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Title: Richard of Bordeaux. A Play in Two Acts.

Author: Daviot, Gordon [Elizabeth MacKintosh] (1896-1952)

Date of first publication: 1933

Edition used as base for this ebook: London: Victor Gollancz, 1933 (first edition)

Date first posted: 5 June 2010

Date last updated: 17 June 2014

Faded Page ebook#20100603

This ebook was produced by: Iona Vaughan, Barbara Watson, Mark Akrigg & the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

Gordon Daviot

RICHARD OF BORDEAUX

*A Play
in Two Acts*

LONDON
VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD
14 Henrietta Street Covent Garden
1933

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*Application for performances to be made to Messrs. Curtis Brown
Ltd., of 6 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2*

Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Ltd., London and Southampton

**FOR
JOHN GIELGUD**

The play was produced originally by the Arts Theatre Club for two special performances. It was subsequently played at the NEW THEATRE, with the following cast:

<i>Fair Page, Maudelyn</i>	RICHARD AINLEY
<i>Dark Page</i>	GORDON GLENNON
<i>Richard II</i>	JOHN GIELGUD
<i>Anne of Bohemia, his Queen</i>	GWEN FFRANGÇON-DAVIES
<i>Duke of Gloucester, Thomas of Woodstock</i>	ERIC STANLEY
<i>Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt</i>	BEN WEBSTER
<i>Sir Simon Burley, the King's tutor</i>	GEORGE HOWE
<i>Duke of York</i>	KINSEY PEILE
<i>Michael de la Pole, Chancellor</i>	H R HIGNETT
<i>Earl of Arundel</i>	FREDERICK LLOYD
<i>Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford</i>	FRANCIS LISTER
<i>Mary Bohun, Countess of Derby</i>	MARGARET WEBSTER
<i>Agnes Launcecron</i>	BARBARA DILLON
<i>Henry, Earl of Derby, Bolingbroke, Son of Lancaster</i>	HENRY MOLLISON
<i>Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham</i>	DONALD WOLFIT
<i>Sir John Montague</i>	WALTER HUDD
<i>John Maudelyn, Secretary</i>	RICHARD AINLEY
<i>Edward, Earl of Rutland, Aumerle, Son of York</i>	CLEMENT MCCALLIN
<i>A Waiting-woman</i>	MARGOT MACALASTER
<i>Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury</i>	REYNER BARTON
<i>A man in the street</i>	ANDREW CHURCHMAN
<i>A second</i>	ALFRED HARRIS
<i>A third</i>	GEORGE HOWE
<i>Woman with loaves</i>	MARGERIE PHIPPS-WALKER
<i>Woman with vegetables</i>	MARGARET WEBSTER
<i>First Page</i>	GORDON GLENNON
<i>Second Page</i>	BRYAN COLEMAN
<i>Lord Derby's Page</i>	KENNETH BALL
<i>Doctor</i>	(By arrangement with Miss Italia Conti) RALPH TRUMAN

The Play Produced by JOHN GIELGUD

CHARACTERS

(In order of their appearance)

FAIR PAGE, MAUDELYN
DARK PAGE
RICHARD, KING OF ENGLAND
ANNE, THE QUEEN
THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER
JOHN OF GAUNT, DUKE OF LANCASTER
SIR SIMON BURLEY
EDMUND OF LANGLEY, DUKE OF YORK
MICHAEL DE LA POLE, Chancellor of England
RICHARD, EARL OF ARUNDEL
THOMAS ARUNDEL, Archbishop of Canterbury
ROBERT DE VERE, EARL OF OXFORD
MARY, COUNTESS OF DERBY
AGNES LAUNCEKRON, the Queen's waiting-woman
HENRY, EARL OF DERBY
THOMAS MOWBRAY, EARL OF NOTTINGHAM
MAUDELYN, the King's secretary
SIR JOHN MONTAGUE
EDWARD, EARL OF RUTLAND
A WAITING-WOMAN
DOCTOR
A MAN IN THE STREET
SECOND MAN
THIRD MAN
WOMAN WITH LOAVES
WOMAN WITH VEGETABLES
FIRST PAGE
SECOND PAGE
LORD DERBY'S PAGE

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE I. A corridor in the Royal Palace of Westminster, February 1385
SCENE II. The council chamber in the Palace
SCENE III. A room in the Palace, the same night
SCENE IV. A room in the Royal Palace at Eltham, autumn 1386
SCENE V. A room in the Tower of London, a month later

ACT II

SCENE I. A room in the Royal Palace of Sheen, three years later
SCENE II. The same, two years later
SCENE III. A street in London
SCENE IV. A gateway overlooking the Great Hall at Westminster, three years later
SCENE V. A room in the lodgings of the Earl of Derby, in Paris, three years later
SCENE VI. A room in Conway Castle, six months later
SCENE VII. A room in the Tower of London, a month later

ACT I

SCENE I

The corridor outside the council chamber in the King's Palace of Westminster, February 1385. In the middle are the double doors of the chamber. To the left of the door, in the rear wall, is a large mullioned window, through which a pale spring sun is shining. The corridor is wide, and deserted except for two PAGES who, half kneeling, half sitting on the floor down stage, are throwing dice. One page is fair and slender, the other square and dark.

FAIR PAGE: That is the whole of last month's allowance gone.

DARK PAGE: There is always next month's.

FAIR PAGE: Very true. Your throw.

DARK PAGE (*playing with the dice and glancing at the door*): How much longer do you think they will be! They have been two hours there at least. What can they find to do?

FAIR PAGE: Contradict each other. And when they are tired of contradicting each other they contradict the King.

DARK PAGE: It seems a waste of time. I wish they would stop it. I'm hungry.

FAIR PAGE (*glancing at the door*): So is the Duke of York, I expect. He will shepherd them out to dine presently.

DARK PAGE (*preparing to throw*): At any rate, Robert de Vere will be funny about them at supper to-night, and I am on duty. That is a pleasant thought. (*Throws.*)

[The door of the chamber is burst open impetuously, and RICHARD emerges, furious. The noise of the roughly opened door is drowned in the exclamations of the two pages as they read the DARK PAGE'S throw, and the door is shut quietly from inside, so that the pages are unaware of the King's appearance. RICHARD stands a moment raging silently. He is at this time nineteen; a slender, delicately made youth with a finely cut, expressive face, and the fair colouring and red-gold hair which made his mother famous as the Fair Maid of Kent.]

His eye comes to rest on the two absorbed figures bent over the dice, and curiosity and interest gradually replace the anger in his face. He tiptoes over until he can lean over and watch.

DARK PAGE: Beat that!

[The FAIR PAGE throws and makes a movement of annoyance.]

FAIR PAGE: Best of three?

DARK PAGE: Yes. (*He throws.*)

FAIR PAGE (*throwing a good one*): Ah!

[The DARK PAGE sees the King and tries to struggle to his feet, but RICHARD subdues him with a hand on his shoulder.]

RICHARD: No, no. Go on with the game. Who is winning?

DARK PAGE: We are even, sir.

RICHARD: What! After a whole afternoon——

FAIR PAGE: Oh, no, sir. On this throw. Up till now I've been unlucky. In fact, I'm practically ruined, sir.

[Enter, left, ANNE, the Queen. She is not beautiful, but she has great charm, with dignity breaking every now and then to discover a hidden mischief, and humour always in her eyes and at the corners of her mouth. She pauses to watch.

RICHARD (*flipping the boy's tunic with his finger*): What! with your new coat still to play for? Poof!

[The FAIR PAGE sees ANNE, and begins to rise, but RICHARD pushes him back.

RICHARD: Running away when you're losing! Oh, John!

FAIR PAGE: The Queen, sir.

RICHARD (*turning*): Anne! (*To the pages, who have risen, he makes a good-humoured gesture of dismissal, as one shoos chickens, and they go out.*) Anne!

ANNE (*indicating her toilette with a slight, calm movement*): Well, do you like it?

RICHARD: My dear, it's magnificent. Even that absurd thing is lovely on your head.

ANNE: You know you like it very well. You're jealous because I've made it the rage. You like to keep the prerogative of making things the rage to yourself, you and Robert. But your little barbarian wife is beating you at your own game. Do you know that the clergy have discovered it? They have begun preaching sermons about it. Someone discovered something about it in Ezekiel. He called it a "moony tire" and said that it was immodest. And unwomanly. I don't think it is particularly manly, do you?

RICHARD: It's adorable.

ANNE: Robert's wife got stuck in Cheapside yesterday. She forgot that she wasn't wearing a cap, and she was impaled between two booths. It was the sensation of the afternoon. She offered to pay the man for his trouble in taking down his booth, but he said that he had laughed so much that she didn't owe him anything.

RICHARD: Poor Philippa!

ANNE: I came along to find out whether I could hear Uncle Gloucester thumping on the table, or if things were going quietly. But it's over, is it? Tell me, Richard, did they agree? Did they say yes?

RICHARD (*sulkily*): It isn't over. As far as I can see they've only just begun.

ANNE: But—— Oh, Richard! Have you run away again! And you promised me that you would be patient, that you wouldn't——

RICHARD: How can I be patient! I know I have a dreadful temper, but how can I be patient? They treat me like a child! They think my ideas are moonshine; idealistic nonsense. When I give my opinion they half smile, a little pityingly—"Poor thing, he is young, and not to be blamed for his queer ideas"—they pause a moment for politeness' sake, and then go on as if I had not spoken. Do you wonder that I go blind with rage?

ANNE: But, Richard, you are the King.

RICHARD: No, I am merely Edward's grandson. And my father's son. They compare me always in their minds with my father. They eye me and think: "If the Prince had lived, there would be none of this pacifist nonsense." Because my father was a general and loved campaigning they think me a weakling. They have no vision. War, war, war! It is all they ever think of. When there is no war they are bored. Tell me, what is shameful about peace?

ANNE: Shameful?

RICHARD: Yes, shameful. When they say it they avoid each other's eyes as if it were an indecency. When I plead that this armistice with France should be made into a permanent peace they look at me as if I were blaspheming. We waste men and money and material for generations on a futile struggle, and, when someone suggests that it would be sensible to stop the silly business, they talk about prestige, and are shocked and furious. It is like battering one's head against a wall. They will not listen and they will not try to understand. They are savages. They would rather hack a man in pieces than—

than teach him to make velvet like that. (*He picks up a fold of her dress.*) Beautiful, isn't it, Anne? (*The touch of the cloth and the consciousness of her soothes him.*) Oh, we could make England so rich and so beautiful. The silversmith sent me something this morning. Something I had ordered for you. You shall have it to-night.

ANNE: My darling. It will be a celebration of our victory. (*She indicates the door.*) Yes, of course it will be a victory! You are not alone, you know. There is Michael de la Pole to back you. Your grandfather trusted him; surely they will trust him too?

RICHARD: They don't trust each other; how will they trust Michael? They suspect him of lining his pockets. They can never forget that his father was a merchant.

ANNE: And there's Robert. Surely Robert's tongue is an asset to any party? (*Even in her anxiety a dimple shows.*)

RICHARD (*sulkily*): Robert just sits there and laughs.

ANNE: Laughs!

RICHARD: Oh, not openly, of course. But I know that he is laughing, and it makes me ten times more furious with the fools than I should otherwise be when I know that Robert is laughing at them and I am only able to rage.

ANNE: But you could learn to laugh too, Richard.

RICHARD: No, I can't. I've tried. Robert laughs because he doesn't care. It is all a play to Robert. But I care dreadfully. It matters to me. I want to kill them for their stupidity.

ANNE: Richard, you must go back. They can do nothing without you.

RICHARD (*with malicious satisfaction*): That is why I came out. They think they are lords of England until it comes to signing a paper. For that they need me. (*With a sudden weariness*) And you have no idea how difficult it is sometimes not to sign, when my uncle Gloucester has been glowering, and my uncle Lancaster has been arguing, and my uncle York has been tactful and silly. My grandfather was distressingly prolific. If only I could trust them, Anne! If only I could trust everyone as I trusted when I was small. That was happiness: to take men as you found them, with no little flame of suspicion always shooting up in your mind to spoil things. I sometimes wish I could be—oh, I don't know; nobody in particular; just one of the people. I talked to the people once, in the rebellion; talked for hours to them; and they seemed quite happy in spite of being so poor. But how they stank, Anne! How they stank! It is an insult to God that a human being should smell like that.

ANNE: And that they should be hungry. Think of it, Richard. Not enough to eat. It is difficult to imagine, isn't it?

RICHARD: Even they are not to be trusted. I gave them all they asked for—gave it willingly because I was sorry for them—and they killed old Sudbury behind my back. Poor harmless old Sudbury. You never knew him. He was a kind old man.

ANNE: Where thousands of men are brought together there will always be knaves. It was not the poor starving cottars who killed Sudbury. Don't be bitter, Richard. I shouldn't like you if you grew bitter.

RICHARD: That is serious. You disapprove of me often——

ANNE: No, I don't.

RICHARD: —but if you began to dislike me——

ANNE: What?

RICHARD: It would be the end of the world.

ANNE: I think the end of the world is a long way off. Now I must go or they will be coming to look for me. And you must go back. Richard, you and I have set our hearts on this peace. Because we both believe in it with all our souls we can make it come true. Perhaps, when I see you again, you will be able to tell me that they have been won over. Now, go.

RICHARD: Very well, I'll go back. They will attend to me now that I have been in a rage. Perhaps I can get my uncle

Gloucester to walk out in a rage, and then we shan't have to put up with him at dinner.

ANNE: Oh, Richard, be serious.

RICHARD: That's not fair. You tell me to take them lightly, and when I do you reprove me!

ANNE: You know what I mean. Don't offend them unnecessarily.

RICHARD: Very well. I shall do my best. We shall have such a happy evening, Anne, when the uncles have all gone. Robert is sprouting a new poem. (*He moves to the door.*)

ANNE: That will be lovely. (*Doubtfully*) I forgot to tell you that Henry is coming.

RICHARD (*stopping*): Oh, my God! No, that is too much. What is the good of being a king if I have to put up with my cousin Henry for a whole evening!

ANNE: My dear, we can't help it. He and Mary——

RICHARD: Mary too!

ANNE: ——are staying in the Palace for the night, on the way to Hereford. We couldn't very well not ask them to supper.

RICHARD: I won't have it! I simply refuse.

ANNE: I don't very much like Mary.

RICHARD (*thawing after a moment to a grudging smile*): Oh, very well. But I warn you that I shall be intolerable to him.

ANNE: You know that when the time comes you will be charming to him.

RICHARD: Possibly. I wonder if he will be thinking as unmentionable things about me as I am about him, all the time we are being polite to each other. A grim thought!

ANNE (*with a dazzling smile*): Good-bye. I'm glad you liked my dress.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A council chamber, the Palace of Westminster, the hour being the same as in the previous scene. An informal conference is in progress, which has become momentarily more informal during the two hours of argument which have passed. The council are grouped round an oblong table.

The King's place at the head of the table is empty.

There are present:

JOHN OF GAUNT, DUKE OF LANCASTER; *a good-looking man of middle age, who carries himself with the confidence of a practised diplomat.*

THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER; *a soldier and less composed edition of his brother LANCASTER. He has the restlessness of all irritable men, and a perpetual air of being about to explode. An uncomfortable person.*

THE EARL OF ARUNDEL; *who is the prototype of all those retired soldiers who believe that the world is going to the dogs. A stupid-looking individual, with small suspicious eyes which seem always searching for slights.*

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY; ARUNDEL'S *brother; as bland as his brother is prickly.*

ROBERT DE VÈRE, EARL OF OXFORD; *a dark young man with a withdrawn air. He is even better-looking than RICHARD, but lacks that flame of spirit which illumines RICHARD to the most careless observer. If ROBERT DE VÈRE has vulnerable places, they are carefully hidden and protected by his good-humoured, cynical indifference.*

MICHAEL DE LA POLE, *Chancellor of England; elderly and white-haired, but shrewd; and, after many years of Courts and Governments, no more easily discomposed than LANCASTER.*

SIR SIMON BURLEY; *once the King's tutor and now Warden of Dover Castle; a ruddy, good-natured person with a smile always in his eye.*

EDMUND, DUKE OF YORK, *the King's third uncle; a pale, self-indulgent creature, deprecatory and devoid of resolution.*

GLOUCESTER (*in full spate*): . . . disgraceful that we should be exposed to this. A ridiculous proposition to begin with, and hysteria to end with! You are far too lenient with him, Lancaster.

LANCASTER: My dear brother, I have neither jurisdiction nor influence over him. Our respective enemies have seen to that.

GLOUCESTER: Well, De la Pole; surely you can control him? Or you, Burley; you brought him up. And a fine mess you seem to have made of it.

BURLEY: If I might suggest it, your grace was hardly tactful in your methods. I have never had difficulty with Richard, except when my own judgment in dealing with him has been at fault.

YORK (*tentatively*): It's getting late; nearly dinner-time. Do you think we should wait any longer?

DE LA POLE (*to GLOUCESTER*): I think you are unfair in supposing that it is a matter of wanton bad temper, my lord. The King feels strongly on this subject. In his eyes it is something infinitely important, infinitely worth struggling for. Something constructive, as opposed to the policy of *laissez faire* which—

GLOUCESTER: Constructive! To let the French keep all they have taken from us; to kiss and make up and give them our blessing, just because Richard would rather stay at home and buy clothes than take an army into France like his father! The boy's a coward, I tell you. A lily-livered coward!

DE LA POLE: That, at least, is untrue. And we all know that it is. We have all of us fought in our time, my lords; but it has always been with the comfortable consciousness of the next man's elbow touching ours; as one of an army; as part of an adventure. Not one of us has walked alone into a hostile mob, and quelled it, as the King did three years ago. A mob which had just seen their leader killed before their eyes. Not one of us has done that, my lords—and I dare not say which one of us would have done it. That was a thing done without prompting, out of his own spirit. (*To LANCASTER*) You were in Scotland, my lord, the Duke of Gloucester was on the Welsh border, and the Duke of York in Portugal. The whole future of this country depended upon a boy of fifteen, and only his courage and initiative saved it from chaos. There is wonderful mettle there, my lords. It is for us merely to guide it, as Sir Simon Burley suggests, and not to thwart and deny it.

GLOUCESTER (*with an exclamation of derision*): You are bemused with him! You throw away the judgment that a man of your age and experience should have, for the favour of a graceless boy.

DE LA POLE: If I have committed myself to the anti-war policy, it is because I believe in the vision of youth, and in its capacity to evolve something which our hidebound practice and unsupple minds are incapable of conceiving; and not because of any love or favour that I hope for.

LANCASTER: Although as Chancellor it would please you more to see good gold in your own hands than spent on munitions.

