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Other Poems, by Amy Redpath Roddick**

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Author: Amy Redpath Roddick

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF A PRINCESS: A COMEDY;
AND OTHER POEMS ***

THE ROMANCE OF A PRINCESS

A COMEDY

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

AMY REDPATH RODDICK

Author of "The Flag and Other Poems"

"The Armistice and Other Poems"

"The Seekers, and Indian Mystery Play"

"The Birth of Montreal, a Chronicle Play, and Other Poems"

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Montreal

JOHN DOUGALL & SON

1922

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THE ROMANCE OF A PRINCESS
A Comedy.

This play is the outcome of many happy walks in the forests that border Charlemagne's ancient capital. The writer and her husband would often pause to view some beauty-spot; at times she would read aloud the rare legends collected by Joseph Muller.

She has now tried to catch some of the interest and joy of those gone by summers to pass on to relatives and friends. If she has failed it is not the fault of the theme.

Let none throw doubt on Emma's reality. Who lives in myth, lives for all time.

A.R.R.

Montreal
Christmas, 1922.

CHARACTERS.

Emma	<i>A Daughter of Charles</i>
Etta	<i>Her Waiting-woman</i>
Charles (Charlemagne)	<i>King-Emperor</i>
Eginhardt	<i>Secretary and Director of Public Works</i>
Albert	<i>Count of the Palace</i>
Hildebold	<i>Archbishop</i>
Ernst	<i>A Charcoal-burner</i>
Guta	<i>His Wife</i>
David	<i>A Precocious Boy</i>
Audulf }	
Herbert }	<i>Courtiers</i>
Courtiers, Wish-maidens, Elves.	

Time: The beginning of the ninth century.

Place: Aquisgranum, the Capital of Frankland.

ACT I.

Scene.—Emma's boudoir. A door on the left leads to the palace courtyard; another, centre back, opens into private apartments, which have no other entrance. The room is furnished befitting the dignity of a princess. Emma, in gala-attire, has just returned from a great function in honour of the Calif Haroun-al-Rashid's ambassadors. Etta helps remove her cloak. The princess then throws herself on a couch, while Etta stands before her admiringly.

Emma. A moment's rest to gather memories
Of what this day has meant; those swarthy Eastern
Ambassadors! the gifts their king has sent.

Etta. How beautiful you are! In Frankland, who
Approaches you in mind or character?
That's what the scholars say. The people though
Dwell on your loveliness. What plaudits when
You rode that bulky beast! the contrast! a Princess,
Alive with happiness.

Emma. To mount so high, an elephant for steed,
To feel that heavy, ambling gait, to know
Such strength for mischief could be chained to work
Man's will. How kind of great Haroun to give
The King, my Father, this unwieldy proof
Of his affection; to teach such animals
Are real, not fabled monsters, as some of us
Have whispered! 'Twas tremulous that ride, up-perched
Above the marvelling throng; to feel myself,
A Frankish maid, upon that leathery
Ungainliness. An elephant in Europe!
Who'd have thought to see the day? But now
Unbind my hair. [*In a low voice.*] I think he will not come
Tonight. [*A knocking is heard.*] 'Tis he! but no, my Father's knock,
So tender yet so masterful. Thou may'st
Retire. I'll wait upon his royal pleasure,
Will then disrobe myself.

'Twas wonderful

*[Etta opens door on the left.
Enter Charles in ceremonial robes, wearing his crown.
Exit Etta through the door at the centre back after
making deep obeisance.]*

In majesty. [*Courtesying.*] I must acclaim you King,
Not Father.

You come attired

Charles. [*Pressing her against his breast.*] Nay, nay, my birdling! nestle here;
My dear Fastrada's legacy; a father's
Sweet solace; the Esther of our court. I could
Deny thee nought, unless a lover should
Address thine ears: avaunt the thought! The well
Of our fair intercourse is clear, undimmed.
As cloudless skies of sun-blessed Eastern lands.

Emma. O Father! what dread shapes may lurk beneath
Those Eastern skies! each soul has got some stain,
Some hidden mystery.

Charles. This day's excitement
Has tired, provoked reaction. Once a Bishop
Complained to me that nuns need long confessing.
Imagined sins are culled for penitence;
In baser lives these specks would pass unnoticed.
We'll rid such faults as thine with kisses; perchance
A wayward thought when Holy Words were spoken.
And now uncrown the King, then help remove
This cumbrous mantle.—Cautiously! I've something
Of great import.

Emma. But not as great as that
Great beast, the elephant!

Charles. As Heaven outvies the earth, as souls are more
Than flesh. See here, my birdling, what I've brought.

Far weightier,

Emma. Some ragged silk, a joke!—It cannot be—

Charles. Thine eyes have guessed; the sacred coverings!
O to-day how all have gaped, and cheered
That elephant, at most a curious
Phenomenon, distracting from rich gifts
Of sober worth. In truth now royalty
Resides in this new Western Rome, a fairer
Than earthly crown implies. Haroun, my brother,
Has raised and honoured us.

Emma.
I've heard some doubts expressed.

Among the Scholars

Charles.
Rank heresy, as well doubt Holy Church
Herself. The proofs are clear; nor flaw, nor break.
These hallowed relics, damped with tears by him
Of Arimathaea, held in sacred trust
By his descendants, traced each step till now
They rest within our great Basilica,
Are here to stay, to gratify, as long
As Franks are true and strong. See! see! my birdling,
This rosy silk was round the cloth that held,
One time, St. John, the Baptist's bleeding head;
This white encased the Virgin's dress; this yellow,
The precious Infant's swaddling clothes; and this
That's dyed with scarlet pomp has clasped within
Its folds the loin-cloth, garment of the cross.
Yes! yes! my lips have pressed those objects, I
Am nearer God.

Most ill-advised.

Emma. This silk?

Charles.
Are wrapped afresh in lustrous lengths of rare
Brocade, a further gift brought by Haroun's
Ambassadors—the Church's treasury
Holds them in state. This tattered silk that age
Unfits for service still retains great virtue
From sacredness long stored. And who is pure
Enough to shelter it? I know of none
But thee, Fastrada's living image!

The holy relics

Emma.
Affectionate regard has blinded thee.
O take that stuff! 'Twould shrink to powdered dust
Did I but handle it.

A father's

Charles.
There is a point where modesty doth lose
Its charm and gives affront. That point is reached;
So fetch my cloak and fasten its jeweled clasp.
Now crown the Emperor, he prays that angels
May watch thy bed. [*He kisses Emma. Exit left.*]

Nay, nay, my Emma,

Emma.
Its folds have touched what once hath touched God's Prophet,
His Mother, His very Self. O some one come
And take it hence.—Or—or is't possible
To make me worthy? e'en though hearts be crushed.

That silk! how can I keep it?

[*A light knock is heard.*]

And so the test approaches! May I be strengthened.

[*Emma opens the door on the left. Enter Eginhardt.*]

Eginhardt. It promises a blustery night. Wait Love,
Until I brush these flakes, a sudden swirl
Of snow; but here there's warmth and comfort. [*Extending his arms.*] My Emma—

Emma. Not yours, a Princess speaks, a gulf has widened
Since last we met. You recognize that silk?
It heals the secret breach I've made within
A Father's confidence, it warns that you
Must leave me now and instantly. You are
The King, my Father's trusted friend.

Eginhardt.
Thy words bite deep—and yet not deep enough

O Emma!

To overthrow the airy castles hewn
From glowing hope. And see what thing has winged
My steps, has brought me here to-night.

Emma.

A ring!

It seems to draw my hand; but no, 'tis for
Some humble maid, who'll taste the happiness
My rank denies.

Eginhardt. Who else can wear this ring
That Queen Fastrada prized?

Emma. [Taking the ring.] My Mother's ring!
How came it here?

Eginhardt. [Sitting on the couch.] Thou know'st the
story?

Emma. [Sitting on a stool near him.]
Unmeant to reach the King, my Father's ears,
And so 'twas crushed. But now the ring I hold
Demands the truth. O Eginhardt, tell all,
Omitting nought, e'en though the listening hurts.

A rumor,

Eginhardt. A lesser soul might rather seek relief
From words unsaid; but thou, with thy clear eyes,
Need'st probe beneath like—

Emma.
Sweet confidence has been outwitted.

Like that Father; whose

Eginhardt.
Betrayed unwittingly, a force outside
Ourselves.

Rather

Emma. That can be crushed; but first we'll hear
Thy story. O Eginhardt, how easily
The dear familiar "thy" slips mouthwards. Let
It be, until the story's told; or as
A master, well-beloved, thou mayest speak;
Whilst I sit here, a mindful pupil.

Eginhardt.
Thy Mother's grace, her wit and understanding,
Thy soul surpasses hers. I but repeat
Archbishop Turpin's words.

Thou hast

Emma.
She lacked a something, a mother's tenderness;
But then her smile would reassure.

I thought at times

Eginhardt.
Intelligence, her merry laughter, her fresh
And dazzling beauty so enthralled the King;
If she but raised her little finger, he,
The Lord of millions, hastened to obey.
And thus it went; although her wishes might
Disturb a court, a city or a kingdom;
The erst so pious Charles exalted one;
Who should have grovelled at his feet.

Her bright

Emma.
About my Mother?

You speak

Eginhardt. Whose beauty is thy dower;
Whose baser parts are long forgotten. Death
Came stealthily—the King refused belief.
For days and nights he knelt beside the couch,
His arms supporting one whose soul had fled.
"She is not dead," he cried, "She sweetly slumbers."
He waved aside, as thou rememberest,
All food and drink, became well-nigh demented,
Completely losing that serene composure,
That seemed as much himself as kingly might.
"She is not dead;" his eyes blazed wrathfully,
While honeyed murmurs passed his lips: "Thou wilt
Awaken, little one." None dared suggest
The funeral plans, nor place of burial.
At last his life seemed doomed with hers. A vague
Uneasiness had turned to fear. 'Twas whispered
His death would loosen war and misery,
The century's near-close would end Earth's cycle.
Lamenting moans were heard within the Church

And prayers of intercession. All this thou knowest.
 But not what follows, the fruit of supplication.
 The good Archbishop Turpin saw, one night,
 Amid the Queen's long-braided tresses, the glint
 Of hidden gold that shimmered through his dreams.
 When daylight broke he stole beside the King
 And softly slipped his hand beneath the dead
 Fastrada's hair. He drew the visioned ring;
 Whose magic power had slaved the mighty Charles.
 Relieved, the King looked round in wonderment.
 He recognized his loss—and God consoled.

Emma. He never afterwards remembered, nor knew
 About the ring, although the story, much
 Disguised, had somewhat leaked. Please tell me further.

Eginhardt. The kind Archbishop, ever the King's most trusted
 Adviser, now became his closest friend.
 He used his influence for good; but Saints
 Become discredited when fortune strews
 Her favours. Tongues wagged ill-naturedly, until
 Such wordy mud was stirred the Prelate felt
 Its splatterings and realized the cause—
 The fatal talisman. He stood beside
 Those stringing ponds that rim so pleasantly
 The new-built hunting lodge. A sudden splash
 The ring had vanished.

Emma.
 And broods beside the larger pond.

My Father often sits

Eginhardt.
 So had it searched most carefully. Last night
 The ring was found. Conceal it 'mid thy pearls,
 Then tell the King thou lov'st his servant. He will
 Refuse thee nought.

I've noticed;

Emma.
 At such a price? win lasting peace and true,
 Sustaining joy? [*She moves and, unnoticing,*
brushes the silk from the table.] O see! the silk has
 fallen.

Can we buy happiness

I cannot leave it crumpled there, nor can
 I touch it, while I touch this charm. I pray thee,
 Take it. [*She hands him the ring, then sobbing gathers*
up the silk and smooths it.] 'Tis not like thee, my Eginhardt,
 To tempt with specious words. Return that ring
 To watery depths. May skies reflected cleanse;
 May lovers, bending o'er the forest pool,
 Gain bliss that's unalloyed with earth-born slime.

Eginhardt. How oft have we exchanged love's vows beside
 That selfsame pool, shall we no more, my Emma,
 Though others may?

Emma.
 The King, my Father, gave consent; the Church,
 Reluctant blessing; how long would'st thou escape
 The soot that smudged my Mother's fame, the good
 Archbishop? Suppose, without that slender circlet,
 We begged the King, my Father; would he not banish
 Whom he calls foster-son?—his minister
 Of public works, his faithful secretary,
 His youngest councillor, and, summing all,
 His poet-friend and mine. My fate would be
 A convent cell, to meditate on mischief
 That can be pushed aside. Dear Eginhardt,
 Bid me adieu and when we meet thou'lt be
 My teacher, who recites a nation's songs;
 But dwells not on his own, nor hers who sends
 Him forth.

Suppose I took that ring;

Eginhardt. O Emma, pray God that I have strength.
 Our secret meetings gave fresh life, all else,
 Methinks, is death.

Emma. [*holding her finger up.*] Hark!

[Distant singing is faintly heard.... Emma opens door, left. Eginhardt throws a cloak over her. They stand looking out.]

A
watchman
sings
without.

