

LUCIFER

A THEOLOGICAL TRAGEDY

George Santayana

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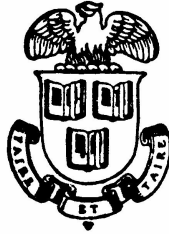
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A THEOLOGICAL TRAGEDY

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A Theological Tragedy

BY

GEORGE SANTAYANA



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INVOCATION

*Ye whose lost voices, echoing in this rhyme,
My tongue usurps, forgive if I have erred.
Not as ye uttered, but as I have heard,
I spell your meanings in an evil time.
Mock not the hope your conference sublime
Hath in the vigils of an exile stirred,
But let the music of my woven word
Waft to your shades the sweetness of your prime.
For ye have passed beyond the gate of day
Into the twilight of a paler morn,
And hidden beauty from the world, and shorn
The mortal eye of its supernal ray.
Take, till I come, the homage of my lay,
Nor hold the pilgrim of your night in scorn.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE RISEN CHRIST
MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL
SAINT PETER

ANGELS AND SAINTS

LUCIFER
MEPHISTOPHELES
AZAZEL
BELIAL
TUREL

DEVILS AND WITCHES

ZEUS
HERMES
ARES
HERA
ATHENA
APHRODITE

*GODS, GODDESSES AND
ATTENDANTS*

ACT FIRST

A MOUNTAIN TOP. BELOW, A CAVE. NIGHT.

HERMES (*ALIGHTING*)

What star art thou and by what god beguiled
To wander in this heaven
Far from the serene and mild
Circle of the sisters seven?
O blasted rock, untenanted and wild,
By lightnings riven,
Receive thou me,
O goddess, if the Pleiad lost thou be,
Lost too and driven
By viewless currents of the ethereal sea.

(Kisses the ground.)

For Earth, my mother, while her child
Wings these frozen spaces drear,
Oh, how otherwise enisled
In her blue and liquid sphere
Swims, forgetting grief, and sleeps
Wrapped in the fleeces of her atmosphere!
Above Olympus, Phœbe dim
Patiently shines the while, and keeps
Still watch in heaven; while below the rim
Of ocean now her brother's steeds uprear
Their fiery manes apace, and dawn is near.
But here no dawn is, and no morning star;
The suns that nearest are

Show like a twinkling host, and peer
Through the cold night, immeasurably far.

Here who can dwell? If there be deities
Whose body stone, whose spirit silence is,
Here they might slumber frozen. Wrinkled brow
And cloven sides of mountains, heaped up rocks
Toys of young giants long since dead, and thou
Horrid abyss that meteors hot might plough
From Heaven falling, and ye vales, by shocks
Of earthquake split in snowy chasms, Oh speak,
If ye have tongues or any ghostly life!

The stranger do not wrong,
A god, though seeming weak,
Who prays you, with the winds too long at strife,
For shelter from this night and stinging thong
Of sleet. Oh, answer me, if any banished soul
Haunts you, and guards from harm the frozen pole.

LUCIFER

(Rising from a rocky pinnacle upon which he has been seated)

Nay! Not a banished soul. What seems forlorn,
Hermes, to thee, another loveth best.
In this crag, the throne of scorn,
Hath a bolder spirit rest.

HERMES

Thou who callest me by name,
Large spectre plumèd for the eagle's flight,
Let me be thy guest this night
If kindness move thy breast, or any flame
Leap on thy hearth, that henceforth, ever bright,
On this hoarse and angry coast,
May gleam the beacon of its sacred light
Where a god, by fortune hurled,
Found an altar and a host
High on the utmost headland of the world.

LUCIFER (*ADVANCING*)

Stranger, look upon this face,
Look long, nor let thy fond heart rashly speak.
Seest thou mortal blood within this cheek?

Do not think thy brother's grace
Befits all spirits. Some there be too high
To wear outward glory still;
For it passes nature's skill
To paint reason to the eye
Or cast in mould indomitable will.

My hand drew yon starry girth
About the middle of the hollow sky;
I have stood a witness by
At the founding of the earth;
I have seen the twelve gods' birth,
Alas! and I wait to see them die.

HERMES

Imperious spirit, I would not offend.
Thy heart knows if this be truth,
And mine eyes, on thee gazing, comprehend
That thou art a god in sooth.
Be then gracious, and befriend
The stranger, and beside thee grant me rest,
That I gain strength unto my journey's end,
And see again Olympus' gleaming crest
And the brothers that I love.

(Embraces the knees of Lucifer)

LUCIFER

But what error brought the dove
To the eagle's wintry nest?

HERMES

I wandered long upon an idle quest
And found no other isle in all the deep.

LUCIFER

Luckless for the child of Jove

To set his wingèd foot upon this steep.
No vines upon so wild a ruin creep,
No Nereid sports in such an icy cove.
But, come. There is a cavern in the hill.

HERMES

'Twill be a covert from this piercing air.

LUCIFER

My servant's fire shall medicine thy chill.
Perhaps thy hunger will not scorn our fare.
This way. 'Tis dark along the icy stair.

(Gives Hermes his hand)

HERMES

Art thou a serpent, that thy flesh is cold?

LUCIFER

They call me so. My blood was hot of old.

HERMES

But froze from breathing long this cruel storm?

LUCIFER

Nay, gentle Hermes. It was not the wind
Which only bites because the heart is warm.
Mine cannot suffer. In my youth I sinned
And loved the soft caresses of the world.
Now I am free. I have forsworn delight
Which makes us slaves.

HERMES

The chill of wintry night
Keeps germs from budding; with no leaf unfurled
Dies the imprisoned deity within.
How, then, shouldst thou be free beneath the blight

Of this sharp flaw?

LUCIFER

I can be free from sin.

(They reach the cave)

HERMES

O welcome glow! My brother's nimble spirit
Even to this region creeps, ingenious fire,
And leaps to meet me, conscious that I came.
But who is he I see in silence near it?

LUCIFER

An angel once, now guardian of this flame,
Still studious, as thou seest, of the lyre.
He mixed the draught and heaped the driftwood up
That we have light and comfort while we sup.

(They sit down)

HERMES

A subtle servitor, that serves desire.
So watching for the dawn before the fight
Soldiers might bivouac.

LUCIFER

Stranger, fill thy cup
And wrap thee in this cloak, if coarse attire
Can please thee, being warm, on such a night.
Guests come not often hither, for the sky
Grudges me chance of hospitality
Lest that small virtue in me wound its sight.

HERMES

But is the sky thine enemy?

LUCIFER

Thou seest

It doth not flatter. Yet 'tis the ally
Of one that wrongs us both.

HERMES

Why, if thou fleest
Into the tempest, on thee it must blow.

LUCIFER

Ah, if thou knewest!

HERMES

Art thou here confined?

LUCIFER

By a great sorrow and a tameless mind.

HERMES

A sorrow?

LUCIFER

Listen, if thou needs must know.
There is among the stars one greatest star
Which showeth dark, and none may see it shine.
Men know it by their hope; a hand divine
Must darkly lead them thither from afar.
But once within its bounds eternal light
Streams on their ampler souls, and there they are
What upon earth they would be. Of this realm
An ancient God is king, majestic, wise,
Of triple form and all-beholding eyes.
The terror of his glance can overwhelm
The sense, as lightning when it rends the skies.
The dread words of his mouth are gladly heard
But marvellous their meaning, not to prove
Except by faith and argument of love.
He saith he fashioned nature with a word,
And in him all things are and live and move.

To that fair kingdom from primeval night
I passed, and clad in splendour and in might
I led the armies of my father, God.
My right hand urged them with a sword of light,
My left hand ruled them with a flowering rod.
Brave was my youth and pleasing in his sight,
Next him in honour; till one day discourse
Upon his greatness and our being's source
Led me to question: "Tell, O Lord, the cause
Why sluggish nature doth with thee contend.
And thy designs, observant of her laws,
By tortuous paths must struggle to their end."
To this with many words of little pith
He answered.

And as when sailors crossing some broad frith
Spy in the lurid west a sudden gloom
And grasp the rudder, taking double reef,
I nerved my heart for battle; for my doom
I saw upon me, and that I was born
To suffer and to fill the world with grief.
But strong in reason, terrible in scorn,
I rose. "Seek not, O Lord, my King," I cried,
"With solemn phrases to deceive my doubt.
Tell me thy thought, or I will pluck it out
With bitter question. Woe if thou hast lied,
Woe if thou hast not! Make thy prudent choice!
Either confess that how thou cam'st to be
Or why the winds are docile to thy voice,
And why the will to make us was in thee,
And why the partners of thy life are three
Thou canst not know, but even as the rest
That wake to life behold the sun and moon
And feel their natural passions stir their breast
They know not why, so thou from some long swoon
Awaking once, didst with supreme surprise
Scan thy deep bosom and the vault of heaven,—
For I did so when fate unsealed mine eyes.
Thy small zeal for the truth may be forgiven
If thou confess it now, and I might still
Call thee my master, for thou rulest well
And in thy kingdom I have loved to dwell.

Or else, if truth offend thy pampered will,
And with caressing words and priestly spell
Thou wouldst seduce me, henceforth I rebel.”
I knew his answer, and I drew my sword,
And many spirits gathered to my side.
But in high heaven he is still the Lord;
I am an exile in these spaces wide
Where none is master. The north wind and the west
Are my companions, and the void my rest.

HERMES

’Tis much. When evil fortune bows a friend
We blush that we are happy.

LUCIFER

Nay, rejoice.
The pleasant music of a tempered voice
Is cure for sadness. If my grief could end
It would with dreaming of an age of gold
When all were blessed.

HERMES

They who serve thy King
Are they not blessed still?

LUCIFER

A doubtful thing
Is happiness like that. They grow not old.
They live in friendship and their wondering eyes
Blinded to nature feed on fantasies.
Their raptured souls, like lilies in a stream,
That from their fluid pillow never rise,
Float on the lazy current of a dream.
My grief is not that I am not like them,
Or that the splendour of my life is less.
My soul hath kinship with the wilderness.
But rage at pangs that reason cannot stem—
Right balked with cunning and truth shamed with lies—

Rage that the lust of living never dies
Gnaws at my heart. My noble trust deceived
In justice and indomitable truth,
The unthought of shame that I should stand alone
When universal nature was aggrieved
And should have mutinied! Faith of my youth
That my stout heart did never yet disown,
Prove thyself true and still to be believed!
Hasten, just day, and hurl him from his throne
As children in a chasm cast a stone!

HERMES

That day may come, but wishing now is vain.
Rest from this passion; much I fear my speech
Hath stirred unwittingly a slumbering pain.

LUCIFER

Not slumbering; dumb, and eased with words again
Now thou dost listen.

HERMES

Tell me, I beseech,
Were many with thee from thy kingdom driven?
And are their hearts embittered like thine own?

LUCIFER

Like mine? Like mine? Peerless I stood in heaven,
And in misfortune still I stand alone.
They follow each his will, and ill they fare.
In having poor and only rich in greed,
They dwell in caves or sail the murky air.
Their spirits have been humbled to their need.
In hunger once, not finding root or weed
One killed a heron and lapped up the blood.
Straight his will, mastered by the infectious deed,
Lost its free function. His lean body's food
Must be warm blood, on blood his visions feed.
Another, then without the goad of lust,

Fell to lasciviousness; his narrowed gaze,
Caught by the wanton image, from him thrust
All other joys. Impossible desire
Is the foul torment of his nights and days.
So some to drunkenness and some to ire
Are also slaves.

HERMES

If all are thus depraved
I see thou canst not live among them now.

LUCIFER

They are my people, Hermes. Knowest thou
'Twas by my deed that they were first enslaved?
How should I leave them? Wrongly I allow
Myself this absence, but their hideous lot
Fills me with grief, and I can bear it not.
Almost it seemeth that the will must err
That brings such sorrow. That thought rends my heart
With vacillation. Fear me. All I touch
Is blasted with infection.

HERMES

Bitter thou art,
And to a by-gone sorrow bound too much.

LUCIFER

Thinkest thou it is gone? Was it the blow
Of Michael's sword? Was it the infinite fall,
The darkness, the desire for heaven? No!
What men call pain I never felt at all,
Nor fear, nor need to see the face of God.
The love of woman I have held in scorn,
And could I make an Eden with a nod,
I would not do it. 'Tis nothing to my soul
What blooms, what withers; by what little thorn
My firm foot, treading on the rose, is torn.
These things are swallowed in the fatal whole

That mocks at justice.

HERMES

But why dwell apart
On this bleak mountain? If thy wound is deep
To natural slumber yield thy tortured heart.
Watch not these feeble stars, sad lamps of grief,
But close thine eyes on the vain past, and sleep.

LUCIFER

Sleep? Yet, why not? When every shivering leaf
From the proud oak is stripped by autumn's flaw
He suffers winter's deep oblivious snows
To choke his anguish and enshroud his woes,
Nor wakes till the new buds begin to thaw
And the whole forest is alive with song.
Yes, sleep. The child, rebellious at some wrong,
Frets in his helpless pain till slumber dries,
Closing his weary eyelids, his dim eyes.
They open laughing in the morning light;
Then his keen pang is nothing, and his cries
The all-forgotten dream of yesternight.
But is my grief a child's? Am I so slight?
Or could my bosom like the wanton trees
Put forth new blooms to every wind that blew?
Say that it could: say that some vernal breeze
Melted my winter; could my vain forgetting
Make heaven just or make the past untrue?
The evil lives, and if I ceased regretting
I should be more unhappy than I knew.

HERMES

No one is truly happy. Evil things
Fate lays upon us. Yet she makes amends,
Bringing us daily comfort on the wings
Of sleep, and by the willing hands of friends.

LUCIFER

Of friends?

HERMES

Thou hadst none? Deem that time is far.
Friendship is knitted in a single night
'Twixt noble minds. Quench not the memory quite
If I to-day was welcome in this star,
But let that breed new kindness. I in turn
Would greet thee in my kingdom. It is fair.
The wisest mind hath something yet to learn,
And I might teach oblivion to thee there.
How sweet it is to scent that fragrant air
At evening, where the outer planets burn!
Ah! hear the blast. I yet have far to fare.

LUCIFER

Alas! I have not suffered thee to rest.
I had forgotten, as I sleep no more,
Thy happy need of sleep. Ay, to the roar
Of this hoarse ocean shut a while thy breast,
And on the pillow of thy bended arm
Lay there thy head. It is a barren nest,
But, by mine honour, stranger, safe from harm.
I will watch yonder on the mountain crest;
Perchance ere thou awake the drifting storm
Will veer to blow thee homeward from the west.

HERMES

Do as thou wilt. Here by the hearth 'tis warm.

(Lies down in the cave)

LUCIFER

Turel!

TUREL

My lord.

LUCIFER

To-day—or am I wrong?—
I heard thee croon and strum upon the lyre.
It was some echo of Sicilian song
Which shepherds on the slopes of Ætna's pyre
Thou heardst to sing, when we were wanderers.
It was a hymn they chanted to this god.
Sing it. He'll dream the breath of summer stirs
The leafy grove, while 'mid his worshippers
He doth upon his wreathèd altar nod.

TUREL

I do but half remember it, my lord,
But I will try.

(Turel sits at the mouth of the cave with his lyre)

LUCIFER

Do, boy. Ay, that's the chord.—
Play on. The children of Pythagoras
When they would sleep bade gentle numbers sound
To tune the soul to truth and the profound
Order of things; so might she sooner pass
Into the light and be with beauty crowned.

(Climbs to his seat upon the rocky pinnacle)

TUREL (*SINGS*)

O blessed night that crept
O'er Maia's cave when Zeus approached her side,
While in Olympus wide
Among the gods the white-armed Hera slept.
For, when the tenth new moon
Over Cyllene cast its thievish beams,
She bare the friend of dreams
Who born at daybreak played the lyre at noon.

HERMES (*RISING ON HIS ELBOW*)

What voice is this? What words I long have heard?
Good youth, is this thy song?

TUREL

'Tis I that sing.

HERMES

Who taught thee?

TUREL

He who taught each cuckoo-bird
To mock the rest.

HERMES

Where didst thou hear the thing?

TUREL

In Sicily they sang it long ago.

HERMES

But wast thou there?