DE LA POLE: I would rather see it thrown into the Channel than spent on munitions. At least it would be harmless there.

GLOUCESTER: The pirate turns preacher!

ARUNDEL: Visionary nonsense, that's what it is!

CANTERBURY: My dear brother, vision is not necessarily nonsensical. There have been occasions when it has proved heaven-sent. Even a crusade achieves something occasionally.

ARUNDEL: Oh, as a Churchman you feel bound to say things like that. But I'm a soldier, and I want to know what good—what practical good—anyone thinks it is going to do us to go begging France for peace as if we were licked, making ourselves the laughing stock of Europe.

DE LA POLE: I can hardly expect Lord Arundel to understand it, but what we are seeking is something new; some way out of the stalemate; out of the everlasting alternation of war and armistice and war again, which is all the history this country has had within living memory. We want a permanent peace in which we may be able to turn to things better worth while than the eternal see-saw of conquest and loss. It is in that hope that we are prepared to treat for a peace with France.

ARUNDEL: Then I say that is treason! It is going back on everything we have been taught to believe. It is betraying the country and those who——

[Enter RICHARD. *He walks to his seat rather as a child might who knows that he has behaved badly but is still indignant that anyone should think so.*

RICHARD (*as they resume their seats*): You were saying, Lord Arundel——?

ARUNDEL: I was protesting yet once more, sir, against this monstrous suggestion of—of——

RICHARD: Of peace.

ARUNDEL (*unconscious of irony*): Yes, of peace. England is not beaten, sir. She has had reverses, of course, but so has France. The spirit of the people is not broken, sir; the will to win is still there and we have a first-rate army. Once this armistice ends, there is nothing to hinder us from making a new invasion which will result in unqualified victory, a complete vindication of our policy, and a still greater glory for England.

RICHARD: And more cripples begging in the gutters, and more taxes to cover the cost!

ARUNDEL: You can have no war without wastage, sir. As to the cost, the captured provinces in France will more than repay the costs——

RICHARD: When they are captured.

ARUNDEL: And I cannot help saying, sir, that it is a poor day for England when she has to count the cost before she takes her stand in a rightful war.

RICHARD: Oh, let us have done with humbug! My grandfather invaded France in a trumped-up cause which even he himself didn't believe in. My father helped him because he liked the game. They both lost practically all they had gained before they died; and now you suggest that I should lay waste France and kill forty thousand men because it is my sacred duty.

GLOUCESTER: I warn you that it is all very well to take this detached view of the war; you can say what you like here in conference and you can out-vote us here; but you will get short shrift in the Commons.

RICHARD: *I will get short shrift!* (*There is a horrified pause.*) You chose your words carelessly, my dear uncle.

LANCASTER (*pouring oil*): Gloucester means that it will be difficult to persuade the Commons to give up claims to France which they have been taught to believe rightful and necessary.

RICHARD: It is for us to teach the Commons better. What the Commons are taught, they think; (*looking meaningfully at GLOUCESTER*) as you very well know. Who are the Commons, to decide the foreign policy of a country? A lot of little clerks and country knights, who know the price of hay and how to write a letter; how are they to judge? It is for us to see that they are neither misgoverned nor misled.

LANCASTER: But—supposing for a moment that this peace policy of yours is carried into effect, can you guarantee that France will be equally conscious of her high mission in European politics? Once our army is disbanded, how can you trust them to refrain from snapping up such a juicy morsel as England will be?

RICHARD: Because France wants peace, too, in her heart. There is no peace, because France too is plagued by people like you, like the Commons, like Arundel, like Gloucester, who say: "It would be shameful to stop! We must go on."

ARUNDEL: And we must! I am not ashamed to say it. We have interests in France which must be protected; we have colonists in Calais, if nothing else. The whole of France was ours once, and what we have done before we can do again.

DE LA POLE: That last sentence does more credit to Lord Arundel's sentiment than to his intelligence. When the late King and the Prince of Wales gained such spectacular victories in France they were opposed to a conscript and unwilling army. To-day, France has learned her lesson and has a well-paid and well-supplied voluntary army, which will prove a very different proposition.

ARUNDEL: Maybe; but we have new artillery. Marvellous artillery!

RICHARD: Which Lord Arundel is dying to try on something more exciting than dummies.

YORK: We seem to be getting no nearer an agreement on the subject. Perhaps if we had dinner first—— What does anyone think?

GLOUCESTER: Does the Chancellor propose to tell the Commons that all the prospective wealth of France is to be given up for a will of the wisp, for an idea?

DE LA POLE: No, I propose to tell the Commons that, if we make this peace, they need no longer lose their trade with Flanders because of the French navy's depredations, and that the whole of France will be open for new trade instead of for annihilation. Your good Englishman has a very healthy respect for trade when fighting is not available.

GLOUCESTER: But you misjudge him if you think he can be bribed by the prospect of trade into forgetting what is due to his country. We are not so far away from Crecy and Poitiers as all that!

RICHARD: Between now and Poitiers a starving army dragged itself beaten out of France. It is said that even my fire-eater of a father died disillusioned.

ARUNDEL: That is merely a matter of organising supplies.

RICHARD: And when the organisation breaks down, you and the other lords live on your stores, and the common soldier dies.

DE LA POLE: Parliament will, I have no doubt, be glad to be spared the cost of organisation. I shall point that out too.

BURLEY: To say nothing of the relief of not having to keep up a few dozen useless and mouldering castles in France which no English nobleman will be induced to live in.

GLOUCESTER: Why shouldn't they live in France?

RICHARD: Because they are all afraid they will miss something in England if they do.

GLOUCESTER: Well, I warn you, England hasn't ceased to be patriotic because a few irresponsibles are willing to sell her to France. You will only succeed in making yourselves unpopular if you push such a proposition in Parliament. Already every public-house in London is seething with the gossip that the King is pro-French. The sound of it sours the ale on their tongues.

RICHARD: Your ear seems to be very close to the ground.

GLOUCESTER: I make it my business to study the temper of the people.

RICHARD (*in a tone which is a subtle insult*): Yes.

GLOUCESTER (*angrily*): And you would do well to study it, too! That is the thing which matters: the temper of the people; and not the high-falutin of a few unpractical idealists.

RICHARD (*mildly*): You can hardly call the Chancellor unpractical; nor Sir Simon Burley. They are hardly men to be led away by——

GLOUCESTER: And what about my lord of Oxford, who hasn't opened his mouth for the last hour? Youth, indeed! You talk about the vision of youth, and Lord Oxford spends his time in committee searching for a rhyme!

DE VERE (*who since the beginning of the scene has been studying a tablet*): Having failed to find reason. (*Mock sententious*) It is a sobering thought for both of us, my lord, that my little song may still be sung when your glorious war is two little lines in the history books.

GLOUCESTER: What I am concerned with is not what I shall be in the history books, but what is to become of France in my lifetime. If this disgraceful peace were to become fact, what about Calais?

RICHARD: If necessary, we could do homage for Calais.

GLOUCESTER: Do homage for Calais! Are you mad? Are you crazy? Do homage for something that is ours by right of conquest! Have you no pride? What have you in your veins, water or sawdust? Whose son are you that you can suggest such a thing?

LANCASTER: My dear Gloucester——!

GLOUCESTER: Your grandfather would turn in his grave to see you sitting in that chair and throwing away his conquests like empty eggshells.

RICHARD: Curious how everyone loses his head at the mention of Calais. We have no intention of throwing away Calais, my dear uncle. The best way to keep it is by mutual agreement.

GLOUCESTER: If you do homage for it you acknowledge that you hold it only by their goodwill, you——

RICHARD: To hold it by goodwill is better than perpetually holding our breath about its military security.

GLOUCESTER: It is a contemptible suggestion, a degrading suggestion. I am ashamed that it should have come from a nephew of mine, and that a servant of Edward the Third (*glaring at DE LA POLE*) should aid and abet you in making it. If your father were only alive to-day——

RICHARD: I wish to God he were! Then I should be hunting in Malvern—and you would be nagging the gardeners at Pleshy!

GLOUCESTER: This is too much! I sit on this council to give advice, not to be insulted. When you need my advice again you can send for me.

[*Exit angrily.*]

RICHARD (*recovering his temper abruptly*): Well! (*The tone says: "That's that!"*) I think that ends the conference for to-day, gentlemen. The papers I shall sign with the Chancellor this evening. The only other matter is Parliament's complaint of my extravagance, and that, being a more or less perpetual matter, can wait. (*Rising*) I expect you all to dinner.

LANCASTER (*as the others file out*): May I have a word with you, if you are not too ravenous?

RICHARD: Ravenous! It takes me two days to recover my appetite after a conference. (*He props himself against the table.*) What is it that you wanted to say?

LANCASTER: You and I will never agree over this French business, Richard. We have quarrelled over it more than once. And it hurts my sense of fitness to quarrel the same quarrel more than three times. I have made up my mind to take my departure to Spain.

RICHARD: To Spain! But——

LANCASTER: I know, I know! (*As one repeating a well-learned lesson*) Spain is France's ally, and France must not be offended. Hitherto I have had to let my military ambitions in Spain wilt because of your peace ambitions in France. But the end of the French armistice is coming, and if it ends, as I am sure it will, in the renewal of war, nothing is left in the way of my little Spanish expedition. I don't think that you can object to that. My claim to Spain, if not immaculate, is at least not greatly—"trumped up" was the word, I think? (*glancing slyly at RICHARD*).

RICHARD (*smiling in spite of himself*): No. I suppose you must go if you want to. But what about the Scots? If we fail in peace negotiations with the French, the Scots will be over the border like water.

LANCASTER: We can settle the Scots while my expedition is being fitted out.

RICHARD: The poor Scots! Well, you have the money and you have the men. What more do you want? My blessing?

LANCASTER: Yes. With your official sanction, and Parliament's unofficial hatred of the French, I can get them to vote a little gift towards my army's supplies. There is no need to beggar myself in Spain.

RICHARD: You know quite well that Parliament will vote anything against France. It is only the King's household accounts that they question. I am sorry that you are going.

[*In the tone of this last remark there is a suspicion of such naïve wonder underlying its conventionality that LANCASTER is amused.*]

LANCASTER: And surprised to find yourself sorry?

RICHARD: Yes; a little.

LANCASTER: We have had small chance to learn to know each other, Richard. Each time that we have come within understanding distance of each other someone has told us of a plot that the other was hatching, 'm?

RICHARD (*thoughtfully*): Yes.

LANCASTER: You always got incontrovertible proof, didn't you?

RICHARD: Yes.

LANCASTER: So did I! (RICHARD, *seeing the point, smiles, and there is a pause.*) You said just now of the Spanish project: "You have the money and you have the men."

RICHARD: Yes?

LANCASTER: With those men and that money I might, if I had cared, have done endless mischief in the last eight years. But, instead, I am taking them out of England. Think it over. I hope you are giving me pigeon-pie for dinner?

RICHARD: I think so. You go on. I'll follow. (*As LANCASTER goes out*) By the way, I suppose you weren't thinking of taking my uncle Gloucester with you to Spain?

LANCASTER (*smiling*): No, you will have to deal with your own worries.

[*Exit LANCASTER. RICHARD moves to the window and stands there looking out, kicking disconsolately in a childish fashion with his toe. After a moment, ROBERT DE VÈRE comes in looking for him.*]

DE VÈRE (*crossing to him*): Dinner, Richard.

RICHARD: I don't want dinner.

DE VÈRE: You will when you see it.

RICHARD (*in a burst*): It is all coming to pieces, Robert! They won't try to understand, and Parliament will think as they do. It is going to fail.

DE VÈRE (*putting his arm across RICHARD'S shoulder in casual friendliness*): Cheer up, Richard! It may fail this time. You

can't expect them to absorb anything as repulsive as a new idea without some coaxing. But we are young, thank God; we have all our lives in front of us. We keep on coaxing, and presently they swallow the dose.

RICHARD: But you would think that we were trying to do something that would harm them, instead of something that would be to everyone's advantage!

DE VÈRE: Everyone's advantage is nobody's business. You should know that. Even we are not entirely guiltless of self-seeking.

RICHARD: What do you mean?

DE VÈRE: Analyse our noble desire for peace and it becomes strangely like a rather low desire for a quiet life.

RICHARD: How can you laugh, Robert?

DE VÈRE: How can I? A little natural aptitude, and some perseverance. Gloucester helps. Gloucester is very funny.

RICHARD: Gloucester! Funny! You know you don't mean that.

DE VÈRE: But I do mean it. Gloucester being righteous must make even the gods laugh.

RICHARD: Oh, Robert, I wish I had your Olympian view. I can only see Gloucester trampling to pieces everything we try to build. Don't you care about that?

DE VÈRE: You know I care.

RICHARD: You think I'm a fool to let them see. But I can't help it. Stupidity drives me crazy. Arundel and his "will to win"! Does Arundel make you laugh, too?

DE VÈRE: Where Arundel is concerned it is a choice between laughter and being sick, and I find it more—convenient to laugh.

RICHARD (*melting*): Robert, what should I do without you!

DE VÈRE: Struggle along, I dare say. Come, Anne will be waiting.

RICHARD (*brightening*): Oh, yes; Anne. (*Gloomy again*) And I have nothing to tell her. I hoped I should be able to—and all I did was lose my temper again. (*As they move out, brightening once more*) But at least Gloucester will not be at dinner!

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A room in the King's apartments, the Palace of Westminster, on the evening of the same day. In the back wall is, left, an embrasured window, and right, a small door. Down right is the fireplace. Centre is a table with the remains of supper. There is moonlight outside.

Supper is over. ANNE is sitting by the fire with MARY BOHUN, HENRY'S wife, working at her embroidery. The others have pushed back their chairs a little, but are still lounging by the table.

There are present: RICHARD; ROBERT DE VÈRE; THOMAS MOWBRAY, EARL OF NOTTINGHAM; HENRY, EARL OF DERBY; and AGNES LAUNCEKRON, the Queen's waiting-woman.

HENRY, LORD DERBY, is the same age as RICHARD, but looks older owing to his sturdy build and solid manner.

MOWBRAY *is also* RICHARD'S age; a plain youth with a manner half resentful, half placatory.

AGNES LAUNCEKRON *is slightly older than* ANNE, a brilliant dark creature with an overflowing vitality. Her English *is much more foreign than* ANNE'S.

MARY: I'm such a cold person. I'm never happy unless I have my toes to a fire. (*There is an outburst of laughter from the table, where ROBERT is talking.*) What are they laughing at?

ANNE: I don't know. I expect Robert is being outrageous.

MARY (*in a disbelieving tone*): Lord Oxford is supposed to be very witty, isn't he?

ANNE: I certainly find him amusing.

AGNES (*noticing the moonlight*): Oh, why do we stay and stifle in a little room on a night like this! (*She rises impetuously and crosses to the window.*)

HENRY: If you women wore looser dresses you wouldn't stifle so much.

AGNES (*opening part of the window and leaning out*): It is like June to-night. You can almost smell the roses.

MARY (*to ANNE*): I should like to wear fashionable things, you know, but my husband won't let me. He says he likes me best in my old things. He doesn't approve of shaved necks and plucked eyebrows.

[ROBERT DE VÈRE *joins* AGNES *in the window, and they stay there, laughing and talking in low voices.*

ANNE: No? A harmless and amiable fashion, surely? One's neck looks so untidy in these new head-dresses if one doesn't shave it. Besides, it does great good to the Church.

MARY: To the Church!

ANNE: It gives the clergy something new to preach about.

HENRY (*demonstrating on the table to RICHARD and MOWBRAY*): He was just about here when I noticed him. This is the far end of the ground, you see. He had just arrived as far as this when I noticed that he wasn't balanced properly. Curious how very few men know how to balance themselves properly. He was going at a great pace, but in that second or two I made up my mind. I marked a spot about two inches, or perhaps three inches—I should say three inches—to the right of the middle line, and about two hands'-breadths below the shoulder; marked it with my eye; and when he was within reach I swerved about half a foot, so as to get a screw effect, and let him have it. He lifted out of that saddle like a bird. I wish you had seen it. It was the neatest thing I ever did.

RICHARD: He isn't quite as heavy as you, is he?

HENRY (*slightly offended*): He challenged me, so I suppose he considered himself up to my weight. (*Recovering his self-satisfaction*) He won't play for some time again, I think.

MOWBRAY: It must be quite two months since we had a tournament, Richard. You are not doing your duty as a provider of spectacles.

RICHARD: How can I provide spectacles with Parliament complaining for ever of my extravagance?

HENRY: That hasn't detained you so far!

MOWBRAY: They'll complain in any case.

RICHARD: I have more serious matters to attend to. Next month I shall be enduring the utter boredom of campaigning on the Scots border.

MOWBRAY: Confess, sir: that is sheer affectation. In your heart you love it.

RICHARD (*surprised*): You're becoming quite acute, Thomas Mowbray!

MOWBRAY (*resenting the indulgent tone*): Am I usually so dense?

RICHARD (*not listening*): Yes, there are some things I like about it. I like wakening up in the morning, with the tent flapping, and Dibdin hissing while he takes the rust off the armour. And the smell of frying. And the footprints all black on the wet grass.

HENRY: Black! Footprints on dew aren't black, they're white.

RICHARD (*wearily*): If you say so, Harry, they must be.

HENRY: I should think so! I may not know the latest fashions in clothes, nor how to write verse, but you can't tell me anything I don't know about campaigning.

DE VERE: The dust of battle is incense in Henry's nostrils.

HENRY: I think it wouldn't be a bad thing for this country if a few more people didn't mind the dust.

RICHARD: In fact, what this country needs is a really big war to redeem itself from the awful stigma of being at peace for more than two years!

HENRY: I wouldn't put it quite like that, but——

RICHARD: But that's what you mean?

HENRY: There is such a thing as a righteous war.

RICHARD: My dear Henry, all wars are righteous! Even the bishops patronise them.

HENRY: When I was in the Holy Land once, we were in a very tight place. It was in a narrow valley like this (*demonstrating on the table*).

MARY (*looking meaningly at the couple in the window*): Is it true, then, madam, what they say?

ANNE: It hardly ever is. But what do you mean particularly?

MARY: Well, it may be indiscreet of me, but they say that Lord Oxford finds your waiting-woman very attractive.

ANNE: Agnes is very attractive.

MARY: Her manners are very foreign.

ANNE: She has been brought up, like me, in a country where women do not wait until they are spoken to before they speak.

MARY: It must be so distressing for his poor wife when people tell her.

ANNE: Then why do they tell her?

MARY: It is only right that she should know what is going on.

ANNE: What is going on?

MARY: Oh, well, madam, you know best, of course.

