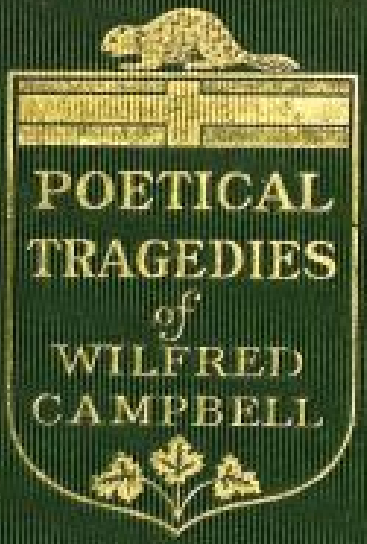
POETICAL
TRAGEDIES
of
WILFRED
CAMPBELL

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Title: Poetical Tragedies
Date of first publication: 1908
Author: William Wilfred Campbell (1860-1918)
Date first posted: October 31, 2026
Date last updated: October 31, 2026
Faded Page eBook #20261054

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POETICAL TRAGEDIES

BY
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LL.D. (Aberd.)

Author of "Collected Poems," "Lake Lyrics," "The Dread Voyage: Poems," "Beyond the Hills of Dream: Poems," "Canada, a Description of the People and Country," "Ian of the Orcades," an Historical Novel.

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1908

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Dedicated

TO

MY FRIENDS,

W. L. MACKENZIE KING

AND

F. A. ACLAND.

PREFACE.

THE four tragedies included in this volume are widely separated in their subject-matter. It is a far call from Arthur of the Round Table, of ancient Celtic Britain, to Daulac, of the French Canadas, and they each are seemingly separated from the fortunes of the great Pope Gregory; yet these plays are included in the one volume because they deal with those eternal problems of the human soul which all of the world's thinkers have had at heart. Two of the plays, "Mordred" and "Hildebrand," were written in 1893, and published in a small edition in 1895, while the others now appear for the first time in book form. The author makes no apology for the form of these plays. Like other writers, he has his own literary ideals, and with the great mass of the sane British peoples, believes that Shakespeare is still the great dramatic poet of the modern world.

If these plays, in spite of their imperfections, receive a kindly welcome, the author will later publish another group of his historical dramas and comedies in a separate volume.

OTTAWA, November, 1908.

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MORDRED.

A Tragedy in Five Acts, founded
on the Arthurian relation of
Sir Thomas Malory.

PREFACE.

THE Arthurian story is one of the most remarkable in human history or literature. There is strong reason to believe that modern scholars have been wrong in their attitude toward what is commonly called mythology.

I believe that it will yet be acknowledged that what is now regarded as pure myth is in reality degenerate history, and that what has been considered mere fable and the outgrowth of the child-like imagination of primitive peoples is rather the time-dimmed account of great civilizations of the early world.

This is a question which I am dealing with in a work treating of the origin of mankind.

But whether Arthur is regarded as a great historic figure, as the traditions of my own race claim him to be, or as a mythological personage, there is something in the story akin to those themes of the great Greek Tragedies, and of the greater Shakespearean dramas, which associates it with what is subtly mysterious and ethically significant in the history and destiny of mankind. Like the divine literature of the Hebrews, all of these great world-dramas and epics—for in a sense they are both—lift the thought and imagination to a loftier plane, and are concerned only with man's personality in his relationship to those more sublime and terrible laws of being which mysteriously link him to deity.

Those who may superficially judge this play as gloomy must, for the same reason, condemn *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Faust*, and the Greek Tragedies. The story of Arthur and Mordred, as I give it, is found in Malory's relation.

I make no pretence to rival so great a word-artist as Tennyson. But when we enter the field of tragedy, literature ceases to be a mere matter of words or mated vowels. The great human problem confronts us. Therefore, with all of its imperfections, I send this play, which was written in 1893, and first published in 1895, forth once more into the world of readers, trusting that it may find a place in the great collection of literature which has grown about the wonderful personality of Arthur.

———

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ARTHUR, *King of Britain*.
MORDRED, *illegitimate son of Arthur*.
SIR LAUNCELOT.
MERLIN.
SIR GWAINE.
KING LEODEGRANCE, *father to Guinevere*.
SIR AGRAVAINE.
SIR MADOR.
SIR BEDIVERE.
DAGONET, *the King's jester*.
A HERMIT.
GUINEVERE, *Queen of Britain*.
VIVIEN.
ELAINE, *a maiden who loves Launcelot*.
UNID, *a lady in waiting to the Queen*.
Knights, gentlemen, ladies, soldiers, herdsmen, messengers and pages.

MORDRED.

———

ACT I. SCENE 1.

PLACE—*A hermitage in the woods.*

Enter ARTHUR, LAUNCELOT *and other Knights.*

LAUN. Here is a place of prayer; we will alight,
And rest a space and think us of our sins.

AR. Launcelot, and were I shrived and clean,
Half hell itself were loosened of its pains.

LAUN. Arthur, friend and lover of my youth,
Couldst thou but throw this black mood from thee now,
And get a sweeter hope into thy soul,
Drive out the horrid phantoms of the past,
And it were hope for Britain. Well thou knowest
Men look to thee to succor this poor land
Enrent by inward brawls and foreign hordes,
Whose fields untilled, and vanished the smoke of homes.
It hath been said that thou wouldst raise once more
Out of these ruins a kingdom whose great fame
Would ring for ages down the days of earth,
And be a glory in men's hearts forever.

[*Passes to the left.*

AR. Launcelot, I know thy love for Arthur.
'Tis thy sweet, manly kinship of the heart,
Opening thy spirit's windows toward the sun,
Hath made my dark days lighter. Would that I
Had kept me holy, innocent as thee.
I might in kinder fate have made this land
A place where holiness and peace might dwell,

And such a white and lofty honor held
Before men's eyes, that all the world would come
And worship freedom's beauty freed from sin.
Such dreams have haunted me from my first youth,
In fitful slumbers or long marching hours.
These lonesome, lofty vigils of the heart
Have made men deem me colder. 'Tis my sin!
O Launcelot, I am blacker than thou knowest!

[*Exit* LAUNCELOT.

Enter HERMIT.

HER. And comest thou, my son, for Church's grace?

AR. I come here, Father, for to have me shrived.

[*Kneels*.

HER. Then thou art shriven; such a noble face
Could never harbor evil in its grace.

[*Lifts his hands in blessing*.

AR. Stay, holy Hermit, fair trees rot at heart,
And I am evil if this world holds ill.
I would lay bare my soul of its foul sin,
And if there be white shrift for such as me
In Heaven's mercy, I would crave it now;
Though little of hope have I, if thou dost hear.

HER. Wouldst thou confess, my son? The Church
hath power
To white the blackest sinner crawling foul
From earth's most sensuous cesspool, doth he but
Come in the earnest sorrow of his heart
And lay his sins within her holy keeping.
But well I know that thou art that great Arthur,
The hope of all for succor to this realm:—
For other man hath never worn such grace
And nobleness of bearing as thou wearest.
Fear not, my son; whatever be the sin
Of thy hot youth, the past will be forgiven,
And holy Church will freely pardon one
And all the evil deeds that thou hast done.

AR. Father, my life is haunted with one thought

That comes between me and my sweetest hopes.
In battle's clamor only will it pass,
But in my lonelier moments it comes in,—
The awful memory of one heinous sin.

HER. Of truth thou hast suffered overmuch, my son.
What is thy sin?

AR. One deed beyond all others of my youth,
Mad, passionate and wild to savagery:
I violated a maid's sanctuary,
And afterwards I found—O Christ, forgive me!

HER. Say on!

AR. She was my sister!

HER. Sancta Maria—Ora pro nobis!

AR. It will not out. The evil of that night
When I, unknowing, did that awful deed,
Hath blackened all my future like a web.
And when men look up to me as their sun,
It makes my life seem like some whited tower
Where all is foul and hideous within.

HER. Thou sayest truth, my son, thy sin be heavy.
[*Crossing himself.*

AR. O swart, incestuous night, whose bat-like wings
O'erspread my life like thunder-gathering cloud,
When will thy dawn break glimmering on my soul?
Or wilt thou drag thy weary length along
And spell thy moments out in hopeless years
Until thy black o'erlaps the black of death
In that dread journeying where all men go,
When all my dreams are spent and smouldered down
Like some far ruined sunset at life's edge,
And hope deferred fades out in endless sleep?
O holy man, forgive mine impious presence,
Thy blessed office naught availeth me.

HER. Nay, son, grieve not as one who hath no hope.
Though awesome be this youthful sin of thine,
Whose memory blurs thy loftier, holier dreams,
Let not this one sin lead thee to blaspheme

Thus ignorantly holy Church's power.
Thy very sorrow half absolveth thee.
In name of Him who blessed the dying thief,
I bid thee look no longer at thy past,
Which eateth like some canker at thy heart;
Redeem thy past in deeds of future good.
Deem'st thy high dreams were given thee for nought?
There is a noble doom about thy face,
A writing writ of God, that telleth me
That thou art not a common ordered man,
But one ordained as lofty ones of old
For some great, lofty cause. Lift up thy heart;
Earth hath a need of thee, thy people call,
Wrongs long unrighted, evils long unplucked,
All cry to thee for judgment. Palsy not
The strength of thy great future brooding on
An indiscretion of thy savage past.

AR. And is it of God, O Father, thinkest thou?

HER. Yea, my son;
As are all hope and sunshine. What is life—
But spring unmindful of bleak winter-time,
Joying in living, mindless of old death;
Youth dead to sorrow, age to coming night.
Look up, forget thine evil, drink new faith
From this glad parable of the wakening year.
The Church's arms are round thee; build new hope
In this poor Kingdom as the quickening year
Hath made this wrinkled earth forget old sorrows;
Be this but thine to do, and thou art pardoned.

AR. Oh, blessed be thy counsel! Even now
I feel new joys run riot in my heart.
Old hopes long faded built on my high dreams!
The old dread sorrow lightens, it is gone,
And I go forth a shrived soul even now.
Yea, hear me, Father, now I consecrate
This my poor life to this great kingdom's weal,
And be my God but with me, I will raise
This head of sorrows out of clouds of ill,
And build a splendor of my chastened will.

Thy blessing, Father!

HER. (*raises his hand in blessing*) Go forth from hence,
Great Arthur, keeper of thy people's peace.
Go forth to right all wrong and guard all right,
In home and mart, in castle and in cot,
Meting the same to high and lowly lot.
Go forth in name of God to build a realm
Built up on chastity and noble deeds,
Where womanhood is gentle and austere,
And manhood strong in its great innocence.
Go, blessed of God and all thy fellow-men,
Go in the strength of thy most high resolve,
Thou wondrous soul, unto thy wondrous work,
The glory of all the after days to be.

AR. Amen! Amen!!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT I. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*Camelot*. (ARTHUR *crowned King*.)

Enter MERLIN *and* MORDRED, *a hunchback, the King's illegitimate son. Outside a great clamor of voices is heard of* "Arthur! Long live King Arthur!"

MER. Now tarry here aside while I prepare
The King for this thy filial audience.

MOR. O mighty Merlin, I fear me all thine arts
That compass ocean, air and deepest mine,
And have command of subtlest sciences,
Have never found the power to brew a charm,
A sovereign draught of distillation rare,
To warm a father's heart toward such as me.

MER. Thou much mistakest, Mordred, he is noble.
This too-long thought on thine infirmity
Hath made thy mind, which is as clear as glass,

Ensickly all things that it looks upon.
When Arthur, thy great father, knows his son,
His nobleness of heart will plead with him;
And when he sees what I have seen in thee,
A subtle greatness of the inner spirit,
Greater than even I, wise Merlin, have,
That prophesies a power for good or ill
Such as is rare 'mid men in this our age,
He will forget that outward lack of mould
In the strong, god-like nobleness within.

MOR. Ah, Merlin, would my spirit thou wert right,
And I would show him such a son's true love,
And consecrate this subtlety within me,
To build a fence of safety round his glory.
But something tells me, some weird, evil doom,
That sits about my heart by day and night,
An awful presence that will never flit,
That he will never love me; yea, that more,
Of all things hateful to him on this earth,
My presence the most hateful. O great Mage,
I know that thou art skilful in thine age,
And subtle in all knowledges of lore,
But there lies in recesses of the heart,
That hath known bitter sorrow such as mine,
A deeper wisdom intuition breeds,
That thou hast never sounded in thy lore.

MER. Hast seen this presence whereof thou dost speak?

MOR. Yea, only as a look that haunteth faces.

MER. Faces?

MOR. I never saw it in my poor dog's face,
When he hath climbed my knees to lick my hand.
I never saw it in the mirrored peace
That brims the beauty of a forest pool,
Nor in the wise regard of mighty nature.
But in the face of man I oft have seen it.

MER. What hast thou seen? This wisdom would I know.

MOR. I never saw it in thy look, O Mage,
But something sweeter, much akin, called pity,
But once I woke a flower-eyed little maid,
Who slumbered 'mid the daisies by a stream;
She seemed the summer day incarnate there
With her sweet, innocent, unconscious face,
So like a flower herself amid the flowers;
And I so lonely there in all that vast,
And thinking ('twas only but a boy's light thought,
With some deep other thought beyond mine age)
To wake this human summer-morn to life,
And know this June-day conscious of its joy;
But when I bent and touched her on the arm,
I only woke a living terror there
Of eyes and limbs that fled from my amaze.
I saw it once within the priestman's face
The only and the last time I was shriven.
I have no need for shriving priestmen since.
My spirit tells me if they hold no power
To conjure out that devil in themselves,
That darting horror that offends mine eyes,
They ne'er can cast the devils from this life,
And all their vaunts but jugglers' juggling lies.

MER. O sad, warped youth, aged before thy time,
With that worst, saddest of wisdoms on this earth,
The knowledge of thine own deformity!
[*Trumpets without*.
Back, Mordred, back! here cometh our lord, the King!

Enter ARTHUR *in his state robes*.

AR. And now, wise Merlin, wisest of this earth,
Here cometh thine Arthur, decked in his first glory.
So great hath been the splendor of this day
That all my heart brims with the wine of it.

MER. Yea, King, thy horn of glory doth enlarge,
Thy sun of splendor toppeth the future's marge,
May all bright auspices attend its setting.

AR. And now, wise Mage, what hath thy will with me?
I am thine Arthur even being King,

For thou hast made me, next to that weird fate
That sat about the mystery of my getting,
And the sweet fostership of Holy Church,
Which hath forgiven my great youthful sin
And set her seal of favor on my deeds.
All present splendors thou hast prophesied,
And made the people take me for their King,
Hast pointed out my fitness for this office,
And lifted Arthur from a cloud of sorrows
Unto the golden glories of a throne.
To-day the fealty of an hundred Earls
Which thou hast garnered to my new-made kingdom
Hath honored me and made me thrice a King.
Yea, well say, Merlin, that my horn is full
To plenty with the blessed hopes of earth,
And all of this I owe unto thy favor.
My thunder-clouds are past, my future clear
As yon blue summer sky. No evil lurks
In secret now to strike at this my glory,
Unless a bolt fell from yon dazzling blue!

[*Thunder heard in the distance*. ARTHUR *staggers back*.

A portent! A portent!

MER. 'Tis nought, O King, but gathering
thunder-heads
About the thick, close heatings of the west,
The muttered portent of a summer shower.
'Tis but a blackness that will quickly pass
And leave a blessing on the fields and woods.
Fear not such signs as nature's seeming anger.
I come to thee upon a graver matter.

AR. Yea, Merlin! speak on.

MER. Arthur, I speak now to no puling youth,
No mere sin-pricked conscience in a human form,
But bring a kingly matter to a king,
Whereof that he may do the kingliest deed
That he may hap on in the unknown lease
Of all his kingship. I have kept this matter,
The deepest and the dreadest concerning thee

And all the workings of thy coming fate,
Until the hour when thou didst feel thee King
In more than seeming outward human choice,
And thou wert at thy greatest, even that I,
In all his power, might see the King I made,
Not in all the glory of his court,
His people's laudings sounding in his ears,
Not in all the shout of battle victory;
But in that dread and secret solemn hour,
When some strange doom uplifts its sombre face
And man must show his kingship of himself.

AR. Yea, Merlin! Say on, Merlin, say on!

MER. For this same reason I have hid till now
The secret from thee that thou hast a son.

AR. A son!

MER. Yea, a son!

AR. Oh cruel! Oh cruel! Oh cruel!

MER. Yea, more, for knowing all the warm desire
That thou hast unto things of beauteous shape,
And lovest chiefly what is glad and fair
To look upon in nature or human form,
Which showeth in thy love for Launcelot—

AR. Yea, Launcelot! Would a Launcelot were my son!

MOR. (*aside*) Ah, me!

MER. But knowing further that a deeper feeling,
Which holdeth rule in every human heart
That knoweth greatness, would uppermost in thee,
At knowledge of the fate of thy poor son,
Who madeth not himself, but bore thy sin
In outward simile in his whole life's being,
As Christ did bear men's sins upon the tree;
Who, knowing all the ill that thou hadst done him,
Still had sufficient sense of inward greatness
To love the father who begat him thus;
I feel, if thou art that great Arthur dreamed
Of me these many years of toil and care
That I have worked to make thee what thou art,

That knowing this son of thine, distorted, wry,
Diminutive in outward human shape,
And void of all those graces thou hast loved
To group about thy visions of thy court,
Hath such a soul within him, like a jewel
In some enchanted casket, that were rare
In all the lore and wisdom of this age,
That thou wouldst love him only all the more
For that poor, wry, misshapen shell of his.

AR. Oh cruel! cruel! cruel!

MER. Mordred, come forth!

Enter MORDRED, *who kneels and tries to cover himself with his cloak.*

AR. (*starts*) What be this?

MER. Mordred, thy son, the heir to thy great realm!

AR. O black-angered Heaven!
[*Falls heavily to the ground.*

MOR. Father! my father! Merlin, thou hast killed him!
O Merlin, Merlin, thou wert over-cruel!

MER. Better that he were dead a thousand deaths
Than this had happened. He is not a king
In more than vulgar fancy. In mine eyes
With all thy wry, distorted body there,
Thou art a thousand times more kingly now
Than he or any like him in this realm.
And thou wilt be a king yet ere thou diest.
O Arthur, thou great Arthur of my dreams,
Why didst thou thus unthrone thee, showing bare
A thing of clay, where all seemed whitest marble?

MOR. Ha! now he revives. Father!

AR. (*rises and staggers*) Ha! yea, that cloud, that cloud about mine eyes!
My crown! my crown! Methought I had a crown!

MER. Yea, of a truth thou hadst one.

AR. And where be it, good father?

MER. Stumbling on sudden to the precipice of a golden opportunity,
Thou loosedst thy kingship and straightway it toppled over.

AR. And might we not make search, father?
Might we not take lights, lights, and go find it?

MER. Not all the lights that light this glowing world
Might light thee to it.

AR. And who art thou that mocketh at me thus?