TUREL

My master travelled then
Much upon earth. 'Twas well for me to know
The country manners and thoughts of men
So he should keep me by him.

HERMES

Not of late
Thou servest Lucifer?

TUREL

Know you the date
When first he marshalled all the heavenly host?
That day he chose two youths, who pleased him most,
To walk before him, me to bear the spear
And one more stout to bear the golden shield;

But he feigned scruples when the end drew near,
And followed not his master to the field.
So I remain alone.

LUCIFER (*ABOVE*)

Is this a dream?
What vital breath is blowing on my soul?
Into my deepest bosom falls a gleam
That makes me wish to live. Oh, strange, I seem
As if escaping from mine own control,
As if a fever waned, and opiate balm
Were running through my veins! The gates of hell
Are open to the morning, to the spell
Of the chill dewy glades. They breathe such calm
As heaven's garden knew, when evening fell
In gold and purple, and each conscious flower
Blest God, and inly felt its sister sing
Inaudibly the praises of the spring.

HERMES

Is't Lucifer?

TUREL

Ay, many an hour
He thus discourseth to the random wind
Of things I know not. Only, to my mind,
His voice is changed.

LUCIFER (*ABOVE*)

It were a wondrous thing
If once again the womb of ancient night
Were big with being, and a giant came
A rival to the other. Oh, the fight,
The victory, the fallen tyrant's shame!

HERMES

He plots revenge.

LUCIFER (*As BEFORE*)

He hath a wondrous charm,
A gentle hand, warm, made to touch a friend's,
A well-born, open spirit, that attends
To others' words, a young god's strength of arm,
The inward smile of them that know no harm.

HERMES

He speaks of me. 'Tis me that he intends.
I cannot doubt it.

LUCIFER

There should be no more pain,
And I, in that republic of the just
Might live from day to day in peace, and trust
That life, although mysterious, was not vain.

HERMES

Hearest thou well? What saith he?

TUREL

Sir, I hear
But may not understand his sacred word.

HERMES

Will he say more?

TUREL

Methinks he will, anon.

HERMES

Come hither, little page. For many a year
Thou followest Lucifer, and thou hast heard
His daily musings.

TUREL

I have gone
Where he has led me, since the heaven's birth,
Even to this cold island of the north
Where, sir, you find us.

HERMES

'Tis well; thinkest thou
To do me pleasure he would journey still
And let me follow as thou followest now?

TUREL

O sir, 'tis not a place for you to fill.
You are too rich. The nights are long and drear.
He speaks but little, and you love him not.
But I, if you should rob me of my lot—
If you have any pity, do not do it.

HERMES

But would he go if I should put him to it?

TUREL

He would, I know. Never since in his court
The six archangels gathered round his throne,
And graciously he spoke to every one
Beautiful words, and gave and took report
Of all their doings—have I heard him greet
Any one so, or ponder so his word,
As he doth now with you. 'Tis as he heard
The wide-eyed Gabriel singing.

HERMES

Run with joy.
Run where he loiters. Tell him that I stand
Waiting to beg a favour at his hand
But fear to ask it. Run, my gentle boy!

(Exit Turel, with hesitation)

HERMES (*TAKING THE LYRE, SINGS:*)

'Twas I with subtle craft
Contrived you first, ye docile strings, to sound.
'Twas I that playing found
The secret of your little souls, and laughed.
Apollo took you then,
And made of seven strings a louder lyre.
His move the heavenly choir
My three suffice to rule the hearts of men.
With three did Orpheus tame
The shaggy lion and the panther wild,
With three doth Maia's child
Enchant this desert whither first he came.

(Re-enter Lucifer and Turel)

LUCIFER

Is music sweeter to my friend than sleep?

HERMES

Nay, music is a slumber of the soul
That rests from thinking.

LUCIFER

Is thy thought so deep?
And is this true, thou hast a boon to ask
From a poor hermit of the frozen pole?

HERMES

The gods have laid on me a heavy task—

LUCIFER

And can I make it lighter?

HERMES

—to explore
The sea of space, and every luminous isle
That in its waters swims, from shore to shore,
And to make trial of what secret powers

Might lurk in Nature's womb, what realms stretch out
Through space, beyond this twinkling vault of ours.
For meditation endeth still in doubt.
Upon this quest I started when the gale
Drove me, unwilling, on thy rock.

LUCIFER

I know.
Wouldst thou look farther? Thou dost see the vale;
A gorge beneath it chokes with heavy snow;
A frozen river, like time's pulses slow,
Works through the rock its hesitating way.
There is naught else to see.

HERMES

It is not that,
For to the gods I am content to say
On what sad throne so sad a monarch sat.
That is enough of glory for one day.
But if again, most like, they send me forth
Without a chart and with the feeble oar
Of my light wing, how shall I breast the north
Or shun the straying planets, bright no more?
Yet if beneath the cloak and mighty arm
Of one whose eye knows every cloudy bar,
I then should fly, I should be safe from harm
And reach the haven of some living star.

LUCIFER

Where wouldst thou go?

HERMES

I know not. It were good
To look upon thy vassals, in their rude
Abandonment, and see their savage state,
For it might strengthen us in fortitude
To know how bravely they endure their fate.

LUCIFER

O generous soul, that in the lost in hell
Still marks a virtue!

HERMES

I should mark it best
Could I prevail upon thy hand to guide me.

LUCIFER

How shouldst thou not? 'Tis thine.

(Holds out his hand)

HERMES (*TAKING IT*)

And for the rest
Wilt thou in all my perils stand beside me?

LUCIFER

Ay, by what most is sacred to my soul
By my own honour and thy love I swear it.
All that is mine I yield to thy control.
My wings, my arms, my thought, if thou canst bear it,
With all the stars that in their courses roll
Obedient unto reason, rule, and date.
Time, Hermes, hath reduced to one estate
Our different lives, made sweeter that we share it.
Wanderer by nature thou, and I by fate.
Oh, let us forth! My joy arriveth late.

HERMES

But it is come now never to depart.

LUCIFER

Never? O let us shut the future out,
Lest thought should poison with the shaft of doubt
The happy now! Would I could trust my heart.

HERMES

Nay, come along.

LUCIFER

The event shall show the truth.
But, Turel, where art thou? What thinkest thou?

TUREL

What should I think, my lord?

LUCIFER

Unhappy youth,
Why did I never pity thee till now?
How weary have these watches been for thee
Serving me here! Thou art too young a boy
To languish in this desert.

TUREL

'Tis my joy,
My lord, to serve you, wheresoe'er it be.

LUCIFER

What should now be the season of the year?

TUREL

Methinks it should be spring.

LUCIFER

Canst hear the birds?

TUREL

Birds in this island without sedge or tree?

LUCIFER

They now are singing in my memory.

HERMES

Come, come. Waste not the night in empty words.

LUCIFER

Lucifer comes. Be patient. It is new
For Lucifer to smile and brook command.
I scarce believe it. Let me touch thy hand,
Beautiful angel! Oh, can this be true?
Do I obey thee? Have I vowed a vow?
'Tis wonderful the things that time will do.
Turel, thy master hath a master now.
We must away. This night shall have its dreams.
Thou shalt behold a green land, watered well,
Where large white swans swim in the lucent streams,
And bosky thickets where the harpy screams,
And centaurs scour the fields of asphodel,
While young fauns pluck their beards, and start away
At great Pan's feast to pipe an interlude.
There painted dolphins with the Nereids play,
Splashing green waves for rainbows in the spray.
And friendly poets, straying thro' the wood,
Lay finger on the mouth, to watch askance
How in wild ring the nymphs and satyrs dance.
Wouldst thou not go?

TUREL

'Tis as my master wills.

LUCIFER

Ay, ay, make ready.

(Looks about)

Sad familiar hills
For how long do I leave you? Not for ever.
A voice of inward warning tells me so.
Forget ye not my voice. Your silence fills
My spirit always; no, I cannot sever
The bond that binds me to your sunless snow.
But farewell for a season. Far I go,

Far, tho' I know not whither, for the breath
Of life is on me, or the hand of death.

(Exeunt)

ACT SECOND

THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES. THE SEA BEHIND. LUCIFER.
MEPHISTOPHELES.

LUCIFER

Yes, I will go to-night. Too long it is
Since I have seen my friends.

MEPHISTOPHELES

It is indeed,
But you were busy.

LUCIFER

Ay, with thoughts that feed
Upon an idle heart. Nought's gone amiss
In my long absence?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Nothing. All's as well
As when you were among us.

LUCIFER

That is good.
I sometimes wondered in my solitude
If they had need of me.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I cannot tell.

It hath been noted that you were not there,—
Reasons, perhaps, assigned,—false, as I think,—
As that you loved us not, or your despair
Of governing our wills, or that some link
Of pure affection kept you bound elsewhere,
Like fond Ulysses in Calypso's isle.
But need of you, precisely, no one had.

LUCIFER

Calypso's isle?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Ah, ah! I see you smile.
I am most glad to note it. It is bad
Never to smile; and you were once too sad.

LUCIFER

Perhaps I was.

MEPHISTOPHELES

If you will come to-night
'Twere well to start. We have a longish flight
To our good cavern.

LUCIFER

Not yet. It is not late.
Hermes, perhaps, will come to-day. 'Tis soon,
But he was not to loiter. I will wait
Until the sun is down.

MEPHISTOPHELES

'Tis after noon
Already.

LUCIFER

Oh, there's time. If he arrives,

I'll take him with me. On no better day
Could he observe the wildness of our lives
Than when the warders of our rocky nest
Welcome me back.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Indeed, I think they ought.

LUCIFER

Dost thou know, Mephistopheles, the thought
Of what the world was, when I knew it best
And found some solace in it, has been brought
By Hermes' converse back; and now I see
Why losing relish for my wandering life,
Since Christ was born, I left the world to thee
And to thy demons? For then lies grew rife,
Thought lost its freedom, grief its majesty.
Since the first zealot from their altar hurled
The smiling gods and fled into his den,
Reason has been an exile in the world,
And beauty but a pilgrim among men.

MEPHISTOPHELES

And now they will move on and visit hell,
Where you will dwell with Hermes. But I think
I see him coming.

LUCIFER

Ah!

(Goes to the back)

(Enter Hermes)

MEPHISTOPHELES (*APART*)

A lovers' meeting.
Tears, perhaps. Oh, to what the proud will sink
When their turn comes! Let me not view their greeting
Lest I should blush. No, I will look away

Like a duenna.

HERMES

See, I came to-day.

LUCIFER

I was expecting thee.

HERMES

The many things
I have to tell thee have made light my wings.
Shall I speak here?

LUCIFER

Oh, surely. Thou mayst say
All that thou wilt. 'Tis Mephistopheles
Of whom I told thee.

HERMES

That his wit is keen
His face gives token. But the glade is green
Beneath the arching of these ancient trees.
If we walk there we shall be more at ease.

(Exeunt)

MEPHISTOPHELES

So soon dislikes me? Features will belie
The best of men. Only a jackanapes
Judges men's spirit by their outer shapes,
Not he that knows the world. But I must try
To please this humming-bird, since what he chirps
Lucifer thunders.—Lucifer and I,
Compare us. What hath he, that he usurps
The kingdom over me? The right divine,
God once appointed him! Though ever since
He hath done nothing, he must still be prince.
I have done all. The work, the skill are mine.

Why not the honour? He may live abroad
Pampering his lordly lusts, until the whim
Of his last darling makes him think of God
And think of us. Then all must run to him
And hail him master.—Yet I need not dread
His meddling now. The hellish rage is fled
Out of his eyes. In soft delicious climes
He must pluck flowers and weep and murmur rhymes
To his young love. He finds a mossy bed
Beneath great oaks and sleeps and dreams—who knows?—
Of the white limbs of nymphs among the trees
Spied as he walks, to meditate his woes,
Near where they bathe at noon. Strange changes these.
He is all charity. He stops and heeds
The clownish minstrelsy that drowns the reeds
Of some lewd grinning faun. He lifts his eyes
To see the naiads rising from the weeds
Startled by him—rapt poet—as he hies
To parley with the waves and gather hints
At sunset from the cloudlets' speckled tints.
But can this last? A month, perhaps, or two,
Not more. For he has seen the face of God,
And dreams are dreams. Awake, what will he do?
He's a proud fool and will be fooled anew
Not to confess his folly. It were odd
Yet like his whims, if he should carry through
The monstrous comedy. How I should laugh
To see him play the lover, scene by scene,
And kneel at last before the Nazarene!
It yet may come to that. We are but chaff,
Light, light in any wind.—The issue is:
Master I am and master must remain
In the good pit of hell.—They come again
Let us take note of their sweet reveries.

(He hides in the wood)

(Re-enter Lucifer and Hermes)

HERMES

Yes, when I told them of the thousand spires
Thou show'dst me glittering in that fair half-light,

They marvelled much; and Zeus, much wrought, requires
That I go back, and in adventurous flight
Inspect those bastions.

LUCIFER

Ah, not now, to-night
I thought to take thee to the cave of hell
To a strange banquet. With carouse and song
They welcome me, withdrawn from them so long.
It is a wild fantastic spectacle
To make thee wonder.

HERMES

It would please me well,
But from my father's soul the dread of wars
Hath banished sleep. I am his herald. Thou,
I know wilt guide me, though it be not now,
Into the region of those viewless stars
That I may do his bidding.

LUCIFER

Thou hast seen
The place already.

HERMES

But I must once more
To better purpose, for that day I bore
No messages from Zeus.

LUCIFER

What dost thou mean?

HERMES

That coming to the presence of that King
I am to say: "O Lord of Hosts, I bring
Greeting from Zeus. He never knew before
Thy dwelling-place, else had he long ago

Sent me to thee with gifts, for it is well
For kings to live in friendship.”

LUCIFER

Dost thou know
What thou art saying? Is it possible
That I should take thee to my dearest foe
To sue for his good favour?

HERMES

But to hell
I will come also, seeking other things.
I have no horror of the nether gloom
Nor it of me. Though kings must deal with kings,
Yet friends will follow friends to any doom.

LUCIFER

Ah, Hermes, it were ill to follow me
Whom all ill follows, and the mockery
Of those I love.—What thou dost ask is hard,
Exceeding hard the passage of that gate,
And I walk never through it. With strong hate
And iron sorrow it is sealed and barred.

HERMES

Thou needest not to come, then. I will dare
To go alone.

LUCIFER

But I have made a vow.

HERMES

That is fulfilled if thou dost guide me there
With prudent counsel.

LUCIFER

Dearest friend, what care,

What joy, what hope, what grief can touch me now
Save only thine? I prize thy valiant soul
That lays before the truth thy bosom bare,
And bids her strike, though she have strength to kill.
Thou growest like me. Yes, I will unroll
The whole world to thine eyes; and yet I feel
Some strange misgiving, some prophetic grief
To think of thee in heaven. Thou must steel
Thy heart against temptation and in brief
Return to me. But, oh, of that return
What dim forebodings haunt me, what deep dread
Of utter loss, as if I saw thee dead!
Hence, evil omen, do not make me stern
For I believe thee not.

HERMES

Thou art distraught.
I am immortal as the earth and sky
By whose pure life I live. Bring back thy thought
To things in reason.

LUCIFER

Thou shouldst never die.

HERMES

Tell me the way and I alone will fly
To that high citadel. Its crested walls
Will not refuse the herald some reply.
I see that to revisit it appalls
Thy wounded soul.

LUCIFER

And yet I shook it, I
Whom it could never shake. No path leads there,
Nor Aquilo nor Notus blows from thence,
Nor fills it any region of the air.
By thought alone in its omnipotence
We come to God.—But I may have thee led,

Good Mephistopheles—

MEPHISTOPHELES (*ASIDE*)

What's this I hear?

LUCIFER

Goes thither. He will guide thee in my stead.

HERMES

I care not.

MEPHISTOPHELES (*ASIDE*)

Thank you. That is kindly said.

HERMES

Where is he, then? Methought he loitered near.
I must speak with him of my embassy.

LUCIFER

Ho! Mephistopheles!

MEPHISTOPHELES (*WITHIN*)

What! here again?

LUCIFER

Come hither, pray.

MEPHISTOPHELES (*ASIDE*)

Now they have need of me,
They like me well enough.