Here are lodged the sacred clothes;
Bow your heads and stainless be.
Earth is draped with glistening snows,
Garbed anew with purity.

Let each soul be undefiled,
God and man be reconciled.
Let each soul be undefiled,
God and man be reconciled.—

Emma. The watchman's song has drifted from his tower.
He steps within. O seize the moment, fly!

Eginhardt. [He makes a movement, then stops.] But Emma! that snow—unspotted—

Emma. That glitters 'neath
The moon! It seems a miracle. The day
Was pleasant, almost summer-like, then came
A sudden wind with flurries, and, though scarce
Ten minutes since thou cam'st, the court is now
Completely carpeted and all so still—
So cold—but beautiful.

Eginhardt. A miracle
Whose cost will be my life and thine mayhap.

Emma. Thy words must have some meaning?

Eginhardt. A woeful one. 14
If I should dare the lightest step, that snow
Would hold its trace, would witness 'gainst this night's
Adventure; and death must be the penalty.
Death!—The chill of winter. Shut it out.
I'll spend my last few hours in warmth by thee.

Emma. I can't believe—let us but think, we'll find
A passage, some how, some where.

Eginhardt. But where? that is
The only path as blocked as though with walls
Of solid masonry.

Emma. A loophole glints,
Nay, now a streaming light. A woman's print
Might track the court and back, 'twould raise no comment.
The Princess Emma's maid has gone betimes
Some errand, has then returned.

Eginhardt. And what of that?

Emma. Hast thou no inkling? Dearest Eginhardt,
I'll carry thee across the court.

Eginhardt. Thou must
Be crazed, suggesting such a thought, an angel
To masquerade as beast of burden.

Emma. But 'tis
Our only chance; remembering, if we
Should fail, the King, my Father, who must pass judgment,
Would suffer consequence as we. We'll seize
The chance!

Eginhardt. O Emma, my sweetheart, beloved Princess,
What ills may happen thee if we should fail.
We'll take the chance. 15

Emma. Then quickly.

Eginhardt. But art thou strong
Enough to bear my weight so far? wilt thou
Not suffer strain?

Emma. Must I, a Frankish maid,
Explain my strength? Have I not heroes' blood
Within my veins? Are not my sinews those
That show descent from mighty warriors, prompt
In action, swift of purpose? Would I not shame

Such lineage, did I permit myself
To slip or falter? Besides 'tis nought but child's play—
My friend, thou hast a scholar's frame. Now take
A breath! then place thine arms around my neck.
I'll bear thee as a peasant's load upon
My back.

*[She totters for a second beneath Eginhardt's
weight.]*

Eginhardt. Thou stagger'st?

Emma.
Twill help. *[She straightens herself.]*

Nay,—but breathe a prayer,

*[Exit Emma with Eginhardt on her back. After a
time she returns, panting, and closes the door.]*

Emma. I've left him by the courtyard-gate
And none have seen. And O I feel such strange
Relief that dims the parting pang. Deceit
Is ended. I've freed myself to guard this silk.
May God protect!

[She takes up a crucifix and kneels before the silk.]

ACT II.

Scene.—The same as Act I. The following morning. Emma, in her gala attire, lies asleep on the couch, a mantle over her feet. Etta enters abruptly through centre door. She notices the Princess and seems relieved.

Etta. Why there she lies and fast asleep. I had
Such fright to find her bed untenanted.
The day's excitement must have tired and then
The King's late visit. I should have stayed or sent
A waiting-maid; but she insists at times
On privacy, the privilege of being
As lesser folk. I have a shrewd suspicion!
Well let it be! Her virtue's proof 'gainst fire
Itself and Master Eginhardt is old
In wisdom. Their talk is but of grammar-rules,
Of ancient days and poetry. They have
My sympathy; though scarce my understanding.
Frivolity would seem more natural,
Would better suit their youthfulness; but learning
Has set its seal on courtly fashion, till even
The cooks and pantry men discuss in terms
Of rhetoric. Well, well the King attends
The palace school and comprehends; while others,
Of weaker wit, absorb the jargon, failing
To delve for sense.—How sweet my Princess looks,
Dear soul; her dimpling smile disarms all envy,
Else might one say 'tis most unfair that she
Should have so much; while houseless beggars crowd
Our narrow streets. Pretence may smirk and strut
And poverty may wince and crawl but here
There's restfulness. A knock!

[*The door, left, is pushed open.... Enter Albert.*]

Not enter. The Princess is asleep. She's there—
Lies there upon that couch. Please slip away.
Go quietly.

Albert. I have a message. You
Must waken her.

Etta.
My Lord; the Princess wakens when she pleases;
And not before.

Albert.
Forbids delay. 'Tis from the King himself,
Of utmost urgency.

Etta.
The Princess sleeps, the King will pardon us.
He would not wish his bird disturbed.

Albert.
Must wake and spread her wings. The other bird
Has flown. An unexpected play was staged
Last night—I would that I had witnessed it—
The King alone was privileged. He liked
It not. Deep creases line his face, his eyes
Flash steel. The Princess must be wakened, yet
I dread to mar that prettiness with grief.
O why will maids forget the beauty-sleep
That wards away next morning's tears. She fell
Asleep—too late, alas!

[*Emma wakes up, seems surprised to see her visitors, sits up and listens unnoticed by them.*]

Etta.
Is turned. I left her here last night 'tis true,
But with the King. To her sweet care he must
Have lent the holy silk, see there it lies
And shimmers trustfully. You have an answer.
'Twill satisfy the King.

Hist, hist, you must

Your tone is somewhat rude,

The message that I bear

If you but say

His bird

My Lord, your head

Albert.

Was witness. Listen! last night another came.
 Where were your eyes and ears? The King retired
 Alone, he practised Greek; when suddenly
 A knavish moonbeam danced its mischief through
 A chink and blurred the alpha-beta. The King
 Threw wide the casement hangings, and sought to wrest
 An ode, a monody from night's allurements,
 When lo! 'twas farce that greeted him, a farce
 That failed to tap his laughter.

Etta.

My heart. Speak on!

A chill has knifed

Albert.

That peered; they seemed to shrink beneath the moon's
 Cold gaze and then from out this very room
 There came a restless prancing jennet, that stayed
 Its curveting, that slid and well-nigh stumbled
 Beneath the slender weight of whom indeed?
 But solemn Master Eginhardt.

He clearly saw two forms

Etta.

Has so demeaned herself! has so abused
 Her rank and sex! I'll not believe a word
 Of it, e'en though her pretty lips give their
 Consent.

The Princess

Emma. He speaks the truth, dear Etta! 'Twas not
 In wanton play! 'twas dire distress. We hoped
 To hide our secret from the telltale snow.
 But now, that all's discovered; give me the worst,
 My Lord. What punishment is meted him
 I love?

Albert. 'Tis not so heavy, ease yourself.*Emma.* Not death?*Albert.*

No, no—

Emma.

Then tell me all.

Albert.

The King

Has seen——

Emma. Of that you've said enough; but after?

Albert. To-day the court has stirred betimes. A King,
 Who spent a sleepless night, would not respect
 Another's rest. His messengers flew back
 And forth, while rumors faster sped. A council
 At such unseemly hour! portending what?
 And few but nurse some covert guilt. The King
 Was grey with wrath—and fear disturbed. But when
 He spoke, recounting all, faint titters rose
 Unbidden, soon quelled beneath his iron glance.
 And then, with icy voice, he hurled the question:
 What judgment should be meted one who so
 Forgot—I pray your pardon—her royal rank?
 The councillors gazed mournfully at one
 Another and then, as though a signal prompted,
 They chimed together: "In love affairs we crave
 Indulgence." Scarce heeding them the King continued:
 "What punishment deserves that man, whom I
 Have favoured? who brings my house to shame." Again
 The answer came: "In love affairs we crave
 Indulgence." But one dissentient voice: "Our laws
 Proclaim a speedy death." 'Twas Eginhardt,
 The youngest councillor, who spoke.

Emma.

You said—

Albert. That death was not the penalty; Ay! listen!
 The King replied: "My youngest councillor
 Gives wiser judgment. Yes he understands
 How stain can spread. Such doings, if left unpunished,
 Might influence court customs, Frankish habits;
 Deserving death, I pass a lighter sentence:
 'Tis banishment without repeal. Now go,
 Nor trouble more mine eyes!" The King had finished,
 A quivering silence reigned. Then slowly rose

The one proscribed, nor made obeisance, nor bade
Adieu, unless his footsteps echoed it.
The air was chill as though a wraith had passed.

Emma. None offered him a kindly word? none gave
A friendly glance?

Albert. Before the angered King,
Was't possible? Besides a favorite,
That's fallen from regard, must needs incite
A wonder seldom damped with pity's dew.

Emma. Mayhap the gateman has inquired which way
He went. Etta! go question him.

Albert.
To none; but strode along, nor visited
His rooms. His writing tools alone he carried,
Unless a book or so that bulged his wallet.

He spoke

Emma. You may depart, my Lord. Your story's told.

Albert. I would it were. Why are you still? can you
Not ease the telling? Question me. Take you
No interest in your fate?

Emma. 'Tis blank to-day.

Albert. Then woe must color it and I must speak
Unhelped. Prepare yourself for greivous change.
When heavy steps had ceased to echo, all
Within the Council-Hall seemed moulded there
By frost of death. Then spoke the King: "My daughter"—
A moment's pause till words swelled through emotion.
They thickly came as waters that soak their way
From out a sodden, leaf-strewn ridge. "My daughter,
Let her fare forth. The fault's the same and so
The punishment!" and then he turned toward me.
His words now sharply fell as waters freed
That clang 'mid stones. "Go tell the Princess Emma,
Mine eyes must dwell on her no more. Let her
Leave home and friends, henceforth a wanderer.
Bid her begone at once, nor moan her fate
With others. Let her depart for presently
I come to seal a tomb that holds the corpse
Of erstwhile loving memory." His words
Sank deep like waters pooled, his eyelids closed
To stay the signs of grief. He blinked them back,
Then called for state affairs. I hastened here,
You may believe, unwillingly.

Emma.
I've heard your message, listened patiently.
Tell the King 'twas well delivered. Now
I pray your absence, go!

So, finis.

Albert.
Your promise of obedience. Nay rather
To beg a Father's clemency, to wake
His fond indulgence, haply some excuse.

To take with me

Emma. Did Eginhardt reply? went he not forth
In silence? go!

[Exit Albert.]

Etta. My dear, sweet Princess. O
How has it happened? where's the cure?

Emma.
Is past, a vain inquiry! where's the cure?
The outlet from this coil? I see it not.

The "how"

Etta. Then haste! gain entrance to the Council-Hall,
Implore the King—not with that stony look.
Let tears entreat and fervent promises.
Speak loving words; those little, winging words,
That search a Father's heart. Let beauty plead,
With clinging arms; till soft embrace wears wrath
Away. My Princess! run, beg mercy! conjure
With woman's art, insist! O pray arouse
Yourself, throw off this bleak November mood,

Weep April drops, and then come singing back,
A lightsome smiling May.

Emma.

Impossible,

When Eginhardt has gone. Besides what would
The masses think did he, the new Augustus,
Show weakness, bend beneath a daughter's pleadings.
No Etta, the King is law, its fountain head;
If it be questioned, the nations totter. Yes
'Tis harvest month and I have harvested.
Unfasten the stringing pearls that bind my hair,
Then help me loose this festive frock, 'tis stiff
With woven gold. A homespun hunting gown
Will better serve the time's occasion. Bring
The russet; 'twas worn that day my ankle twisted.

[*Exit Etta, centre door.... She soon returns with the gown. Sighing and shaking her head she helps Emma make the change.*]

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Etta. 'Tis torn and stained.

Emma.

I know, nor would I part

With it, nor have it mended. The rent will suit
My shifted fortune. Eginhardt went forth
With student's ware. I'll take my bow and arrows,
My spear and ah, this silk, 'twas given me
Last night to guard and am I different?
My place in life may be; but not myself.
So fare thee well, dear Etta, I find no words
For messages. [*She opens the door left.*]

Etta. But stay! You cannot go
Like this alone, to face a thieving world.

Emma. What have I here to tempt?

Etta.

Those spangled pins,

What's more, your beauty.

Emma.

Pull the pins, now let

My hair fall loose; divided o'er each shoulder
It ripples to my feet. Am I not like
The strange wild-women habiting the hills?
I may draw glances; none will venture near.

Etta. Then fairy-folk will seize you trespassing.

Emma. O plague me not with fancied fears; but let
Remembrance follow me and now and then
A whispered prayer. [*A dove flies into the room and lights on Emma's arm.*] What's this? my dear, pet dove.
It nestles faithfully, yet I must part
With it, alas! O guard it, nurture it.

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[*She hands the dove to Etta. Exit, left, hastily. Etta makes a movement to follow her, then stops and soothes the bird.*]

Etta. Poor fluttering thing that shares unhappiness.
How far doth sorrow spread? and can I stay
Its murky flow? I'll importune the King,
The Royal family. There must be some
Recourse.

[*Enter, left, Albert.*]

Albert. And has the Princess gone?

Etta.

But now.

Where is the King?

Albert.

