk of love and fate
Here on the daisies till the night comes down!

Enter Sir James and Lady Montgomery, and Captain Mercer.

 Mary-Jane [aside]. My husband! O, what shall I do?
 Lady M. Alas,
She is not here!
 Mercer. My wife is; that is she.
 Edmund. You watch us keenly.
 Sir James. We have reason, sir.
 Mary-Jane [kneeling before Mercer].
Forgive me. Kneel beside me, May; kneel down.
[May kneels.
Give me your hand, and—kiss me.
 May. Mother, mother!
What is it?
 Bellona. Now, I think, the play begins.
 Mary-Jane. They killed my baby; and they gave me her.
Look at her, feel her!—could I give her up?
Sir—madam!
 May. Mother, mother!
 Mary-Jane. Husband!
 May. Hush,
Or you will die.
 Mercer. Dear love, dear soul, dread nothing.
[Raises Mary-Jane.
 Bellona [aside]. Herminia comes.—Good people, who are caught In this
same net of circumstance, go hence:
Pass through these birches, and you'll find a bower
Whose shade will blend more sweetly with your mood,
And make serener your enraptured souls.
Besides, I am the prompter, or the fate
Of one scene more fantastic than you play,
Which falls now to be acted here.
 Sir James. Lady,
Your garb does not bespeak your wisdom.
 Bellona. Sir,
Since when had decency sole grant of sense?
 Edmund. Well said!
 Sir James. I'll set my wits to yours anon.
Is this the way?
 Bellona. Under the lowest boughs.
[Sir James and Lady Montgomery, Mercer,
Edmund, Mary-Jane and May go out.

Enter Antinous and Herminia with Annie Smith dressed like a bride.

 Bellona. Ah, keep that look, sweet child! The mystery
Of sense and soul! Her eyes are infinite.

Herminia, what would not you and I,
Maids as we are, and infants yet in law,
Surrender thankfully to own again
The dream of innocence?

Herminia. My beauty—ay,
Half of my beauty for the dewy dawn,
The fragrance, and the shadow of heaven, the blood
That knows not what it would, bathing the thought
With odorous tides, the rapture of life, the swoon
Of innocence, the infinite longing,
The sweet pain, and a pure, brave boy to love me!
Antinous, we shall please ourselves with this,
And play at being a boy and girl again.

Antinous. My love, you are happier in this fantasy
Than when you were the thing and knew it not.

Herminia. And I believe you.

Bellona. Here they come. Sit, child.

Annie Smith sits on a knoll. Herminia and Bellona lie on either side of her. Antinous stands behind.

Enter Clown with Ringan Deane.

Ringan. What deity is this? whose bride? whose queen?
Look, how she sits among these earthly maids,
A star between two lamps. She looks at me
With eyes like beckoning flames. A kind of night
Hovers about her, she so dazzles day.
She bends toward me; she stretches out her arms;
A tear, a molten tear wells in each eye,
And overhangs the lid and slowly falls,
Loth to descend these tender wistful heavens.
Her lips are open, but her struggling voice,
A helpless, still-born sigh, dies in her mouth.
I hope I may have strength to speak to her.
[He kneels before Annie Smith.

Annie. O Ringan—Ringan Deane!

Ringan. You know me, then!

Annie [embracing him]. O, Ringan, I am Annie—Annie Smith!

Bellona. Clown, this is very well. I am so moved;
I feel a kindness to all the world.

Clown. And I am of the world.

Bellona. Ay, so you are.

Re-enter Sir James, Lady Montgomery, and the others.

Bellona. Well, noble earl? What!—wonders?

Edmund. Yes, indeed,
Most wonderful.

Bellona. Sit, then, and tell us. See,
The feast is spread.

Edmund. We'll tell you when we sit;
But there's a thing to do before we sit.—
Ladies and gentlemen, a little way
We've stepped beyond convention. I propose
A further deviation from the path
Beaten by ages, dusty with the trade
Of thronging use and wont. The Scottish law
Permits us here to marry as we are:
Let us be married—are we not all paired?
And this same feast shall be our wedding-feast.
Do you object, Sir James?

Sir James. Why should I, sir?

Edmund. Then, May Montgomery, will you know me yet?

May. I am in a dream. One mystery at a time.
However came you by my proper name?

Edmund. That is the strangest accident of all:

I was a prophet when I wrote my book.—
Sweet May Montgomery, I take you for my wife
In sight of heaven and you, astonished friends.
 May. I take you for my husband.
 Antinous. I take you,
Herminia, for my wife.
 Herminia. And I take you,
Antinous, for my husband. [Aside to Ant.] Dear old Jack.
 Bellona. My name is Mary Jones.
 Clown. So? Ha! Then I,
James Jocelyn, take you to be my wife.
 Bellona. I love you, and I take you for my husband.
 Mercer. My dearest wife, you'll be my bride again?
 Mary-Jane. Surely, my husband.
 Sir James. This is bravely done!
My wife and I bid heaven's blessing on you.
 Mary-Jane. But where are Annie Smith and Ringan Deane?
 May. I saw them, like a vision, steal away.

Curtain.

BRUCE: A CHRONICLE PLAY
(Glasgow, 1884)

DRAMATIS PERSONS

Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrich, afterwards King of Scotland.
Edward Bruce.
Nigel Bruce.
Lamberton, Archbishop of St. Andrews.
Walter, the Steward of Scotland.
Sir William Wallace.
Sir James Douglas.
Sir Thomas Randolph.
Sir Christopher Seton.
Sir John Seton.
James Crombe.
Kirkpatrick.
Comyn, Earl of Badenoch.
Comyn, Earl of Buchan.
Macduff, Earl of Fife.
Sir Robert Comyn.
Edward I., King of England.
Edward II., King of England.
The Earl of Pembroke.
Lord Henry Percy.
Lord Robert Clifford.
Sir Ingram de Umfraville.
Sir Giles de Argentine.
Sir Peter Mallorie, Justiciary of England.
Hugh Beaumont.
Isabella, Countess of Carrick, afterwards Queen of Scotland. Isobel,
Countess of Buchan.
Countess of Badenoch.
Lady Douglas.

An Old Man, a Young Friar, a Messenger, a Forester, a Spy.
Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Monks, Soldiers, &c.

Scene: London and Scotland.

BRUCE

ACT I

SCENE I.—London. A Room in the Palace.

King Edward I., Earl of Pembroke, Lord Henry Percy,
and Lord Robert Clifford.

Edward I. Once more, my lords, the rude north claims our care.

A faction there is still opposed to peace,
Strongly ill-willed to England and to me,
Obdurate, set, incorrigibly wroth—
A band whose blood is of the liquid flame
That often madly jets in savage veins,
When wisdom would bestow some blessed gift,
Some pearl which ignorance rejects with scorn,
And chafes and frets and sets the world on fire.
The Bruce, my lords, has fled the English Court:
He goes to Scotland, and his guiding star
Is that same beacon of rebellious light
Built up by every burning Scottish heart.
Astonishment and curiosity
Shoulder each other in your crowded eyes
Like townsmen gazing from a window's height
At some strange pageantry afoot below;
There let them crowd, for wonders are to pass.
Were I to ask you, now, if Bruce or Comyn
Has played the fairer game, you might say this:
They cannot be compared—Bruce always with,
And Comyn always opposite to me;
Yet have they both held by the cause they chose:
So there's a parity of constancy.
Such answer might be yours. Then I would say,
They both are faithless: here I hold the proof.
[Exhibits a scroll.

This is a deed transferring Bruce's lands
To Comyn, who exchanges for the same
His claim—it's written so—to Scotland's crown.
He promises besides to aid the Bruce
To gain the state and name of King of Scots.
There are their signatures.

Pembroke. By miracle—
Or how did this indenture reach your hands?

Edward I. John Comyn sent it me. You see—base rogues!—Bruce false
to me, and Comyn false to Bruce.

Pembroke. My liege, Bruce hitherto has borne a name
As bright and glorious as his golden shield,
Untarnished by dishonour's rusty breath.
This paper may be forged.

Edward I. That was my thought;
And so I had a copy of it made,
And sent to Bruce last night. My messenger
Asked, being charged so far, some word from him.
He half denied; but compromised, and craved
Three days to answer. So much grace I gave.
This is the first day, and last night he fled.

Pembroke. A sign of guilt. What will your Highness do?

Edward I. With your good counsel, lords, doubtless the best!

Percy. To horse, and take the knave alive or dead!

Edward I. A speedy finish; but consider this:
Comyn and Bruce divide the land of Scots;
They now are mortal foes; why need we stir
To fight two cocks who will each other slay
Between the high walls of their Scottish pit?
Yet Pembroke, Clifford, and bold Harry Percy
Be ready at a word to lead your knights
Across the border.

Percy. Nor can that summons come
Too soon for us.

Edward I. I would your willing haste
Were from the proof removed a farther cast:
And so were Wallace wise as he is wight
It would be. Twice I offered grace and love,
If he would govern Scotland in my name.
He thanked me for my grace and for my love,
But at my terms he laughed as at a jest.
Had he accepted them, I say again,
As there is none so fit to rule the Scots,
Your willing service had been hardly asked.

Percy. Let me say this: had such a league been struck
Between your Highness and the valiant Scot,
You might have borne your banners through the world.

Pembroke. What specious arguments could Wallace urge?

Edward I. O, ask me not! My patience served me ill
To hear him out. How can I then rehearse
His saucy reasons, wasting breath and wrath!
Within short space you all shall hear himself;
A fortnight hence, I think, he will be tried.
And now, Lord Clifford, James of Douglas comes
To claim his father's lands, which you possess.
Tell me, who knows, what kind of man he is,
That we may judge how he will bear himself?

Clifford. A man of men, although my mortal foe.
I knew him well in Paris ere these broils.
Unarmed, a gentle blitheness graced his style:
A dainty lisp engaged his auditors
With tickling pleasure; such a piquant touch
Was in the Scottish Hector, as they called him,
Tripping with helpless tongue, like rose-lipped girls.
But when he armed his body, then his soul
Was harnessed in a dress of adamant.
In council-halls, o'er ladies' lutes, in war,
Brave, courteous, wise, loyal to truth, he was:
So is he: Douglas changes but for good.

Edward I. You praise him highly. You shall answer him.
He comes. Make room.

Enter Sir James Douglas.

We know your errand, sir.
Speak, and Clifford here will answer you.

Douglas. Lord Clifford will, and must: be sure of that.
I also crave King Edward's open ear.
Clifford will reckon with me for my land:
You, sire, must render an account of blood.

Clifford. Clifford has yet to learn why Douglas dare
Speak such a swift defiance.

Edward I. [turning his back to Douglas]. Answer him
On this wise, my good lord:—Your father, sir,
A faithless felon, died a prisoner
In Edward's dungeon; and his forfeit lands
Reverted to the crown. It pleased the king
To make me lord of Douglasdale. Go, then,
Buy land where'er you may, I keep my own.
He has his answer, follow me, my lords.
[Edward I., Pembroke, Clifford, and Percy go out.]

Douglas. There's justice in the heavens if not in kings!
He might have listened. It is very plain
King Edward means to play the tyrant now.
Yet tyrants can be courteous. Insolent!
To toss an answer o'er his shoulder at me,
Whetting with crude affront, the pointed "No,"
As one would check a cringing beggar's plea.
One way is left, a flinty, narrow way,

The rebel's way, the way I still have shunned:
And yet it seems a broad, green, garden-walk,
Since I elect to be a traveller there.
Now though it be as hopeless as to stem
The Solway's tide, or toss the deep-based Bass
From Forth to France, with all my strength I'll fight
Against this tyrannous usurping king.
How strange that I should find rebellion's storm
The happy haven where my troubles end!
But so it is: my cares are blown away;
Light-hearted vigour is my lot once more;
And trampled conscience, like the heath released,
Springs up, and breathes sweet scent of approbation.
[Goes out.]

SCENE II.—Dumfries. The Greyfriars Church.

Enter Bruce and Comyn of Badenoch.

Comyn. I thought you were in London, cousin mine.

Bruce. And still would have me there, or anywhere,
But by your side.

Comyn. Why is your tongue so harsh,
Your eye so big, your face so dimmed with ire?

Bruce. Why falter you? Why has your colour fled?
Why, but because my tongue still speaks its thought;
Because my face wears not the darker show
Of death's grimace upon a spear's long neck,
Grotesquely ornamenting London Bridge;
Because my limbs are not the bait of crows,
The gazing-stock of crowds in Scotland's towns;
Because I live and am at liberty:
These are the reasons why you tremble now.

Comyn. Not so; it is because I think you mad:
These monstrous breathings are insanity:
You shake with passion, hissing out your words.
I fear you; and I will have witnesses
Or no more conference.
[Going.]

Bruce [seizing his arm]. With honest men
God is sufficient witness. Are you true?
You know my ground of wrath as well as I.

Comyn. Your words are like your brow, darker than night.

Bruce. Be this the sun that shall illumine them.

[Exhibits a scroll.]

Sun, said I! rather inky light of hell,
Whereby you may behold your treachery.
I see it's true what I have heard of men,
Who, knowing right, pursue a wrongful course:
Custom uprears athwart the source of shame
A fragile dam; but when another marks
The waves that beat behind, they swell and burst
The sandy sea-wall of hypocrisy,
Like a packed gulf delivered by the moon.
That flood is in your face: you blush like fire.

Comyn. I blush to be accused of this great wrong.

Bruce. Comyn, you lie. Look, see, the very words
Of that compact, which we with aching hearts
Drew up and signed and swore in Stirling town.
Have you forgotten how we wept hot tears
Condoling over Scotland's misery?
Its fertile plains, that richer were than gold,
Burnt up with fire, salted with tears and blood;
Its cots and palaces confounded low
In stony litters that the soil reclaims;

Its wealthy towns and pleasant places sacked;
Its people?—Ah! we could not sound our grief
For wives made widows; husbands, left alone;
And children, blighted by too early bareness
Of parents' comfortable snowy wisdom:
Death and destruction feasting everywhere.
We found ourselves to blame; therefore we wept,
Repenting of our jealousy and strife.
This pact united us in sacred bonds
For ever to oppose the English rule.
We prayed that our conjunction, like two stars
Meeting auspiciously for Scotland's weal,
Might yield its war-worn people prosperous peace;
And o'er the border cast calamities
Of such deserved and overwhelming woe,
That England never more should be inclined,
Nor have the power to wage a conquering war.
We then embraced, and you with trembling breath
Thanked God that Bruce and Comyn now were friends.
Two copies of our compact we endorsed.
Here is a third that's neither yours nor mine:

King Edward sent it me; whence had he it?
Comyn. Unless King Edward sent it back to you,
You having given it him, I cannot tell.

Bruce. God keep my hands from blood! O soulless wretch!
Obtuse, unthinking liar! Could I note
The shape of good that dances in your brain
To be matured for service by denial,
Perhaps that might extenuate your lie.
But knowing nothing save your treachery,
And hardened daring of a damning fact,
Relentless hate expels all dreams of love
That harboured once toward you within my heart.

Comyn. If, then, your rage is for the present spent,
A few plain words may hope for audience.
What proof have you that Edward had this writ
Through me or mine? Impartial sense would blame,
Not me, who ever have been Scotland's friend,
And foremost in opposing Edward's power,
But you, the truckling lord, inheriting
And practising your father's policy,
Which was to follow at the Longshanks' heel,
And fawn for smiles, and wait his Highness' whim
To pay the lacqueying with a dirty crown.

Bruce. This idle mockery becomes you well.
Did any doubt remain of your dark sin,
The hunting out a mote within my eye
To poise the beam that does disfigure yours,
Would make me sure.

Comyn. What legal proof, I say?

Bruce. The laws of God, honour and loyalty
Condemn you traitor to their interests.
I judge you guilty, for I know right well
King Edward never had this scroll from me,
And no one else could give it him but you.
Your heart condemns you, though you brave it thus.

Comyn. And yet I say again, I swear by Heaven,
I never saw that paper till to-day.

Bruce. Talk not of seeing!—Come to the altar here.
[They advance to the altar.
Now lay your hand upon the traitorous sheet,
Call God to witness that you speak the truth,
And swear once more you have not broken faith.
Beneath your feet the dust of true men rests,

Your ancestors and mine; this lofty roof,
These consecrated walls and columns high
Are wont to hear the sounds of sacred song,
The gospel of the holy Christ of God;
This is God's house; this altar is God's throne.
Now, can you swear? You will not do it, sure.

Comyn. And what shall hinder me while I have breath?
Without my instigation or connivance
Our compact reached the King. If God's in heaven,
And I speak false, may I this moment die.

Bruce [stabbing Comyn, who falls].
God is in heaven, and my hand wields his wrath!
What have I done? A madman's dreadful deed!
I was engulfed, and now I'm cast ashore.
O, in our passionless, reflective hours
We lock emotion in a glass-walled jail
Of crisp philosophy; or give it scope
As far as prudence may enlarge its steps!
But to some sense a small distraction comes—
Across the sight a butterfly, a flower—
The fetters snap, the prison crumbles—off!—
To clasp the air where shone our will-o-wisp!
For no gewgaw have I burst reason's bonds,
But to avenge a gross iniquity
That clamoured brazenly to heaven and earth.
O, it was human!—It was devilish!
Here on the altar—O, the sacrilege!
That man of my own blood, whom I adjured,
By every holy thing, to speak no wrong,
I do wrong, slaying. O, heinous sacrilege!—
Perhaps he is not dead. Comyn, look up;
Speak; make some sign. Alas! that fatal blow
Was aimed too surely at my cousin's heart!
I used God's name too when I struck him dead!
O horrid blasphemy! The sacrilege!
[Going.]

Enter Kirkpatrick.

Kirkpatrick. My Lord!

Bruce. I fear I have slain Comyn.

[Goes out.]

Kirkpatrick. Ha!

You fear!—Then I'll make sure. He opes his eyes.

Comyn. False—foolish—dying—guilty—perjured—lost!

[Dies.]

Kirkpatrick [stabbing Comyn].

Something to staunch your muttering. No fear, now.

Enter Sir Robert Comyn with his sword drawn.

Robert Comyn. Stop villain! Hold your hand, rash murderer!

Kirkpatrick. I only gave a grace-thrust to your nephew
To end his agony. Put up your sword.
He died a good death on the altar-steps.

Robert Comyn. Kirkpatrick, you have aided in a deed,
Unseconded, even in these fearful times.

Kirkpatrick. Strong words and stiffly spoken. Does your sword
Keep pace with your sharp tongue?

Robert Comyn. We'll try.

Kirkpatrick. Come on!

[They fight, and Robert Comyn falls.]

Robert Comyn. Is this the day of judgment for our house?
Kinsman, I was your follower on earth,
And now I am your henchman through death's vale.

[Dies.

Enter Edward Bruce, Sir Christopher and Sir John Seton, and other gentlemen.

Sir Christopher Seton.

Two Comyns dead! Bruce only spoke of one.

Kirkpatrick. I slew the other. He would have me fight.

Sir John Seton. Alas! and could it be no other way?

There was enough dissension in the realm

Without a feud between these families,

Highest in state and strongest in the field.

1st Gentleman. Comyn is dead, and Bruce has laid him low.

The dead may slay the living. What say you?

2nd Gentleman. I say so too. The stroke that Comyn killed

May yet recoil upon his murderer.

Edward Bruce. Judge not, my friends. A murder has been done

With outward signs of most unrighteous wrath.

But think who did the deed—the noblest Scot,

The knightliest chevalier, the kindest friend,

The prince of brothers. I, who know, say this.

The very horror and the sacrilege

That frame the crime with dreder circumstance,

Cry out the doer was insane the while,

And recommend him to your lenience.

Therefore, take warning; and before you judge

Let your bloods cool, lest you be guilty too

Of foolish rashness in your condemnation.

My brother left a message for you all:

He asks you who are friends to visit him

to-morrow at Lochmaben; where he means

To lay the matter of his crime before you,

And take your counsel on the consequence.

1st Gentleman. It's fair we should withhold our judgment, sirs,

Until we be possessed of this event,

The cause and manner of its happening.

[Shouting within.

Enter Nigel Bruce.

Nigel Bruce. The people buzz and clamour to be led.

The news of Comyn's death has made them mad;

If blood were wine, and they had drunk of it

To fulness, they could not be more mature

For any mischief that the time suggests.

Edward Bruce. Good mischief, if the English suffer it.

I'll be their captain. Caesar pricked his horse

Across the Rubicon, defying Rome.

Bruce pricked John Comyn over death's dark stream,

Defying England. Caesar triumphed: Bruce

Shall triumph too. And now begins the fight.

[All go out.

SCENE III.—The same. Monks enter and lay the bodies side by side. A bell tolls, and the monks kneel round the altar. Then enter the Countess of Badenoch, and Comyn, Earl of Buchan, and the Countess of Buchan.

Buchan. You holy men, give place a little while.

A Monk. To whom?

Buchan. The wife and friends of slaughtered

Comyn.

[The monks retire.

Countess of Badenoch. Would any mortal think to look at me

This dead man was my husband? Should I weep,

And rend with sighs my breast, and wring my hands;

Peal out my sorrow, like a vesper bell

Calling the cloistered echo's shadowy choir

To take the burden of a woeful dirge;

Enrobe myself in that dishevelment
Which tyrannous grief compels his subjects pale
To show their vassalage by putting on,
I might persuade myself and you, my friends,
That I am sorry for my husband's death:
Even as an actor, lacking any cue,
Visible, tangible, as I have here,
Steps lightly at a word upon the stage,
Leaving his brothers and their merry chat,
And takes upon him any passion's show
With such devotion and abandonment,
That what was first a cloak becomes a soul,
And audience and actor both are held
Dissolved in ecstasy; which, breaking, back
From high heroics to sad homeliness
Their spirits are precipitated straight.
But I'll not play the broken heart, for you,
My friends, my audience, know the cause I have
Rather to laugh than weep. O wretched corpse!
What habitation holds the spirit now
Which Bruce ejected rashly, warrantless,
Pulling the house about the tenant's ears?

Buchan. He loved me little, and he loved you less;
And by his death he leaves a legacy,
The taking up of which, if spirits watch
From where eternally they rest or pine,
Our tragic, many-scened mortality,
Will reconcile him to his sudden death.

Countess of Buchan. Husband, what legacy?

Buchan. A mortal feud.

Countess of Buchan. Will you avenge on Bruce the death of him
Whom his best friends lament not?

Buchan. Yes, I must.