ANNE: I see nothing wanton or strange in the fact that Robert should find Agnes amusing. Poor Lady Oxford is very dull.

MARY: Philippa Oxford is a good woman.

ANNE: I have no doubt of it.

MARY: And you yourself are so good, madam, that I am surprised that you take their—well, their friendship so lightly.

ANNE: It has never made me angry to see others happy. And if Lady Oxford has a grievance she probably enjoys it more than she does Robert's company.

HENRY: And there I had the whole five of them, and not a struggle left in the lot of them! (*He picks up his glass and drains it.*)

RICHARD: Marvellous. Do you approve of my malvoisie?

HENRY: Yes, not bad. Get it from Bramber?

MOWBRAY: Of course he does.

HENRY: You know what you're about, Richard! Keep in with these merchant princes, and take the perquisites, eh?

RICHARD (*coldly*): I happen to have paid for that wine. Foolish of me, no doubt. Part of my lamented extravagance. (*Dropping to good-humoured abuse*) You are a clod, Henry. Is Bramber's only charm in your eyes the fact that he is a wine merchant?

HENRY: Oh, well, I suppose it is good policy to keep in with the Lord Mayor, whatever he deals in.

RICHARD: Oh, have some more, for God's sake! Mowbray, pour him out some.

[DE VERE *sings in a low voice to AGNES, while ANNE and MARY talk.*

ANNE: It is only that I think the Church has become too rich, and forgotten its mission. That is all. It has become a tyranny instead of a comfort, and I think something should be done to make it simpler and kindlier.

MARY: I should like to study these things too, but the children take up most of my time, as you can imagine. And in a big household—— (*She sighs complacently.*)

ANNE: But don't you have a good housekeeper?

MARY: Oh, yes, she is fairly good. But I like to keep an eye on most things myself. Henry likes to see what he calls my touch in things. A wife takes so much more interest than a paid servant. Besides, don't you think men understand those matters of State better than we ever can?

RICHARD: Robert, if you must sing, sing openly and not in a corner.

DE VERE (*coming back to the table with AGNES*): I can't sing at all. The song isn't finished yet. I was merely trying it out on Agnes, and now you've ruined my inspiration.

MOWBRAY (*with a glance at AGNES*): Vere's inspirations are easily ruined, aren't they?

DE VERE (*surprised*): Not as easily as Mowbray's digestion, apparently. Has your supper not agreed with you, Thomas?

MOWBRAY: My supper has agreed with me, thank you; but there are other things I find hard to stomach.

DE VERE (*refusing the lead*): Such as my singing? Very well, I promise not to sing. Have you finished the wine, Henry?

RICHARD (*passing the wine*): No, just in time.

DE VERE: Are you going campaigning in Spain with your father, Henry?

HENRY: No, I think this country might be interesting for a little. The Hereford estates need looking after.

DE VERE: If you imagine yourself as a country gentleman, Henry, you're wrong. You'll only get into trouble. England isn't big enough for you.

MOWBRAY: He has a family he wants to see something of, you know.

HENRY: Have you told the King your news, Mowbray?

RICHARD: News? What has old Thomas been doing?

MOWBRAY: I am going to be married.

RICHARD (*delighted*): Married! Thomas, my dear friend! And I had no inkling of it! You are becoming a dark horse, Thomas. Who is the lady? Someone about the Court? Let us all guess. A silver girdle to the winner! I have first guess.

MOWBRAY: I don't think you know her, sir. It is Lord Arundel's daughter.

[*There is a moment of silent consternation, but RICHARD rises to the occasion.*]

RICHARD: *Arundel's daughter!* (*After a pause*) Well, my dear friend, I could have wished the alliance otherwise, but if you are happy I am bound to be content. Come, let us drink to Mowbray's happiness. (*MOWBRAY murmurs a half-shamefaced thanks, and they drink.*) And heaven grant him patience with his father-in-law!

[*There is a general laugh, rather hysterical and relieved.*]

Is the marriage to be soon?

MOWBRAY: Some time within the year.

AGNES: The lady must be very lovely to have tempted Lord Mowbray away from the Court beauties.

MOWBRAY: She is considered to be quite good-looking.

DE VERE: What admirable detachment!

HENRY (*into an awkward pause*): I think it is time that I said good night.

RICHARD: What! With some malvoisie still in the flask?

HENRY: We are setting out very early in the morning. Mary!

[*MARY rises and takes her leave of ANNE.*]

RICHARD: Well, Simon Burley says it is going to be wet, so put on an old coat for your ride to-morrow.

HENRY: I haven't any new ones. *My* coats are made for the weather.

RICHARD (*taking leave of LADY DERBY*): But not yours, madam, I hope?

MARY: Indeed yes, sir. In the country one lives as the country people do, with rain for one's bath and russet for one's garb.

RICHARD: A little dull, surely. Good night. I hope you have a safe journey.

MOWBRAY: If you don't mind, I think I shall take my leave too. (*He looks half defiant, half shamefaced at RICHARD'S surprise.*)

RICHARD (*making things easy for him*): Thomas wants to write love-letters! Very well, my friend. But don't try verse. Your metre was always lame. Good night.

MOWBRAY: Good night, sir.

[*He takes his leave of ANNE, and follows the Derbys out. The four who are left stare after them.*]

RICHARD: With Henry! That is a new alliance, surely?

DE VERE: Perhaps he has been overcome by a longing for beef and brawn.

RICHARD: It is a strange marriage—with Arundel's daughter.

DE VERE: Don't blame him too much; perhaps he is in love with the girl. Which reminds me. (*To ANNE*) Have you been shocking the Countess of Derby, madam? There was a drawing aside of skirts, I thought.

AGNES (*with more scorn than she can utter*): Skirts like that need drawing aside! Has she no mirror, the woman!

ANNE: Lady Derby does not approve of us. I have been well and truly snubbed all the evening. What one suffers in the name of social duty!

RICHARD: But—Mowbray! After all those years, to go over to the Arundel camp. And to tell us when he had Henry here to back him! What has gone wrong?

ANNE: What is wrong is that he is jealous. I should have thought that was obvious.

RICHARD: Jealous of what?

ANNE: Of Robert. You and he and Robert have been together ever since you were small, and you never make any secret of your preference for Robert. You were never a good dissembler, Richard, and Mowbray is not a good second fiddle.

DE VERE: He won't be even second fiddle in the Arundel-Gloucester league.

AGNES: But it is much easier to play forty-fifth fiddle than second, you know.

ANNE: And he will feel that in some vague way he is getting even.

RICHARD: Getting even for what, in heaven's name! I have never been anything but friendly to him.

ANNE: That very thoughtless friendliness is a thorn to a jealous nature.

RICHARD: Then you think that he has deserted us? That this marriage is an ultimatum?

DE VERE: Perhaps he has merely a hankering to take part in one of Arundel's triumphant progresses after the next war.

RICHARD: Arundel makes me quite sick! He has never forgotten the shouts of the populace last time he rode through London after a victory, and to have that in his ears again he is ready to wade through blood.

DE VERE: And his grace of Gloucester is prepared to do likewise so that France may have the benefit of his ministrative abilities.

ANNE: Don't laugh, Robert!

DE VERE (*surprised*): Why not?

ANNE: None of us can afford to laugh at Gloucester.

DE VERE: Afford! Well, however expensive, I reserve the right to laugh when, where, and at whom I choose.

ANNE: You talk like a grammar!

RICHARD (*smiling at ANNE*): Anne has never got over her first sight of Gloucester when he met her at Dover.

ANNE: I have certainly never changed my mind about him.

DE VERE: You must forgive her her prejudice. It was raining. Think of a wet day at Dover, all her baggage lost, and Gloucester to meet her! It's a marvel that she didn't go straight back to Bohemia.

RICHARD: Don't imagine such hells for me, Robert. I have had enough for one day. You really had finished that song, hadn't you?

DE VERE: Yes, but I wasn't going to waste it on Henry.

RICHARD: I thought so. Let us have it now. (*Sitting on the floor by ANNE, and leaning against her knee*) Oh, how tired I am! What a day! (*Musing, as ROBERT is preparing to sing*) You know, there are times when I quite like Lancaster.

DE VERE: When you have had an hour alone with Gloucester.

RICHARD: No, I mean it. He is the type of man one wouldn't mind having for a father.

DE VERE: Henry doesn't find him so congenial.

AGNES: You mean he doesn't find Henry so congenial. It must be dreadful, poor man, to have Lord Derby for a son! (*The others laugh at the passion of sympathy in her voice.*)

DE VERE: I know why you have discovered a liking for Lancaster.

RICHARD: Why?

DE VERE: Because he is going to Spain.

RICHARD: Tease if you like, but there are times when I very nearly trust Lancaster. Sing, Robert, and save your wits.

[DE VERE *begins to sing as the curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A room in the King's Palace of Eltham, autumn, 1386.

There are present: RICHARD; ROBERT DE VERE; and MICHAEL DE LA POLE.

RICHARD (*to DE LA POLE*): So you think I have been behaving badly?

DE LA POLE: With all due respect, sir, I think it was a mistake to create Lord Oxford Duke of Ireland at the present moment. In the circumstances it was—well, a slap in the face for Parliament.

RICHARD: That is why I did it.

DE VERE: And I had hoped it was for my graces, if not for my merits!

RICHARD: And my desertion of Parliament, do you think that a mistake too?

DE LA POLE: That was not so serious. In the present deadlock a certain amount of independence is good policy. It is when independence becomes wanton that it tends to alienate sympathy, and we cannot afford to alienate any sympathy just now.

RICHARD: Oh, you croak, Michael, you croak.

DE LA POLE: The situation is serious, sir. London is seething with rumours of a French invasion; the people have been worked into a state bordering on panic, and the invasion—mythical as far as I know—is being attributed to our supposed remissness.

DE VERE: But what connection has this supposed raid with our policy? If we had been able to make peace there would have been no danger of a raid!

DE LA POLE: You can hardly expect the man in the street to examine the logic of a rumour. At the best of times he is not clear-thinking. When he is a little silly with terror it is enough to suggest to him that the King is responsible. He is angry and frightened, and only too willing to accept the scapegoat presented to him. There has been one thing wrong with our policy. (*Bitterly*) We have not sown the by-ways with lying rumour.

DE VERE: Yes, it is their deliberate policy. My squires have told me things.

DE LA POLE: A terribly effective policy.

RICHARD: Well, I refuse to go back to London until Parliament climbs down from its attitude of dictation. The responsibility of everything that happens in this country is laid on my shoulders, and that being so I must be free to direct it as I think fit. When Parliament is willing to share the responsibility, then it will have the right to dictate. All it has done so far in its history is to criticise.

DE VERE: And to pat themselves on the back when the King has pulled the chestnuts out of the fire.

DE LA POLE: The fact that they are willing to send a deputation down here augurs well for their reasonableness.

RICHARD: They are growing impatient, that is all. They want to get back to their wives, and their own much more important quarrels with their neighbours. At bottom the Commons care nothing what happens to the country. Even the Londoners, when they aren't worked up like this against the French, are less interested in foreign policy than in the fact that Stratford bakers make short-weight bread.

DE LA POLE: When do you expect the Commons?

RICHARD: I said that I would see a deputation of forty this afternoon.

DE LA POLE: Then they will be here presently. I have not paid my respects to the Queen. With your permission I shall do that before they come.

RICHARD: Very well. You will find her in the garden, I expect; she and Agnes are converting the flowers to Bohemian ways. (*Enter a PAGE.*) Well, is it the deputation?

PAGE: No, sir. The Duke of Gloucester and the Earl of Arundel have arrived, sir. They would be grateful if you would grant them an interview.

RICHARD: Either my uncle has bought himself a new tongue, or you lend him yours.

DE LA POLE: I think you had better see them, sir.

RICHARD: Of course I shall see them. I want very much to see both of them. Let them come in.

[*Exit PAGE.*]

DE VERE: So they couldn't trust the Commons!

DE LA POLE: You'll be tactful, sir. It will not gain us anything to rouse more enmity.

RICHARD: Could there be more?

DE LA POLE: If you like, sir, I can conduct the interview on your behalf. I'm your Chancellor, don't forget.

RICHARD: I don't forget it, Michael. I shall never forget it. You have been a good friend to me. But I am going to see those two alone. Yes (*as the others protest*), you are to go, both of you. I am not frightened of Gloucester, and I will not have him think that I need support against him. Now go, quickly, before they come. (*DE LA POLE and DE VERE move reluctantly to a small door down left.*) And don't wait outside that door. If I want you I shall send for you. Go and advise the Queen about next year's roses.

[*As they go out, the PAGE shows GLOUCESTER and ARUNDEL in.*]

Good day to you both. You wished to see me?

GLOUCESTER: I have come to see you as representative of the present Parliament.

RICHARD: I had expected a deputation of forty Commons.

GLOUCESTER: I am deputed to speak on their behalf.

RICHARD: Have the Commons been struck dumb, then? I wish I had seen so rare a sight!

GLOUCESTER: Since the deputation was entirely agreed as to their point of view it was thought better that one man should present it to you.

RICHARD: And your—shield-bearer, what is he for?

GLOUCESTER: Lord Arundel is here to add weight to my message.

RICHARD: I see. A reinforcement.

ARUNDEL: No such thing! Our position requires no reinforcement, sir. I am here independently, in my own capacity.

RICHARD: I beg your pardon. But you have so many capacities: soldier, sailor, landowner, agitator, critic— However, to business. I am prepared to listen to what you have to say.

GLOUCESTER: It will not take long in the telling. I am authorised by Parliament to say that no business will be transacted nor grants made until such time as you are willing to dismiss the Chancellor, and accept a Chancellor nominated by them.

RICHARD: By you, you mean. Is that all you have to say? I have already refused to dismiss De la Pole. Not only have they no right to demand such a thing, but they have produced not one excuse for such an outrageous request. Michael de la Pole has served this country well, both in my grandfather's time and mine— But it is not for me to defend my Chancellor to you.

GLOUCESTER: He will have need of defence presently. If you refuse to consent to their demands Parliament will take other means of ensuring that their wishes are granted.

RICHARD: Their wishes! They are nothing but a hundred mouths for your own utterance! I would not dismiss a scullion at their bidding. Go back and tell them that. Tell them that the Duke of Gloucester may own Parliament, but Richard is still King of England.

GLOUCESTER: If you refuse to listen, sir, I am deputed to tell you that De la Pole will be impeached.

RICHARD: Impeached! There is nothing on which they could base an impeachment. You cannot try a man without accusing him of something.

ARUNDEL: There will be ample accusation.

RICHARD: You will see to that, you mean!

GLOUCESTER: And furthermore—

RICHARD: Go on! Let us hear the whole of the enormity!

GLOUCESTER: Parliament considers that your present advisers are incompetent and a danger to the country.

RICHARD: I have heard that before. They have failed to show in what way they are incompetent or dangerous.

GLOUCESTER: And that from now on the King should be subject to a committee of advisers of greater worth and stability.

RICHARD: I should be subject to—! Are you mad? Do you know what you are saying? There is no such provision in the Constitution.

GLOUCESTER: In times of emergency new provisions must be made. It is suggested that the committee consist of Lord Arundel, the Duke of York, myself, two archbishops, and six other persons.

RICHARD (*almost speechless with rage*): You are a brave man, Gloucester, to stand there and make a suggestion like that.

GLOUCESTER: I have excellent backing. My support does not end with the handful of men waiting for me in the courtyard.

RICHARD: You had better go before I forget even that handful of men in the courtyard. I could imagine things worth losing a

crown for.

GLoucester: Losing a crown may be easier and more immediate than you think, sir. There may not be precedent for a governing committee, but there is excellent precedent for deposing a king.

RICHARD: Is there no limit to your insolence?

GLoucester: There is very little limit to our power. In the present troubled state of the country the people will accept any measures which a strong Government choose to propose.

RICHARD: And who is responsible for the troubled state of the country? Not I! By God, not I! You have built this situation brick by brick; built it out of your own spite and contentiousness. You have hedged me round with lies until I am as much in prison as if you had built stone walls round me. You dare not murder me, so you murder my reputation. You have misrepresented every action of mine, from the attempt to make peace with France to the gift of two marks to a page, until my name stands for everything that is wanton and contemptible. There is nothing that has not been used for your own ends. You have taken the prospect of a petty French raid and crazed the people with rumours of an invasion. You blame me for the raid, and when it comes to nothing you will claim that the defeat was due to your own foresight. There is nothing you will not stoop to in your campaign of lies, no slander so foul that you will not make use of it. You murder me by little bits, murder the thing that is me, and I have no redress. I cannot go out into the streets and shout: "It is not so! I am not that! When I did such and such it was because of this and not because of that!" If my friends give the lie to your slander the people smile and say: "You are his friends. We hardly expected you to say otherwise." There is no stopping it! One cannot fight whispers any more than one can hold back Thames with one's hands. They laugh and run through one's fingers. And you have done this to me! You who come here in all your sanctity of self-righteousness to say what I shall or shall not do.

GLoucester: I speak for the people.

RICHARD: The people! Poor little puppets who are cozened by this knave and that, until they do not know what they believe or why. I have never cozened them, nor will I truckle to them. The Constitution says that the King is the Law. It is for him to see that it is kept from being made a plaything by princes drunk with power and Commons rotten with bribery. Go back and tell them that, Gloucester! Tell them that!

GLoucester: I warn you, Richard, that if you don't come back to London within the next two days, an end will be put to the situation by removing the stumbling block. The situation is paralleled very closely in the case of your great-grandfather, Edward the Second; and I need hardly remind you of his fate.

RICHARD: You dare to hold that over my head! Get out of my sight. Get out of my sight, before it is too late. Do you hear me? Leave Eltham at once, you and your henchman. And be quick before it is too late.

ARUNDEL: We are going, sir. All that we came to say has been said.

GLoucester: And all the answer we take back is that we left an hysterical boy, throwing the cushions about in his rage.

RICHARD: Oh, go, for God's sake go, and be thankful to your saints that you go at all.

[GLoucester and ARUNDEL go.

RICHARD *snatches the dagger from his girdle as though he would follow them, but instead flings himself on the table, stabbing promiscuously and sobbing in incoherent rage.*

Curse him! Oh, curse him! Oh, God, why do you let the fiend live!

[*Exhausted, he leaves the knife sticking in the table.*

Enter SIR SIMON BURLEY.

Burley!

BURLEY: So you are glad to see old Burley?

RICHARD: I am always glad to see you, Simon. I don't have to be anything that I'm not with you. You've known the worst about me ever since I was five. And what is still better, I don't have to keep wondering what is in your mind.