He comes this way. He wishes

An empty cage, nor view of hapless bird.

Etta. And I've one here that may remind.

[*Exit, left, Albert. Etta seeks to soothe the bird. Enter Charles, in ordinary Frankish attire, attended by Albert. Etta kneels imploringly.*]

I beg for her. Where are the tears that flowed
Beside her Mother's bier? Do they not force
Forgiveness, if indeed what's pure requires
Such word. O send for her lest harm may come
To one so gently nurtured.

Charles. [*Sitting down heavily.*] Harm has come.
If more ensues it scarce can blacken what's
Already black. Begone. I've said enough.

[*The dove escapes through doorway, left.*]

Etta. [*Rising.*] The bird! O Sire, the bird!

Charles.

What's that?

Etta.

Her dove.

She treasured it.

Charles.

Then let it follow her.

Sir Count, remove the woman. Fail not to give
My message. None must speak the words proscribed,
Nor hint we had such daughter.

[*Exuent Etta, door centre;
Albert door left.... Charles stares round moodily. A
knock is heard.*]

The Emperor, Augustus, not have some hours
Alone to toy with grief?

Who raps? Can I

[*Enter Hildebold, left, closing the
door after him.*]

Hildebold.

You sent for me?

My gracious Lord,

Charles.

And you have tarried long.

The judgment's given. Leave me here in peace.

Hildebold. If peace reigned here, I'd gladly go. Methinks
A wounded soul awaits my help. I missed
You, Sire, at mass.

Charles.

I had excuse. You may

Have heard. Respect my sorrow. Leave me now.

Hildebold. [*Sitting down.*] One time, long since, you rode with Eginhardt;
Nor stayed for pomp of retinue, your wish
Was speed, to reach a mother's side; who gasped
Your name while breath still lingered. Not a word
You spoke; but peered the gloom, as on you raced
'Gainst death itself. The night was dark and still,
The thudding horses woke strange echoes, hark!
That tinkling bell betokens mass, though dawn
Has scarcely greyed the sky. A mother's blessing
Depends on haste and yet God's call was heeded.
You turned aside to find the forest church,
My dear, first charge; and there you humbly knelt.
At that same hour, you later heard, the Queen,
Your Mother's breath came evenly. She smiled
And seemed content to wait. Three days of sweet
Communing God allowed his servants ere
The parting came.—You raced 'gainst death that night
And won. To-day, I fear, God's face is turned,
His help rejected.

Charles. [*Wearily.*] My Lord Archbishop, I
Have scarcely followed, have indeed no will
To argue; granting all your premises,
Pray leave me now.

Hildebold.

Your rank and mine we'll set

Aside. Consider me that Hildebold
Whom you have raised to be your chosen friend,
Who comes to offer—

Charles.

Not the golden coins

This time but useless words. O would that you

Had kept my largess then, nor parted with
Humility.

Hilдеболд. [*Reminiscently.*] And how surprised I was
To see those gulden left by seeming huntsmen.
I felt such gold might burn a simple monk;
Besides our chapel needed nought and so
I hailed you back and asked instead a doeskin,
Soft and pliable, to bind my mass-book,
That time had sadly ragged.

Charles.

Appealed. I sent you one deep-purple dyed
And limned with gold—'twas not enough; a ring,
A staff, a bishopric were further added,
And so a mentor saddles me. Pray take
The hint, begone!

Your modesty

[*He leans on the table and sinks his head
on his arms, oblivious to everything. Hilдеболд
advances as though to touch him, then steps back and
sits down, casting pitying glances at him. After a
while Charles looks up.*]

My hints are lost, well stay;

A humbled man may wish an audience.
O yesterday what glory streaked my life.
Those blessed relics brought uplift, a sense
That I, above all others, was indeed
God's chosen vessel, Emperor and Chief
Of millions. Yes, I had a deeper sense
Of His abiding grace and awesome trust
Than even on that Christmas morn when vast
St. Peter's thundered forth the ancient plaudits:
"Long life and victory to Charles, the pious
Augustus, crowned by God, the great, pacific
Emperor!" while on my head there rested
The precious diadem. Ah, then I felt
Some fear, a dread that I perchance usurped
A mighty privilege. But yesterday
'Twas peace, as though the all-pervading God
Communed with me, not as man talks with man;
But as the angels gain instruction, thought
That comes unvoiced, yet glows with warmth of knowledge.
And so, deluded, I kissed goodnight. Outside
'Twas bleak, rough winds assailed, snow flurries pricked.
Within my chamber's solitude I sought
Relief through study; tossed my books aside;
Revulsion gripped my soul. What had I done
With power? Some cruel acts grew large and then
The future glowed uncertain. Everywhere
Dissensions rise; they say the brazen cock
That crowns our palace points the spot, so swift
Comes punishment; but age may weaken, have
My sons the force that pushes me? I see
The Northmen's snake-like galleys nosing, feel
The Saracens' sharp sword; to meet them warriors
With discipline relaxed, disordered laws,
False judges, ignorance, a church debased.

Hilдеболд. Hold, hold, my Son, mirage is in your eyes
To-day, transforming faults to giant-size.

Charles. And then I pulled the curtain back and saw
God's eye of night, the lustrous moon, that stared
Suggestive quiet. Prophet of storms, it failed
To prophesy; but shed meek rays along
Fresh-fallen, smirch-less snow, ay spotless! spotless!
My thoughts now strayed to her, my youngest daughter,
Her baby hands that clutched my beard, her soul
Developing; her proud, young ways and later
Her matchless maidenhood, her sweet accord
With all my moods, her soothing charm, ah then
A door was opened furtively, I saw—

[*Covering his face with his hands.*]

Are we God's care or Devil's sport?

Hildebold.

My Son,

You saw not far enough; but thus it is
And God is blamed. Was't love of justice made
You banish her; or jealousy, or fret
That things went not to please your wishes?

29

Charles.

You'd

Excuse such conduct?

Hildebold. I'd seek its cause and seek

The cure. The cause, those two so thrown together;
The cure to separate or sanction.

Charles.

Let winds

Draw them apart or close. They blow without.
I've said my say. And now give orders that
This room be sealed, a memory that's ended.
My Lord Archbishop, take the silk, I know
Of none else worthy.

[*Exit, left, hastily.*]

Hildebold.

Take the silk? I see

It not. Poor Princess! Poor Emperor! [*He opens centre door, against which Etta has evidently been leaning.*] But Etta,
Thou stumblest! Is't sympathy that holds thee near?
Well let it be. Thy reddened eyes do penance.
Now beg the Palace Count to seal this room,
That none may enter. Would the deed were done
With lowered head and lips that move in prayer.
But give me first the sacred silk.

Etta.

The Princess

Has taken it.

Hildebold. That proves her innocence.

'Twas but a youthful prank. I'll follow her.
A convent wall will guard her charm until
The King relents.

[*Exit, left.*]

Etta. I fear his mind is set.

And what can change whom all obey?—who has
So changed himself.

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ACT III.

Scene.—A clearing in the forest near Aquisgranum. At the back, amid trees, a charcoal-burner's hut and a kiln. On the left a linden and copse leading to a grove once sacred to heathen deities; but now feared and shunned. On the right a barricade of logs and fallen trees so placed in one part to form steps. Ernst advances from his kiln, looks over the barricade as though expecting some one. He is joined by Guta who comes out of the hut.

Ernst. 'Tis mild for harvest-moon and yet the wind's
Unsettled, portending what? How strange the snow
That came so suddenly then disappeared
As some night wraith that fears clear-visioned day.

Guta. The Devil must have pinched his wife she dropped
Such frozen tears. 'Tis most unfair that when
She's disciplined poor folk should feel so oft
The dripping moisture of her grief; 'tis bad
For rheumatism.

Ernst.
The witch deserves to spill some tears, she has
So often damaged them; what branches crunch
And fall, when she, amount her broomstick, rides
A gale through serpent-hissing, midnight skies.

And good for forest trees.

Guta. And so thou'rt in the skies and never wilt
Thou heed my limping gait, that cries a life
In town, some gaiety before a coffin
Completes this stiffening.

Ernst.

And leave our home?

Guta. That hovel!

Ernst.

What could I do?

Guta.

Thou might'st instruct

The palace school, save Master Eginhardt
These many visits here.

Ernst.

If I had been

A cleric, had learnt to read and write, maybe,
May be—

Guta. Thou hast a head well stacked with knowledge.
Do books all boast as much? 'Tis odd that thou,
A peasant, hast such stuff within, that courtiers
Must come to pump it out then serve it for
The King.

Ernst. The King loves ancient hero-tales.
A proper King! a proper Emperor!
What's more, a proper man. I wonder why
Good Master Eginhardt delays; I promised
Some verse, it quivers on my lips. That's just
The way, he comes when I am disinclined
And now he dallies.

Guta.
Royal mourners wailed. In fright I woke. The wind
Blew fluted dirge-like notes; but dreams are ay
Contrariwise. Most like 'twas wedding bells.
I wish good Master Eginhardt would come;
I thirst to hear Court gossip, e'en the bits
He doles with grudging tongue. And he could tell
Us of the long-nosed beast with dragon skin
That I so dread, yet wish to see.

Last night I dreamt of death,

Ernst.

A crackling!

Hist! but not our scholar's steed, nor yet
A wandering huntsman's. Such a footfall, quiet
And even, forewarns at least a Bishop's palfrey.
As I'm alive 'tis Father Hildebold;
Who now dismounts and ties his horse. [*He mounts the
barricade and stoops to help Hildebold up.*] The steps
Are steep so have a care. We welcome you.

[*Enter Hildebold, appearing over the barricade.*]

Hildebold. Thou bar'st thy citadel, good friend.

Four-footed beasts, not two. Step gingerly.
I beg your Lordship's pardon. Come Guta, kneel
And kiss the ring. Our old Confessor climbs
Too high for peasant jokes; so let us help
Him down.

[*After helping him, the peasants kneel to receive a blessing.*]

Hildebold. My children, it pleases me to greet
Old friends. Receive God's blessing.—Tell me now
Has Master Eginhardt been lately here?
Or Princess Emma?

Ernst.

While hunting with the King; who has himself
Broke fast with me and stayed awhile to rest.
He talked of Master Eginhardt, whom both
Call foster-son, which makes a kind of sweet
Relationship between our Lord, the King,
And me, his servant.

The Princess once was here,

34

Hildebold.

This gifted foster-son?

And dost thou soon expect

Ernst.

He fails to come.

Ay, surely, unless

Hildebold. Hark then! If he should come

Or Princess Emma, use a kind detention,
Some artifice, then steal away and bring
Me news or send a trusty messenger.
Remember as thou valuest salvation.—
Is there no easier exit? well, thy hand.
Remember! and beg thy wife to curb her tongue.

[*Exit with Ernst who soon returns. Guta mutters to herself.*]

Guta. 'Tis always thus, a woman's tongue, a woman's—

Depend upon it, some ill has chanced; my dream,
The winds have prophesied; but what indeed?
Why should the Princess visit us? There is
No reason; nor that Master Eginhardt
Should be detained; for that is what, through love
Of company, we ever strive; nor is
Their reason to inform 'gainst her or him
Or them. Canst thou, good man, make ought of this?

Ernst. Why puzzle, when time brings plain solution.

Let time
Then bear the brunt and weight of ravelling riddles,
Nor goad ourselves with useless questionings.

[*A cry for help is heard. It dies down, then comes again.*]

But hark, that erie cry! or is't the wind?
Hark! Some poor soul has missed her path and dreads
The forest loneliness. I'll succour her.

Guta. Thou must not go, that cry is not from tongue

Made true through taste of Holy Sacrament.
Such shrilling gentleness is not the moan
Of fagot-picker in distress. 'Tis like
The dirge of last night's dream. I recognize;
'Tis some wild woman of the woods that seeks
To lure a Christian soul—Nay husband, stay!
I warn thee. [*Clutching his coat, then wringing her hands.*

Exit Ernst, by the steps. He soon returns supporting

Emma.] O the foolish man and worse

Than foolish—what will come of this? He brings
Her here, alas! our happiness has flown.

Ernst. Quick Guta, fetch some water, haste, she faints.

Guta. Then let her lie; but no; discourtesy
Might bring revenge. They say 'tis best to flatter,

35

To wheedle with fair words and deeds. [*She goes into the hut and brings out some water in a horn mug.*] My pretty!
A sip will freshen thee; another! See
Thy colour comes and delicate as that
Pink robe that's bundled 'neath thy mantle, frayed
And torn most like in some uproarious
Fandango, some brawling midnight junketing,
Some screech-owl revels.

Emma. [*Reviving.*] Thou dost forget thyself
To so address—I had forgot!—but this
Is holy silk.

Guta. If I should contradict
'Twould be for sake of bickering. The holes
Are plain enough. Thou seem'st to treasure them,
And yet the hole thou comest from is lined
With gold, they say.

Emma.

The woman's mad!

Ernst.

Thou talk'st

Too much, my wife.

Guta. [*Addressing Emma.*] 'Tis true. Take no affront.
But if I may not talk, who will? a silence
Is often more discourteous than words
And gives the Devil chance—

[*The noise of some one approaching is heard.*]

Ernst.