LUCIFER

I called to thee
To tell thee of a charge thou must sustain
For love of me and Hermes. He would fain

Visit Jehovah's city to deliver
A message from high Zeus. To spare me pain
In seeing all that I have lost for ever—
Thou wilt conduct him.

MEPHISTOPHELES

When is this to be?

HERMES

To-morrow, pray. I must not lengthen out
My father's trouble. For he lives in doubt.

LUCIFER

To-morrow then. Let me commend to thee
His safety and success. The thing is new
Which he attempts and hazardous to do.
Use good words first, but if the Porter frown,
Push to the gates, for they should let him through
Who hath no sin. Guide him and set him down
Before the throne, thyself removed a space,
And let him speak, and let the King reply.
Say not a word thyself, but still stand by
To lead him, when he wishes, from the place.
When thou hast past the cloud-bar, look for me,
And I will take him from thy hands, and see
That for this service thou hast ample grace.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I humbly thank you. Such fair company
Will be reward enough. Here at this gate
I meet him in the morning.

HERMES

At the dawn

I shall not fail.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Nor shalt thou need to wait.
Come now, my lord. The sun is set. 'Tis late.

LUCIFER

Go thou before. My absence hath withdrawn
The single check, perhaps, their license had
In my poor kingdom. Go thou and proclaim
My coming, lest what should have made them glad
Should, ill prepared for, cover them with shame
And my first word of greeting turn to blame.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I go, sweet Prince, to make thy welcome such
That thou shalt better judge our loyalty.

(Exit Mephistopheles)

LUCIFER

I do them wrong, perhaps; to doubt too much
Has been my weakness. Thou must bear with me.
But come, my Hermes. Let us now begin
Our flight together. All hell's shouts and din
Will seem sweet music to me. At thy side,
Blest in thy love, I shall grow strong in pride
And deem not their calamity my sin.

HERMES

Alas, it cannot be to-night, I fear.
Beside the midland sea expired a seer
At point of sunset; facile, happy sage,
Lover of reason in a fevered age,
He lived apart, and his thought's jewel clear
Set in the wrought gold of a perfect page.
Dying, he thought not of the Nazarene,
Nor his own sins, but of the gentle god
That to the mansions of the dead serene
Shepherded shadows with a wingèd rod,
And a deep sigh to join those blessed souls
Was his last breath. I hear his voice, for prayer,

Even unuttered, knows no bounds of air,
Nor time, nor opposition of the poles.
I go to lead his spirit in my ways,
To wash his wounds of life in Lethe's stream,
And bind his brow with cool ambrosial bays,
That with the blameless ghosts of better days
Smiling he walks in an eternal dream.
This piety performed, I shall be free
But am not now.

LUCIFER

Ah! Come then after me.
The way is easy for one light of wing,
And cannot well be missed. Our revelry
Once started knows nor dawn nor evening,
And thou hast time for all. Above the sea,
Along the breakers and the desert sands,
Fly to the south. Heed not the marshy lea,
Pestiferous, havenless, dark jungle lands,
Nor heed the barren islands, single rocks,
That brave that sullen ocean. But dart on
To where the Antarctic ice, like mountains, locks
The waters in. Dart on, till at the pole
Thou see a black unfathomable lake
Lapped in foul snow, where many a fiery flake
And falling cinder burns its sputtering hole.
There, in the water's midst, a mighty rock
Belches volcanic fumes. Its spongy sides
Are fretted into caves, and there a flock
Of bat-like demons circles, peeps, and hides
Like bees about a hive. If they should mock,
Disdain their chatter. They are cowards all
And the mere glance of thy divinity
Will scatter them like gnats. Girdle the wall
Of that steep mountain till above the wave
Thou see the triple yawning of a cave.
There is the gate into our sombre hall,
And there thou shalt be welcomed by some brave
And trusty officer.

HERMES

Behold, the night
Begins to gather. Mournful Acheron
Summons me now. But I will come anon.

LUCIFER

Thou wilt not fail?

HERMES

So wonderful a sight
Would tempt me farther. I must now begone.

Exit)

LUCIFER

Farewell; and may the good thou goest to do
Make thee more blessed. Oh, how far from me
Are all his thoughts! To him the world is true,
And in his fair divine simplicity
He deems his virtue all. He is a boy.
If he swims well, or answers riddles well,
Or knows the winds well why should conscience clog
His young blood's current, or truth blight his joy?
His life is heaven. And my life is hell.
Because I know. O poisonous alloy
Of reason in me, quickening the heart
With all the sorrows of the universe
To futile anger! Undeservèd curse
That will not let me live or have my part
In joy with all the world! I cast thee out.
I wash myself quite clean of thee. Begone!
Speak not to me of evil. There is none,
For I am happy. Tell me not of doubt
For I behold the splendour of the sun
And feel the sinews of my body strong
To prove my faith. And murmur not of wrong
Or of false gods again. What's done is done.
How should I change it?—Here Heracles of old
Ended his labours and to Atlas gave

Again the weight of heaven. He was brave,
Yet from these boughs he plucked the ripened gold,
Rejoicing in that little prize. Behold,
A second hero treads your hallowed glades,
Daughters of Hesper. From a greater strife
His spirit passes to your charmed life.
Welcome me, sisters. Let your ancient shades
Favour my slumber. Hark, the pleasant sound
Of your green leafage whispers, holy maids,
Your pieties to me. Here is the spot
Where I will live. Here I will choose my lot
With your fair silvan presences around
And my great peace with things. I made them not.
From such an Eden once I tempted men
To evil fortunes. Here the apple hangs,
By Lethe watered, that might still their pangs
And bring them peace at last. I take thee, then,
Fair gift of nature.

(Plucks an apple)

Nourish me with joy.
Run, run, thou pleasing poison thro' my brain
And make me happy, like that innocent boy
That smiles, wide-eyed, upon a world of pain.
Do lions sleep not, because sins abound?
Are eagles pensive for the griefs of men?
Do the fair gods upon Olympus crowned
Pity the world? The devils in their den
Make merry, and forget the wrath of heaven.
Nay, God himself, who saith he died for all,
Remembers not his myriad unforgiven
Children in hell, nor all the worms that crawl
Through suffering to death. Must I alone
Cry JUSTICE? I alone renounce the wrong?
Lucifer, Lucifer, why art thou strong
Only to suffer? Live, and take thine own.
Thou Morning Star, shine forth! Shine forth again
In the pale Orient, Herald of the Day!
Haply some shepherd, watching for thy ray,
Will at thy brightening glow beguile his pain
And lie down comforted. Resume thy reign.

Behold the altar of thy heart relumes
Its ancient fire, and through the pulsing vein
The warm blood mounts. Again thy beauty blooms;
Again the iris glitters in thy plumes
Outspread to heaven. Hermes shall not shrink
Except in awe before thee; thy caress
Shall be his pride hereafter. He shall think
Thou comest not to serve him, but to bless
With glorious apparition and excess
Of supernatural light. Depart, depart
From mine immortal beauty, blight of care.
O Lucifer, dishonour not thy heart
Though it be dead. Remember who thou art
And with thy glory cover thy despair.

ACT THIRD

HELL. SUBTERRANEAN HALL, WITH A GREAT HEARTH. DEVILS AND
WITCHES.

FIRST DEVIL (*SINGS*)

Blow, bellows, blow
Till the red coals glow
And the cauldron simmer.

Aho! Aho!

This work is slow.
Blow, bellows, blow
And, flamelets, glimmer.

CHORUS

Blow, bellows, blow!
Aho! Aho!

FIRST DEVIL

Blow, bellows, blow,
For without is snow
And rain and drizzle.

Aho! Aho!

The fire burns low.
Blow, bellows, blow
And, kettle, sizzle.

CHORUS

Blow, bellows, blow!
Aho! Aho!

(Enter Mephistopheles)

MEPHISTOPHELES

Ho! worthy matrons, what's there fit for food?

FIRST WITCH

There's goat's flesh broth, my lord, and mickle good.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Go kill a heifer or a swine at least.
I met his highness walking in a wood,
He eyed me so, in melancholy mood,
And said: "I come to-day. Prepare a feast."

SEVERAL VOICES

What! What! The Prince is coming?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Coming soon.

SECOND WITCH

Then I must fetch the silver bowl and spoon.

(Exit)

SECOND DEVIL

I'll stick the pig. I've a sharp, sharp sword.

(Exit)

FIRST DEVIL

Give me the key to the wine, my lord.

(Sings)

For tho' we drink but stalissh beer

The Prince must quaff canary clear—
And, pray, my lord, let go my ear.

(Exit)

FIRST WITCH (*SINGS*)

I will trim the lamp,
For the cave is dark.

SECOND WITCH (*SINGS*)

It is dark and damp.
I will fetch a log
With a good dry bark.
Oh, the merry blaze and the crackling spark!

THIRD WITCH (*SINGS*)

I will cut a spit
That they roast the hog
As is right and fit
When his Highness is coming to taste of it.

CHORUS

Flit, comrades, flit,
And show your wit,
And make good cheer;
For the Devil is coming to supper here.

(Exeunt dancing)

MEPHISTOPHELES (*LOOKING ABOUT*)

Where is the sly minx hiding? I come weary
And all this howling rabble needs must din
Their ribald nonsense in mine ears; she only
Is gone who hath some spark of understanding
And the rare gift to please me. Where's she gone?
Hist, gossip, hist!

(Enter another witch)

WITCH

Doth my lord call? Alack,
How long an absence! But how doth my lord?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Ill, very ill. Business and state affairs
Fill my head full. But I am still a man,
Ay, hussy, still a man. For all they say
I'm lean and sour, I relish my rank pleasures
Even as the keenest rascal of them all.
Heugh! But your burgher's wives are fat and heavy,
Dull, artless, like so many grunting sows—
Who's there? Who comes?

WITCH

We are alone, sweet lord.

MEPHISTOPHELES

By the cold blasts of hell! Hence quickly, go!
They must not see me thus. It is a weakness
I am not thought to have.

WITCH

Nay, no one comes.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I heard a step. Yes, listen. Voices too.
'Tis mad Azazel and besotted Belial
Reasoning together. Quickly, till to-night.

(Exit witch)

(Enter Azazel and Belial)

AZAZEL (TO MEPHISTOPHELES)

Alone and melancholy? Have you caught
The Prince's malady?

BELIAL

Nought's wrong, I hope.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I was impatiently awaiting you.
Strange signs of disaffection to the Prince
Spread through the people. Much will be to do
To keep them down. If they receive him ill
'Tis we shall bear the blame.

BELIAL

What? Disaffection?

You make me wonder at your words. I thought
I read delight upon their honest faces
To hear he came to-night.

AZAZEL

Yes. They are fools.

They gladly sweat, though they love idleness
And scrape them clean, although their natural dirt
Keeps them as warm as any monkey's hair,
All in the Prince's honour. Know you why?
He feeds them not, he helps them not, nor loves them;
No, but he reigns. That's argument enough
For loyalty of fools.

BELIAL

'Fore God, 'tis true.

He has no stomach for our brave designs.
All day he walketh by the sounding shore
That hems the skirts of Atlas and the world,
Discoursing to the light clouds and the winds
That cannot hear his words. I'll swear he's mad.

MEPHISTOPHELES

You do him wrong. He keeps a pupil there,
None else than Hermes, to discourse to now.
And such sage lessons! I have heard him ape
Your speech and paint your manners to his friend

Like a true poet.

BELIAL

What? He mocks us, eh?

MEPHISTOPHELES

In truth of you, my friend, he hardly speaks
Except to say: “And there’s a fellow, Belial,
Among my lackeys hath such want of wit
He keeps the rest a-laughing. Wine helps, too,
For that’s an essence kindles sluggish brains,
And he is ever drunk.”

BELIAL

The damnèd liar!

His lackey, too.

MEPHISTOPHELES (*To AZAZEL*)

Of you, my friend, he drew
A fairer picture.

AZAZEL

Yes, he ever praised
My worth, I know, but coupled with soft words
No fit rewards of honour.

MEPHISTOPHELES

He is proud,
And doubtless envy of your greater merit
Held back his hand. And envy, too, methinks,
Prompted the gibes—for what could prompt them else—
I heard him chatter to the laughing god,
As when he said: “These men of noble blood
When their ambition makes them serve the mob
Sink to their master’s level, heart and soul.
Azazel once was noble; see him now!
He knows not truth, nor his own bosom’s thought,

But what the fickle rabble crave to hear
That he says first and then believes outright.
He mouths a part and, as bad players use,
Feels what he feigns and doth himself abuse.”

AZAZEL

The tyrant’s impudence! The people’s will
Guides me in all.

MEPHISTOPHELES

O wondrous policy!

AZAZEL

He scorned us always and betrays us now,
And under Hermes’ guidance makes again
A covenant with heaven.

MEPHISTOPHELES

As for that
’Tis harmless trifling. Metaphysical air
Has ever been the pasture of his soul.
The braying conclave of the saints will grant him
A doctor’s title, if his logic prove
How erring Nature is fulfilled by Grace,
With thrice three hundred clinching arguments.

BELIAL

I never more will serve him. Why, I swear,
I never quite perceived the thing till now;
But he’s a brain-sick dreamer and no chief
For us, a parcel of good honest fellows
Who brave the gusts of chance.

AZAZEL

Whom shall we serve
Who have not wit enough to serve ourselves?

BELIAL

Tut, Mephistopheles, we'll make thee Prince.

AZAZEL

We can debate hereafter upon that.
There will be time enough. We can do nothing
While Lucifer is with us, for his presence
Will cast a spell around.

BELIAL

Then keep him out.

AZAZEL

We should first choose another leader.

BELIAL

Why,

Here is the noble Mephistopheles.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Do you trust me?

(He brings them forward)

Hear my plan.
He will bring his friend to-night
To sup with him. His delight
Never was among his clan.
But our foolish custom's ban
Keeps from this benighted cave
Every stranger, god or man.
Therefore when fat Hermes, grave,
With wide unperceiving eyes
And curled shock entwined with flowers,
Startles this grim pit of ours,
Raise, my friends, loud, piercing cries:
Treason! Treason! The surprise
Helps us, for like senseless fire

Through the mob contagion flies—
Seize them, ere the tide retire,
Cast them out and let them go.
Meanwhile I will plainly show
To the people gaping here
The great ills they had to fear,
From which we have saved them so.
They will raise a drunken cheer.
Lucifer may freely then
Dwell among his gods and men
For twelve months of every year.
Now what say you, friends?

AZAZEL AND BELIAL

Amen.

(Exeunt)

(A bell tolls. The devils and witches re-enter with utensils and lay the tables, dancing and singing)

FIRST DEVIL

I hear the great bell
That with merry knell
Wakes the fiends that dwell
In the breast of the teeming earth.

SECOND DEVIL

I hear the great bell
And I sniff the smell
That I love full well
Of a roast on the roaring hearth.

FIRST WITCH

I hear the great bell
And its changes tell
That the Prince of Hell
Is the guest of our seldom mirth.

CHORUS

I hear the great bell.
Let its merry knell
Wake all fiends that dwell
In the breast of the teeming earth.

(Re-enter Azazel and Belial)

AZAZEL

Think you, Belial,
The double-minded Mephistopheles
Could rule us long? He scorns and loathes us more
Than Lucifer himself, and were he Prince
Would be detested for his tyrannies
As for his mockeries he is hated now.
What? See you not that he is all compact
Of malice, envy, and hypocrisy?
His avarice will grind the people down,
And his insufferable taunts will kindle
Their hatred to rebellion.

BELIAL

How now, man?
You urged me first to rise against the Prince,
And would you now restore my loyalty?
Nay, that you shall not, for my mind is fixed.

AZAZEL

Not that; but who would quit a noble master
To serve a slave? For freedom's sake we rose
Against the Lord—a virtuous king enough
But yet a king—and we must still be free.
Let Mephistopheles give out the cry.
Then if he fails the punishment is his,
If he succeeds we make ourselves his partners
And share the just rewards. No. We must serve
Only ourselves, or else some honest chief.

BELIAL

Well said, well said. Each man shall rule himself.

I will remember your good words. I will.