MER. A shadow.

AR. And what be I?

MER. In truth a shadow.

AR. And that—that blackness? [*Pointing at* MORDRED.

MER. A shadow, also; yea, we all be shadows.

AR. And is there nothing real, nothing tangible in all this mist?

MER. Nay, nothing, save the visions we have lost,
The autumn mornings with their frosty prime,
The dreams of youth like bells at eventime
Ringing their golden longings down the mist.

AR. And be we dead, father?

MER. Yea, I am dead to one great hope I had,
And thou art dead to what thou mightst have been,
And he is dead to what is best of all,
The holiest blossom on life's golden tree.

AR. And what be that, father?

MER. Love! Love!

AR. Then he be greatest?

MER. Yea, greater far, though we completed greatness,
Than either thou or I could ever be.

AR. Then what be he?

MER. He is that rare, great blossom of this life

Which mortals call a man.

AR. A man!

MER. Yea, a man.

AR. Why, he is wry, distorted, short of shape,
Like some poor twisted root in human form.
And I am tall and fair, placed like a king,
And yet you make him greater, how be that?

MER. Didst thou but own Goliath's mighty shape,
And wert a Balder in thy face and form,
With all of heaven's lightnings in thy gaze,
Still would his greatness dwarf thee.

AR. Then what be I?

MER. The wreck of my poor hopes.

AR. The what?

MER. The shadow of a king.

AR. And where may be the king, if I be but the shadow?

MER. Gone! Gone!
He went out in his glory one bright morn,
In all the summer splendors long ago,
And there, by well-heads of my youth's bright dreams,
Be-like he's walking yet.

MOR. O Merlin, wake him! Thou art over-cruel
To play thus on his fancy with thine arts.

MER. And dost thou love him still?

MOR. Yea, love is not a thing so lightly placed
That it may perish easy. Thou mayst kill
The king in him, thou canst not kill the father.
Though thou mightst make me bitter to conspire
And topple his great kingdom round his head,
Yet I would ever love him 'neath it all.
The Arthur of thine ambitions may be dead,
But not the Arthur of my childhood's longing,
Though this poor King who hunteth his lost crown
Be but the walking shape of all those dreams.
And temptest thou me, Merlin, thus to hate?

MER. Yea, Mordred, I am cruel, I am fate.
I tempt thee but to live, and dost thou live,
Enalienate from all this love of earth,
And they but crumble this phantom round their heads.
Thou art the key by which I may unlock
The lock that I have made with mine own hands.
And if thou ever want'st an instrument,
A dagger wherewith to stab this paltry realm,
Use Vivien.

MOR. Vivien!

MER. Yea, Vivien. There is naught on earth
That cuts so sharp the thews of love and hate
And those poor brittle thongs that bind men up
In that strange bundle called society,
Like the sharp acids nature hath distilled
From out the foiled hates of an evil woman.
(*to the King*) Ho! ho! Arthur! Great King
Arthur! Knowest thou me, Merlin?

AR. Yea, Merlin, it is thou, and I the King,
Waking, it seemeth, from an evil dream.

MER. Yea, King, we have all awakened.

AR. Ha! where is my crown?

MOR. You dropped it when you fainted, sire.
[*Kneels and presents it.*
Here is thy crown, father.

AR. Father! I know all now. It cometh back.
And this my son? O Merlin, had I known
That thou didst hate me and would use me thus!

MER. I hate thee not, O King, nor do I love.
I loved an Arthur once, a phantom king,
Whom I did build on pinnacles of glory.
But he hath now long vanished, and I go,
Like many another who hath wrecked his hopes
On some false shore of human delusiveness,
To bury my pinchbeck jewels in that pit
That men call black oblivion. No, proud Arthur,
I am much over-old for loves or hates,

My days are past, my mission done on earth;
I leave thee one here, though, whose love or hate
Is more to thee than mine could ever be.
'Twixt thee and him there are such subtle webs
Of destiny, it needeth no magician
To prophesy the running of those threads
That weave the warp of your two destinies.
Farewell, Arthur! Mordred, fare thee well!

AR. Stay, stay, Merlin! I have need of thee.

[*Exit* MERLIN.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT I. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*A room in the castle at Camelot.*

Enter DAGONET, *the King's fool.*

DAG. Meseems this King is like an April week.
But yestermorn he was all smiles and sun,
And now he skulks and prowls and scowls and mopes,
As though existence were a draggled pond
In dirty weather.

Enter VIVIEN.

VIV. And thou, fool, but a wry toad on its edge.

DAG. And thou the snake's head lifted in the sedge,
Aye, sweet Vivien.

VIV. Why snakest thou me, fool? Methought that
thou favoredst me?

DAG. Aye, so I do. Thou coilest round my heart,
The sweetest, wisest serpent in this world.
Thou charmest me with those dazzling eyes o' thine.
And though the blessed bread were yet in mouth,
I'd go to Hell to do a deed for thee.

And yet thou art a snake, as well thou knowest.
Is it not so, sweet Vivien?

VIV. Canst thou be wise for once, my Dagonet?
Yea, let me teach thee.

DAG. What is it to be wise?

VIV. To leave aside that mummer's lightsome talk,
And show a front of silent dignity.

DAG. Like the King?

VIV. Aye, like the King.

DAG. Then to be wise is to be like the King,
To be a cup of summer wine to-day,
Anon a dish of lonesome woe to-morrow.
I love not much this wisdom thou dost teach,
These high come-ups and downs they like me not.
I am too much a fool to learn thy lesson.

[*Sings*.

And who'd be wise
And full of sighs,
And care and evil borrow;
When to be a fool
Is to go to school
To Happy-go-luck-to-morrow?

Who'd tread the road,
And feel the goad,
And bear the sweatsome burden;
When loves are light,
And paths are bright
Of folly's pleasant guerdon?

Sigh while we may,
We cannot stay
The sun, nor hold its shining;
So joy the nonce,
We live but once,
And die for all our pining.

Who'd be a king
And wear a ring
And age his youth with sorrow;
When to be a fool
Is to go to school
To Happy-go-luck-to-morrow?

VIV. Aye, Dagonet, thou art indeed a happy fool. Wilt thou show me how to make love?

DAG. (*kneels in mock humility*) Sweet Vivien, I am thy knight.

VIV. It is all thou canst say?

DAG. What wouldst thou have more?

VIV. Oh, lovers' talk.

DAG. Thou meanest as lovers speak?

VIV. Yea.

DAG. After wedding or afore, sweet Vivien?

VIV. Afore, of course, stupid fool.

DAG. (*folds his hands and recites solemnly*)

Butter frups and mumble rings,
Whirligigs and winter-greens,
Turnip-tops and other things, I love thee!
Spindle-spouts and turtles' eggs,
Mutton-chops and milk-stools' legs,
Heigh ho! I love thee!

VIV. And now thou art the fool in earnest.

DAG. Yea, and the better lover.

VIV. And what after the wedding, thou wise fool?

DAG. What saith the pot to the egg that is boiled therein,
The floor to the mop that hath scrubbed it,
The rain to the moist earth,
And the bird's nest to the empty shell?
Learn, and thou shalt find it.

VIV. And hadst thou never a lover's longing, fool?

DAG. Yea, but I cured me.

VIV. Wilt thou give me that receipt, Dagonet?

DAG. I filled my mouth wi' honey, and my couch wi' prickles,
And went asleep on't.

[VIVIEN *laughs and retires behind the curtain.*

DAG. Yea, woe is me, is me, poor Dagonet!
I hate myself and yet I fain must smile
And, play the thistle-down and dandy-puff,
The foolish froth at edge of flagonets;
And all the while see me a tortured torrent
Winding down in darks of its own sorrow.
Yea, Dagonet, thou art too much the fool,
Like the great King and all the other fools,
To be the thistle-down thou fain wouldst seem,
For thou art also anchored by the heels
To some sore, eating iron of thy desire.

Enter KING ARTHUR.

AR. Well, fool, what mummeries now?

DAG. I be holding a black Friday service, Sir King.

AR. And what sayest thou in thy supplications?

DAG. I think on thee, Sir King, and I think on poor Dagonet,
And I say, Lord have mercy upon us!

AR. A pious wish, Sir Fool, but why pitiest thou me?

DAG. For thy poverty, sire.

AR. Why poverty, fool?

DAG. Yea, King, thou hast a crown, thou hast wealth,
And power and lands, and yet thou lackest
The cheapest commodity i' the whole world.

AR. And what be that, fool?

DAG. (*going out*) Sunshine, Sir King, that be the cheapest commodity.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

LAUN. Sire!

AR. Launcelot, sit here and let's forget
That I am king and thou the greatest knight
In this most mighty realm. Let us deem
Me but the Arthur of old days, and thou
The sunny Launcelot who was fain to shrive
His sorrowful Arthur from his darker moods,
And make a glow about the future's countenance.

LAUN. Yea, King, but methought thou sentest for me with most urgent commands.

AR. Yea, most urgent.

LAUN. The knights and men-at-arms await below,
And all the splendid cortège thou hast ordered,
With retinue befitting thy commands.
God's benison go with thee, great Arthur,

This most auspicious day thou goest forth
To meet the high and beauteous Guinevere,
Thy chosen mate and queen of this fair realm.

AR. I go not forth!

LAUN. Thou goest not, and why?

AR. Deem it not strange, my Launcelot, that I sit
Here thus disconsolate my betrothal morn,
Nor over-eager for to play the lover
And, decked in splendor, go to meet the queen.
Launcelot, thine Arthur hath a sorrow.
Hast seen my son Mordred?

LAUN. Yea, Arthur, I have seen this Mordred.
Yea, my King, thou hast indeed a sorrow,
And could thy Launcelot but help thee bear it!

AR. What thinkest thou of this Mordred? Likest him not?

LAUN. He is so strange, so small, so queer of limb,
At first I marvelled, then I pitied, then—

AR. Yea, and what?

LAUN. I met his eyes, and straightway I forgot
The manner of man he was, save that a soul
Of wondrous scorn and mystery met mine;
That froze the present, made the future dread,
With strange forebodings. While I mused he passed,
But left that chill behind him in my blood.
And yet he seemeth, sire, one to be pitied.

AR. Yea, all but pity Arthur's son should claim.

LAUN. 'Tis thy cross, Arthur, as a king thou'lt bear it.
And we all seeing shall say our King, like Christ,
Beareth his cross i' the sunlight, i' the shadow,
And take pattern from thy greatness.

AR. I bear it not, Launcelot, it beareth me
Down into blacker depths, aye, and blacker.
He cometh betwixt my spirit and the sun.
Canst thou not help thy King? I seem like one
Who walketh in dread dreams where all are shadows.

LAUN. Take courage to thee, Arthur, it will off.
Go in thy kingship's strength and meet thy queen.
Her beauty and her kindliness will cure
This thy distemper.

AR. Nay, Launcelot, this is the very matter,
As thou well knowest, she hath never seen me;
And for the very reverence I bear her,
A maiden princess, I would hold as snow
In each thing that regardeth purity;
By all the love that I would bear to her,
I would not have her meet me in this mood,
But I would have her meet her Arthur when
In kingly grace he is himself a king.
Yea, Launcelot, for this I sent for thee.
'Tis mine intent that I should tarry here
And in the joustings cure me of this fit,
While thou dost go forth in my place to bring
The Princess Guinevere to Camelot.

LAUN. Nay, sire, not I! Not Launcelot!

AR. By thy love for Arthur, thou shalt do it,
Whom else in all this kingdom wide but thee
Could I send on a mission such as this?
I honor all thy love in sending thee,
The one true knight, the glory of my realm.
In this, O Launcelot, thou canst help thy King,
And show abroad the love that 'twixt us lies,
Till men will say: "So much of love there lies
Betwixt King Arthur and great Launcelot,
That when the King stayed ill at Camelot
He sent forth Launcelot to fetch the Queen."
And what more fitting messenger to send
Than thee in all thy strong and splendid youth,
The flower and sun of all my chivalry,
Launcelot, the young and pure-in-heart.
Thou wilt do this and crown thy love for me.

LAUN. Nay, mine own Arthur, men will rather say:
"Why stayed the King, unkingly, thus at home?
And sent forth Launcelot to meet his bride?"
O Arthur, by my love, go forth thyself.

Rather thou sentest me sack a hundred cities
Than do this deed that will un-king thee so.

AR. Launcelot, I would rather die than go.

LAUN. Yea, Arthur, I would rather die than go.

AR. Launcelot, lovest thou thine Arthur?

LAUN. Yea, Arthur, well thou knowest.

AR. Wilt thou honor me as king?

LAUN. Yea, to the death.

AR. Then the King commands that thou goest for the love thou bearest Arthur.

LAUN. Yea, sire, I will. (*aside*) But all fears go with me.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT I. SCENE 4.

PLACE—LEODEGRANCE'S *castle at Camelard*.

Enter LEODEGRANCE *and Pages*.

LEO. Now is the day auspicious to my house
When Guinevere will wed with mighty Arthur.
Golden the mornings, happy haste the nights,
With constellations soft and wooing hours
That speed the bride and bridegroom to their bowers.
Splendid be my prime and soft mine age,
Who am a father to this mighty realm.
Ho there, without!

[*Trumpets heard. Enter Pages*.

Page. Mighty sire, with trumpet and with drum,
The lofty Arthur with his host hath come.
A world of spears and pennons fills the town,
And all the burghers feast their eyes with seeing.

[*A clatter of arms without*.

Enter LAUNCELOT, *who kneels*.

LAUN. Sir King!

LEO. Where tarries the great Prince Arthur?

LAUN. He cometh not, my lord.

LEO. And why?

LAUN. The King, on sudden sick at Camelot,
Hath sent me with his heart to Camelard
To plead his absence with thee and the Princess,
And guard her glad way forth to Camelot.
I am that Launcelot, that knight-at-arms,
Who loveth Arthur more than maid or king.
Perchance if thou wilt trust her to my care,—
Here is great Arthur's order.

[*Presents a ring*.

LEO. Welcome to Camelard, most noble knight;
Well ken we of thy name and nobleness.
It grieves us much great Arthur could not come
And, guest of our poor hospitality,
Receive our noble daughter at our hearth
And lead her home from out our very doors.
This much perforce had willed a father's pride,
This much had satisfied a father's love.
But seeing Chance hath given us none of it,
We must be gracious to her messenger
And thank her for the safety she hath sent.
To-morrow's dawn we give into thy hands
The maiden daughter of our kingly love,
To guard in safety to great Arthur's court,
There to be wedded as his faithful queen.
Meanwhile receive our hospitality.
This castle and this town are thine to-night
In honor of the Princess and the King.

LAUN. We thank thee, sire, for this thy hospitality.

LEO. Yea, one thing further; knowing our daughter's nature,
And fearing a maiden's pride might feel a hurt,
At the King's absence, we would now advise

That this be kept a secret till to-morrow,
When we will break it softly to Her Highness;
Though she hath never seen him, as thou knowest,
She now half loves him for his kingly fame,
And being her father's daughter thinks it well
To act a daughter's just obedience.
She hath a wayward nature, 'tis a pride
We have in common, therefore we defer
This matter till to-morrow. 'Twould not do
To let her sleep on such sharp disappointment.

LAUN. As you will, noble lord.

CURTAIN.

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ACT I. SCENE 5.

PLACE—*The apartment of* GUINEVERE.

GUINEVERE *and a lady attendant.*

GUIN. Now, Unid, I have seen this noble Arthur.
I spied him from my turret as he rode,
And all my heart went out in love to him,
The knight incarnate of my girlhood's dreams.
Didst notice his bearing, Unid?

UNID. Yea, lady; fairer man and nobler knight
Eye hath not seen.

GUIN. His face was like the gardens when the sun
Lifts up his crimson splendor after dawn;
His bearing as the bearing of a god,
And yet as one who would be kind and loving.

UNID. Yea, my lady, he seemed glad and fair,
And fit to be the lord to thee, my Princess.

GUIN. Come, Unid, take my hand, and we will sit
And speak of this great Arthur. Well thou knowest
My maiden fears regarding this same marriage.
I honor this Arthur as a noble king,

The mighty monarch and the splendid warrior,
And yet I fear him for reputed coldness.
Thou knowest me a princess warm in blood,
Brim with fire and sweetness of this life,
Not fitted to be wedded to a statue,
A marble, though that marble be a king.
For something stirred my life-springs long ago,
And whispered, Guinevere was made for love,
And love alone would rule her destiny.
And when I looked and saw him enter there,
And knew my lord, and felt him gaze my way,
Knowing his errand to my father's hall,
I blushed me till mine inmost being burned.
And all the roses whispered, Arthur! Arthur!
And "Arthur! Arthur!" rang through all the halls.
I wonder much if he will love me, Unid.

UNID. In sooth he must, my lady, be he noble.
Though he never saw thee, who but heard
Of all thy charms, my Princess Guinevere,
Could help but love thee when he seeth thy face?

GUIN. 'Tis in my mind to sound his manner, Unid.
To take him treacherous and unawares.
I like not much this way of wedding maids,
In cruel blindness of their coming fate.
This marriage savoreth much of state affairs,
Even o'er-much to please my noble fancy.
I would me much to see this royal lover,
And know with mine own senses if he loves
With that intense delight and warmth of feeling
With which poor Darby freely weddeth Joan.
Though I be all a queen I be a woman,
With all the thoughts and instincts of a woman.

UNID. What wouldst thou do, my lady?

GUIN. That I this even meet him in the garden.

UNID. On what pretence, my lady? 'Twere a risky
business.

GUIN. Thou wilt be veiled and take this golden ring;
Cozen his squire, and say, this for the knight

Who rode within the castle walls to-day.
Leave thou him word, a lady in distress,
Who needeth a knight to aid her in her sorrow,
Would meet him in the garden walls at sunset.

UNID. I will, my lady; but what if he come not?

GUIN. No danger of his not coming if he be
The man I worshipped from my tower this morning.
He'd come were yon rose-plot enchanted ground
And gated by a thousand belching fiends.
He'd come, my king! O Unid, how I love him!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT I. SCENE 6.

PLACE—*A rose garden adjoining the castle.*

Enter LAUNCELOT.

LAUN. This is a sunset bower for lovers made.
The air seems faint with pale and ruddy bloom,
The red for rosy dreams, the white for pure
And holy maiden thoughts all unexpressed.
There hangs fatality upon this place;
I cannot shake its ague from my heart.
I would I were safe back in Camelot,
With this fair Guinevere, great Arthur's glory.
I'd rather meet the mad kerns of the Isles,
Than come again on such a quest as this.
This Guinevere, they say, is proud and cold,
Not such a woman as Launcelot would love.
Yea, love, what doth it mean? and this strange maid,
What can she want of me? Aye, here she comes.

Enter GUINEVERE, *veiled.*

GUIN. My lord, forgive this meeting in this place.
(*aside*) Oh, if he like it not!

LAUN. Wouldst ask mine aid?

GUIN. Yea; wouldst thou aid a maiden in distress?