To show his horns.

And thou hast said it! hush! hush—

[*Enter Eginhardt.*]

Emma.

Eginhardt!

O Eginhardt!

Guta. The devil in disguise!
Or is't our friend in troth? I know not friend
From enemy.

Eginhardt. [*Embracing Emma.*] My sweetheart, how cam'st thou here?
Alone? without a following? thy hair
Unbound, a rivulet of gold! Or art
Thou but a bloodless figment, a fancy born
Of seething thought? Nay, nay, 'tis Paradise
My lagging steps have mounted unawares
And thou'rt my angel guide.

Emma. [*Sinking in his arms.*] O Eginhardt,
'Tis peace at last!

Ernst. [*Addressing Guta.*] She seeks a younger prey
Than us old folk and one, methinks, that's more
Susceptible; but we must warn—

Guta.

Let us

Away, advise good Father Hildebold.
He'll exorcise with book and candle.

Ernst.

And while

Our backs are turned what harm may come. I'll pluck
His sleeve and warn. Dear Master Eginhardt,
I'd speak with you.

Eginhardt. [*Testily.*] Well! well!

Ernst.

Not here, but step

Aside; one moment! pray.

Eginhardt.

Think'st thou I'd tempt

The winds? All day they've strangely whirled. But now
The air is still, this precious burden rests
With me. If I should loose my grasp might not
Some mischievous air-current spirit her
Afar.

Ernst. If only such could happen!

Eginhardt.

Man,

Thou must be mad to e'en suggest the thought.

Has dotage crept thus suddenly? Begone,
Let thy old wife coax reason back.

Emma.

A poor

Instructor! She's mad as he.

Guta.

O Master, you

Alone are crazed. Quick cross yourself, break loose,
Use Latin words, delve deep within your learning;
From useless lumber pluck some magic art;
Whose strength will free from love's bewitching power,
From spectral glamour.

Eginhardt.

Break loose from love? O Guta;

Each golden hair, that showers its wealth about
This yielding form, holds me in closer bondage
Than shackling chains of adamant. Break loose
From love? this head, that leans its gentle weight,
Impresses more than all the rolling skies
That bowed great-shouldered Atlas, steadying.
Break loose from love? 'Twould be a harsher fall,
Than Satan's fierce descent from Heaven's peace
To Hell's contentious flame. Break loose from love?
Not while there's breath to seal its troth, to pledge
Its honour. [*He kisses Emma.*]

Guta. [*Addressing Ernst.*]

Pray come! let us obey! seek help

From Father Hildebold, lest worse should follow.
If that most sober scholar is thus enmeshed
By magic wile, what hope is there for thee?
Who spinnest love tales as others gossip. Come!
A lengthy walk!

Ernst. And leave the youth? O youth!

First love! sweet raptures, mine no more—no more—

Guta. Come, come away; thou moonstruck fool! white hairs

Are no safe shielding 'gainst man's foolish bent.

[*Ernst and Guta mount the steps but as they descend
the other side they pause and look round unnoticed by
Emma and Eginhardt.*]

Emma. They speak of Father Hildebold, most like
The Bishop. Would that he or some poor monk
Were here to give God's blessing.

Eginhardt.

My Lord Archbishop

Would give such duteous advice that we,
In following, might find ourselves constrained
To cloistered cells; to hold, apart, sad vigils,
Remembering the happiness that's ours
To grasp. But I, like thee, would have God's blessing.
See Love! two lengthy sticks! we'll form them crosswise;
So notched, this silken cord will serve. [*He gathers two heavy sticks to make a cross, using some
string that bound the silk.*] I'll plant
The longest end; how easily it slides!
And firm as though God truly wished it here.
And now we'll drape with this most blessed silk.
See Love, 'tis woman's work.

[*Emma drapes the cross with the white silk.*]

Ernst. [*Whispering to Guta.*]

A solemn rite,

And e'en a pious, stay! 'tis worth the watching.

Guta. Nay, let us fly! 'tis impious, a wild

Hill-woman to hide the sign of Christendom
'Neath tattered rags of vile debauchery.
A worn ball gown that's torn in lengths.

Ernst.

Whist! Silence!

[*Some leaves of the linden rustle slightly.*]

Emma. A sound, a fluttering sound, and voices! no,
All's quiet. O would that we had witnesses,
Those mad-brained peasants if none else and yet
We're kindly rid of them.—The forest hush

Breathes thoughts of God. This mellowed silk was once
Around the Virgin's dress and now it decks
The marriage cross. O we have audience.

[*Emma and Eginhardt kneel before the cross and repeat together.*]

O Lord! be witness to our mutual vow.

Emma. My husband!

Eginhardt.

Together.

My treasured wife!
Whom none may part.

[*They kneel in silent prayer. Suddenly from the linden tree a dove flits down and lights on Emma's shoulder.*]

Emma. My dove, my own pet dove. O God has sent
This sign.

Ernst. [*Whispering to Guta.*] It seems like some strange miracle;
Yet what it is I fail to grasp; yes, yes,
We'll go to Father Hildebold. He'll straight
This tangle, if any can.

[*Exeunt Ernst and Guta.*]

Emma. [*Resting with Eginhardt against a log.*] O Eginhardt,
To think the bird has followed us! It links
The past and present, soothes the sting, and brings
A sweet assurance. Soft, wee nestler! a bit
Of pampered yesterday; that tears with us
The veiling morrow, fearing nought for love
Encompasses. O husband of my dreams,
Thou art reality. No tempest can
Disturb—And see, look round, 'twas here those dreams
Grew strong from sudden birth. Incredible
That chance has drifted us to this same spot.
A higher agency methinks has forced
Our steps. They say this world is evil, 'tis but
A tottery stepping stone; I say 'tis wrought
Of solid bliss; whence beauty springs and all
That holds and satisfies.

Eginhardt.

My Emma, the world is passing good; whate'er
Its slips and fallacies some moments since.
Ay, here it was that Love surprised. Unmasked
The lusty teaser flashed his bolt, exciting
The carmine to thy cheeks, a shining moist
To soft thine eyes, a shrinking tenderness
Through all thy being.

Emma.

Thou speak'st the truth,

But thou wert bold, my friend.

Eginhardt. So saved a nasty fall. I see thee now
As then. Thou stood'st upon that fallen oak
In this same garb methinks. Thy hair neat-tucked
Within a huntsman's cap, some tendrils though
Fell gently loose, thy lips were curved to smile.
Asudden there came a stir from out the black
Of those deep woods that yonder lie, a stag
Brushed by, sprang lightly forward; ere the dogs
Caught scent or vision, an arrow whirred; thy sister,
The Princess Bertha's aim was good, beside
Thee lay the struggling beast. To end its pain
Thou raisedst thy hunting spear, but stumbling would
Have wrenched I know not what of this most dear
Anatomy, had I not seized thine arm
And righted thee. In that same flash of time
Two lives were changed, our eyes had met. Pray God
The ill averted may not lead to worse.

Emma. Who speaks of ill upon his wedding day
Deserves the same. Fie, shame, my Eginhardt.
Must we not fashion plans together, "together."
Ay, a precious word! what matters else?

"Together; together"—Hark! a stir! are we
Repeating history? Another stag!
Quick! my bow. [*She shoots toward the copse, a heavy
animal falls at its entrance. She and Eginhardt walk
over and examine it.*] I've brought him down. There is
No need to spear. He's dead, quite dead. See here
An ancient wound that's scabbed and healed. Indeed
The very stag. He must have 'scaped that day
But we, enamoured, had no thought to spare.
What ages since that hunting party; so
It seems, my sister's merry laughter, the King,
My Father's kind solicitude.—And now
This cruel break—but Eginhardt, I'll wink
Salt drops away, lest one should fall to splash
Our luck, to mar our wedding-day. Why is't
When joy is keenest, there lurks beneath a pool
Of woe? Well, well 'tis far beneath, we'll lid
It with a stern forgetfulness. "Together;"
That's the word, "together;" and now we'll plan
To make a wild and beautiful adventure.

Eginhardt. Brave Heart, together, yes together we'll stem
The tide; but 'tis for thee I fear, for one
So gently nurtured.

Emma.

My ancestors: the Pepin of Landen, the Pepin
Of Herestal; iron-handed Charles who cowed
The Saracen; his son who trembled not
From royal power; and his, in turn, my Father,
Who scaled fresh heights and slipped not back when offered
Imperial pomp and dignity. Each rose
To circumstance. Shall I, who boast such race,
Grow pale, show fear, lay down my arms before
So slight a foe as seeming poverty.
For poverty, what is't? but just a nought,
A nothingness and I have thee so I
Am rich.

Eginhardt. And I far richer! So let us shape
Our future. This stag will nourish us and more
Whence it has come. For shelter here's a hut
With fire, utensils—poor but clean.

Emma.

Not further go from those old folk? I liked
Them not! A something calls me toward the thickets,
As though the inky depth they fringe held safe
Asylum. There must be entrance where the stag
Came forth. Let us push through the coppice, search
What lies beyond.

Eginhardt. 'Tis mystery, unsafe
To penetrate. The peasants say that dwarfs
Dwell there, that wild hill-women dance. They say
Some few of mortal birth have forced a way;
But what they saw none know, for none have since
Returned.

Emma. Ay, peasants' talk; but e'en if true—
St. Augustine, I've heard, hath not denied
There may be other hidden agencies
Than those of scriptural warrant—yet this silk
Will serve as amulet. I have no fear.
Hast thou?

Eginhardt. I'd be ashamed to so confess
And once indeed I peeped.

Emma.

Eginhardt.
It be for now. Thou'rt weak and famished. Rest
Thee here. I'll do some foraging.

Remember, Eginhardt,

43

Could we

44

And saw?

We'll let

[*Exit through door of hut.*]

Emma. [*After a pause, gathering up the silk.*] Yes, yes
We must go further then. A call from out
Those tangled depths comes loud, insistent. There

Solution lies. But first this precious silk
Must he repacked, the cross unwound. What's here?
A shimmering droplet, a gem that must have slipped
Its setting. Eginhardt! please come!

[Enter Eginhardt
with some hunks of bread and a mug of milk.]

A jewel
Has fallen from its royal resting place.
Last night I handled the King, my Father's crown.
It lay beside the holy silk, whose folds
Have not disdained earth's wealth though they were used
To fairer things. The sun gives warmth; but this
Pale imitation chills my hand, what shall
We do with it? and how return?

Eginhardt.
This bread, and drink; then we'll consider.

Now eat

[*They both eat hastily.*]

Emma.
For our adventure in those mazy woods,
For go we must, we need some wherewithal,
Some first provisions, some household stuff. We'll leave
This gem, and in its place take our requirements;
Reward, that's offered, would more than pay for such
Poor odds and ends as we may choose to plunder.

Listen!

45

Eginhardt. Thou'st said the word. If thou'rt refreshed, we'll make
A kindly start before the day grows late;
But I must bear this stag, so wilt thou help
As would a peasant woman?

Emma.
My life has seemingly begun—so free.
I'll take deep breaths.

With joyous heart!

[*They go into the hut and come out laden.*]

Eginhardt. [*Laughing.*]

Dost think we have enough?

Emma. Enough and e'en to spare! 'Tis laughable
The troubles ta'en preparing 'gainst one's wedding;
The puckered brow, the oft vexatious thought,
The wondering if this or that becomes
One most; what furnishings are suitable;
What friends invited. Well, we're saved some burdens.
Compared, this sack is light; but canst thou manage?
Then sling the stag upon thy back. Now let
Us venture? Where's my dove? Ah here still perched
Upon my shoulder, our only wedding guest;
Who shows the confidence we feel.

Eginhardt.
'Twere better witnessed.

I would

Emma.

Tush, Eginhardt, lead on.

Eginhardt. Then bend thy head, protect the bird, protect
Our confidence against recoiling twigs.
'Twas by this linden tree I one time found
A path; but thou must stoop, be careful! Love.

46

[*Exuent, the trees closing on them.*]

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ACT IV.

Scene.—The same as Act III, six years later. It has a more deserted appearance. Some smoke escapes the kiln. The steps of the barricade are broken down, leaving a narrow passage, through which enter Charles in hunting attire and Albert, whose court finery is somewhat dishevelled.

Charles. Why, Albert, see, there's smoke, haste thee! Inquire!

Albert. [*Looks into the hut.*] No sign of life within the hut, my Lord.
Nor little else. An emptiness that weighs
Like what's inside my belt. Will you not blow
Your horn, my Lord, that baskets may be brought.

Charles. My courtiers think of food, of clothes; thou'rt dressed
As for a festival and so the rest.
Indeed 'twould shock our simple ancestors
Could they but see the follies prevalent
To-day, the love of luxury, the splurge,
The flaunt of silk and jewels, the rich-piled velvets,
The pranking plumes, the strut and swagger. Yet
Methinks, on closer view, thy feathers have
A languid droop, thy coat has lost its vain
Bravado, thy ribboned finery agrees
But ill with huntsman's sport.

Albert.
Am privileged to speak, we dressed prepared
For Council work; but you withdrew, changed plans,
Made call for dogs and horses, spears and bows;
Gave us no time to change.