(Enter Turel)

TUREL

Silence all. The Prince is there.
One foot on the topmost stair
Stands he with uplifted face
Gazing into starry space,
Drinking deep the midnight air.
From his brow the matted hair
Floats, each lock a golden flame.
High scorn quivers through his frame,
His fixed eye with question burns,
And his soul unconquered yearns
For the heaven whence it came.
Him those mighty pinions brought
To this island's yawning shore
That so grandly beat and soar
To the pulses of his thought.
By the winds his vesture caught
Filled and floated like a cloud,
Dun and silvern as a shroud;
For all sea mews and sea gulls,
Flying in the tempest lulls,
Ravens, hawks, and eagles loud,
And whatever living things
Trembled upon woven wings
In the path he chanced to take,
Fell into the bitter lake,
Weary suddenly of breath;
And the spoil of quiet death
Strewed the billows in his wake.
Behold him.

(Enter Lucifer)

BELIAL

God! He never looked so fair
Even in heaven.

MEPHISTOPHELES

'Tis the change of air.

LUCIFER

Again I greet you, hollow rocks; again
Among your ancient treasures hide my pain.
I love you better than the heaven blue,
Which is not blue nor heaven. This squat dome
Broods like a dungeon close. Its frown is true.
Were my soul local I could call this home.
And O my piteous angels, faithful few
Of all my comrades, I return to you.
All brutish natures fructify and grow,
But you are barren. Others breed and sow,
And only kill what may be food for them.
You in just hate and scorn of being stem
The world's unfathomable flood of woe.
Reason, that first in my deep heart was born,
Won your rude natures for this work of peace.
But, oh, how slowly doth the evil cease!
Would that the healing edge of my keen scorn
Had plunged to nature's heart, the sacred fire
Of my compulsive thought consumed desire.
Then were a lull in heaven and deep sleep,
And sweeter music than the angels' choir.
Let us forget redemption, and not keep
Our hearts enchanted by a hope so vain.
The whole creation is in love with pain.
The child, delighted at the sparrow's note,
Cries, Would I were a bird that I might fly!
But the bird's chirping is his hunger's cry,
A nameless want is throbbing at his throat,
His wings are weary, and the season's stress
Drives him from wilderness to wilderness.
If one of you had watched him in the glade
Hop to his nest, officious with a straw,
Across the patches of the sun and shade,
You had belched fire upon him, or your claw
Had gashed his breast. And it were better so.

No more those numbèd feet would mark the snow,
Or that slight soul accuse the gods above.
Thus your wild instinct does the work of love.
He and none else is cruel who began
The fatal work of life, and in each breast
Bade some blind passion torture all the rest,
To die unsatisfied. Innocent man
Obeys his need, and pities when he can.
Therefore I love you. In your delvèd hall
Night is as day, and by this leaping flame
Summer and frozen winter are the same.
So, too, your wills, raised by your noble fall,
Surpass the servitude to praise and blame.
Save that great sin which is to be at all,
Ye know no crime, but as each soul is made
So it stands forth, incapable of shame,
Naked, defiant, lustful, undismayed;
And that I prize, as my soul hates the fool
Whose only passion is to live by rule.
Unreason made the world; if her vast loom
Chance to inweave a monstrous figure there,
And if I choose to dote and deem it fair,
For that strange judgment there is also room.
For every spirit born to breathe the air
Is his own master and himself his doom.

(He takes his place on the dais)

Thus I fill the flagon up
With red wine and pass the cup.
Lo! My lips have touched the brim
Where the beaded bubbles swim.
As I drink, drink, comrades, after
Of this fount of love and laughter.
Curst be he who stints his joy;
Him the honeyed foam shall cloy.
The stout heart that drinketh deep
Hath loud laughter and long sleep.
Drain the bitter dregs, my braves,
Nor go foolish to your graves,
For it ne'er comes round again,
Youth's full cup of joy and pain.

We who were together boys
In the painted house of joys,
We who have been young together
Breasting foul and wintry weather,
When the sand doth scrape the prow,
How shall we be parted now?
Shame to him who scorns the pleasure
That hath filled another's measure.
Death to him who dreads the groan
That a brother's soul hath known.
Thus I drink with each that saith:
Here's to friendship unto death.

(Drinks and passes the cup. They sit down to eat)

(Music and Dance)

BELIAL

Let's to the food.

AZAZEL

So Hermes is not come?

MEPHISTOPHELES

The time's not yet, but we shall see anon
The rosy god, the Prince's darling friend—
Of whom he thought the while he flattered us—
Who being gay and squeamish in his food
Is fortunately late. Else had he heard
That woeful monologue, and smelt this fish.
We, my lord's comrades, whom he frankly hates,
Are fools and churlish knaves. He told us so.
He gives us his sad words; his jolly wine
He keeps for better company. In sooth,
'Twill be that novel friendship's sweetening
Of which he sings the praises. Some such catch
I learned while at the university
I read Aquinas. I oft heard the like
In their beer-cellars.

BELIAL

'Twas a beauteous song.

MEPHISTOPHELES

My barrel-bellied friends, the publicans,
Know many better. I will sing you one
When you are drunker and of keener wit
To relish song. Perhaps the thieving god
Will never deign to come. This barren house
Gives little scope for his dexterity,
And dining off his father's golden plate
Seems better worth his pains. But I will ask.

(To Lucifer)

My lord, was it to-day the son of Jove
Walked awhile with us in the wonted grove?

LUCIFER

Ay; said I not I meant to bring him here?

MEPHISTOPHELES

I had forgot. Was he prevented then?

LUCIFER

His duty called him to the needs of men.
Alas! How grim a cavern hell will seem
After Elysium! Some one must stand near
With courteous greeting, lest he shrink in fear.
Yes, let one go and signal from the hill.
Azazel, thou, who ever drinkest least.

AZAZEL

Not I, my lord. Bid servants do your will.

LUCIFER

Why, I should go myself, but that the feast
Would lack a chief. Yet, since thou tak'st it ill,
Here's Mephistopheles—

MEPHISTOPHELES

My lord, the law,
If I mistake not, and not any lack
Of zeal to serve your fancy holds him back.
Law when unwelcome most enforces awe.

LUCIFER

The law?

MEPHISTOPHELES

You live away from us, my lord,
Among the better people of your dreams,
And you forget how great a trifle seems
To meaner spirits. Would you might afford
More counsel to your people!

LUCIFER

But didst thou say the law?

MEPHISTOPHELES

It was my word.
A constant custom has the force of law.
If he who made it, with a wayward mind
Repents, it yet finds honour from mankind.
That which the prudent people never saw
Is dangerous to do, what e'er it be,
But more if it be rash and mark disdain
Of their poor safety in the strong who reign.

LUCIFER

I do not understand. The law I know
Is that the greater should command the less
And that by nature mincing crookedness
Hath a bad end.—Lead Hermes hither; go.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I would, my lord, but that it cannot be.
This is the kingdom's inmost citadel.
No foreign chief or enemy of hell
May enter here. Such is the law's decree.

LUCIFER

Ah, that! If that were all, all yet were well.
I see a deeper treason in thy breast.
The law? Who made it, that it fetters me?
I chose not hitherto to bid a guest
To my rude hall, and am I now not free?
He oft must change his ways who seeks the best.

MEPHISTOPHELES

You changed them once, my lord, and we lost heaven.
Was that, too, for the best?

LUCIFER

It was indeed.
To suffer for the truth is to succeed,
The fall had been by falsehood to have thriven.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Ah! I had thought you meant the good old King
Should die and you be heir. With some such thing
I thought you tempted us.

LUCIFER

It was a dream.
Reason at first is ignorant. Her might
She deems, like her prerogative, supreme,
And weds in fancy victory with right.
By grief instructed, none the less I cling
To truth, and from my deepest heart defy
The shameful triumphs of iniquity.
Thou dost not so, my brother. Thy sick mind
Needs to be truckled to by flatteries.
Small tricks of chance and favours of mankind

Are dainties to thy palate. Wretched lies,
Unmeaning strokes of fortune, mad and blind,
What should they be to me? I let them strike
That cannot wound my honour.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Sir, I like
Your martyr's courage, but could wish removed
The disappointment of your slight mistake,
Although the people's murmurs be reprov'd
Whose folly makes them think the burning lake
Less pleasant than cool heaven.

LUCIFER

Villain, when were such words addressed to me?
Ho! Where is Belial? Call him quickly here—
Is this mere madness or conspiracy?
From mild Olympus what have they to fear?
It were too gross a blindness for their eyes.
Ho! Belial! Where is Belial?

FIRST DEVIL

Here he lies.
Look, sir, the Prince is calling.

BELIAL

Let him call.

(Sings)

Ho, heigh, ho, the wine is red,
One more cup and then to bed
And between—that's wrong, that's wrong.
Sing thou, I have forgot the song.

FIRST DEVIL

Come, sir, the Prince speaks. Attend.

BELIAL (*REELING, CUP IN HAND*)

Would the sweet Prince drink with me?
I am now his enemy,
But until the mad world's end
If a man will drink with me
I will count him for a friend.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Hush, fool, you are drunk. Be still.

BELIAL

So I am; but you forget
You are not my master yet.
Drunk? Well, drunk I'll have my will.

(To Lucifer)

Mephistopheles and I
Have decreed that you must go.
All the rest would have it so—
I forget the reason why.
You must fly, my lord, must fly—
And I bid you now farewell.

(Offers his hand)

In the lands where you will dwell
I will sometimes visit you
And in cups like this renew
Pleasant memories of hell.

(Drinks)

MEPHISTOPHELES

Nay, this is his dream, my lord,
Hatched in his besotted brain.
We all hope you long may reign
And we would not use the sword.
But we all, with one accord,
Will from strangers guard this hold.
You are welcome as of old,
But your friend you cannot bring,
For a treasonable king

Makes the loyal subject bold.

LUCIFER

Astonishment more utter than disdain
Ties my parched tongue. How should you banish me?
To me the gates of heaven still are free
And cannot close; the Father's weary brain
By nature's curse, though unconfessedly,
Holds nightly session with my mastering pain,
And will you banish me?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Not from our thought,
My lord. We shall remember you, no doubt,
Though in the body you should dwell without.
But let your better judgment yet be brought
Not to command the impossible. The fool
Loves to attempt it. Bid your passion cool
And answer the assembled people this:
Shall a god, pampered and tyrannical,
Who burdens mortals to increase his bliss,
Sit like a guest of honour in this hall
Spying our deeds; and having had his fill
Issue from hence and hurry to his mates
Sitting in sloth upon their castled hill
To plan campaigns against us?

LUCIFER

Hold! Be still!

I must no longer hear thee. The just Fates
Are sleeping else this kingdom could not stand.
O gentle friend, if o'er the moonlit waves
Thy light soul flieth to this shaken land,
Turn back, and enter not these cursèd caves,
For here a great calamity has come.
I might with flaming sword, ay, with a breath
Quell this rebellion, like Samson split this dome,
And crush these venomous worms in sudden death.
Ay, and then say to him who entereth:

These are my vassals, this my house and home.
O deep damnation!
Avaunt, thou festering plague, thou livid scum
Of hell's envenomed serpent-breeding pool!
That ever I should call this people mine
Amid their swinish kisses belching wine!
Why did I e'er seduce them, trustful fool,
To follow reason? Heaven was their place.
Leave me, go back to him, implore his grace
Who with bribes sweetens his usurpèd rule.
You know me not. In me you never saw
The truth's superb and calm authority
That without armies holds the world in awe.
You saw a kinder, weaker lord in me
Smiling on license, and your evil blood
And lust of riot hatched your mutiny.
Doth my dog love me only for his food,
Or follow to be sleek? Ye mongrel curs
That bite when you are thin! What's hungry truth
That you should serve it, or be ministers
Of holy pity or all-healing ruth?
Henceforth to be your king shall be my shame.
Look not to me, nor hide your rankling vices
Beneath the mantle of my spotless name.
Back to your ancient master; he'll forgive
And feast you for returning. It suffices
That you blaspheme my faith. O live and thrive,
Show all the hireling world how wise you are.
I do so hate you I would have you live.
Grow, breed, beget, let writhing lechery
Drive sleep from you at night and treacherous war
Hound you for ever. Breed, that if you die
Misshapen giants may the plagues inherit
With which I curse you now.

TUREL

O shaken spirit!

AZAZEL

What will he do?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Nothing—but nurse his grief.

AZAZEL

He'll leave us.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Ay, in that our plot succeeds.

LUCIFER

Farewell for ever, partners of my deeds,
False to my thought. Look, soldiers, on your chief
For the last time.

FIRST DEVIL

My lord—

SECOND DEVIL

My lord, I pray,
Charge not to me another's treachery.

LUCIFER

Ye all are foul. Speak not a word to me.
I fly beyond the fountains of the day
Into the silence. The polluted shore
Of hell releases me. I strive no more.

TUREL

Master, may I go with you?

LUCIFER

Who shall tread my secret ways?

TUREL

I have served you all my days.

What is left for me to do?

LUCIFER

I have been a curse to thee
Ever. Thou forsookest heaven
Uncondemned, thy choice was free,
Fool, by love to ruin driven!
Unavailing, unforgiven
Was the only love of me.

(Exit)

MEPHISTOPHELES

Comrades, the Prince, as you have seen, hath fled,
As to the next in office lend instead
Your loyal aid to me.

AZAZEL

Hold! Not so quick.
Others have equal privilege and I
Cannot consent. This is too plain a trick.
The common voice alone may choose a king.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Nature hath named him.

BELIAL

Mark his vanity.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Thou shalt not mark it twice.

(Stabs Belial, who falls)

AZAZEL

Pernicious fiend,
Thy reign is well begun, but it shall end
Ere further mischief follow.

(Draws)

MEPHISTOPHELES

Fool, come on.

(Exeunt, fighting)

SECOND DEVIL (*SEIZING A FIRE BRAND*)

I will set fire to something. If one fall
I'll brand the other till he howl with pain.
Come on, a blaze! A revel, one and all.
Who knows when such a night will come again?

(Exit, amid general confusion)

FIRST DEVIL (*AFTER THE STAGE IS EMPTIED, FILLS A BOWL AND SINGS*)

What care I what king is king?
I am still a slave.
While there's red wine in his cave—
Ring, bells, ring—
What care I what king is king?

What care I what king is king
If my coat is brave?
While I have a song to sing—
Dig his grave—
What care I what king is king?

ACT FOURTH

SCENE FIRST

IN FRONT A PLATFORM. ON ONE SIDE THE OPEN SKY, WITH FLOATING CLOUDS. ON THE OTHER THE GATE OF HEAVEN. BESIDE IT, SAINT PETER, IN HIS CHAIR, READING. BEHIND, A PART OF THE WALLS AND PINNACLES OF THE CELESTIAL CITY.

(Hermes and Mephistopheles arriving)

MEPHISTOPHELES

We started early. It is twilight yet.

HERMES

Pleasant it is to watch this broader sun
Rise from this calmer sea.

MEPHISTOPHELES

It is a moon.
The sun shines there within and cannot set.

HERMES

Your feast was brief.

MEPHISTOPHELES

It ended with the broth.
About some trifle—almost I forget

The cause—our Lucifer was greatly wroth
And burst with curses from us. That upset
Our festival.

HERMES

Indeed! In one so just
The thing is strange.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Who knows? Some deep chagrin
May have found vent in this. The sinless must
Lay all their troubles to another's sin,
Which thus grows large. He did not seem at ease.
I think thy absence grieved him.

HERMES

It was late
When I came forth and found thee at the gate.
Thou saidst that all was over.

MEPHISTOPHELES

If thou please
Sit here awhile. The Porter seems awake.
I will be gentle with him for thy sake.

(Approaches Saint Peter)

Ho! Father Porter, is there leave to pass?
You will grow fat in office, now, I fear,
That no one knocks, and doze while chanticleer
Awakes us busy people. But, alas,
Though others fail you, I will come to mass
And keep the Church's precept once a year.

SAINT PETER

Thou knowest, devil, that the way is free.
It is thy pride hath forged for thee the lock
And closed thy bosom to felicity.
Go, demon, see the glory thou dost mock.