And good Sir Robert, too—his blood cries out.
It is a duty that the world will look
To see performed directly and with speed,
Admitting no perfunct, half-passive dance
On patient Providence. Dissuade me not,
For it becomes you not. There is a thing
That vaguely circulates in certain spheres
Concerning you, my dearest. Sad am I
That from my lips it first should taint your ears;
But you must know it now. Give me your hand.
This white and fragrant palm from guilty deeds,
That harden more than penitential toil,
Or from the touch of slime, is not more free,
Than your unshriven soul from infant thoughts
Swaddled in shame. But foul-tongued calumny,
Tutored by hatred, like a jabbering bird
With implication lewd repeats your name
And Bruce's in a breath.

Countess of Buchan. Alas, I know!
The lying scandal that benights my life
Will be a foil to make my memory shine.—
If it confronts you graven on the sky
To visit retribution on his head
Whose hand laid low your cousin's, be it so:
I'll not invade your secrets; but I mean
To do what woman can for Bruce's cause,
Which whispers tell me will be Scotland's soon.

Buchan. Well, we'll not quarrel. We'll talk of this again.

Countess of Badenoch.

Come take me home. I'm in a gentler mood.
Let those good cows return and pray their best.

[The Countess of Badenoch and the Earl and Countess of Buchan go out. The monks advance and kneel, and the scene closes.]

ACT II

SCENE I.—Lochmaben. A Room in the Castle.

Enter Lamberton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, Edward and Nigel Bruce, the two Setons, Sir Thomas Randolph, and other Lords and Gentlemen.

Lamberton. My lords and gentlemen, this is no time
For ceremony, which, when lazy peace
Has rusted o'er the world's slack businesses,
Oils easily the motion of affairs;
For now events impel each other on,
And higher powers than beadles usher them.
I am commissioned by the noble Bruce
To greet you heartily and wish you well
While you remain within Lochmaben's walls.
By my advice he begs you to excuse
His absence, while I speak. When you have heard
I doubt not that you will. He has confessed
The sacrilegious crime of yesterday,
Contritely and with simple truthfulness.
No exculpation, no defence at all,
Such as we know there is, he offered me.
Some of us here may hold that Bruce's act
Should rather be extolled than stigmatised.
We know for certain now what was the wrong
That Comyn, having wrought, denied on oath,
And all our sympathy goes out to Bruce.
But such the old deceitfulness of sin
That feelings of the sweetest comfort oft
Mislead us to embrace iniquity.
Man's worst of deeds God turns to good account:
A penance, which I hope will work God's will,
I have enjoined on the humiliate earl.
I mean to crown him, Robert, King of Scots:
His task will be to make that title good.
Now I have said a word that stirs your blood,
Begetting hope and courage, valiant twins.
And yet it is not I that speak, but God:
Surely God speaks. The sequence of events,
Of which this conference is the latest bud,
Appears to me a heavenly oracle,
As evident as Aaron's sprouting rod,
Commanding Robert Bruce to be the king.
He would have placed the crown on Comyn's head
Had Comyn wished, that Scotland might be one;
But Comyn thought to get the crown by guile,
And like an impious fool betrayed his friend,
Setting between him and the English king
A gulf of enmity impassable.
Edward will judge him out of church and law;
But in our Scotch communion he is safe:
And being out of law, there is no way,
Except to be our king, above the law.
Needs must, my lords; and is not need God's will?
Edward Bruce. It is the will of God.
All. Bruce shall be king.

Enter Bruce.

Long live the King! Long live King Robert Bruce!
Bruce. You hail me by a name that may be mine

In more than word, but not without your aid.
There are not many Scots besides yourselves
Who will acknowledge me their King. Think well
Before you pledge your faith to one outlawed;
For so I am, if law depend on power.
Scotland, the Isles, and England are my foes:
My friends are individual; on my hands
They may be counted. Lennox, Athole, Cairns,
Fleming, the Hayes, the Frasers, Sommerville,
Glasgow, and Moray, sum the list with you:
These only are the Scots whom I may rule.

Sir Christopher Seton. Then only these deserve the name of Scot.

Lamberton. Right, Seton!

Randolf. We are Scots, the rest are slaves!

Freeman and Scot have ever meant the same.

Lamberton. Carrick or King?

Bruce. King, by God's will and yours.

Lamberton. Sometimes we please ourselves with images
Of deeds heroic. The unstabled thought,
Enfranchised by rough-riding passion, winds
A haughty course and laughs at depth and height:
But the blood tires; and lo! our thought, a steed,
That from his rider ever takes the mood,
Pants, droops, turns tail, and hobbles home to stall.
Look in yourselves, and see if vain conceit
Or lofty daring, lord it o'er your minds.

This thing is sure: reason must be constrained:

You must be hot, believing, fanatic;

You must be wrathful, patriotic, rash;

Forethought abandon o'er to providence;

Let prudence lag behind you, like a snail,

Bearing its house with care upon its back;

Take counsel only of the circumstance

That shapes itself in doing of the deed;

Be happy, scornful, death-defiant: strong

You will be then matchless, invincible.

What! shall we go to Scone, and crown Bruce king?

Randolf. At once, Lord Archbishop.

Sir John Seton. To Glasgow, first,

To take our friends there with us.

Lamberton. That is best.

Is it your will to be crowned king at Scone?

Bruce. Most reverend father, and my noble friends,

If language were to me in place of thought,

I could pour grateful speeches in your ears;

But words are wanting. I am helpless, dumb;

I would be lonely; I would think awhile.

Lamberton. Think worthy thoughts, that only second are
To worthy deeds; yet their begetters too.

We'll leave you till our little troop's arrayed.

Bruce. You are very kind, my lords.

[All go out except Bruce.

I'm not a man

Much given to meditate. When pending thoughts

Hurtle each other in the intellect,

Darkening that firmament like thunder-clouds,

To let them lighten forth in utterance

Clears up the sky, confused with swaying rack.

My life begins a new departure here;

And like one dying all my time appears

Even on the instant, in eternal light.

Ambition struck the hours that measured it.

My pact with Comyn was half-hearted. What!

The passion that laid hold upon my soul

When he was killed—When he was killed? I think
I'm to myself too merciful; but yet
I seemed to do some bidding:—were there not
Alloys of gladness that the bond was loosed,
Of jealousy that Comyn barred my way,
Mixed in the blow that paid the traitor's wage?
There are two voices whispering in my ear:
This is the bane of self-communion. Now,
Right in thy teeth, or in thy toothless chaps,
I swear, antiquity, first thoughts are best:
Their treble notes I still shall hearken to,
And let no second, murmuring soft, seduce
Their clear and forthright meaning. It is gone,
The flash of revelation: dallying does
With intuition as with other chance.
I would to God that I might ever hear
The trump of doom pealing along the sky,
And know that every common neighbour day
Is the last day, and so live on and fight
In presence of the judgment. Wishing this
Have I not broached the very heart of truth?
Each unmarked moment is an end of time,
And this begins the future.

Enter Isabella.

Isabella!

Isabella. What in this time of doleful accidents
Could move the joyful shouts I heard just now?

Bruce. My dearest, what would make you shout for joy?

Isabella. I have not shouted since I was a girl;
But now, I think, if any happy thing
Should spring into my life, I would cry out,
I have been so unhappy, and so long.
Tell me you'll never leave me any more;
Then will I cry, and weep, for very joy.

Bruce. Heaven grant it may be so!

Isabella. If there is hope!—
Did I not shout now?—I will nurse it warm,
And pet it like a darling, till it come
To be what I imagine in the fact,
Or in the fancy; for I will go mad:
I'll bend myself to lose all faculty,
All thought, remembrance, all intelligence,
So to be capable of company
With your phantasm, more real than than life;
And be a wild mad woman, if those fears,
Those weary absences, those partings pale,
And fevered expectations, which have filled
The summer of our life with storm and cold,
Determine not in peace and halcyon days.
You do not love me as I love you; no;
Else you would never leave me. Love of power
And love of me hold tourney in your breast.
Let Will throw down the baton, and declare
The love of me the winner, and I'll be
Your queen of love; and beautiful as love
For man can make a woman. I am proud:
When love transfigures me I can conceive
How beautiful I am. Stay with me, then,
That holy, sweet, and confident desire
May light me up a pleasant bower for you:
I am, when you are gone, a house forlorn,
Cold, desolate, and hasting to decay:
Stay, tenant me, preserve me in repair;

Only sweet uses keep sweet beauty fair.

Bruce. I love you, Isabella, by high heaven,
More than the highest power that can be mine.

Isabella. Why then pursue this power so ardently?

Bruce. I stayed pursuit; but it would follow me.

My countrymen have asked me to be king.

Isabella. King!—But you murdered Comyn. All his friends—
Forgive me, love. I would not for the world
Reproach you; but—

Bruce. I know your gentle heart.

My thought of you is not the morning bride;
Nor even the rose that oped its balmy breast
And gave its nectar sweetly. In my mind
This memory of you crowds out the rest:
The woman who with tender arms embraced
The bloody murderer. I know your heart.

Isabella. Hush!

Bruce. Friends are few; but if my title's good?
Hopeless the cause; but if the cause be just?
I'm glad my hand that did my passion's hest
Has made my mind up for me.

Isabella. You'll be king?

Bruce. Will I be hunted like a common knave
Who stabs his comrade in a drunken brawl
For some rude jest or ruder courtesan,
And, being an outlaw, dies by any hand?
I'd rather be the king; and though I die
The meanest death, be held in memory
As one who, having entered on a course
Of righteous warfare by a gate of shame,
Pursued it with his might, and made amends
For starting false—so far as lay in him;
For out of him his sin is, 'stablished, past,
And by a life's atonement unredeemed.
I do not brood on this. Before you came
I had better thoughts.

Isabella. O, I am sad at that!

Bruce. I love you: not from you those worse thoughts sprang.

Isabella. Perhaps they did: for I have sometimes found,
When I have spent an hour in decking me,
But thinking more to please you in my life
Than in my dress, that, coming then to you,
Brimming with tenderness, some thoughtless word,
Or even a look from you, has changed my mood,
And made me deem the world a wilderness;
While this cross glance, or inauspicious tone,
Was but a feint of yours, whose strength of love
Withheld itself, afraid it should undo
Its purpose by endeavouring too much:
And we have parted, discontented both.
But we'll not part now. Say, we shall not part.

Bruce. Not now. We will be crowned together, queen.

Isabella. 'But then' succeeds 'not now'; I hope, far off.

Bruce. We must prepare to go.

Isabella. So soon!

Bruce. Our friends
Await us, chafing doubtless at delay.

Isabella. Then I will make a proverb lie for once,
And be on horseback sooner than my lord.
[They go out.]

SCENE II.—A Road in Dumfriesshire.

Enter Bruce, Isabella, and a Squire.

Bruce. Look to our horses while we rest.

[Squire goes out.]

Isabella. How far

Are we before our friends?

Bruce. See, they appear.

Isabella. That little puff of dust?

Bruce. Our company,

Three miles away I think. The road is straight,
And slopes to us. I hear a hoof—this side.

Isabella. It is a solitary knight, but one

Who need not fear to ride afar, alone,

If I may trust a woman's hasty eye.

He is dismounting; he unhelms, he bows;

He seems to know you, and salute you king!

Enter Sir James Douglas.

Bruce. Douglas! I thought that Paris would retain
For years to come the service of your youth.

Douglas. You speak as one whom some transcending hap
Has shown the high and secret worth of life;

And such am I, or else discourtesy

Alone had greeted me in what you said.

Not with shrunk purse, drained veins, and heart dried-up;

Will—broken-winded; pith-brains; sinews—straw,

From Paris, which unstiffens many a one,

Come I to Scotland, where is need of strength.

A love of noble things—a kind of faith—

A hope, a wish, a thought above the world,

Has swayed me from the mire; and yet I know

It is a miracle I'm not more soiled.

Bruce. I spoke unworthily of this reply,

And gladly now unsay my hinted charge,

Which, with less thought than commonplace, I made;

Though I should utter nothing now but thought,

For as you judged I see a soul in life.

And what in Scotland do you think to do?

Douglas. Retrieve my lands, avenge my father's death,

And drive the English from its borders. Here

I offer Scotland's king my lance, and here

I vow to be his lady's loyal knight.

You are amazed. They say, ill news spreads fast:

He whom the tidings then will halcyon

Knows of his weal as soon as he his woe.

Is the news good to you that Bruce is king?

Bruce. The news is good: best, that he's king of you.

I wonder most at that. I stood in arms

Against your father, and but yesterday

I seemed the friend of England.

Douglas. Yesterday

Was once the date of every lasting change.

While you are faithful to the land that's yours,

I swear to serve you faithfully till death.

Bruce. Another trusty friend when friends are few—

And such a friend! Welcome, a thousand times!

Isabella. A happy handselling of our enterprise!

What is the news from England? Have you heard

If Wallace has been judged?

Douglas. Not yet; but soon

In Westminster he will be doomed to death;

For victory, which oft ennobles kings,

Debases Edward. Since he has not grace,

The gracious-hearted world with one outcry

Should claim the life of Wallace for its own,

As the most noble life lived in this age,

And not to be cut off by one man's hate.

Bruce. The thought of Wallace troubles me. The truth
That great men seldom in their times are known;
And this that little men are eminent
In midst of their thin lives and loud affairs,
Assert how perilous election is
By peers all bound and circumstanced alike.
If he were solely moved by noble thoughts,
And is the signal hero you give out—
Nothing I say, and nothing I deny—
Then were the nobles who deserted him
Unworthy cowards, beggars, churls, knaves, hounds.
Shall I condemn my order so? or think
That Wallace hoped to aggrandise himself,
And lost those friends who had no need to fight
For mere existence when the restive hoof
Of personal ambition kicked aside
The patriot's caparison? You wince:
But with the time I drift, and cannot find
A mooring for my judgment. Pardon me.
This I believe: there is no warrior
Before the world, who could, even with those means
Of formal power that Wallace mostly lacked,
Have wrought the tithe of his accomplishment:
His name will be an ensign; and his acts
The inspiration of his countrymen.

Douglas. You yet will know his magnanimity
Which girdled round the ample continent
Of his performance like the boundless sea.

Bruce. I'm glad to think—to know the best of him.
Shall we turn back and meet our friends?

Isabella. Yes; come.

And, Douglas, tell us more of Wallace, pray.
[They go out.]

SCENE III.—A room in the Earl of Buchan's Castle.

Enter the Earl and the Countess of Buchan, and the Earl of Fife.

Countess of Buchan. Once more, I beg you, brother, on my knees, To
undertake the duty of your race.

Now, while I plead, they may be crowning him,
And no Macduff to gird his curling hair.
Eleven kings from Malcolm Canmore's time
Our ancestors have perfected with gold,
Laying the ruddy chaplet on their brows
Like magic dawn that tops the day with light.
It is a custom that has come to mean
The thing it garnished; and he cannot be
The King of Scots, however just his claim,
However consecrated, sceptred, throned,
Who is not crowned by you.

Fife. I am the friend
Of England, of your husband; finally
Be answered I beseech you. If you plead
Again with such hot vehemence, I'll think
Your husband is a fool to slight the word
That birds have carried of the Bruce and you.

Countess of Buchan. If I were richer than to need your help,
I'd let you know that brother's quality
Who dares to doubt his mother's daughter. Shame!
But I am passionate, and so are you:
You meant no wrong. You'll do this, will you not?

Fife. Why! here's a woman!—What a woman! Well!
I tell you I am England's friend, which means

The foe of any upstart such as Bruce;
And I am Buchan's friend, which means the foe
Of Buchan's mortal foe, the outlaw Bruce.
I tell you this, and yet you beg of me
To do for Bruce the service needed most
To make him mighty in his enmity.

Countess of Buchan. If you were armed to fight a champion,
And he had lost his helm before you met,
You would not do despite to chivalry,
And take advantage of his naked head,
But find him in a morion, or unclasp
Your own, and equally defended, charge.
Be chivalrous to Bruce; make him a king
That Edward may be vantageless in that.
Then fight for Edward—with your puissance, fight.

Fife. I think you're mad. This pertinacity,
Which you intend shall urge me to comply—
Which you conceive no doubt a sign of strength,
But which I judge a sign of vanity—
Is one of women's weapons, well-approved,
With which she jags to death a stronger will.
But my resolve is harnessed, and your dart
Turns off it blunt—and spent I hope.

Buchan. You hear;
I said you could not move him.—Come away—
I'm sorry you have set your mind on this.
[Fife and Buchan go out.]

Countess of Buchan. To toss my hair, to weep, to rate my maid,
Are small reliefs I ne'er resorted to;
And now I must do something notable.
What if I went and crowned the Bruce myself?
Ah! here's a thought that's like a draught of wine!
My brother whose the office is, resiles:
Mine—mine it is!—But how?—but if I did?
Their tongues, their tongues! their foul imaginings!
Is the world wicked as its thought is? Love?
There's no one would believe me if I vowed
Upon my deathbed, between heaven and earth,
I understand no meaning in the word.
Maidens have lovers, and they sigh and wake;
Wives love their husbands, and they wake and weep:
But never, never have I loved a man
As I see women love—with bursting hearts,
With fire and snow at variance in their cheeks,
With arching smiles, the heraldry of joy,
Whose rainbow shadows shine on hot, hard tears;
With cruel passion, dying ecstasy,
With rapture of the resurrection morn.
I have not loved. It may be to my shame,
But justly to the world's, condemning me
For deeds no cause could work me to commit.
If I take horse to Scone, farewell my fame,
Which halts yet at the threshold. Who's this?

Enter James Crombe.

Crombe,
Do you remember in my father's house
Your life once stood in danger for a crime—
Which I'll not name—when mercy at my plea
Was meted you in place of punishment?

Crombe. Well I remember.

Countess of Buchan. You were thankful then,
And held your life at my command. The time—

Crombe. My lady, if some service you require

Perilling my life, I'll do it willingly;
But had you urged my love, my duteous love,
And not my debt, I had been happier.

Countess of Buchan. I beg your pardon, sir. Indeed, I think
The service I require may cost your life,
But surely something dearer. I am whirled
From thought to thought: my mind lacks breath. Good Crombe,
You owe me nothing. Will you, if I bid,
Procure me black dishonour, and yourself
A name of loathing?

Crombe. No, my lady.

Countess of Buchan. How?

Crombe. If I beheld you hurrying to your shame,
I'd keep your honour holy with my sword,
And send it hot to heaven.

Countess of Buchan. Well.—You're a Scot?
I mean, you long for Scotland's freedom.

Crombe. Yes.

Countess of Buchan. Are you acquainted with the news?

Crombe. Of Bruce?

I've heard they mean to crown him king to-day;
But since my lord of Fife is England's friend——

Countess of Buchan. Yes, yes! But are you glad?

Crombe. Most heartily.

I think of joining Bruce.

Countess of Buchan. My timorous heart,
Fie, fie!—I knew you were a noble man.
You will put no construction but the right
On what I mean to do. Both you and I
Must be dishonoured in the world's regard:
I, an unfaithful wife; you, go-between.
Saddle two horses; lead them secretly
A mile beyond the castle. There I'll mount
And ride with you to Scone. Go, instantly.
I, Isobel Macduff, will crown Bruce king.

Crombe. But, noble lady—not for fear, but safety—
What of pursuit?

Countess of Buchan. Pursuit? I am a mint,
And coin ideas. Come—come out! It's gold!
My husband's horses must be aired to-day.
You'll see it done. Some of the grooms we'll bribe,
And some will come unbought, and some we'll force
Either to follow us, or quit their steeds:
Leave nothing in the stables that can run.
My lords—ha! ha!—are nowhere in the chase.

Crombe. Captain, and countess, mistress, service-worthy,
Be confident in me, as I in you,
And the deed's done.

[Goes out.]

Countess of Buchan. Now, world, wag, wag your tongues!
I sacrifice my fame to make a king:
And he will raise this nation's head again
That lies so low; and they will honour him;
And afterwards, perhaps, they'll honour me.
Or if they slight me and my modest work,
I shall be dead: I have enough to bear
Of disrespect and slander here to-day,
Without forecasting railing epitaphs.
But some—nay, many of the worthiest,
And many simple judgments too, will see
The sunlight on my deed. This, I make sure:
No Scot's allegiance can be held from Bruce
Because he was not crowned by a Macduff.—
And if I love him, what is that to him?

That's a good saying. So is this, I make:
If I do love him, what is that to me!
[Goes out.]

ACT III

SCENE I.—Westminster. The Hall of the Palace. King Edward I. on a throne of state. In attendance, Lords Pembroke, Percy, Clifford, and other Lords, Gentlemen, and Officers.

Enter Sir Peter Mallorie with Sir William Wallace, bound and guarded.

Edward I. Proceed with the impeachment, Mallorie.

Mallorie. Sir William Wallace, knight of Elderslie,
Some time usurping Guardian of Scotland,
You are a traitor to the English crown——

Wallace. I am no traitor to the English crown,
For I was never subject to King Edward.

Mallorie. Therein your treason rests. But speak not now:
You may speak afterwards in your defence.

Wallace. I will speak now, not to excuse my deeds,
But to arraign the falsest traitor here.
Edward of England, if one pure pulse beats
In that debauched and enervated core
Which was your conscience, I will make it ache.

Edward I. What do you mean? To have us think you mad,
And to your frailty that compassion show
Which crimes and sins forbid us to extend?
Or are you posing as a prodigy
Of heroism? In their minstrelsy
They sing of captive knights whose bold address
In presence of their victors won them grace:
But know that justice sees no worth in words—
Deeds only: therefore hear your deeds rehearsed.

Mallorie. Sir William Wallace, treasons manifold——

Wallace. I crave the pardon of all manhood here.
Having small use for any faculty
Since I became a captive, I have slacked
The rigour of my will, and thus it is
I spoke with petulance before my time.
Proceed to read my accusation, sir.

Mallorie. You are accused of many treasonous acts
Done on the persons, castles, cities, lands,
Of our most noble sovereign, Edward First,
In England and in Scotland——

Wallace. But, explain——

Edward I. Silence, guilty felon!

Wallace. Guilty? Condemned
And hanged already, doubtless, in your heart.
I will confess my guilt, for I am guilty—
Guilty of failure in a righteous cause.
I will confess that when ill-fortune came
My friends forsook me; that I lost the day
At Falkirk, and have since been little worth.
I stayed your accusation, sir, to ask
What treason I could work against a king
Whom I acknowledge not, and in a land
Not governed by that king?

Edward I. Silence!—Proceed.

Wallace. What! English Edward! Would you roar me down?
My deeds have spoken: shall I fear your tongue?
The charge against me is irrelevant;
No jurisdiction have you over me
To pardon or to doom: prisoner of war,
No traitor, I; and here I make demand
For knightly treatment at the hands of knights.

Edward I. You shall have justice.

Wallace. In the end I shall:

And so shall you. Death you have often faced;
Justice you shall see once.

Edward I. Stay, Mallorie.

We'll tutor this heroic insolence.