LAUN. Lady, all maidens command a true knight's help.

GUIN. My lord, hast thou ever loved?

LAUN. Fair women have I seen, but none to love as
thou meanest.
Why askest this?

GUIN. Wouldst fight for one like me?
[*Throwing aside her cloak.*

LAUN. (*starts and stands as one in a dream*) Fair
lady!
(*aside*) Wondrous Heaven, what be this?
In all my dreams I never saw such beauty
Of woman's face or of a woman's form.
She fills my heart like combs of golden honey!

GUIN. My lord, hast lost thy tongue?
(*aside*) I had not dreamed this.

LAUN. Fair lady, forgive my sudden lack of speech,
But never in my existence have I seen
Such loveliness and maiden grace as thine.
Yea, I would call it benison, could I stand
And gaze upon thee as thou art, forever.
There's some fatality that draws me to thee,
Like I had known thee somewhere long ago.

GUIN. My lord!

LAUN. Thou art all glory, all that this life is.
And all before but one poor, pallid dream
Of this real living. Now I see thy face,
I know what Heaven is and all delights
That erring mortals lost in Paradise.

GUIN. My lord! (*aside*) Sweet Heaven, this be too
blessed!

LAUN. Fair maiden, princess, lady, what thou art
Is what I'd die for. In mine inmost heart
Thou art enshrined. It seems some blessed dream.

Thou art too beautiful for mortal maid,
And yet I feel thou art not all unkind,
Might I dare read love's missal in thine eyes.

GUIN. Most noble lord, I came here for this purpose,
To render my heart's being up to thee.
Deem not this act unmaidenly in one
Whose whole life's currents to thy being run.
My lord!

LAUN. It seems that we were never strangers.
[*Folds her in his arms and kisses her.*

GUIN. All life hath been but shaping up to this.

LAUN. Oh, could this sunset be but gold forever!

GUIN. My lord Arthur!

LAUN. (*starts back*) Great God!

GUIN. Kiss me. Why Great God?
Thou are my God when thy lips are so sweet.

LAUN. Why calledst thou me Arthur?

GUIN. And art thou not?

LAUN. Oh, who art thou that callest Arthur lord?

GUIN. As thou art Arthur, I am Guinevere.
[LAUNCELOT *starts back in horror.*

LAUN. Guinevere! Make thick your murky curtains!
Day, wake no more! Stars, shrink your eye-hole lights,
And let this damned earth shrivel!

GUIN. (*clutching his arm*) And art thou not great
Arthur?
Who art thou? O God! who art thou?

LAUN. Not Arthur, no! but that foul Launcelot,
Who 'twixt his hell and Arthur's Heaven hath got.

GUIN. Then am I a doomed maid!
[*Swoons.*

LAUN. Black, murky fiend of hell! come in thy form
Most monstrous, give me age on ages here,
And I will clang with thee and all thine imps.

Bind me in blackness under Hell's foul night,
And it were nothing, after dream like this.

GUIN. (*rising up*) Oh, mercy! damned or not, I love thee still!

LAUN. Why doth not nature crack and groan?

GUIN. (*crawls to his feet*) Oh, be thou fiend or imp or Launcelot,
Thy kisses burn me even through this mist.

LAUN. Yea, thou dost move me as never woman hath moved.
Oh, would to God that we had never loved!
Then thou wouldst have been Guinevere and I Launcelot.

GUIN. What be we now?

LAUN. Damned souls.

GUIN. Then sweet, my love, it were thus to be damned.

LAUN. Oh, thou must go, proud Guinevere, to-morrow
Unto great Arthur's court and be his bride,
And I will be that olden Launcelot
In shape and seeming, though I hold a devil.
Oh, never more, mine Arthur, will I look
With peace and frankness on thy noble face.
'Twixt thee and me a wall is builded up
Of hideous evil. Guinevere, my love,
We were doomed long ago, and this be hell.

GUIN. Oh, most unfortunate me, thou art not Arthur,
And I am Guinevere and I have loved.
Though I go morrow morn to Camelot
And place my hand in his and pledge him mine,
Not all the clamor of glad abbey-bells,
Or heavenward incense, may kill out the fever
Of thy hot kisses on my burning lips.
I am not Arthur's. He is but a name,
A ringing doom that haunts me round the world.
Launcelot, we were wedded long ago,
Before this life, in some old Venus garden,
And this brief meeting but re-memory
Awakening from some cursed doze of life

Unto this present glory of our love.
Thou wilt not leave me, Launcelot, loveless, lorn?

LAUN. Aye, this be hell!

GUIN. Aye, hell to me to be divorced from thee.

LAUN. Thou art betrothed to our great lord, high Arthur,
And I that Arthur's trusted bosom friend,
And yet I'd kiss again thy honied lips,
Though Arthur's shadow flaming stood between.
I'm not an Adam to be driven out
With flaming brand from thy sweet paradise.
I'd hold thee, Guinevere, in these mine arms,
Though on each side, asquare, a "shalt not" stood.
I'd fight 'gainst all, aye, Arthur, mine old self.
O Guinevere, this love hath made me mad.
Oh, were't that all were changed in nature's course,
That I were not myself, but some rude shape;
That thou wert not so sweet to look upon,
But sour and crabbed and old, for Arthur's sake,
So that all might have gone the olden way.

GUIN. Oh, that this night might never pass away,
We and this garden here forever stay,
Yon setting moon forever hold her crest
Above the fringèd peace of yonder West,
These roses ever perfumed petals cast,
So that our love in its glad youth might last;
No bleak to-morrows with their Arthurs come,
With evil waking to a sombre doom;
No age, like autumn, wrinkling to decays,
Filled with sad hauntings of gone yesterdays.

CURTAIN.

ACT II. Scene 1.

Place—*The forest of Bracliande*.

Enter Merlin *and* Vivien.

Mer. Tarry we here, for I am fain for rest.

[*Sinks down*.

O mighty Slumber, sweet Oblivion!
Make this day night and seal my sleep-ward eyes;
And bear me in thy light and feathery bark,
For I am over-weary of this world.

Viv. Give me the book of charms wherein is written
The power whereof that I may guard thy rest.

[Merlin *gives her the book*.

Mer. Thou hast poor Merlin on the weaker side.

[*He sleeps*. Vivien *mutters the charm*.

Viv. Sleep! Sleep!

[Merlin *tries to awaken*.

Mer. Ho! ho! a mountain lieth on me. Take off this mountain!
Ha! ha! mine olden power, and thou art gone at last!

[*Tries to rise*.

Viv. (*mutters charm*) Sleep! sleep!

Mer. Methought it thundered, and a drop of rain
Fell on my forehead.

Viv. Sleep! sleep!
Spirit of slumber, rise from thy dark caves!

[*The spirit of sleep rises up as a grey mist and looms about*.

Wrap him in thy shadowy embrace
And bind him in thy filmy, silken bonds
A thousand ages.

Mer. O light, thou goest out!

[*Sinks again*.

VIV. Come, black Oblivion, from thy shadowy tomb!
[*The spirit of oblivion rises as a black smoke.*
Shroud him in thy swart and deep embrace
A thousand ages. Bind his senses fast.
Make him all droppings of a foul decay.

[MERLIN *moans and sinks in sleep.* VIVIEN *weaves paces about him. Spirits rise and wind him in a grey and black smoke.*

Sleep like any rock or clod of earth,
Thou coffin that enclosed a human soul.
The blind dull years take never note of thee,
For thou art part and parcel of the past.
Now, Arthur, that thy great right hand is gone,
Vivien, the devil, backs to Camelot;
Vivien, the scorned, the dust betwixt thy feet,
Doth back to Camelot, where vengeance waits.
I am resolved to be the villain dire,
And cunning plotter of this present play.
Then hence to Camelot to achieve mine end.
I'll shadow Mordred, work upon his ill,
And mould him creature to my spirit's will.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*Castle at Camelot.*

Enter MORDRED.

MOR. Two roads there are for me in this dark world,
Both shadowed by the gloom of haunted groves.
One leads to quiet and kind nature's peace.
I'm part inclined to join a brotherhood,
Composed of nature and mine inward thoughts.
The other road leads to no happiness;
But dark ambition—it lowers about my brain,

And hatred at the scorn of human eyes.
Yea, I am half resolved to be a man,
And take a part in this poor, shifty world,
Where so much ill begins to lift its head.
And help to pull the ropes behind the scenes
That aid the puppets to their forcèd parts.
Yea, sooth, indeed, that Vivien hath a devil,
But it is such a sweet and clever devil,
I cannot help but take it to mine arms.
She hath a counsel toward the stormier part.
She puts her little foot on fate's grim head,
And harks it hiss. I am persuaded much
To make a stir to remedy my wrongs,
And yet my loftier nature cries me no.
O Mordred, what art thou, misshapen monster?
Thou wilt be sweet as Launcelot in the grave,
Though thou canst never smile on Guinevere,
Or other star of brightness, stand by Arthur
Like lofty pine that girds the hills of snow.
Yea, I am half constrained to be a fiend,
And take this mighty kingdom by the walls,
And shake it till its deep foundations thunder.
There is no love for Mordred in these precincts;
Took he the lonely road to-morrow morn,
They'd cover his face and laugh the world along,
Unmindful of his setting.

Enter VIVIEN.

VIV. Nay, not so, there are two would grieve for thee.

MOR. Aye, two?

VIV. Yea, two: I and thy dog.

MOR. Yea, sooth would grieve my poor four-footed friend.
Better that Mordred had been got a dog,
With four good legs and strength of limbs and back,
A pattern to his species, than be thus
A blot on all the beauty of his kind.
Vivien, would that I were shelved in earth!

VIV. Doubtest thou my love?

MOR. Thou art a strange and subtle human mixture
Of cleverness and charm and swift deceit,
And yet I like thee, though thou voicest me
Upon the evil longings of my nature.
What canst thou love in me?

VIV. Yea, all of thee, not thy misshapen body,
But thy deep, precious mind, thy spirit rare,
That patent greatness seated on thy brow
Wherefore I'd see thee lift this Arthur down,
And show thy kingship on thy rightful throne.
Thou hast a grievance against this callous world,
If ever man were saddled by grim woe.

Enter LAUNCELOT *at left, followed by* GUINEVERE.

And here doth come the way will help thee to it.
[*Pulls* MORDRED *back into the shadow*.

LAUN. (*comes forward, followed by* GUINEVERE) My
dearest lady, why wilt tempt me thus?
Thou art the rightful, wedded spouse of Arthur.

GUIN. O Launcelot, thou hast doomed me with thy
beauty.
I am no more the rightful wife of Arthur;
I cannot live without thee, Launcelot!

LAUN. Lady, this stolen sweetness is a hell.
I am no more the Launcelot that I was,
Nor would I be that Launcelot for high Heaven.
[*Both pass on*.

VIV. (*aside to* MORDRED) These words are rungs by
which to build thy ladder,
Over the ruins of this doomèd kingdom.

MOR. I cannot play thus on my father's shame,
Even though he hate me. I would rather go
And bury my sorrows in a hermit's grave
Than build a power upon this human folly.
Even these twain, my heart doth pity them.
Not all their beauty hath kept them from this hell.

VIV. Hast thou no pride, Prince Mordred?
Yea, wait a breath, I'll show thy wrongs too deep
To languish in a monkish wilderness.
What hath thy soul to do with weeds and turf?
Assert thy greatness or else kill thyself.
Thou art not fit to cumber this flat earth
If thou canst not assert thy dignity.
Were I misshapen o'er a thousand times,
Had but one eye, a wen upon my neck,
And swart and foul as foulest Caliban,
And were a man, I'd make my kingship felt—
So all should fear the god that looked a devil.

MOR. Where'er thou comest from, thou comest not
from Heaven.

VIV. What cometh from Heaven is not for such as thee.
The day doth come when thou wilt call on me.

Re-enter GUINEVERE, *alone*.

VIV. Stay, lady, I would speak with thee.

GUIN. What art thou, woman?

VIV. I am a maiden here about thy court,
Of whom 'tis said that she did love great Arthur,
Our high lord Arthur, whom thou lovest so well;
If this be my poor crime, forgive me, lady,
Seeing thou thyself art happier in the same.
Thou art the splendid moon to his great planet,
And we but stars that vanish at thy rising.

GUIN. What wouldst thou with me?

VIV. I would fain bring unto thy notice one,
Wrongèd of nature and his human kind,
Knowing where thine admiration stopped,
Might follow thy pity.

MOR. Nay, all but pity. Pity is such a gift
That all the world would grant it, none receive.
Grant me thy scorn, lady, but withhold thy pity.
Thou mightst pity a horse or dog or fowl,
But man of rarest compounds moulded up,

And standing on foundations of a soul,
Hath too much of the god within him hid
To need such shallow, cold, inclement gifts.
Your pities would freeze the icèd heart of winter
Colder within its breast.

GUIN. And what art thou, strange heap, that speaketh thus
Unto thy Queen?

MOR. Madam, I am one who through this world
Goeth by ways of sorrow and mishap.
Knowest me not, madam?

GUIN. Thou seemest like some gloomier Dagonet,
Wearing proud black of some mock tragedy.
Art thou another fool?

VIV. (*aside*) Ah! that will touch him.

MOR. A fool, madam! Callest thou Mordred a fool?
Takest him for one who juggles for a court,
A football for the passing merriment,
Forgotten ere his wit hath passed to sadness?
Because I wear mis-nature on my form,
Knowest thou not the son of Britain's King?

GUIN. I know thee not, save thou art insolent.
Pass! You bar my way.

MOR. Is there so little in this royalty
That men know not a king when he goes forth?
When that great Arthur thou callest lord goes out,
I tell thee, madam, I am Britain's king.

GUIN. Enough, insolent! is it some mock tragedy
Thou playest? Or art thou mad?

MOR. Madam, though thou wert thousand times a queen,
The day will come when thou wilt eat those words
With the salt rue of utter wretchedness!

VIV. (*aside*) He hath awakened at last!

Enter LAUNCELOT.

GUIN. Dost threaten thy Queen? Make way, monster!

LAUN. (*rushing forward*) Dost thou insult the Queen?

MOR. Nay, not as thou hast insulted great Arthur's
wife.

LAUN. Toad! abortion! take that, and that!
[*Beats him with the flat of his sword*.

MOR. (*starting back and drawing*) Thou hast slain
pity and peace forever.
Come on, adulterous knight, and each foul stroke
Dishonoring my poor back I'll pay with hate
To fullest usury!
[*They close*. LAUNCELOT *disarms* MORDRED.

LAUN. There, go, Mis-shapen. Wert thou not a prince,
I'd teach thee manners toward thy father's wife;
Wert thou a man, and not that which thou art,
With this quick blade I'd stop thy craven heart.

MOR. There is nought more to do but to slay me.
(*bares his breast*) Slay me ere I kill myself.

VIV. Nay! nay!

LAUN. Kill thyself, Prince; Launcelot fights with men.
(*to the Queen*) I will follow you, my lady.
[*Exeunt* LAUNCELOT *and the Queen*.

MOR. (*flings his sword away*) All sweet compassions,
pityings and resolves
That dwelt in Mordred's breast are slain at last,
Slain by a woman's scorn, a man's brutality.
A last good-bye to all my gladder thoughts,
And hail, dark vengeance, plots and evil counsels.
Mordred is misshapen, then will he breed chaos.
Mordred is monstrous, then will he breed horrors.
Mordred is dark, then will he cast a shadow
That ne'er shall loose this kingdom's light again.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT II. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*Another part of the castle.*

Enter VIVIEN.

VIV. Now for the plot to bring this kingdom down.
I've racked my wits. Yea, I have got a plan.
Ho! here comes Mordred.

Enter MORDRED.

Art thou resolved to put it to an issue?
Or art thou craven?

MOR. Yea, I am all determination now.
Compunction's dead. Yea, I am over-tired
Of playing the wart upon the hand of time,
But am resolved to be that hand itself,
And move the issues of this foolish world.

VIV. What is thy plot?

MOR. To hold the world at bay.

VIV. 'Tis too vague.

MOR. Yea, all this life is vague till evil shrinks
The vistas of our longings down to lusts.
My plot is this, to reach this kingdom by
The sinister door that opens to Launcelot.

VIV. Yea, 'tis my thought.

MOR. To catch the Queen in her own guilty net,
Then open her shame to all the gaping world.
'Twill bring great Arthur's glory by the walls,
With thunder and smoke of splendor to the ground.
Launcelot is half of Arthur's greatness,
And when he hateth Launcelot for the Queen,
This house of majesty will rend itself,
And Mordred be the raven in the smoke,
Flapping his wings across its desolation.

VIV. Yea, then will my hate—my love—

MOR. Nay, woman, do not speak of hates or loves,

Or other foolish human-hearted moods
Of man's poor weakness, nay, but steel thyself
To be an engine of the crushing fates;
For he who would be powerful must be iron
And adamant amid this cruel world,
Knowing not heat nor cold, remorse nor shame,
Doing the deed that cometh to his hand.
But we must have a care and watch and wait,
And bait the trap and lay the springe and mine.
Not such a greatness crumbles in a day.
Much might be lost by hastening the issue.
Some one must work upon the moody King
And mould him softly, cunningly to knowledge
Of his cuckoldship. It must be deftly done,
Or like spark i' the powder, it would send
Our plottings and hopings out o' the skyhole.

VIV. It is well.

MOR. Meanwhile we watch the Queen and Launcelot,
Each action, aye, the changing of their faces;
Till knowledge be garnered of their secret commerce.
Who will approach the King?

DAG. (*heard without, singing*)

Morning her face is,
  Blue seas her eyes,
All of earth's sweetness
  In their light lies.

Coral her lips are,
  Red reefs of doom,
There do Love's ships drive
  Down to their doom.

VIV. Here cometh one who may work the matter.

MOR. Who be it? Not the fool?

VIV. Yea, the fool! He is not all surface, he is deep,
Yea, deep for me.

MOR. May he be trusted?

VIV. Yea, like one who is in love.
Leave me, Prince, I would sound him.

DAG. (*enters, singing*)

There would I shipwreck,
Swooning to death,
Passing to darkness
On the winds of her breath.

[*Exit* MORDRED.

Ho, Vivien!

VIV. Well, fool, and what wert thou singing?

DAG. 'Twas but a fool's carol.

VIV. If thou wert not a fool I would say thou wert in love.

DAG. (*starts*) Well guessed, Vivien.
And by Our Lady, thou art in the right of it.

VIV. And who might be the object, sir fool?

DAG. Madam, I am deep in love with three mistresses,
To wit, the past, the present, and the future.

VIV. And how be that, fool?

DAG. The first be my breakfast which I have had,
The second my dinner which I have just eaten,
And the third be my supper which, like the morrow,
Is the more joyful as yet to come.

VIV. Wouldst thou do me a favor?

DAG. What be it?

VIV. Dost thou love the King?

DAG. Yea, that I do, though he be sometimes like a great child,
Spoiled on the weather-side,
There be something grieves him.