Go, fiend, and double torment may it be
To look on heaven, having hell in thee.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Slowly, good Father, give me time to blink,
For, by the Cock, you are infallible
And rashness now might bring expense of ink
On sucking theologians. Truth to tell—
But I forgot. I have some news for you
That will surprise you. Lucifer, I think,
Is coming back to heaven. He withdrew
Last night from our command. He says we stink.
He will not speak in his own name at first—
He has diplomacy—but sends to sue
For leave that one, his favourite, may view
The sights of heaven. But, mark me, if he durst,
He would beg pardon for himself. His sin
Will be forgiven, and sans further harm
You'll have a soldier-prince. The secular arm
Will drive the clergy hard when he is in.
I am most sensible of your alarm.
You see this strange conversion must chagrin
Me also, who have lost him. But we bear,
They say, the griefs more lightly which we share.

SAINT PETER

Ah, liar! Is there any truth in this?

MEPHISTOPHELES

All I have said. I came now not to miss
The touching scene. He will be here anon.
But I have brought you Hermes, who would ask
A herald's privilege and see the King,
To offer gifts from Zeus. A pious task,
Unless your Holiness forbid the thing.

SAINT PETER

Why is it pleasant to thee to offend?

Thou knowest such imaginations vain.
Here children born to Adam and again
Born unto Christ with angels live alone.
He who comes with thee comes to no good end.

MEPHISTOPHELES

His ends are his, I make them not my own,
But as a common human courtesy
I point the way to strangers. To the throne
I take the slight petition you deny,
For, though I'm sorry for it, sure I am
God receives many that the churches damn.

(Turns back to Hermes)

SAINT PETER

God knows the right; but it is not our place
To make exceptions. He can grant a grace
Who gave the law. We cannot.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Well, my son,
He will not let thee pass.

HERMES

And were it rash
To try the gate?

MEPHISTOPHELES

'Tis hardly to be done,
And failure in that insolence would dash
All hopes of parley.

HERMES

May he not be won?
Leave the old man to me.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Prescriptions bind
These priests and pedants, and he thinks to find
Some ancient rule against it. Underlings
Will ever stickle at the forms of things.
The King himself will judge with freer mind
And haply bid thee welcome. I will ask
That favour, being fitted for the task
Better, perhaps, than thou. Thou art a Greek
Unused to kiss the ground before the throne
Of the Great King, or smile the smile, and speak
The flowery phrase. 'Tis well I go alone.
I know the anguished look, the posture meek,
The trembling voice that make good manners here;
And, though I am a rebel, I appear
As an old courtier and I move with ease.
Over my lot the cherubs shed a tear,
And 'spite of all my blasphemies I please.
Talk meantime to the priest. He is a sage
Of pleasant wit when he forgets his rôle,
And when not bent on catching any soul
Enjoys the fancies of this naughty age.
Nor has he worshipped at thy shrine in vain.
He knows thy trick of words and trick of gain.

(Goes in)

HERMES

Old man, I pray thee, wherefore may I not
Speak to thy King?

SAINT PETER

Thou hast no need of grace.
That is a sadder and a higher lot
Than thine. The poor in spirit see his face.

HERMES

Strange! Surely Lucifer who knows the truth
Sent me not hither to be turned away.

SAINT PETER

It is a serpent tempts thee, noble youth.
Even while speaking truth he leads astray.
His eye is subtle, but his heart is blind,
And of God's fruits he marks the spotted rind,
But not the kernel where their virtue lay.
All nature yields no meaning to his mind,
For understanding withers at its springs
Unless love guide it to the sense of things.
On faith is built the wisdom of mankind.
Mark how this age, that builds its truth on doubt,
Falters at heart and knows no certain hope,
But trusts to fate, with which it dare not cope,
To work its undeserved salvation out.
What truth have men? The senses' brief deceit.
What happiness? The slavery to greed.
What art? An echo and a paltry cheat.
What God? A helpless consciousness of need.
Upon what food, then, doth this people feed
That it forgets of whom it borrows breath?
Knows it the secret of the budding grain,
Or can it conjure floods or summon rain?
Or grows it sick and amorous of death,
Or like its father, Satan, dull to pain?
Oh, men have waxed too covetous of gold
To lift their eyes up from their labour's gain;
And as each morning brings the sun again
And summer wears his splendours as of old,
They drive the ploughshare deeper in the mould
And say: There are no longer gods in heaven!
With smitten breast and penance would they crave
Their bread, if God less bountifully gave,
But they forget him now, when all is given.
Thus are the souls my Master died to save
Like earth-regarding beasts in stupor driven
Without the hope of heaven to the grave.

HERMES

Old man, thy words are strange, thy thought is just.
Our altars have not smoked these many years;
Our shrines are desolate, our statues dust.

None bring us sacrifice of joys and fears,
As for our honour and their good they must.
For men have need of us to feed their soul
And with a perfect thought their pain beguile.
We are the better part that saves the whole,
And man's heart lightens when he treads a grove
Hallowed by me or any child of Jove.

SAINT PETER

Amiable spirit, in the heaven's smile
Among the flowers thy beauty came to birth.
Live, and make fragrant still that early earth
Where nothing sinful is and nothing vile.—

(To himself)

No, Adam, thine was not a blessed fault,
Though ransomed by the blessed death of Christ.
The good that nature gave us had sufficed,
Nor if the touch of evil could exalt
Would God forbid it and the heart cry, Halt!

(To Hermes)

Why shouldst thou pray to pass these heavy doors
Through which the triumphs of our sorrow go
When heaven dwells within thy breast and pours
Its music through thy being's pulses? No.
Envy us not the comfort of our woe.

HERMES

I envy nothing. If I scaled these towers
'Twas to deliver messages I bring
From Zeus, my father, to thy Lord, the King,
And bear his answer back.

SAINT PETER

A darkness lowers
Suddenly in the east, as if a storm
Were coming on us. From all evil powers
Defend us, Master. Hath the thing a form?

(Enter Lucifer)

HERMES

'Tis Lucifer!

SAINT PETER

I know not what I fear,
But a great chillness falls upon my heart.

LUCIFER

Alas! Methought that I should find thee here.

HERMES

How welcome, Lucifer, how fair thou art
In these strange heavens!

LUCIFER

Whither didst thou flee?
Couldst thou not find some path across the sea
To where I waited?

HERMES

It was late to start
And Mephistopheles—

LUCIFER

O evil name,
Let me not hear thee utter it!—

HERMES

He came
Ere midnight, saying that the feast was o'er,
And led me straightway hither.

LUCIFER

Did no shame

Show on the villain's brow?

HERMES

He seemed the same.
'Tis thou hast never looked so stern before.

LUCIFER

Where is he now?

HERMES

Within. The gate is locked
Against me, but he took my message in.

LUCIFER

Couldst thou trust him, whose words have ever mocked
His own heart's thinking?

HERMES

It was not my sin.
When to his hands thou hast commended me
Should I not trust him?

LUCIFER

Fates, ye spin, ye spin!

HERMES

If I might enter now 'tis not too late.
Question this man. I cannot find the cause
Why, being good, he keeps me from the gate.

LUCIFER

Leave the old fool alone. This realm hath laws
Older than those in which his tribe is schooled.
Do not these frowning portals give thee pause?

HERMES

I fain would pass them.

LUCIFER

They may yet be ruled.

Hear me, ye gates, if ye have memory
Of peaceful days when ye could wider swing
And feel the brazen chariots, wing and wing,
Roll o'er your golden threshold to the sky.
Hear me, ye gates, and, opening, reply.

HERMES

Hear me, ye gates! A wingèd herald I
From distant skies, with greetings to your King;
The guardian of the souls that ever sing,
The shepherd of the shades that never die.
Hear me, ye gates, and, opening, reply.

LUCIFER

Hear ye not, O ye faithless gates, the cry
That with hosannas made this welkin ring,
When ye, a-tremble at so glad a thing,
Opened to let the swift Archangel by?
Ye hear me not. Your silence makes reply.

SAINT PETER

Vain incantation! See ye not the cross
Above the doors?

HERMES

Ah, look! Was that sign there
When they obeyed thee?

LUCIFER

Out of my despair
Thou bring'st me, Hermes, to a second loss.
I never thought to see this place again.
Never! Never to call and call in vain

At my own kingdom's portals. Still to hope
Was folly. See how like the blind I grope,
Led by thy wanton hand; into what mesh
Of infinite affliction thou hast led me!
Thou with a touch hast quickened my dead flesh
And on the bitterness of beauty fed me
Till all my healèd wounds do bleed afresh.

HERMES

What have I done? I know not. If this place
Is grievous to thee, do not enter in.
Methinks this good old man will have the grace
To be my messenger.

LUCIFER

'Twas an innocent sin,
Hermes, in thee.

HERMES

Why, then, this bitterness.
Thou lov'st me not.

LUCIFER

Incredible to me
Is the deep root thy love hath taken in me,
So deep it wounds, so deep it cannot bless.
What need of proof? A word of thine could win me
To leave my proper throne and follow thee.
Remember, Hermes, that my grief is large,
Not small my love. Can time unsalt the sea
For drinking sweetness of a thousand streams?
'Tis they grow brackish far above the marge
With his pollution. Malediction seems
To spread about me. O beware, beware,
Lest some great evil fall upon thy head,
As upon all my mates, and leave despair
To mock the phantom of thy beauty dead.
But I will save thee still. When I am fled

'Twill be my comfort in my heavy lot
To know thee happy. It shall then be said
That one was once my friend and rued it not.
For this sole thing, to have the power to bless,
As all men have, I could remount my sphere.
There, where I loved, I carried happiness.
Now I must banish me from what is dear
Lest it should perish if I linger near.

HERMES

And I had hoped to make thy sorrow less!

LUCIFER

Alas! The ghost of good that haunts the earth
Is sadder than all evil. Of thy birth,
Of thy young faith, repent! Let no caress
Win thee to softness, no sweet voice decoy,
For it will leave thee like a desolate child
Weeping a blasted hope. In thy defiled
And empty heart, oh, quench the hope of joy!
Guileless thou wert. Myself have I beguiled
Into this toil. There is a time in love
When comes a chill, a little touch of frost,
And the simplicity of love is lost.
It may live after, many a trial prove
Its constancy; but upon friend and friend
The burden lies—foreknowledge of the end.
My flower is nipped. We stood now at the crest
Of our high friendship. The pathway heretofore
Mounted, and love was daily more and more,
But henceforth to the gates of death addressed
It winds into the sunset. I am loath,
Hermes, to grieve thee, but the truth is best.
I shall not falter. Faithful to my oath
I will walk with thee till thou hast thy will,
But then I leave thee. To my desert hill
Never pursue me, to ensnare us both.

HERMES

Nay, I release thee now.

LUCIFER

'Tis not the oath.

When the lips swear, the lips may be forsworn,
But, oh, the torment when the heart is torn!
How could I leave thee in so strange a plight
Amid the quicksands of this ghostly shore,
Where every blear and unfamiliar light
Would mock thee and bewitch thee o'er and o'er?
Thou art not armoured for so vast a war,
Nor in the bivouac of so foul a night
Hast thou in thy sweet soul enough despair
To keep the courage of thine inward right
And the last issue of thy fate to dare.
Therefore, for the sad sake of this last love
So rich in sorrow, and in hope so poor,
I make me thine ambassador above.
Insolent gates, avaunt! Proud heart, endure!

(Lucifer strikes the gates with his lance. They open and he enters. Hermes attempts to follow, but an invisible barrier prevents him from crossing the threshold. Saint Peter, making the sign of the cross, follows Lucifer. The gates close again, and Hermes remains watching the scene in an attitude of rest.)

SCENE SECOND

HEAVEN: FROM THE AISLE THAT OCCUPIES THE FOREGROUND THE CHOIR OF A VAST CATHEDRAL IS SEEN THROUGH AN OPEN SCREEN. ANGELS AND SAINTS. IN THE SHADOW OF A PILLAR, MEPHISTOPHELES.

MEPHISTOPHELES

In ill time have I come. They are at prayers.
I know the tinkle of that feeble bell.
These drowsy animals with pompous airs—
How I rejoice they do not cumber hell.
It rasps against the bone to hear them whine.
We had good music once.—Here comes his grace,
Led by his new love to this torture-place.

(Enter Lucifer)

Pish—though: 'tis good to see the true steel shine
Amid this tinsel army.

(To Lucifer)

Good my lord—

LUCIFER

Do not speak to me.

MEPHISTOPHELES

We have passed the gate,
But here's the ante-room. They make us wait.

LUCIFER

Silence. Let not thy lips pronounce a word.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Why not? Does this sweet song so charm your ear
That my voice grates? I'll speak to others, then,
For I am not disposed to stand by here

Until they reach the eighty-fifth *Amen*.

(He goes up to the screen, looks through, and touches the Archangel Michael, who stands near it, on the shoulder)

Michael, although men's fortune may decline
You prize the ancient privilege of race.
Lucifer stands with mortals here in line
And fain would see the Master face to face.

MICHAEL (*APPROACHING LUCIFER*)

Lucifer, have good patience for a while,
The evening canticle is just begun.
But if thou wilt, withdraw beneath this aisle.
I will stand with thee till the song is done.

ANGELS SING

*As the grass-blade in the sod
Turns to heaven from the clod,
I from nothingness to God.*

LUCIFER

Thou lookest on me, Michael, and thy gaze
Saith, Oh, how changed, how changed my captain is.
But heaven too is changed, more changed, since days
When only perfect spirits knew its bliss.

ANGELS SING

*On the floating cloud I swim,
Finding in the brightness dim
Him and Him and only Him.*

MICHAEL

Ay, brother. Many earthly voices swell
The mellowed music of the angel-host,
And in my soul man's works the greatest spell,
For it is man the Lord hath honoured most.

ANGELS SING

*As a drop within the sea
I am lost and found in thee,
Thou, my life, exceeding me.*

LUCIFER

Who now is King? A man the Roman slew
For working wonders to the gaping mob.
And who is Queen? The daughter of a Jew,
And heaven trembles at a girlish sob.

ANGELS SING

*As a little star on fire
Twinkles in thy silent choir,
My heart sings with joy entire.*

MICHAEL

There is no greater glory than to raise
The spirit's dignity from grievous fall.
Think of the joy if after evil days
Thou wert a prince again among us all.

ANGELS SING

*As the grain within the ear
Feels the summer of the year
So I watch and love and fear.*

LUCIFER

I am a thing raised high above the world
And challenge this great evil's right to be.
With reason like a cloak about me furled
I bid the mad gods thunder over me.

ANGELS SING

*As in quiet space a wind,
Though embosomed not confined,
Moves my mind within thy mind.*

MICHAEL

There is no right nor wrong, no high nor deep,
There is no reason nor unreason here.
I choke with too great reverence to weep
And sink before the wonder I revere.

ANGELS SING

*As of leaves the tenderest one
All my soul is overrun
With warm love, as with the sun.*

LUCIFER

The wonder is in us and in our thought,
I will not worship any lesser thing.
The waking cometh when the dream is nought.
The void will then be glad, the silence sing.

ANGELS SING

*As the snow-flake in the sky
Willeth with the storm to fly,
Living in thy life I die.*

MICHAEL

God was before us; in his boundless mind
Found us and loved us first and called us forth.
He would not leave us to his beauty blind,
But bade us know the love that gave us birth.

ANGELS SING

*To thy wisdom all I leave,
It is thine to take and give,
Mine to love and to believe.*

LUCIFER

He saith he made us. Let him then destroy.
He is his nature's slave as much as I.

Think not your flattery can give him joy,
For in his heart he knoweth it a lie.

ANGELS SING

*Hold me fast, or make me free
Freely to return to thee,
Thou the all in all of me.*

MICHAEL

I know the comfort of my Master's breast,
And with no fever is my spirit tossed.
Remember, Lucifer, thou once wast blest,
And tell me what is gained for what is lost.

ANGELS SING

*By thy sacred body fed,
Living by thy blood, and led
By thy spirit overspread,—*

LUCIFER

Ah! For his gifts thou worshippest thy Lord,
Thy courtier's privilege, thy garments sheen.
For all the glory of thy flashing sword
Thou art a coward, and thy soul is mean.

ANGELS SING

*While I see thee, I am blest,
While I touch thee, I can rest,
While I love thee, all is best.*

MICHAEL

I will not answer now. Behold the King.