The observant world has notched the life of man,
And three main periods indicate three powers
Whose dreadful might directs our very stars.

These powers take reason's throne, the intellect.

First, love usurps, like Saturn come again—

Whose orb is yet man's most malignant foe—

Turning the sad, outlandish time of youth

Into a golden age. Ambition rules

With godly sway the second period,

And marshals man's capacity to war

Against the evils that beset him most,

And win what things of worship he desires.

Prudence, which none but old men understand

To be the strongest tyrant of the three,

Reigns lastly, making peace with God and man:

Securing acquisitions; peering forth

Into the future, like a mariner,

Whose freight is landed in a foreign port,

With wistful homeward gaze, but eager yet

To see his merchandise disposed of well:

And reason, which should rule, most cheerfully

Accepts the ministry beneath these kings:

That is the chronicle of noble men.

The sun gleams lurid through a rotting fog,

And those pure powers that shine in lucent souls,

Clear, as if lanterned only by the air,

In natures base, burn with a murky flame,

As lust, concupiscence, and avarice:

And reason, mad with degradation, toils

Unwillingly in slavish offices.

Now comes my application. Cruel, vain,

Intolerant, unjust, false, murderous,

You, Wallace—rebel, outlaw, hangman, fool,

Incendiary, reiver, ravisher—

You are the serf of vile concupiscence—

Yea, of the vilest famine—hungry greed

Of notoriety!—the commonest,

The meanest, lewdest, gauntest appetite,

That drives the ignoble to extremity!

No sooner had we quarried painfully

Forth of that chaos left by your King John,

A corner-stone for righteous government,

Than you and other itching malcontents

With gothic hands o'erturned the fane of peace

And on your groaning land brought heathen war,

That you might win the name of patriot.

Again I built up order; and again

You overthrew my government, and caused

Your fatherland—heroic patriot!—

From Tweed to Moray Firth to swim in blood,

Before divine authority could rule.

Still you rebelled; for you must stand alone—

And think not, lords, I over-rate the strength

Of this delirious thirst for some repute—

Though nobles, knights, burgesses, yeomen, priests,

Yea, every Scot, well-pleased, acknowledged us,

You—cast-off guardian—dog that had his day—

Alone, unfriended, starving in the wilds,

Held there aloof, and signalised your night
By howling for that moon you almost clutched,
A tyrant's power, calling it liberty:
For that was still behind your lust of fame.

Mallorie. You're silent now.

A Lord. Silence becomes him well.

This just exposure stills his shameful voice.

Wallace. Seeing how your rage leapt from your lips in lies,
King, I bethink me ere I make reply,
Lest I, too, throw the truth.

Edward I. Now tell us, lords,

Are we on our defence or Wallace? Which?

Villain, regard law's form if not its soul.

Be better mannered; touch your memory;

You stand before the majesty of England.

Wallace. I stand there truly; but behind me pants

The king of terrors; and his quiver holds

One dart I hope to parry, which I fear—

But not the venom'd shaft that nothing fends.

It is—not now; I'll tell you afterwards.—

Noble?—ignoble?—who shall judge us, king?

This deed and that we may with help of heaven

Christen or damn, and not be far astray;

But who shall take upon him to declare

The mind of God on what is unrevealed,

The guiding thought, deep, secret, which is known,

Even to the thinker, but in passing wafts.

Because my life was spent in thwarting you,

I am not therefore an incarnate fiend,

Although the justice of the end I stayed

Possessed your soul to sickening. Mad for fame!—

My wife's, my father's, and my brother's deaths.—

Edward I. No more of this. Call in the witnesses.

Wallace. I'll speak now, and be heard.

All. Silence! Be still.

Wallace. I can outroar you all. Sound trumpets, drums,

And fill your hall with clamour, I shall speak,

And you shall hear. Above the voice of war

I have been heard, and—

All. Silence, traitor, silence!

[The shouting continues for a little, but gradually ceases as Wallace speaks on.

Wallace. I fought for liberty and not for fame.

Monarchs know not the inestimable worth

Of that imperial, rich diadem

Which only crowns both kings and carls, men.

Say, slavery unfelt were possible,

Then freedom is a name for sounding wind.

But call me slave in any mincing term;

And let the tyrant's frowns be smiles of love;

The chains, less galling than a lady's arms;

The labour, just my pleasure's ministry:

If I surrender to the conqueror,

As captive is my soul, as though thick irons

Wore through my flesh, and rusting in my blood,

Rasped on my bones, the while with lash and oath

Some vicious tasker held me to hard toil.

I stand here free, though bound and doomed to die.

And know, King Edward, every Scot who bent,

Gnawing his heart, a recreant knee to you,

Perjured himself, being free; and even now—

I know my countrymen—contrite they rise;

And when they have another leader—one

Abler than I—pray heaven, more fortunate!—

They will anew throw off your galling yoke,
And be once more lieges of liberty.

I am the heart of Scotland; when I die
It shall take heart again—

Edward I. No, no! by heaven!

The Scots repudiate you!

Wallace. The Scots do not:

The people, pulse for pulse, beat warm with me.

Edward I. You lie! You lie!—But I forgot myself.

Freebooters, prodigals, scroyles—outcasts all—

Your sole supporters, may lament your end;

But true men everywhere are jubilant.

Not England only, and the better part

Of your divided country were your foes;

But from the world's beginning you were doomed

To fail in your unholy enterprise.

For destiny, whose servant Nature is,

Ordained by the creation of this land—

So long sore vexed by chance, fate's enemy,

With heptarchies, divisions, kings and clans—

That one king and one people here should dwell,

Clasped in the sea's embrace, happy and safe

As heaven is, anchored in eternity.

In fighting me you fought fate's champion,

Anointed with the fitness of the time,

And with the strength of his desire inspired,

To finish Nature's work in Albion.

You, paltry minion of a band of knaves,

In name of patriotism—which in this case

Was in the devil's name—fought against God;

The coming of His kingdom hindered here.

Now His sure vengeance has o'ertaken you,

And over both our lands His sweet peace reigns.

Wallace. Eternal God, record this blasphemy!

Who doubts our lands are destined to be one?

Who does not pray for that accomplishment!

Why! Know you not that is the period,

The ultimate effect I battled for,

That you, free English, and that we, free Scots,

May one day be free Britons. And we shall;

For Scotland never will be tributary:

We are your equals, not to be enslaved;

We are your kin, your brothers, to be loved.

Time is not ripe: fate's crescent purposes,

Like aloe-trees, bloom not by forcing them;

But seasonable changes, mellowing years,

Elaborative ages, must mature

The destined blossoms. Listen, king and lords;

Here is a thing worthy remembering,

And which perhaps you never rightly knew:

Duty is always to the owner done;

And the immediate debtor wisely pays:

The heritage of duty unperformed

Increases out of sight of usury.

Restore to Scotland freedom. Do that, king,

Or it will be required from you or yours

With woeful interest.—I have done. I feared

I might not find a way to speak these truths,

Having no nimble tongue, and die oppressed

With warning unpronounced. I truly thought

I could command a hearing had I words.

Death now, the due of all, my triumph, waits.

Edward I. The witnesses, Sir Peter Mallorie;

Your accusation now is needless.

Mallorie. Sire,
Hugh Beaumont is the first. He'll testify
Of early deeds in the arch-traitor's life.
He is an old man now and garrulous:
A gentleman withal, whose gentle blood
Stood him in little stead, when windy youth
Had sown itself, and whirling poverty
Down to the barren common dashed his head.
So with his sword he batted as he might,
And valour was his star. Let him have scope,
For he has much to say.
[Hugh Beaumont is led in.

Inform the king
As strictly as to God of all that passed
Between you and the prisoner.

Edward I. Speak the truth.

Beaumont. Your gracious majesty, what I can tell
Is liker fable; but the noble knight,
The prisoner, will acknowledge all I say:
Much of it honours him.—To Ayr he came
One day, disguised, with hat down, cloak pulled up.
There as he paced the street, Lord Percy's man
Seized on some fish a burgher just had bought;
Whereat, Sir William, like a smouldering fire,
Flared up to burn the foot whose thoughtless kick
Had tortured it to flame. In speechless rage
He grasped the caitiff's throat and smote him dead.
About two score well-harnessed Englishmen,
With whom I was, did straight environ him.
Against a wall he bore which seemed to be
Rather upheld by him than him upholding,
And reaped us down like corn. He did, my lords.
He multiplied his strokes so that he seemed
To multiply himself; there did appear
Opposed to every soldier there a Wallace.
Without or helm or mail, in summer-weed,
Grass-green, flowered red with blood, he fought us all,
Till one that bit the dust writhed near enough
To pierce him in the leg, and then he fell.
Yet even so he might have won away;
But as he rose he fetched a blow at me,
Which I eluding, down his breaking brand
Upon the causeway struck; and in his eyes
A light went out, when his uplifted hand
Showed but the hilt. In faith I pitied him,
I pitied him, and bore him to the tower.
There in a filthy dungeon he expired
Of festering wounds and food that swine refused,
Ere they had settled what death was his due.

Edward I. But he is here alive?

Beaumont. Pardon, dread lord;
He seemed at that time dead: the West mourned for him:
His aged nurse bought his corrupting corpse
To bury it decently in hallowed ground.
Well, after that a while, in Lanark town,
I waited in the High Street on the judge,
Lord Ormesby, then on circuit in the West.
Four men were with me. One, on fire with wine,
A braggart at the best, vaunted his deeds.
And when two men came down the street, he cried,
"See yonder stalks a canny muffled Scot,
A strapper, by this light! attended, too!
He's like to have that may be taxable.
Something I'll mulct him of; or something give,

That shall be worse than nothing—namely, blows!"
"Belike," said I, "that boon will not go quit.
His side is guarded by a lengthy purse,
Whose bright contents, I think, he will not hoard."
"I'll have his sword," quoth he, "if he refuse,
Take it, and beat him with it till he shake
His dastard body out of his habergeon;
Which, leaving here, he'll give me hearty thanks,
That I leave him his skin, the lousy Scot!"
And so he staggered out to meet the two.
The muffled stranger whispered to his man,
And he sped on before in anxious haste,
Dodging the drunk man's outstretched arm, who said,
"Well, you may go; your master is behind."
And when the master came he stopped him, saying,
"Knave Scot, unveil! Come, show your sonsy face.
Vile thief, where did you steal this tabard green?
And where the devil got you this fair knife?
What! jewelled in the hilt! Unbuckle, quick,
Mantle and whittle; and to make amends
For having ever worn them, clasp them both
About me, and you shall have leave to go."
"St. Andrew! There's my whittle, English dog!"
And with a thrust the Scot let out his life.
We others rushed upon him instantly,
Shouting, "Down with him! Vengeance on the
Scot!" He gave us back, "St. Andrew, and the right!"
Wrapping his arm in what had wrapped his face,
And looking like the lion that he was.
Beholding him, I trembled, and stood still;
But one more rash ran on, to shriek and fall,
His raised right arm lopped at the shoulder off.
With that a voice cried, "In the king's name, peace!"
The Scot looked up and saw a troop approach.
"Too great a pack for one," he said, and ran.
Now this was Ormesby, the justiciary,
Arrived in Lanark to dispense the law,
With Hazelrig, the ruler of the shire.

Mallorie [aside to Beaumont].

Quick, man! be quick! Look how his Highness chafes!
Beaumont. The valiant Scot was Wallace. It appeared
His foster-mother, who had paid away
The earnings of her lifetime for his corpse,
Kissing and weeping o'er it, saw a spark
Struggle with night of death; or else her hope
Inspired new breath, much aided by her prayers.
The little glow she nursed into a flame,
So feeble, that, lest meat should smother it,
Her daughter gave one of her bosom's springs,
Then at high-tide to feed her new-born babe,
For the replenishing his body's lamp.
Being recovered, he had come to see
His wife, who dwelt in Lanark.

Wallace [aside]. God! O God!

Beaumont. Hazelrig led the chase: I followed close.
We reached the house: I searched the garden. There,
Scarcely concealed, I saw the prisoner.
Sire, I'm not a coward, and I was not then;
But from the instant that I recognised
The dead man come alive, enchantment caught
My spirit in a toil, and made me watch,
Powerless and voiceless, all he did. I felt
No movement, even while I followed him.
There was some witchery I do believe.

And leave another to pursue unchecked
A course of similar iniquity.
You for your treason are condemned to die
The death that traitors merit. Lead him hence.
Come after me, my lords, immediately,
And take your charges for the North.
[Edward I. goes out. Wallace is led away.

Clifford. I think

The king but whiled the time with Wallace here
Till news should come from Scotland.

Pembroke. With what haste
He sentenced him!

Percy. Yes; as a gamesome cat
Diverted with a mouse, scenting another,
Gobbles the captive quick.
[All go out.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—A Room in the Earl of Buchan's Castle.

Enter the Earl of Buchan.

Buchan. This is not jealousy. I only ache
With sorrow that my trust has been reposed
In falseness; and I feel—I fear I feel
The whole world's finger, quivering with scorn,
Stream venom at me. If I cannot sleep,
It is no wonder, for the laugh I hear,
Like icy water rippling—cold and true
As tested steel—so wise, so absolute—
Is learned from those that know me by the fiend
Who watches with me nightly. Jealousy?
If it possessed me, mortal sickness, bonds,
Nothing in heaven or hell, would hold me back
From sating it with blood—with hers and his.
But I will not be jealous, like poor souls,
Whose vanity engrosses every thought,
And calls itself nobility; not I.
I will devise some vengeance, some just means,
Some condign punishment, the world will praise,
Thinking of me more highly than before
This miserable time.

Enter Fife.

Fife. Brooding again!
Pluck up some sprightliness, for I have news.
Pembroke has routed Bruce in Methven wood,
And captured many leading rebels. Bruce,
Who showed himself a gallant warrior,
Proved in retreat wise as a veteran,
Escaping to the North.

Buchan. My wife?

Fife. They say

That she and other ladies northward too
In Nigel Bruce's charge escaped with speed.

Buchan. And is this sure?

Fife. I well believe it. Come,
Question the man who told me.

Buchan. If it's true

We'll join our powers and hunt the rebels down
Like noxious vermin, as they are.

Fife. Be cool.

What means this bitter passion?

Buchan. Am I hot?

But you'll combine with me?

Fife. Assuredly:

It is a noble chase; the quarry, game
To wind us over Scotland. Tally-ho!

Buchan. Now you are thoughtless. Come, the messenger.
[They go out.]

SCENE II.—The Wood of Drome. Scotch soldiers about a watch-fire.

1st Soldier. What clouded loons we are! Royal beadsmen! Eh? 2nd Soldier. The king's as ragged as the rest. 1st Soldier. That's true. to-day I hunted with him, and I thought, Seeing his doublet loop-holed, frayed, and fringed; His swaddled legs and home-made shoes of pelt; His barbarous beard and hair, and freckled face, That manhood's surely more than royalty; For through this weedy, nettle-grown decay, A majesty appeared that distanced us, Even as a ruined palace overbears A hamlet's desolation.

Enter Bruce, unperceived.

3rd Soldier. He's a king

By nature, though descent were lost in churls.

2nd Soldier. Ay, ay; but mark: I'll reason of our state.

Here many days we've wasted in the wild,
Chased by the English like the deer we chase,
Exposed like them, without their native wont,
Beneath this fickle, rigorous northern clime,
Ill-fed, ill-clad, and excommunicate;
While decent burghers—Scots as true as we—
Live warm, and prosper with their families.
I think we're fools.

1st Soldier. Fools for ourselves, maybe,
But wise I hope for Scotland: and the folk
In every town and village think us wise,
And bless and pray for us.

Bruce [aside]. A brave heart that.

[Advancing.] Good evening, comrades. Can you guess the time?

1st Soldier. An hour past sunset. Look, your Majesty;
Barred by these trunks the cloudy embers burn
Where day is going out.

Bruce. Faintly I see.

Your fire's so bright it dims the distant glow.
Sit down again, good friends.

1st Soldier. A story, sir?

2nd Soldier. O, pray you tell us one!

Bruce. I think I will.

I've told you many tales of chivalry,
Of faerie, and of Greeks and Romans too;
But now I'll tell you of a Scotchman—one
Who lived when Rome was most puissant here.
The Roman governor, a valiant man,
Agricola, in whom ambition paused
Whenever prudence thought the utmost done,
Reconquered all the southern British tribes,
And drove his enemy beyond the Forth.
The noble Galgacus then swayed the realm
That stretches northward of that winding stream;
And while the Roman, building forts and walls,
As was his wont, secured the bird in hand,
He mustered from his glens a skin-clad host
To fight for freedom. Ardoch they call it,
Where the armies met. Ere the battle joined,
Firm on his chariot-floor with voice aflame,
The Scottish chief harangued his thirty thousand.
"Brothers," he cried, "behold your enemies!
Gauls, Germans, Britons—mercenaries, slaves!
In conquest, one and strong; but in defeat,
So many weaklings, heartless, hopeless, lost.

One signal victory to us were more
Than all the battles that our foes have won:
Their confidence is in their leader; ours,
In our cause. Harken!—had I a voice,
Like heaven's thunder, I would shout across
This battle-field to be, to yon mixed throng,
And tell them they are Britons, Germans, Gauls:
Bid them remember how in haughty Rome
Their free-born countrymen are taught to serve
The wanton fancies of luxurious vice
In perfumed chambers or in bloody shows;
Think of their wives and daughters, all abused;
Think of themselves, leagued with their conquerors
Armed and opposed against consanguine folk,
Placed in the van to bear the battle's brunt,
That Rome may triumph, and her blood not shed:
Then would they turn and rend with us the foe.
What need has Rome of Britain? we, of Rome?
We, the last lonely people of the North,
A morsel merely, perilous and far,
Incite the eagle appetite of Rome,
Uncloyed until she gorges all the world.
No other need has Rome. Poor, desolate,
Shrouded with mists, with cold empanoplied,
At war among ourselves, fighting with beasts,
We yet are freemen; and we need not Rome:
We are the only freemen in the world.
Here, in the very bosom of our land—
The last land in the world—we meet the power
That rules all other lands but ours. Even here
Let Rome be stricken. Brothers, countrymen,
Freedom has taken refuge in our hills.
She has a home upon the streaming seas,
But loves the land where men are hers. Let not
The word go forth on woeful-sounding winds
That Rome has driven freedom from the earth:
Sprite you with lions' hearts; like baleful stars
Inflame your eyes that their disastrous glance
May palsy foes afar; pour your whole strength
In every blow, nor fear a drought: the power
Of each is great as all when all are one.
Rush like a torrent; crash like rocks that fall
When thunder rends the Grampians. Liberty!
Cry 'Liberty!' and shatter Rome."
The Scots were worthy of their gallant chief,
And fought as if they loved death, courting her
By daring her to opportunities;
Which she—a maid o'er-wooed—resented oft,
And strained their cooler rivals to her breast;
But discipline—that rock that bears the world,
Compactly built—a city on a cliff
Breaking disorder back like unknit waves—
Founded the Roman power; and on its front
The Scots beat, shivered by their own onset;
And evening saw them ebb, calmed, vanquished, spent.
Yet that lost battle was a gain: our hills,
That battle, and the ruin of her fleet,
Held Rome behind Grahame's dyke, and kept us Scots.
All south of us the Romans, Saxons, Danes,
And Normans, conquering in turn, o'erthrew
From change to change; but we are what we were
Before Aeneas came to Italy,
Free Scots; and though this great Plantagenet
Seems now triumphant, we will break his power.

Shall we not, comrades?

1st Soldier. Yes, your Majesty.

2nd Soldier. But might it not have been a benefit
If Rome had conquered Scotland too, and made
Between the Orkneys and the Channel Isles
One nation?

Bruce. A subtle question, soldier;
But profitless, requiring fate unwound.
It might be well were all the world at peace,
One commonwealth, or governed by one king;
It might be paradise; but on the earth
You will not find a race so provident
As to be slaves to benefit their heirs.

1st Soldier. At least we will not.

Bruce. By St. Andrew, no!

Enter Nigel Bruce.

My brother Nigel! Happy and amazed
I see you here. Why left you Aberdeen?

Nigel. For several ends. And firstly, I have news.

Bruce. Come to our cave.

Nigel. No; for a reason, no.

Bruce. Mysteries, secrets!—Well; retire good friends.

[Soldiers go out.

Nigel. Perhaps my news is stale.

Bruce. Little I know

Since in the flight from Methven, panic-struck,
We parted company.

Nigel. Learn then that Haye—

Hugh de la Haye; John is with you, I know—
Inchmartin, Fraser, Berclay, Somerville,
Young Randolph, Wishart, trusty Lamberton
Are captives.

Bruce. Half my world! But is it true?

Nigel. So much is certainty. Rumour declares
Young Randolph has deserted us; that those
I named will ransom; but that some, unknown,
Have died the death of traitors.

Bruce. Noble souls!

Randolf—poor boy! What more?

Nigel. A price

Is on your head.

Bruce. That matters not.

Nigel. I know.

Still, have great heed of whom and how you trust.
That's all the evil tidings. Hear the good.
The queen—Ah, this is she! I'll leave you now.
[Goes out.

Enter Isabella.

Bruce. My dearest!

Isabella. I couldn't wait, my husband.
The Lady Douglas and the Lady Buchan
Are in your cave. We rode from Aberdeen
This evening, learning you were cantoned here.
Douglas was sleeping when we came. His wife
Bent o'er him, and she slipped into his dream;
For when he waked he wondered not at all
To see his lady there, till memory
Aroused him quite to find the vision true.
Nigel was seeking you; but when I saw
The joy these two partook, incontinent
I hurried out myself to find like cheer.

My dear wayfaring hero, I have come
To share your crust, and rags, and greenwood couch:
I'm deep in love with skied pavilions:
I'll be your shepherdess, Arcadian king.
This evening's journey lay throughout a wood:
The honeysuckle incensed all the air,
And cushats cooed in every fragrant fir;
Tall foxgloves nodded round the portly trees,
Like ruffling pages in the trains of knights;
Above the wood sometimes a green hill peered,
As if dame Nature on her pillow turned
And showed a naked shoulder; all the way,
Whispering along, rose-bushes blushed like girls
That pass blood-stirring secrets fearfully,
Attending on a princess in her walk;
I think with rarely scented breath they said
A loving wife was speeding to her lord.
Why are you silent?

Bruce. I am thinking, dear,
That I'm the richest monarch in the world.
Possessing such a universe of love,
The treasure most desired by kings and clowns.

Isabella. What universe, dear lord?

Bruce. Simplicity!
You are my universe of love, you know.

Isabella. Then keep your universe, and do not waste
In empty space the time. I'll stay with you;
Surely I can? Come, tell me all your plans.

Bruce. I've none. What I desire I know; and think
Firmly and honestly my wish is right.
Plans are for gods and rich men: I am poor.