My Lord, if I

Charles.
For Councillors? Grave work needs grave attire.
Ye came arrayed for dance and spectacle
So I was forced to holiday. The chase
Has made some spectacles, I trow. [*Laughing.*] Nay stay
Thy sulks, seek now thy friends, beg them retain
This morning's lesson; hark! and come not back
Until my horn wakes echoes.

Do I want fops

Albert. [*Turns to go, then stops.*] But is it wise
To leave you here alone, my Lord; this place
Is ill reputed.

Charles. See that rustic cross,
Some pious pilgrim's work. Six years ago
'Twas noticed first; since then long winters have
Unloaded snow and whipped the biting blast,
Yet there it stands assuringly. How oft,
When unsought vigils have distressed, my mind
Has flown to this same spot, has tried to pierce
Its mystery, has lingered round those branchlets,
Gleaned a strange relief; and now again
Smoke floats above the charcoal kiln. All haste,
Count Albert, comb the woods, make nearby search,
Discover him who caused that smoke, who stirs
A smouldering hope; but still my heart! the flame
May yet die down as has so oft occurred.
Haste, haste Count Albert, I would know the worst
Or best.

[*Albert starts to go. Enter Ernst who collides with him.*]

Ernst. Dost wish to murder me? a bandit!
Ho! Help!

Albert. [*Holding Ernst by his collar.*] Didst thou cause yonder smoke?

Ernst.
I did, where is the crime? the kiln is mine,
Though long deserted. Unhand me pray.

And if

Albert.
Desires thy presence.

The King

Ernst.
Didst thou remove thy knuckles; though, in truth,
Thou flatterest. To hold me so presumes that I
Have still the nerve and mettle of rash youth,

A fitter one I'd show,

His racing-wind, his wiry limbs unfettered
By time's harsh reckoning. Ay, that is better,
I breathe again. A nobleman! it seems.
I must have dreamt a cutthroat throttled me,
But, by our Lady, thy dress belongs to neither.
Gentility cast-off and mired. May be
Thou art some actor who practises his part.

Albert. Thou shouldst have studied thine. Servility
Becomes a peasant's tongue.

Charles.

Polite to whom?

To dainty nobles who presume on birth
And wide possessions, whose love of play and sport
Bids them forget the useful arts, the work
That makes life passable, their Emperor's
Renown, the safety of the realm? No, no.
My love is for the striving man whate'er
His station be. Is not the peasants' wisdom,
His industry, the backbone of our nation?
Ah woe the day when he forgets his high
Estate and seeks to ape his so-called betters.

Ernst. Great King, I kneel to you, the peasants' friend.

Charles. And thou art truly Ernst whom we have sought
These many years. Tell me, where is my daughter,
The Princess Emma? My foster-son? whom we
In sport called "ours."

Ernst.

How should I know?

Charles.

Why did'st

Thou disappear?

Ernst.

My Guta was afraid.

Charles. Afraid? Speak on! Impatience frets, afraid
Of what?

Ernst. Of telling tales.

Charles.

Thy trade of yore;

But now I ask the simple truth unvarnished.

Ernst. My Lord, 'twas truth we feared; when witchcraft plays,
A silent tongue is safest. We had seen
Too much. We slipped away. And now, alas!
Poor Guta! [*He weeps.*]

Charles. If she be dead I pity thee.
'Tis heartfelt! I have drained the bitter cup.
I understand. A worthy woman! a dear
Companion! Friend Ernst thou hast my sympathy,
But grief with thee is indexed, chapter and verse,
Each last sad smile, each parting word. Thou mayst
Read slowly this remembrance, skip the next,
Avoid what is most harassing. It can't
Be changed, the book is writ; but mine is blank.
Where is my daughter? write the lines for me.

Ernst. My Lord, why ask a charcoal-burner? If she
Be missing, those of higher rank will know,
Not I.

Charles. But thou hast just confessed a knowledge.
Shall I stand longer here and wheedle words,
Or shall I blow my horn? Let torture bring
Some sense.

Ernst. My Lord, have mercy!

Charles.

Then out with it!

Why did'st thou fly six years ago? nor bring
The Lord Archbishop news.

Ernst.

My Lord, that is

A simple question, simple as thin ice,
That skins the depth, yet holds till rudely struck.
Let us reach shallows far from here before
We test its brittleness.

Charles.

Nay speak, and promptly.

Ernst. Then take the onus, Sire, I've warned. For me
Nought matters now, my Guta's dead. Besides

A king's hot temper may extrude more sparks
 Than witch's fell bedevilment. So listen!
 Six years ago a semblance, a strange wild woman,
 Not of mortal birth, escaped the hills,
 Came moaning here, cast amorous glances, trapping
 With beauty's mesh the soul of our dear friend,
 Our foster-son. Before this feeble cross,
 Whose magic keeps it firm spite time's decay,
 An awesome rite took place; those two exchanged
 The marriage oath, scarce said the words, when skies
 Blew open, a bird descended, 'twas like a dove;
 But well we knew 'twas come from Odin's shoulder
 To perch upon the smiling hag.

Charles.

So call my child, insulting her as me.
 It was the Princess Emma.

Thou darest

Ernst.

Although methinks there was some likeness, still
 She came without attendants, her hair dishevelled,
 Her garments torn; besides I've proof. But patience!
 We sought good Father Hildebold, mistook
 The way, took council, agreed 'twas well to wait
 Developments, so found an ancient friend
 And visited the elephant, a beast
 Of weirdest size, whose arm-like nose, whose trunk,
 Was sucking from a bucket, then mouthwards curved
 And poured the flow until we heard the water
 Gushing through his mighty stomach. O—

Nay, my Lord,

Charles. Away with rounding O's. Keep straight thy tale.

Ernst. 'Twas late one night when we crept back, the place
 Was still, no movement, deserted; ay and more;
 The hut was vacant, our belongings gone.
 A light though strangely gleamed, a moon ray or—
 We plucked it, troth a goblin stone; 'twas left
 As pay; but could it pay for goods endeared
 By use? No, no, a thousand times. We wept;
 So passed the hours till ruthless day affirmed
 Our loss. Provisions, tools, utensils, all
 Were gone, and e'en some garnered seeds. If such
 Could happen, why not worse? Our lives? We'd find
 A safe asylum, work elsewhere, poor Guta!
 And now my proofs: the goblin stone, this bit
 Of beldame finery, a scrap, the cross
 Had kept. [*He unwraps his treasures.*]

Charles. Why Ernst, thou hast a royal stone.
 'Tis worth a noble's ransom, and thou dost cry
 For peasant chattels, a royal stone indeed!
 It must have slipped my crown that night six years
 Ago. What corners have been swept for it.
 What countries searched for them; who left it here.
 And this frayed scrap is holy silk; I feel
 Its texture. Where? O where can they have gone?

Ernst. Those thickets yonder hide the secret. Fierce
 Carousing, banqueting from golden plate
 Or grave-yard bones, who knows? No mortal has
 Retraced his steps though more than they have dared
 The bosky growth. Far, far within are dwarfs,
 Wild women of the hills and mystic stags
 That lure to doom. O Sire, return! it is
 Not safe to meddle, nor speak where trees have ears.

[*A rustling is heard 'mid the trees.*]

What's that? a rustling breath that warns.

Charles.

A prying zephyr. The woodman's axe will fell
 This mystery. I'll give prompt orders—yet
 A pause—to think, prepare myself for what?
 Hope fanned afresh? or chilled to ash? So leave me
 Ernst, and thou Count Albert, a moment's rest
 Before we prize the lock. I would be strong.

More like

Albert. 'Tis injudicious, most unsafe, my Lord.
We've heard enough to fright the staunchest saint
Of Holy Church.

Charles. And thou art far from that.
Well cross thyself, tell beads, or what thou wilt;
But leave me here. Go, quiet the horses. Hark!
They champ impatience. I must curb myself.
If kingdoms fell would I be so disturbed?

Albert. Come Ernst, we'll tarry near, thou must know more,
I'd hear it all.

[*Exuent Albert and Ernst.*]

Charles. I'm strangely tired, this bank
Affords repose, though peace is far.

[*He falls asleep. The scene grows perfectly dark. After a time the twinkling light of candles gradually discloses three mushroom-shaped tables, on which the candles stand among golden goblets and dishes. Around each table sits a group of three Wish-maidens, aethereally dressed, with long flowing locks.*]

*Wish-
maidens.*

Sisters, we quaff to the past,
When forests were thick and daylight dim.
Sisters, we quaff to the past.
Once sacred this grove, here heard Woden's hymn.
Sisters, we quaff to the past.
The past! the past! [*They drink deeply.*]

Wind-spirits are we, wild women called,
Substance of water and air,
Of fabric whence breathed the ancient scald
Verses that seize and ensnare.

Through tempests we ride, upheaval's din,
Light as a figment of dreams,
And sometimes we flash a visioned sin,
Sometimes a virtue that gleams.

The bubbles of thought we puff at night
Enter the soul that is cursed,
Awaking a shameless appetite,
Perfidy, shuffling, war-thirst.

The bubbles of thought we throw from light
Enter the soul that is blessed,
Like dust of the rainbow, pearled and bright,
Singing of hope and of quest.

But Sisters the future stores for us
Obloquy, exile, and wrong;
Already the signs grow ominous,
Seldom man hearkens to song.

So spill from our cups—earth honouring,
Earth that will triumph one day;
Let earth play the tune round faery ring,
Twanging the strings we obey.

[*Where the wine is spilt on the ground dwarfs spring up, each clad in green and bearing a golden harp.*]

Clear tables away, come dwarfs, come elves
Harp for us, harp long and loud!
Let fingers that grasp the golden helms
Work strings with music endowed.

[The tables are pushed back. In front sit the dwarfs who first play slow dance music, gradually quickening the time. The Wish-maidens dance in three groups. From a slow gliding step they arrive at a dizzy whirl. Then suddenly they stop, break up their groups and sing while making steps and motions to imitate weaving.]

We dance to the past while weaving tales,
Rosy with mist of the dawn,
Astir with the mood of wilful gales,
Lightsome as leap of a fawn.

We dance to the present, weaving fears.
Daylight strews shadows behind;
The dazzle of noon dissolves in tears,
Man is the sport of the wind.

We dance to the future, weaving death,
Purpled with evening sky;
A knowledge has come with failing breath,
The courts of Valhalla on high.

So round and around we faster spin,
Straightening the tangles of time;
We dance to the earth, find spirit within,
Hark! to the music sublime.

[They stand prettily poised listening, each with the right forefinger raised. The scene grows quite dark again while delightful strains of heavenly music are heard. After a time they die away. The scene lightens, Charles is discovered still sleeping. All trace of Wish-maidens, tables and dwarfs have disappeared unless it be David, a little green-clad figure, who enters from the copse, losing his hat on a thornbush. He looks round wonderingly, then comes and examines Charles.]

David. Goliath as my name is David, Giant
Goliath. Indeed I've found adventure. Yet
I have no sling. Might I not steal his sword,
To carry home a giant's head, would not
The ancients envy me? My Father, though
A mighty hunter, has never brought such game.
Soft, soft, he sleeps. I'll lightly pull. The sword
Slips loose from out its sheath, a bolder tug;
Ah now it comes.

[Enter Ernst. He sees David and stands transfixed.]

Charles. *[Waking.]* What's that? who drags my sword.
Am I asleep? do I still dream? a dwarf,
A tiny green-clad man like those who harped
The magic tune. Have pagan times returned?
My Lord Archbishop warned me 'gainst the tales
Of ancient days. An old man's mind should steep
Itself in gospel truth; what troubles have
I brewed? And yet the sky seems natural,
The sun and trees. What art thou? elf or child?
Of goblin birth or Christian ancestry?

David. *[Singing.]*

Pass the loving cup,
Kling, klang, klung.
Let us brightly sup,
Ting, tang, tung.

What's disturbed by light,
Ting, tang, tung.
Let us mend at night,
Kling, klang, klung.

Ernst. That song has answered you. My mother heard
It in her youth and hers before and always
A little man like this made music. See,
Thorn-caught, there hangs the hat that blurs and hides

Its goblin wearer. Never have I seen
Such mannikin until to-day; though oft
On winter nights annoyed by raps and creaks;
Strange pranks they play, themselves invisible.

David. 'Tis true, my hat was flicked away. This sword
Will help recovery. Alack the tear!
A nasty rent.

Charles. Before thou fad'st in space,
Return my sword.

David.
Consult my mother.

Nay, nay, Goliath, we'll

Charles.

Thy Mother?

David.

Ay, my Mother.

Her favoured stag, the one she trained and petted,
Came flagging home to die, a pool of blood
Around.

Charles. A wounded stag but lately 'scaped
Our dogs.

David. I knew thou wert the culprit, Giant
Goliath. If thou hadst not waked, I would
Have sawed thy neck as Father saws great logs,
Then carried home thy gory head, that long
White beard would serve as handle. Instead I'll take
Thee prisoner! so follow, march. They call
Me David, a name that strikes some fear.