BURLEY: Is it that I am so simple? Or because I have given you a piece of it so often?

RICHARD: Have you come to give me a piece of it now?

BURLEY: I have come with bad news, Richard. (*He removes the knife from the table.*) Carving one's initials is a plebeian pastime, my son.

RICHARD (*shamefaced*): I lost my temper again. Gloucester has been here.

BURLEY: Yes, I thought it was Gloucester's men in the courtyard.

RICHARD (*in a low voice*): He was unspeakable, Simon; unspeakable. (*Holding out his hand for the dagger.*) You can give me that. I am quite better now. (*BURLEY hands over the dagger.*) They suggested the most outrageous things. They have elected themselves into a committee to rule me—Gloucester and Arundel and the rest, with my uncle York thrown in to be useful and say yes when they make proposals. Did you know about that? Was that what you came to tell me?

BURLEY: Yes, I heard about the commission. But it was a worse thing I had to tell.

RICHARD: That they threaten to depose me?

BURLEY (*shocked*): No, not that! Did they threaten that?

RICHARD: Yes; if I don't go back to Town and do as they suggest they will treat me as Edward the Second was treated. If you didn't know that, what was your news?

BURLEY: That when you go back to London your five best friends are to be accused of treason and tried.

RICHARD: Burley! No! Even if I agree to their demands?

BURLEY: I don't think any concession you could make now will turn Gloucester from his purpose.

RICHARD: Who—who are the five?

BURLEY: Robert de Vere, Michael de la Pole, the Archbishop of York, Bramber, and—myself.

RICHARD: You, Burley! Why you? (*As BURLEY does not answer*) Because you are my friend, is that it? That is offence enough, isn't it! But what have any of them done but that? It is not treason to obey one's King.

BURLEY: We have been leading you astray, apparently, and that is accounted treason.

RICHARD: What is to be done? First of all we can raise the London trained bands. (*As BURLEY shakes his head*) What is wrong with that?

BURLEY: What is wrong is that they will not rise.

RICHARD: Not if Bramber is threatened! Bramber is the most popular mayor that London has had for years.

BURLEY: Perhaps. But the rest of us are distinctly unpopular, it seems. To be frank, sir, they say they have no intention of getting their heads broken for Robert de Vere. (*As RICHARD takes this mildly*) That Duke of Ireland business was not very judicious.

RICHARD: I know. I do foolish things when I am furious. And so our cause is unpopular?

BURLEY: Yes. But that is neither your fault nor Robert's. Gloucester has used every underground channel in the country to achieve that end. They pillory a fish-hawker for slander, but you cannot pillory Gloucester and his friends.

[*Enter* ROBERT DE VERE.]

DE VERE: Richard, listen——! Oh, good day, Burley. (*To RICHARD*) So you have heard the news?

RICHARD: That my friends are considered traitors? Yes. Since when has obeying the King become treason?

DE VERE: My dear Richard! You hardly do justice to Gloucester's inventive ability. Treason is merely the general heading, so to speak. The charge takes two hours to read, and is composed of thirty-seven sections. That we have abused the King's tender age; that we have induced him to waste the treasures of his realm (that is that last tournament you gave, Richard; I told you it was a little gaudy); that we have estranged him from loyal councillors and kinsfolk (the excellent and loyal Duke himself, in fact); prompted him to murder Arundel and Gloucester (when I think how often I have restrained you from hitting Arundel over the head with a bottle!); and thirty-seventh, but by no means least, prompted you to betray Calais. You know, the one real mistake your poor councillors ever made, Richard, was to let you even mention the name of that misbegotten little French village. No Englishman is quite sane on the subject of Calais.

RICHARD: How do you know all this? Are you making it up?

DE VERE: You do me too much honour. I am quoting from Tressillian. He has just arrived with a copy of the charge. He is included among the traitors.

RICHARD: Tressillian too! What is to be done? Burley, bring De la Pole here, will you? He is in the garden, I think.

DE VERE: You will find him discussing roses with the Queen in the long alley. I left them there when I saw Tressillian arrive.

RICHARD: Don't let the Queen know yet that there is anything to worry about.

[*Exit BURLEY.*]

It is a dreadful thing to be my friend, isn't it, Robert?

DE VERE: I have not found it so.

RICHARD: If you and I had devoted our wits and the country's wealth to, let us say, annexing Scotland, the people would have blocked the streets to see us, and even the maimed soldiers would have thought us fine fellows. But because we pour most of our money into the pockets of London tradesmen we are a despicable pair. It is a curious point of view.

DE VERE: We are young. There is still time for us to become the complete warriors. I think the occasion is about to be thrust on us. It is a comforting reflection that you showed very good form on that last Scottish campaign. You were a credit to your parentage, Richard.

RICHARD: Any man worthy of the name can fight when it is necessary. But it is so very seldom necessary, it seems to me.

DE VERE: This time it is going to be necessary.

[*Enter BURLEY with DE LA POLE.*]

RICHARD: This time? What do you mean?

DE VERE: Don't you know that Arundel has all his men mobilised at Reigate, and Mowbray and Henry are concentrating in the Midlands? I thought Burley told you that?

BURLEY: I didn't know! Are you sure that it is true?

DE VERE: Oh, yes. Tressillian has all the details. They are coming south to join Gloucester at Waltham.

RICHARD: And Mowbray is with them!

DE VERE: Mowbray is with them. I told you he hankered after military glory!

DE LA POLE: So it has come! I did not think Gloucester would have dared.

BURLEY: With a popular cause it requires little daring.

RICHARD: War, is it! Well, now we plan. Cheshire will be loyal, whatever the rest of England may be. I must go to

London, that is obvious. But while I am keeping them quiet there by nibbling the cheese in the trap, you must gather what forces you can in Cheshire, Robert. De la Pole, you must get out of the country. No, don't argue. At your age you cannot fight, and you will not add to my popularity by staying with me. Oh, my dear old friend, don't argue. It will be so much off my mind if I know that you, at least, are safe. It is a pitiable reward for years of service, isn't it! To offer you *safety*, to consign you to exile. But it is all we can do for the moment. It shall not be for long, I promise you. I shall see you before you go. As for you, Burley, what about you?

BURLEY: I am coming back to London with you, sir.

RICHARD: No, no! That is foolish.

BURLEY: It is not foolish, sir. It is very good policy. If you and the Queen go back alone, immediate suspicion will be the result. But if we go back together, casually, they will not suspect that we know anything beyond the fact that Parliament has a word or two to say to us.

RICHARD: There is something in that. Robert, take the Chancellor away, and have horses saddled for both of you. Order a meal which you can eat before you go. You'll need men from the bodyguard. Warn the men you want, and let them eat while the others are preparing horses for them. When you go downstairs send Tressillian to me.

DE VERE: Yes, sir. (*Goes out with DE LA POLE.*)

RICHARD: What are you smiling at, Burley?

BURLEY: You sounded so like your father, sir.

RICHARD: Does that please you?

BURLEY: The Black Prince had his faults, but he was a very fine man.

RICHARD: Simon, I wish I was sure that I was letting you come with me because it is good policy, and not because I want the comfort of your presence.

BURLEY: There will be no danger, sir. You and the Queen can go to the Tower instead of Westminster. That is still the King's property, and the walls are conveniently thick.

[*Enter ANNE, radiant, with a bunch of roses.*]

ANNE: Look, Richard. In October! Smell, Simon. And all out of one border. What are you looking at me like that for, Richard?

RICHARD (*smiling*): I was thinking that even if the heavens fell you would still be there.

ANNE: Of course I should. It hardly seems a fact worth remarking on.

[*RICHARD exchanges glances with BURLEY, who moves to the door, and RICHARD draws ANNE to a seat as the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE V

A room in the Tower, a month later. It is evening and growing dusk. RICHARD is moving restlessly from the window, left, to the centre of the room and back again. While he is at the window, enter MAUDELYN softly at the door, right, and begins to light the candles.

RICHARD (*swinging round*): Why do you creep about like that? What are you doing? What do you want?

MAUDELYN: I came to light the candles, sir.

RICHARD: I didn't say that the candles were to be lighted, did I? Leave them alone. It isn't time yet.

MAUDELYN: It is the usual time, sir.

RICHARD: Leave them alone, I tell you. It isn't evening yet. Has no one come with news?

MAUDELYN (*irresolutely*): No, sir.

[RICHARD *flings round to the window again, and MAUDELYN begins to creep out, leaving the candles which he has lighted still burning.*

RICHARD (*savagely*): Put out these candles!

[MAUDELYN *turns, and hesitates.*

RICHARD: Well, what do you want!

MAUDELYN: I am sorry, sir. I did have a message when I came to light the candles. There is news, sir.

RICHARD: News! Well, tell me! Tell me quickly.

MAUDELYN: There's been a defeat, sir. They were cut off at Radcot Bridge. Because of the fog. It was—it was practically a rout, sir. Sir John Molyneux surrendered himself, and they—murdered him then and there, sir.

RICHARD: And Lord Oxford?

MAUDELYN: He—(*in his embarrassment and fear he cannot find a happier term*) he fled, sir.

[RICHARD *strikes him across the face.*

RICHARD (*in a furious whisper*): How dare you! How dare you even think the word!

MAUDELYN: That is the message, sir.

RICHARD: Who brought it?

MAUDELYN: A man of Ratcliffe's, sir.

RICHARD: Where is he? Let me talk to him.

MAUDELYN: He has gone, sir. He wouldn't stay in London. He was making his escape.

RICHARD: When did this—this at Radcot—happen?

MAUDELYN: This morning, sir.

RICHARD: This morning! And it is only now I hear!

MAUDELYN: The message came some time ago, sir, but—

RICHARD: And I was not told! Dear God! I was not told! Why not? Why not?

MAUDELYN: No one had the courage to tell you, sir.

RICHARD (*suddenly quiet*): Only you. And I struck you. You say Lord Oxford—escaped?

MAUDELYN: Yes, sir.

RICHARD (*after a pause*): You may leave the candles.

MAUDELYN (*pausing by the door*): Is there anything I can do for you, sir?

RICHARD: No, you have done what you could. (*He slightly accentuates the first "you."*) Wait! Has anyone told the Queen of this message?

MAUDELYN: No, sir.

RICHARD: Then find her, and say that I should like to see her.

[*Exit MAUDELYN. RICHARD turns to the window again. The candles grow brighter as the daylight fades.*

Enter, without warning, ROBERT DE VERE, pale, harassed, and dirty. He shuts the door and stands leaning against it. RICHARD turns as if not quite sure that someone has really entered.

(*In gladness*) Robert! (*In fear for him*) Robert, are you crazy when you come here!

DE VERE: I thought I should go crazy if I didn't.

RICHARD (*remembering and withdrawing a little*): Well?

DE VERE (*after a pause*): I'm sorry, Richard.

RICHARD (*bitterly*): Are you by any chance apologising?

DE VERE: When one has no excuse there is only apology.

RICHARD: And so you are *sorry* for throwing away the hopes of half England.

DE VERE: Richard, I am not excusing or explaining. But I must tell you how it happened. That is why I came here. I felt that I must tell you myself. I don't know why. I never did like other people's explanations of me, did I? It isn't that I want to minimise it. I just want to tell you myself.

RICHARD: Is there any more to tell than I have already been told?

DE VERE: They've told you we were defeated?

RICHARD: Routed was the word.

DE VERE: Yes, routed. The mist was so thick that one couldn't see more than three horses' length in any direction. The bridge looked deserted, and we went down to it. Then Henry appeared out of the fog without warning, and took us on the flank. It was not going to be a fight, it was going to be a massacre, hemmed in there between Henry and the bridge. If I could have believed in the possibility of winning, I might have led them. As it was, I could only see the futility of the slaughter. They were a fine lot to look at, Richard. They made a brave sight, all those days, marching down through the Midlands, four thousand of them. And now in ten minutes they would be masses of mangled flesh—all for nothing. We couldn't win, caught as we were. It was murder to let them fight.

RICHARD: And was the four thousand so perfect that you could not spare two as scouts to reconnoitre?

DE VERE: I may be a failure, but I'm not a fool. Of course we reconnoitred the bridge. The scouts came back to say that there was no one there. Time was important to us, and I thought we could risk it. I was wrong; that is all. I made a mistake in taking them to the bridge, but not in refusing to fight. If they were all dead to-night the situation would be the same.

RICHARD: So you advised them to surrender. Why didn't you surrender with them?

DE VERE: To Henry!

RICHARD: Molyneux did.

DE VERE: Yes, I have heard. They killed him. Would you have preferred me dead, Richard?

RICHARD (*in a burst*): Yes! Oh, God, yes, a thousand times! I could have remembered you with pride then, dead with your honour safe.

DE VERE: My honour! Richard, you talk like your father. Do you expect me to fall on my sword because my troops had to surrender?

RICHARD: You ran away. "Lord Oxford fled," says my page. A Vere bolting across the fields like a frightened rabbit! It is a sweet picture. The Duke of Ireland escaping. Troops in confusion may be noticed in the rear. You coward! You paltry coward!

DE VERE: I came to apologise for my bad generalship, but it seems that I must apologise for being alive.

RICHARD: You deserted your men when you had led them into a trap. You were trusted to rescue your friends in London, whose only hope was in you. And, when you failed, your only thought was your own skin. Robert de Vere! (*He turns away to the window.*)

DE VERE (*after a pause*): Perhaps you are right, Richard. You had always a habit of being right when you were being most unreasonable. I know that I should have stayed there. But I couldn't do it. I wanted to live. And so I—ran away. Now I have confessed it.

RICHARD (*in a fury*): Who wanted you to confess it? Curse you, who wanted you to confess it? Do you think I like the spectacle? Do you think it makes it more bearable for me to see you humble yourself? Why come to me with your excuses and abasement? Take them to those who find interest in them!

DE VERE: Very well. I must go in any case, if I am even yet to save my own skin. And, strange as it may seem, life is still desirable. If I get away, it is unlikely that we shall meet again. (*He pauses hopefully, his eyes on RICHARD, who has once more turned to the window.*) Good-bye, Richard.

[RICHARD does not answer, and DE VERE turns to the door.

Enter ANNE, and comes face to face with DE VERE.

ANNE: Robert! What is it? We thought you had escaped!

DE VERE: I had to see Richard first.

[*She looks past him to RICHARD, and understands that the interview has been stormy. RICHARD'S back is eloquent.*

ANNE: You aren't hurt?

DE VERE: Oh, don't.

ANNE: I didn't mean that. You know I didn't. What are you going to do now? Where are you going?

DE VERE: I am getting a boat from the Essex coast. No one will look for me in Gloucester's country. My unpopularity will for once be a blessing. (*He tries to smile at her.*)

ANNE (*hurt by the smile, putting out her hand impulsively*): Poor Robert!

DE VERE (*simply, without the usual façade*): My dear lady Anne. I have to thank you for many kindnesses. Most of all, you gave me Agnes, and made our marriage possible.

ANNE: Poor Agnes! What will she do?

DE VERE: She is coming with me.

ANNE: Be kind to her, Robert. It won't be easy for either of you in these friendless times. But she has a gallant spirit. And I know how happy one can be, in spite of all adversity. Good-bye.

DE VERE: Good-bye. I wish I knew a blessing to say over you. (*He hesitates, and looks back at RICHARD, still standing*

with his back to the room.) Good-bye, Richard.

[RICHARD *does not answer, and DE VERE goes out.*

RICHARD (*without turning*): So you know?

ANNE: Yes; your page is crying his heart out on the stairs. He told me. Everything is lost, it seems.

RICHARD: Yes, everything is lost. And I have said dreadful things to Robert.

ANNE: He knows you didn't mean them, Richard.

RICHARD: I did mean them! Every word of them! He is a coward, a paltry feeble thing with no more courage than a child. He had four thousand men, and he was afraid to fight, afraid!

ANNE: No; his silly tender heart betrayed him. I know. That is the truth about Robert. What he saw when Henry and his men came out of the mist was not the glory of taking a risk, but the certainty of his men's deaths. His imagination betrayed him. You rail against him for the very thing that made him your friend.

RICHARD: And at a time like this he can think of Agnes!

ANNE: Oh, Richard, don't be ungenerous. Agnes is the one precious thing he can save from the wreck. The world is falling about his ears, and you grudge him Agnes. Think for a moment what the future is going to be for him. All his life he is going to remember that moment at Radcot Bridge. It is going to be a nightmare that he can never escape. Robert is not the man to forget, or forgive himself. You know that. You don't usually have to be told these things, Richard.

RICHARD: I know. I know what you say is true. I keep saying it to myself. But it doesn't rid me of the anger with him—the despair! It isn't because he lost us the battle; not altogether. It is because he was Robert, and he didn't fight!

ANNE: Your pedestal was too high, Richard. No one could have stayed on it. You must not blame Robert for that.

[*She moves to a chair and sits down with a small, sobbing sigh.*

RICHARD: Where have you been all the afternoon? I wanted you.

ANNE: I have been to the Duke of Gloucester.

RICHARD: To Gloucester!

ANNE: To beg for Burley's life.

RICHARD: Anne! And did he—what did he say?

ANNE: It was no use. (*After a pause, as if living it over again*) I went on my knees to him.

RICHARD (*humbly*): Anne! You make me ashamed of myself.

ANNE: Why? You are the King. You couldn't kneel to him. But I am a woman.

RICHARD: And he wouldn't listen?

ANNE: He said that it would be more suitable if I prayed for you and for myself.

RICHARD: That is all, then? There is nothing else we can do?

ANNE: Nothing.

RICHARD: How can they do it! In cold blood! A man who has never harmed them. And I? What have I ever done to them? I have never put anyone to death. I have never taken anything that was not mine. What harm have I done any of them? Gloucester will take all Robert's lands. He will own half England presently. And the people throw up their caps at sight of him. "Long live Gloucester, the man of action. He kills for his gains, instead of taxing us." And, because I kill nobody, I am a fool. But I am being educated. They are teaching a willing pupil. To become an expert in murder cannot be so

difficult.

ANNE: Richard, my dear——

RICHARD: I swear to you, Anne, I swear to you now, that one day I shall be revenged on all of them. Before I die I shall pay my debt, and my friends' debt, to each single one of them. Gloucester, Arundel, Mowbray, Henry. Before I die I shall be King in deed as well as in name; I swear it. I shall break Arundel as twigs break underfoot; I shall make Mowbray my plaything, and Henry my squire. As for Gloucester—(*his passionate utterance sinks almost to a whisper*) he had better have spared Burley. He had better have spared him!

ANNE: It is difficult to understand just why the world has fallen on top of us like this, isn't it? We did so little wrong.