VIV. Yea, well hath he cause to grieve!

DAG. Thou dost say so! What be the cause?

VIV. The Queen.

DAG. Why, she be well favored?

VIV. Yea, but treacherous.

DAG. Aye! Knowest thou that?

VIV. Yea, and more!

DAG. Then is hell come on earth!
What wilt have me do?

VIV. I would have thee warn the King.

DAG. The King!

VIV. Yea, the King.

DAG. As well ask the cricket to pipe for the
thunder-storm.
Dost thou crave my destruction so dearly?

VIV. Thou alone canst do it and survive,
Thou art so little in his estimation,
And thou must.

DAG. Yea, Vivien, I will. O poor world,
Where e'en royalty cannot 'scape the blight!
God save us all! I will e'en commence now.
Here cometh the King.

[*Exit* VIVIEN.

The King enters at the left.

DAG. Though she bade me hellward, I will obey.
But what evilment is abroad now,
That would I know? There's something back o' this.
The King a cuckold! Then Heaven help us all!
I would this were dispatched, yet how to do it
Passeth my understanding.

AR. Well, sir fool,
Hast a merry message for my heart to-day?

DAG. Yea, sire.

AR. Then mouth it, fool.

DAG. He who cometh to the wall hath crossed the last
ditch.

AR. Thine is but grim comfort, fool.

DAG. Then is it thine, King; and he who garners not
i' the morning
Can laugh with death.

AR. Indeed, thou art over-weird.
Come, play me a masque.

DAG. A masque, sire! Should it be merry?

AR. Aye, merry, or thou ruest it!

DAG. Here be a comedy, sire:
There be a king, sire,—

AR. Yea.

DAG. And there be a queen, sire,
And there be a bishop—nay, a knight.

AR. And what then?

DAG. The knight taketh the queen!

AR. And the king, fool?

DAG. Oh, he be fool's-mated, ha, ha, ha!

AR. And where be the comedy, fool?

DAG. Oh, the fiends laugh i' the pit.
That be the comedy! ha, ha, ha!

AR. Ha! Hast thou a moral?

DAG. Nay, not a moral, sire! Morals be not in it.

AR. Thou art but a wry fool to-day.

DAG. (*aside*) My plan faileth.
(*to the King*) Yea, sire, I passed an uncommon sorry
night.

AR. How, fool?

DAG. I dreamed of thee, Sire, and as I love thee
I liked it not.

AR. What was thy dream?

DAG. I dreamed I saw thee stand, and back of thee

A great blackness, that thou sawest not,
And from the shadow loomed—pardon me, sire—the Queen
And—and—

AR. Ha, and what?

DAG. Forgive thy poor fool, Sire, but methought I saw
Sir Launcelot.

AR. (*in a terrible passion*) Heaven damn thee, beast!
scum!
[*Knocks* DAGONET *down and would throttle him.*
Did the greatest knight i' this kingdom
Dare even dream such a thought, I would hack him to
earth!

DAG. Slay me, great Arthur, but forgive thy fool.

AR. Knowest thou not thou hast slandered the whole
realm?

DAG. I am but a poor fool, sire.

Enter GWAINE, *a tall, clumsy youth in scullion's dress.*

AR. Who art thou?

GWA. Thou must tell me.

AR. I am the King.

GWA. Art thou? Thou lookest like one.

AR. Whence comest thou?

GWA. I came out o' the marches yestermorn,
Where I served my father i' the bogs,
Intentioning to be a knight,
And they put me down in the kitchen.

AR. Thou wouldst be a knight?

GWA. Yea.

AR. And wherefore?

GWA. That I might serve the King.

AR. Thou wouldst serve me?

GWA. That I would!

AR. (*loosening* DAGONET) Then hang yonder imp i' the crane over the castle wall.

GWA. Come, rat!

[*Lifts* DAGONET *and hangs him on the crane*.

DAG. Oh, oh, the shame!

GWA. Hath such as thou shame?

DAG. Yea, I house me a soul.

GWA. Then is it poorly lodged.

[*Goes out*.

AR. (*strides back and forth*) Yea, a fool!—worse than a fool!
Arthur, why wilt thou shame thyself even in thought?
Out, damned suspicion, that insulteth my dignity!

Enter GUINEVERE.

AR. Madam, I would entreat thy pardon!

GUIN. Wherefore, my lord?

AR. For a thought. Guinevere, I am unworthy of thy queenliness.

GUIN. Nay, nay, my lord. I am but flesh and blood.

AR. Thou art a Queen!

GUIN. Yea, and a weak woman.

AR. It seemeth we be strangers even yet.

GUIN. Aye, my lord.

AR. Thou art cold, madam, and I like that iciness.
It well becometh this whiteness I uphold.
What wouldst this morning, my Queen?

GUIN. I would know of the tournament thou hast in hand.

AR. Yea, the tournament!—the tournament!
I fear I am over-moody, forgetful at times.

Hast thou seen Launcelot?

GUIN. (*starts*) Why Launcelot, my lord? He is not the King.

AR. Yea, not the King, but he hath charge of such matters.
Knowest thou, my lady, that Arthur loveth Launcelot?
Yea, had Arthur a brother or a son, would he were Launcelot!
And were Launcelot evil, the heavens would distil poison.

GUIN. Yea, my lord, but thou forgettest the tourney.

AR. Heralds have been sent out, and throughout the kingdom
Jousts are called, with strange and wondrous tests.

Re-enter GWAINE.

GWA. Well, what next?

AR. Sirrah! the Queen!

GWA. (*doffs his cap*) Morrow, madam!

AR. To your knees! by my blade, to your knees!

GWA. By my legs, I am no lick-spittle to claw the earth.
Kneel to your own woman, I'll to none!

AR. Death! down on your life!

[*Draws.*

GUIN. Nay, nay, he will kneel.

GWA. Not he! King or other man, I can crack a neck.
Come on, give me a quarterstaff and I'll knock your Kings like nine-pins.

GUIN. (*gets between*) Nay! nay!

AR. Wilt thou kneel?

GWA. I will fight, but I will not kneel,
Not to mine own mother. Gwaine is honest, but a plain man.

GUIN. And thou shalt not kneel, if thou wilt not.

Thou art well-favored, hadst thou manners.

GWA. Manners, madam, like fine feathers,
But hide the lice i' the bird.
Gwaine loveth acts, not appearances.

AR. Madam, wilt thou that I make him kneel?

GUIN. Nay, but grant his wish.

AR. What wilt thou, knave?

GWA. That I be made a knight.

AR. Thou must kneel to be knighted.

GWA. Not to man.

AR. To thy God, then.

GWA. So be it, if it must.

[*Kneels*.

AR. What be thy name?

GWA. They called me Gwaine i' the marches.

[ARTHUR *lifts his sword*. GWAINE *leaps to his feet*.

Wouldst thou hit a man when he is down?

AR. I would knight thee, clown; 'tis the mode.

GWA. Oh, but be careful, King, i' the doing.

[*Kneels*.

AR. Art thou of noble blood?

GWA. Dost thou mean honest? Gwaine is plain; if thou meanest i' the getting, no one can mis-call Gwaine's mother.

AR. (*raises his sword and strikes him with the flat on the shoulder*) Rise, Sir Gwaine.

GWA. (*rises*) Is it done, King?

AR. It is in sooth.

GWA. Then, King, am I thine, but yours first, madam. Gwaine is plain but honest; I would have a sword, King.

AR. Go, get thee one!

GWA. Dost thou mean it, King?

AR. Yea.

GWA. (*goes to the arras and, taking one down, proceeds to buckle it on*) Then this one pleaseth me.

GUIN. Stop, knight, 'tis the King's!

GWA. Then will it be the King's still.

[*Goes out*.

AR. What more wouldst thou with me, my lady?

GUIN. I would speak of one Mordred.

AR. My son! what of him?

GUIN. My lord, I would have him banished the Court.
He is sinister on my sight, and exceeding forward.
I like him not. Wilt thou promise?

AR. It is a heavy matter. We will consider it.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 4.

Enter ELAINE *and her retinue*.

A Squire. Lady, this is the place; we will retire.
Within short space the Queen doth come this way.

[*Exeunt all except* ELAINE.

EL. They say she is all goodness, she will grant
That I may meet this noble knight and fair,
And know my love returned, or else I die.

Enter GUINEVERE *and ladies*.

GUIN. Lady, what wouldst thou?

[ELAINE *kneels*.

EL. O most noble lady, I am a maid,

Called Elaine, daughter unto Astolat's lord,
Who cometh to thee, madam, for kind help
Upon the matter of a maiden's love.
It rendeth me so, unless it be returned
My heart will burst in twain, and I will die.

GUIN. Maiden, thy tale is sad; be thy quest pure,
The Queen will help thee; be thy person wronged,
By Arthur's mighty kingdom, thou art 'venged.

EL. Nay, madam, Elaine's love is white and pure,
And he she loves is noble as any knight
In all this kingdom. Forgive my boldness, madam,
And by that love thou bearest to the King,
Our great lord, high Arthur, help me now,
And bring me to the face of him I love.

GUIN. Of truth, thou hast a boldness in thy love.
(*aside*) There is an innocence in this fair maid
Doth make me pity her, so deep in love
For some false face that made a summer toy
Of her frank passion. Yea, I pity her.
(*to* ELAINE) Maiden, to-morrow we do hold a tourney.
Thou wilt be present with us in the Court,
And thou canst note the knights and seek thy lover,
If he be 'mid the guests of noble Arthur.

EL. Oh, thank thee, noble madam, may kind Heaven
Bless thee in thy great wifehood to the King.

GUIN. Come, maiden, thou wilt follow in our train.

[*Exeunt all.*

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 5.

PLACE—*The Court.*

Enter VIVIEN *disguised as a strange maiden, followed by men bearing a great stone with a sword thrust in it.*

AR. Whence comest thou unto our Court, strange maiden,
And on what quest art sent?

VIV. Nine days are past and gone, O noble King,
Since thou didst advertise throughout the land
The kingdom be gathered for tests at Camelot,
And marvellous feats might here performèd be.
Wherefore I, knowing of that noble pride
With which you hold the flower of your great Court
For manhood's purity, woman's chastity,
Have deigned to show before the world, great King,
The truth whereof thou boastest.

AR. It is bold, indeed, but Arthur keeps his word.
What be the tests?

VIV. First, here to test thy knighthood's purity,
We bring a sword sunk fast in yonder stone
By magic's force, and he who plucks it forth
Must be a knight who hath not known a woman,
Save in the lawful mode of marriage bed.
(*to* LAUNCELOT) Wouldst try, pure knight?

LAUN. Yea, I would, doth great Arthur will,
Though all the fiends of hell clutched nether end.
Do other knights but make the trial first.

[*A number of knights come forward, try to pull the sword out of the stone, but fail.* LAUNCELOT *then places his feet on the stone and grasps the sword and pulls with all his might, but the sword remains fixed.*

AR. It is in sooth a marvel!

LAUN. It seemeth grown therein,
Yea, I will bend and strain until it comes.
It will not.

[*Stands to take breath.*

GUIN. It is enough!

VIV. Wouldst thou try again, pure knight?

LAUN. Yea, I will try till I die, if it come not.

[*Tries again, bends his whole strength, then staggers to his feet.*

Methought the earth's roots hung thereon.
I am shamed!

AR. 'Tis enough!

VIV. Wilt not try again, pure knight?

LAUN. (*with set face*) Yea, now for Camelot's glory.
Launcelot's manhood pulls on this side, Hell on that.

[*Braces himself and gives one terrible tug, then falls back fainting.*

EL. 'Tis he!

[*Rushes out and falls fainting on his breast. The Queen's women lift her and bear her out.*

GUIN. Great Heaven!

AR. 'Tis enough! away with it, maiden; thy magic hath outdone our noblest worth.

VIV. (*scornfully*) Is there no pure man here will make a trial?

GWA. (*emerges from the throng still dressed in scullion's dress*) Yea, I will try, although I rend the stone.

[*Leaps on to the stone and plucks the sword out with both hands with a great pull, and waves it aloft with an exultant shout. The throng starts back.*

How now, mighty King?

AR. 'Tis a great marvel!

LAUN. (*steps forth*) Thou must face Launcelot to the death—the death!

[*Faces* GWAINE *and draws.*

GUIN. My God!

[*Her maids support her; she hides her face in her mantle.*

GWA. I would not slay thee.

LAUN. Thou canst not!—Keep you!

[*They fight. Knights try to separate them.*

AR. Nay, back, more room! give them more room!

[*Continue fighting; each draws blood, but neither gives way.*

GUIN. (*aside to the maids*) Be he slain?

A Maid. Neither be slain, madam.

AR. Enough! I say enough!

LAUN. Sire!

GWA. Must we stop the exercise?

AR. It is enough, you are both brave knights.

LAUN. Gwaine, thou art better than I.

GWA. Thou art the best I have met.
Wilt thou take the hand of Gwaine?

LAUN. Yea, I will, though it hath pressed me hard.

AR. Clear the Court.

[*Trumpets blow and the throng falls back.*

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 6.

PLACE—*An outer room in the castle.*

GUINEVERE *walking back and forth. Enter* LAUNCELOT, *kneels, would take her hand.*

LAUN. Madam!

[GUINEVERE *draws back coldly.*

LAUN. Madam, what means this coldness?
Thou wert not ever wont to meet me thus!

GUIN. Where hast thou left the maid of Astolat?

LAUN. Maid of Astolat!

GUIN. Yea, that frail pink-and-white that pillowed thy breast,
What time thou didst faint; some slim cowslip miss
Such as do flatter you strong men by their weakness.
Go, flippant knight, and seek your skim-milk love.
Guinevere would hate thee but for scorn.
God curse the day I ever let thee love!

LAUN. Madam, each word thou utterest, like a dagger,
Doth stab with cruel agonies my heart.
If Launcelot hath sinned in loving thee,
That love is maiden unto all save thee.
Yea, I am damnèd daily for thy face,
And even thou dost scorn me!

GUIN. A truce of words; I saw with mine own eyes
What all the Court and all the world doth know.
Launcelot's Love, the Maid of Astolat,
Is mouthed by all fools' lips in all men's ears,
Till Guinevere is even Mordred's scorn.
I'd slay thee, were I only but a man.

LAUN. Madam! by my love!—

GUIN. By thy love, a flimsy, forsworn thing,
A toylet of a moment! Such as thou!
And I! I gave—By Heaven! I pluck thee out,
And thrust thee from me, thou false, handsome face!
Thou devil-eyed to lead hearts on to ruin!

LAUN. Madam, wilt thou not hear?

GUIN. Nay, nay, begone! I scorn thee, yea, I hate!

LAUN. (*sadly*) Yea, Guinevere, I go, to come no more.
It is well seen that thou hast tired of me.
Thou hast driven Launcelot mad! mad!
The world reels round me, I am all alone.
All else the visions of a noisome dream.

I am mad, mad, Guinevere!
And dost thou smile? here's for the lonely dark!
Ho, ho! the world's one hideous mockery.
[*Leaps from the casement.*

GUIN. Nay, nay, Launcelot! Launcelot!
Come back! I love thee, I forgive thee all!
(*falls on her face*) O Heaven! I have driven him away,
Nevermore, oh, never to return.
O Love! O Love! my maddened heart will break.
O foolish stars, why smile on this grim night,
Lighting the heartless heaven with your eyes?
O foolish birds, why pipe across the dark,
Calling the rosy morn, the false-faced morn,
While hearts are breaking here amid the dark?
Launcelot! Launcelot! Hark! now he returns.
Nay, 'tis the foolish wind wooing the silly trees.
He never will return, nor will forgive.
O poor white hand! he nevermore will clasp.
O wayward lips! he nevermore will kiss.
O heart, break! break!

Enter a Maid.

Maid. Madam, here cometh the King.
[GUINEVERE *rises.*

Enter the King.

AR. Watchest thou the splendor of the night?

GUIN. Yea, there is a burden in the distant sea,
And a soft sadness from the far-off night
Of ghost-winds footing under the haunted dark.
It groweth chill, my lord.

AR. We will go within.
[*Exeunt both.*

Enter GWAINE *and* DAGONET.

GWA. Yea, mad! mad! stark, raving mad, you say?

DAG. Yea, mad. His eyes were like balls o' fire,

An' his face fixed like he followed a vision
Or walked i' his sleep,
An' his hands did beat the air the while he shouted a war song.
It hath frighted me out of a week's sleep.

GWA. Yea, he is indeed mad. 'Tis this crazy love.
And he such a man, the best i' the world.
I will take horse and follow him.
Drop that lanthorn, fool, and help me wi' this buskin,
'Tis new to me. The best i' the world, damn this love!
Fool, wert thou ever in love?

DAG. Yea, thou knowest I be a fool.

GWA. Then be wise like Gwaine, fool, and scorn love;
'Tis but a mad fever o' the head and marrow.
It creepeth in by the eyes and spoileth a good man.
It killeth sleep and maketh a mock at feeding.
It heateth the blood and routeth caution.
'Ware of love, fool, an' thou wouldst be wise.

DAG. Yea, thy words be like what the wind said to the wall.

GWA. And what be that?

DAG. Stand up while I blow thee down!
Art thou off now?

GWA. Yea, till I find him.
Tell the King Gwaine hath ta'en French leave, but he will come again when he bringeth the best man i' the kingdom.
Ho! without there! Fool, go ahead with that lanthorn.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 7.

Enter VIVIEN *and* MORDRED.

VIV. Prince, and do you weaken now again?

MOR. Yea, Vivien, I have only half a heart
For this ill business.

VIV. 'Tis but a lack of manhood in thy blood,
That runs to water dwelling on puerile things,
Like parent-love and other sickly longings,
Forgotten with forgetting of the paps.
Now, me, my memory knows no parentage
Save circumstance and mine own nimble wits.
'Tis but our acts that build the bridge of fate
Across this perilous river men call life.
Some kneel and pray, trust some fond deity,
And build in fancy safety for themselves,
Then soon are churning 'mid the ravening flood.
Others do build them piers of solid stone,
Or use men's bodies for to tread upon.
These get the surest over.—Hast seen the Queen?

MOR. Ha, that one name hath more to conjure with
Than all your sophistries, to my dark soul.
Yea, how I hate that woman! I am but
The hideous toad that poisons on her sight.
Though I may sense the glories of this earth
With all its wealth, the heaven o'er-bridged with stars,
And know love's heights and depths, and pity's well,
Brimming with pearls of tears and woman's eyes;
I am but hideous Mordred after all.

VIV. Yea, in her eyes art hideous, not in mine.

MOR. Woman, thou liest! It were natural
To love the perfect shape and noble form,
The sunny face and splendid laughing eye;
But canst thou love the wry and gnarlèd shape
And beetle-browed, night-shaded soul like mine?
I am a toad, a bat, a gnarlèd stump.
Those hideous in nature are my kin.
Woman, thou liest, when thou speakest of love!