Isabella. In spirit? So you may be blamelessly;
But are you, sir?

Bruce. I hardly know. Just now
I tried to cheer a whining fellow here,
But stood myself in greater need of hope.

Isabella. I know—I understand. You need to think
Of other things, my dear. I've heard of men,
Great men, exhausted even to lunacy
By just those labours that were beating smooth
A thoroughfare for ever to success,
Repair themselves with youth's prerogative
That stops time and the world deposes, all
In favour of a dream; or spend a while
With children or the simplest souls they knew.
Come, you must be amused. But, tell me, sir,
Am I to stay?

Bruce. Yes, dearest pilgrim, yes.

Isabella. Oh, I am happy! We will live like birds.

Bruce. And in the winter?

Isabella. Winter? What is it?
This is the summer.

Bruce. Winter is——

Isabella. Hush!—hark!
What birds so late fly screaming overhead?

Bruce. Stout capercaillies, hurrying to their hills,
Sated with fir-tops.

Isabella. Ah! But, dearest lord,
Are you quite well? I haven't asked you yet.

Bruce. I am very well. And you?

Isabella. See—look at me:
You used to know by gazing in my eyes.

Bruce. My wife, my lover, you are well indeed.

Isabella. The fire is nearly out. Come to the cave,

And there we will devise amusements, dear.
[They go out.]

SCENE III.—Another part of the Wood of Drome. The Earl of Buchan alone.

Buchan. God help me and all jealous fools, I pray!
The plagues of Hades leagued in one raw scourge
Might minister diversion to my soul,
Assailing through my flesh. No thought at all
Of starry space or void eternity;
Nor love, nor hate, nor vengeance, nor remorse—
My cousin's murder!—I've forgotten it!—
No sound of horns crackling with riotous breath
The crisp, rathe air; no hounds; no beckoning tunes
With notes of fiery down; nor singing girls
Whose voices brood and bound; nor chanting larks,
Nor hymning nightingales can touch my soul.
Nothing but torture unendurable
Wrought in the flesh has power on jealousy.
Slay him with agonies? A passing swoon!
I'll kill my wife!
Her blood is Lethe if oblivion be
Save in more high-strung anguish of my own.

Enter Fife.

Fife. What is it? You have news.

Buchan. They are together—
The outlaw and your sister. They're at hand—
Three miles away—no more. A trusty spy
Told me just now.

Fife. Is there a band?

Buchan. Some score.

Fife. Then we will take them.

Buchan. Yes.

Fife. About it straight.

[Goes.]

Buchan. I'll follow—Ho!

Enter Spy.

I thought you still were near.
I haven't thanked you yet. [Gives money.] How did she look?
Was there about her not a thievish air,
A truant aspect, frightened and yet free,
Shame-faced, but bold, and like an angel lost.
Spy. Who, my good lord?

Re-enter Fife.

Buchan. The queen—the outlaw's wife.
Spy. O no, my lord! She laughed, as she rode past
Where I lay hid, at something gaily said
By my good lady, your good lordship's wife.
They both looked happy, riding in the sun.

Buchan. Aye; that will do.

[Exit Spy.]

I'm coming, Fife.

Fife. Stay yet.

Why did you try to lead him off the scent?
You meant my sister when you questioned him.
Tell me, what makes your jealousy so strong?
You never were in love with her I think.

Buchan. Nor am not now. I think—I know—I feel
What I have heard: true love is never jealous.
I am like other men; I love myself.

I cannot speak. I mean to act. Come on.
[They go out.]

SCENE IV.—A Cave in the Wood of Drome, with a fire at the back. Bruce, Edward, Nigel Bruce, Douglas, Crombe, Isabella, Countess of Buchan, Lady Douglas, and others.

Bruce. Who would build palaces when homes like these
Our kingdom yields us bosomed in her hills!
What tapestry, where the gloss and colour fade
From some love-story, overtold and stale,
Or where a famed old battle stagnates dim,
Befits a room before these unhewn walls
Whose shifting pictures lower and shine and live,
Ruddy and dark in leaping of the fire.
No homely mice in cupboards cheep; the night
Is here not soothed by any mellow chirp
Of crickets, happily, devoutly busy;
But in the ivy and the hollow oak
The owl has heard and learnt through day-long dreams
The wind's high note when pines in ranks are blown,
Bent, rent, and scattered with their roots in air,
And sounds his echo loud and dwindling long,
Fearfully as he flutters past our door;
The wild-cat screams far off in the pheasant's nest;
The wehrwolf, ravening in the warren, growls.
Night is no gossip here, watching the world
Sick-tired, heart-sore, sleep weariness away;
But free and noble, full of fantasy,
Queen of the earth, earth-bound, ethereal.

Isabella [aside]. His spirit rises. We must hold it up.—
My lord, shall Lady Douglas sing?

Bruce. She shall.

Lady, I beg you sing us something sweet.
No trumpet notes, no war—

[1st Soldier appears at the entrance of the Cave.
Douglas whispers with him.

What does he want?

Douglas. He comes as spokesman for his fellows.

Bruce. Well?

1st Soldier [advancing].

I hope your Highness will be patient with me.
My mates have bade me ask a favour, strange
And difficult to ask; but not so strange
If it be thought of well, nor difficult
If I can keep my head.

Bruce. Go on.

1st Soldier. My lord,

For this great while we have seen no woman's face,
My mates and I: your Highness knows that well.
When we beheld these ladies enter here,
A longing seized us all to look on them;
To see their faces and their gentle shapes;
And even to have them turn their eyes on us;
Perhaps to hear them speak. We are true men,
And honest in our thought.

Bruce. Bring them all in.

[Exit 1st Soldier.]

Countess of Buchan.

I know the mood that holds these men: brave lads!
If they were wed to women worth their love,
They would be nobler heroes than they are.

Isabella. We'll speak to them.

Countess of Buchan. I'll kiss that knave who spoke.

Lady Douglas. Will you?

Countess of Buchan. Yes; and I'll do it openly.

Enter Soldiers.

Bruce. Welcome all, heartily, most heartily.

Countess of Buchan [to 1st Soldier].

Have you a wife?

1st Soldier. I have.

Countess of Buchan. You love her?

1st Soldier. Yes.

Countess of Buchan. Is not the truest love the most capricious?

1st Soldier. I cannot tell. True love is fanciful.

Countess of Buchan. You long to kiss your wife?

1st Soldier. And if I do,

What matters to your ladyship?

Countess of Buchan [whispering] This, sir:

I also long to kiss one whom I love;

Perhaps I never shall; but I think now

In kissing you that I am kissing him.

[Kisses him.

1st Soldier. Thanks, noble lady. If you were my wife
I'd kiss you thus.

[He embraces and kisses her.

Bruce. Well said and bravely done!

Countess of Buchan. And can you fight

As deftly as you kiss?

Bruce. I warrant him!

Your song, my Lady Douglas; sing it now;

A love-song, something homely if you can.

Douglas. Sing "If she love me," sweetheart.

Lady Douglas. Shall I? Well.

But you should sing it rather.

Douglas. No; sing you.

SONG.

Love, though tempests be unruly,

Blooms as when the weather's fair:

If she love me truly, truly,

She will love me in despair.

Is there aught endures here longer?

Can true love end ever wrongly?

Death will make her love grow stronger,

If she love me strongly, strongly.

Can scorn conquer love? Can shame?

Though the meanest tower above me,

She will share my evil fame,

If she love me, if she love me.

Enter a Forester.

Forester. A thousand men are on you, fly!

[Going.

Bruce. Stand, there!

Hold him! What thousand men? who lead them? speak.—

Put out the fire—stamp on it, some of you.

[The fire is trampled out and the Forester seized.

Forester. I know not; but I saw them in the wood
Stealthily marching.

Bruce. Are they near?

Forester. An hour

By time, for they are stumbling out a way.

There's half a mile or so of wood between.

If I had been their guide they had been here.

Bruce. You know the paths so thoroughly?

Forester. Blindfold.

Bruce. Could you lead safely to Kildrummie Castle

A band of twenty?

Forester. When? to-night?

Bruce. Just now.

Forester. I think I could. But tell me, sir: they say
That you're the king. Now are you?

Bruce. I am he.

Forester [awkwardly]. What must I do?

Bruce. Wait patiently.—Good friends,
We'll yet postpone farewell. A little way
Together in the wood——

Edward Bruce. But must we fly?

Ten are a thousand in a coward's sight;
And they may be our friends. Defence even here
Were not too rash against a hundred. What!
Is not despair achievement's mother? Why!
The high, black night, a shout, a sudden charge,
And we dispel this sheep-heart's fearful dream.

Bruce. Upon us march the Earls of Fife and Buchan,
With many hundred men. They have hunted us
For days, and I have known. My spies are caught
I fear, or they had not arrived so close
Without our knowledge. [To Forester.] We must thank you, friend,
For timely information of our plight.
The plan I formed still holds, and this is it.
Kildrummie will give shelter to our wives;
Nigel will take them there: Douglas, one way,
And I, another, as we may decide,
Splits up the scent,—and we shall all escape.

Edward Bruce. Brother and king——

Bruce. No more. In straits like these
Counsel's a Siren: if the leader list,
Wreck follows. Errant paths, straightly pursued,
Soon reach the goal; while wiser, well-thought ways
Wander about for fear of miry shoes.
And shall I hear one rasher than myself,
When wisdom would be folly!—Isabella,
A little way together, then farewell.—
[To Forester.

Friend, go before us.—Follow close. No word
Above a whisper.

Isabella. Must I leave you then?

Why are we made so that we trust our hopes!
[All go out.

ACT V

SCENE I.—A passage in Berwick Castle. Enter Crombe as jailor, carrying food. He opens a door, and the Countess of Buchan is discovered in a cage.

Countess of Buchan [aside]. O me! Another! I can court no more. This
one I'll take by storm.—Fellow, good friend,
I think you are my thousandth jailor.
Soon I'll have a fresh one doubtless every day.
I've here had trial of my power on men,
On common vulgar men like you—for you
Are like your predecessors, I suppose—
And find myself most potent. Listen, now!
Yes, but you shall, you must; and look as well:
For I have looks like golden lightning, swift,
Gentle and perilous, that fascinate
The worshipful beholder. I have words,
Sweet words, soft words, and words like two-edged swords,
Like singing winds that rock the sense asleep,
Like waves full-breasted, filling deepest souls;
And I will kill you in a thousand ways

With words and looks unless you yield you now.
The others all were conquered just too late;
The women tell me nothing—English all;
But you will tell me what I want to know,
In brave submission to my witchery;
Now, like a man: I hope you are a man.

Crombe. What must I tell you?

Countess of Buchan. You must tell me first
How the king is—King Robert Bruce, I mean.

Crombe. They say he's well.

Countess of Buchan. Where is he then? But, sir,
I see you better now; you have an eye,
A brow, a mouth. Without more question, say
How Scotland fares since I was prisoned here.

Crombe. Because of this same eye, and brow, and mouth
They made me jailor.

Countess of Buchan. O, I understand!
And being nobler than those stolid pikes—
Pike-handles, I should say—forerunning you,
You'll not do wrong in duty's name. Escape
You cannot help me to; but tell me, sir,
Some news.

Crombe. Ah! Pardon me. If, as you say,
I have a brain to know that wrong is wrong
Though soldierly obedience be its badge,
Shall I not have the strength to overcome
Rebellious righteousness? Think you—

Countess of Buchan. James Crombe!

Crombe. Your servant ever, lady.

Countess of Buchan. Pardon, friend;
I did not know you. I've no memory
Except for horrors. I am half a beast—
Starved, frozen, scorched, in rags. Sometimes at night
I'm mad. The rotten air, the subtle dark,
The clammy cold, crawl through my blood like worms:
They knot themselves in aches, they gnaw my flesh,
And I believe me dead. Ghosts visit me:
They come in undistinguishable throngs,
Sighing and moaning like a windy wood.
Demons invade my grave with flaming eyes,
With lolling tongues; and ugly horrors steam
And whirl about me. Mountains topple down,
Grazing my head; and threatening worlds approach,
But never whelm me. O my friend! O me!
Tell me for mercy's sake of living men!
How came you here?

Crombe. To be beside you, lady.

Countess of Buchan. What! You are weeping! Dear friend, speak to me.
What food is this? White bread, and wine, and meat! [Clapping her hands.]
Thanks, thanks! O thanks! I'll eat, while you recount
All, all, about my friends!

Crombe. My time is brief.
And first I'll tell you of an enemy.
Edward the First is dead.

Countess of Buchan. Say you! Aha!
That was a mighty villain.

Crombe. Nigel is dead:
They killed him when they took Kildrummie tower.

Countess of Buchan. Ah, what a wanton waste of noble blood!
Remorseless tigers! Ah, the wolves, the rats!—
The queen, and Lady Douglas?

Crombe. Prisoners both.

Countess of Buchan. The man, my husband?

Crombe. Beaten, decayed, forgot.

When we were scattered in the wood of Drome,
The king sought refuge in an Irish isle,
Which in the spring he left, and dared his fate.
So after perils, and trials, and mighty acts,
And deeds of marvellous device—well poised
By those achievements, rare and manifold,
Heroically wrought by Edward Bruce,
Douglas, Boyd, Fraser, Gilbert de la Haye,
Randolf, and many another famous knight,
Whose deeds already ring in lands afar—
At Inverury he and your husband met:
And there the earl suffered such dread defeat,
That ignominy has become the grave
Where all his hopes lie buried.

Countess of Buchan. Wretched soul!

Crombe. Now in the length and breadth of this free land,
One castle only is in England's power.
Would I had time to tell you how 'twas done!

Countess of Buchan. What castle?

Crombe. Stirling. Edward found the siege
For his hot blood too long, and made a pact,
That if the governor, Sir Philip Mowbray,
Were not relieved within a year and day,
He should surrender. In the interval
Sir Philip went to London to the king—
Edward the Second, an unstable man—
And couched his eyes of that security
That curtained Scotland's state. He levied soon
The mightiest army ever England raised;
And in the sight of Stirling, Bruce and he
Are met to fight.

Countess of Buchan. Now?

Crombe. Now. And news is come
That Bruce to-day o'erthrew a champion
Between the armies; and that Randolf fought
And conquered Clifford, who had dreadful odds.

Countess of Buchan. And are they fighting now?

Crombe. No; but to-morrow
The battle is.

Countess of Buchan. Then, gallant friend, away!
Take horse and ride! You must not miss to-morrow.
Spur through the night!—Nay, think no more of me!
Or think me sitting lightsome on the croup,
And smiling at the moon. I go with you:
My soul is in your arm!—You must not stay.
One stout heart more!—Ride, ride!—I thank you, friend:
To know your dear and steadfast constancy,
As now I do, is worth these lonely years.—
Away to victory!—I can weep at last!—
Here, take this withered rag! It is the scarf
The queen gave me that far-off night in Drome.
My parched and desert eyes that sorrow shrunk
Are wet with happiness! See! Am I red?
My pale and stagnant blood wakes up again,
I would that we were flying together, Crombe,
As once we did, rebels, so free and glad!
Now go! Now go!—Yes, kiss me through the bars:
My kiss shall help to win the battle. Go!
[He kisses her, and goes out. The scene closes.]

SCENE II.—The Scottish Camp at Bamwckburn. Bruce in his tent at night.

Bruce. This drowned and abject mood; this sodden brain;
This broken back; this dull insanity,
That mopes and broods and has no thought at all;

This dross, that, in exchange for molten gold
Of madness thrice refined, were hell for heaven;
This flabby babe; this hare; this living death;
This sooty-hued, cold-blooded melancholy!
We know it for a subtle, potent lie—
A vapour, a mere mood! But when it comes,
Stealing upon us like unwelcome sleep
In high festivity, we've no more power
To shake our souls alive, than if we'd drunk
Of Lapland philtres,—muddy brew of hell!
When we, like beakers brimmed with wine, are full
Of living in the hand of God, there strikes
Some new divine idea through His brain,
And in the careless instant we are spilled
To be replenished never: so we feel.
We feel? How hard it is to fix the mind!
Only less hard than to withdraw it. Sleep?
No; not to-night. Heart, faithless heart, grow strong.
Ay, now I have remembrance of a thought
A dear breath whispered making wisdom sweet.
"Husband," she said, "when faith is strong in you,
Then only have you any right to think,
To judge, to act." And kissed me then, as if
Her healing truth had need of honey!
O, Love with its simple glance can pierce the night,
When drowsy sages at their tapers nod!
I will not trust myself but when self-trust
Is buoyant in me. And I surely know
to-morrow's battle finds one soul sufficient.—
I wonder how my wife is! Have these years,
These days, these hours—it is the hours that tell—
Dealt kindly with her in her nunnery?
Poor lady! She is gentle, delicate—
A lute that can respond to nothing harsh.
If she be shattered by this heavy stroke
Of separation! I, with sinewy strings,
Endure the constant quivering—

Enter Guard.

What now?

Guard. The leaders wait without, your majesty.

Bruce. Is it that time? Well, bid them enter.

Enter Edward Bruce, Douglas, Randolph, and Walter the Steward.

Friends,

Good morning. Let me see your eyes.—Randolf,
You have not slept.—Sir James, perhaps you have!
Your eyes were never dull.—What, half awake!
Why, Walter, love, if not anxiety,
Should have kept watch in that young head of yours!
Brother, I know you slept.

Edward Bruce. Why should I not?

I thanked God for the error that I made
In giving respite to the garrison,
Since it has brought us to this desperate pass
Where we must conquer. Then I slept, and dreamt;
And wakened, laughing at I know not what.

Randolf. I had no sleep. This would not leave my mind,
That we were one to five.

Bruce. Why Randolf, shame!

You are the last who should complain of that.
What good knight was it, like a water-drop,
Lost shape and being in an English sea,

Which found him out a rock, but yesterday?
Why man, you are my cousin, Thomas Randolf;
And this is Douglas; this, my brother Edward;
We are men who have done deeds, God helping us.
God helping us, we'll do a deed to-day!

Randolf. I do not fear; but, lonely, in the night
I could not see how we must win.

Bruce. No! come.

[They go to the door of the tent and look out.
I see the battle as it will be fought.
The sun climbs up behind us: if he shine,
His beams will strike on English eyes. Look there!
The earth throws off her mourning nightly weed;
And the fresh dawn, her bowermaid, coyly comes
To veil her with the morning, like a bride
Worthy the sun's embrace. This fight you dread,
Regard it as a happy tournament
Played at the marriage of the fragrant world,
If the full weight and awe of its intent
Press on you too o'erwhelmingly.

Randolf. Not I.

I'd rather lose the fight for what it is,
Than win it jestingly.

Bruce. Well said! The night,
That filled you with its gloom, out of your blood
Exhales, and it is day. Imagine, now:
Between high Stirling and the Bannock stream,
Whose silvery streak hot blood will tarnish soon,
Four battles stand. To westward, Edward's charge,
Douglas and Walter to the north and east,
Randolf, the doubter, in the central van;
I keep the second ward. Pent in this space
We cannot be unflanked, the river's gorge
On this wing, and on that, calthrops and pits.
The English archers scattered—Edward's task—
There but remains to stand, while yonder host,
Which leaves its revel only now, shall twine,
And knot, entangled in its proper coils,
Crammed in a cage too small for such a bulk,
Such sinuous length, such strength, to bustle in,
Save to its own confusion and dismay.
Speak I not reasonably, and quietly?

Randolf. Too quietly for me! Why, in this trap,
This coffin, they shall die for want of air!

Edward Bruce. It is too cheap a victory!

Douglas. When won,

I hope we may not find it all too dear.

[Bagpipes, drums, trumpets.

Bruce. Ha! now the din begins! My blood is lit!
Come, let us set our soldiers in a glow!
After the abbot says the battle mass,
I'll speak to them, and touch them with a flame.

Douglas. They'll burn.

Edward Bruce. They'll make a bonfire.

Walter the Steward. To announce
That Scotland's liberty's of age.

Bruce. Well roared,

My lioncel!

[They go out.

SCENE III.—The Field of Bannockburn. Enter Edward II., the Earl of Pembroke, Sir Giles De Argentine, Sir Ingram De Umfraville, with other Lords and Knights, in advance of the English lines.

Edward II. Will yon men fight?

Umfraville. Ay, siccarly. My liege,

If you will hear an old man's humble word
Who knows the Scotchmen well, feign a retreat:
Then will these fiery children of the North—
Children they are in every gift save strength,
And most in guileless daring—rush on us,
Leaving their vantage, and be overcome
Utterly, as in many a fight before.

Edward II. I'm a young warrior, and I mean to win
By dint of strength, and not by strategy.
To sneak a victory I came not north;
But in a lordly way to overthrow
The base usurper of my lordship here.
Leave paltry sleights and fawnings upon chance
To starveling rebels, keen as hungry curs
That dodge the whip, and steal the bone at once.
Think you we brought our friends across the sea
To juggle with them? We are here to fight,
As in the lists, like gentlemen. My lords,
I give you Scotland. Nothing for myself
Save sovereignty I claim: and that must be
Not snared by ambush, for assassins fit,
But seized by courage, frank and English.

Pembroke. Sire,
One reason only urges strategy:
Adopting it, less English blood will flow.

Edward II. That touches me.
De Argentine. And it is kindly thought.
But I have heard the Scotsmen plume themselves
On victory over any English odds,
In battles, pitched, embroiled, and hand to hand;
That we have never vanquished them in fight
Except when treachery assisted arms.
Conquest unchallengeable, dearly bought
Were worth its cost. A wily victory
Would leave our foes unhumbled, unappeased,
And confident of ultimate success.

Edward II. This is the wisest counsel.
Umfraville. Hear me yet.
What warrior is wiler than Bruce?
The schiltrons he has perfected: no knights
Can break the Scottish spearmen: chivalry
Means nought for them save mounted foes whose trust
Is in their horses—

Edward II. 'Tis a base device,
This slaughter of our steeds! A dastard's trick!
The delicate art of war, where excellence
Lay in the power of noble blood alone,
He makes a trade for ploughmen. Battle-fields
Are shambles since this rebel taught his clowns
To fear not knighthood!

Umfraville. True indeed, my liege!
And some have thought that this new style of war
Will drive the other out. But see you not
That every possible advantage—

Edward II. No!
For I will not!—Behold, the Scots ask mercy!

Umfraville. They do—from Heaven. These men will win or die.

Edward II. I hate such kneeling, whining warriors, I!
What right have they to think God on their side?
Our glorious father taught them otherwise
With iteration one had deemed enough.
I burn to teach them finally. My lords,
Our swords shall pray for us. One hour's hot work,
And Scotland is your own. Let us begin!