Charles.
My little man, it does, and some have called
Me David too and some have shrunk from me.
But I will follow thee. Lead on!

Indeed,

David.

Play fair, will promise not to snatch the sword,
I'll lend my help, hold back the twigs that else
Might blind; but thou must make a giant's promise.

If thou'lt

Charles. I promise!

David. And I can trust thy word for giants
Like dwarfs and elves must speak what's in their hearts.
They are all through as clear as bright spring-water.
'Tis otherwise with man, my Father says,
His lips may smile the softest "yes" while "no"
Is boring through his heart. There's one who plucks
Thy coat. He has a baneful eye. Come shake
Him off, I wait.

Ernst. [*Holding Charles' coat.*] My Lord, consider, I pray you.
Remember your high station. You are the Star;
Whose rays shed peace on countless millions. O
Imperil not the light of Christendom!
My voice may crack and quiver from the strain
Of time. It carries though authority,
Thy peoples' need!

Charles. [*Shaking Ernst off.*] Back Ernst, my mind is set.
I'll sift the matter through, take consequence.
Lead on my boy; let briars, thorns and nettles
Prick doubt to shreds. Lead on! Give me that peace
My humblest subject craves.

David. [*Parting the shrubs by the linden.*] Then stoop, Goliath,
Stoop. Here is the secret entrance. Canst thou
Bend low enough?

Charles. [*Stooping.*] Ay low enough, God knows,
May He protect!

[*As Charles disappears, following David,
enter Albert.*]

Albert. The King?

Ernst.

Enticed away

Like Master Eginhardt. Those woods have closed
On Majesty, ah woe the day!

Albert.

Ah woe

Indeed! where shall we turn? Old man, come steer
My course; the ship is rudderless, the captain
Has gone.

Ernst. And so you call on me, a peasant;
Forgetting noble birth and heritage!
Go search your prized gentility, your schooling,
Your war-time prowess, your hunting skill, your pride,
Vain-glory, your anything. Leave me. I have
A friend—another friend, to mourn. When one
Is old and poorly circumstanced, good friends
Are sadly missed, alas!

Albert. Thou weep'st a friend—
The surging ocean 'broils the land and thou
Dost cower above a puddle! A friend, nay, nay;
A King, an Emperor, the one strong man.

Ernst. Did I not plead?—but grief digs as it will.

Albert. And thou art right. Have I not cause for fear?
Who is responsible? will I be blamed?
Old man dry up thy tears, give thought, help break
This hush that tantalizes. Hark! a rumble!
The clash of horses; our friends arrive. Ho there!
Come help!—The King is lost.

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[*Enter Audulf, Herbert and other courtiers scrambling
over the barricade. Their rich attire, like Albert's,
has suffered somewhat from the chase.*]

Audulf.
That be when you Lord Count are found? Ay hang
Your head, 'twill need explaining. Is lost? but here's
His hunting-spear. You jest, Lord Count, he can't
Be far. Is this a game?

Is lost? How can

Albert.

I would it were!

Audulf.

Then let us search; which way went he?

Ernst.

Where ways

Are none, whence none have yet returned.

Audulf.

Thou mean'st

The King is dead. Impossible!

Ernst.

See there

That tanglement. Could you alone, unweaponed
Pierce far? And yet those branches swung apart
As once the Red Sea waves, then swiftly closed
Upon our Charles as surged the swelling tide
O'er Egypt's host. Alas! no fiery pillar
Has guided him; there skipped before a dwarf,
Green-hued, a morsel from the nether world,
A thievish imp, an elf-enchanter.

Albert.

It seemed

As though the King stooped low, 'twas here he went.

Audulf.

I see no passage.

Herbert.

Let us break through with swords

And spears.

Ernst. Take heed for magic dwells within.

'Twere pity to impair those silken fabrics;
Though somewhat rent and smeared, still maids might find
Some trimmings. Your lives no doubt concern yourselves.
Who else would grieve?

Albert.

If we were lost or dead

Woe majesty let fall a scalding tear?
The King has oft rebuked. This morning too
He led a wilful chase. Indeed our clothes
Can testify. Have we not cause for quarrel?
Upbraiding us forsooth because times change
And fashions too. Is he not Emperor?
Why prate of ancient days? of meek, out-worn,
Out-lived simplicity? Instead should we
Not rival Eastern Courts in luxury,

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In pomp and ease? the trappings of success—
Success! and there's the jolt, has he not paved
Its way? whate'er his faults he must be found
And that right speedily. Will none suggest?
If we but had a charm of Baltic amber,
A phial of spittal, at least some pungent herbs.
There's Ernst, whose mind is stored with peasant-tales
Who tunes the old heroic sagas; who
Pretends a knowledge of those deities
That cradled our great race. Does he not know
Some runic sign, some spell, some heathen rite
To drown this vile uncertainty? If age
Has not undone thy wit, give us some nostrum,
Some countenance from out the crafty past.

Ernst. My Lord, you sport with words, have you not said
Times change and fashions too? Has daily Mass,
The Palace School left you thus weaponless?
Must you, of this ninth century, turn back
To pagan thought to fight the power of ill?
O fie! fie! fie! a peasant must accoutre,
Must offer arms to noblemen? If help
There be, 'tis by that cross. Fall on your knees
In humble supplication, tell your beads,
Make Christian vows, invoke the Saints, wake Heaven
With moans and pleading sobs. But he, whose horse
Outstrips the rest, must foam its mouth and froth
Its flanks until good Father Hildebold
Be traced,—our Lord Archbishop. Say to him
That Ernst has sent—six years may be too late.

[*Exit Audulf. The rest kneel round the cross.*]

ACT V.

Scene—The interior of a log hut. The walls are draped with rare skins and decorated with horns and heads. The furniture is covered with skins. There are interesting collections of curios, dried grasses and ferns; and everywhere freshly gathered asters in horn mugs. The whole presents a most artistic appearance. Emma sits on a couch beside a cradle, crooning a slumber song to the infant in her arms. Beside her sits Eginhardt, attaching feathers to his arrows. Through the door, centre back, fruit trees are seen. Six years have greatly changed Emma and Eginhardt. The latter has a long black beard; both are tanned and seem stouter.

Emma.

Little one, close fast thine eyes,
Thy guardian angel near thee flies;
Close thy rosebud-mouth, thine ears
To all want and needless fears.

Little one, lie still and rest,
Mother holds thee at her breast,
Like a flower by lover plucked,
Kissed and in maid's kerchief tucked.

Little one, thou'rt sweeter far
Than any petal-textured star,
Sweeter than a lover's gift;
Thou art joy that God hath whiffed.

Little one, keep pure and true,
Let no taint thy heart bedew.
Mother's prayer is spent for thee,
Now and through eternity.

Little one, if dreams should come,
Hurt, or aught that's troublesome,
Put thy trust in God above
As now thou lean'st on mother-love.

Little one, thy cradle's here,
Mother stays and watches near.
Swansdown-pillowed, slumber long,
Mother ends her drowsy song.

[Emma gently rocks the cradle in which she has laid the sleeping child.]

Emma. O Eginhardt, he's fast asleep, nought will
Disturb. I never knew so good a child.
He's like his father, his dumpy nose upturned;
A smile that lingers through his sleep as though
His spirit babbled angel-talk.

Eginhardt.

Revile my nose, in troth it doth admit
Plebeian birth; but what of that? when thou,
Who own'st the straightest nose in Christendom,
Art well content with it. As for my smile,
I must demur, has it not character,
When thou art cause? and yet thou liken'st it
To that which flushes this wee bit of soft Inanity.

Thou may'st

Emma. Away with thee, rude scoffer.
Nay, look again. Admire as we have done
These hundred times, the long, black silky lashes,
That fringe so restfully; a modish damsel
Would give her soul for such possession. Ay
'Tis true the smile resembles thine, the same
Calm confidence, a hint of humour, yes,
A tryst with higher things that leaves me far
Behind. Now David's smile is like the King,
My Father's, a flash of wit or merriment
Or tender love, or pleased concern that fades
As graver thoughts come uppermost. 'Tis strange
Of late my Father's face has haunted me.
It bears a wistful look. Dost think he grieves
For us?

Eginhardt.

Six years should act as poppy balm,
Besides his Jove-like mind has such to grapple,
That private woes are soon reduced to pricks,
Scarce felt and then forgotten. If thou had'st kept
The magic ring—but that is long ago.
I see it now upon the frozen pond.
I could not sleep that night and so stole forth—
A walk might ease my pain. Unrealized
The hunting-lodge was reached and I had thrown
The ring. It glittered 'neath the moon, then I
Would have it back; but suddenly, a crack;
It disappeared, black water bubbled—my dream
Seemed over.

Emma. To begin! dear Eginhardt!
If we, through magic, had secured the king's
Affection; courtly pomp, its undercurrents
Of jealousy and constant bickerings
Had swallowed us and what we hold most dear,
Our liberty and close companionship.
How free we are! how happy! this wondrous home
With nought superfluous to hamper; but just
Enough for daily needs—a little more
To please one's sense of beauty, and all has grown
With married life. There's not a skin that decks
Those walls; but 'tis the fruit of hardy chase,
No graceful antler, but thou hast bent the bow;
Each has its story. As for curios,
Have I not helped discover them? and David
Has rooted well. The mountain-dwarfs must scatter
Rarities to satisfy the lad,
To hear his piping notes of childish triumph,
His chubby hand tight-clutching some gay stone,
Or weathered fossil, spotted egg, or fern,
Or tufted grass for drying, or rusty lichen;
Each a worthwhile specimen. 'Tis strange
That blindfold avarice should grope in towns,
While forests are thus generous with gifts.

Eginhardt. True, true, the forest is man's natural home,
And yet at times ambition stirs. Was I
Not once great Charles' youngest councillor?
Have I not planned his palaces? laid out
His gardens? supervised his public works?
The ever-famed basilica; have I
Not felt his love? He called me foster-son.

[*He drops his head in his hands.*]

Emma. Weep not, dear Eginhardt, we are content.

Eginhardt. Ay wife, we are content and happiness
Doth flood; still far beneath strange eddies surge,
Nay rather purl; but there they are—a vague
Uneasiness—

Emma.

Eginhardt.

Thy cheek 'gainst mine and smile, the mood has passed.
But let us talk of him whose towering genius
Projects such sparks that lesser minds are fired,
A galaxy illumines the sky, great deeds
Are done!—and we stay trifling here. The mood
I said had passed—and we are quite content.
But still we'll talk of him, our Charles, whose fame
Will ring throughout the centuries while we,
Dear Emma, are forgot or sunk to myth.
His age we've known, when fires are somewhat dimmed,
What must his ardent youth have been! surpassing
Hannibal, yea Caesar, in art of war;
Manoeuvring, until a tiny force,
Thrown here and there, has downed a mighty host.
Persistency through good, through evil fortune,
Till restive Europe feels the curb of peace,
Acknowledging its blessing. The Saxon idol
Has crumbled, the Arab-crescent stays its distance;

Thou frighten'st me.

Then lay

The Northman dares not venture. One man, one mind
Accomplishing so much! and now he seeks
To cleanse the Church, to make a roadway 'mid
The brambles of divergent laws, to wake
A nation's pride, reviving tales, rude songs
Of hero-ancestry. With pause, he would
Himself have ventured more than playful verse.
There is that vibrant hymn he wrote, asserting
The Holy Ghost comes from the Son as Father.
In truth he hath a poet's soul and that
Maybe explains! An autocrat and yet
The servant of his people; fathoming
Their needs, to satisfy or wisely guide.

Emma. Some say he hath worked miracles, thou know'st
The story of the flowers.

Eginhardt.
It fall again from thy sweet lips.

Emma.
My Father, had shamed the Saracen; but O
At what a cost! Archbishop Turpin, brave Roland,
And many another paladin returned
No more. O war, it is a ghastly thing!
The victor suffers as the vanquished, though pride
May not acknowledge it. Our hardy troops,
Who struggled past the Pyrenees, brought plague,
That Southern ill. It spread through Rhenish towns,
Death stalked from house to house, all nostrums failed.
The learned Doctors could but shake their heads,
Fear seized each heart—and then man turned to God.
He fasted, prayed and promised. The King, my Father,
Nor slept, nor eat, imploring constantly,
Until celestial voices spoke: "The Lord
Hath heard thy prayer. The meadow holds reply;
Ride forth, His name upon thy lips, then string
Thy bow and upward shoot." The King arose,
Nor felt the chilling dawn, a silent figure,
Upon his great black charger, he passed the gate;
His lips were mumbling prayer and so he went.
The open reached, they say, a wondrous light
Passed o'er his face as looking heavenward,
He sprung the bow. High winged the shaft as though
To pierce the firmament, then wavering fell,
And lo its blunted end had crushed the stem
Of that small golden flower, whose thistle-bloom
Has since been called "carlina," bearing thus
The King, my Father's name to blazon through
The centuries how God lent heed to prayer.
The arrow-head was damped with juice, so found
The remedy. Again was laughter heard,
As eager children gathered plants; a flush
Returned to pallid cheeks, the light of hope
To sunken eyes. And so the plague was stayed
And death slunk off disconsolate.—But where's
Our David? and this his special tale, why at
This point he likes to thrust his wooden sword
As though to stab a threatening foe. Ay youth
Can combat death; but what of age?