VIV. Nay, Mordred, do not scorn me! Thou'rt a man
In more than mere out-seeming; 'tis thy fate,
Thy whole grim spirit, Vivien pitieth.
Wouldst thou but love me, Vivien would be

Thy queen, thy slave, the 'venger of thy wrongs,
That call to heaven.

MOR. Nay, nay, it cannot be, thou wastest words.
I like thee least in this strange mood of thine.
Love is no word for Mordred, rather hate,
And thou wert made for plottings, not for joys.
Yea, we will marry in compact of ill,
And will beget as child, black, black revenge.
This is my mood.

VIV. Now thou art natural! There is much to do.
Our schemes o'erreached, proud Arthur's jealousy
As yet untouched, and Launcelot fled the Court
In some queer madness. How likest the conditions?

MOR. He must come back, I am a devil at root.
We'll seethe him in the Queen's despairs and sorrows.
I have a plan,—she giveth soon a feast
Of autumn fruits unto her favorite knights,
And I will go, although she hates my face,
For I misdoubt she fears me even now.
There is a joy to know, if thou'rt not loved,
That thou canst wield an influence over those
Who otherwise would pass thee by in scorn.
Well, I do know a poison, subtle, sharp,
That when it bites it is the tooth of death.
This will I get inserted in some fruit,
And manage that one knight will eat of it,
Sir Patrise, brother unto that Sir Mador,
Who hates the Queen for that she scorned his love,
And not being present will call for loud revenge
Upon his brother's death 'gainst Guinevere.
Proud Arthur, then, will call upon some knight
To prove her innocence upon the sword,
And her extremity makes Launcelot sane.
He will return. Then I will trap him with her,
Set Arthur and Launcelot at bitter war,
And wrest the kingdom from their weakened hands.
This is my plot, now for the working of it.
Down all compunction! Mount all dark resolves!
Let me be Mordred inward as well as out,

All inky poison of soul, even that I,
Who'd trample others, must crush out myself.

VIV. Yea, Prince, indeed, 'tis seen thou hast a mind
Of subtle working fit to rule a king.
Thou wilt be greater than great Arthur yet,
When thou sittest in his place.

MOR. Nay, woman, tantalize me not with hopes.
'Tis not the splendid end that leads me on.
'Tis but the getting there that Mordred loves;
The mood of one who'd trample on the flowers
In some fair garden whence he is excluded.
Here is the poison. That will be thy part
To get it hidden in the special fruit,
And get it fed unto the special man
Whose snuffing out will pander to our end.

VIV. Give me the poison!

MOR. Here it is, this small pill,
So petty, but all-powerful.
'Tis wondrous that this tiny polished globe,
Could hide betwixt the finger and the thumb,
Hath power to open the gateways of this world,
And in a sudden sleep dislodge a soul.
Hast thou an agent for to do this work?

VIV. Yea, that I have.

MOR. Not the fool again?

VIV. Yea, the fool!

MOR. See he does this better than the last. 'Tis the more perilous. Thinkest he will undertake it?

VIV. Yea, he will.

MOR. By what compulsion?

VIV. By that most powerful of all most powerful compulsions. He loveth me.

MOR. And thou wilt use him, put him on the rack,
Which is thine influence?

VIV. See my little finger; he is as the yarn

That I may wind around it.

MOR. Thou art a devil! Ho! ho! Mordred hath
mirth!
And this be life? Mordred hath mirth, yea, Vivien, mirth!
See, woman, that thou failest not.
Mordred is roused, it must be.

[*Exit* MORDRED.

VIV. Ho! ho! Thou art travelling my road at last.
I must haste hence and find me Dagonet.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT II. SCENE 8.

Enter DAGONET.

DAG. I'm but the ghost of mine old former self,
Who, once a jester, am now but the jest
Of some outrageous fortune. Sleep hath fled,
My meat hath no more taste unto my mouth,
The wine but heavy lees within the cup.
I am so held in love for Vivien
That I must end this foolish spark o' life.
My heart leaps up for joy to see her face,
A silly joy, such as a child might have,
Loving some star for plaything, out of reach.
Oh, what would I not do to even dare
To press the velvet of her dainty hand!
Back, down, poor foolish dreams! Now I must play
The frothy merriment of a world that's gray.

(*Sings.*)

There may be poison in the cup,
  But still the foam must cling.
To keep the strong world's courage up
  Poor fools must laugh and sing;
With sobs below and smiles above,
  A-masking day by day,
On trampled, bleeding hopes of love.
  So whirls the world away!

There may be breaking of the heart,
  Though merry laughs the eye.
Still we poor fools must act our part,
  And laugh, and weep, and die.
Still must we sportive battles wage,
  With foam of lightsome breath,
While underneath the currents rage
  And wrecks are churned to death.

Enter VIVIEN. DAGONET *starts.*

VIV. Thou growest gruesome, Dagonet; where hast lost thy mirth?

DAG. I know not, Vivien, I know not; belike I am a fool, indeed. Poor Dagonet is no more himself.

VIV. Poor Dagonet!

DAG. Why not call me fool? Dost thou pity me?

VIV. Yea, I do.

DAG. And since when?

VIV. Since I knew that thou wert a man.

DAG. Dagonet, the fool, a man?

VIV. Yea, since I knew as thou couldst love indeed.

DAG. That I love, Vivien, what knowest thou?

VIV. Yea, that thou hast a heart under thy mask. Yea, more, for whom thou hast this feeling. Wouldst thou win her grace?

DAG. (*falls on his knees*) Yea, yea, Vivien, for one look, one smile. O Vivien, well thou knowest I am thy slave.

VIV. What wouldst thou do for my love?

DAG. Thou hast my heart bare in thy sight. Write on it what characters thou likest, for I am thine. I tell thee I am thy dog, thy slave.

VIV. Not dog, nor slave, but lover.

[VIVIEN *holds out her hand*, DAGONET *crawls near and takes it*.

DAG. O Vivien, dost thou mean this?

VIV. Yea, in sooth I will try thy love. Wouldst thou win my love, Dagonet?

DAG. Dost thou mock me?

VIV. Nay. (*takes a little box from her girdle and opens it*) Dost see this pill?

[*Leans near and whispers in his ear.*

DAG. (*starts back*) Nay! nay! not that!

VIV. That or nought.

DAG. Wouldst thou use me thus?

VIV. Thou art the man who'd win my love! I tell thee so must all who'd love Vivien.

DAG. Nay, nay, I must think. This is indeed death, death!

VIV. Yea, death or nought! I thought thou wert a man?

DAG. For that reason am I now in hell.

VIV. (*takes his hand*) Dagonet, dost thou love me?

DAG. O God! Yea, Vivien, give me the pill. I am not myself any more. I am thine, I will do it. Vivien, thou wilt not fail me?

VIV. See that thou dost not fail me, and be sure that thou doest this well.

DAG. I will.

[*Exit* VIVIEN.

At last, O Dagonet, thou hast thy wish,
Thou'st passed the iron o' that grim barrier
That shutteth comedy from black tragedy.
Dagonet, now thou art indeed a man!
Thou art pitied! Thou canst win love.
Thou canst snuff the candle out o' a life.
Dost know thy former features any more?
And all for love!

(*Sings.*)

O Love, that lights this world
  Yet leaves us i' the dark;—
I led thee to my couch,
  A grave-cloth was thy sark!
O Love, we would be clothed,
  And thou hast left us stark.

Yea, I am on fire. Snow! snow! Would I had snow to
  cool me!
Fool, thou art no more a fool. Dagonet, thou art a man!
Thou lovest. This must be done.

[*Goes out.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III. Scene 1.

Arthur, Mordred, Dagonet *and Nobles*.

Enter the Queen in great trouble. Enter Sir Mador *and Knights, bringing in a dead body and crying*, "Treason! Treason!" *The Queen takes her state.*

Ar. Who would accuse the Queen?

Sir M. 'Tis I, my liege.

Ar. What be the substance of thine accusation?

Sir M. Murder, sire! murder most foul and treacherous!

Other Knights. Yea, murder most foul and treacherous!

Ar. On whom?

Sir M. On the body of this knight, my brother, Sir Patrise, whom thou knowest to have been a courteous knight of much steadfastness to thee and the Court.

Ar. It is most strange. Relate the circumstances.

Sir M. 'Twas at the banquet, Sir King, where we all invited of thy Queen, the Madam Guinevere, who sitteth there, and after meat, she, with much courtesy of seeming, did press on us to partake of some fruit, the which on partaking of, my brother, this dead knight, did fall in agony so extreme and mortal that his soul went out, and now he lieth as thou seest him.

Other Knights. Yea, 'tis true, 'tis as he saith, a most foul and damnable murder.

Ar. (*turns to the Queen*) Madam, what sayest thou to this accusation?

Guin. 'Tis a false, foul lie. I am innocent of this deed.

Dag. (*aside*) Yea, 'tis true!

Ar. Thou seest this dead knight here, and these witnesses. As I am King I must see justice, even against thee. Hast thou no other defence to offer?

GUIN. Nay, my lord, as I am the Queen, 'tis a most damnable lie. 'Fore Heaven, I am innocent of this strange murder.

DAG. (*aside*) Now is my soul in flames!

SIR M. According to our ancient laws, when a guest dies in this most suspicious manner, where proof of grievous intent is present, the accused is condemned to be burnt at the stake.

GUIN. Great Heaven!

AR. 'Tis a foul punishment.

SIR M. But for a foul crime.

Other Knights. Yea, 'tis but justice.

AR. There is also a trial.

MOR. Yea, sire, the accused, being a woman, must have a knight to prove her innocence by his body on the body of the accuser ere the time of death be accomplished.

AR. Then be it so. The law must follow on the weight of these many witnesses. (*turning to the Queen*) Guinevere, Queen of Britain, I believe thee guiltless of the crime whereof thou art accused, as thou hast said. As King, I am not free to prove thine innocence with my body, but, as the King, unless thou procurest a knight to assoil thee ere the time appointed, I here condemn thee to be taken hence to a place of public note and there be burnt to death, as the law requireth.

GUIN. O great Heaven!

[*Falls in a swoon*.

AR. Sir knight, art thou satisfied?

SIR M. Yea, on my body.

AR. Then clear the Court.

[*Exeunt Knights*.

Madam, this is the heaviest hour of all my life.

GUIN. (*supported by her ladies*) Yea, my lord, thou wilt save me?

AR. That I will, in all justice. Ho, there, without!

Enter a Page.

Bring me Sir Hake on the instant!

[*Exit Page.*

Enter SIR HAKE.

AR. I command that this stern sentence on the body of the noble Queen be proclaimed widely, and that messengers be sent, on pain of death, to find Sir Gwaine and Sir Launcelot, that if they be not procured here within the present month, the messengers pay the penalty with their bodies.

SIR H. Yea, Sire, it shall be done.

[*Exit.*

AR. And thou, my Queen, retire to your apartments; I will come shortly to you. Keep up thy heart; as thou art innocent so will Heaven help thee.

GUIN. Yea, my lord, thou wilt save me, as I am innocent.

[*Exeunt* GUINEVERE *and her ladies.*

AR. Ho, page, bring wine. (*aside*) I would forget my sorrow.
Bring wine, I say, and send me hither my fool!

[*Exit Page.*

Enter DAGONET.

AR. Fool, I would forget my heaviness. Make me merry.

DAG. (*aside*) O God! (*to the King*) Yea, sire, what wouldst thou have?

AR. Some music.

DAG. Yea, sire. (*sings*)

Blue is the summer morning's sky,
And birds are glad and merry;
And Anna's eyes are sweet and sly,
Her cheeks like any cherry;
Her lips like dewy rosebuds are
Upon the gladsome morning.
She is my love, my heart's glad star,
In spite of all her scorning.
So fill the cup of gladness up,
And drink to youth and morning;
Let sadness go with evening sup,
I'm hers for all her scorning.

AR. Would I had thy merry heart, fool.

DAG. Yea, sire.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT III. SCENE 2.

LAUNCELOT *discovered seated almost naked amid swineherds.*

(LAUNCELOT *sings.*)

Once there was a castle hall,
Fair, fair to see;
Armored dight, and splendored all,
Filled with shout o' revelry.
Came the hosts o' fate and rage,
Thundered on its walls amain.
Sunken now like ruined age,
Never laughs its light again.
I loved a Queen and she loved me.
Aye, that were long ago!
Come now, wrack! come now, woe!
Strike now, lightning! beat now, snow!
Memory, I'll ha' none o' thee!

Ha! ha! Cowards, who'll fight? (*rises*) Ha! ha!

Enter a Knight.

Knight. Who be this?

1st Swineherd. Him be mad, though him hurt us not, for us be soft wi' him. Him tend a' swine.

2nd Swineherd. Him mun fight, but us not answer. Him be o'er hulk a man twa hanle a staff.

LAUN. Winds are cold and flowers are dead. All is past, past!

Knight. Ho, there! who be thou?

LAUN. 'Tis an old world, an old, old world, I tell thee truth. I loved a queen, but that be long past.

Knight. His wits be dull.—Who art thou, fellow?

LAUN. It hath been never summer this many a year. Canst tell me why?

Knight. 'Tis summer now, thou fool!

LAUN. Nay, nay, 'tis but winter. I loved a queen—

Knight. Oh, damn thy queen! who art thou?

LAUN. Yea, damn all queens, I am with thee, friend,—wilt thou fight?

Knight. Not with thee.

LAUN. Curse thee! thou shalt!

Knight. I tell thee I won't.

LAUN. Then, damn thee, take that!

[*Knocks him down.*

Knight. Oh! oh! I am murdered!

LAUN. More! more!

Enter GWAINE.

GWA. Ha! at last, it seemeth!

1st Swineherd. Have care, master! Him be dread.

GWA. How long hath he been like this?

2nd Swineherd. 'Tis some time agone. At first him did tear the earth
An' bite hisself, but him be better now.

LAUN. I chased the moon, the silly moon,
Ahind a willard tree.
I knocked the stars like nine-pins down,
One, two, three.
I loved a queen. Ha, ha! 'tis winter.

GWA. And this be he, the best o' Arthur's Court,
A ragged ninny, mouthing wanton froth,
The sport o' pig-folk; this be love's good work?
O Love! thou hast much to answer!

1st Swineherd. Him want allus twa foight.

GWA. Yea, he spoileth for a bout; 'tis often a right cure,
I will try it. God give it may bring him round!
(*to* LAUNCELOT) Ho, there, fellow!

LAUN. Ho thyself, windbag. Thou hast a fine voice, friend; Canst thou call back memory?

GWA. Yea, I can.

LAUN. Canst thou find springtime? I loved, I loved—

GWA. Oh, damn love—dost thou know me?

LAUN. Know thee? know thee? I know thou art a man. Wilt thou fight, friend?

GWA. With a merry good-will.

LAUN. Then let's to't.

[GWAINE *takes a quarterstaff; they fight hard and long*. GWAINE *belabors* LAUNCELOT *on the head, back and shoulders*.

Ha! it raineth thoughts now. Come on, Hell, come on!

GWA. Yea, am I coming. (*hits him harder*) If I beat that fool's love out o' him I will do him a good deed. How's that,

and that?

LAUN. And that, and that?

[*Both fight till exhausted.*

GWA. Launcelot, dost know thyself now?

LAUN. Methinks I partly do, under a cloud.

GWA. And dost thou know me?

LAUN. Methinks thou art the moon.

GWA. Fiends take this love! If I be the moon thou shalt find me no honeymoon.

[*Hits him again; they fight fiercer.*

LAUN. Come on, thou art welcome. Oh!

GWA. Well, dost thou know me yet?

LAUN. Methinks thou art one named Gwaine. Oh, my bones!

GWA. Be this winter?

LAUN. I be warm now?

GWA. An' dost thou love a queen?

LAUN. What mean'st thou?

GWA. I would rid thee of this damned love.

LAUN. Then wouldst thou rid me of this life. Gwaine, thou art a noble soul, but thou canst not do that.

GWA. Art thou thyself now?

LAUN. Methinks I am—Yea, I have been mad.

GWA. Yea, and I have cured thee. Come, this be no place. Let us go.

[*Exeunt both.*

CURTAIN.

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ACT III. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*Another part of the forest.*

Enter LAUNCELOT *and* GWAINE.

GWA. Launcelot, thou art a fool. Thou art the King's man, and the best. Thou hast an arm and a sword on it. Thou must come. I will no longer here.

LAUN. I may not; this hurt be too deep.

GWA. Curse thy hurt, man! thou art sound as I.

LAUN. 'Tis a deep hurt; Launcelot fights no more. Here will I die.

GWA. Better go a monk. Thou art a fool, man. This love is a girl's folly. Fighting is a man's trade and his sword his true mistress. Gwaine will have no other. Come, thou art not dead yet.

LAUN. Aye, Gwaine, thou wastest words. Launcelot is ended.

GWA. Nay! nay! I gave my word I would bring thee. Will I have to go forsworn, else carry thee on my back. Have I cured thy madness but for this?

LAUN. Nay, nay, make peace best thou canst. Thou art a good fellow, but I cannot. Launcelot will die here.

GWA. I say, damn thee, thou shalt come!

LAUN. Thou liest!

[*Both spring to their feet and draw. Trumpets without.*

Enter the King's Messengers.

GWA. Who comes?

Mess. From the King.

GWA. What want ye?

Mess. We seek two knights, Sir Launcelot and Sir Gwaine.

GWA. We be thy men—what be thy message?

Mess. The King desireth thee in great haste; the Queen be in great peril.

LAUN. Nay!

Mess. Yea, of her life. She be condemned to the stake if a knight assoil her not with his body on her accuser to-morrow noon.

LAUN. Dread Heaven!

GWA. What be the accusation?

Mess. Murder on the body of Sir Patrise.

LAUN. Enough! Hast thou brought horses?

Mess. Yea.

LAUN. Then quick! on your lives! lead us hence!

[*Exeunt* LAUNCELOT *and Messengers*.

GWA. The foul fiend take this love! It be a queer sickness, indeed. Anon it made him like to luke water, and now he be all fire. It bloweth now up, now down, like the wind i' a chimney. Yea, I love that man like a father his child. There is no sword like to his i' the whole kingdom. An' a wench that be a queen leadeth him like a goss-hawk. (*voices without*) Yea, I am coming.

[*Exit*.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT III. SCENE 4.

Enter Court-ushers with trumpets, Soldiers and Knights. Enter the King, takes his state. Enter the Queen, in a black robe surrounded by her women; she comes to the foot of the throne, falls on her face.

GUIN. Arthur, thou wilt save me?

AR. My Queen, as the King I may not. My heart is hell.

Put thy trust in Heaven.

GUIN. 'Tis a dread death.

AR. Madam, could Arthur save thee he would. If thou diest, so doth my joy in this world. Keep thy heart!

GUIN. 'Fore God, I am innocent.

AR. Thou must trust to Heaven.

GUIN. That I do.

[*Rises and takes her state.*

Court Chamberlain. Guinevere, Queen of Britain, of this dread crime whereof thou art accused, what hast thou to say?