(A gate in the screen opens. Enter: The Risen Christ, clothed in white, bearing the standard of the cross, the wounds on his hands, feet, and side.)

LUCIFER

What, so? No more?

CHRIST (*TO SOME WHO POINT OUT THE PRESENCE OF LUCIFER*)

Peace. Greet ye not with scorn
One who comes not in anger.

LUCIFER (*APART*)

What? So shorn
Of all his glory? A man? O pitiful thing!
Why did I tremble? I come to triumph here
And find my conqueror more lost than I.

(*To Christ*)

Alas, O King, thou bought'st thy victory dear
If having vanquished thou wast fain to die.

CHRIST (*TO LUCIFER*)

We both have chosen sorrow. Therefore speak
The burden of thy heart. What seekest thou?

LUCIFER

I? Nothing.

CHRIST

For thyself thou dost not seek
That which thou seekest, for thou doest now
Another's errand.

LUCIFER

Oh, then wherefore ask
What thou well knowest, as thou knowest all,
And make more grievous thus mine honest task?
Be generous, O King, that if thou fall
Men may lament thy ruin. At thy gates
Unhoused, unheard, an unarmed herald waits.
Thy churlish warder would not let him pass—
There comes he frowning: his poor brain debates

The point of law and reckons up the toll—
Therefore to this strange kingdom I, alas,
Am come with jarring words to wound thy soul.

SAINT PETER

What I have done is well. Authority
Hath not been laid upon me without grace
To know my office. No, it was not I
That kept the youth away. There is no place
In heaven for his nature or his race.

LUCIFER (*LOOKING ABOUT HIM*)

O wonderful! Where thieves, adulterers,
And knaves with blood-stained hands, for dying well
Have entered in, more welcome that they fell,
No star may transit make that never errs
From its true course, celestial sentinel!

SAINT PETER

A perfect nature is its proper heaven,
But when the struggling spirit, from its fall
Would rise through penance, saving grace is given.

LUCIFER

Is not thy bosom still the home of all,
Is not the womb of night, by thy rays riven,
Fruitful by thee? Is not now every star
A spark of thine own life's incessant fire,
And every wind that sweeps the cosmic lyre
An echo of thy heart-beats felt afar,
A needful voice in thine eternal choir?
This we believed when thou wast God indeed,
But now thou hast renounced the world entire
To be but Saviour to the woman's seed.

SAINT PETER

Mark how the devil will misquote the creed.

CHRIST

When to my breast I took the universe
And from its exile promised it return,
I bent to that which most had felt the curse
Of being other: from the farthest bourn
I took the weakest up and most forlorn,
For there is nothing in the infinite
More pitiful than man; no mortal cry
Comes with such bitter wailing through the sky.
Upon his brow alone the curse is writ
Of shame and labour in divinity.
In losing all things he foreknows his loss.
Therefore I made his agony mine own
When I cried *Eli*, dying on the cross.
I died a man, yet not for man alone,
But that all natures might my peace receive
And learn that he who laid on them to live
Himself had suffered first, and felt, and known.

LUCIFER

If we forgive thee, then thou wilt forgive,
Bartering mercy!—But let mercy be,
I speak of justice. If the vilest dust
Assume the godhead, and its brother worm
Enter thy glory, must the purer form
Coming with innocent questionings be thrust
Unanswered from thy portals? Is it just?
Thou lovest men who turn away from thee.
Why then despise the god that dares to trust
His open bosom to thy courtesy?

CHRIST

Wouldst thou have brought him were he seeking me?
He knows not of me, but for love of wealth
And idle knowledge tempts an unknown sea.
These are his Indies, and he sails by stealth
Borne on we know what broad-winged argosy.

LUCIFER

'Tis true. Once in my bosom's folds I brought
The wanderer hither, but his pilot thought
Pointed the way, and his bold spirit filled
The vans that bore him. To thy surly gate
I had not sent him if he had not willed.
He begged it of me. I deny him nought.
Make not my love a reason for thy hate.

CHRIST

Doth thy heart echo to the dulcet string
To which the speech is tuned? Thy care was less
For other souls of old.

LUCIFER

My heart, sad King,
Is full as thine of ancient bitterness.
The wreathèd roses that about it press
Are its new crown of thorns. Look, else, and see.
Why should I make my soul a mystery
When it is pure and worthier to be known
Than all men gape at in the rolling heaven?
They think, since I am just, my heart is stone.
Stone be it, yet for grief that stone is riven.
By the world's shame into the desert driven,
I live in torment, for I live alone.
Alone in thought I fathomed the false deeps
Of old pretension and alone I rose,
For they that followed are in truth my foes.
Alone I stand in nature, for she sleeps
And leaves me the large treasure of her woes.
Hunger for love is still our misery
Whether we feed it or we feed it not.
Thinking of that, in patience of my lot,
I sat upon a crag above the sea—
The vultures fly in terror from the spot
It doth so whisper of eternity—
When Hermes, angel to his father Jove,
Set foot to plume his wing upon the steep.
For many leagues the bitter wind he clove
And found no other island in the deep.

Marvelling, I questioned him. What care could keep
His youth in exile from the vernal grove?
No vines upon so gaunt a ruin creep,
No Nereid sports in such an icy cove.
He feared me not, but smiled at what I said,
Nor marked the ominous thunderbolts that played
Ceaseless above me; all I chanced to ask
He freely answered, hiding nothing; laid
His warm hand in my hand, and his fair head
Upon my flinty pillow; told what task
The gods had laid upon him—to explore
The sea of space and every luminous isle
That in its waters swims, from shore to shore,
And to make trial of what secret powers
Might lurk in Nature's womb, what realms stretch out
Through space beyond this twinkling vault of ours;
For meditation ended still in doubt.
He spoke, and speaking wove a net about
My thought-sick heart, and at his breath new flowers
Sprang in my fancy, barren long with drought.
The fragrance of the past came back to me
Laden with joys. I saw these courts again,
And through the silence of my charmed pain
Burst snatches of an ancient harmony.
It loosed amain the floodgates of my youth
To see his beauty and angelic mind
So like my comrades lost, and I resigned
My will to his, and told him all the truth.
And as an eagle, old and hoarse and blind,
Turns his young fledglings' eyes to the sun's fire,
Proud they should relish the ancient fierce delight,
So have I led my loved one higher and higher
Till mine own heaven opened to his sight.
Alas, I deemed those glories ever bright
And find them now tear-tarnished. How require
His simple soul to read this riddle right?
'Tis well thy gate is shut, for with disgust
He would have turned him from this ghostly throng,
Nor would his sense have found the measure just
Of the so mournful passion of their song.

CHRIST

Lead him hence quickly, if thou be his friend.

LUCIFER

He seeks the truth, and this is thy reply?

CHRIST

Reason not of him. What is he to us?
Speak of thyself if thou art come to-day
To crave a grace. For him 'tis hazardous
To loiter here, beyond the tepid ray
Of his own yellow star, 'Twere better thus.

LUCIFER

Happier is he, O King, than thou or I
Who cannot hope, for we behold the end.

CHRIST

His paradise hath no forbidden tree.
While there he ranges he is safe from harm,
But if he venture, trusting in thine arm,
Into the infinite, his choice must be
Either to die or to believe in me.

LUCIFER

What! dost thou threaten? Dost thou think to lay
Bold hands upon him? Look to what thou dost!
Where are thine armies now? Where that array
Thy trumpets marshalled once? Lost! Mortal clay
Clogs thine own soul. Thy long-sheathed sword is rust,
And all thy silver clarions choke with dust.
These vaults, these bastions, of themselves decay,
Crack, crumble, rock, methinks, to hide for shame
The rabble that they house. Women and friars
Fight for thee now. Nor deem my lance the same
That broke once in my hand; 'tis purged with fires,
Unflinching steel, thrice tempered in the flame.

That he will die, I know; but not alone.
Thou, who wouldst seem to guide the hand of death,
Shalt fall beneath the sickle. Every groan
Scatters thine irrecoverable breath
Into the vast inane. Merciful death
Hushes all sorrow, and will hush thine own.
Would he might lay his magic hand on me,
Seal mine eyes, too, and turn my heart to stone!
He cannot. For while truth is, I must be.

CHRIST

Unteachable! Is God not Lord of Hosts?
The arrows that against his bosom fly
His own strength drives, and in thy mutiny
He triumphs, and is mighty in thy boasts.
What need of sentinel to guard the shore
When he is master of the embosoming sea,
When his the wave, the bark, the sail, the oar,
And his the sinews of his enemy?
O Lucifer, couldst thou behold thy soul
As it lies open to my Father's sight,
The gathering clouds of pity fast would roll
Across thine eyes, to hide thy proper plight,
And rain on thy parched heart in showers light
Of sweet humility. Woe to the vain
And raging will that hugs its mortal pain!
Is it for thee to fathom wrong and right?
'Tis God who spun the fibres of thy brain
And wove thy reason; had he placed awry
One thread, new dreams had turned thy dreams to naught
And idle thought confounded idle thought
For ever, and none questioned destiny.
Now thine own tyrant, to thyself unkind,
Thou chafest at the limits of thy wit
Whose meek quietus were to live resigned
And serve the elder Will that fashioned it.
For in the bosom of the infinite
Thou hast thy life, and thy forsaken woes,
Like foam on the false bosom of a wave,
Rise in vain fury, impotently rave

A moment only. Then thy proud will goes
Whither the billow sinks or the wind blows.

LUCIFER (*TURNING TO GO*)

Thou wastest words.

CHRIST

Await my last reply.
That which is written shall be now fulfilled.
To all the spirits of the earth and sky
My grace extends. The Father ever willed
They should be gathered to him in the end.
And as he sent me once to those who fell
To those who fell not he will also send.
I went to earth in sorrow, and to hell
I went in death, a ghost to call a ghost.
In peace I now will go to those that dwell
In peace upon Olympus, that the host
Of heaven's sentinels may know the Lord.
Let Hermes to his father bear my word
And prophesy my coming.

LUCIFER

Thou wilt go
To them thyself and thou wilt not receive
Him they have sent thee?

CHRIST

He should first believe.

LUCIFER

Believe? Full well thou knowest, as I know,
He never can believe. It is too gross
And palpable a fiction, fit for those
Who dream awake. And must I leave him so?
Hell in revolt and heaven in disdain
Shut in his face, and my great vow quite vain?
Behold how time, the keen inquisitor,

Hath stopped my torture to increase my pain!
Fool that I was to buckle on once more
The harness of the world! Remember, heart,
Remember not to love.

CHRIST

Thou temptedst me,
Satan, of old. Now I have tempted thee.
Thrice didst thou try me, thrice with divers art
Woo me to evil; thrice I turned away.
But I have tried thee and enticed with good
And thou hast yielded twice, and shalt to-day
Yield the third time.

LUCIFER

Nay, by high heaven! Say,
When have I yielded?

CHRIST

In thy solitude
I found thee hungry and thou turn'dst to bread
The stone I showed thee. It was I that led
An angel to thee. It was I that stirred
Thy heart with longing at the words he said
Though he meant nothing; and it was my word
Made thee renounce thine anger, and confess
Thy need of love.

LUCIFER

Thou sayest it was thou.
I know it not.

CHRIST

A second time but now
I showed thee hell and its unrighteousness,
And tempted thee to cast thy kingdom off
For a just life; and in that trial's stress
A second time I vanquished.

LUCIFER

I might scoff,
But that which vanquished was a holy thing,
And even thou if thou usurp its name
Shalt find me patient.

CHRIST

A third time I bring
Thy spirit to the proof. I shall proclaim
My godhead in Olympus and their king
And all his sons shall hear me. If they came
And did me homage, trusting what they heard,
And in their ignorance of primal things
Honoured my witness and received my word,
Hermes among them—would their faith suffice
To bring thee with them to the king of kings?
Or would thy pride refuse to pay the price?

LUCIFER

'Tis a vain question. Why should I decide?
They never can submit.

CHRIST

Nay, answer me.

LUCIFER

Think not to triumph over my just pride
With indirection, for it shall not be.
Of my own will I have renewed my soul
And to my love and not to thy control
I gave a short and doubtful mastery.
True, I am weary. My eternal flight
Finds not a resting-place in all the world.
Against the void I have disdained to fight,
My heart is silent, and my wings are furled.
But locked within the consciousness of right
For ever lives, and though I wear again
My natural glory in the realms of light,

Yet in my bosom's hushed and secret shrine
I celebrate my sacrament of pain,
And as thine altars in meek bread and wine
Repeat thy bloody sacrifice again,
So in my silence I remember mine.
Oh, there is little in the world can add
Now to my doom; and even if thou stole
The only good that yet might touch my soul
I do not think that it could make me sad;
Nay, happy rather. Take, yes, take the boy
For ever from me. Make the whole world mad,
And let all worship thee and find their joy
In what I know is false. For that is life.
And never let a glimmer of my doubt
Disturb his faith; abolish quite the strife
Of reason in him; blot my being out.
Bring back thy demons from the pit of hell
To dwell in plenty; uproot the cancerous vice
I planted in their bosoms, and dispel
Their long delusion. Let my pangs suffice
Thine anger. In the place where I shall dwell,
Sole victim of an endless sacrifice,
It then will comfort me to be alone,
For I shall hear no other spirit moan
In the wide world where all was misery.

CHRIST

The third time, Satan, do I vanquish thee.
Thou yieldest in my hands, lest it should perish,
Thy single joy. Why yield me not thy pain?
Is evil more than good, that thou shouldst cherish
Thy misery? Shall wrath alone remain?

LUCIFER

That cannot yield which is invincible.
This wrath is I; I am this pain and hell.

CHRIST

All can believe. It is not faith to know,

It is not faith to trust when all is sure,
But, knowing not, to venture and endure.
Thou, Satan, when I gave thee long ago
The call of faith, didst ask me for a sign.
The sign I gave thee was that thou wast mine
And I was thine; for love can also know.
Thou wast too happy in thy lordly mind,
Too rich in thy fond reason, for belief.
Now thou art wiser, having tasted grief,
And partly seeing, being partly blind,
Art willing to be led. Me thou didst scorn
In the proud days of thy tranquility,
Who was thy God, not yet of woman born,
And now, behold, a child is leading thee,
So lowly is thy plight and so forlorn.
Yet this repentance in thy sorrow's stress,
If thou hold fast and suffer to the end,
Shall be accounted thee for righteousness.
Thou lovest me, when thou dost love thy friend,
And what thou doest to the least of these
Thou doest unto me.

LUCIFER (*KNEELING*)

Spare me, O Lord.
Spare me, I pray thee on my stubborn knees!
Why wilt thou, in mere vengeance, plunge this sword
So deep into my heart? Hath thine not bled?
By the remembrance of our glory fled,
By that long morning of felicity
Ere thou or I had ever bowed the head,
Yea, by those joys that never shall be more,
And by the ghost of trust and honour dead,
Spare me, O Lord.

(*Rises*)

No; this can never be.
Thou knowest it. It ne'er can come again,
That ancient life, nor can my faithful pain
Be swallowed up in empty mockery.
Yet I confess to thee thy victory,

If such it be. For when the heart is weak
There is no honour in a swaggering tongue.
Mine ever spoke the truth, and now shall speak,
Although my heart in speaking it be wrung,
And in thy temples a new hymn be sung
How Lucifer was vanquished. Go, persuade,
Persuade all other gods to worship thee,
Or him alone who (as it seems) was made
The unwitting herald of thy grace to me:
If he believe and enter through the gate
His faith has opened, I will follow him,
Resume my throne and wear my old estate,
Making thy glory bright, which shows so dim.
For I have wholly understood my fate,
And know there is not in this scheme of things
Room for my soul. Then why not hide it here?
But nothing shall be true to me, or dear,
Of what the vision of thy glory brings:
The words of prophets and the deeds of kings,
Like rustling leaves, a pleasing noise at best,
The fruit of all the anguish of the years,
Nor truth, nor hope, nor certainty, nor rest,
But only laughter in my hollow breast,
Laughter, and in the night a gust of tears
O scorn, O pity, that the heart must teem
With these false joys, these troubles of a dream!
Why troop the wailing phantoms through my soul?
Why wake the echoing caverns of my mind
To sound of warring, cloud-compelling wind?
All things are parts of me, and I the whole;
And if entangled in the web I weave
To stars or gods or men I yield control
Over my heart, and bowing down believe,
Me headlong in their dance of death they roll
And with perpetual mockeries deceive.
Steadfast I therefore stand, enwrapped about
As with this mantle in my large despair,
An armed as with this lance by piercing doubt
I scorn the gathering armies of the air.
In midst of battles islanded in peace,
And firm beneath the ruins of the sky,

I live by truth, as ye by falsehood die.
The wreck of worlds is my supreme release,
The death of gods mine immortality.