Each to his post, and everlasting shame
Blight him who cherishes a moment's thought
Of other means of victory than these,
Our English bows and lances, English hearts,
And not less English courage of our friends
Whose foreign banners grace our army. Come;
England shall stretch from Orkney to Land's End
After to-day. St. George for Merry England!
[They go out.]

SCENE IV.—Another part of the Field. The Scottish Army. Enter Bruce and the other Leaders.

Bruce. I think we all know well what courage is:
Not thews, not blood, not bulk, not bravery:
Its highest title, patience. Fiery haste
Has lost most battles. Till the word be given,
Let no man charge to-day: no seeming flight
Must lead you to pursue: take root; grow strong;
The earth is Scottish. For our country stand
Like bastioned, frowning rocks that beard the sea,
And triumph everlastingly. Doubt not
The time to charge will come—once and straight home:
We'll need no spur: so must you curb your blood;
Command your anguished strength: a false start now
Will lose a race we cannot run again.
If any of you feel unfit for fight
From any cause whatever, let him go,
Leaving us undiluted. Scorn nor curse
Shall blast him; but our generous thought shall praise
His act and consecrate his name,
As one who did his best in doing nought;
For victory depends on each of us.
I say, if gallant souls be timorous,
Get them behind the hill, and be not sad:
Great courage goes to make an open coward.
[A great shout.]

Then are we all one heart. Our enemies,
Our English enemies, who hope to drown
The very name of Scot in Scottish blood,
And these outlandish battle-harlots, hired
From Holland, Zealand, Brabant, Normandy,
Those Picards, Flemings, Gascons, Guiennese,
The refuse of the realms from which they swarm,
Are robbers lured by plunder, one and all,
From king to scullion: they are in the wrong.
We are the weapon to defend the right
God grasps to-day. Can we be put to shame?
Soldiers. No!

Bruce. Forward, trusty friends! The hour is come
For long-desired redemption of the vows
Groaned out when tender mothers, sisters, wives,
Fathers we worshipped, brothers we adored,
Were spared not. Let our battle-cry be—No;
I'll give you none. Each soldier shout the name
Of that best friend in prison buried quick;
Of yonder heaven-homed, most beloved soul
Among the multitude whose butchered limbs
Lie pledged in sepulchres. My countrymen,
Welcome to victory, which must be ours,
For death is freedom!

Soldiers. Victory or death!
[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—The Gillies' Hill. Men and women watching the battle.

A Young Friar. "St. Andrew and St. George! Fight on! fight on!"

A whole year's storms let loose on one small lake
Prisoned among the mountains, rioting
Between the heathery slopes and rugged cliffs,
Dragging the water from its deepest lair,
Shaking it out like feathers on the blast;
With shock on shock of thunder; shower on shower
Of jagged and sultry lightning; banners, crests,
Of rainbows torn and streaming, tossed and flung
From panting surge to surge; where one strong sound,
Enduring with continuous piercing shriek
Whose pitch is ever heightened, still escapes
Wroth from the roaring war of elements;
Where mass and motion, flash and colour spin
Wrapped and confounded in their blent array:
And this all raving on a summer's morn,
With unseen larks beside the golden sun,
And merest blue above; with not a breeze
To fan the burdened rose-trees, or incense
With mimic rage the foamless rivulet,
That like a little child goes whispering
Along the woodland ways its happy thought;
Were no more wild, grotesque, fantastical,
Uncouth, unnatural—and I would think
Impossible, but for the vision here—
Than is this clamorous and unsightly war,
Where swords and lances, shields and arrows, flash,
Whistle, and clang—splintered like icicles,
Eclipsed like moons, broken like reeds, like flames—
Lewd flames that lick themselves in burning lust—
With scorpion tongues lapping the lives of men;
Where axes cut to hearts worth all the oaks;
Where steel burns blue, and golden armours blaze—
One moment so, the next, a ruddier hue;
Where broidered banners rustle in the charge,
And deck the carnage out—A skeleton,
Ribbioned and garlanded may sweetly suit
The morris-dancers for a May-pole now!—
Where hoofs of horses spatter brains of men,
And beat dull thunder from the shaking sod;
Where yelling pibrochs, braying trumpets, drums,
And shouts, and shrieks, and groans, hoarse, shrill—a roar
That shatters hearing—echo to the sky;
Where myriad ruthless vessels, freighted full
Of proud rich blood—with images of God,
Their reasoning souls, deposed from their command—
By winds of cruel hate usurped and urged,
Are driven upon each other, split, and wrecked,
And foundered deep as hell. The air is dark
With souls. I cannot look—I cannot see.

[Kneels.

A Woman. The battle's lost before it's well begun.
Our men fall down in ranks like barley-rigs
Before a dense wet blast.

A Cripple. Despair itself
Can only die before the English bows.
O that they could come at them! Who are these
That skirt the marsh?

Woman. My sight is weak. But see;
Here's an old fellow, trembling, muttering. Look
How he is strung; and what an eye he has!

Cripple. Old sight sees well away. I warrant, now,
His is a perfect mirror of the fight.
You see well, father?

Old Man. Ay. That's Edward Bruce;
And none too soon. The feathered deaths speed thick
In jubilant choirs, flight after singing flight:
That tune must end; the nest be harried. Ride,
Fiery Edward! Yet our staunch hearts quail not.
Ah! now the daze begins! I know it well.
The cloth-yard shafts like magic shuttles, weave
Athwart the warped air dazzling, dire dismay,
And the beholder's blood slinks to his heart
Like moles from daylight; all his sinews fade
To unsubstantial tinder. Ha! spur! spur!
There are ten thousand bowmen! Gallop! Charge!
Now, by the soul of Wallace, Edward Bruce,
The battle's balanced! On your sword it hangs!
Look you; there's fighting! Just a minute's fight!
Tug, strain! Throe upon throe! Travail of war!
The birth—defeat and victory, those twins,
That in an instant breathe and die, and leave
So glorious and so dread a memory!—
The bowstring's cut! What butchery to see!
They shear them down, these English yeomen! God!
It looks like child's play too! And so it feels,
Now I remember me.—That's victory.

St. Andrew and the right!

Woman. The knights, the knights!

Old Man. I see them. But our spearmen! Do you see?
This hill we stand on trembles with the shock:
They budge not, planted, founded in the soil.
Another charge! Now watch! Now see! Ugh! Ha!
Did one spear flicker? One limb waver? No!
These fellows there are fighting for their land!
The English army through its cumbrous bulk
Thrilled and astounded to the utmost rear,
Twists like a snake, and folds into itself,
Rank pushed through rank. Now are they hand to hand!
How short a front! How close! They're sewn together
With steel cross-stitches, halbert over sword,
Spear across lance, and death the purfled seam!
I never saw so fierce, so locked a fight!
That tireless brand that like a pliant flail
Threshes the lives from sheaves of Englishmen—
Know you who wields it? Douglas, who but he!
A noble meets him now. Clifford it is!
No bitterer foes seek out each other there.
Parried! That told! and that! Clifford, good night!
And Douglas shouts to Randolph; Edward Bruce
Cheers on the Steward; while the King's voice rings
In every Scotch ear: such a narrow strait
Confines this firth of war!

Young Friar. God gives me strength
Again to gaze with eyes unseared. Jewels!
These must be jewels peering in the grass,
Cloven from helms, or on them: dead men's eyes
Scarce shine so bright. The banners dip and mount
Like masts at sea. The battle-field is slime,
A ruddy lather beaten up with blood!
Men slip; and horses, stuck with shafts like butts,
Sprawl, madly shrieking! No, I cannot look!
[Exit.

Woman. Look here! look here, I say! Who's this behind?
His horse sinks down—the brute is dead, I think.
His clothes are torn; his face with dust and sweat
Encrusted, baked, and cracked. He speaks; he shouts;
And shouting runs this way. He's mad, I think.

Cripple. He's made his hearers mad. Tents, blankets, poles,
Pitch-forks, and staves, and knives, brandished and spread
By women, children, grandsires! What is this?

Enter Crombe followed by a crowd bearing blankets for banners, and armed with staves, etc.

Crombe. I rode all night to strike a blow to-day:
The noblest lady living bade me go:
Her kiss is on my lips and in my soul.
Come after me—yea, with your naked hands,
And conquer weapons!
[They go out, shouting.

SCENE VI.—The Field of Bannockburn. The Scotch Reserve. To them enter Bruce.

Bruce. Most noble souls who wait so patiently!
Your splendid faith is in the air about you;
Your steady eyes shine like a galaxy;
Your presence comforts me: pressed in the fight,
The thought of you, like balm upon a wound,
Softened the thriftless aching of my heart.
The English waver; on the hill behind
Our followers fright them, marching in array
Bannered and armed, a legion out of heaven.
The tide of battle turns, and victory
Needs only you to launch it bravely forth.
Now—I would bid you think, but that the thought
Eludes me, like a homely, old-known song,
Wreathing in fitful gusts beyond the sense—
Now will the lofty keystone of our life
Be pitched in heaven for ever. We have dreamt
Our prayers into fulfilment many a time:
to-day we wrestle, and the victory's ours:
And yet I feel so scantily what it means
That I'm ashamed. Enough: I know you all.—
Now for our homes, our children, and our wives,
For freedom, for our land, for victory!
And cry our old cry, Carrick!
Soldiers. Carrick and victory!
[They go out.

SMITH: A TRAGIC FARCE
(Crieff, 1886)

PERSONS

Smith.
Hallowes.
Graham.
Brown.
Jones.
Robinson.
Two Men-servants.
Magdalen.
Topsy.

Scene: London and Garth. Time: The Present.

SMITH

ACT I

SCENE.—A Room in a Public-House. Glasses on the table. Brown is discovered talking excitedly; Jones, attempting to interrupt him; and Robinson, in a corner with a newspaper.

Brown. Truth is an airy point between two cliffs
Of adamant opinion: safest he
Who foots it far from either beetling brink.
Hallowes, now: he goes hanging on the verge
His martyr-face and aspirations strung
With bent keys. If his starting eyes behold
Some tartan star, or other fire-flaught born
Of pallid brains ill-nourished on bleached blood,
It is the truth—truth absolute! And down,
Loosing his hold to clasp his fervid hands,
He'll crash, and spill his life on stones untrod.

Robinson. Fair—very fair, indeed!

Jones. So would not you!

The Bastille Column or St. Paul's at noon,
Where crowds may see your glossy frock-coat fly,
And wax pathetic o'er the exotic spray
That slips the button-hole in middle air,
And twinkling after, lights upon the mess
Of limbs and oozing blood that late was you.

Robinson. Come, let each other be! no answer, Brown;
Because I want to open up a point.

That fellow, Smith—the point is suicide—
He said the other day—why, it was here!—
He would have coffee; we had brandy: well—
You know he speaks to everybody; so,
He cries to Topsy, there, who brought the drink—
He spoils the barmaids with his high-flown talk:
I tried it, and they laughed at me; but he!
He talks philosophy, religion, books:
And they can talk it too, with him. Well, then——

Brown. Pure innocence: the man's a baby.

Jones. Yes.

Uncultured, too; he lacks the college stamp.

Robinson. Well, then, my point——

Brown. Oh, never mind your point!

You've hit it, Jones; "uncultured" is the word.
Give me a man who knows what language means:
No forging sudden bolts that gild the fact,
A bright enough reality before:
Who never says a thing a thousand ways,
Nibbling with slippery sleight-of-tongue, till chance
Expose the end to bite. Give me a man
Whose mind is ready as a lawyer's desk,
Each pigeon-hole accountable for this,
Each drawer containing that, and nothing else.

Jones. Whose thinking's done; whose automatic mind
Strikes the same absolute response each time.

Brown. A man who knows the best of everything;
Consummate, bland; whom novelty annoys,
Guessing what musty masquerade it is
Of some dispute of Lamech and his wives.

Jones. Smith's a mere savage, barbarous as a Lapp:
A handsome creature, but elliptical.

Brown. Something awanting to complete the sense!

Robinson. Fair, very fair! But here's a point: you men
Since you began to go about with Smith,
Have caught a little of his style of talk;
You can't deny his power.

Brown. Power?—seething blood.

Give Jones, or such a man, Smith's body—why,
You'd have the hero of the age! Power? stuff!

Jones. Admit the power—potential as a troop;
But where's the captain?

Brown. Ay; his brain's a mess

Of sodden sawdust; it ferments and fumes:
But, let me say, wood-spirit's not champagne,
In spite of fables to the contrary.

Jones. Labels, you mean.

Robinson. Fair—very fair, by Jove!

Do you go north this year?

Brown. I do, this week.

Robinson. So soon! Health and a happy holiday!

Jones. Your good health and a pleasant time in Garth!

Robinson. Here's a point, Brown. Hallowes—he talks of Garth:
I thought the place was only known to you.

Brown. Hallowes discovered it a year ago:
And there I met him.

Jones. So: I understand
How such an out-at-elbows man as he
Is known to you: there you had no one else.

Brown. Exactly: with his simple ecstasies
He made good sport when Maudlin took the dumps.

Jones. When do you wed your cousin?

Brown. In a month.

Jones. Is the day fixed?

Brown. I go to have it fixed.

Robinson. Your cousin, Magdalen ... By Jove, here's Smith!

Enter Smith.

Smith. You here! Has Hallowes been?

Brown. No; not to-night.
Are you to meet him?

Smith. Yes.

Brown. He'll not appear:
He acts the people's notion of a poet.
He has a double memorandum-book—
Engagements to be broken—to be kept;
And most of those he makes are for the first:
"Sorry I failed you," when he sees you; "but"—
And you are left to gather that the Muse
Hugged him so close he couldn't get away.

Smith. He'll not fail me.

Jones. Don't be too sure of that.
I've known him break with me a dozen times.
Smith. Perhaps he's braver than your other friends.

Jones. The satire's deep.

Brown. A little underbred—
Hallowes, I mean.

Robinson. Still he's a graduate.

Jones. Finished apprentice; but he shuns the stress
Of competition with the journeymen,
Whereby alone dexterity is gained.

Brown. A fledgling knight who flies the eager fray
Where sword whets sword.

Robinson. He herds with nobody,
I've noticed that. But here's a point: I, you,
Smith—everybody wants to know the man;
He—won't be known: no one can equal him
In turning forth the dark slide when you think
Acquaintance burns to intimacy. Smith,
Only you see his lantern blazing bright;
How's that?

Brown. Speak for yourself, sir. This I know,
He rather courted me. His fitful wisp,
However, I assure you, Robinson,
Leads to a quaking bog of egotism.

Jones. Where I have floundered more than once. A month—
Three weeks ago when he gave up his post

In—Holofernes' School—the Cambridge man's—
That very day I met him here alone.
"I'm done with it," he cried. "These squalid years
Of mental boot-blackening are ended now—
The shameful pedagogy. Ah," he said,
With lips that shook and molten eyes, his voice
Hushing and sparkling as his passion tore
A ragged way through wordy wildernesses,
Or spread, where image failed, in shallows vague,
The margin lost in rushy verbiage,
"Shameful! a devil's compact! I, for food
Have made myself a grindstone, edging souls
Meant most for flying: I, in piteous mouths,
That yearned for sweetest manna, crammed rough stones
And loathsome scorpions: children, youths, the light
Of God brought newly down by love,
Straining to shine on all the flowers of earth,
Of heaven, of poetry, have I swathed up
In noisome fog of the dead letter—I,
Who dare aspire to be a child for ever.
Intolerance in religion never dreamt
Such fell machinery of Acts and Codes
As now we use for nipping thought in bud,
And turning children out like nine-pins, each
As doleful and as wooden. Never more
Shall I put hand to such inhuman work!"
To come with this to me, who teach, and mean
To start a boarding-school next year!

Brown. By Jove!

The net result of solitude. This world,
This oyster with its valves of toil and play,
Would round his corners for its own good ease,
And make a pearl of him if he'd plunge in.

Smith. Then you would change the diamonds into pearls,
The rubies and the opals?

Robinson. Very fair!

Brown. Better a pure pearl than a damaged diamond.

Jones. And in this matter we may all be pearls.

Smith. Be worldlings, truly. I would rather be
A shred of glass that sparkles in the sun,
And keeps a lowly rainbow of its own,
Than one of those so trim and patent pearls
With hearts of sand veneered, sewed up and down
The stiff brocade society affects.

Robinson. Fair, very fair!

Jones. Be quiet, parroquet!

Are we such pearls?

Smith. Pearls! This is what you are:
The commonest type of biped crawling here.
Take it thus crudely: you would not believe
A subtle phrase in full, but think I meant
Less than the words might bear, deeming me dull—
Barbarian you call me ...

Brown. Who said that?

Smith. The friends of gossips gossip, little Brown.

Brown. The great Smith gossips too, then.

Smith. What! You fool!

You dare to bandy words with me! Begone!

Get out of here the three of you!

Jones. He's mad.

Smith. You sots, you maggots, shavings, asteroids!

A million of you wouldn't make a man!
Out, or I'll strike you, monkeys, mannikins!

[All go out; then re-enter Smith, followed by Topsy with salver, etc.]

Smith. You're looking fresh: You've had a holiday?

Topsy. I've had my week.

Smith. Where were you?

Topsy. At the coast.

Smith. Now, tell me, what of all you saw, remains?

Topsy. Oh, well—there's many a thing! There's—
Ah! there's this! One morning early that I stood alone,
And saw the green sea from a windy cliff,
With small, white, curling waves, like shavings pinned
Upon a watered silk.

Smith. Oh! how was that?

Topsy. There was a great Scotch lady long ago—
I read it in a penny paper there;
That made me think of it; and she was poor,
And wore, instead of ribbons, shavings once,
And was the belle and made a match that night.
Here's Mr. Hallowes, sir.

Smith. The same for him.

Enter Hallowes. Topsy goes out, and returns as before, and goes out again.

Hallowes. Smith, I congratulate you. Come, your hand.

Smith. Thank you; I'm very pleased indeed. On what?

Hallowes. On the great gladness you're about to feel.
I've lost my post—dismissed—incompetence.

Smith. So soon! I said three months: it's just three weeks.
Business is worse than teaching, then.

Hallowes. Oh, worse!
Give me a week to coin its condemnation!
Business—the world's work—is the sale of lies:
Not goods, but trade-marks; and still more and more
In every branch becomes the sale of money:
Why, goods are now the means of bartering gold!

Smith. It fits these reeling times of tail-wagged dogs.

Hallowes. But wish me joy.

Smith. Joy, friend, till pain be ease!

Hallowes. Now will I tell you what I mean to do.
Garth's in the North, a hamlet like a cave,
Nestling unknown in tawny Merlin's side,
A mount, brindled with scars and waterways.
The windows, Argus-eyed with knotted panes
That under heavy brows of roses blink
Blind guard, have never wept with hailstones stung;
No antique, gnarled, and wrinkled, roundwood porch,
Whiskered with hollyhocks in this old thorpe
Has ever felt the razor of the East:
No rail, no coach, no tourist passes there:
But in the brooding evening from her seat,
A worn tree-trunk, the toothless beldame leaps
As lithe as superstition, says a saw,
And kills the toad that in the channel hops;
Far up the mountain children's voices ring;
The quoiters cry; and past the ivied inn
A chastened brook tells all its pebbled beads;
Between the bourtrie-bushes and the thorns
The commonest bird that sings is wonderful,
So empty are the spaces of the air
From any breath of modern weariness.
There will I live and walk the mountain-side,
Looking across the strath upon a stream,
A beakerful of water, spilt along
A winding strip of green and bosky spray,
That showers in silver when light-fingered winds
Turn up the leaves: a ridge, fire-reared and low,
Of coppice-covered hills, scalloped against

A loftier mass of purple, nobly borne,
Gives body to the sunset: night and day,
Asleep or waking, earth in heaven's lap lies.

Smith. And is this to be wholly holiday?

Hallowes. I shall make poetry—a line a day,
If nothing more. I'm twenty: I may count
On ten years yet. Three thousand lines, each line
A very mountain from whose sun-gilt crest
The stormy world a peaceful picture seems.
I shall upheave and range a chain like this:
Realms shall rejoice in it: my fame shall grow
For ever like the sword.

Smith. Let fame alone.

Hallowes. You misconceive: fame is the breath of power:
What valid work was ever for itself
Wrought solely, be it war, art, statesmanship?
Nothing can be its own reward and hold
Rank above patience, or whatever game,
Angling or avarice, is selfisher.
O watering palates! and, O skyey grapes!
O purple path above the milky way!
Give me to dream dreams all would love to dream;
To tell the world's truth; hear the world tramp time
With satin slippers and with hob-nailed shoes
To my true singing: fame is worth its cost,
Blood-sweats, and tears, and haggard, homeless lives.
How dare a man, appealing to the world,
Content himself with ten! How dare a man
Appeal to ten when all the world should hear!
How dare a man conceive himself as else
Than his own fool without the world's hurrah
To echo him!

Smith. But if the world won't shout
Till he be dead?

Hallowes. Let him address the street:
No subtle essences, ethereal tones
For senses sick, bed-ridden in the down
Of culture and its stifling curtains. Gusts
From bean-fields and the pine-woods, thought and deed
Of the young world bursting its swaddling bands
Before the upturned eyes and warning palms
Of fangless Use and Wont, his nurses hoar—
These find an echo everywhere.

Smith. The world
Still follows culture, though.

Hallowes. Maybe. But it
Follows itself, and shall, Narcissus-like,
Perish of self-love.

Smith. Echo, what of her?

Hallowes. She shall be re-incarnate by the word
That she shall hear.

Smith. What word?

Hallowes. It is not said.

Smith. Who shall pronounce it?

Hallowes. Who knows?—You, or I?

Smith. Well said! We'll go together to the North.

Hallowes. What! are you free?

Smith. I am. You want to write:

I want to think. When shall we start?

Hallowes. To-morrow.

Smith. So soon! But you are right: one must become
Fanatic—be a wedge—a thunder-bolt,
To smite a passage through the close-grained world.
[They go out.]

ACT II

SCENE.—An arbour in Graham's orchard. Enter Smith, Hallowes, and Graham.

Graham. Now, rest you here; I've business in the house:
And when I come I'll bring my daughter. Ha!
[To Hallowes.] She lives on poetry; you'll soon be friends;
[To Smith.] While you and I and Brown will talk again
Of London. What!—you called it—let me see—
The running sore, the ringworm of the earth.
Good, very good.
[Goes out.]

Hallowes. You'll make excuse for me.

Smith. Why are you so reluctant to remain?

Hallowes. You do not see the meaning of the knight.
We trespass in his wood: he meets us; storms,
And plays his gamekeeper. Our witty talk
Changes his character, and—we are here:
But mark, on trial; else, not his arbour,
But his drawing-room.

Smith. He brings his daughter, though.

Hallowes. True; but you see our humour was so broad.