GUIN. (*rising*) That I, Guinevere, Queen of Britain, am innocent of this most foul charge of which I am here accused, and here call on Heaven to prove on the body of that foul knight, my accuser.

Marshals enter and trumpets are blown.

Court Chamberlain. Doth no knight assoil the Queen?

GUIN. Heaven help me!

AR. Do no knights approach?

Page. Nay, sire.

AR. Then has the hour of my life's sorrow come!

Enter SIR MADOR, *doffs to the King.*

SIR M. Sire, the time hath almost passed, and I demand a knight to do me battle, or that the Queen be burnt.

GUIN. (*aside*) Merciful Heaven!

AR. (*to the Page*) Do none come?

Page. Nay, sire.

DAG. Were I not bound to Vivien body and soul I would state the truth. Nay, I am accursed. There is but one way.

[*Staggers to the front of the throne; the throng presses back in wonder.*

DAG. (*kneels*) Sire!

AR. (*in voice of thunder*) Well, fool?

DAG. Didst thou not once make me a knight?

AR. Yea, in a moment of jest.

DAG. Then would I take this gage!

GUIN. Nay, nay! death, death! but not this insult! What base knight of this Court hath prompted this?

DAG. None, none, my lady; 'tis my wish.

AR. Take him out! Now is Arthur shamed!

[*Knights hurry* DAGONET *out*.

DAG. (*aside*) Now is hell indeed my portion!

GUIN. Sire, I would now die.

AR. Yea, my Queen, so would Arthur.

SIR M. Sire, the time be up. And I, as the accuser, now ask that thou, as King, wilt command that Guinevere, Queen of Britain, who standeth there, be taken from hence and burnt till she be dead.

[*A commotion without*.

LAUNCELOT *rushes in, draws, and faces* SIR MADOR.

LAUN. And I say, nay!

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT III. SCENE 5.

Enter MORDRED.

MOR. Now cursed be the womb that gave me birth!
Thrice cursed be the paps that gave me suck!
That I, but made for hellish plots and hates,
And inky thoughts and moods and black despairs,

The most unhappy man in this dread world,
Should house in me a dream of womanhood
Such as doth dwell in all the milk-white glory
And glamored stateliness of Arthur's Queen.
Yea, would I now forego all I hold dear
In this life and the next, if such there be;
My chance of Heaven thrust to darkest Hell,
One hour like Launcelot to know her love.
Hell! Hell! I laugh at Hell! such flames I burn
Would scorch the northern ice-seas in their beds,
So deep a flame I hold me in my thoughts
Of madness for her love.—Yea, I am turned
A very subtle Satan that will plot
High Arthur's downfall, Launcelot's banishment,
And all the ruin of this present kingdom.
Yea, I will be a king and perch a crown
In its unsteady poisings on this brow,
So that by very glamor of my power
And inner majesty of mine iron soul,
I build in her a fancy for my person.
For I am Mordred; in this hour I'm great
In subtle cunning far beyond these days
Of mere brute strength and stature physical.—
Yea, I was born upon an evil time
Of evil parentage of sin and shame,
Thrice cursèd in the inner soul and form.
What sportive fate gave me the gifts I bear?
But I am willed to use them to my use.
Yea, I will use all deviltries and lies,
All plots and counterplots, to gain mine end.
This misbegotten now doth hold the key
To this doomed kingdom.

Enter VIVIEN.

We are well met. Thou art upon the hour.
The plot grows closer to our waited end.
The net is weaving closer, mesh by mesh,
That traps the leopard and the lioness.
I have by long connivance, secret planned,
Built round me many knights who hold my weal,

Jealous of Launcelot and Arthur's glory.
These will be with me when the stroke comes down.
A thousand swords will leap their scabbard mouths
At shout of Mordred! Yea, a thousand throats
Will cry me king when my fate topples Arthur.

VIV. Now art thyself, this be thy natural mood.
Yea, Mordred, when thou kingest it, there will be
A splendid thraldom to true kingliness.
For thou wilt sink a terror in men's hearts
Of king's prerogatives will make them fear
The very sound and rumor of thy name;
And there will go before thee waves of will
Presaging thunders of thy royal coming.
But wilt thou then, my lord, remember Vivien,
When thou dost come unto thy royalty,
Her who did place thy footsteps in the way
That led thee to these gateways of success,
And bade thee trample on thy youthful fears
And doubts and milksop fancies of the mind,
And gave into thy hand an iron mace,
And bade thee use it? Wilt thou think on her,
The only one who loved thee for thyself,
The single soul that knew thee in the dark,
And loved thee for thy nobler qualities?

MOR. What wouldst thou have me promise?

VIV. I would be a queen!

MOR. Ha! thou climbest high!
Be careful or thy stairway
In toppling over carry thee to ruin.
(*aside*) This be her trend! I must match cunning with
cunning,
And tie this serpent in her venomed coils.
Were she a man I would admire her much,
But not as woman! She be Mordred's queen,
When queen of women there be one Guinevere!
(*to* VIVIEN) When I am king thou wouldst then be the
queen?
'Tis a daring thought!

VIV. Not more than that thou bearest,
That Mordred, squat and monster, lorn, despised,
Misgotten, friendless save to such as me,
Should rise in dreams to heights of Arthur's glory,
And even sigh to husband Guinevere.

MOR. What now? Thou devil!

VIV. Ha! Now I stabbed thy longings to the quick,
And probed thine ink-heart.—Thou dost love the Queen,
Thou, who dost dwell so far below her scorn!

MOR. Witch-hag or devil! Wert thou but a man,
And I would quickly send thee to that place
Where thou belongest.

VIV. Nay, I fear thee not.
I am too much a part of all thy plans
For thee to quarrel with. Stab me and thou stabbest
The life of all thy longings. Let my blood,
And with it flows the making of thy dreams.

MOR. (*aside*) 'Tis as she says. She's woven in my
web,
And I must keep her, evil though she be.
Yea, Mordred! Mordred! (*to* VIVIEN)
Vivien, thou art hasty
In dreaming Mordred would do thee an evil.
'Twas but the sudden mantling of the blood.
Yea, I indeed do owe thee overmuch,
And Mordred will pay thee with what gratitude
Of words and acts as such as he possesses.
Yea, when my mind dwells on the what I was,
And that which I now am, an admiration
Sudden and great comes o'er me at the change
And the swift transformation thou hast made.
Thou took'st a youth from out his sickly longings,
Vague, undefined with musings on this world,
And sick with evil of a shadowed fate,
Dried up his kindness, showed him he was iron,
And gave the keys of cruelty to his hand
Wherewith to pick the lock of this poor kingdom.
Yea, I am wrapped in admiration vast.

Then I would shudder did an evil thought,
Wandering vaguely through my caverned mind,
But stop and grin me. Now it seems mine act
Would neck and neck with Hell's most foul desire.
Yea, thou hast right in pride of workmanship
In building from material thou hadst
So deft a moulded villain to thy hand.
Yea, Vivien, fear not Mordred will forget,
When every waking moment on his bed,
And every devil knocking on his sill,
Mindeth him of cause for gratitude.

VIV. Wilt thou promise?

MOR. Nay, I will never promise!
What part have I with pledges in this world,
Save pledge that I will topple all to ruin?
This give I Fate, as sure as I am Mordred.
I tell thee, woman, I am thy slave no more,
Nor slave to any, be it man or devil.

VIV. What art thou then?

MOR. I am thy master. Thou wilt be my slave,
Thou cunning plotter, schemer to my hand,
To be my dagger, poison, flaming brand,
My very slave, convenience, creature, tool;
And if thou art not, I'll trample, trample thee.
I tell thee I will thrust this kingship out;
Will spin these actors round my crooked thumb,
Until this devil Mordred walketh king.
Little didst dream what demon thou wert raising
When thou didst conjure Mordred.

VIV. Darest thou me?

MOR. Yea, look into my glass and ask thyself
What Mordred hath in life to hope or fear?
But I do tell thee, woman, Mordred in hell
Will be no tortured creature spinning round,
But himself the very devil.
To show my power of evilment, I tell thee,
I know thy fatal liking for myself.
'Tis the one part of thee that now can suffer,

The only part of thee that holdeth good.

VIV. Nay, I will not hearken!

MOR. (*seizes her wrist*) I'll bind thee on the rack as
thou hast me,
Or, rather, finding me there, stretched my sorrows,
And show thee all the fiend that thou hast roused.
Then hear me: I do scorn that love of thine:
Do trample on, despise, as I do thee!

VIV. (*falls on her face*) Nay, Mordred, thou breakest
my heart.
Nay, curse me not.

MOR. Yea, ask the rack for mercy when it racks,
Or seek for honey in the aspick's sting!
Yea, more, I tell thee plainly to thy face,
Guinevere makes hell within my breast,
And thou, my slave, wilt help me to her arms.

VIV. One little smile, one little word of peace!

MOR. Nay, silence, or a curse! Wilt thou do this?

VIV. Thou knowest I will, let me but touch thy hand!
Trampled on, despised, I love thee still.

MOR. Now to the point: Launcelot goes this night
To secret assignation with the Queen—
This saving of her life hath patched their quarrel—
And thou must find for me the hour of meeting,
Must intercept the trusted messenger,
And bring me secret knowledge of the time.
I go now with some knights unto the King,
To force his leave for this our undertaking,
And put their secret love to open shame.
Thou must watch near the apartments of the Queen,
And take by fraud or force knowledge of the hour,
And bring it to my ears with thy best speed.

[*Exit* MORDRED.

VIV. Yea, I will.
He hath read true, I am his slave at last.
Aye, what a splendid devil he doth make!
There is no man like him in all this world.

I'll see him crowned, climb he there o'er my body.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT III. SCENE 6.

PLACE—*An audience room in the castle*.

Enter MORDRED, SIR AGRAVAINE *and other Knights*.

MOR. 'Tis a delicate business we be come upon,
Though one of grave importance, therefore I
Will stand i' the background. Thou, Sir Agravaine,
Being a kinsman not o' the sinister side,
May speak the plainer. Let it fall on me.
Yea, I will answer with my body here.

SIR AG. Yea, I will put it plainly to the King,
And show the evil placed upon our house,
And that foul insult tendered King and kingdom
By overbearing Launcelot and the Queen.

Other Knights. Yea, we are with you.

Enter a Page.

SIR AG. We would see the King.

[*Exit Page*.

Enter ARTHUR.

AR. What means this sudden assembling of knights
At this strange hour?

SIR AG. We'd bring a matter to thy hearing, King,
Of grave import unto thyself and us
Of thine own household, who'd uphold thy pride.
Yea, one affecting the dignity of this land.

AR. What be this matter?

SIR AG. The matter is one which toucheth thine own

honor,
And hath to do with Launcelot and the Queen.

AR. Dost thou insult thy King?

[*Draws.*

SIR AG. Nay, 'tis thou dost insult thyself and us,
Dost thou not listen!

Other Knights. Yea, King, 'tis true.

AR. 'Tis treason, damnable treason 'gainst my Queen,
'Gainst myself and 'gainst this noble kingdom!

SIR AG. Wilt thou hear me, King?

Other Knights. Yea, hear him.

AR. Then I will hear thee further, but 'tis plain
You prove this on your bodies to the death.
If this strange lie be not as true as Heaven,
Each man who thinks this damnèd treason dies!

Knights. 'Tis just, King; we will prove it on our bodies.

SIR AG. We think, Lord Arthur, thou art over-blind
To certain things that compromise thine honor,
And some of us have reason to suspect
Sir Launcelot holdeth commerce with the Queen.

AR. Stop, caitiff!

SIR AG. Wilt thou not hear it?

AR. Have ye forgotten that my name is Arthur?
Or is this nobleness a vanished dream?

SIR AG. We would prove this same upon our bodies,
By taking of them in the very act.

AR. No more! by heaven, no more! I say, no more!
Or by my crown, I'll cleave thy caitiff tongue,
And spatter thine evil brains on yonder pavement,
That dared impeach my royalty of such dishonor.

SIR AG. Nay, King, we will die for the truth of this
matter.

Knights. Yea, Lord Arthur, we are so prepared.

AR. Nay, ye are mad, blind, besotted mad.

SIR AG. Nay, King, here is Sir Mordred, who will show
The truth whereof we speak.

[MORDRED *comes forward*.

AR. Ha! 'Tis thou at bottom o' this ill!

MOR. Sire, I would but do my duty to this kingdom,
And to the honor of your kingly place.
Sir Agravaine is over-blunt in speech,
And speaketh sudden on a cruel matter;
Yet he hath but the right in this grave question,
Nor doth dishonor thee in this respect
More than do any of these loyal knights,
But rather would show wherein thine honor lieth.
If dishonor lies therein, it doth not lie
On them who'd prove the evilment suspected,
But rather on those who by their treasonable act
Have brought this shame upon us. It would seem
That thou dost love Sir Launcelot even more
Than the unsullied honor of thy Queen.

AR. Nay! Speak no more! Thou hast insulted Arthur.
If but one thousandth part of this be true,
Then is great Arthur's glory brought to ground.

MOR. Sire!

AR. No more of words! What wouldst thou have me
do?

MOR. Sire, we would that thou give opportunity
To prove the cruel substance of our coming
By taking the doers in the very act,
And trapping Launcelot in the Queen's apartment.

AR. Go on! Death! Speak on! Accursed me!

MOR. If thou wilt go abroad this coming night,
And advertise thy going, and grant to us
Sufficient knights to make the matter proof,
We will fulfil this matter with our lives.

Knights. We will.

AR. And it hath come to this!

MOR. Sire, wilt thou grant this?

AR. Yea, I will grant it, but, by Arthur's honor,
The knight returning from such vile ambushment
Without full proof unto the open world
Of that which spills the sea of Arthur's glory,
Shall die the foulest death this kingdom lends!
On this condition only do you go.

MOR. Yea, we accept the conditions.

Knights. Yea, we do.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT III. SCENE 7.

PLACE—*A passage near the Queen's apartments*.

Enter VIVIEN.

VIV. Now, slave, but do the bidding of thy master,
And soon the boding hour will draw anigh
When Guinevere will queen a royal hunchback.
Now serve me well, my wits, until I play
The issue of this matter to my mind.

[*Retires into an alcove*.

Enter UNID, *the Queen's Maid, with a ring*.

UNID. Now, drat that page! What can the matter be?
This ring must go, but who will be the bearer
It bothereth me to discover.

[*Passes out on left*.

Enter DAGONET *on right*.

DAG. O me! me! me! that ever I did that deed!
(*to spirit*) Nay! nay! spirit, come not here!
Hide, hide that woeful face. Sleep, sleep
Quiet i' the grave! Dagonet meant it not.

Ha, ha! I'll laugh and be merry. 'Tis but my wits.
I'll think on Vivien.—Nay, nay, not that face!
I slew thee not! Away! away! away!
'Tis but a fancy, but it lifts the hair
In frosty bristles, makes the eyeballs stare,
And turns me to a horror. Away! away!

Re-enter Maid.

UNID. What play is now, sir fool, that thy wit playeth?

DAG. Oh! 'tis thou!

UNID. 'Tis said that thou art looking at the Queen,
And wouldst oust Sir Launcelot. Thou art a bold fool.

DAG. Nay, nay, 'tis thou, sweet Unid, rendeth my heart.

UNID. Now art thou a kind fool.

DAG. Is the Queen within?

UNID. She sleepeth.

DAG. I will sing thee a song. (*sings*)

It rose upon the month o' May,
When woods were filled with laughter
Came Margery tripping up the way,
And Jock a-stealing after.
(*to spirit*) Away! away!

It rose in autumn's afternoon,
When love was dead, and laughter,
That Jock went striding 'neath the moon,
And Margery pining after.
(*to spirit*) Away! I say, away!

UNID. Well acted, fool, and well sung!

DAG. Yea, it is a part of me.

UNID. (*aside*) He will do. (*to* DAGONET) Fool, wilt thou deliver a message for me?

DAG. Yea, by my love.

UNID. It be a pressing business, and a private one.

[*Speaks in a low voice*.

Thou seest this ring. It is the Queen's. Thou needs must find Sir Launcelot, and deliver it to him privately and say: "This night afore midnight."

DAG. What doth it mean?

UNID. It meaneth, do thy part, and shut thy ears and mouth, and put a padlock on thine inward thoughts. Wilt thou do it?

DAG. Yea, that I will, 'tis for the Queen. (*to spirit*) Away! away! Haunt me not!

UNID. What aileth thee?

DAG. Did I speak?

UNID. Thou spokest as to someone.

DAG. 'Tis but an infirmity.

UNID. 'Tis a queer one. Thou wilt be speedy and private?

DAG. That I will. Not one kiss?

UNID. Away! away! Haunt me not!

[*Exit*. VIVIEN *comes from the alcove*.

VIV. Ha! thou false lover!

[DAGONET *drops the ring*.

DAG. 'Tis thou!

VIV. Caught in the act, soft words and lovers' songs,
And rings exchanged, and even kisses proffered.
Thou double-dealer! Thou wouldst seek my love?

DAG. I tell thee thou art wrong. 'Tis the appearances are at fault.

VIV. Thou liest! Didst thou not offer to buss her?

DAG. 'Twas but a sally to cover mine inward thoughts.

VIV. Thou liest again. What were those low words she spake, when she took thy hand?

DAG. 'Twas but a message she gave me on a private matter.

VIV. Oh! oh! very private, Dagonet, very private!

DAG. I cannot tell thee of its import.

VIV. Nay, thou canst not, for thou liest.

DAG. I tell thee, Vivien, thou wilt madden me.
I tell thee I love thee only, and thou knowest it.

VIV. What was the substance of that message?

DAG. If thou must have it—and thou draggest my heart out —it was from the Queen: the words, "to-night afore midnight."

VIV. A true story! To thee?

DAG. Nay, to Sir Launcelot.

VIV. Thou liest! Canst thou explain that ring she gave thee?

[*Picks it up*.

DAG. 'Tis the Queen's.

VIV. Ho! ho! And thou the trusted messenger! 'Tis a likely story. Wouldst have me believe it?

DAG. Vivien, I tell thee that I love thee, and am in hell for thee, aye in hell!

VIV. Thou forgettest thine important message, thou most trusted lover and messenger!

DAG. Vivien, wilt thou not believe me?

VIV. Go, go, I tell thee; I will see thee again.

[*Exit* DAGONET.

Now cometh the hour when my revenge approacheth,
Now winds my web about doomed Camelot,
An angered fate hangs o'er these castle walls.
There will be bloody deeds abroad to-night.
Rise, spirits of old vengeance and affright!
Vivien conquereth! Wait! wait!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV. SCENE 1.

(*Rise outer curtain*.) *Passage near the Queen's apartments*.

Enter DAGONET.

DAG. 'Tis little I can do, but I will mend
The devilment that I have helped to cause.
Hark, now they come! Here I will take my stand.
'Tis over my dead body, when they come,
That they'll come at her. Ho! stand without!
(*sounds heard without*)

Enter MORDRED, SIR AGRAVAINE *and other Knights with torches and naked swords*.