RICHARD: You forget our crimes. We wasted money on beauty instead of on war. We were extravagant——

ANNE: I heard a piece of news when I was waiting to see Gloucester.

RICHARD: He kept you waiting?

ANNE: Oh, yes. He is that kind of man. That didn't make me angry.

RICHARD (*almost wistfully*): Nothing makes you very angry, Anne.

ANNE: Some things do—terribly.

RICHARD: What was your news?

ANNE: Parliament have voted Gloucester and Arundel twenty thousand pounds.

RICHARD: What! (*There is a pause while he savours this in full. Then, in a quiet, amused tone*) How Robert would have laughed! (*As the situation overcomes him*) How Robert would have——

[*He breaks down, covers his face, and falls sobbing into a chair.*

ANNE comes to him and puts her arms round him.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

An ante-room in the King's Palace of Sheen, three years later. On the right is the door to the inner chamber, to the left the door to the corridor; at the back a doorway to the courtyard.

There are present two people. One is the DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, obviously waiting and obviously resentful. The other is MAUDELYN, the King's secretary, who is the page from the previous Act. MAUDELYN, now about twenty, has discarded his gay silks for a clerk's sober habit. He is seated unobtrusively at a table by the wall, busy with documents.

GLOUCESTER (*calling to MAUDELYN*): You! How much longer am I to be kept waiting?

MAUDELYN (*politely*): Lord Arundel is with the King, sir.

GLOUCESTER: Arundel! What does the King want with Lord Arundel?

MAUDELYN: That is something outside my business, my lord. (*Resumes his writing.*)

GLOUCESTER (*muttering*): Impudent young puppy! (*Looking again at MAUDELYN*) I remember you. (*Coming down to him, surprised*) You used to be Richard's page.

MAUDELYN: Yes, my lord.

GLOUCESTER: And a disgusting little fop of a page, too! (*Flicking the clerk's dress contemptuously*) And was your intended armour too harsh for your tender skin?

MAUDELYN (*more reminiscent than boastful*): I used to beat the other pages in the lists.

GLOUCESTER: Then why the clerk's dress?

MAUDELYN: Because it keeps me near the King, my lord.

GLOUCESTER: That is a strange reason.

MAUDELYN: I had not hoped you would understand it, my lord.

[*Enter ANNE, on her way to the inner chamber. She sees GLOUCESTER, pauses, and bows coldly. She hesitates.*

ANNE (*to MAUDELYN*): Is the King not alone?

MAUDELYN: Lord Arundel is with the King, madam.

ANNE (*turning to go*): I will come back.

GLOUCESTER: You are not looking well, madam. Does the hot weather not agree with you?

ANNE: I am not very well. It is nothing much. A little chill.

GLOUCESTER (*with more relish than solicitude*): Have you seen a doctor, madam? Plague is very prevalent this summer.

ANNE (*coldly*): It is nothing, thank you. (*More conciliating*) Please do not say to the King that I do not look well. I do not want him to be worried to-day.

GLOUCESTER: And why not to-day?

ANNE: Because to-day, I think, he is very nearly happy. (*Considering him*) Do you know what happiness is, my lord?

GLOUCESTER: I trust so.

ANNE: I have often wondered. You handle such a precious thing so carelessly. But it is a hardy plant, happiness. Joy—ah, no. When joy is killed it dies for ever. But happiness one can grow again. I will come back. (*Exit.*)

GLOUCESTER (*with a contemptuous shrug*): Feverish!

[*Enter from the inner chamber the EARL OF ARUNDEL. While he is greeting GLOUCESTER, MAUDELYN, who since the first mention of the QUEEN'S looks has exhibited growing anxiety, follows the QUEEN out.*]

ARUNDEL: Gloucester! So you've been summoned to Sheen, too!

GLOUCESTER: I have. And I cool my heels for an hour while you have an audience. What did he want of you that took so long?

ARUNDEL: He wanted my *advice*! I don't like it. I don't like it at all!

GLOUCESTER: Don't like having your advice asked? You're unique.

ARUNDEL: I distrust meekness. And most of all I distrust the King's meekness. (*Warming at sight of GLOUCESTER'S smile*) When Richard smiles I feel as if I were walking through long grass in a snake country. And to-day—— There is something wrong, Gloucester. He summons me from London, and then talks politely about ships and tonnage. And all the time they are smiling at something else, he and Rutland and Montague. Gloucester, do you think Richard can have something up his sleeve?

GLOUCESTER: That would be the only justification for the sleeves. Don't be ridiculous, Arundel! Richard is just where he was two years ago, and that is in our hands.

ARUNDEL: Things are not *exactly* as they were two years ago, my friend. (*Watching the advent of someone in the corridor*) Here is at least one weathercock which shows a change of wind!

GLOUCESTER (*following his glance, morosely*): Mowbray. Yes. I'd forgotten him.

[*Enter MOWBRAY, very magnificent, on his way to the inner chamber.*]

So Mowbray comes to Court again!

MOWBRAY: I have that privilege.

GLOUCESTER: Is it the Plantagenet charm that blinds you, or those acres in Wales?

MOWBRAY: The King has been gracious enough to grant me the estates I claimed, and I am grateful. That is all.

ARUNDEL: And the King smiles, and you are pleased!

MOWBRAY: Why not? It is pleasant to be friendly again.

GLOUCESTER: You fool, Thomas Mowbray. Do you think Richard will ever forget that you helped to destroy Robert de Vere?

MOWBRAY: That is all past. If the King had not forgiven my part in that, he would not have supported me over those estates.

GLOUCESTER: You talk like a child. Because a bright toy is dangled before your eyes, you trust the hand that holds it. You make a mistake, my friend!

MOWBRAY (*slowly*): It may not be I who makes the mistake. (*Abruptly*) I think I am quite capable of managing my own affairs, my lords. (*Exit to the inner chamber.*)

GLOUCESTER: God, what clothes! How the fellow apes Richard!

ARUNDEL: I wish I could see behind the silk coat. Was it those Welsh fields that brought Mowbray to Court, or does he

know something that we don't?

GLOUCESTER: In heaven's name, Arundel!

ARUNDEL: Has it ever occurred to you that Richard might be an enemy worthy of respect?

GLOUCESTER: That fool! That scented fop! A man who takes an hour to choose a pair of gloves! You must be ill, Arundel, that your knees fail before that silken packet of whims and fancies.

ARUNDEL (*angry*): My knees don't fail! I hate the creature as I hate the—the French. I hate him all the more now that he gives me cause to wonder.

GLOUCESTER: What cause does he give you? Because he is meek? He had better be meek! Without backing he can do nothing. And where will he find backing in England?

ARUNDEL (*doubtfully*): In England, no. (*With no great conviction*) There is Lancaster, of course.

GLOUCESTER: As long as there is a crown to be had in Spain, Lancaster will stay in Spain.

ARUNDEL: Yes, I know. I am only searching for reasons for the King's attitude. I don't like the way he calls me Admiral.

GLOUCESTER: You are the Admiral, aren't you!

ARUNDEL: I don't like the way he says it.

GLOUCESTER: My dear Arundel, you need a tonic——

[Enter from the inner chamber the KING, his hand on the arm of EDWARD, EARL OF RUTLAND (the Duke of York's son; a girlish youth, very pretty), and followed by MOWBRAY and SIR JOHN MONTAGUE. MONTAGUE is slightly older than the other three, and looks what he is: a poet, a scholar, and, on occasion, an efficient soldier.]

RICHARD: Ah, my dear uncle! Discussing ships and tonnage with the Admiral? The Admiral is so interesting on ships and tonnage. I am sorry to have kept you waiting. Has the Queen not come?

GLOUCESTER: She was here a moment ago, but went away again when she found that I was waiting to see you.

RICHARD: I see. Edward, find the Queen and bring her here in five minutes. (*Exit RUTLAND.*) Mowbray, see that your father-in-law has some wine before he goes. You must have much to say to each other. (*As ARUNDEL and MOWBRAY are going out*) When next I see you, my lord, I shall have found a use for your ships, I hope. (*ARUNDEL throws a puzzled glance at GLOUCESTER, which GLOUCESTER fails to return, and goes out with MOWBRAY.*)

GLOUCESTER (*indicating MONTAGUE, lingering by the courtyard entrance*): Is Sir John Montague's presence necessary?

RICHARD: Not necessary, but pleasant. Sir John's presence sweetens the atmosphere when needful, like a bunch of herbs.

GLOUCESTER: Well? You sent for me?

RICHARD: I sent for you yesterday.

GLOUCESTER: Yes. I told your messenger that I was busy. I have the burden of this State on my shoulders.

RICHARD: I think there are ways of lightening that burden. I sent for you to ask you a question of some importance. How old am I?

GLOUCESTER: How old? Twenty-three, I suppose.

RICHARD: You acknowledge that I am twenty-three?

GLOUCESTER: Certainly.

RICHARD: In that case I am of age; and since I am not insane, I am fit, *by law*, to share in the government of the country and

in the choosing of my ministers. Will you tell the Treasurer, Bishop Gilbert, and the Chancellor, Bishop Arundel, that I require their resignations.

GLOUCESTER: Resign! I don't know what good you think you are going to do by foisting a whim like this on the council. If you hope that the country will accept one of your own——

RICHARD: In their places I have appointed Brantingham and Wykeham. You look disappointed? It is difficult to find objections to Brantingham and Wykeham, isn't it? I make no other changes for the moment, except (*he signs, unseen by GLOUCESTER, to MONTAGUE, who goes out*) to add one more to the council. A month ago I sent to ask an old acquaintance of mine to return from abroad.

GLOUCESTER (*quickly*): Robert de Vere is dead——

RICHARD: I don't forget it.

GLOUCESTER: And so is De la Pole. Who is there——

[*Enter the DUKE OF LANCASTER.*]

RICHARD: Oh, there you are. We were speaking of you.

GLOUCESTER (*astounded*): Lancaster!

LANCASTER (*advancing smiling and quizzical to his brother*): Well, Thomas, how are you?

[*They shake hands.*]

GLOUCESTER: So you're back.

LANCASTER: Yesterday.

GLOUCESTER: Have you deserted your army, or have they deserted you?

LANCASTER: Still the same Thomas, as tactful as an angry wasp! My army is coming after me as soon as transport is arranged.

GLOUCESTER (*sourly*): You had little luck in Spain, if all reports are true.

LANCASTER: No; too much fever. It played havoc with my troops. But I made myself so much of a nuisance that they have given me a fortune in return for my claim to the crown.

GLOUCESTER: So you have traded your royal ambitions for money.

LANCASTER: Yes, but I have also married my daughter Katherine to the heir.

[*RICHARD gives a small laugh.*]

GLOUCESTER: I fail to see the joke.

RICHARD: My condolences.

LANCASTER: Richard has asked me to be one of the council again, so we are to be colleagues.

RICHARD: It will give me much pleasure to have you both there.

LANCASTER (*perfectly understanding*): I have no doubt of it. (*Looking at the KING*) You have grown up, Richard.

RICHARD (*not smiling*): Yes, I have grown up.

LANCASTER (*hastily abandoning the subject*): Another advantage which I plucked from my misfortunes in Spain is a peace treaty.

RICHARD: And in the next year or so we shall have peace with France, as well as with Scotland.

GLOUCESTER: With France! Is that maggot still alive in your brain?

RICHARD: More than alive. It breeds.

GLOUCESTER: And are you going to countenance a policy like that, Lancaster?

LANCASTER: I think, do you know, that I am. Richard has been good enough to suggest creating me Duke of Guienne. If I go to Guienne as Duke it will be enormously to my advantage to have a peaceful France round me.

GLOUCESTER: I see. I see. Well, it may suit the Duke of Guienne to have peace with France, but it may not suit the people of England.

RICHARD: The people of England are less frightened by the idea than they used to be. They grow used to it. Presently they will adopt it quite happily, and imagine they fathered it. Some day they may even impeach you for suggesting war, Gloucester. What a heavenly thought!

[*Enter the QUEEN, with RUTLAND, followed by MONTAGUE.*]

ANNE (*to LANCASTER*): My dear uncle! I am sorry that I missed you yesterday.

LANCASTER (*saluting her*): You are lovelier than ever, madam. You seem to have lost your roses, but the lilies are very becoming.

ANNE: Lilies are more fashionable. Fleurs-de-lis are our token these days.

RICHARD: And this is your nephew Edward?

LANCASTER: York's son!

RICHARD: Yes, the Earl of Rutland.

LANCASTER: Why, you were just a baby four years ago.

RICHARD: He still is. (*RUTLAND protests.*) He likes better to play with my greyhound than attend to his duties.

LANCASTER: What are his duties?

RICHARD: To amuse me. Sir John I think you saw yesterday.

LANCASTER: Yes. But I had Sir John in Spain with me.

MONTAGUE (*puzzled*): In Spain?

LANCASTER: In my pocket. I read your poems in Castile, John. They were water in a thirsty land.

GLOUCESTER (*to RICHARD*): With your permission I shall take my leave. I presume that everything I was sent for to hear has been said?

RICHARD (*grinning unashamedly*): Yes, I don't think I forgot anything. But won't you wait for dinner?

GLOUCESTER: No, I must get back to London.

RICHARD: It is going to be a very special dinner in Lancaster's honour. The cooks have been inventing stuffings all day.

GLOUCESTER: Eating is not one of my amusements.

RICHARD: No, I know. A hunk of cold beef on a bone is your meat. But that is a lack in you, not a virtue. Don't pride yourself on it. Good-bye. (*GLOUCESTER takes his leave.*) Edward, take the Duke of Gloucester to his horse.

LANCASTER: With the King's permission, I shall see you go. I want to hear all the news of your family. How is Humphrey?

[LANCASTER, GLOUCESTER, and RUTLAND go out.

RICHARD (*flinging an arm exultantly round MONTAGUE, and appealing to ANNE, between laughter and triumph*): Who says I am not a king?

ANNE: Are you happy, Richard?

RICHARD: I begin to know the taste of it again. But there is a feast of it coming. We shall be throwing happiness to the dogs presently, Anne, we shall have so much of it.

ANNE: You will have deserved it, Richard. You have been very patient, and patience comes hard for you, doesn't it!

RICHARD: It is a sweet sight to see Mowbray make his obeisance. Stumbling over the carpet, and not looking in my eyes. A few thousand acres of barren land—that is the price of Mowbray's allegiance.

ANNE: Perhaps he was glad to come back. He loved you once.

RICHARD: I remember. So much that he bit me like a jealous cur. (*Brightening*) And now that Lancaster is back, Henry will come to Court and bend his thick knee too. Anne, I've been thinking. Now that peace with France is coming, don't you think we might do something about Ireland?

ANNE: Isn't one always doing something about Ireland?

RICHARD: Yes—patching! I want to find out why the patches don't last. I want to know why the English settlers in Ireland always become more Irish than the Irish.

MONTAGUE: I think that is due less to the charm of Ireland than to the indifference of the English. We have a habit of raising our eyebrows, you know, at anyone who chooses to live out of England.

RICHARD: The indifference of the English? I think you are right, John, That is why we fail. (*To ANNE*) Now this morning I had a letter from an Irish chief who calls himself Art—Art——(*He appeals to MONTAGUE.*)

MONTAGUE: Art Macmurrough.

RICHARD: Art Macmurrough. John, do go and find that letter; it was very amusing. (*To ANNE, as MONTAGUE goes out*) He wrote to me as one king to another—very sensibly on the whole. I should like to talk to that fellow, Anne. I should like to talk to all of them. Find out what they think and why. John is right, you know. We take no interest in them. How can the Irish be loyal to a King and Queen they never see? Anne, I've been thinking. Anne, wouldn't it be a fine idea to make pilgrimage to Ireland? You could teach the women to wear—— Anne, you're not listening!

ANNE: Yes, of course I am. (*She shivers*) It's cold, isn't it?

RICHARD: Cold! I'm on fire. I'm all blazing inside as if I were lit up. Think, Anne! soon we—— (*He understands fully what she has said.*) Cold! In this weather? What is the matter with you?

ANNE: I don't know. I have shivers up and down my back, and I feel—strange.

RICHARD: Anne, are you ill?

ANNE: No, not ill. But I—my head feels so strange and light, and my feet feel as if they were shod like horses'.

RICHARD: Don't, Anne; you frighten me.

ANNE: There isn't anything to be frightened of. Besides, Richard of Bordeaux is frightened of nothing. Hasn't he faced his enemies for three years and outfaced them in the end!

RICHARD (*in a low voice*): There are some things I—— (*Sitting down by her*) You aren't really ill, are you, Anne? (*He puts an arm round her.*) Shall I send for your women?

ANNE (*leaning against him and closing her eyes*): No, stay there. It is so comfortable. (*Sniffing his coat*) Is that the new perfume? It is lovely. You always smell nice, Richard. The first time I saw you—do you remember? in the Abbey—I

thought you looked like a flower. But I didn't know you had so many scents then! Darling Richard.

RICHARD: How long have you been feeling ill? Why didn't you tell me?

ANNE: I'm not ill. I got chilled at the pageant yesterday, that is all.

[Enter RUTLAND. ANNE starts up at sound of the opening door.

RUTLAND: Richard, I'll go to Ireland, I'll go to hell for you, but don't ask me to be charming to Gloucester for you. There are limits to my——

RICHARD: Send the Queen's waiting-woman here at once.

RUTLAND (*sobered by RICHARD'S look*): Yes, sir. (*Exit.*)

ANNE: Why do you like Edward so much?

RICHARD: I don't know. He has great charm. Don't you think so?

ANNE: No.

RICHARD: You don't like Edward, do you? Jealous?

ANNE: I was never jealous of Robert. He was more worthy of you. It's funny how things are near one minute and miles away the next.

RICHARD: Shut your eyes and don't look at them. Oh, Anne!

ANNE: It is true about the peace with France, isn't it? Lancaster is going to help with that?

RICHARD: Yes, our dream is coming true. We'll have the most marvellous celebration that this country has ever seen, on the day that peace is signed.

ANNE (*childishly*): Not a pageant. I get cold at pageants.

RICHARD: No, not a pageant. We'll think of something that no one has thought of before. We'll search the world for beautiful things. We'll——

[Enter RUTLAND with a WAITING-WOMAN.

Anne, you must go to bed.

ANNE: Oh, not to bed. What about Lancaster's dinner?

RICHARD: To bed. And at once. In fifteen minutes I shall come along to see that you are there.

ANNE: You are a tyrant, Richard. Do you know it? You bully your most faithful and loving subject. Perhaps it would be wise to go to bed. You'll come soon, Richard?

RICHARD: In fifteen minutes.