Smith. Therefore he does not take us to his house?
Suppose it so, is he the less a man?
Why, it's a powerful thing to do.

Hallowes. Indeed!

Snobbish, say I.

Smith. Away, man! Use that word!
A poet, too! Oh, I could rail at it! Snob!
It's a modern word; and so is cad:
None use them but deservers of them. Faugh;
So bitterly I hate them, into sense
My spleen spins slovenly. We all are men.
Doomsday of nicknames! I behold it dawn.
An inky cloud, with thick corrosive stench,
Blots out the heavens, and like a palimpsest
Shows name on name in smoking characters,
A leprous scroll, too filthy to o'er-read:
Beneath them, branded deep athwart the cloud
In letters huge from which the light scales off,
The most inhuman, most ungodly word,
Sinner. But lo! the rotten-fuming signs
Smoulder and writhe, and run like mercury,
Flooding the cloud, which belches into flame
And shrivels up beyond the bounds of space!
A rose-dipped pencil washes suddenly
A blush along the east, whereon appears
In molten gold, Man, Woman; and I know
That we are all one race, and these nicknames,
Phantasmal charnel-lights of self-contempt.

Hallowes. You know I have not always strength of wing
To soar like you right to God's point of view.
Pardon the word. Now, you must let me go.

Smith. You give no cause: poetic mood won't do.
I see a mental sickness in your eye:
What is it, Hallowes?

Hallowes. Why, my money's done:
And day by day from London packets come—
Dramas and poems, essays and reviews,
Returned with thanks, returned with thanks.

Smith. Just so.
Ten pounds I have: take half: when this is spent
Then we return with thanks to London town.
You have your ticket?

Hallowes. Oh, yes!

Smith. Cheer up, then!
We have a fortnight yet. Sit down and talk
Of comfortable things. We'll meditate
Upon return-tickets for a while:
How beautifully suited to our need,
Spendthrifts like us! Devise some praise for them.

Hallowes. O let me go! I have my note-book here.
I'll climb to Merlin-top and write all night
Under the moon or till you follow me.

Smith. Away then, since you must! Good luck, good rhymes!

Hallowes goes out. Enter Magdalen without seeing Smith.

[Aside.] These plaited coils of hair, the golden lid
Of the rich casket where her live thoughts lie:
Her cheek is tinged with sunset? Has she eyes?
Her body sways: the crimson-blazoned west
Like organ-music surges through her blood.
My seeming aimless visit to the North—
The time—the circumstance!—I yield myself!
This is the woman whom my soul will love.
She moves this way, backward, to sit. I'll speak.
Lady.

[Magdalen wheels round.

Her eyes are living sapphires!

Magdalen. What!

Smith. I love you.

Magdalen. Sir!

Smith. I love you, lady.

Magdalen [about to go]. Sir!

Smith. Lady, stay.

My body and my soul assembled here,
At war till now, are wedded by your glance:
You make that man which chaos was before:
And this is love. I dreaded love: I knew
It should with such a pang lay hold of me.
I am not mad although I tremble thus:
It is the inspiration of my love.
Fly not, repulse me not, and do not fear:
I would tear up my body with my hands,
And hide you in my heart did evil threat:
I am as tame to you as wild things are
To those that cherish them. Be confident,
For I shall guard my dreams from harming you
As faithfully as time his vigil keeps.

Magdalen. I do not fear.

Smith. Speak louder, speak again.

Like rose-leaves that enrich the greedy earth
The tremulous whispering bedews my heart.
Speak, speak!

Magdalen. Who are you, sir?

Smith. A mellow voice,

Falling like thistledown, melting like snow,
Golden and searching as a sunny wine.
It bore a question: Who am I? A man.

Magdalen [aside]. I think so too.—What do you want with me?

Smith. Our language is too worn, too much abused,
Jaded and over-spurred, wind-broken, lame,—
The hackneyed roadster every bagman mounts.
I cannot tell you what I want with you,
Unless you understand the depth of this:
I want for you heroic happiness.

Magdalen. How might I win this happiness?

Smith. Be mine:

I am the enemy of all the world:

Dare it with me: be mine.

Magdalen. I know you not.

I am engaged to one I do not love;
My father swears that I must marry him:
It is a common misery, so stale
That I contemned it: and I know you not:
But I have courage. Let me think a while.

Smith. Think my thought; be impatient as I am;
Obey your nature, not authority:
Because the world, enchanted by the sun,
The moon, the stars, with charms of time and space,
Of seasons, tides, of darkness and of light,
Weaves new enchantment everlastingly,
Whirled in a double spell of day and year,
A self-deluded sorcerer, winding round,
Close to its smothered heart, coil after coil
Of magic zones, invisible as air—
Some, Cytherean belts; some, chains; and some,
Noisome and terrible as hooded snakes.

Magdalen. What do you mean? what spells? what sorcery?

Smith. The hydra-headed creeds; the sciences,
That deem the thing is known when it is named;
And literature, thought's palace-prison fair;
Philosophy, the grand inquisitor
That racks ideas and is fooled with lies;
Society, the mud wherein we stand
Up to the eyes, whence if I drag you forth,
Saving your soul and mine, there shall ascend
A poisonous blast that may o'ertake our lives.

Magdalen. I feel a meaning in your eloquence;
I see my poor thoughts made celestial
Like faded women Jove hung in the sky.
Obey my nature, sir? How shall I know
The voice of nature from the thousand cries,
That clamour in my head like piteous birds,
Filling the air about a lonely isle
With ringing terror when the hunter comes.

Smith. Shut out the storm and heed the still, small voice.

Magdalen. Have pity. Yet I think the woman's dream
Is given me—the strong deliverer
To pluck her from the dragon's jaws unharmed.
What can I say? Rest still your eyes on mine,
And I shall dare to speak. I love you, sir;
And I have loved you since I was a girl—
You, only you. Good-bye. Oh, in my life—
A miracle, I think, as this world goes—
I met the living image of my dream,
And was found worthy to be loved! Good-bye.
I seem to see my daughter at my knees,
Listening with violet eyes of heaven-wide awe,
The virgin story I shall utter once
To her, only to her.

Smith. And so, you go
To hell.

Magdalen. Ay, even so: my father's word
Is plighted to this man, and so is mine.
Perhaps, that I may know this is no dream—
Sir, will you kiss me?

[He folds her in his arms and kisses her.]

Smith. You are faint, my love.

Magdalen. Oh, have pity, sir!

Smith. I will have pity.

[Goes out carrying her. Then enter Brown. He goes out after them, and re-enters running as the curtain falls.]

ACT III

SCENE.—The top of Mount Merlin: a precipice on one side: rocks on the other. Hallows is discovered lying with a note-book by his side.

Hallows. O noblest hour in my ignoble life!
Hunger and squalor, and delirious rhymes;
No past, no future; one unending now
Of meanest misery, most miserable
When fairest dreams gilded the starless night,
And words in choirs flew singing through my brain
Melodious thunder, for then most I knew
The yawning wants and gnawing cares of life.
To sink to that inanity abhorred,
The wretch whose early fervour, burnt away,
Leaves him, for lack of ease to smite his thought
To white-heat—since the brazier of youth,
That needs no sweat, is cold—incapable
Of any meaning, but with loathsome itch
That still essays, and still produces nought,
Or horribly emits untempered scraps—
Toads, cinders, snakes, nameless aborted things,—
The hideous castings witchcraft vomited;
Maybe to live on grudging charity
Of friends estranged; sneered at by smug success;
Called poetaster: such had been my life;
But I have chosen death. Death—and the moon
Hangs low and broad upon the eastern verge
Above a mist that floods the orient,
Filling the deep ravines and shallow vales,
Lake-like and wan, embossed with crested isles
Of pine and birch. Death—and the drops of day
Still stain the west a faintest tinge of rose
The stars cannot o'erwash with innocence.
Death—and the mountain-tops, peak after peak,
Lie close and dark beneath Orion's sword.
Death—and the houses nestle at my feet,
With ruddy human windows here and there
Piercing the velvet shade—deep in the world,
Old hedge-rows and sweet by-paths through the corn!
The river like a sleepless eye looks up.
Pale shafts of smoke ascend from homely hearths,
And fade in middle air like happy sighs.
Death—and the wind blows chill across my face:
The thin, long, hoary grass waves at my side
With muffled tinkling.... Not yet! No; my life
Has not ebbed all away: I want to live
A little while.... Is the moon gone so soon?
They've put the shutters to, down there.... The wind
Is warm.... Death—is it death? ... I had no chance....
Perhaps I'll have another where I go....
Another chance.... How black!...
[Dies.

Enter Smith carrying Magdalen.

Magdalen. I think now I can walk again.

Smith. No need;

We've reached the summit: see, the circling world!
Does this seem madness still?

Magdalen. Mad happiness:

I know we should be here. Ah! there's a man!

Smith. My friend, the poet. He has chosen well:
The cream-white moon, this high peak of the earth—
The earth, itself the one Parnassus-mount.

Magdalen. And have you climbed the hill only for him

Bearing me half the way? But answer not:
I only wish to feel that I am yours;
And that this knowledge may be fully mine,
Call me my name. You do not know my name?

Smith. And wish not: you are woman; I am man.
Why should we limit all the thought of this,
Shrouding the Infinite with names? Our life
Is haunted by these ghosts ourselves have raised.
O lady, we shall never know the truth,
What man, what love, what God is, till we cease
To talk of them—which all do in the grave.

Magdalen. How strange it seems to me and yet not strange:
Death, life, I care not which, so I am yours.

Smith. And I yours, now, for ever.—Hallowes!—What!—
Asleep?—pale ... dead! ... This was a man too slight,
Too sweet to live. I think he has done well:
For had he stayed strung naked on life's wheel,
Broken by every circumstance of woe,
He had gone mad. This sight would pierce my heart,
But that yours bucklers mine. A girl-like boy!
He used to talk of euthanasia:
How has he killed himself? Here's blood! He said
That should he ever need to take his life
Thus gently would he ope a sluice and die.
I loved him. I shall weep some other time.
What has he written here?

While Smith examines the note-book enter Graham, Brown, and two
Men-servants.

Scored and re-scored,—

Illegible.

Magdalen. Oh!—my father!

Graham. So, sir!

What Jupiter are you that walk away
With ladies over mountains in the night!
What radiant devil rather! With an art,
Seven times refining the seducer's dross,
You brand the reputation curelessly.
And leave the spotless sufferer to pine,
The guiltless-guilty in a hell of woe.
Or are you but a thundering, blundering fool,
Mad, not malignant? Do you understand?
to-morrow all the county shall declare,
And shortly London echo how Graham's girl—
Graham, the old fool, who never stirred from Garth,
And out of harm's way kept his daughter snug,
Filtering her reading, her acquaintanceship—
Never a man but Brown, her lord to be—
How she, when he, too confident because
She just had named the day, brought home that night—
The first time since his daughter turned fifteen—
Two men, wild London fellows—hark, away,
With both among the heather, o'er the moor!
For there's your friend, I see, sir. Do you see?
What's to do? Who is to suffer? Speak, sir!
Maudlin, he stares at you; you, at the ground—
But that is well, Brown, speak to him—to them.

Brown. Love holds my tongue, sir.

Graham. What! do you love him?

Why, now, as we came panting up the hill,
You swore he was a mean adventurer,
Poor as a rat, and friendless as a toad:
A scribbling, bibbling, fribbling, poet, he
Who takes it all so coolly there.

Smith. He's dead.

Graham. Dead!—O my God!—my head—my heart is split:

No hiding now. O man, man, you have done
Worse than you think! In every ha'penny rag,
Cried in the streets, the talk of billiard-rooms—
My daughter Magdalen!—my happiness,
My poem, picture, my divinity!
I haven't fired a gun, or touched a card,
Donned buckskin, made a bet, for five long years.
I've led a dog's life; done dog's duty too;
And been as happy as a faithful dog:
And all to save my daughter from the taint
That taints me, taints the world, and taints the best:
I've no fine names for it; I know it's there.
I've taught her everything—professors, books:
Made her a—what's the word?—a paragon:
And now I've got my nephew here, young Brown,
Who had a grandfather, who had one too—
An Oxford man, a wholesome, handsome boy,
Rich, well-disposed, to marry her: and here,
Safe in my pocket, is their honeymoon—
A map, I mean, where I will follow them—
I've marked in red the route they'll take, you see—
Before I go to bed. I'll have my fling
After they're married—do you understand?
My poem out, my picture on the line,
I'll dance, and sing, and dine, and wine, and shine!
My God, Magdalen, don't stand staring there!
The moon can't help you, bouncing as it is.
I'm going mad. Brown, take my daughter home.

Magdalen. Father I cannot, now, go home to-night,
Unless he comes with us.

Graham. He! whom? What! him?

Magdalen. Father, for him you sacrificed yourself,
Not knowing how you wrought on fate's behalf.
Most loving and most noble father, thanks:
My heart is aching with deep thankfulness.
Never had daughter such a holy time
Of preparation: any other life
Would not have made me meet for him.

Graham. Girl! girl!

Be quiet, now!—Brown, tell us what to do!

Brown. Keep cool, as I am. Smith, I know your power:
You are the kind of man that healthy girls
Yield to at once, you know.

Graham. What's this? What's this?

You've lost your head, I think.

Magdalen. O father, look!

See with my eyes. He's worth a million Browns.—
[To Brown.] Sir, pardon me. You are a worthy man,
And much above the common stamp, I know.
Father, this man—I do not know his name—
Is all the world to me.

Graham. You little fool!

[He hands Magdalen over to Brown and the servants.
Now, sir, I'll pay you down a thousand pounds
To keep this quiet.... Oh, the murdered man!
Ay; he's been murdered: here's the murderer:
That's the way out of it! Ha, ha! my buck,
We'll have you clapped in jail.

Brown. That wouldn't do.

I'll add another thousand. Keep our names ...

Smith. Magdalen!

Magdalen. Yours, only yours.

Graham. Be quiet!

What's to be done? See you here, ravisher—
But stop a bit: we're all assuming. Brown,
Perhaps there is some satisfactory—
Some explanation, plausible at least.
Sir, have you anything to say?

Smith. Much. First:

You are my enemy, and I am yours.
Rancorous debates, and wars, and martyrdoms
Give tolerance the most forlorn of hopes;
But with the impartial moon for ensign, here
I dare assay to make my foe my friend.
Even one who overlooked the world with me,
And saw it, as I see it, a flying shuttle,
Weaving a useless web of mystery
That shrouds itself—even he, whose piteous blood
Stains this green mountain-brow the soft clouds kiss,
And sweet wild winds freshen continually,
Had not discerned the reason of our deed:
How much less you, who never think at all!
But you must listen: you must try to think.
And see how simple is our presence here:
The way to town is five miles by the road,
And two across the hill; so this I chose,
Being shorter, and because my friend had said
He would await my coming. She and I
Are on our way to London.

Graham. You are mad:

You've made her mad. Good-night.
[He is about to lead Magdalen away but Smith holds him.]

Smith. Not so: We are not mad, but you—the world is mad.

You and the world would make her such a thing
As poets still cry out on. Mine she is,
Mine by the love that, as we had been gods
Meeting in golden Tempe, dawned and shone
Full-beamed at once. What is more sane than love?
The universe is chaos without love....

Graham. Hold off!

Smith. Be still!—Women are made by men:

The nations fade that hold their women slaves:
The souls of men that pave their hell-ward path
With women's souls lose immortality.
What station in our heart's economy—
The hidden household where our naked thoughts
Stand at the windows innocent as babes,
Or crouch in corners shamefaced and undone,
Though none may pass but he whose thoughts they are:
What home, or what foul den we keep them in,
These complements of us, these plastic things
Our fancy fashions to the shape we please—
That is the test of sanity. Behold,
Your daughter, being throned within my heart,
Has straight become a queen!

Graham. What noise is that?

Smith. A cry within the wind. Have you ne'er heard

Prophetic voices muffled in the blast?
Old man, you've done a high thing for your child;
But all is naught if you constrain her now.
Give me the woman whom my soul has chosen,
Give me the woman who has chosen me.

Graham. Poor fool! no frantic whim will change my plan.

[Graham and Brown lead Magdalen out. Smith attempts to take her from them but the servants interfere. He hurls them both to the ground: they rise and run out. Smith goes out, and re-enters backward with Magdalen on one

arm, keeping Graham and Brown off with the other. He stops at the edge of the cliff.

Smith. Back, or we plunge together.

Graham. Hold! [Aside.] That sound!

How could they know? But yet, they saw us go.

It is the village coming up the hill!

They'll rescue us. Brown, we must seem to yield.

This is a madman, no idealist.

Brown. Stark, staring mad.

Graham. Of course. We might have known.

Why, I could laugh. Come on, we'll humour him.—

Conclusions reached with salience, sir, are oft

Wiser than those we plod to; for the mind

Tires on the dusty round-about; and so

I think you have deserved my daughter.

Smith. Ha!

Then you are but a worldling after all:

I know your thought: I've met it face to face

A hundred times; and though it owns it not,

It means that all it cannot understand

Is madness, and that highest God is mad.

Is it because the moon is in a cloud

You speak this folly now?—a human voice!

Some people on the hill! I see your drift.—

Magdalen Graham ...

Magdalen. Yours, always, only yours.

Brown. I warn you, monstrous rogue, abduction earns
A lengthy term of penal servitude.

Smith. Inept fool!—Lady, life, the shooting star,

Is no more worth than is the miser's gold,

The cultured man's impressions, lust's delight;

It is a prison innocence may break;

A moment mere of immortality.

Magdalen. Watch for the moon: she slips her sable shawl,
And silver lace. Behold!

Smith. The happy night

Heaves a deep long-drawn sigh of sweet content.

Magdalen. Oh, if the world would look on us like that!

Smith. The world for you and me is one blank stare—

A basilisk would shrivel up our souls.

Magdalen. O these hoarse shouts and fiendish empty shrieks!

How near the people are! Can we not go?

Smith. Yes, we can go where none will follow us.

We two could never love each other more

Than now we do; never our souls could mount

Higher on passion's fire-plumed wings; nor yet

Could laughter of our children's children pierce

With keener pangs of happiness our hearts.

I have a million things to tell my love,

But I will keep them for eternity.

Good earth, good mother earth, my mate and me—

Take us.

[He leaps with her over the precipice. Graham rushes forward, but falls fainting. Enter villagers, shouting and laughing.]

SCARAMOUCH IN NAXOS: A PANTOMIME
(Crieff, 1888)

PERSONS

Bacchus.

Silenus.

Sarmion.

Glaucus.
Scaramouch, a Showman.
Harlequin, in the employment of Scaramouch.
Ariadne.
Ione, daughter to Glaucus.
Columbine, in the employment of Scaramouch.
Satyrs.
Bacchantes.
Sailors.

Scene: Naxos.

PROLOGUE.

Silenus. Gentle readers—I would fain say, hearers, but I am afraid I shall never fool it on the stage—I am very fond of Pantomimes. I don't know whether I like this one so well as I liked those which I witnessed when I was a boy. It is too pretentious, I think; too anxious to be more than a Pantomime—this play in which I am about to perform. True Pantomime is a good-natured nightmare. Our sense of humour is titillated and strummed, and kicked and oiled, and fustigated and stroked, and exalted and bedevilled, and, on the whole, severely handled by this self-same harmless incubus; and our intellects are scoffed at. The audience, in fact, is, intellectually, a pantaloon, on whom the Harlequin-pantomime has no mercy. It is frivolity whipping its schoolmaster, common-sense; the drama on its apex; art, unsexed, and without a conscience; the reflection of the world in a green, knotted glass. Now, I talked to the author, and showed him that there was a certain absence from his work of this kind of thing; but he put his thumbs in his arm-pits, and replied with some disdain, "Which of the various dramatic forms of the time may one conceive as likeliest to shoot up in the fabulous manner of the beanstalk, bearing on its branches things of earth and heaven undreamt of in philosophy? The sensational dramas? Perhaps from them some new development of tragic art; but Pantomime seems to be of best hope. It contains in crude forms, humour, poetry, and romance. It is the childhood of a new poetical comedy." Then I saw where he was, and said, "God be with you," and washed my hands of him. But I'll do my best with my part.

SCENE I.—A Wood.

Silenus, sitting. Harlequin and Columbine posturing about him. Satyrs and Bacchantes dancing round the group.

Song.

Sing of dancing, sing of wine,
Satyrs and Bacchantes, sing.
Harlequin and Columbine,
Leap within our frantic ring.

Dance, the skies are violet;
Dance, our lips with wine are wet;
Sing, heigh-ho, the shade is mellow!
Twist and twine from dusk till dawn;
Feet and hoofs beat bare the lawn.
Bacchus is a noble fellow!

From our garlands grapes are flung,
And we tread them in the grass;
Ivy, in our tresses strung,
Streams behind us as we pass.

Dance, the skies are violet;
Dance, our lips with foam are wet;
Sing, the beechen shade is mellow!
Bend and bound with one accord;
Foot it firm, and trench the sward.
Bacchus is a splendid fellow!

Round we spin; our starry eyes
Glimmer through our tossing manes.
Time is ending; wisdom dies;
We are drunk; and Bacchus reigns.

Dance, the skies are violet;
The dust with juice of grapes is wet;
Sing, the deepening shade is mellow!
Dance the night into the day;
Dance into eternity.
Bacchus is the only fellow!