(*draws*) Where go you, masters?

MOR. We go this road; 'ware how you stop our way.

DAG. The man who goes this road goes o'er my body.

SIR AG. Louse! take that!

[*Stabs* DAGONET; *he falls*.

MOR. 'Tis the King's jester.

DAG. You have leeched my folly. Now is the jest ended.
Vivien!

[*Dies*.

A Knight. He was a man, after all.

MOR. Onward, knights, to better game than this,
Though little we know the tragedy that ended
When yon poor light went out! Come this way!

[*Exeunt all*.

(*Rise inner curtain*.) *The Queen's apartment*.

Enter LAUNCELOT *and* GUINEVERE.

LAUN. I come this night to bid you a long farewell,
Before I leave this kingdom's shores for ever.
This love doth hold me in a demon's grasp,
And my heart breaks to feel great Arthur's love,
And all the time we twain be meeting thus.

GUIN. Nay, nay, Launcelot, leave me not forlorn,
I cannot live without thee. Thy strong arms

And thy warm kisses are to me the one
Fair garden springing on this drearsome earth.

LAUN. Lady, I must go. My lands in France,
Tribute to my sword, I'll make a kingdom,
And pass my days in memories of thee.

GUIN. Nay, nay, thou wilt not go! and if thou must
My heart will bleed for thee until my death.

UNID. (*hurrying in*) Madam, there is treason roused without.
Many armèd knights do come this way.

LAUN. Now is the end come I have long expected,
The grim fatality of all my fears,
The nightmare real at last. Quick, my sweet!
Kiss me your latest now! This is my death!

GUIN. Launcelot, hasten! save, oh, save thyself!
I will bar them with my body here.
They will but trample a dead, dishonored Queen,
Whom brute fatality made its passing sport.
Quick! that way!

LAUN. Nay, nay, sweet love, but I will die with thee,
And show great love can make a greater death.
(*draws*) Would to God I had mine armor!

[*Loud knocking heard at the door, and the voice of* MORDRED *heard without*.

MOR. Come out, thou traitor, Launcelot, and show the world
The face of him who hath dishonored Arthur!
Come out, thou traitor!

GUIN. Launcelot, save thyself, there is time yet.

LAUN. Nay, love, I'll end me here, if be my fate.
Ho! Cowards without! I am a single man,
Devoid of armor, having but my sword;
Yet will I open and give you hell's glad welcome.
[*Unbars the door*; SIR AGRAVAINE *rushes in*.
Die, hound!

[*Brains him*. LAUNCELOT *drags him aside and bars the door*.

Quick! Help me to this armor!

[*Takes the arms from* SIR AGRAVAINE'S *body and arms himself*.

GUIN. (*helping him*) Aye, love, if prayers are aught,
will mine clothe thee.

Voices outside. Open up, traitor, open up!

GUIN. Great God, Great God, help this poor Queen
who prays!
[LAUNCELOT *buckles his armor*.

LAUN. Now am I ready. Fare thee well, sweet love!
Whatever haps—and we may meet no more
This side of darkness—carry to thy grave,
That Launcelot loved thee, thee, and only thee.

GUIN. O Launcelot, my heart breaks!
[*They embrace. The Queen faints*.

LAUN. (*to the Maids*) Take her back from this,
protect her, keep her safe.
This work is not for her sweet presence. Now Heaven help
The man that meeteth Launcelot's blade this night!

Voices without. Coward! Traitor! wilt thou open up?

LAUN. Yea, traitors who forswore the name of knight,
When like some drunken rabble ye polluted
The gentle sacredness of these apartments!
And every man who shamed her ears to-night
(*throws open the doors*) Shall die! die! die! Come on,
ye fiends!
[*They rush in and then fall back in surprise*.
Ha! ha! here's wine that Launcelot's blade would drink!

[*Rushes forward, hacking fiercely with his sword; twelve knights fall one after the other.*

MOR. God of heaven, let us back! This man be mad!

[*Retreats with four knights*; LAUNCELOT *slays the rest*.

LAUN. Come on, ye fiends of hell! I'll back me here! Launcelot is indeed a man of honor!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 2.

PLACE—SIR LAUNCELOT'S *apartment*.

TIME—*Midnight*.

Enter several Knights with torches and swords.

SIR BAN. Hello there! wake up!

Knights. Hello! Within! Within!
[*Loud knocking heard at the doors*.

Enter several other Knights. *Enter* SIR LAUNCELOT.

LAUN. What means this, that ye be armed?

SIR BAN. Strange horrors woke us frozen from our beds. Hideous nightmares beset us. Some heard moanings, some that grave-bells rang, and others saw strange spectres, and I myself heard clash of mighty arms, and quick each man found himself leaped from his bed, naked blade in hand. What may it portend? We be much affrighted.

LAUN. 'Tis a true portent. Now the end hath come
Of peace and happiness for this doomèd kingdom.
To-night, on private meeting with the Queen,
In her apartments, there was I surrounded,
And, hounded traitor, slew so many knights,
There's scarce one left to tell the King the story.

Knights. A most foul and dastard attack! The kingdom is doomed!

Enter a Messenger.

LAUN. The Queen! quick! the Queen! what of her?

Mess. An order hath but come in the King's name: And she is to be burnt to-morrow noon.

LAUN. Never! by my blade, she shall not die!

Knights. She shall not! she shall not! on our lives!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*The King's lodge in the forest*.

ARTHUR *walks back and forth*.

AR. Would I had not done this! Heaven this hour
Be kind to this poor King, suspend thy wrath.
For my past frailties judge me not too heavy.
Oh, were it dawning! Nay, if it be shame,
Night roll forever round your shrouding glooms,
Hide Arthur's woe in your convenient black.
Rise not, O pitiless day, with searching white,
Showing abroad catastrophe and doom.
Hark! 'tis the messenger. Now, my royal soul,
Is it black or white, is it death or life to thee?

Enter Messenger.

Mess. Sire!

AR. Speak! Is it calamity?

Mess. Yea, sire, it is calamity; Sir Launcelot ta'en—

AR. In the Queen's chamber?

Mess. Yea, sire.

AR. Then, sable Night, shut out the morning now!
O Blackness, bury Arthur in thy shroud!
O Calamities, pelt, pelt your fire!
Sink now, proud Arthur, sink to rise no more!

Enter MORDRED *and two Knights*.

MOR. We bring you evil news in sorry haste.
Launcelot ta'en by us in the Queen's apartments,
When we, hailing him traitor, would bring him out,
Then he, mad with a devil, did issue forth
And slay the most of us, so that we are scarce fled with
our lives,
As these two knights do witness.

Knights. 'Tis true, King.

AR. Murder and Treason walk abroad this night.
Adultery and Incest leave their graves.
Arthur, Arthur, thou art a King no more!

MOR. We would arrest the Queen, did we know thy
will.

AR. O Night! Night! Night!

MOR. 'Tis not an hour for grief and memories, sire,
But action, instant action is the word,
If thou wouldst keep thy kingdom. Sir Launcelot knoweth
That thou wert privy to this heavy matter,
And, swearing direst vengeance on us all,
Buildeth a party for to help the Queen
And oust thee from thy royalty.

AR. Dost thou not know I loved this Launcelot?
And had I chosen a brother or a son,
It had been Launcelot! O thou cruel world!
Thou hast no cloud of evils brooding dire,
So much hath rained. Mordred, take my crown.
To illegitimacy pass my glory now.

MOR. Nay, sire, but be a King until thou takest
A King's dread vengeance on thine enemies.

AR. Enemies, thou sayest! Who so low
To stoop to hate this cuckold, shamèd King?
I am a King no more, my Table Round
Is but a stall-yard where the swine of men
Will rend and snarl and tear my glory down.

Enter GWAINE.

GWA. This is a bad and foolish matter, King,
And thou wert fool to fetch it to an issue.
But now thou makest bad worse. Didst thou send out
For Launcelot's arrest and the Queen's murder?

MOR. The order hath gone out in the King's name.
'Tis gone too far for compromises now.

GWA. 'Tis thou hast done all this, thou plotter!

MOR. Thou liest! 'Tis but the natural end of circumstance
that worked its issue. I tell thee, the King ordered this.

GWA. King, didst thou give these orders?

AR. Gwaine, thy words were ever over-blunt,
But now they're fitting. None need show me reverence.

GWA. I know not reverence, but I would of facts.
Didst thou proclaim that Guinevere should die,
Being found of treason foul against thy person,
And doom her to the stake to-morrow noon?

AR. The Queen! the Queen! thou sayest? I'll have
no queens!
If there be a Queen to-morrow in this land,
She shall die the death! 'Tis the King's word!

MOR. Now thou hast thine answer.

GWA. Then fear Sir Launcelot's hate and split this
kingdom,
Topple yonder King and bring him down,
As thou wouldst love to. Gwaine will none o' this.
The Pope shall hear it! What's a woman worth
That, truth or untruth, she should wreck a kingdom?

Enter a Messenger in haste.

MOR. Speak!

Mess. Sir Launcelot and many knights have rescued the Queen and have taken her to Joyeous Guarde, and in the quick struggle Sir Gareth and Sir Lynnette were slain.

AR. More woes! More woes! Where will this end?

MOR. (*to* SIR GWAINE) Now art thou satisfied?

GWA. (*to Messenger*) What! Thou liest! tell me my brothers be slain?

Mess. 'Tis true, master, mine own eyes saw them dead.

GWA. Hell! who did the deed?

Mess. Sir Launcelot himself. He rode quick i' the Court, and lighted and hacked without looking at whom he met, to reach the Queen, whom bearing to horse, he stayed not to see who were dead or wounded, but straight rode away.

GWA. This world or the next, he will answer me!
Mine own two brothers, and all for a damned wench!
Queen or no, King, thou shalt answer here.
Yea, all shall answer for this fatal business.

MOR. Yea, I will help thee. 'Twas most unnatural,
Who never harmed him, he should serve them so.

GWA. Launcelot, Launcelot, now I cast thee out!
One world won't hold us!

MOR. This works my way. O world, thou art moulding swift
To my poor vengeance!
(*to* ARTHUR) Sire, what wilt thou do?

AR. To arms, to arms! we'll siege him in his hold.
'Tis death that cures dishonor. He will reap
The swift, dread harvest of Heaven's retribution.

GWA. Would Launcelot were but two men, I'd slay him twice
'Twould suit my feelings.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 4.

(*Rise outer curtain.*) *Court at Camelot.*

Enter two Gentlemen.

1st Gent. Were I the weaker kind, I'd trickle tears
For this poor kingdom. Hast thou seen the Pope's bull?

2nd Gent. Yea, forbidding the carrying on of this strange war,
And commanding Arthur to take back his Queen,
And give Sir Launcelot passage from the Kingdom.
He be a wondrous knight, this Launcelot.
'Tis pity this love o'ercame him.

[*Both pass out.*

Enter VIVIEN *and* MORDRED.

VIV. My heart grows hot to bring things to an issue.

MOR. Patience! and thou wilt see the issue come.
Launcelot banished, Arthur follows after,
With blustering Gwaine, both ravening for war.
Arthur will leave me regent, then's mine hour.

[*Both pass on.*

(*Rise inner curtain.*) *Enter* ARTHUR, *takes his state. Knights and Ladies. Trumpets blow without. Enter* LAUNCELOT *with the Queen, draped in black, with her Ladies.* LAUNCELOT *leads the Queen, who stands.* LAUNCELOT *kneels.* ARTHUR *averts his face.* LAUNCELOT *speaks.*

LAUN. Sire, by order of the Pope of Rome,
And your most royal promise, here I bring
Unto your keeping Guinevere the Queen,
And dares one knight within these royal precincts
Impugn her chastity or queenliness,
I meet him with my body.

AR. Madam, I acknowledge you as Queen.
It is the will of Heaven. I submit.
But loving wife thou art no more to me.
Not Pope nor Prince can white thy black in this.

[GUINEVERE *takes her state.*

GUIN. Arthur of Britain, I answer thee, the King,
I am no more thy wife, nor ever was,
Nor am I shamed as Queen to own the love
I've borne for Launcelot. In the coming world
He will be mine, as I am truly his.
I wronged thee not, great Arthur, but 'twas thou
And hellish circumstance have wrecked my days.
'Tis the Queen's answer, she will speak no more.

AR. Sir Launcelot Du Lake, arise!

[LAUNCELOT *stands*.

Launcelot Du Lake, thou traitor knight,
Sinner against the honor of this realm,
I banish thee forever from this kingdom,
On pain of foulest death, dost thou return.

LAUN. Sire, I accept the issue.

MOR. 'Tis but a gentle majesty that leans
To mercy such as this. Were I thy King—

GWA. Yea, get thee quick. Fast as thou nearest
France,
We sail the faster. Thou shalt meet with Gwaine,
And pay his brothers' spirits thou hast slain,
Thou foul, lewd traitor!

LAUN. Lord Arthur, thou hast reason to scorn me now,
And all thine anger stabs mine inward soul;
But now 'tis open I must tell thee true,
I love Queen Guinevere as mine own body,
And her alone will love unto my death,
As to none other. For this woeful love,
I'll answer to my God who put it there,
And not to man, nor even to thee, proud King.
And yet I say it, yea, with breaking heart,
I love thee King, as doth no other man;
And did no hideous fate come in between
I had been thy Launcelot still.

AR. (*aside*) Great God! Now my heart breaketh.
(*to* LAUNCELOT) Begone, false knight. 'Tis enough.

LAUN. Yea, yet a little, sire, it is the end.
If Gwaine would hearken, I would answer him

For his two brothers.

GWA. Nay, nay, I'll not hearken.

LAUN. 'Tis ended, then, but I would say to thee,
That nothing, next to this most heavy matter,
The most dread, sorrowful matter in this poor world,
Hath grieved me so as that I did that deed.
All blinded with my sorrow for the Queen,
I knew not 'twas your brothers that I slew.

GWA. Nay, nay, blood, blood alone will answer.

LAUN. (*to the Queen*) And thou, sad Guinevere, thou
queen of women,
Sweetest of soul and form upon this earth,
I'll look upon thy beauteous face no more.
Let womanhood blossom in the days to come,
There nevermore will be one like to thee.

[*Bends and kisses her hand*. GUINEVERE *goes toward him*.

GUIN. Launcelot, take me with thee; I am thine!

AR. And thou, the Queen?

GUIN. I am no Queen of realm save this man's heart.
And where he treads, that land to me alone
Beloved of the kingdoms of this earth.
Oh, take me, Launcelot, my lord, my king!

AR. Ladies, the Queen to her apartments!

LAUN. I would not shame thy kindness, Guinevere.
We were each other's ere this world began,
And we together, unshamed yet shall go
To meet our God. Sweet love, farewell, farewell.

[*Hurries out. The Queen borne slowly to her apartments, weeping*.

AR. O black, brute Evil, why was Arthur born?
Now is all loveliness gone out from life.
Yea, I will sink. Nay, I am Arthur still.
The Kingly still, defying Hell and Fate.
To arms! to arms! Red battle is my mood!

MOR. Yea, battle!

GWA. Yea, blood for blood! my brothers' spirits call.

AR. My heart awakens! Mordred, as my regent,
I leave thee filial keeper of my crown,
My queen and kingdom, while I wed with war,
And bring as issue yon foul Launcelot's doom.
Make my forces ready. France! is the word.

All. (*drawing swords and shouting*) Yea, battle!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 5.

PLACE—*A corridor in the palace*.

Enter two Gentlemen.

1st Gent. Hast heard the news? Mordred's usurped the kingdom, hath seized the Queen, and, backed by half the realm, doth challenge Arthur to a warm home-coming. 'Tis said he hath plotted this long time, and now hath proved his chances. How stand you in this most bitter struggle?

2nd Gent. I'm for Arthur, and now for Dover and France this coming night.

1st Gent. Then I am with you. May we bring these shores
New peace from this usurper when we come!

[*Exeunt both*.

Enter VIVIEN *with a dagger*.

VIV. Nay, he shall never make her Queen. Nay, never!
She shall die first! No Queen but Vivien
Shall royal it while Mordred lifts the crown.
His slave, his creature, yea, in all save this.
I'll make her beauty wan, I'll curtain her lights.
Yea, she shall queen in Tartarus this night.

[*Sounds heard without*. VIVIEN *gets behind the tapestry*.

Enter MORDRED *as King*.

MOR. Now have I reached the pinnacle of my revenge
In these uncertain heights of Arthur's glory.
And even now I sicken of the struggle;
Even now I top a tower of fear.
A thousand swords, would leap at my command,
And swim this land in blood at my one word,
Would at a stronger power but turn and rend me.
The thousand throats that this morn shouted "Mordred!"
To-morrow morn may shout as loud for Arthur.
'Tis but a petty thing to be a King,
And strut an hour to crown a people's will
And make them think they wield a majesty,
And hold a phantom rule; then pass and be
A little dust in a forgotten heap.
Nay, 'tis not worth the blacking of a soul,
The letting of a single human life,
The fouling o'er of youthful memory.
And I am now this self-contemnèd thing,
A man of truest sorrows who descended
From out the pedestal of nobler dreams,
And used the subtle intrigues of this world
To climb this pyramid of human weakness.
And now I hate it as I hate myself
Who stooped to gain it. Yet must Mordred king
This realm with a tyranny that fear
Wields o'er a monarchy that knows not love,
And burn his heart out for a woman's scorn.
Yea, she shall be my Queen if love can win her.

Enter GUINEVERE *as a State Prisoner*.

MOR. Madam, I would detain you.

GUIN. Usurper! why this bringing of me here?
I deemed the shelter of a sisterhood
Were not denied me.

MOR. Madam, I would to you unfold this matter.

I am not all you think me in your scorn.
Though I be born misshapen, yet my soul
Hath appetite for beauty like a man's
That shows the inward in the outward mien.
Madam, I would lay the matter plainly:
I have long been a victim to thy beauties,
And would new-make thee Queen of this old kingdom.

GUIN. Never! Were Launcelot or Arthur standing by,
Insulter of thy Queen, thou quick wouldst die.
Make way! Make way!

MOR. Madam, have compassion on my weakness!
A soul is lodged within this crooked body.
No man hath ever loved as Mordred loves.

GUIN. Make way! this be hideous!

MOR. Let your sorrow plead for Mordred's sorrow.
As thou hast loved Launcelot unhappy,
So he loves thee.

GUIN. Show it by closing quick this audience.
I am all Launcelot's, this world and the next,
As Heaven knoweth.

MOR. Then thou wilt not have compassion?

GUIN. I pity thee, but this may never be.

MOR. Never?

GUIN. As I am a Queen, never!

MOR. Lady, thy pity doth but little help me.
Yet will I show thee Mordred hath a heart.
Know thou hast killed the spark of Mordred's hope,
And silenced the music of this world for him;
Yet, lady, as rightful King of this great land,
He grants thee safest passage where thou wilt.