[ANNE attempts to rise, assisted by her WAITING-WOMAN, but collapses, and MAUDELYN, who has appeared with a DOCTOR, brings him forward. RICHARD moves away to let the DOCTOR come. As he comes to her again, the DOCTOR, having seen ANNE, prevents him.

DOCTOR: No, sir. You must keep away.

RICHARD (*surprised and indignant at the restraint*): What do you mean? How dare you lay hands on me? Do you know who I am?

DOCTOR: It is because you are the King, sir, that you must keep away. You have a duty to your subjects, and the contagion is deadly.

RICHARD (*after a pause, in a horrified whisper*): Oh, no! No!

[*The others—RUTLAND, LANCASTER, MONTAGUE, and others who have come crowding in at the news of the Queen's illness—move involuntarily away from her. Only the WAITING-WOMAN, after her first instinctive withdrawal, moves back to her with a cry of grief.*

(*In sudden complete realisation, desperate*) Anne! Anne!

[*He flings himself against the DOCTOR'S detaining arm.*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The scene is the same. The time, two years later. MAUDELYN is writing at the same little table. SIR JOHN MONTAGUE is lounging near by and occasionally casting an eye over MAUDELYN'S shoulder. The DUKE OF YORK and his son, RUTLAND, are chatting together; and the DUKE OF GLOUCESTER and the EARL OF ARUNDEL, a little apart, are listening to the conversation.

RUTLAND (*concluding a tale, to YORK*): Two of the kings didn't know what forks were for, and a third tried to eat his plate. Oh, you should have been there, father. Ireland was gorgeous! And there was another called—called—— (*To GLOUCESTER*) Uncle, what was the name of the king we gave the clothes to? You remember!

GLOUCESTER: No, I don't. I didn't come to Sheen to spend the time gossiping about Ireland. I came on business. And, now that the business is nearly finished, I must go. (*Looking disparagingly at the desolate-looking room*) A nice cheerful place to spend a winter afternoon!

RUTLAND: Oh, well, the name doesn't matter. (*Continues his gossiping to YORK.*)

MONTAGUE (*half to himself, half to MAUDELYN*): It was cheerful enough two years ago.

MAUDELYN (*pausing in his writing and staring in front of him*): Yes. She—she liked this room.

MONTAGUE: Because of the little tree in the courtyard.

MAUDELYN: And because you could see the river from the window.

YORK (*to RUTLAND*): But the food, my dear Edward, the food must have been very——

RUTLAND: Oh, no; we taught them how to cook, too. It was most amusing.

ARUNDEL: And did Gloucester find Ireland so amusing?

GLOUCESTER: Amusing! To see the King of England feasting barbarians and presenting them with gifts? Knighting traitors instead of quartering them? It turned my stomach.

MONTAGUE: At least we have achieved what no one has achieved for two hundred years: goodwill as well as peace in Ireland.

GLOUCESTER: The mistake you all make is to imagine that the Irish want peace. They are only waiting until our backs are turned.

ARUNDEL: London didn't like the sound of those banquets very much. The usual insane extravagance!

MONTAGUE: A military expedition would have cost ten times as much, including several hundred lives, and achieved nothing.

[Enter MOWBRAY, with a paper, which he lays on the table for MAUDELYN'S use.]

MOWBRAY: Has the King not come back?

GLOUCESTER: No, he hasn't. I had expected to be half way back to London by now. It shows a distinct lack of consideration to leave us like this when——

YORK: The message may have been important.

ARUNDEL: Yes, it may have been a message of love from the French which had to be answered without delay.

GLOUCESTER: Even that could surely have waited until we had decided the date of Parliament. That was all that remained to be done. They could have answered a dozen letters in this time.

ARUNDEL: I expect that he and Lancaster are deciding what time the sun should rise to-morrow.

MOWBRAY (*looking round, as if he had missed LANCASTER for the first time*): Lancaster? Perhaps I had better go and find them. The King may have forgotten that the business wasn't finished. (*Exit.*)

ARUNDEL (*looking after him*): Or been too long with Lancaster?

GLOUCESTER: Forgotten that the business wasn't finished!

YORK (*pacificaly*): This is the King's first visit to Sheen since the Queen's death. He is bound to find it a little upsetting.

GLOUCESTER: Pose, my dear brother, all pose! Richard likes his moods as becoming as his clothes.

RUTLAND: How dare you say that the King could pretend about a thing like that! You know quite well that all the time he was in Ireland he could never bear to——

MONTAGUE: Rutland! My dear Edward, that gage is hardly worth picking up, surely?

RUTLAND: He shouldn't say such things. He knows they are lies. And to lie about a thing like that—something that——! How can he!

[Enter the KING with LANCASTER and MOWBRAY following.]

RICHARD: I had not forgotten you, my lords, but I had other business.

GLOUCESTER: I should have thought that private business with Lancaster could have waited on public affairs. It is inconvenient enough for me to come all the way to Sheen for a council without wasting time at the end of it.

RICHARD: Be assured, my lord. You will never come to Sheen again.

GLOUCESTER: No?

RICHARD: I have given orders that the place shall be pulled down.

GLOUCESTER: Pull down the palace of Sheen? Are you crazy? What wantonness of destruction is this?

RICHARD: What I destroy is bricks and mortar. What is there in that to make *Gloucester* squeamish? About the date for assembling Parliament, my lords, would a fortnight hence be too soon?

ARUNDEL: The sooner the better. It is time that some attention was paid to England.

RICHARD: If all reports are true, England is well content. I may even yet become popular, it seems.

GLOUCESTER: With Calais just across the water? Let me tell you that "God save Richard" still means "God save Calais" to an Englishman.

RICHARD: To a Londoner, perhaps. But London is not England.

GLOUCESTER: In matters of policy it is.

RICHARD: Oh? Then why does my lord of Arundel waste his time in—Cheshire?

ARUNDEL (*disconcerted*): In Cheshire! I have not been nearer Cheshire than the north of Wales.

RICHARD: Then rumour slanders you most foully, my lord. We must investigate the matter when Parliament meets. Shall we say the 25th? (*As the others agree*) The business will be mainly routine.

GLOUCESTER (*preparing to go*): But not entirely routine, I hope. There will surely be the matter of a foreign alliance. The sooner you marry again the better.

[*There is a moment of complete silence.*]

RICHARD: You expect me to protest. I am going to disappoint you. I am going to marry again. At the earliest possible moment I shall marry the daughter of the King of France.

GLOUCESTER: A French alliance!

ARUNDEL: Marry a child! A child of eight!

YORK: My dear Richard——! You can't be serious.

RICHARD: After fifty years of war we have achieved peace with France. I am going to see to it that that peace is not broken in my lifetime.

YORK: And for that you are prepared to marry a child, too young to be either companion or wife to you? Is it wise, sir? There are other things to be considered. There is—there is the matter of an heir, for instance.

RICHARD (*savagely*): Have my uncles not children enough! (*Recovering*) There is no need for argument, my lords. The affair is practically settled.

GLOUCESTER: And what will the people say when you present them with a child as Queen, and a French brat at that?

MONTAGUE: They'll crowd the streets to see her, and tell each other how sweet she is. You forget the English passion for children, Gloucester. For once you miscalculate.

MOWBRAY (*with menace*): It won't be the last time that Gloucester miscalculates.

LANCASTER: If you look at the matter without prejudice, my lords, I think you must see that the results of this alliance are likely to be very happy for England.

ARUNDEL (*beside himself*): Happy! To have every scullion in France sniggering at us! To know that it is said everywhere that our King is so little a man that he must——

MOWBRAY: Shut your mouth, Arundel, or I'll shut it for you!

ARUNDEL: Yes, Mowbray is famous for his strong arm methods, isn't he. But I'm not afraid of you, Mowbray. I'm not afraid of any of you. I protest against this ridiculous marriage, and the alliance it is supposed to further. We are being made a plaything for France, and no one protests. The King and Lancaster are farming the country, and this council is a mockery.

YORK: My dear Lord Arundel——

ARUNDEL: Be quiet! If you had stomach for anything but food, you would be protesting too. It is iniquitous that this council should be merely an echo for whatever the King and Lancaster choose to speak.

RICHARD: If that is how Lord Arundel feels about the council, the obvious course is resignation.

GLOUCESTER: Why should Arundel resign merely because he disapproves! You refuse free speech to anyone who disagrees

with you.

RICHARD: I have always found you both marvellously free of speech.

RUTLAND: What the King objects to is not free speech, but bad manners.

ARUNDEL: Manners are being the ruin of this country. The mode is everything, and the method nothing. And now you think that free wine and coronation processions will blind the people to what you are doing. But I warn you, you make a mistake. The people will find a coronation little compensation for a French alliance. (*Taking his leave*) With your permission—— (*Exit.*)

YORK: Lord Arundel is hasty, sir. I trust you will treat anything he says as the utterance of his anger, and not of his considered judgment.

RICHARD (*dryly*): I have great experience of Lord Arundel's considered judgment.

GLOUCESTER: Arundel has warned you, and I warn you! You propose to make us a joke for the whole of Europe, do you? You propose to sell us to France, in a marriage treaty, do you? Well, you can't do it. You can't do it, I tell you! You may be lords of Parliament, and sure of your majority in council, but you are not yet lords of what the common people think. I may be helpless here in council, but I am not yet helpless out of it. If you want me I shall be at Pleshy. (*Exit.*)

RICHARD (*wearily*): Well, my dear Lancaster, we seem to have stirred a hornet's nest.

LANCASTER: More buzz than sting, I think.

RICHARD: The buzz is sufficiently distracting.

MONTAGUE: It has been a long day, sir. Gloucester will seem less tiresome after dinner, when you are less tired.

RICHARD (*bitterly*): I am very tough, I find. It amazes me, sometimes, to find how much a human being is capable of surviving. Are those papers ready, Maudelyn?

MAUDELYN: They will be in a moment, sir.

RICHARD: I shall sign them now, then. Don't wait, my lords. Perhaps you can convert the Duke of York to our French alliance, Lancaster.

LANCASTER: I shall try. (*He goes out with YORK, followed by MONTAGUE.*)

[*The others, MOWBRAY and RUTLAND, who, since the DUKE OF GLOUCESTER'S exit, have been talking together, linger at a sign from the KING.*]

MOWBRAY: So Gloucester is bent on making trouble.

RUTLAND: Is he ever anything else? Has he not tried to wreck every idea we ever had as soon as we launched it?

MOWBRAY: We've been very patient, Richard. We should be fools to wait any longer. Say the word, and I shall see that he is quiet in future. I shall do the job myself.

RICHARD: You were always a bloodthirsty wretch, Mowbray.

MOWBRAY: I know how to kill an adder when I see one.

RICHARD: It is of Arundel that I want to speak to you. I think the time is ripe to deal with Arundel. I shall have him arrested to-morrow for treason. Five years ago he judged my friends traitors, on trumped-up charges. We shall not need to invent charges. He has had five years' rope to hang himself with. You two, with John Montague and two or three others, will be his accusers.

RUTLAND: Accuse Arundel! It would please me more than a dukedom.

RICHARD: You may get the dukedom too.

MOWBRAY: But what about Gloucester? Is he going free?

RICHARD (*almost caressingly*): No, not free. No. I have been thinking. He has a great affection for Calais, it seems. He is besotted about it. Now, you are Captain of Calais, Thomas. And Gloucester is an old friend, not to say ally, of yours

MOWBRAY: Oh, Richard, I thought that was forgiven!

RICHARD: So perhaps it would be appropriate if you were to show him Calais. Look after him well and show him the sights. Yes?

MOWBRAY: That is a good idea. Out of England. You are a genius, Richard.

RICHARD: His health has not been good lately, so look after him well. He might succumb unexpectedly.

RUTLAND: But will he go?

RICHARD: I shall go down to Pleshy and bring him back with me. Before we get to London you can join us, Mowbray, and persuade him to go to Calais with you. We can arrange the details at supper to-night.

[*Enter* LANCASTER.]

LANCASTER: Aren't you coming to dinner, Richard?

[*The conspirators melt away.*]

RICHARD: Coming, my good Lancaster, coming. Your impatience for the table does you credit at your age.

LANCASTER (*apprehensively*): Richard, what are you plotting?

RICHARD (*arming LANCASTER to the door*): Nothing but good, my dear uncle, nothing but good.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A street in London, evening, three weeks later. Two MEN conversing. There are passers-by at frequent intervals, and, as they pass, the men pause in their conversation. They are very self-important and mysterious, and are greatly enjoying their solemnity.

FIRST MAN: Well I have it at first hand. My cousin knows the captain of the barge that took him off. He says one of Mowbray's men laughed and said: "Take farewell of the Duke, won't you? It may be a long time before you see him again!"

SECOND MAN: I don't suppose there is any doubt that he was—— (*He nods suggestively.*)

FIRST MAN: Well, as one man of the world to another, what is there for us to think? And there is this other business—— (*He pauses.*)

SECOND MAN: The treason affair, you mean?

FIRST MAN: That is what I mean. The two things hang together, don't they?

SECOND MAN: Well, I must admit I don't approve of hole-and-corner business, but I don't feel like shedding tears over either of them. (*As they are joined by a third MAN*) Well, Hobb?

THIRD MAN: Discussing the events of the day? What do *you* think of them?

FIRST MAN: What is one to think? What is one to think?

THIRD MAN: It's pretty obvious, I should say, putting two and two together.

FIRST MAN: That's what *I* say. My cousin knows the captain of the barge that took them off, and he says that one of Mowbray's men laughed and said: "Take farewell of the Duke, won't you? It will be a long time before you see him again." What are you to make of that?

SECOND MAN: Well, I can't help thinking that neither of them was any loss. If everything that You Know Who had done in his time was as sensible as this, he would get more people to cry, "God save him."

THIRD MAN: Yes, the old man was a bad lot. And so was the other, in a way. But that doesn't alter the fact that—well——

FIRST MAN: Did you hear that a Certain Person went to Pleshy himself, and led Someone into an ambush?

THIRD MAN: No! Is that true? Did you hear anything definite as to what happened at Calais?

FIRST MAN: No, no; nobody knows that, of course. We can only put two and two together. But, as men of the world, I don't think it is difficult to——

[Enter, from opposite ends of the street, two WOMEN. One carries a sack of loaves slung over her shoulder, the other is carrying a basket of vegetables in front of her. As they pass on opposite sides of the street they notice each other, but are both too much burdened to stop.]

WOMAN WITH LOAVES (*calling cheerfully as they pass*): Hullo, Meg! All well? So they've murdered the Duke of Gloucester at last!

WOMAN WITH VEGETABLES: That they have! And good riddance, I say. Did they cut his throat?

WOMAN WITH LOAVES (*her voice rising to still more power as they draw apart*): No, hit him over the head, they do say. Heard about Lord Arundel?

WOMAN WITH VEGETABLES: Who hasn't? I don't give much for his chances.

WOMAN WITH LOAVES: Not me! What times! And flour gone up a halfpenny!

[They go out at opposite sides. The three MEN stare after them in silence.]

FIRST MAN (*after a pause*): I always said that women had no discretion.

SECOND MAN: *Nor* accuracy.

THIRD MAN: *Nor* a sense of proportion.

[They turn to their gossiping again.]

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A balcony in the King's Palace of Westminster, overlooking the hall; three years later. Night. Music from below and the sounds of a social gathering. Two PAGES leaning by the railings and watching the scene in the hall.

FIRST PAGE: I hate parties. The palace is never one's own until they are over. And then there is the clearing up.

SECOND PAGE: Did you see the King's face when I spilt the sauce over that fat old boy in the leather coat?

FIRST PAGE: Talking of fat, Henry is putting on weight, isn't he? He must do himself well on those crusades.

SECOND PAGE: He does himself well always. Hadn't he seven children before he was thirty?

FIRST PAGE: I think I can hear his voice booming from here. (*Peering in an effort to locate HENRY*) Between his voice and the children I don't wonder his wife died.

SECOND PAGE: It's fun up here. You can see what everyone is doing. Now they're going to dance. Why do you think the De Courcy woman wears purple?

FIRST PAGE (*still peering into a different corner of the hall*): Look! They're quarrelling!

SECOND PAGE: Who? Where?

FIRST PAGE (*pointing*): Henry. He's quarrelling with Mowbray.

SECOND PAGE: So they are. Goodness! *Really* quarreling.

[*As the sound of the quarrel grows, the expressions on the faces of the PAGES change from excited interest to dismay.*]

FIRST PAGE: They're coming up here! (*They back away a little from the railing.*) Let's go. Quick!

[*They go out as MOWBRAY and HENRY, flushed and furious, come up from the hall, followed immediately by LANCASTER and RUTLAND, who are endeavouring to keep them apart.*]

MOWBRAY: Call me a traitor, would you! Liar that you are! What are you trying to do? Spoil my standing with the King? You can't do it, let me tell you. The King is my friend.

HENRY: You'll find out how much your friend he is if I tell a tale or two.

MOWBRAY: Do you think he'd believe your lies? When did he ever trust you, Henry? If you weren't Lancaster's son he wouldn't even tolerate you.

HENRY: And you think he trusts you, you turncoat? Well, try him. Just try him.

LANCASTER: Are you crazy, Henry, to stir up trouble in this way?

HENRY: It was Mowbray who stirred it, not I!

[*Enter the KING.*]

RICHARD: What is the meaning of this? You may not love each other as old allies should, but must you brawl in public, and under my roof?

LANCASTER (*in great anxiety*): Take no notice, sir. They have both drunk more than is good for them. They don't know what——

MOWBRAY: Do you suggest that I am drunk? I am sober enough to know that your son has accused me of plotting against the King. Is Henry going to take refuge behind the excuse that he is drunk, or is he going to answer my challenge and fight like a gentleman?

HENRY: Of course I am going to fight! When and where you please. You cannot call me a liar and go unharmed for it.

RICHARD: Will someone explain?

HENRY: Yes, sir. I'll explain. We were riding up from Brentford together about a month ago, and your faithful servant Mowbray tried to persuade me that you had never forgiven either of us, and that our best course was to band together for

our common protection.

MOWBRAY: You lie! It was you who made that suggestion. Why should I say a thing like that? I am Earl Marshal of England and the King is my friend. You are a liar, Henry.

[He strikes him deliberately across the face with his glove.]

HENRY: And you are both a liar and a hypocrite.

[He picks up the glove.]

LANCASTER: Henry, for God's sake, don't! You are digging your own grave.

RICHARD: A charming scene! And so you fight, do you?

LANCASTER: Forbid them, sir. There is no need to take an evening quarrel so seriously.

RICHARD: You think not? But it was not to-night that the conversation they speak of took place. They both admit that there was such a conversation. Their quarrel is merely who said what. If they choose to fight, let them. Why should I prevent it?