Harlequin. Now, you may tell them; now, that they think of Bacchus but as one of themselves—a wine-bibber, and the inventor of wine-bibbing. Silenus. Do you disparage wine-bibbing? Harlequin. May my mask grow to my face, and my sword to my arm, if I do not think it a most intellectual pursuit! Columbine. For what do you take us? Silenus. No enigmas: I am not good at riddles in the evening; for the tedious parched hours of this torrid July, and the labour of moistening them make me sweat brains; but if I have not enough left to say what I take you for I would be glad to mount spontaneously to heaven in a chariot of fire—I mean by combustion. You, my good Harlequin, I take to be the son of Mercury and one of the furies. Harlequin. Which one? Silenus. Know you not your own mother? She whom Hermes mistook for Aphrodite: it's an old story now, as your joints might tell you, for you are a most degenerate Harlequin. Now do I remember Bathylus and Pylades, sweet youths both. Harlequin. Were they Harlequins? Silenus. Harlequins! They were anything. Their very hands were garrulous as beldames, and their fingers more exclamatory than Marsyas under the knife of Apollo. You are a mere grasshopper and a magpie—a very signboard. You are like your father in nothing but the lightness of your heels, and the nimbleness of your pilfering. Harlequin. In what am I like my mother? Silenus. In greed, and in that you are appointed to be my torment. But you serve me, too, or I would discard you. Moreover, you amuse me. You are a walking firmament: your spangles are the milky way, and your belt the zodiac. Sometimes you are Orion, and swagger out with sword on thigh to ogle the Pleiades. You are the bad angel of pleasantry, because you are, as it were, humour run to seed, and become a science: you are a mere name, and the thing which you once were is in limbo; wherefore you suit these times, and are well matched with my sweet Columbine. Columbine. What am I? Silenus. What short flounces and limelight have made you. What do these woods know of fleshings? Doff them for shame, and go naked. Columbine [aside]. Swell till you burst, old pumpkin! We'll make a pantaloon of you before we've done. Silenus. What are you muttering? Do you hear? You must go naked with a tiger's skin. Harlequin. She shall. But see, they are ripe for your address. Silenus. I say, wine-bibbing is noble, and drunkenness a virtue. Give me a drink, and let me go to sleep. Harlequin. Have you forgotten? Silenus. I thank Jove I have. To forget is Elysium; regret is hell. I would put it better if I weren't so sleepy. Harlequin. This will rouse you. [Gives him wine. Silenus [drinks]. Aurora is in this wine: already I feel her chariot prancing through my veins. I have drunken of the sun. Children—[Aside.] What was I to say? There was some plot. Harlequin [aside]. You are Bacchus. Silenus. I am the new Bacchus—Harlequin [aside]. No, no; you are the old Bacchus! Silenus. —and the old Bacchus, and Bacchus altogether; and that maiden-faced Bacchus, who these many generations has roamed about the world striking men with fury and madness, is not the son of Semele, but a pampered and audacious old mountain-rover, none other than my ancient, Silenus, disguised. And this is the meaning of the fable that says I was dead and buried for a time. What greater burial could there be than the eclipse of Bacchus by Silenus! Well then, I am Bacchus: Proserpina nursed me. Harlequin. The true Bacchus is come again! All. Long live the true Bacchus! Silenus. There shall be no more rations, but all shall drink as much as they please; for ever since I stepped out of Jove's thigh I have been a hard drinker. [Aside.] Do I not do it well? Observe how I throw in these back-handers about my parentage—casually—before I am aware; and I blush and hem, for I would not be thought proud.—Children, rumour has confounded me with my father, Jupiter. Think it not: I am plain Bacchus, whose only claims on the world are that he invented wine, and is a good fellow, and a hard drinker. Fear me not, for I am harmless. All. Long live Bacchus! Silenus. Columbine, where is Ariadne? Columbine. I do not know, but we must find her. Silenus. We must.—I have no chariot. Harlequin. You shall have one. Silenus. And tigers? Harlequin. I fear you can't have tigers: there are none on the island. Silenus. Then you must get me some cats instead. And now I bethink me, cats will please me better. They were dangerous reptiles, those tigers, and I am growing old: my charms have not the power they once had. Harness me some half-dozen tabbies: they shall serve well enough. I have somewhat more to say, and I will say it seriously. [Rises. Drinkers and drunkards, gentle profligates, In praise of drinking to be curious Would task Apollo and his morning lyre, With fresh and dulcet brains and strings new-strung, So often has the art been sung and said: And yet good reasons for it scarce are known: One that consoles me I will offer you. We are immortals—all of us, divine; But people of inferior intellect. Wherein consists our chief capacity? In drinking deep: and some have sprightly toes. Well, here's my reason. What is genius? This: Perception of our bent and tireless zeal To track it out against the wind of fate. Have we not followed with a quenchless thirst Deep drinking? All. We have, most noble Bacchus. Silenus. Are we not plagued with headaches in the morning? All. We are, we are. Silenus. Some of our noses, too, are rubicund. All. Most true. Silenus. Our eyes are bulging, blazing amethysts. 1st Satyr. Grapes, bursting grapes. Silenus. The women's hair is dank as Panope's, Uncrisped and colourless, as limp as hay. Bacchantes. Alas! alas! Silenus. Their cheeks are hollow, and their arms are thin. Bacchantes. Alack-a-day! Silenus. We all are

rebels. 1st Satyr. Outcasts. 1st Bacchante. Unsexed. 2nd Bacchante. Lost. Silenus. Then are we geniuses. Now, hear my reason. 1st Satyr. Your reason! 2nd Satyr. Why, we thought we had it now! Silenus. Erroneous conclusion; for to say That we have geniuses for drinking deep, And drink accordingly, is but to say We drink because we're dry: that's not enough. Reason there is for genius evermore, Could we discover it. 1st Satyr. Then tell us ours. Silenus. Patience and drink a little. [All drink. Mine alderliest prodigals, the truth Is simply this, that we're inferior. 1st Bacchante. We know it. Silenus. Well said! That's it! We know it! Inferior, and we know it. Consider, then, What dreadful thought is this—what dire dismay— Inferior, yet immortal! We tried, we failed; Failure was our familiar: so we chose, Rather than miss our aim eternally, To aim to miss, making success secure: That is the reason of our geniuses. Were we of those to whom death ministers, We might strain struggling, staggering—but no! What is the highest life that mortals live? A finger-length—time, fame, oblivion— A slate, a pencil, and a sponge! Then drink.

Song and dance, in which Silenus joins.

Dance and sing, we are eternal;

Let us still be mad with drinking:

'Tis a madness less infernal

Than the madness caused by thinking.

Death, cease whetting missiles for us;

Lurk not in the grave's dark portal;

Bring your dead, and join the chorus;

Drink, for we are all immortal.

Drink, my gallants; reel and rhyme

Though our souls are second-rate

We are none the less sublime:

Drink, and give the lie to fate!

Silenus. I know another song like that; but if drunkenness is no excuse for plagiarism, what is? [Silenus, Satyrs, and Bacchantes go out.

Enter Scaramouch.

Harlequin. Welcome, great chief! Columbine. Hail, noble champion! Scaramouch. How d'ye do? How d'ye do? Have you secured our venerable Bacchanalian friend? Harlequin. We have. Scaramouch. Where is he? Now, don't tell me he's in your pocket. I'm not yet better of that fairy you caught me. Harlequin. Was she not a success? Scaramouch. O Harlequin! O Columbine! I had her advertised on posters as big as mainsails. I paid municipalities fortunes to permit policemen to be my sandwich-men. Harlequin. And a very good use to put them to. Scaramouch. Now don't: I can't stand it. Listen: I offered a prize of a thousand guineas to whoever would make a new joke about policemen, introducing my fairy. Twenty-one thousand jokes were sent in: I read these jokes. Harlequin. Heroic soul! Scaramouch. Nay, I am better. Do not flatter me.—Well, I published an hourly bulletin of the fairy's progress to the capital, with gratis supplements of original novels by the chief living writers. I hired and shut up six theatres, and bought the Crystal Palace to exhibit her in. Age of glass and iron! there came a thing about the size of a small tadpole! Harlequin. Well, I never said she was a giantess. Scaramouch. No; but my bills had her as big as a ballet-girl. The crowd—there was a crowd the first and only night—couldn't see it; so they wrecked the Palace and went off in a body to the performing fleas, and a stray cat ate the fairy. Now, how big is Bacchus? Harlequin. Too big for a cat to eat: in fact, I don't believe any cat in Christendom, even Whittington's, which bearded a king, would dare to look at him. I only saw him once, and I've no desire to see him again. He withered me, sir, with a look: I am limp still. Scaramouch. Paper, pens, and ink! I thought you said you had him? Harlequin. No, sir; we have only got his venerable Bacchanalian friend. Scaramouch. People and pantomimes! what am I to do! Harlequin. Ship Silenus instead. Why, even supposing we could get hold of Bacchus, he would be of no use for our purpose. Columbine. He would be a worse bargain than the fairy, unless you passed him off for Ariadne. Scaramouch. In the name of the living tinker, how? Harlequin. Because not a soul would believe that the big beardless boy which Bacchus looks was he. Now, this old wine-skin, Silenus, is just the idea your worthy patrons have of what Bacchus must be after a supposed debauch extending from end to end of the Christian era. Scaramouch. And is he willing to play Bacchus? Harlequin. As willing as a grub is in May to be a butterfly. Bacchus has placed him and some other drouths of his crew under guard, and limited them to so many drinks a day, for they were as dissipated as porters. I helped them to escape on condition that they should sail with us; which was a bargain. But they were more difficult to manage than a crew ashore after a three months' voyage. Imagine, now: they have gone off in search of Ariadne. By good chance they took the way to the beach. Scaramouch. Is Ariadne in the wood? Harlequin. Not at all: but they have all shipped such a sea of liquor that they would believe anything. Silenus told them to go and find Ariadne, and they straightway comprehended that

she was in the vicinity. Scaramouch. I suppose we couldn't lay hands on her? Columbine. On Ariadne? you might as well try to lay hands upon a star. Scaramouch. Stripes and stirrups! a glorious idea! To have a well-preserved planet or a three-tailed comet on exhibition! Naxos and night! but that would be stupendous.

For a caravan is the only plan;

Hurry my toms and trulls!

Ho-ye-ho, and a rumble-low! Pay your penny, and see the show:

This is the age of gulls.

[They go out dancing.

SCENE II.—The Sea-shore.

Enter Ione.

Ione. O wind, and do you wander all the night,
Moving the broad, black clouds, heavy and high,
And lifting, there and yonder, with a kiss,
The wet plumes of the sea? O sweet west wind,
Stay here and tell me secrets for a while!
Whence do you come and whither are you bound?
What music are you singing to yourself,
Sometimes with muffled syllables that fall,
And break their meaning on the hearts they touch?
Is this the wind that turned against her mouth
Forsaken Ariadne's wrathful sighs?
I see her leaning on her clenched right hand,
As she awakes and knows the flying sail,
And thinks that even to her has man been false,
Hatred and scorn—no sorrow, love, nor dread—
Starting in tears from both her angry orbs.—
My foot is wet! The tide is thronging up
With jocund whispers, and the press of waves
Scatters in pearly laughter on the sand.
Surely the moon is arming for the night:
O, now, I see her silver harness gleam
Behind the dusky curtains of her tent!
While the wind, swelling, sounds a trumpet-note,
She showers her bounteous shadow on the sea,
A largesse to the waves that toss their caps:
And now she leaps into the lists of heaven.—
What creature in her shadow floats this way?
It is a boat, and one sits at the helm!
[Hides behind a rock.
The sail is silken, and the hull, pearl-clad;
It leaps from wave to wave: the sweet, salt spray,
Like odoured tresses loosened in the dance,
Streams from the prow. This is some god: he lands.—
If he be man, the men that I have known
Are of a lower order. How the moon
Shines on him! and his eyes drink in her light.
He cannot know our world. Now on the sea,
Now on the shore, he flings his looks about;
And yet again, the moon. What if he be
Endymion! O, would I were the moon!
What! has he seen me?
[Sarmion enters and leads her from her hiding-place.

Are you man or god?

[He makes a sign.

Can you not speak? Poor mariner, he's dumb!

What shall I do with him? Be not afraid;

No one shall harm you, for my father owns

The land here and the shore. I left our house

Without his knowledge and against his will

That I might see the sea alone at night:

I never felt such ecstasy before:
I will frequent the strand, and with the moon
Keep company. You love the moon, I think?
[Within.] Ione, Ione!
My father's voice!

Enter Glaucus.

Glaucus. Well, why don't you introduce me? Ione. Are you angry? Glaucus. O no! I have run a mile through thorns and bents and sand, but I am not angry. I may be hot and out of breath, and my head may steam like a punch-bowl, but I am not angry. I fell ten or twelve times and harrowed the soil with my countenance, but I am not angry. My daughter, sir—this is my daughter, the sauciest madcap in Naxos—runs out of the house when she should be asleep, to meet you in this unwholesome moonlight, and she asks me if I am angry! Why, sir, a man who could be angry in these circumstances would be a man of an infinitesimal mind. My body may be one bruise; my heart may be broken into cat's meat; but I am not angry: do not think it. [Ione and Glaucus talk apart. Ione. This is a god. Glaucus. A what? Ione. One of the minor gods. Glaucus. I wouldn't have thought it. What's his name? Ione. I do not know. He slid down a moonbeam in that boat you see, and sailed ashore five minutes ago. He has not spoken yet, nor will he speak. I think he has done something for which Jove is punishing him with dumbness. Glaucus. Poor fellow! I'd sooner be blind. Ione. I believe you, father. I think you should ask him to the house. Glaucus. Do you? Are they not rather ticklish customers, these gods? Ione. No; they are charming company. Glaucus. Oh!—But this is an anonymous god. People would laugh at us, and call him an impostor. Ione. We can give him a name. Endymion will do. Glaucus. What god is he? Ione. God of the moon. Glaucus. Endymion, god of the moon. Well, I'll invite him.—Good sir—I mean, good Ione, how shall I address him? Ione. Address him by his name. Glaucus. Endymion, will your godship be pleased so far to favour my humble abode as to take up your quarters there for the night. [Sarmion passes his hand through Ione's hair. [Aside.] Thus do the gods turn the insolence of men into courtesy. He seems smitten with Ione. Suppose, now, my daughter were to marry a god: she would become a goddess; and I, the father of a goddess and the father-in-law of a god, would, perforce, be made a god also—a minor god. I would have been contented to be a baronet; in my dreams I have sometimes beheld myself a lord; but to be a god!—Ha! you are getting on together. I wonder, now, Endymion, for what you were made dumb. Do you know the dumby alphabet? No; well; you can write it down when we go home. Ione, I want to speak to you. [Glaucus and Ione talk apart. Would you like your father to be a god,—a minor god? Ione. No. Glaucus. But I would develop godlike qualities, of which the chief is tolerance. I begin to feel more dignified and wiser already. Then, as these qualities, by friction with other gods, and a rational indulgence in ambrosia and nectar, become brighter and solider, my minority may end, and they may give me a seat at Jove's table on Olympus, Ione, think; a little intrigue has brought about a greater matter than a divorce: Juno must be old! her successor—you do not listen: give your eyes to him and your ears to me. Ione. I will. You were saying that you would like to be a god. Glaucus. After all, I am a well-made man; and Endymion looks no more. Ione. But he is disguised. Glaucus. It may be that I am disguised too. Ione. I doubt it: no god could be disguised so completely as not to know his own identity. Glaucus. Still, here is a god punished with dumbness: Jupiter may have punished me with oblivion of a brilliant past. Ione. What god could you possibly be? Glaucus. Probably just a god. Doubtless there are gods of nothing in particular, merely decorative. Ione. Doubtless. Glaucus. Well, I would rather be that than no god at all. Ione. I fear it. Glaucus. Endymion, you must tell me in writing when we go home, if one of the chief minor gods was punished some fifty years ago by the loss of all knowledge of his own identity. Ione. Father, he does not know a word you say: He understands no language I can speak— [Aside.] Except that of my eyes. If I can read The fire of his they tell me priceless tales.

Enter Silenus, Satyrs, and Bacchantes.

Silenus. Ha! Ariadne!—Theseus, not yet fled!
Or who are you? But you are Ariadne.
[He is about to take her hand when Sarmion interferes.
Bacchantes, bind him!
[After a short struggle Sarmion is bound.]

Glaucus. I declare! Take care what you are about, my good women; and you, old man, conduct yourself more respectfully in the presence of immortals. This is Endymion, and I am a nameless god.

Silenus. Nameless and noteless, you! Endymion, this?
Never! I saw Endymion long ago
Before the stars were tarnished: with his crook
Sloped in his hand he wandered down a hill;
The night shone round him: this youth is not he.

Men are not made so now, though this is one
Who may remind me of the elder time.
But you, most lovely lady, seem to me
The very image of the golden age.

Glaucus. My daughter!

Silenus. She is Ariadne now,

For I am Bacchus. Fill my cup again;
If I cease drinking I grow melancholy.

[A Bacchante fills his cup and he drinks.]

Glaucus. Pardon, most potent god!

Enter Scaramouch, Harlequin, and Columbine.

Silenus. Ha! Harlequin!

Scaramouch. Is that Bacchus?

Harlequin. Yes.

Scaramouch. Capital!—How d'ye do? how d'ye do?

Silenus. What irrepressible person is this?

Harlequin. Scaramouch.

Silenus. I do not know the name.

Scaramouch. Lamps and limpets, no! It is not in LempriÃ`re, but it is
a good name.

Silenus. It is well you think so. What are you?

Scaramouch. I am the gentleman Harlequin told you of—he who has the
honour to be your majesty's most obedient servant and impresario.

Silenus. The showman! Well, I suppose there must be showmen.

Scaramouch. Shawms and psalteries, I should think so! I can
demonstrate to you that there is nothing pays but showmanship.

Glaucus [aside]. This is a wise fellow.

Silenus. You shall demonstrate nothing to me; but get us all on board
your vessel as soon as possible.

Scaramouch. As practical as a man! I thought all you gods were a kind
of moon-struck, plaster-of-Paris, posturing, and, to say the truth,
frequently indecent parcel of patriarchs. It shall appear in your
advertisement, sir, 'As practical as a man.' May I be dipped in wax if it
don't. The terms, sir: do you accept the offer Harlequin made?

Silenus. You must be the son of a puppet.

Scaramouch. Puppies and patchwork, why?

Silenus. From your habit of unexpected, disjointed, and inept
gesticulation, which has its exact counterpart in your pattering speeches
and preposterous preludes.

Scaramouch. What am I to do? The world is old; it has been satiated
with originality, and in its dotage cries bitterly for entertainment. A
public man must therefore be extravagant in order to distinguish
himself. My felicitous alliteration and prompt non-blasphemous oaths
constitute my note, which is the literary term for trade-mark—a species
of catch-word, in fact. Sweetness and light! do you understand me?

Silenus. Showman and sharper, you speak shrewdly, and I accept your
terms. Come, where are your boats?

Scaramouch. Oakum and orchids, there is only one!

Silenus. One! you need a fleet.

Scaramouch. Break me and splice me, if I understand!

Silenus. How else will you ship the company before morning?

Scaramouch. Company!—Harlequin, explain.

Harlequin. It is true I only bargained for Bacchus, but he seems to
think I meant the whole crowd.

Silenus. All, or none.

Scaramouch. Never! there was a bargain. Business!—O sacred word! Now
you attack me on my weak point, which is also my strong one.

[Blows a whistle. Enter two Sailors.]

With reverential firmness remove our Bacchanalian friend.

[Silenus mesmerises the Sailors as they advance.]

Mesmers and mystogogues! none of that! Secure the god; although he nod he
cannot shake the spheres.

Sailors. Ay, ay, sir.

1st Sailor. Our timbers are rooted.

2nd Sailor. Our flippers are frozen to our sides.

Scaramouch. Good, my men. I shall find you an engagement as supers when we go home; but this is not the stage.

Sailors. Ay, ay, sir.

1st Sailor. I'm in as good form as calf's-foot jelly, and as frisky as a pyramid.

2nd Sailor. And I'm as strong as water, and stiffer a deal than grog.

Scaramouch. Ha! ha! very fine indeed. Now, truss him up and away. Do you hear? stop that acting.

Sailors. Ay, ay, sir.

1st Sailor. Acting? I call it doing nothing.

2nd Sailor. I can't even scratch my head.

Scaramouch [draws his sword]. Death, distinctly, if you do not leap your own height when I count three. One, two——

[Silenus makes passes and they leap.]

Scaramouch [sheathes his sword]. Back to thy bed, bright babe of Birmingham! Arrest the god.

[The Sailors advance, but are again mesmerised by Silenus.]

Sea lubbers, dare you rouse me further?

Sailors. Ay, ay, sir.

Scaramouch [draws his sword]. Homer and homicide, then die!

[Silenus mesmerises Scaramouch just as his sword pricks 1st Sailor.]

1st Sailor. Do not prolong my agony: run me through at once: the point pricks me, sir: in or out, one or other.

Scaramouch. Magic and mastodons, I can do neither! Great Bacchus, is this a trick or no?

Silenus. That depends on you, good Scarabee. If you consent to ship all my friends, it is a trick; but if you do not, you will find it a serious matter to stand there till you rot.

Scaramouch. Every mother's son and daughter of them—the whole island, anything you like. This power of yours is worth a kingdom.

[Silenus releases them.]

Silenus. Embark Ariadne in the boat you have, and send back others for the rest. Tow this egg-shell shallop with you: it is precious: its workmanship is divine.

Scaramouch. Ariadne!

Silenus. Yes; that is she.

Scaramouch. Shiver my timbers! this will be the greatest combination on record.

Silenus. Columbine, attend your mistress.

Columbine. Mistress Ariadne, I am to be your waiting-maid.

Ione. I am not Ariadne.

Glaucus [aside to Ione]. You are! you must be! Don't you see this is Bacchus, and the dumb fellow an impostor. Bacchus says he's not Endymion.

Ione [aside to Glaucus]. It was I called him Endymion. He's no impostor.

Glaucus [aside to Ione]. Don't argue.—Great Bacchus, Ariadne is a little bashful as becomes a maiden honoured with the attention of your godship.

Silenus. What are you?

Glaucus. Her father—at least I have been so for eighteen years. I begin to doubt whether she be my child or no, since your godship perceives that she is Ariadne—a fact which I recognised the moment you mentioned it; and since certain quakings have overcome my being, revealing to me that this lodgment of clay is, as it were, a long-slumbering volcano, about to waken into full and luminous godhood.

Silenus. Know then, that she is not your child; she is a king's daughter.

Glaucus. Princess Ariadne, I beseech you humbly to pardon any trouble I may have given you as a father. I here formally renounce, what was never mine, all control over your royal highness. And now, Bacchus, let us sift to the bottom this mythological mystery. First of all, what god am I? Of course I know I am only a minor one in the meantime, so do not scruple to

tell me, however insignificant my rank may be.

Silenus. We will discuss it, friend, over a bottle.—Harlequin, remove Ariadne and this youth. Good people, accompany them with singing to the shore.

Ione. Adventures throng upon me.

Song.

The boat is chafing at our long delay,
And we must leave too soon
The spicy sea-pinks and the inborne spray,
The tawny sands, the moon.

Keep us, O Thetis, in our western flight!
Watch from thy pearly throne
Our vessel, plunging deeper into night
To reach a land unknown.

[Harlequin, Columbine, Ariadne, Sarmion, go out.]

SCENE III.—The same.

Silenus, Scaramouch, and Glaucus sitting round a rock. Bacchantes set bottles of wine and go out.