Eginhardt.
Of age? whose cheeks are soft and round. I will
Admit thou hast enough of woman's wisdom
To delve some crisscross lines or tiny crows-feet.
But none I see, not one wee crease and that
Reflects some credit on thy husband's care;
Six years! and lovers still! was ever known
Such foolish pair. [*He kisses her.*]

Emma.
But not of self I thought, a father's face!
That may have deeper lines because of us.
Ah, 'tis ever so, that face obtrudes—
But where has David gone? I now remember,
He asked to gather acorns—and oaks are near
The zigzag path that leads—that leads beyond

Ay, but let

69

The King,

70

Talk'st thou

Was ever? Eginhardt.

The realms of happiness, O let us search
And quickly, if harm should come—

David. [Without.]

Ting, tang!

Emma.

His voice,

Thank God, his clear shrill treble.

[Enter David.]

O David, thou

Hast frightened me!

David. [Twirling the sword.] That's nought but play-pretence;
But now thy hair shall stand on end, see what
I brandish here.

Emma.

My son, pray heed, take care!

A real sword! and one of consequence?
It is, it is—

David.

A giant's sword! O Mother!

Thy son's a dauntless hero, as those thou sing'st
About.

Eginhardt. A naughty vagabond, more like,
Where hast thou been? Give me the sword.

David. [Handing the sword to Emma.]

Nay, nay!

'Tis mother's; but I've outrun the prisoner,
An honest giant, although he killed our stag.
Hi there! Goliath!

[Enter Charles, who stoops to pass the
doorway. He does not recognize his hosts.]

See Mother the captive I

Have taken. Now proudly smile and call me hero.

Charles. This door was never built for captive giants
But gladly I'll acknowledge, dame, thou hast
A stalwart hero! a splendid boy!

David. [Clapping his hands and dancing round.] There! there!
I said as much, a hero! a hero! a hero!

Emma.

[Who, with Eginhardt, recognizes Charles, laying
her hand on her heart as though to still its throbbings.]

Quiet boy! let others sing thy praise.
I welcome you, my Lord, your face, this weapon
Proclaim nobility; we are unused
To strangers here. Forgive a trembling voice.

Charles. [Looking round.] But not a peasant's voice, I swear, and this
No peasant's hovel: such skins, so well arranged,
Such forest wealth would grace our hunting lodge.
I've never seen a room so strangely decked,
Nor one that suits me better. If magic's here,
Then let it be, I'm well content.

[He sits by the central table.]

David.

Without

Thy sword, Goliath?

Charles. [Receiving his sword.] Ay, without my sword,
And yet I'd handle it. Joyeuse! thy title
Becomes thee well to-day. Dear blade; a sweet
Adventure has wiped thee clean. Thy name is freed
From irony. Joyeuse! Joyeuse! Joyeuse—
A happy languor steals.

David.

O Mother, Goliath

Seems quite at home. His head is nodding sleep;
'Tis well I did not sever it. A tame,
Old giant for playmate, how the boys in tales
Would envy me! We'll feed and treat him well.
O Mother! Father! say that I may keep
My prisoner.

Emma. Indeed my son thou mayst.
If there be strength in human love, 'twill hold
Him close. [*David jumps delight.*] But softly boy, thou must be more
Polite, more circumspect. O Eginhardt!
He looks so peaceful. Think you that mood will change,
That passion will distort his brow when he
Discovers?

Eginhardt. He has not realized and yet
Has felt thy soothing presence. O 'twould be
Impossible to meet thy tender gaze
And then to break from it. Ay love will hold
Him here; but let the truth come leaking out,
Lest joy disturb his age.

Emma.
Than I, who am his daughter.

David.

Eginhardt. Hush David, help bring the dishes, not one word
Until I give consent. [*Addressing Emma.*] Hast thou prepared
The venison?

Emma. The way he likes it, ay,
Well seasoned, with relish and proper garnishings
That blend with forest wine. I've but to serve.

Eginhardt. Then haste thee, Wife, while I make search within
This precious book, "God's City," to find the place
Left off six years ago, when last I read
At meal-time. Ah, 'tis here; a tiny mark
Bears witness, blurred with tears, with frequent handling.

[*While Emma places the venison on the table, David,
who has his eyes on Charles, drops a dish, waking the
latter.*]

Charles. By all the Saints, a feast! the table set
As at the palace e'en though wood and horn
Replace our silver ware. And venison
That smells like roasted meat, not boiled to shreds
As my dull doctors have prescribed. I smell
An old time flavour. Surely, Dame, thou hast
Not been at court?

Emma. My Lord, some years ago
I served as kitchen-wench. The Princess Emma—

Charles. Talk not of her—unless thou knowest aught.

Emma. My Lord, you come from court; why question then
My ignorance? But see the venison
Awaits, we wish a kind report; we trust
Our cheer will strengthen you.

Charles.
And eat. Consider me a humble guest.
My lad, canst thou say grace?

David.
A Latin Ave too.

[*He mumbles an Ave Maria while all cross
themselves and sit down. Emma carves the venison,
Eginhardt opens his book. Charles stares wonderingly
round.*]

Charles. Such culture so far removed from influence,
In this unknown retreat is surely most
Uncommon, an element of mystery
That suits me well. I feel a living part
Of it—untrammelled, so much at home. Good people!
Ye practise kindly spells, weave on! weave on!
Nor let me wake.

Eginhardt. Then taste our venison,
My Lord. [*Addressing Emma.*] A goodly helping! whilst I do read
A passage as our custom—once—

Thou hast more hope

The giant's daughter?

Then sit ye here

Indeed, Sir Giant,

"For joy and peace are desired alike of all men. The warrior would but conquer: war's aim is nothing but a glorious peace; what is victory but a suppression of resistants, which being done, peace follows? So that peace is war's purpose, the scope of all military discipline, and the limit at which all just contentions level. All men seek peace by war, but none seek war by peace. For they that perturb the peace they live in, do it not for hate of it, but to show their power in alteration of it. They would not disannul it; but they would have it as they like;"—

Charles. "As they like;"—and so they suffer! but that
Is past. O Eginhardt, 'tis thee! thy voice!
Thy gesture! and Emma, my daughter Emma, I know
Thee now. Come let me feel, make certain, my dear,
Dear child, ay, ay; 'tis not a dream. O God
Is good to my old age. My pet, lean here.
These arms have ached for thee. O dearest one,
Why hast thou been so cruel? nor understood
A father's love, when time elapsed, would conquer
A moment's ire.—To hide from me, it was
Not kind, not Emma-like. My child! my child—

Emma. Then Father thou dost love me still? but what
Of him who kneels imploringly, yet not
Repenting, for am I not his wife?

Charles.
Have missed him once, 'twas every day, for six
Long years and is there more to say? The earth
Was combed for him and thee, our agents sent
To foreign courts, to seats of learning; alway
A "no" came back that pierced my heart with stabs
Of pain! 'Tis easier to face the slaps
Of life when punishment is undeserved;
When one can say at least: "'twas not my fault;"
But O the lingering torture, when one's own act
Has brought fell consequence. If only one
Could backwards turn, how different! Emma!
Eginhardt! help kill the memory
Of those six years, make glad the few that stretch
Before me. Ah my children! dear children! dear children!

David. Goliath! hast thou forgotten me?

Charles.
Brave lad. [*The baby cries.*] but hark! a cry.

Emma. [*Takes the baby from the cradle.*] Our youngest son
Awakes, bids welcome, completes our happy group.

Charles. 'Twould test an artist's brush to paint such bliss;
But let me look, a healthy child, well-formed,
Most promising; but not a David! I
Have never seen a finer lad, a braver!
Pray God, court life will keep him so, and that
Reminds there is a court and etiquette
And problems, eternal problems! well, so be!
If duty weighs, good Eginhardt, we'll lean
On younger arms; so take my horn and blow
A lusty blast, we have the heart to work;
And God will aid.

[*Eginhardt blows the horn, while Charles turns to his
venison and Emma quiets the baby. An answering call
comes faint, then louder.*]

Eginhardt. Run David, run, and point
The way. [*Exit David.*] I'll go a step to greet old friends,
Prepare their minds.

[*Exit.*]

Emma. [*Laying the baby in his cradle.*] Hush, hush—

[*She pours some wine for Charles.*]

Charles. [*Drinking.*] Thy health, dear Emma.

Emma. [*Pointing to the holy silk that drapes an altar.*]

Perhaps this holy silk has helped with thought
Beyond our daily round. See Father, I
Have guarded it—no harm has come to us
In this old pagan grove.

Charles.

While simple faith dwells here. I tell thee, Emma,
We'll build a castle round this shrine-like home,
Protecting it and all that love has reared
Within and here, at times, we'll seek respite.

Emma. And laughter too! O Father, those first few nights.
How silently we stole without and emptied
The charcoal-burner's deserted hut; the jewel
We left reward enough for paltry stuff—
The wedding dower of Princess Emma—but hark!

[*After a pause enter Hildebold, Eginhardt, David,
Albert, Ernst and Courtiers.*]

Charles. What Hildebold! our dear disheveled court,
And old man Ernst and none afraid to venture!
My Lord Archbishop, the Church has proved its strength
To lead through lanes of mystery and soon
My children here will ask its further blessing.
But later, when we are more composed and now
A hunting song to make all seem more real.

Courtiers.

Ya ho! ya ho! let Frankland ring
With daring deeds, with battles won;
Great Lords submit to Charles, our King,
As stars that fear the rising sun.

Ya ho! ya ho! for Victory!
Now Frankland's voice is heard afar,
It trumpets peace o'er land and sea,
The War God lists and stays his car.

Ya ho! ya ho! for huntsman's horn
Awakes once more the forest glade,
With mirth and joy that put to scorn
The battle scar, the murky blade.

Ya ho! ya ho! the quarry's traced,
Six years of search have ended now,
The fairest doe that ere was chased,
To her we make a lowly bow.

[*The courtiers all make obeisance to Emma.*]

Emma. And I do thank you, friends; my husband,
The King permitting, will speak for me.

Charles.

Myself will speak. Good people, listen all,
I oft have chided, seeking the City of God
On earth, an Empire as St. Augustine
Once visioned—I have failed—but in this home,
I clearly see the germ.

Nor will it come,

Nay I

**THE TALL PALMETTO
and
OTHER POEMS**

THE TALL PALMETTO

The dense live-oaks were swept with wrath,
The rubber trees swung roots in mire,
A fine-leaved cedar tittered spite,
Magnolias were flushed with ire.

Alone within the garden pale
A tall palmetto gently swayed,
Serenely straight its feathered head
Above all else had skywards strayed,

To catch the first, faint blush of dawn,
To linger long with sunset's glow,
To trace the moon's illusive course
From orange disc to silvery bow.

So strove the palm and was content
To glimpse at times a furtive clue,
To pierce the haze of mystery,
Emerging thence with leaflet new.

And as the leaf, fanlike, unfurled,
Its green was showered with radiance,
Eternal truth had shed fresh light,
Another phaze! another glance.

And so the palm in stature grew,
In lofty thought and vision wide,
Unmindful of a carping world,
Outdistancing the trees beside.

Nor hearkened to their small-leaved tones,
The rustling of close-quartered boughs,
Nor dreamt of murky depths beneath
Whose dark no errant sunbeam ploughs.

An ancient oak, misshapen, knarled,
Whose prideful age man's care had crutched,
Whose groaning branches bent toward earth
Until the barren soil was touched,

Spoke low with mirthless muttering:
"A scrub palmetto! cabbage palm!
A worthless sprout but yesterday
Disdaining us with saucy calm!"

The rubber tree now sputtered back
While dropping rootlets scratched the dirt:
"The palm makes bold to grasp the clouds,
With gauzy forms it seeks to flirt."

The rounded cedar, clipped and dwarfed,
Agreed with snickers scarce-repressed:
"A slender form might tempt the clouds,
But never earthlings verdure dressed."

The richly decked magnolias,
Who boasted cultured lineage
And garden-birth in foreign climes,
Made inward flutterings of rage.

A country yokel! cabbage palm!
To air itself in heaven's blue!
So far above their august heads,
What was this new world coming to?

The slim palmetto gave no sign
And yet at last these murmurings
Had forced attention, drawn its thoughts
From godly height to baser things.

It sought the reason, paused awhile;
Though skies had greyed there pearled some light;
Then flashed the truth, itself could see;
Those other trees had vision slight.

And then the palm began to talk
And told of dawn and afterglow.
How skies touched earth with brilliancy,
It traced the seven-coloured bow.

It spoke of rifts in frothy clouds,
Of silent lakes illumed with stars,
Of earth-mirage in misty air,
Of spirit force that light unbars.

The trees were still and hearkened now;
But shallow cups hold little draught
And soon the weary listeners tired,
Some curled their leaves, while others laughed.

Then beauty spilled and fell to earth
Where tiny flowers sucked up the drops.
No single thought had gone awaste,
From some there came rich harvest crops.