(Exit)

THE ANGELS SING

*God gave us grace to love
The earth, the sea, the starry air,
But woe to him whose love remaineth there,
Nor flies to rest above
In the Eternal Fair.*

CHRIST

I breathed the breath of life
Into thy nostrils, but in vain,
Unless for love thou render it again.
Else comes no rest from strife,
Nor any peace to pain.

THE ANGELS SING

*I loved them—where are they?—
That led me, loving them, to thee,
Who only art my joy or fairest me.
My loves have passed away
From earth and air and sea*

ACT FIFTH

SCENE FIRST

THE PALACE OF ZEUS UPON OLYMPUS. A HALL SURROUNDED BY COLUMNS. BEYOND, THE OPEN SKY. ON ONE SIDE, THE THRONE OF ZEUS.

OPPOSITE, A GROUP OF NYMPHS, ATTENDANTS OF ATHENA, AT THEIR HANDIWORK. AMONG THEM ATHENA AND APHRODITE, WHO, BEARING LONG GARLANDS OF ROSES, RISES AS IF TO GO.

ATHENA

Stay, Aphrodite; do not leave us thus.
Hermes, methinks, is on his homeward way
With answers from that King. Abide with us.

APHRODITE

I have seen men before, dear Maid. They say
This is a man.

ATHENA

Half man, half marvellous
God of the heavens. I beseech thee, stay.

APHRODITE

Since this new business filleth night and day
I find no solace in Olympus more.
I go to Paphos. Haply in that isle
Men doubt not yet what spirits to adore,

Nor urge new questions. I would rest awhile.

ATHENA

How the alloy of Oriental ore
Shows in thy golden heart, in spite of time!
Do we not love thee? Could a sultry clime
Prone sloth and revels make thee happy now?
No. Thou wouldst lack the calm illumined brow
And holy lips of Zeus, and me, thy friend.
Thou knowest how this enterprise began.
Stay by us now, and see its wondrous end.

APHRODITE

Well, be it so. But speak not of the man.
'Tis that thou askest, and the hour grows late
To start to-day. Alas! I know not why
The doubt pursues me that it may be fate
That I should never see my native sky.
Of heavy bondage, though a silver chain
Fetter the exile to a golden throne.
I would go forth, I would be free again
Unwatched, uncensured, unbeloved, alone.
Here every morning with the same sweet note
The bugle blows at sunrise; every eve
Pass the same solemn gods, that Zeus receive
His daily homage; the same cloudlets float
In the same luminous ether; the same dreams
Visit the sleeping dryads by the streams,
And from the same high crag the same remote
Unheeded melancholy vulture screams.
Oh, I should die, did not my lover come,
Ares, from battle, and fling down his crest
And bloody harness on the marble floor,
Startling as with a lion's roar the dumb
Cool cloister rafters, and still red with gore
Rush like a child upon my heaving breast.
Then I am happy and forget the rest.
With gentle palm I close his bloodshot eyes
That still shoot fire, and wash away with care
The sweat and clotted blood, and with my hair

Dry all again; and if some splinter lies
Deep in the quivering flesh, or some sharp thorn,
I pick it out, and where the skin is torn
I pour rich drops of nectar on the place
Till the wound heals. Oh, then 'tis paradise
To watch the sweetness creep into his face!
Alas! alas!

ATHENA

If happy love so sighs,
How shall unhappy lovers breathe their woes?

APHRODITE

They say there is a thorn in every rose,
But that is false; for see, these roses here
Prick not my fingers as I weave the crown.
I cut the thorns off first. Look, sister dear,
And in thy book of wisdom set that down.

ATHENA

I will, and guard my soul as thou thy flesh,
Unhappy sister, lest thy wreaths enmesh
My strength and reason. Hera comes. Her frown
Will grow but darker, if she see thee weep.

(Athena draws Aphrodite to a seat beside her, and dries her tears. Enter Hera.)

HERA

Thy father, Pallas, hath not tasted sleep
Since Hermes' putting forth, but racks his mind
With dim forebodings.

(She turns to observe the sky)

The eyes' utmost sweep
Spies not a speck in all this depth of air.
To women's warning men are rashly blind,
Else had he never started. It is cold
In those disconsolate regions; the ether rare
Cheateth the breath, the wings will not upbear.

How mad a venture, when all signs foretold
Some evil!

ATHENA

Pray, fair Hera, do not grieve.
Our crafty herald will in time return.

HERA

Apollo will not speak. He must discern
His brother's fate, but will not undeceive
A hapless father with the dreaded truth.
There stretch the kingdoms of eternal snow
Where savage tyrants rule, unchaste, uncouth,
Who for no ransom let the stranger go.
Thy father comes. If gentle Hermes dies
He will go mad. Too much his heart hath fed
On these wild thoughts. Behold his bended head
And voiceless lips that mumble prophecies
Dishonoured long ago. With stealthy tread
He makes perpetually the bastions' round,
And lists to sound of wings or any sound
For tidings of his son. He loves you both.
Go to him, speak. Dispel his sullen mood
And the dark dream on which his vigils brood.
My words, alas, he flouteth. I am loath
To feed his choler. Ay, my lips are dumb,
But my heart saith, the worst is yet to come.

(Exit)

(Enter Zeus. Athena and Aphrodite advance to meet him)

ATHENA

Father, thou comest fitly to dissuade
Our friend from an ill purpose.

APHRODITE

'Tis not ill.
I long have nursed the hope I now fulfil.

ATHENA

She would depart.

APHRODITE

For a brief time, dear Maid.

ZEUS

The time is chosen well; this is the season
When courtiers leave a king.

ATHENA

When his renown
Spreads to new regions?

ZEUS

When he pawns his crown.

ATHENA

What words are these? Thine own thoughts hatch this treason.

ZEUS

Is he not living, that invisible god
That drove our image from the soul of man?
I know the time when first his fame began
And Sinai shook, unshaken by my nod,
And through the wilderness a caravan
Bore jealously his ark.

ATHENA

Let these things be.
What terror hath the tale, that Jove should stare?

ZEUS

Where doth he lurk? The unfathomable air
Doth not contain him, nor the monstrous sea,

And when I searched in hell he was not there.
My brothers portioned out the world with me
And we left nought but the intangible
And barren night, where nothing good might dwell,
Not subject to our sceptre; but from thence,
Alas, ariseth now the dread offence.
Evil is laid on us at birth; the spell
Broods silent on us, thickening to the dread
Ordained finish. When my father fell
He cursed me, for his father, dead, long dead,
Had cursed him so. The one my hand avenged,
The other's curse now hangs above my head.

ATHENA

For shame, good Father. Is thy mind estranged?
I, though a woman, cannot know such fear.
This sombre god hath lived for many a year
Lost in his cloud-land. Let him there live on.
What's that to us? He will not face us here,
Or, if he doth, he will be gladly gone.
The Indian Caucasus is full of ghosts,
For I have chased them oft from peak to peak
With laughter and the prick of my bright spear.
Before the Ægis fly their gibbering hosts,
Rending the woeful night with many a shriek;
Yet each is a great wizard.

ZEUS

Brave words these,
But vain to help us in an evil hour.
O parent sky, shed light upon my heart!
O kindred deep, replenish with thy power
The fountains of my joy!

(Re-enter Hera, following a herald)

HERALD

See, see him dart.

HERA

Where?

HERALD

There, to the west, good mistress.

HERA

That bird there?

ZEUS (*WHO HAS JOINED THEM, LOOKING TO THE SKY*)

It is his plunge. I know the motion, I.
None other of my sons so cleaves the air,
As if an arrow thinkingly should fly,
Dodging the denser cloud. Now with sly speed
He finds the rifts of navigable sky,
Now diving rends the thinner mist asunder,
With radiant visage laughing at the wonder.
Ay, 'tis my messenger.

HERA

It is, indeed.
Ah me! how many pangs and errors pave
The way to doubtful peace.

(Enter Hermes)

ATHENA

Happy the brave,
For either victory crowns their venturous deed
Or fame their failure.

ALL

Welcome.

ZEUS

Welcome, son.
Glad are mine eyes to see thee. They will close
Content to-night.

ATHENA

But hast thou met with foes?
Where hast thou tarried? Is thine errand done?

HERA

At least thou hast no wound? Thou art not maimed?

ZEUS

Leave the poor boy awhile. You will be blamed,
Fair goddesses, to ply your questions now.
The beaded sweat is standing on his brow,
And still he pants for breath. Ho! fetch him first
The nectared cup, that he perform the vow,
Home-coming, to the god, and quench his thirst.

HERMES (*TAKING THE CUP THAT IS BROUGHT TO HIM*)

Olympus, and ye elder gods that keep
Invisible watch about this hallowed dome,
Receive your child. Guard ye my toil, my sleep.
Fly with my flight, defend and lead me home.

(He pours a libation and drinks)

ZEUS

Send forth a crier. Be it known to all
That Hermes is returned.

HERALD (*BLOWING A BUGLE*)

Ho! Hermes is returned!

(The cry is echoed in the distance. The gods gather, and group themselves in a circle before Zeus, who has mounted his throne.)

ZEUS (*TO HERMES*)

Speak now. So shall the praises thou hast earned
Sound as is fit.

HERMES

In sooth, the praise is small,
For thus it chanced. I passed the empty main
Led by a subtle guide. I saw again,
More near at hand, what belfries from afar
Lucifer showed me, when he cast a spell
Over my soul and first I saw the star.

ATHENA

How gladly would I view the miracle!

HERMES

'Twere worth thy pains. For if to Babylon
Thou addest Nineveh and Thebes by Nile,
With silvering moonbeams falling full upon,
And raisest Zion on them, then the pile
Were half as vast and intricate with spires
As the embattled and cloud-girded isle
Where that god dwells, with all his wingèd choirs.

ZEUS

And didst thou enter in?

HERMES

It was forbidden.

ZEUS

Then is thy message undelivered?

HERMES

Nay,
Lucifer passed through the wide gates; but hidden
Magical bolts, if I pressed, barred the way.

HERA

O evil omen!

ZEUS

Brought he no reply?

HERMES

This only: that the King himself would come
Here to our midst, and answer us.

ZEUS

But how?

Can all his legions pass the infinite sky?

HERMES

I know no more. For Lucifer was dumb.
Issuing from thence with thunder-laden brow,
He seized me as thine eagles seize a lamb,
With sudden swoop, and hid me in his arms,
And with no further word through the abyss
Bore me, and through the zone obscure of charms
That hems that sphere, ere yet the lights of this
Gladden the eyes. When Hesper 'gan to shine
I cried in joy, 'I see my star'; and he,
Spreading his arms to give me liberty,
Answered, afar already, 'I see mine.'
I turned. Nor he, nor his pale star was there,
Only a solemn sound of rushing wind
Retreating; and alone, with laden mind,
Homeward I journeyed through the sweetening air.

ZEUS

Blind were your counsels, children. Doubly blind
My doting heart.

ATHENA

And blinder thy despair.
Let this god come, if haply come he dare,
And what is lost?

ZEUS

Our peace is lost. Henceforth
We never shall know sleep, were't but the thought
That from the cloud-land and the bitter north
Some monstrous shape might come. But this is fraught
With greater dangers. He may now descend
With all his legions on us. Who can know
How against magic we should then defend
These ancient walls? Perchance we touch our end.
Let us not meet it basely. Long ago,
Alone, I slew the Titans and with cords
I bound the hoary tyrants. Sons, to arms!
Keep diligent watch and burnish bright your swords,
And fix keen brazen heads upon your spears,
But temper most your souls, for 'tis by charms
And traitorous thoughts, and heart-corroding fears,
That this new enemy works. Be ye but brave,
And all worth saving in yourselves ye save.
Away! To arms!

(Exeunt all but Zeus and Hera)

HERA

Wilt thou now trust my tears,
Hard-hearted, whom no word of mine could move?
It is not I alone have vouched for this,
Apollo saw him.

ZEUS

Show me where he is,
If he be here. Each palace, grove, and grot,
I have had searched.

HERA

He cannot thus be found,
But I have seen him, though I sought him not,
As in a dream. I cannot tell the spot,
Or say whether he flew or trod the ground.
The form pursues me like a secret crime
Where'er I go. I dare not lift mine eyes
For fear to look on him a second time.

Apollo also in his rhapsodies
Of late evokes the ghost; or from the ground
As exhalations to the moon arise,
Or from the very potency of sound,
It shapes itself before his haggard eyes
Into a thing of meaning.

ZEUS

Fantasies.

Both he and thou have ever been abused
By turbid humours. Prophets are the curse
Of kings. When young men gape, amused
With dreams and marvels, kingdoms are undone.
Peace to these woman's ravings. There is worse
To fear. We must seek out a greater foe.
Leave me awhile to my heart's counsel. Go.

(Exit Hera)

ZEUS

Intolerable doubt! What stratagem
Hath this god planned, that proffers coming here
And cometh not, nor giveth ear to them
We send with gifts and greetings? Much I fear
His onset in the night, while evil dreams
Benumb our courage. Is his flight misled,
Unused to ford the rushing ether-streams
That part our kingdoms? Is he lost or dead?
My wingèd boy himself could hardly thread
That labyrinth of shadows, ere to-day
He had come else.—Ah me, what have I said?
Perhaps it is my own blind heart that errs,
Perhaps these weak unbidden thoughts that prey
Upon my quiet are his messengers,
His shafts that find a quick and magic way
To my defenceless soul. He may be here,
And in my sister's madness and my son's
Begin to work my ruin, while he shuns
My stronger eyes.—If thou be true, appear,
Insidious foe, and poison not my life
With evil rumours. Better open strife

Than endless watching in the house of fear.

(The Risen Christ appears)

What do I see? Ere this, when racked with care
Men have seen ghosts. My senses are befooled.
Why should these inward vapours not be ruled
By him who drives the thunderbolt? Look there!
Oh, I must nip this ague in the germ
Ere it grow master-madness! Let me clutch
My good throne so. Ah, while I feel thee firm
My reason will be safe. The rest's not much.
Behold, he cometh terrible and grave
To seize my sceptre.

CHRIST

'Tis a thing I gave.

ZEUS

He answereth my thought, or is't my thought
That answereth itself?—Thou gav'st me naught.
My father Time gave all I boast to have.
Who sayest thou thou art?

CHRIST

Eternity.

Both life and kingdom have I given thee.

ZEUS

My father's spirit! Spare me! I resign
Both life and kingdom, if thou too give thine
Back to thy father.

CHRIST

I have rendered mine.

ZEUS

What! Is old Uranus awake again?

CHRIST

Can Heaven sleep? Are not his silent spheres
Perpetual in their round? Is not his main
Of light immense, and infinite his years?

ZEUS

What wouldst thou then? Wouldst thou again devour
Thy children's souls and henceforth reign alone?

CHRIST

I and my Father envy not thy throne.

ZEUS

Why come so ghost-like then to mock my power?

CHRIST

Ripeness of time and the appointed hour
Come to us all. Thou in thy day of need
Hast called upon me, and behold I heed.

ZEUS

I never called upon thee.

CHRIST

Thou didst send
Thy son with offerings to me; even now
Didst pray to see my face.

ZEUS

What, was it thou,
Cronos, that Hermes sought? O bitter end!
I see the meshes of the Parcae now.
While in fond sloth I slept, and thought me blest
Drinking sweet poison in a golden cup,
My outraged blood bred this avenger up.
Too late I sought thee in thy cloudy nest,

Ill-boding Phœnix; too, too late delayed
To its last refuge to pursue thy shade.
Would I had hastened, burning still with wrong
And drunk with blood, while death was in thine eyes,
And crushed thee quite, nor seen thee thus arise
After long ages. But I thought me strong,
And was too merciful.—Yet the vision lies,
Perchance.—Thou wouldst my kingdom?