LANCASTER: For your own fair name, sir.

RICHARD: For my name! How does it concern me?

LANCASTER: It concerns you because such a fight can have but one result. You, and I, and everyone else, know that Mowbray can beat my son. If you let this matter be decided by a duel, it will be said that you arranged the affair.

RICHARD: All my life rumour has flayed me; my skin has grown hardened.

HENRY (*to* LANCASTER): How dare you say that I cannot beat Mowbray!

LANCASTER: You know very well that you have never beaten Mowbray in the lists since you grew up.

RICHARD: It is some time since they were matched.

LANCASTER: You are determined to have this fight?

RICHARD: If they do not fight, what is the alternative?

LANCASTER: The alternative is to overlook what is merely an evening quarrel occasioned by too much wine and the consciousness of old enmity.

RICHARD: Old alliance, you mean, surely? Come, Lancaster, you know that these two are as sober as you or I. They are quite seriously accusing each other of a grave offence against peace and honour. If they want to fight, I shall do nothing to prevent it. This thing must have an issue. You must see that. I will have neither my Court nor my country turned into a bear-garden when it seems good to my subjects. There must be an end to this bickering. That is all, my lords.

[MOWBRAY and HENRY go out, but LANCASTER lingers.]

Well, old friend and enemy? What is it now?

LANCASTER: You know very well, Richard. I forgave you for what you did to Gloucester, because it was, in a way, a just retribution; although it was iniquitous that you should have been the means of it. But this is wanton. Henry may have harmed you once——

RICHARD: You think he would not harm me again? Well, perhaps not. But do you seriously think that I set Mowbray on to this?

LANCASTER: I know you didn't. Chance has delivered them both into your hands.

[RICHARD looks suddenly and intently at LANCASTER.]

RICHARD (*after a pause*): You are a clever man, Lancaster.

LANCASTER: It doesn't matter to me what you intend to do with Mowbray. All that concerns me is that he will kill my son if they are allowed to fight.

RICHARD: You don't flatter Henry. It was tactless of you to decry his fighting powers. He is very vain of his talent in that respect.

LANCASTER: You never liked Henry much, did you, Richard?

RICHARD: No, he was such a show-off when he was small, and he never grew out of it.

LANCASTER: Yes. He is not very lovable. A solid person; stupid, a little—but dependable. It is a type that the Englishman admires and understands, though, Richard. You would do well to be careful.

RICHARD: Is this a threat?

LANCASTER: My dear Richard, have I ever threatened you, even when I was in a position to do so? And just now I am a suppliant, not an overlord. I am merely warning you of what the consequences may be; a little because there are many things in you that I like and admire, but mostly because my son is in danger. I neither like nor admire my son particularly, but he is my *son*. Richard, if I have ever served you well in times when you needed service greatly, remember it now and forbid this duel.

RICHARD: You have certainly served me well, and I have always acknowledged it.

LANCASTER: Your gifts have been princely, I know. I have been well recompensed. You do not have to remind me. But I have never *begged* for anything before.

RICHARD (*after a pause*): The alternative is exile. Ten years' exile.

LANCASTER: Ten years! It is a reprieve for Henry, but not for me. I am not as young as I was, and my health—— Ten years —— (*He considers.*)

RICHARD (*conversationally*): Mowbray goes for life.

LANCASTER (*astounded*): For life! (*A pause.*) I see. You have a long memory, Richard.

RICHARD: An excellent memory.

LANCASTER: But ten years' exile for Henry punishes me more than Henry.

RICHARD: Very well, we shall make it six. That will be no hardship for anyone that I can see. Henry is more often out of England than in it.

LANCASTER: Thank you. That may be still too long for me, but I cannot complain. Henry has put himself in the wrong, and you have taken your chance. I wish you could have found it in your heart to be generous over this, Richard; to have overlooked the whole thing.

RICHARD: There is no question of either generosity or the reverse when one pays debts.

LANCASTER: Anne might have counselled generosity.

RICHARD (*furious*): Be quiet! How dare you, Lancaster? Even you cannot say that to me.

LANCASTER: I beg your pardon.

[*Enter a PAGE.*

PAGE: The Earl of Derby and the Earl of Nottingham wish the King's approval of the day they have chosen for the contest.

RICHARD: Are Lord Derby and Lord Nottingham still in the palace?

PAGE: They are in the ante-room, sir.

RICHARD: Ask them to come here.

[*Exit* PAGE.

LANCASTER: I am sorry, Richard. I shouldn't have said that.

RICHARD (*still in pain*): No.

[*Enter* MOWBRAY and HENRY.

I have decided that such a duel as you contemplate will have a bad effect both in London and in the country generally. I forbid it.

BOTH: But, sir——!

RICHARD: That is enough. I forbid it. But do not imagine that I am going to put up with your factiousness. There will be no peace for anyone while either of you is still in this country. I am sending you both abroad. You, Henry, will leave England for six years. And you, Mowbray (*MOWBRAY allows a faintly conspiratorial smile to appear*), will leave England and never come back. (*MOWBRAY'S smile vanishes in puzzlement.*)

[HENRY *is about to burst into protest, but* LANCASTER *restrains him.*

Nothing but my generosity restrains me from arraigning you both before a court of law, when your fates would probably be inconceivably harsher. You may go now. I shall expect you both to take formal leave of me before you depart from England. Lancaster, you will be responsible for your son's acceptance of his punishment.

LANCASTER: I will. If you will permit me, sir, I too will take leave of you now.

RICHARD: Take leave? Where are you going?

LANCASTER: At my age the life of Courts is upsetting. I think a quiet existence at one of my manors will be more greatly to my mind in future.

RICHARD: Very well. Let it be as you please. When you want to come to Court you know that you will be welcome.

[LANCASTER *takes his leave and goes out with* HENRY, *but* MOWBRAY *lingers.*

Well, my dear Thomas, have you grown roots?

MOWBRAY: Richard, you were bluffing, weren't you? What do you really mean me to do?

RICHARD: I thought that I had made that perfectly plain. As soon as you have settled your estates to your satisfaction, you leave England for good.

MOWBRAY: But you can't mean that, Richard! You can't! What have I done? Because Henry and I quarrelled is surely no reason to punish me? I've been your friend for years now. You can't believe the things he said. You can't believe that I plotted against you. Haven't I been your right hand? Didn't I help you with Gloucester? Didn't I?

RICHARD: And who more appropriate?

MOWBRAY: What do you mean? I don't understand you, Richard. Is a sentence of exile to be my reward? Indefinite exile! Think of it! To leave everything I have in England, and not know whether I shall ever see it again! It's unthinkable.

RICHARD: You thought it a very happy fate for Robert de Vere.

MOWBRAY: Robert de Vere! (*A pause.*) Oh! (*There is in the half-whispered exclamation a whole world of understanding and despair.*)

RICHARD: There are surely worse fates than exile, my friend. Simon Burley—you remember him? a charming old man—

died on Tower Hill, an ugly death. And Archbishop Neville, you knew him; he starved to death in a country parish. And there was Bramber, and Tressillian—— But why go on? It is a depressing subject. Beside such fates as these, a well-to-do exile seems almost happy, doesn't it? You have your fortune, and the world is yours to choose from; you have little to complain of, it seems to me. (*As Mowbray says nothing*) Well, are you dumb as well as rooted?

MOWBRAY: You take my breath away.

RICHARD: No, no. That is just what I am pointing out. You may breathe until you die of old age, in any country in the world but England. Give thanks to God, Thomas Mowbray, and take your luck as it comes. You have never known what it was to suffer misfortune. All your life you have been friends with the party in power. You could hardly expect such luck to last for ever!

MOWBRAY: So you never trusted me, Richard.

RICHARD (*preparing to go*): My dear Thomas, the only persons I trust are two thousand archers, paid regularly every Friday. (*Exit.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE V

A room in the lodgings of the EARL OF DERBY, in Paris, three years later.

The table is strewn with small pieces of armour which HENRY, humming tunelessly, is engaged in polishing. Among the armour is a flask of wine.

At the moment he is burnishing a gauntlet, con amore.

Enter a PAGE.

HENRY: Well? (*Exhibiting the gauntlet*) There's what I call a polish. That's what my gauntlets should look like, you young sluggard! (*Dabbing a forefinger at the joints*) No rust in the hinges and (*flexing his fingers*) a shine on the fingers that blinds the other fellow when your hand moves. See? Well, what do you want?

PAGE: A kind of priest person has arrived in Paris to see Lord Derby. He says he comes from England.

HENRY: From England, eh? Let him come in.

PAGE: He is very shabby, sir. Had I better ask him his business?

[ARUNDEL, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, *appears behind the PAGE.*

CANTERBURY: Forgive my intrusion, my lord. I feared to entrust my credentials to your page, and my habit is not—reassuring.

HENRY (*peering at him*): Well, I'm——! (*He motions to the PAGE, who goes out.*) Canterbury! My dear Archbishop! "A sort of priest person!" (*He laughs.*) What are you doing in France, and in that get-up? Are you on pilgrimage?

CANTERBURY: Only to you, my lord.

HENRY: Since when has Henry Derby been a saint!

CANTERBURY: I am not so much a pilgrim as an ambassador.

HENRY: Ambassadors are sent to princes, my lord, not to poor exiles.

CANTERBURY (*glancing round*): Your exile, I am delighted to observe, appears not too greatly uncomfortable.

HENRY: Not bad, not bad. It would have been more comfortable if I could have married the Duke of Berry's daughter. Richard was a dog in the manger to object to that.

CANTERBURY: When the King sent you into exile it was no part of his plan that you should make yourself popular in France.

HENRY: What did he expect me to do? Die of the sulks like Thomas Mowbray? They give you very good hunting in France.

CANTERBURY: The King has always looked upon France as his own preserve.

HENRY: Yes. I suppose he would have had me turned out of France too, if my father didn't happen to be Duke of Lancaster.

CANTERBURY (*after a pause*): My lord, you—are the Duke of Lancaster.

HENRY: Do you—— Is my father dead?

CANTERBURY: That is what I came to tell you.

HENRY (*after a pause*): We didn't always see eye to eye, you know. (*Another pause.*) He had a fine seat on a horse. So you are an ambassador! But why did Richard choose you?

CANTERBURY: I do not come from the King, my lord. I represent all those persons with whom you have been corresponding in England. (*As HENRY moves abruptly*) Don't be alarmed, my lord. Your cause is mine.

HENRY (*heartily and quite without irony, as one sufferer to another*): Yes, I heard that he had dismissed you.

CANTERBURY: You do not rate my motives very highly.

HENRY: I'm a practical man, my lord.

CANTERBURY (*with a little bow*): I shall endeavour to keep the conversation at a practical level. The King says that you shall stay in exile. I am here to suggest that you return to England.

HENRY (*playing with a gauntlet*): It is a very kind suggestion, but the King has ten thousand excellent reasons against it.

CANTERBURY: The King is going to Ireland.

HENRY: Oh? More feasts to the charming Irish?

CANTERBURY: No. This time it is a visit of retribution.

HENRY: Oh, have the Irish been misbehaving again?

CANTERBURY: Very gravely. They have killed Roger Mortimer.

[*The hand which is playing with the gauntlet is suddenly still.*]

HENRY (*after a pause*): It was tactless of them to kill the King's heir. So Richard is going to Ireland?

CANTERBURY (*watching the hand*): Yes. He is taking all the available troops with him.

HENRY (*with an effort at lightness*): An expensive expedition!

CANTERBURY: Very. But the Lancaster estates are to provide the expenses.

HENRY (*throwing down the gauntlet*): No! No! After his promises to my father? He wouldn't dare. What excuse has he?

CANTERBURY: His excuse is that he promised for Lancaster's peace of mind. And that, he says, is now assured.

HENRY: I always despised Richard, but I didn't think him capable of *this* iniquity.

CANTERBURY: Say, rather, of this folly.

HENRY: Folly?

CANTERBURY: To make you from a mere exile into a martyr. No wrong rouses your Englishman to such sympathy as disinheritance. The King has committed in his time many follies, but this is—stupidity!

HENRY (*slowly*): Yes, it is—stupidity. (*Puzzled, almost enquiring*) He used not to be stupid.

CANTERBURY (*thoughtlessly*): So even you see that?

HENRY: Even I?

CANTERBURY (*amending*): After some years of exile. You realise the change. What is destroying Richard, my lord, is something more potent than his enemies. Success. Remember this, Henry Lancaster, in days to come: it is not the possession of power that offends the multitude but the flaunting of it. You may have all earth for your footstool if you refrain from—prodding it with your toe.

HENRY: So Richard has overreached himself.

CANTERBURY: Yes, the people look askance. He takes no one's life, but everyone's peace of mind. He holds England in his two hands and laughs like a wicked child, and men pause and hold their breath, not knowing what he may do with his toy. They hope that someone may rescue it before it is too late. Do you come back to England, my lord?

HENRY: I should like to be sure of my welcome.

CANTERBURY: I bring you the promise of two thousand men at the moment you land, and ten thousand volunteers will be yours in a week.

HENRY: Promises are cheap.

CANTERBURY (*producing a document*): Promises, as you say, are—easy. But what a man puts his hand to he is usually ready to fulfil.

HENRY (*glancing down the list of signatures*): But I have never written to—— Some of these are Richard's friends.

CANTERBURY: He owes money to all of them, and they begin to lose hope. They think that you may collect for them—with interest.

HENRY: For services rendered. I see.

CANTERBURY (*as HENRY appears lost in thought*): Well, my lord?

HENRY: My father—did he send me any message?

CANTERBURY: The messengers from your father are half a day behind me.

HENRY: We didn't always see eye to eye, you know. It's a funny world, isn't it! We belonged to the wrong fathers, Richard and I. In his heart, you know, Lancaster always liked Richard better than he did me. (*Ignoring CANTERBURY'S protest*) They talked the same language.

CANTERBURY: You certainly should have been the Black Prince's son; a soldier, a man to stir the nation's sleeping pride. But it is not yet too late for you to save England's prestige. If you come back with me now, my lord, there is a great future in front of you.

HENRY: If I come back with you now, it is to claim my estates.

CANTERBURY: Yes, yes. That is understood. And whatever greatness the future may hold for you, you will owe to the fact that your cause was just.

HENRY: To the fact that Richard was foolish, you mean. (*He pours out two glasses of wine.*)

CANTERBURY (*as HENRY pushes a glass across to him*): Well, my lord?

HENRY (*giving him a toast*): To the folly of princes!

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

A room in Conway Castle, six months later. SIR JOHN MONTAGUE, alone.

[*Enter MAUDELYN, as if from a journey.*]

MAUDELYN: Sir John! He's here, sir. Aren't you coming down? (*MONTAGUE takes no notice. He appears to be sunk in a stupor.*) Sir John!

MONTAGUE: Oh, God, I wish I were dead!

MAUDELYN: But it's the King, sir.

MONTAGUE: I know, I know.

MAUDELYN: But there's no one here to welcome him but you, sir. You must come down! Please, sir! We've been travelling since dawn, and he is tired and hungry.

[*Enter RICHARD, alone.*]

RICHARD (*amiably*): Well, my friend, are things so bad that you haven't even a greeting for me?

[*Exit MAUDELYN.*]

MONTAGUE: Oh, God, I wish I were dead. I've failed, Richard.

RICHARD: So it would seem. I have come all the way north through Wales without seeing a single man wearing the White Hart. All the more reason that I should see at least one on the doorstep of Conway. Come, John, pull yourself together and tell me. What has become of the Cheshire men I sent you from Ireland to raise?

MONTAGUE: I did raise them—quite a likely-looking lot. And because Henry was coming north fast, I took them into Wales, to march south through the mountains to meet you and the Irish army. Bristol way, somewhere. But Chester surrendered to Henry, and when my Cheshire lot heard that they just melted away. Deserted in bands of twenty and thirty at a time. I am left with only my own men.

RICHARD: Poor John! And so you have been holding your head for a week, wondering how you were going to tell me. Cheer up, you've told me, and I haven't exploded. Things aren't hopeless yet, you know. There is still the Irish army. I left it with Edward at Bristol. I thought that I should be happier with my own Cheshire men. We shall go south and join them as soon as you have given me the meal which you haven't yet offered me.

MONTAGUE: But—there isn't any Irish army.

RICHARD: What do you mean?

MONTAGUE: They've gone over to Henry.

RICHARD: The men I had in Ireland! But Rutland! Edward? He had twenty thousand men when I left him.

MONTAGUE: He sent a messenger to say that there was nothing for it but surrender. It would have been useless to fight, he said; the men had no heart for it.

RICHARD: Yes; that has a familiar sound. It is a fatal thing to be my friend, isn't it?

MONTAGUE (*with more generosity than conviction*): You can't blame Edward altogether. York had been forced to give way, and he just followed his father's example.

RICHARD: I don't blame him. Why should I? And so we have no army?

MONTAGUE: No. I have scoured all the Welsh fortresses—Flint, and Holt, and Beaumaris—but there is no help there.

RICHARD: No help anywhere, it seems. There is one thing you haven't done, John.

MONTAGUE: What!

RICHARD: You haven't said: "I told you so." It was a mistake to twist Henry's tail any further.

MONTAGUE: Why did you, Richard?

RICHARD: Oh, I don't know. What does it matter now. This looks like the end.

MONTAGUE: You take it very calmly.

RICHARD: I am so tired. My life has lost direction, John; and I have no longer anything for compass. We had a vision once—Anne and I. We made it come true, too; as near as visions may be true. And then Anne—— But for me there was still a purpose; a debt to pay. The prospect of that payment filled the years for me. And in the end I paid it. (*Under his breath*) Gloucester, Arundel, Mowbray, Henry. It is intoxicating to achieve one's purpose, John. There were times when I wanted to stop the very passer-by and say: "I have done it! I have done what I set out to do!" It was so heady a draught that I may have drunk too deep, perhaps. (*Coming to the surface*) Sweet reason has not been my ruling characteristic these last months, has it? Oh, well. The only question that remains to us now is whether I go and surrender myself with all the dignity of our combined forces, or whether I sit at Conway like a snake-scared bird waiting to be taken. While we are discussing the momentous question, perhaps you will give me something to eat and drink? Wales may be picturesque, but it is a sorry——

[*There is a noise of arrival outside. Enter MAUDELYN.*]

MAUDELYN: It's the Archbishop of Canterbury, sir.

RICHARD: Alone?

MAUDELYN: With only two followers.

RICHARD: A deputation from Henry! Let him come in.

[*Exit MAUDELYN.*]

I seem fated not to eat to-day. Oh, smile, John, smile, for God's sake. Is the approach of the Archbishop not sufficient gloom?