Silenus. Taste this, good Scarab. My little godling, drink. [All drink. Scaramouch. Body and bouquet! what is this? Silenus. Wine, sir, crushed from grapes the sun never ripened. Glaucus. Is this to be bought? Silenus. What! are you still buying and selling here? Come, drink again. [All drink.] Does it not search into the dark corners and irrigate the waste places of the brain? This will make you gods, truly. And you still buy and sell below the moon? Scaramouch. The old story, sir— East and west, and north and south, Under the crescent, or under the cross, One song you hear in every mouth, "Profit and loss, profit and loss." Silenus. Is it so? I should have expected some change. Glaucus. Where have you been not to know that the divine institution of buying and selling is as vigorous as ever? Silenus. I did not know it was divine, and I have been with Bacchus among the stars. Scaramouch. Roads and railways! what does he mean? Silenus. And is money still the cure for all the ills of life? Is it still the talisman, eh!—my brand-new demigod? And the great and glorious institution of rich and poor, good spick-and-span divinity—is the world not tired of that gift of the gods yet? Glaucus. This is empty railing: there must always be rich and poor. Silenus. Let the rich hope so. But drink: these thoughts unnerve me. [All drink. Scaramouch. Good Bacchus, great Bacchus, you must be careful. Such a slip in public as you made just now would ruin us. Silenus. What slip did I make? Scaramouch. You talked of being with Bacchus; now, you are Bacchus. Silenus. So I am. Well, it was a slip. Scaramouch. Tell us about the stars. Silenus. Aha! good Scarab, we travelled about from planet to planet, from orb to orb, and each fresh sphere grew an original wine. As pebbles to grapes, are grapes to the fruits they crush there. Damsels, Hebes all, gather and tread them, and their ankles are stained with purple all the year round: the wine-presses and the vats are made of scented wood: the season never changes: there is no night, no death, no rich and poor. Glaucus. Glorious, Bacchus, glorious! But it seems to me that we three may now fitly discuss my mythological rank. Silenus. We may, good codling. Let us see. There was a god some five decades ago who lost caste abominably—no, it is longer; because during the last score centuries we Bacchanalians have been out of hearing of the faintest mundane murmur, beyond cry of Olympus, conquering the realms of space, and now visit the earth solely for Ariadne's pleasure: she had a desire to see once more her bower in Naxos. Glaucus. To whom might I appeal, then? Is there no register of gods? Scaramouch. None but LempriÃ"re. Silenus. It matters not: if you feel confident that you are a god you must be one. Glaucus. But any one might be a god at that rate. Silenus. Surely, surely; confidence makes gods and goddesses of the merest mortality. Scaramouch. Mars and martyrdom! I shall be a god too. Silenus. Do, good Scrub, do: be a god: be the god of gulls.—I have it! Drink again. [All drink.] By-the-bye, what has your name been hitherto? Glaucus. Glaucus. Silenus. Then, Glaucus, know that thou art not Glaucus, but my squire, Silenus. I am right glad to see thee, old one. Thou hast been a wanderer long. Glaucus. I thank thee, Bacchus. But I have no memory of my name or character. If thou—— Silenus. Nay, thou must not 'thee' and 'thou' me. I am thy superior, and in my familiarity and my cups so address thee, showing my pleasure in thy return. Use respectable pronouns, Silenus. I am not angry with thee: in coming to thyself thou wilt doubtless make many mistakes, which I without resentment shall promptly correct. Glaucus. Ah! great Bacchus, I seem, now, to remember with what reverence I regarded your godliness: it is the first hint my consciousness supplies of my identity. Will your great highness tell me more of myself? Silenus. I will, Silenus. Thou art one of those whom the bulk of gods and men pity: but thou art not truly pitiable. It is certain that thou art not a respectable immortal, for thou keepest late hours, and dost allow thy company to choose itself. I hear that thou art, or would'st be, perennially drunk: thou seemest to have as many stomachs as a cow, and art as bald as a vulture; and after thy godliness thy most indubitable attribute is certainly not thy cleanliness. No;

thou art not respectable, therefore art thou pitied; but thou dost not pity thyself, wherefore I love thee. I respect the unsubduable temper of thy soul, which, in the perdition of all that mortality and immortality consider barely necessary for the mere toleration of existence, still retains its diamond edge, flashing from the worn-out scabbard, keen and serviceable for offence or defence. Glaucus. But, my lord Bacchus, I shall reform. Silenus. Never, by Styx, thou fool! I tell thee, wert thou to change one thought of thy brain, or could'st thou obliterate one dream of thy youth, or cancel an action of thy prime, thou would'st endanger the stability of the universe. Go to: if thou reformest thou lovest immortality and mortality, and shalt cease to be. Glaucus. With all due respect for your godship, I do not like my character. Silenus. Dost thou think I like mine? Glaucus. But when I was Glaucus— Silenus. Thou wert a fool and respectable, and did'st admire thyself. Go to. Scaramouch. Gall and wormwood! what sound is that? Silenus. I hear no sound. Scaramouch. A sort of tinkling. Silenus. O Hecate! it is the silver cymbals. Scaramouch. What cymbals? Silenus. Listen. Glaucus [aside]. The old wine-skin's going to faint. Silenus. He comes! he comes! great Bacchus comes! My heart! Now, foolish creatures, will you see a god. But me, alas! what punishment for me? Some wine! [Drinks.] I'll dull my sense and show no shame. [Empties his bottle. This wine has lost its virtue.—Do you hear? These cymbal-players all were ladies once, Matrons and maids, close-robed from head to heel: Wild panthers' skins, zoned slackly, vest them now; Their milk-white limbs like moonbeams softly glance From tree to tree: and through the night they come. Scaramouch. Would I could hear them! But I tremble. Glaucus. What does all this mean? [Rises, drunk.] Bacchus is here, and Bacchus is there, and I'm a god, and can't understand it. I have a crude suspicion that I have taken too much wine, which a man may do once or twice in his life. My opinions about drunkenness are strong, but I will keep them to myself. Suffice it to say that I have never been drunk without good reason, and I'm not drunk now. I know the difference—any man knows the difference between exhilaration and drunkenness. I'm exhilarated now; I'm not drunk. I seem to remember another man some time or other—several men, in fact, at various times—saying that they were only exhilarated. It's a common thing to say in certain circumstances: it's a platitude. I'm not drunk. Do you think I'm drunk? Scaramouch. Drams and drachmas! as drunk's a fiddler! Glaucus. Liar! liar, definitely! Put me to the test. Bacchus—give me a back! [Runs at Silenus, and falls. Silenus. These are the satyrs playing pandean pipes, These rippling flames of sound: the muffled notes Are tabors. How the music dwindles! Hark! From some far isle it seems to reach our ears, To reach our ears and faint: the tide-mark there Is out of hearing. I should say they pass A knoll that lies between us, or the road Winds backward, and the forest is more dense. Scaramouch. They may be going back. Silenus. No, Bacchus comes for me. Scaramouch. Perhaps they've lost the way. Silenus. Ha! ha! when Bacchus loses himself in a wood Silenus will drink the sea. Scaramouch. The sound again! It is as you say: one would think it journeyed over sea. It grows and gathers, and now it travels from its own quarter: it is very near. Silenus. He comes in all his state: the chariot-wheels Like silent billows roll; from side to side The tigers' heads between their velvet paws, Like lilies eyed with flame, sway noiselessly, Or, poised on high, breathe odours to the moon. Taller than Ariadne by a head He stands with her upon the chariot-floor: They have been lovers since he found her here: His arm is round her neck; one loyal hand Droops on her shoulder, and the other holds A careless rein: her face lifts up to his The deep, sweet melancholy of desire; And he looks down, high mystery in his eyes— The passionate love of these sweet centuries; Unstaunch'd, uncloyed. Scaramouch. But, where?—where? Silenus. In the wood. I know how Bacchus travels. Here they come. Scaramouch. But the tigers: we shall be eaten alive. Silenus. My good Scrub, the tigers of Bacchus know of daintier food than such marrowless bones and savourless flesh as you and I. The best thing you can do is to stretch yourself there beside Glaucus, and pretend that you are drunk. Bacchus may be angry at those who have carried me off, and his immediate punishment might be severe: he will do nothing to one who is in the power of wine, and by the time you can be reasonably sober his ire will have gone like the beads from a goblet. Scaramouch. I would not do so for a man, but gods may be encountered by such sleights. Honestly, I have soused my brains a little. You do not lie comfortably, Glaucus. Come—why, he is sound asleep! I'll make a pillow of him. [Lies down with his head on Glaucus.]

Enter Satyrs and Bacchantes, followed by Bacchus and Ariadne in a chariot drawn by tigers. They descend.

Bacchus. Well, runagate, who are your friends?

Silenus. My foes:

They fell at the first bottle: I have won.

Scaramouch [aside]. I could drink him out in brandy; but these planetary wines are not for this world.

Bacchus. How often have you run away?

Silenus. Seven times.

Bacchus. Seven times you've risked disaster. You are old, Feeble and foolish—

Silenus. Oh! not foolish, Bacchus!

Bacchus. Hare-brained at least—

Ariadne. But chide him not, dear lord.

Bacchus. Well, then, I will not: he is found. Be wise,
My ancient friend, and know your happiness.

[Bacchantes surround Silenus and bind him with ivy.

Scaramouch [aside]. These are gentle divinities.

Ariadne. Here, by this sea, I waked, how long ago!
Here, by this sea, you found me.

Bacchus. Would you be
My bride again?

Ariadne. O no! each day, each hour
I am your bride; and as the days and years
Gather behind us, every happiness—
And that is every minute of my life—
Doubles the joy of that which went before:
And yet the past is as a galaxy
Wherein no star excels the radiant throng.

Bacchus. Not that fair hour when first you loved me?

Ariadne. No:

I have no memory. I am striving now
To summon up the time when here you came,
And made me an immortal and your bride.
I might as well compel my thoughts to search
For some unnoted dream that I forgot
The moment after I had told you, love,
New wakened from the sleep I dreamed it in.

Bacchus. But memory goes afoot—invalid here:
Love has a high-commanding minister,
Imagination; and it serves alone
Beings who yield their moods and bow their minds
To its obedient masterdom: stout thought,
That trudges, blind and lame, the dusty way,
And memory, that casts its broken net
In Lethe's waves, keep not among your train—
Fit servants these for mortals.

Ariadne. So I do—

I banish them: but still there clings to me
Something of earth.

Bacchus. I love you best for that.
A goddess born is tame, secure of heaven,
And there is nothing to endow her with;
But you derive divinity from me,
Yet keep the passionate heart that mortals have.—
Now, I am at the morn I found you here:
Come, Ariadne, leap into the past.

Ariadne. I cannot.

Bacchus. See, the flying traitor's sail!

Ariadne. No, no! This night—this hour is in my blood.
The brine, the sea-pinks, and the soaring moon
Seem thoughts of mine which now I body forth;
And these, and all the beauties of the world
Breathe of my love for you.

Bacchus. I found you here
With crimson cheeks and nostrils wide, asleep;
Your hair dishevelled, and your mantle torn.

Ariadne. No, no!

You cannot drive me back. I see, indeed,
A picture of our meeting; but not mine.
My fancy like a wayward messenger
Despatched to gather roses, on its wings
Bearing their scent, flies empty-handed home.

Bacchus. What picture, Ariadne?

Ariadne. That we saw
In Athens, when we last alighted there.
Do you remember how it made us smile

Until we felt that love had painted it;
And then we found it true and beautiful?

Bacchus. Yes: and the poet.

Ariadne. Oh! some mortals still
Love us, and deem us worthy of a song.
But for the subject of their art, I vow
They needs must know it better than myself
Who am the heroine: their feigning hangs
A veil before my fancy.—Come away:
Back where the water gurgles through the fern,
Dewing the feathery fronds, and hyacinths
Spread like a purple smoke far up the bank.
[Steps into the chariot.

Enter Harlequin and Columbine. Scaramouch rises.

Harlequin. Bacchus!

[Is running out.

Bacchus. Stay.

Harlequin. Pardon, great Bacchus!

Scaramouch. Pardon!

Bacchus. What men are you, infesters of this isle?

Scaramouch. From England come we, Bacchus—England. Ha! Know you
not England, land of shams and shows?

Bacchus. Is patriotism dead in England, then,
That travellers thus traduce their native land?
What make you here?

Scaramouch. We came to hire you, sir:

I am a showman: but we took instead
Silenus here, who, pardon me, agrees
More closely with the popular idea
Of what you're like than you yourself do. Now,
What must I do? I most distinctly see
That you would be a more attractive show;
But I have made a contract with Silenus.
Then, here's the Ariadne I suppose,
And I have just returned from shipping one!
What's to be done? Stalactites, storms, and strums,
Will you come, too? Name your own price: look here:
You'll be yourself; Silenus himself, too;
And Ariadne will be Ariadne.
For her I've shipped—why, ladies have their starts,
Their turns, their maggots, and their fantasies,
Their hypochondrias, their aches, their pains,
Their dreams by day and night, their whims, their nothings;
And should her ladyship lie in the clutch,
The grip, the throes, or, to be more precise,
The mood, or mode, or manner of a qualm,
The madam I have shipped could take her place,
And be her under-study as it were.
Yea, by the very doom of destiny,
I have a substitute for you, my lord—
Endymion, they call him—in the ship!
So, Bacchus, if it happened, as it might—
And who has better reason?—that you sipped,
Or tiddled, or indulged, or—Heaven forgive me!
[Falls on his knees.

Take off your eyes: they scorch me through and through!

Bacchus [to Harlequin].

You, with the wooden sword, I know your trade:

You shall do feats with that untempered blade.

[To Ariadne.] Should you not like to see these substitutes?

Ariadne. Rarely.

Bacchus [to Harlequin]. Strike, knave; and deeper than the roots
Of aged oaks, as deep as is the sea,

Wide as the Aegean, and as Olympus high,
Your striking shall be felt. Come nearer me;
Now strike, until your sword in splinters fly.
[Harlequin strikes the earth with his sword.]

SCENE IV.—Transformation from the Sea-shore to the Bower of Ariadne.

Song.

Through the air, through the air,
We are borne; from our hair
A spicy odour is shaken:
We sing as we sail;
The strong trees quail,
And the dreaming doves awaken.
The pale screech-owl
That, cheek by jowl,
Goes ravening with night,
Thinks day has come,
And hurries home
Half-starved, to shun the light.
An eagle above us screams;
But a star blows a silver horn,
And a faint far echo floats
From the depths of the lakes, and the streams
Warble the shadowy notes.
A young lark thinks it morn,
And sings through our flying crowd,
That seems to his eager soul
Like a low-hung dawning cloud.
The bells of midnight toll;
The night-flowers tell the hour;
And the stately planets roll,
As we fly to our lady's bower.

SCENE V.—The Bower of Ariadne.

Enter Bacchus and Ariadne, Sarmion and Ione, Harlequin and Columbine,
Glaucus, Scaramouch, Satyrs, and Bacchantes.

Song.

Here are brackens, green and gold,
Fit for plumes of Titans old;
And we see them by the light
That immortals shed at night:
Bosky rooms where to and fro
Shadowy dryads come and go;
Bubbling springs where naiads peep,
Mossy couches where they sleep.
Here beneath this tree-topped hill
Pan oft comes to pipe his fill,
Making all the valley ring;
Here the Muses sometimes sing:
And here upon this midnight hour
We visit Ariadne's bower.

Ariadne [to Sarmion]. Who may you be?

Ione. He cannot speak.

Ariadne. Not speak!

Bacchus. Silenus knows a remedy for that.

Silenus. None better.

[Gives Sarmion wine in a goblet.]

This would loosen dead men's tongues.

Sarmion. My name is Sarmion. Whence I come I know not:
I know I live; and now I have command
Of speech and of my thoughts, thanks to this wine.
I first remember being on the sea:

My shallop leapt from wave to wave: I thought
For ever to go sailing through the night:
My molten life welled from my heart and streamed
In murmuring flame through all its channels, fanned
By cooling winds: I watched the wanton waves
That melted in each other till I slept.
When I awoke the moon shone overhead,
And made along the sea a path of light,
Wherein I sailed: the beauty of it all
Blanched me with rapture; but before I knew
My shallop grounded, and I sprang on shore.
I looked about me for a silver stair
To mount up to the moon, and seeing none
Began to be dismayed, when suddenly
I came upon this lady, whom I love.

[To Ione.] Lady, I love you. How I longed to say
"I love you!"—We were carried to a ship,
And thence arrived here borne upon a cloud.

Bacchus. I know you now, and what and whence you are.
I think this lady loves you in return: ask her and see.
[Sarmion and Ione talk apart.

[To Scaramouch.] So, you are he would make of me a show.

Scaramouch. It is my vocation. It may be an inferior calling, but
there are worse. It is not so honourable as being a god, doubtless, but it
is a decent kind of beggary.

Bacchus. I understand you have been prosperous.

Scaramouch. On the whole I have. I am not yet a millionaire, but I
have capital. I—don't look at me like that!

Bacchus. Prosperity has spoiled you, sir, I see:
You need to view the world with other eyes.
Come, Harlequin, that splinter of your sword
Shall work an old-world metamorphosis.
Strike him between the shoulders.

[Harlequin strikes Scaramouch.

To an ape

Be changed: and in that form you shall be caught,
And pass on exhibition for a year
From John-o'-Groat's to Land's End, up and down:
Thereafter you shall be a man again.

Scaramouch. Monkeys, menageries and misery! Bacchus, Bacchus, think
what you do! Do I merit such a fate? Make me a toad, a rat, a cockroach!
Heavens! a monkey in a cage! Straw, stench, and filth; and little boys
to tickle me with sticks, and throw me nuts! A blinking bleared baboon! A
chattering, gibbering, jabbering—

[Scaramouch rushes out transformed to an ape.

Bacchus [to Glaucus]. Come hither.

Glaucus [aside]. Now shall I grow young again, and be the god I
am—and yet I tremble.

Bacchus. You look like one who thinks himself of note.

Glaucus. Surely, sir, surely. I am Silenus, your high godship's
faithful old servant. I wish I could see myself. Have I undergone a change
similar to your godship's? When I last saw you—I remember nothing since I
fell asleep by the sea-shore—you were an old blown blue-bottle; now you
are as I see you. Am I now a god? Have I cast my slough?

Silenus. Oho! I have a word to say. You must know that I played
Bacchus in my wanderings. This vain old coxcomb took it into his head that
he must be a god, whereupon I persuaded him that he was myself, though all
Olympus knows there's not much of the god about me.

Glaucus. What! have I been played upon like a kettledrum? Is this all a
drear?

Bacchus. Well, are you still an immortal?

Glaucus. No—no; I am a foolish old man.

Bacchus. I'm glad you think so: you can now go home.

Glaucus. My daughter, sir?

Bacchus. Is safe. Farewell.

[Glaucus goes out.]

[To Harlequin and Columbine.] Come here.

Harlequin and Columbine. Mercy! mercy!

Bacchus. Will you return, or will you follow me?

Harlequin and Columbine. O send us back!

Bacchus. A wretched choice: but go.

[Harlequin and Columbine go out.]

Sarmion, what says the lady to your love?

Sarmion. O words of wonder, of enchantment—sweet,
And yet so strong, so tender and so bold,

That any ears save mine would miss the sense,
The savour, the aroma that they bear.

Ariadne. You love him, then?

Ione. Yes.

Ariadne. And you told him so?

Ione. I did.

Ariadne. What wondrous language could you use
That he should be so frenzied?

Ione. I but spoke

The language of my heart.

Bacchus. Well answered, girl.—

Our time is brief, for we have far to go
Before this side of earth can roll again
Out of its shadow. Listen, lovers.

Silenus. Peace.

Bacchus. Sarmion, you are descended from a race
Inhabiting a star above the moon.

Spirits they are, and by a subtle thought
Spirits are born to them. Those sultry clouds
That surge in slumbrous ranks like golden waves,
Or on the skyline of the earth build up,
Agleam with topaz and with sardonyx,
Towards evening, high pavilions and towers,
That change to lofty crests and gorges deep
The fancy cannot fathom, are more dense,
More gross than the ethereal continents
Of yonder orb, washed by a sinuous sea
Guiltless of storm, thinner and lovelier
Than the divided azure. In a dream
You had a vision of an earthly maid;
And, still asleep, your life, on fire for her,
Shaped to itself the body that you have—
The first to be incarnate of your race:
And then the secret limbec of your love
Distilled the wing'd and airy boat of pearl
That bore you to the earth. Here you awoke,
The past, forgot—the present, wonder all.

Ariadne. But shall we visit soon this star of his?

Bacchus. Sometime we shall.—Sarmion, this choice is yours:

Either to give Ione up, and be
Again a free thought in your natal sphere,
Whose whole dimensions, tense and rare, are pierced
By dwellers there, and give as easy way
As summer air to swallows, as the deep
To sporting dolphins; or to have your love
And with her the imprisonment of earth,
Where spirit must be draped in mortal flesh,
Where motion's shackled, and where ways are hewn,
Where life is conscious, and where death ends all.

Sarmion. I choose Ione. What with her must come
I scarcely understand; but there can fall
No present woe so bitter as would be
Her absence from my life.

Ione. O love, think well!
Here are disease and care; I shall grow old;
And poverty may catch us in its net.
Sarmion. Your voice is music, but you speak of things
Unknown to me.

Ione. Then, though my heart must break,
Return, return! This world is not for you!
A thousand daily pitfalls mesh the path
Of those who here are native: faults in friends,
Denials, tarryings, storm, and heat and cold,
Things loathsome, incomplete; falsehood, and wrath:
O I am ill at saying what I mean!
Think; if these pitiful disquietings
Have power to kill the joy in us, who come
Of blood that never beat in other veins
Than those of men and women, still abused
By buffetings of chance on every side,
What misery, what terror will there be
For you, whose life has known no bolts, no bars,
No stumbling-blocks, no weariness, no care!
And, chief of all, when you begin to find,
How weak, how foolish, and how fond I am!

Sarmion. Have you to suffer daily miseries?
Then here I stay. Gaunt wretchedness, advance:
If I may have this maiden for my mate,
No sting, no stroke of yours can make me quail;
And while I live I cannot be so bruised
But some sound part of me shall have the strength
To bear the blows intended for my love.

Ione. Now, God forbid! 'Tis I shall be your shield.
Ariadne. Come here and kiss me.

[Ariadne embraces Ione.

Bacchus. This is well, indeed.—
We must, ere dawn, away to India:
You two shall be transported through the air
To Glaucus' house.

Ione. How far are we from home?

Bacchus. Three miles, I think.

Ione. O, pray you, let us walk!

Sarmion, three miles together through the wood
Shimmering with moonlight, full of smothered sound,
And ghostly shadow, and the mingled scent
Of flowers and spices, and the cooling earth!
It is a very lifetime of delight!

Bacchus. Good-night then, and farewell.

Ariadne. Farewell.

Ione. Farewell.

Sarmion. All happiness go with you into Ind.

[Sarmion and Ione go out.

Ariadne. This star, my love—I burn to see this star.

Bacchus. You shall upon your birthday.

Ariadne. Two weeks hence,

As mortals count! Well, I can wait.

Bacchus. Lead on.

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