CHRIST

Nay. Thy heart.

ZEUS

Ah, cruel father! Canst thou pluck it out?

CHRIST

To me it lieth bare.

ZEUS

No sword, no dart
Is in thy hand. My children stand about
Ready with arms. Attempt it, if thou dare.

CHRIST

The sword I bring is now transfixèd there.
Invisibly it long hath pierced thy soul
With secret anguish, and the fear of death
Dwells in thy breast. To me is given power,
If thou dost will, to heal thee with my breath.

ZEUS

To pluck my heart, and heal me?

CHRIST

Thou hast heard.

ZEUS (*RISING*)

I called upon thee in an evil hour,
Impotent shade that with equivocal word
Dost work upon my doubt. Avaunt! Begone!
In what I did, not I but nature erred,
That made me mad. Let vengeance long deferred
Come now, and let what must be be anon.
Ho! children. Look, dear sister. There he stands
Whom ye have summoned, Cronos, once a god.
Question ye him, if any understands
His riddled speech. Of old I bound his hands
And took his thunder from him and his rod.

(Re-enter all the gods successively)

ATHENA

I told thee, Hera, there was naught to fear.
Let us approach.

HERA

The same I saw, the same.
But oh, not Cronos. Could my father dear
Wear such a shape?

ATHENA

Come, I will ask his name.

ZEUS

'Tis Cronos' shade.

HERA (*To ZEUS*)

Thy wit is turned, for shame
At that old crime.

(To Athena)

No, daughter, not too near.

ATHENA (*To CHRIST*)

What do men call thee?

CHRIST

Many names they use.
Some call me Son, some Master, some the Word,
Some by another name of angels heard
On bended knees alone.

ATHENA

Dost thou refuse
To tell us what thou art?

CHRIST

Lo! I am he
Near to all hearts whom none hath ever found.
Read, if ye will.

(He writes on the ground with his staff. All, in a circle, watch him.)

ARES (*ASIDE TO APHRODITE*)

What writes he on the ground?

APHRODITE

A word in my own tongue he means for me.

ARES (*LOOKING*)

Why, I can read it, too. Plain 'Victory.'

ATHENA

That is a thought thou tak'st the title of
And not a thing of life. To be 'the Truth'
Is to be bright in every spirit's love,
Being nothing in oneself.

HERA (*APART*)

Ah, from my youth
No seer ever read my secret so.

(To Christ)

But tell me, prophet, art thou friend or foe?

CHRIST

Friend, if he be a friend who gave thee life.

ZEUS

But foe, if he would take that life again.
To ease their lust the husband and the wife
Beget the child and bring him forth to pain,
And while for their delight they rear the boy
Tread down his soul, and chide with peevish rage
If far from home he snatch a day of joy,
While they devise how in their feeble age
To use his love and keep his heritage.
So common fathers are, but thou the worst
Who art not only tyrant of the soul,
But the frail children thou begetttest first
Devourest after; and when in natural thirst
For life and joy they slip thy harsh control
Watchest to curse them. Be thyself accurst.

(He turns away and mounts his throne again)

HERA

He thinks thee Cronos. He is much distraught
And hath misread thy script. Let me, who share
His royal office, speak his better thought.
What in thy country is thy private care
Concerns us not, what battles thou hast fought
Or triumphs sounded in those realms of air.
We would not harm thee, for thou seemest wise
And weak. Not by thy hand we think to fall.
The rich and gleaming treasures of this hall
Bring little gladness to thy godlike eyes.
Go therefore back. We will persuade no more
Thy griefs to wander from their cloudy shore.

(She turns away and takes her place beside Zeus)

CHRIST

If I go hence, great weakness overwhelms
Your kingdom now. As long ago I gave
I now take back your being and your realms.
Who keeps shall lose his life, who gives shall save.

ARES

Bah! Would a child be gulled by such a trick?
I have fought much, but never yielded yet
To any foe, although my heart grew sick
And mine eyes dim, with naught but glory set
Before the victor. I can still endure
And face the worst. It were not much to die,
And it behooves the soldier to be poor.

CHRIST

To what end battlest thou?

ARES

I know not, I.
Only a coward asks the reason why.

(He turns away)

ATHENA (*JOINING ARES, AND MOVING WITH HIM TOWARDS THEIR THRONES*)

Nay, courage also wields the arms of thought.
It is for freedom, brother, thou hast fought,
For the sweet privilege of breathing deep
The air of heaven and of speaking sooth
And sharing with the comrades of thy youth
The joy of battle and the balm of sleep.
I know these wiles. What calls itself the Truth
Wraps in an evil dream the things we see,
And henceforth naught is pleasant, fair, or free
In all the world, till in her ecstasy
The soul, bereft of light, her heavenly food,
Deems her last agony her perfect good.

APHRODITE (*WHO MEANTIME HAS DRAWN NEARER TO CHRIST*)

Stranger, who comest from my native land—

For these are not the hills where I was born,
Nor these my sisters—heed thou not their scorn.
Some things the happy never understand.

CHRIST

Art thou not happy?

APHRODITE

Oh, the mocking word!
The chains of fortune and of fatal love
Burden my soul, while perfect joy deferred
Woos me to fly, and flies with each remove.
Where shall I find my rest?

CHRIST

In loving more.

APHRODITE

'Tis now my torment that I love too much.

CHRIST

Love all things and love justly. They who clutch
My raiment lose me. Touch not and adore.

APHRODITE

Ah, that were peace. And yet what love is this
That drives all hope away?

CHRIST

It is a cross.
The perfect victory of love it is
To conquer love, and in that blessed loss
To live for ever without other bliss.

APHRODITE

Were death not better? With hope set before

Patience is good, but not with hope denied.
Knowing the sea to stretch without a shore
The mariner would drop the oar he plied;
Nor would the ploughman yoke the labouring steer
Thinking it should be winter all the year.
We look for happiness, else had we died
When reason dawned. I think at last to hear
The longed-for voice, the music of my dreams,
Calling my name, at last to kiss the face
My fancy painted, know the long embrace.
Else what were love? A foolish thing, meseems,
That ends in nothing.

CHRIST

Love can never end.

(Aphrodite turns away slowly)

But is there none will hearken to my voice
In all these mansions? None that knows his friend?

HERMES

I hearken gladly, and had I the choice
Would venture with thee. Who untaught shall tell
Whether thou counselest and lovest well?
But with my father and my brothers here
My life is knit for better or for worse,
And I would rather take with them thy curse
Than far from them thy blessing.

CHRIST

Lucifer

Thou lovest not?

HERMES

I hold the stranger dear.

CHRIST

From all love flows intelligence of love,

And thine might yet persuade his soul to move
In her true orbit, with her starry mates.

HERMES

Let him make head alone against the fates
Even as I; or if sad thoughts reprove
What once he did, let him return to thee.

(He turns away)

CHRIST

The hour is come. All is that was to be.
The gift I brought which ye would not receive
Was life, but death shall be the gift I leave.
I am the Lord of Immortality,
The way, the truth, the life; who lives by me
Shall live for ever. You some inward voice
Persuaded once that you should ever live.
What privilege have you that you rejoice
While all things suffer? You shall also grieve.
I have endowed you with exceeding strength
And beauty, bidding time to spare your pride
And leave you young. But you shall now at length
Grow old. Vain and unsanctified,
Weary of pleasures, you shall yield your breath
Like waves that sink again into the sea,
Not having any voice to cry to me.
But painless be to you the hour of death—
For you have sinned in all unwittingly—
And full of stars the night on which you cease,
Passing forgetful to the realms of peace.

(Christ disappears)

HERA

He vanishes!

ATHENA

'Tis well.

ZEUS

If I must die,
To-day at least I sit upon my throne;
And not in fief I hold it. 'Tis mine own.
The earth, my temple, stands. My native sky
Claps me about with homage of sweet air.
The kindly light of the unquenchèd sun
Gladdens mine eyes. To-day the world is fair.
To-morrow, if dark clouds rebellious run
In flaming rack athwart the seas of heaven,
I shall not less have lived, I, mighty one.
And there where night, the mother of us all,
By the quick birth of light asunder riven,
Broods infinite and in her starless pall
Folds all the stars, there, children, is much room
For you and me and him, when he shall fall,
Who judging others speaks his proper doom.
Some comfort it will be, when we abide
In that unbodied realm, to see this ghost,
Ill-boding spirit of impalpable pride,
Enter oblivion, and, hearing still his boast,
Feel o'er our face the shade of laughter glide.
We also thought we should not taste of death,
But it is fated. Fleeting is the breath
That saith: I am eternal! We were born
And we must therefore die. Such is the wage
Of being. Mourn, my stricken children, mourn.
Into the boundless ether breathe your rage.
You will be quiet soon. E'en now, meseems,
His peace is on us. Lethargy of age
Creeps over nature, chilling all her streams,
And heavy with the languor of dull dreams
Ye sit upon Olympus, and are dumb.
No longer from his crag the eagle screams,
And in the wood the dryad's limbs are numb.
The last sad summer of the world is come.
The earth, that in her youth prodigious bore
Mammoth and Mastodon and Titan bold'd,
Scarce feeds the pigmies that she spawned of yore.
Weary she bows her palsied head and hoar,

Likening her fate unto the fate untold
Of by-gone worlds, while man, her nursling, gathers
The utmost harvest from the laboured mould,
Envyng the straitened fortunes of his fathers
In piety content, though poor in gold;
And on the barren peak he lived to climb
He stands aghast, and vainly waxen old
Prays the sweet heavens. But the stars are cold.
Fool, fool, to chide his soul with ancient crime,
Nor mark how earth and sky, together rolled,
His loves, his labours, and the gods sublime
He deemed immortal, slowly yield to time.

SCENE SECOND

LUCIFER'S ISLAND, AS IN ACT FIRST.

TUREL

Came he hither? In the sphere
Where the happy angels dwell
They made answer: All is well.
Lucifer is past from here.
When I asked the lost in hell
For their lord, they cried to me:
Look in heaven. We are free.
When I sought him by the shore,
We remembered him no more,
Said the voices of the sea.
Thou alone, unhappy star,
Still hast echoes for his name.
Will he welcome me, or blame
That I followed him afar?
When he cometh, let him mark
The old glimmer of this flame.

(He kneels by the hearth to kindle it)

The dead flint still yields a spark
To the steel that striketh.—Hark!
My heart leaps as if he came.

(Lucifer crosses over)

Doth he see me? Doth he pass?
Ah! his thoughts are elsewhere
And the bitter mask of care
Lies upon his face. Alas,
Buried in the ancient pain,
He who made the world so bright
For a space! O happy night
When Lord Hermes comes again!

LUCIFER (*STOPPING*)

Thou art a fool to wish him back again.
He's dead.

TUREL

Dead? Oh, I knew not that.

LUCIFER

'Tis true.

To the eternal spirit's changeless view
What shall be is. The way of speech is vain
That saith, He is not, but shall be anon,
And then, He is, and then, He is no more.
Thus with a groping hand the blind explore
The embossèd page; the word their finger's on
They know, but have not eyes to look before.
Yet every letter of that ancient page
For ever stands, imprinted as on brass,
And it is we then turn the leaves and pass,
Reading the sequent tale of age on age.

TUREL

Alas! How did he die?

LUCIFER

Unthrifty boy,
How art thou here to ask? I bid thee go
And not entangle in my mesh of woe
Thy witless soul. The devils will employ
Thine idleness and give thee answers. No,
I will no longer keep thee.

TUREL

Lord, forgive
Or slay me else. I have no will to live.

LUCIFER

Ha! What a blessèd end it is for all

To die. The flowers of sweetest breath
Are nearest to the blessedness of death,
For as their sweetness is ephemeral
So is their life. Only the rankest thorn
That thrives by hatred hath the winds in scorn.
Ay, it is well I killed him.

TUREL

Hermes killed!

LUCIFER

It was in mercy. Thou didst beg to die
But now. In him the blessing is fulfilled
That cannot come to thee.

TUREL

You did it?

LUCIFER

I.

To die is better than to live. Our sin
Alone is fertile, peopling all the earth
With lust and error and their troublous kin.
But chastity is barren, and her worth
Outshines the stars; she brings all good things in
Into the soul, and mercy, strength, and peace
Follow her light. Long years the lingering ghosts
Of hate and folly walk the night in hosts.
The life of innocence is quenched with ease.
So thou, the perfect, whom the sacred earth
Brought forth to beauty, dying, now hast shed
Thy fragrance in the garden of thy birth,
As Hyacinth once bowed his poppied head
Parched by the noon, when from the highest height
Phœbus, his lover, rained the shafts of light
And slew his love, and hallowed him when dead.
The sad Apollo kept the flower instead
To be his comfort; I have lost thee quite,

And all the sweetness of my life is fled.

TUREL

If he is dead and can return no more
And you must keep your vigils here alone,
Oh, let me serve you, even as before,
For sorrow hath a comfort of its own
Coming by you.

LUCIFER

What! Must I say it o'er?
Have hell or heaven any part in me,
Whichever thou be of? Begone. Of old
I did thee wrong, and all I see in thee
Is that dead horror. Get thee hence. Yet hold;
There's yet an office for thy ministry
Greater than all.—When Hermes' star is cold,
And chaos shattereth his crystal sphere,
And other gods lie buried with their fear
Beneath Olympus' ruin, he, the bold
And swift contriver, will with skill elude
The crumbling stars, and reach the outer world,
And in that dark and pathless solitude
Remember me. Safe then will seem the nest
The eagle builded, sweet the bitter rest
Of exile, and the face of friendship good;
And he will yield him, trusting in my aid,
To the dark whirlwind. When he first essayed
That unknown flood, the swift insidious flaw
Wafted him hither, falsely seeming kind;
Unsought he found me, sought he shall not find,
But in the midst of heaven struck with awe
Sink in the void. With fluttering of his wings
He shall not fly beyond the realms of death,
Nor by the wasting of his little breath
Reverse the ancient destiny of things.

TUREL

Then this hath not been yet. May I not go,

Find him and save him?

LUCIFER

No, I tell thee, no.

No man shall hearken unto him that saith:
Lucifer, Lucifer. That word of woe
Shall be his last.—But listen: on the strand
Walk thou and watch, till the disconsolate flow
Of the same flood that cast him here of yore
Wash up his body on the beaten shore.
Close for my sake his eyes with pious hand
Lest afterwards their dumb and piteous stare
Haunt thee in hell. Then in the yielding sand
Dig deep his grave, and lay him gently there.
When thou hast smoothed it over, go thy way.
And if in hell thy comrades speak of me
And ask if I have perished, thou shalt say
That the last service that in life could be,
Thy hand did for me. Go, child, go. This day
My soul hath entered on eternity.

(Exit Turel)

Great God, when thy frail son of Galilee
Forsaken on the cross was nigh to death,
Into thy hands he yielded up his breath.
Death's vain forgetting hath no balm for me.
Hereafter I shall look upon the sun
In sorrow, for my circle is not run,
The circle of mine endless misery.
My pang is greater than a man's could be
Whose father was in heaven and who, forsooth,
Thought to be happy. And I needs must find
A greater, dearer comforter than he.
O truth, O truth, eternal bitter truth,
Be thou my refuge when all else is blind!
Thou art the essence of my lofty mind;
At thy pure wells I will renew my youth.
Thy joyless bosom never was unkind
To him who loved thee; let us now be one.
I have no other friend, I have resigned

All love but thine. My foolish life is done.
But O ye hills that I have known of old,
Unravished of the sun, ye snowy flock
For ever sleeping, take me to your fold
And in your flanks of adamant rock
Entomb my fiery heart. Over me spread
Your frozen shroud and wreath me in ice-flowers,
To watch with you through everlasting hours
And not remember. Lo! I lift my head
Into the void, in scorn of all that live
Through hope and anguish and insensate wars.
For, knowing grief, I have forgot to grieve,
And, having suffered, without tears receive
The visitation of my kindred stars.

THE END

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[The end of *Lucifer A Theological Tragedy* by George Santayana]