MONTAGUE: What do you think—— (*He has not sufficient courage to finish "he has come to say."*)

RICHARD: I think that it *would* be Arundel's brother who came on a mission like this.

[*Enter MAUDELYN with the ARCHBISHOP, and two followers.*]

RICHARD: Good day, my lord.

CANTERBURY: Good day, sir. I come on rather an unhappy mission, and since I am an ambassador I trust that you will treat all that I have to say as the utterance of another, made through my mouth. I come in fact, from your cousin Henry.

RICHARD: I fail to see that you should apologise for that. Being ambassador *for* Henry is not worse than being ambassador *to* him. You were the person who went into France to invite him to England, weren't you?

CANTERBURY: I was, sir, I was. But there again I went as the ambassador of the English people, and not in any personal capacity.

RICHARD: My poor Archbishop! It must be a sad fate never to have the chance of speaking for oneself. But speak for Henry, and we shall take care to blame Henry for all the impertinences.

CANTERBURY: The Duke of Lancaster, sir——

RICHARD: Who! Oh, yes—Henry. Go on.

CANTERBURY: The Duke of Lancaster, sir, would have you know that he has come into England, not wantonly, to stir up trouble, but at the request of influential nobles and with the consent and approbation of the common people and of all law-abiding citizens, to ensure that this country shall be better governed than it has been for the last twenty years.

[MONTAGUE *moves impulsively, but RICHARD restrains him.*

RICHARD: Go on, my lord.

CANTERBURY: The Duke of Lancaster has no desire for war, and if you, sir, are willing to surrender your person to him he undertakes that no harm shall befall you while in his care.

MONTAGUE: What guarantee have we of that?

CANTERBURY: The Duke of Lancaster suggests that the King should accompany me and my two servants, along with his own household and retainers, to Flint, and from there ride with the Duke and the other nobles, honourably and openly to London.

MONTAGUE (*whose attention has been called by MAUDELYN to something beyond the window*): You say you came here alone from Flint with only two followers?

CANTERBURY: With only the two who await me now.

MONTAGUE (*pointing out of the window*): And what are these, then, may I ask? What are these?

CANTERBURY: These what? (*At MONTAGUE'S tone*) Really, Montague!

MONTAGUE: These points of light among the trees?

CANTERBURY: I really don't know. The sun is shining on something bright, I expect.

MONTAGUE: Yes, on something bright! Do you think we are fools? That is the sun shining on helmets and spear-points. You and your two followers!

RICHARD: Come, come, Montague. Let us not be hasty. We can hardly accuse the Archbishop, who is not only an ambassador but a holy man of God, of deliberately concealing the truth. We must accept his word for it that the points of light are merely—points of light, my lord?

MAUDELYN: Don't, sir, don't! You are walking into a trap.

RICHARD: Fie on you both! Have we not the ambassador's word that we ride honourably and openly to London?

CANTERBURY (*uneasily*): I am merely delivering the message with which I was entrusted, sir.

RICHARD: You have made that amply clear. Am I allowed to make conditions?

CANTERBURY: I am to use my own discretion.

RICHARD: What! So much licence to a mere mouthpiece! Well, let us be thankful for it. My only condition in giving myself up to my cousin is that safe conduct will be granted to my friend, Sir John Montague, and my secretary, John Maudelyn. That they shall be free to come and go as they will. No rides to London, honourable or otherwise, for them.

[*The others protest that they are going with him in any case, but he motions them to silence.*

Well, my lord?

CANTERBURY: I think I may say that that will be granted.

RICHARD (*sharply*): Don't think! I want an answer to that. It is to be your word for their safety.

CANTERBURY: Then I give you my word, sir.

RICHARD: There is one other matter. I want a promise that the Queen's household at Windsor will remain unchanged for the moment. That the attendants and friends that she knows may be allowed to remain with her, and that she shall be in no way disturbed or frightened.

CANTERBURY: Sir, we should never dream——

RICHARD: Will you give me an answer? Is the Queen to be left unmolested? Do you promise that?

CANTERBURY: Certainly, sir, with all my heart.

RICHARD: Then we shall ride with you to meet Henry. But first I hope you will join us in a meal.

CANTERBURY: I'm afraid there will not be time for a meal.

RICHARD: Time!

CANTERBURY: It is advisable that we travel by daylight.

RICHARD: What are you afraid of? (*Bitterly*) My armies? (*As CANTERBURY does not answer*) Be assured, my lord. I shall ride with you to meet my cousin. But I have no mind to go fasting.

CANTERBURY: I very much regret—— Perhaps you can eat as you go. We must set out at once.

RICHARD (*indignant*): *Must!* (*Recovering*) I see. May the King invite his grace of Canterbury to drink with him? Maudelyn, bring some wine. (*Exit MAUDELYN.*) Perhaps, after all, you are right, my lord, in so firmly refusing our hospitality. Judging entirely by appearances I suspect that Sir John's larder will not come up to Lambeth standards. But his cellar is always good. That was a good wine you gave us last year. A little light, perhaps, but very fragrant. Italian, was it?

CANTERBURY: I—I don't remember.

RICHARD: But you shouldn't have served it in those goblets, you know. Delightful cups they were—a benediction to the eye—but so bad for the wine! Your small talk is not as good as usual, my lord.

[*Enter MAUDELYN with three cups of wine. He offers the tray to the King.*

RICHARD *is automatically about to take his cup when he pauses.*

RICHARD: Let the Archbishop choose his.

CANTERBURY (*stiffly*): I hope you don't think, sir, that——

RICHARD: You are still my guest, my lord, and as a good host it would pain me to force upon you something which all your life you have so signally avoided.

CANTERBURY: What is that, sir?

RICHARD: A risk.^[1] What shall we drink to? Let me give you—My cousin, your master.

[CANTERBURY, *after a moment's surprise, drinks. MAUDELYN puts down his cup, untouched.*

CANTERBURY: It was not a fortunate toast, sir.

RICHARD: Why not?

CANTERBURY: Canterbury has no master who is not king. Shall we go?

RICHARD: Tell them to saddle the horses again, Maudelyn.

[*Exit MAUDELYN.*

CANTERBURY (*as RICHARD makes no movement*): Will you make ready, sir?

RICHARD: I have lost my wardrobe. You will not have to wait even for that.

[*He turns to the door.*

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

A room in the Tower of London, a month later. RICHARD, alone, with a tray of food, untouched, beside him.

Enter MAUDELYN.

MAUDELYN: You haven't touched your food, sir.

RICHARD (*amiably*): I'm not hungry, Maudelyn. And it is hardly the kind of food to stimulate appetite, is it?

MAUDELYN: No, it isn't very pleasant, sir. I'm sorry. I did protest when they gave it to me, but——

RICHARD: Don't protest, Maudelyn, for heaven's sake. I don't want you to get into trouble. It would be dreadful if they took my last friend from me. How does it feel to be butler, body-servant, nursemaid, and bottle-washer, as well as secretary?

MAUDELYN: I like it, sir. If the circumstances were happier, there is no fate I should like better.

RICHARD: You may even have to mend my clothes, presently. Look at these shoes. To lose one's kingdom may be humbling, but to be down at heel is utter humiliation. I had no idea that when you had only one set of clothes they wore out so quickly. (*Rising*) Ah, I'm stiff yet. Riding that awful little pony was as bad as riding a fence. It was like Henry to think of that pony. Even his revenges lack vision. A tradesman, Henry. Did you see him as we came through London? He ducked his head to each blessing like a street singer catching coins in a hat. I got no blessing. Did you hear what they called me? Traitor! It was a strange word to choose, surely?

MAUDELYN: Does it matter, sir, what the mob shouts?

RICHARD: It shouldn't, but it hurts. They counted me a friend once. But I lost their friendship when I gave my other hand to France. They never quite forgave me that.

MAUDELYN: It made me sick at heart to look at them, and know that grown men should make such a rabble.

RICHARD: They are children, Maudelyn, such children; the sport of every knave with a glib tongue. They will go on being gulled; and beauty will go on being at their mercy. (*His eye lighting again on his shoes*) I might set a new fashion, of course; shoes with no toes. Would it be effective, do you think?

MAUDELYN: If you please, sir——

RICHARD: Well, Maudelyn, what is it that requires so much effort to say? Do you want—to leave me? Is that it?

MAUDELYN: Oh, no, sir! God forbid! It's just that—well, I noticed your shoes, sir. And I thought, sir—I have a spare pair that look a little better than these. If you would care— (*He pauses.*)

RICHARD: If I should care! But don't be rash, Maudelyn. You don't know where your next pair of shoes is coming from.

MAUDELYN: They are not very beautiful, of course. If you would rather not—I just thought—

RICHARD: Maudelyn, I love you. Go and get the shoes before Henry comes.

MAUDELYN: I have them outside, sir. (*Picking up the tray, and carrying it to the door*) I brought them—well, just to be ready, in case—

RICHARD (*gently*): It was almost as difficult to tell me about the shoes as it was to tell me the news of Radcot Bridge, wasn't it?

MAUDELYN: Well, they're not very beautiful shoes, sir.

RICHARD: At any rate, I didn't hit you this time.

[MAUDELYN *puts the tray outside and comes back with the shoes.*

MAUDELYN: You see, sir; they're very plain.

RICHARD: They are ravishing. You should get a principality for this, my friend.

[MAUDELYN *takes off the worn shoes and puts on the new ones.*

Are you crying, Maudelyn?

MAUDELYN: No, sir, I have a cold.

RICHARD (*patting his shoulder*): Get rid of it. (*Surveying the shoes*) Now you can tell them that I am ready to receive Henry, if it is convenient for him.

MAUDELYN: The Duke of Lancaster is not staying in the Tower, sir. He has gone to the Palace at Westminster.

RICHARD: So Henry has settled at Westminster? I'm afraid the decorations will be wasted on him.

MAUDELYN: They are expecting the Duke at any moment, though, sir. At least, that is what it looked like. There was a—

RICHARD: An atmosphere. I know.

[*The door is flung open without warning and HENRY comes in, followed by the ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY and the DUKE OF YORK.*

I know that I am your prisoner, Henry. But it might have been a little more graceful to announce your arrival. You should learn from the Archbishop how to do an evil thing gracefully. (*To CANTERBURY*) Good day, my lord. Are you ambassador to-day, or do you for once represent the Archbishop of Canterbury? (*To YORK*) Good day, my lord. I am glad that your son is safe. Will you tell him so from me?

YORK: You must believe me, Richard, when I say that all this is inexpressibly painful for me.

RICHARD (*soothing*): Yes, yes. It is a little painful for me too.

YORK: In unprecedentedly difficult times I have done as it seemed to me best for all. I hope that you will not blame Edward, or me, for the course we have felt impelled to take.

RICHARD: I have said already that I am glad your son is safe, and I mean what I say. It occurs to me to be glad, too, that your son is safe, Henry. Rumour has never been kind to me, but I shudder to think what it would have said if Lancaster's heir had not come safely back from Ireland.

HENRY: All this is beside the point.

RICHARD (*with an echo of HENRY'S manner*): Yes, yes, let us not waste time. To business, to business.

CANTERBURY: We have come, sir, bringing a formal deed of abdication which, if you are still willing, we require you to sign.

RICHARD: And if I am not willing? What then? Don't be distressed, my lord; I shall sign. The cares of government I shall turn over to my cousin with thankfulness. As to the kingdom and the glory, I have had enough of them. (*He nods to HENRY, as if he had spoken.*) Too much, perhaps, as you say. I may have been extravagant in my own household. But when they are financing your next war, Henry, they may remember my tournaments with regret. Well, let me see the deed.

[*The ARCHBISHOP lays the paper before him, and RICHARD scans it.*

(*Slowly*) "Insufficient and useless." "Unworthy to reign." It is not a generous document, is it? "Tyranny." Have I been a tyrant? Curious. I never thought of myself as a tyrant. At least no tyrant has shed less blood. Nor been so tolerant of others' modes and minds. I have never persecuted anyone for their own good. I leave that to you, Henry. What the towns will save in feasts to the King they will spend on the burning of heretics. Have you a pen, Maudelyn?

MAUDELYN (*in a strangled voice*): No, sir.

[*RICHARD looks up, surprised. His expression softens at sight of his servant's face.*

CANTERBURY: I have one here, sir.

RICHARD: You have forgotten nothing, have you, my lord? (*He muses over the paper again.*) Henry, when I gave myself up to you in Wales, I made conditions which you accepted but saw fit not to keep.

HENRY: I have explained already that your guard was as much for your own safety against the people as from any motive of imprisonment.

RICHARD (*pityingly*): You were never very ingenious, Henry. (*In his normal tones*) Before I sign this abdication I want to be reassured in the presence of these witnesses that the conditions will be carried out. That I shall be set free—strange as it may seem, life is still desirable (*he smiles faintly at that, as at a memory*)—that the Queen will not be further molested, and that I shall be granted an adequate livelihood. You agree to these three things on condition that I sign this paper?

HENRY: I agree.

RICHARD: And you, my lords?

YORK and CANTERBURY: We agree.

[*RICHARD signs the deed. The ARCHBISHOP takes the document into his keeping.*

HENRY: I think it will be for your own safety if——

RICHARD: What! More measures for my safety! What now?

HENRY: If you leave London for a time. I suggest that you go, with a suitable escort, to the north. Let us say to Pomfret Castle.

RICHARD (*in sudden fear*): No!

CANTERBURY: I think you will find it more judicious to take the Duke of Lancaster's advice, sir.

RICHARD: No, I tell you! I shall leave London, yes. Do you think I want to experience again the hatred in the streets, the sneers, the lying accusations flung at me like mud? Yes, I shall leave London, but I will not leave it a prisoner. I know your suitable escorts, Henry. I suffered one all the way from Wales. I shall leave London with my friends, freely, as you promised.

HENRY: It does not suit us that you should join your friends in London.

CANTERBURY: You must see, sir, that trouble before the coronation is to be avoided at all costs.

RICHARD: I have no wish to make trouble. The best way to prevent it is to let me join my friends as soon as possible, otherwise they may plot to secure me a crown which I have freely given up.

HENRY: They may plot, but without your physical presence they will have no following. You would be well advised to go to the north for some time.

RICHARD: I shall go north in any case, but not under your escort. Why should I?

HENRY: Because you have no choice.

RICHARD (*after a long pause*): I see. And you, my dear uncle, you agree to this?

YORK: I think you can trust Lancaster to do what is best, Richard. The situation is awkward, very awkward.

RICHARD: Very. (*Looking HENRY in the eyes*) But Lancaster will get rid of the awkwardness in due course, I have no doubt.

HENRY (*uneasy under the scrutiny*): It will only be a matter of a few weeks, until things have settled down.

RICHARD: Would Maudelyn's presence in Pomfret be dangerous for me?

HENRY: I think it better that none of your friends should be with you just now.

MAUDELYN: But I must, I must! I go everywhere with the King.

HENRY: You can still go everywhere with the King. There is a place for you in my household.

MAUDELYN: I'd rather die. (*To YORK*) My lord, you know that I have been all my life with the King. Speak for me, please. Don't separate me from the King. Please! Speak for me!

RICHARD: Hush, Maudelyn. I don't want you to come. You can look after the Queen for me, now that they have taken her other friends from her. (*To HENRY*) Or would that perhaps be dangerous for someone?

HENRY: No, I see nothing against that.

MAUDELYN: But I want to be with you, sir. I must come with you.

RICHARD: Maudelyn, you are the only person left to whom I can say: "I want this," and know that I shall have what I want. I want you to stay with the Queen at Windsor until—until I come back. I know that you would prefer to come with me, but I ask you to do this for me instead.

MAUDELYN: I can't, sir, I can't! If I let you go I may never see you again.

RICHARD: Even if you didn't you would know that you had done me a great service. That is something. You could do me no service at Pomfret.

MAUDELYN: I could be with you, sir.

RICHARD: I would rather that you were with the Queen.

CANTERBURY: I think, since our business is finished, and time presses——

HENRY: Yes, we must take our leave. I shall ask Sir Thomas Swynford to escort you north to-morrow. If you like, I shall take Maudelyn with me now, and see that he is sent safely to Windsor to-night.

RICHARD: With a suitable escort?

HENRY: Safely.

RICHARD: Very well. You had better go, Maudelyn. (*Seeing MAUDELYN'S mutinous and despairing face*) Give us a moment, my lords. (*To CANTERBURY and YORK*) Good-bye, my lords.

YORK: We shall have you back very soon, Richard, very soon.

RICHARD: Do I see you again, Henry? No? That is a pity. I should have liked to see how a crown became you. Take care that your son does not steal it from you!

[*All go out but RICHARD and MAUDELYN.*]

MAUDELYN: How can you ask it of me, sir?

RICHARD: Is this mutiny?

MAUDELYN: You know that I can do nothing for the Queen! You think that I shall be safe at Windsor. That is why you want me to stay. And you will be all alone up there—all alone! I can't bear it, sir.

RICHARD: But you are wrong, quite wrong. I want you to be a companion to the Queen. She must be very lost among all the strange faces. Think of it, Maudelyn. Poor little foreigner! But to-morrow morning you go to see her, tell her that I am coming soon, and make her happy. You can do that for me, can't you?

MAUDELYN (*with difficulty*): Yes, sir.

RICHARD: Good-bye, Maudelyn. I shall remember the shoes; and the night you came to light the candles. You have been a good friend to me. (*Someone calls outside.*) They are very impatient, with all time in front of them.

MAUDELYN (*trying to talk of ordinary things*): Yes, they have to meet a committee of the Commons. One of the guard told me.

RICHARD (*also making conversation*): Oh? Are the Commons going to vote Henry a fortune in consideration of his services to the country?

MAUDELYN: No, sir. The gifts he made to his followers were out of all reason, they say. They are complaining of his extravagance.

[*A radiant smile breaks on RICHARD'S tired face.*]

RICHARD: Extravagance! Isn't life amusing? (*There is an impatient knocking.*) Good-bye, Maudelyn. (*MAUDELYN kisses his hand fervently and almost runs out. RICHARD stares after him, stares at the empty room, and then slowly the amusement comes back to his face.*) Extravagance! (*He savours it.*) How Robert would have laughed!

CURTAIN

[1]At the bottom of page 110, we have corrected "Drink. What shall we drink to?" to "A risk. What shall we drink to?" in accordance with this erratum slip bound into the printed edition:

Erratum

For the word "Drink" immediately following "Richard:" in the 5th line from the bottom of page 110, read "A risk."

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

The following changes were made to the original text:

Page 27: *changed* 'Richard!' to 'Richard:'

Page 96: *changed* 'What have I done.' to 'What have I done?'

[End of *Richard of Bordeaux* by Gordon Daviot]