Long afterward, when death had chilled,
A fallen log lay swathed in vine,
Whence sword-like cacti pushed their blades
And orchids peered 'mid tufted pine.

Such beauteous decay still blessed
As once the wishful, dreamy palm
And trees, that erst reviled, made boast
That they had heard its twilight psalm.

And little flowers that humbly trail,
Content to star unseen, unsought,
'Neath grass to spread their milky-way,
Remember what the palm once taught.

Florida,
January, 1922.

CHARLESTON.

I.

An ancient house, thrice tiered its galleries
And sideways placed, its gardens tucked behind
High walls and iron gates, with taste designed,
Whence peeps are caught of palms and mossy trees;
The passion-flamed poinsettia at ease
With quiet pansy bloom, and jonquils lined
In stiff array, and rose that holds enshrined
Man's love, and English ivy trailing these.

Within the stately home such tales unfold
As flowers and weathered brick have writ without:
Adventure, proud success, war's agony,
And now the gentle calm that cloaks the old,
That stills the heart and gives a sense devout;
So, Charleston, thou reveal'st thyself to me.

II.

I've wandered much through Charleston's cobbled streets
And found each corner's turn a fresh delight;
Old churches, with their memories, invite,
Their yards, grave-strewn, suggestive, calm retreats.
A court, with one-time slave annex, completes
The tale of life gone by, while gardens bright
Make known a Southern town; whose homes unite
This land with charm of English country seats.

Gay cavaliers imprint their rank and mirth
And courage proven well; sad ¹Huguenots
Bequeath the virtue tried by terror's reign;
And Charleston folk are proud to trace their birth,
When forefathers such gracious gifts bestow;
Through changing times the days long past remain.

III.

Now hark! those slow-drawled cries: "Fine chucks, pecans!"
"Crabs, crabs!—live crabs!" then, "Cabage, cabagees!"
"Yes ma-am! raw shrimps, yes ma-am." Still further pleas:
"Sweet potats. I-rish ´ potats!" "Banans."
And so each passing vendor stays and scans
Some friendly gate, whose ancient hinges wheeze;
There's soft-voiced bargaining 'neath spiky trees;
The turbaned cook and tempter—Africans.

Africans! nay, nay, Americans!
Their comeliness well suits this smiling clime;
Unwilling captives once, now citizens,
Whose hearts hold scarce a trace of savage clans;
If childlike still, so be! the hand of time
Is stretched past legacies to shape and cleanse.

¹. *Pronounced as in French.*

LAKE GEORGE.

Where cedars taper, there's a lake beyond;
Once visioned from the hill, it beckons me;
Soft-hazed with heat's grey, slumbrous canopy,
Or bright with glittering dust of diamond,
Or calmed when waning day wafts glances fond,
Or freighted with the moon's pale poesy,
Or blown till sobbing wavelets plash the lea,
Or sunk in starless night like fabled pond.

Whate'er thy mood, O dream-kissed, mountain lake;
It lingers still, my inmost self replies;
But where's the song that plumbs the depth of thought?
The lyre has lost its strings, the words forsake.
What Art's so high; but Nature far outvies?
In silent wonderment, God's voice is caught.

THE EVENING STAR.

Beneath a weight of glistening snow each bough was bent,
Ice-glued the crystal cushions took strange form,
Like ghosts of prehistoric ferns whose palour blent
With earth and sky—the aftermath of storm.

The splattering rain had stayed its noisy, windblown course
And now the padding flakes had ceased to come.
A silent world that stilled all passion and remorse,
Heart-throbbings, grief, thoughts dull and burthensome.

And in the shanty's warmth a child lay stretched at rest,
As delicate as winter tracery.
A mother's eyes sought hers in anxious, tender quest,
Then turned with prayerful light toward western sky,

As though to wrest the secret of the universe
From silver drapery and peeps beyond,
As though one added effort would avail to pierce
The cloaking space, that something must respond.

A something e'en more wonderful than branchlets sprayed
In weird fantastic tire 'gainst heaven's deep;
And lo the mystic blush of evening gently rayed,
Wee cloudlets strayed from mist like flocks of sheep.

A wind! or was't a cry? The infant gasped for breath.
Belike soft bleating lambs had wakened her,
Belike the new-born soul was lured toward lanes of death,
The rosy flush had held a messenger.

Ah woe that Mother's heart as close she pressed her child;
Poor quivering nameless thing and O so frail
To penetrate that void—her thoughts grew fierce and wild.
An infant unbaptised, what fears assail?

An erie wind had risen; hark its shrilling cry I
A flickering candle loosed deep shadows round
That emphasized despair and cruel misery;
The night had come, a sullen night that frowned.

And nought remained but burning love for help was far,
Nor remedies; and grief had surged and ebbd.
Again the Mother sought the sky and lo a star
Had forced the clouds; it peered through boughs close-webbed.

A bright and steadfast star that shot its friendly rays.
"O Evening Star," the woman softly sobbed,
"Be sponsor, shed celestial light through trackless haze."
Asudden within her heart the answer throbbd,

Or winds had drifted: "Innocence." She hearkened, yes
"Innocence," the Star had sanctioned it:
Her baby's name! Upon its brow with fond caress
And moistened touch the crossing sign was writ.

And Innocence looked up and smiled and caught the light
That streamed from Evening Star and breathed a sigh
That held content; a faint, sweet sigh that put to flight
A mother's fear, that hushed anxiety.

And so the Babe was named and Innocence still cheered
The lonely hut. A father heard the tale;
How Evening Star had given aid as he had steered
Through her his homeward course, obscured by gale.

And oft at sunset hour the parents sat and watched
Receding day with grave expectancy,
At times through lattice work of branches gaunt and notched,
At times through leafy boughs that swathed the sky.

And when the rosy prelude, orchestra of tint,
Had dimmed; with deep, upwelling thought that strives
And gladsome awe, they faced the Evening Star; whose print
Was on their baby's brow, had marked their lives.

Then Innocence would laugh and stretch her hands and prayer
Half-breathed would rise that happiness remain.
The Evening Star flung beams of trust and through the air
Oft "Innocence" was voiced by winds again.

And Innocence grew tall as passed the years; but frail
At times she seemed, still more when strangers neared.
Ah then she'd seek some ferny haunt, 'mid flowerlets pale
She'd cower, nor knew what dreaded ill she feared.

A lily-maid in homespun garb of softest white,
Her winter coat of silky rabbit skin
Or ermine brought by Indian guide. Her cheeks as white
Unless the flush to evening skies akin.

And so time passed, the nearby settlement became
A village, then a boastful town and road
And searching railway broke the still and helped defame
Sequestered charm that God, through Grace, bestowed.

And Innocence would shrink from noise and close her eyes
When drifting smoke showed progress near, like plant
That's sensitive, that shrivels from man's touch and lies
So piteous with tremulous leaves aslant.

Too weak for woodland stroll, a hammock-couch was strung
'Neath lofty pines and there the young girl lay
And watched a robin's second brood, or chipmunk swung
On sapling bent, or butterflies at play.

One heavy night she stayed without, till Evening Star
Had blown a kiss, then dipped beneath some clouds.
A silence crept, scarce broke by owlet's hoot afar,
While mists arose like ghosts in flaunting shrouds.

A rustling sound! but Innocence had dropped asleep;
Within her hand a dangling lily stem,
Whose cool, white bud unfolded tales that willows weep
Where broad green leaves and starry petals gem,

Where waters pause from maddened rush to catch the calm
That slips through foliage, to rest awhile
In reedy bays as man fatigued might search for calm
'Neath roofing church, immunity from guile.

A rustling sound, a stealthy tread, some broken twigs,
And Guilt peeped low through scrubby briar growth,
Then pushed his ruthless way, nor cared that tender sprigs
Refused to bloom, once heard his muttered oath.

He plucked a burr that pulled his coat askew, then brushed
Aside some pollen dust, some larva-thread;
His outward garb so sleek and glossed, with step that hushed
He fast approached—above dark clouds had spread;

But through the gloom, the lily bud was visible,
The pallid curve of maiden's cheek; one stride,
He stood befogged, a something stayed against his will.
A something childlike, Godlike that defied.

For Innocence had wakened now and unabashed,
Unharm'd she gazed at Guilt and pity lay
Within her eyes, a pity blent with pain that lashed,
Till Guilt one blinding moment felt its play.

He sank to earth beseeching what? He scarcely knew.
Respite? was pardon past? He felt a touch
As light as though from highest Heaven a Seraph blew
A kiss that floated downwards bringing much.

And on his heart he pressed the flower that Innocence
Had proffered him, the lily bud that erst
Had lain on waters cool and clear. It brought from thence
Some mirrored truth that Nature's self had nursed.

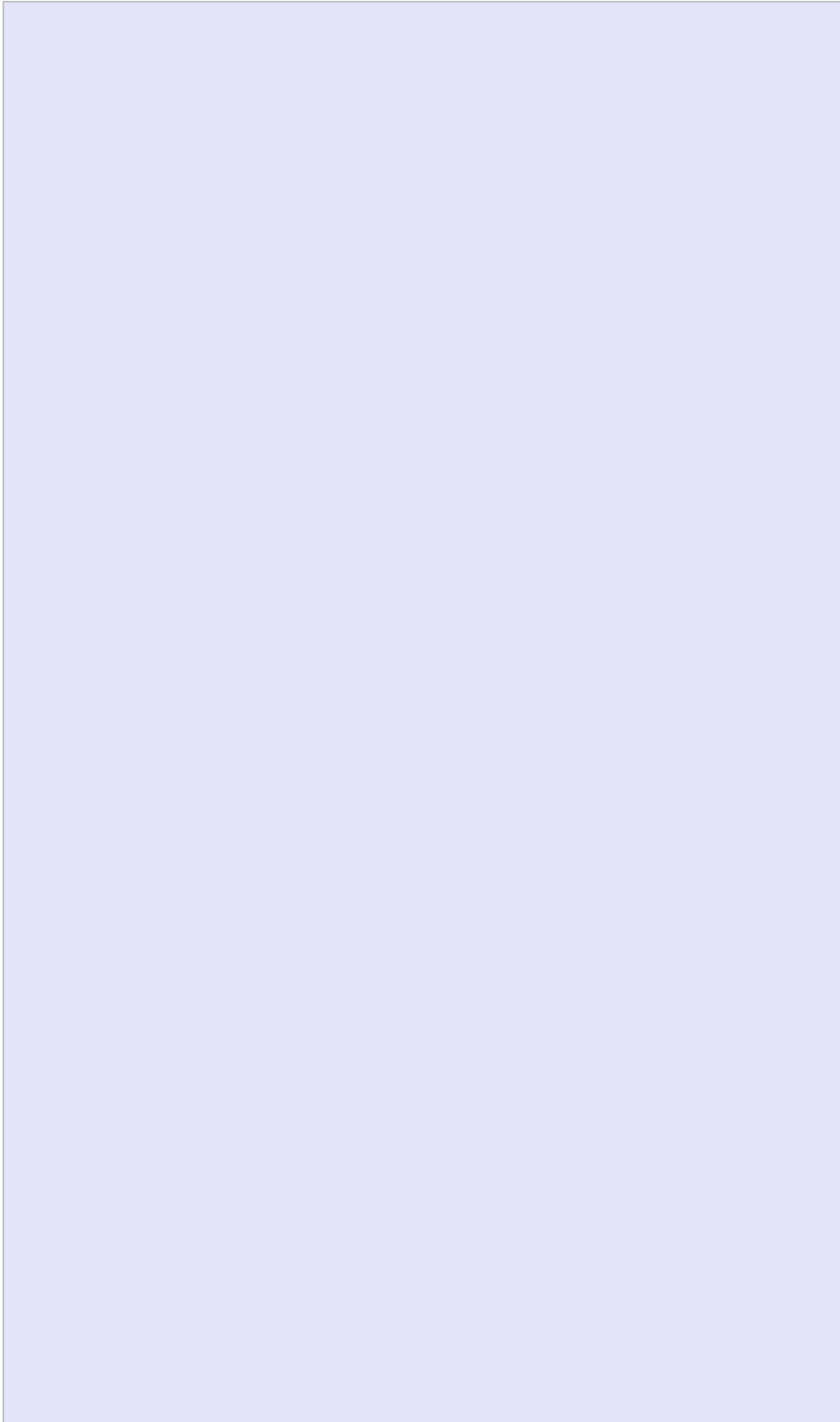
But Innocence had breathed her last, one gasp, 'twas all,
While Guilt affright, scarce pausing, fled; once more

The Evening Star shone forth, winds sobbed a lingering call,
The parents listened—useless to implore.

The grave awoke with crimson flowers; new birth attained,
The Evening Star had guided faithfully;
For ever since no grovelling soul has been so stained
But moments come that give some chance to free.

'Twas long ago, in our old Province of Quebec,
This tale at evenfall was whispered me.
One spoke—and was that one alive? or but a speck
Of spirit-world, of God's Eternity?

THE END.



TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

1. Silently corrected simple spelling, grammar, and typographical errors.
2. Retained anachronistic and non-standard spellings as printed.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF A PRINCESS: A COMEDY;
AND OTHER POEMS ***

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