GUIN. I would go to a nunnery.

MOR. As thou wilt. Not one word? Not one token?

GUIN. Prince, thou hast my respect and gratitude
For this thine act.

[*Exeunt* GUINEVERE *and her train*.

VIVIEN *comes forward.*

VIV. Ha, ha, ha! King Mordred!

MOR. (*springs forward and draws*) Fiend! thou diest! (*He clutches her, they stand confronting each other*) Nay, nay, and thou didst hear all? Nay, I will not kill thee. Thy punishment hath been more than I could mete thee. I see sharp agony in thine evil face. Yea, woman, thou hast suffered.

VIV. O God! My love! My love!

[*Would stab herself.*

MOR. Nay, die not! (*throws the dagger away*) Thou deservest thy reward. Mordred will crown this farce and make thee Queen.

VIV. Me! thy wife?

MOR. Nay, nay, nor mistress even; only Queen.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 6.

PLACE—*France. A tent on the field near* LAUNCELOT'S *castle.*

ARTHUR *paces to and fro.*

AR. I would I were on British soil again!
This leaguer goes but feebly. I am sick
Of losing battles to this Launcelot,
Whose strength and prowess in far kinder days
Were my heart's pride. Arthur, thy star grows dark.
Thou canst not keep the love of woman. Nay,
Men's friendships turn to traitor on the lips.
O Merlin, couldst thou now but see thine Arthur!

Enter Messenger.

AR. Well?

Mess. Sir Launcelot met Sir Gwaine beneath the wall,
And of all the bloody fights betwixt them two,
Which have enhorrored this ensanguined war,
This was the bloodiest.

AR. Speak on!

Mess. Sir Gwaine be mortal wounded, so it seemeth.

AR. Nay!

Mess. He even fought on after he was down,
Till his blade fell from out his palsied hand.

AR. This time maketh thrice that he hath been defeated,
And surely this will cool his fiery blood.
He is the strongest hater I have known
In all my royalty. He would as lief go
To hell, so that his foe might forfeit heaven.

Enter GWAINE, *born by Squires and Attendants*.

GWA. Let me forth—forth, I say! Hell! caitiffs, I be
better now.
I would at him! Oh!

Attendants. Sire, if he rest not he will die.
The blood runneth from him in streams
So we cannot quench it, do he not lie still.

GWA. King, I be a shamed man. Damn this world!
I will shut it out o' my knowledge. I be in pieces.

AR. Thou hast had enough, temper thy hates.
And do thy brothers more they lodge in hell.
I am for England.

GWA. Nay, King, let me but once more.

AR. Thou canst scarce utter, thou wilt die.

GWA. Nay, I will stand his front so long as I may hold a blade, and shake it at him!

Enter a Messenger in great haste.

AR. Whence come you?

Mess. From England. Mordred hath made him King.

Ar. Nay! nay!

Mess. 'Tis true, and seized the Queen.

Ar. Great Heaven!

Mess. Even now he sitteth robed in thy late state,
And wieldeth puissance.

Gwa. The damned hunchback!

Ar. O world! would I were gone! My Queen untrue,
My heart's best brother traitor, even my son,
Mine ill-got son doth rend me. Who would now
Hold fate with sunken Arthur?
(*to the Messenger*) Be there more?

Mess. Nay, sire, I came in haste at the first news,
Though it is said that he would wed the Queen!

Ar. A thousand devils take him!—Nay, not that,
Not that most foul completion!
Ho! Sir Hake, Sir Mark! Ho, knights without!

Enter Knights.

Ar. Mordred's usurped the kingdom. We must haste to England now. The siege is raised. Yea, I will blot him out or make an end righting mine old glory.

Gwa. (*borne out*) Now are my chances gone. Gwaine is disgraced. This is a world of woe. I'll fight no more. But one more bout, and my sword might ha' done it.

Curtain.

ACT V. Scene 1.

(*Rise outer curtain*.)

Enter two Soldiers.

1st Sol. Ho, without there!

2nd Sol. What news?

1st Sol. Arthur is back for England with all his forces, and the King hath sent an army to withstand his landing, and himself leaveth to-night to follow them.

2nd Sol. He be a rare King, this hunchback. He hath a marvellous power. His knights be feared of him, but 'tis said he's just.

1st Sol. He be not lawful got, 'tis said, but none can say his rule be foul.

2nd Sol. 'Tis said that the new Queen be a witch an' hath holpen him wi' her deviltries.

1st Sol. God save us if it be true! Yet it is safe to say: God save the King an' Queen. 'Tis better to cry a witch Queen than to be split i' the gullet.

2nd Sol. Yea, wi' plenty ale i' the pewter and meat o' the spit, no matter who queens or kings it, so says I. I'm for Mordred an' the witch.

1st Sol. So be I till the next change comes.

[*Exeunt both.*

(*Rise inner curtain.*) *Enter* VIVIEN *as Queen, with many Ladies and Pages; takes her state. Enter a Knight, who kneels.*

VIV. What news from France, Sir Bors?

Knight. Arthur cometh back, my lady.

VIV. Nay!

Knight. Yea, my lady, the army be embarked.

VIV. Oh, short and bitter!

Enter MORDRED.

MOR. Well, madam!

VIV. (*to the Ladies*) Begone!

[*Exeunt all.*

(*to* MORDRED) Hast thou heard the news?

MOR. 'Tis as I have long expected. He now cometh

back.

VIV. Art thou prepared?

MOR. Yea, if 'tis death thou meanest.
And 'twere better so. Thou art a Queen already!
I had not thought thou wouldst so look the Queen.

VIV. Mordred, would that thou mightst also see
I wear a heart, a woman's heart, beneath
This queenly mask!

MOR. A heart?

VIV. That beats and breaks for thee!

MOR. I'm not myself, I am a hunchback king
Who stole his father's rule by subtlety,
And keepeth it by power of being a devil.
I know not love. Woman, thou art mad!
Art thou not satisfied with what thou art?
I made thee all that woman's heart might crave.
Revenge, ambition, these all can I grant,
But love, a commodity not in Mordred's giving.
Use this thy power to surfeit while it lasts;
To-morrow it will topple. I'm o'er-weary
Of all this sycophancy of creeping men,
Who fear my power and sneer upon my back;
A pageantry of lies where human worms,
Who crawl to-day, to-morrow get a sting
And use it on the hand that 'friended them.
I cannot mould the face to popular form,
And hide the thought behind the outward act,
And make good ill, ill good, by royal patent.
Nay, I can scorn, and I can hate,—yea, strike,
When rules the mood, yea, I'm a very devil;
But cheat myself and others to what I am,
And be a popular dream, a fancied god,
The victim of a world's delusiveness,
What manner I am, I were not made for this.
Yea, coming struggle, I meet thee with a joy,
'Twere scarce expected. Madam, I bid farewell.
We worked this masque together, thou and I,
And if it like thee little, blame not Mordred.

I go to-night to meet my sire in battle.
Such fight will be this kingdom hath not known
In all its sorrows. Britain's darkest hours
Are blacking on her, I feel I go to death.
I leave some knights to guard thee. If thou desirest,
Thou canst withdraw unto some convent close
Till this blows over.

VIV. Nay, Vivien flees not. She dies first. Woman
or Queen,
She will be found where dangers threaten thee
And menace thy kingliness. O Mordred,
Thou knowest not the woman that I am.
Take me with thee as thy heart's true slave.
Where thou diest, there would Vivien die,
Or where thou goest, there would she wander, too.

MOR. Nay, nay, 'tis vain, I am a man apart.
Thou knowest not the iron I am become.
Mordred needs no shield of kindly help
Other than what unkind nature gave him.
Woman, thou dost unqueen thyself, I tell thee.
Thou wastest thy words on Mordred.

VIV. O brute, O cruel shape, not natural man,
Hast thou no feeling?

MOR. I go forth to-night
To wreck my father, stem his tide this way
Unto his rightful kingdom. Speak me love!
Rather tell the lamb skipping the mead
Go ask the wolf for suckle.

VIV. Nay, Mordred, slay me now, and thou wilt know
Vivien had blood full warm to flow for thee.

MOR. Woman, I'm all iron and adamant,
And yet I pity thee, for thou hast hell.
I would not slay thee—rather fare thee well.

[*Exit* MORDRED.

VIV. O God! Mordred! Mordred! Is this all?
And I have moulded him unto this iron
I beat against. It is my punishment!
O God! O God! Nay, I will go with him,

And die with him if need be. Now, my wits!
But how? How? How?

Enter a Page.

Page. Madam, the King?

VIV. He hath just left.—Stay, dost thou go with him?

Page. Yea, madam.

VIV. Dost see this jewel?

Page. Yea, madam, it be wondrous indeed.

VIV. It will be thine—wilt thou stay,
And let another go in thy stead.

Page. The King trusteth me.

VIV. 'Tis the will of one who loveth the King far more than ever thou couldst. 'Tis my will. Thou must stay. Quick, this way!

[*Exeunt both.*

Re-enter MORDRED *with his Knights.*

[*Trumpets without.*

MOR. Make haste! Make haste! Where tarrieth this squire of mine? We must ride to Dover ere it darkens.

A Knight. He cometh now, sire.

Enter VIVIEN, *disguised as a Squire.*

MOR. Dost thou keep thy King? Thou wert long in coming.

VIV. I came with all speed, sire.

MOR. Thou seemest over pink and white for this work. Canst thou fight?

VIV. Yea, sire, I can use a dagger.

MOR. Then follow.—Ho, there without! Now for Mordred's doom!

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT V. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*The Kentish coast.*

Landing of ARTHUR'S *troops opposed by* MORDRED. *Battle going on in the distance. Enter* GWAINE, *borne ashore on a litter. Battle comes near.*

A Soldier. They come this way. Here will we stand and guard thee.

[*They put down the litter.*

GWA. How goes the fight?

A Squire. Desperate hard. The enemy be strong,
As if half England would shove the other i' the sea.

GWA. Give me my sword and help me up; I'll fight.

A Leech. Sir knight, if you rise up it is your death.

GWA. Damn thee, to lie here helpless is to die,
With those fierce sounds of battle in mine ears.
Quick! my sword! mine old strength cometh back.

[*A Squire hands him his sword; he leaps to his feet. The battle comes near, and they are all borne out fighting. Re-enter* GWAINE, *borne by Soldiers and the Leech.*

Leech. I told thee thou wouldst die.

GWA. And so wilt thou some day, and, like a milksop, i' thy bed.
'Twas a poor prophecy, though a sure one. It is naught.
Turn me over. Yea, I wedged some skulls, and clipped
Damned Mordred's wings o' some pen-feathers.

Enter ARTHUR.

AR. So far the battle's ours. This edge, at least,
Of Britain's soil doth Arthur own to-night.
What be this?

GWA. 'Tis Gwaine, King, brought to bay at last.

AR. Thou wert mad to fight.

GWA. 'Twas madness not to fight with all that battle
Ringing its clarion thunders in mine ears.
All life be madness, and death but the healing of it.
I have reft some brain-pans i' my time, ha, ha!
Tell traitor Launcelot—Yea, turn me softly;
'Twas a deft hand did give me that last stroke.

Leech. What be thy message, knight? thy time groweth short.

GWA. Yea, take away—tell Launcelot Gwaine's vengeance waits him i' the nether black.

[*Dies*.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT V. SCENE 3.

Night on the battlefield. The royal tent, ARTHUR'S *camp*.

AR. Ho! there without! (*Enter a Page*) Send me Sir Bedivere.

[*Exit Page*.

Enter SIR BEDIVERE.

AR. Is all safe i' the camp?

SIR B. Yea, sire, the sentries are set and watch-fires ablaze. And all ready for battle i' the first dawn.

AR. What of the enemy?

SIR B. They be the same, sire; all seemeth quiet i' the camp.

AR. Remember all watchfulness, so there be no surprise. Thou canst go, Bedivere; I would fain sleep.

SIR B. Yea, I go, sire, and God keep thee this night.

AR. Stay, knight; Arthur of England is a lonely man,

Betrayed of those who should have loved him best.
To-night perchance he fronts the brink of death,
In bloody battle for his rightful kingdom.
Take this ring, knight, in memory of thy King,
(*gives him a ring*) Survive he not the morrow.

SIR B. God keep thee, sire.

[*Exit* SIR BEDIVERE.

AR. Now what will morrow's dawn-rise bring to Arthur?
Will it bring bloody victory or defeat?
How like an autumn wood is stript my glory,
Who short since was sole monarch of this realm.
O evil Spite, that ruleth this sad world!
Come, joy, come hope, there's nothing sure but death.
Yea, I will sleep and muffle out my sorrows.
A little while.

[*Goes toward the couch.*

Nay, Arthur will not pillow till he beds with death,
Or doth regain his kingdom. I will rest me here.

[*Seats himself on a chair and wraps his cloak about him.*

Now for oblivion's peace!
O stricken King, thou art the loneliest to-night
In any realm.

[*Leans forward; falls asleep. A Page steals in.*

Page. He sleeps.

[*Exit Page.*

AR. (*starts and mutters*) Launcelot! Launcelot! My friend! my friend! Guinevere! Ah! Guinevere!

Ghost of MERLIN *rises.*

Ghost. Arthur of England!

AR. (*in his sleep*) Merlin! Ah! Merlin!

Ghost. I come to tell thy doom. To-morrow, Arthur! to-morrow!

AR. Away, spirit! Affright me not. Away! Away!

[*Ghost vanishes.* ARTHUR *starts up.*

Ah, did I dream of Merlin? 'Twas but fancy.
O Mage, to-night thy portents wander back
Unto my mind. Oh, couldst thou see thine Arthur!
To-morrow, said the voice within my dream.
To-morrow! Yea, to-morrow!

[*Sits down again and folds his cloak. Sleeps. Mutters*, "Mordred! my son Mordred!"

Ghost of GWAINE *rises*.

Ghost. King!

AR. Ah! 'Tis thou! Away! Away!

Ghost. King, fight not to-morrow.

AR. (*in his sleep*) Nay, I will!

Ghost. King, fight not to-morrow.

[*Ghost vanishes*; ARTHUR *wakes*.

AR. Yea, sleep is but the borderland o' death.
'Tis twice! 'Tis twice! It is a certain portent.
Yea, Arthur fights, though Arthur dies, to-morrow.
Yea, now I'll sleep, for I am over-weary.
Weary of life, yea, I am over-tired.
I would fain sleep, though night should have no morning.
This night is sweet. To-morrow cometh doom,
This hour for soft oblivion.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT V. SCENE 4.

PLACE—*Near the battlefield*.

Enter two Knights.

1st Knight. This day is Britain doomed and Arthur's Court
Rent and dismembered by old grisled war.

2nd Knight. Meseems the kingdom's severed like two tides
That meet together in some mountain course
To whelm other. Arthur's star grows dark,
And Mordred's darker. 'Tis the Queen, they say,
Hath cursed the realm with her godless loves.

Enter two other Knights, fighting on foot.

One. A Mordred! Ho! A Mordred!

The Other. An Arthur! An Arthur! Have at you!
[*They close and each stabs the other. Both die.*

1st Knight. Thus is the kingdom rent like doomsday's crack.
Such awful portents have been told abroad
Since yesternight. Some say the world hath end.

2nd Knight. And what be they?

1st Knight. The crucifixes on the churches' walls
Have trickled blood, and many abbey-bells
Have tolled the midnight, rung by no man's hand.
Yea, even the dead have risen from their graves.

2nd Knight. Ora pro nobis!

1st Knight. Some even say that Merlin hath come back
And prophesied the kingdom at an end,
And all last night I dreamed such fearsome dreams
Of blight and pestilence and spectres dire;
I fear me much the end of days hath come.

2nd Knight. How goes the fight?

1st Knight. Yea, even fiercer, as two tidal waves
That roar together on some mighty bore,
And meet in thunders. Never hath such war
Been known in Britain since the ancient days.
The bowmen's arrows darken all the sun,
The battle-axes clamor on the shields,
As on some morn the loud woodcutter's din
By some bright hillside. Knight encounters knight
In serried thunders. All the kingdom's turned

To one mad tournament of blood and flame.

[*The battle is heard moving nearer. Both rush out.*

Another part of the field. Enter ARTHUR, *surrounded by his Knights.*

AR. Now where is he, that monster foul, deformed,
In shape and spirit, Nature calls my son?

Enter MORDRED.

MOR. Here!

AR. Ah, Blot on all this sunlight, Creature dire,
Spawn of mine incest. There standest thou, my sin,
Incarnate now before me; mine old doom;
Thou that wast stronger in thine influences
To work dread evil in this hideous world
Than all the glory all my good might win.

MOR. Father!

AR. Yea, well say Father! Parent I this ill
That hath enrent my kingdom all in twain.
In that dread night of my licentious youth,
When I in darkness thy foul shape begot,
I worked a web of blackness round my fate
And thine, distorted phantom of my sin,
Not all the tolling of sweet abbey-bells
And murmur of masses sung this thousand years
Can sweep from this doomed kingdom. Father! Yea,
There is no truce betwixt us. Thou art Death
To all that I hold dearest on this earth.
Thou stood'st betwixt me and my gladder fate,
The one black spot on all my glory's sun.
In thee once more mine evil blackens in,
Reddens mine eyesight! Have at thee, foul Curse!

MOR. Father!

AR. Have at you!

[*They fight.* ARTHUR *wounds* MORDRED. *He falls. A Knight stabs Arthur from behind.*

AR. Ho! all the sunlight blackens! Mordred! Oh!
My glory darkens! Curtain not yon sun!

[*Dies.*

MOR. Yea, this is all, and I were made for this,
To scatter death and desolation round
On this fair kingdom, ruin this sweet land,
And level all the pride of Arthur's glory,
As men might level some great castle walls;
And sow with salt the fields of his desire,
And make him mock before the eyes of men.
Turn all his great joy into bitterness.
Yea, I his blood, and I were made for this.
O ancient, cruel Laws of human life,
O deep, mysterious, unfathomable Source
Of man's poor being; we are ringed about
With such hard rinds of hellish circumstance
That we can never walk or breathe or hope,
Or eye the sun, or ponder on the green
Of tented plain, or glorious blue of heaven,
Or know love's joy, or knotted thews of strength,
But imps of evil thoughts creep in between,
Like lizards in the chinks of some fair wall,
And mar life's splendor and its fairness all.
'Tis some damned birth-doom blended in the blood
That prophesies our end in our poor acts.
Oh! we are but blind children of the dark,
Wending a way we neither make nor ken.
Yea, Arthur, I had loved thee sweet and well,
And made mine arm a bulwark to thy realm,
Had I been but as fair as Launcelot.
What evil germ, false quickening of the blood,
Did breed me foul, distorted as I am,
That I should mar this earth and thy great realm
With my wry, knotted sorrows? Launcelot's love
Was manly, kind and generous, as became
A soul encased in such propitious frame.
The kingly trees well turn them to the sun,
And glory in their splendor with the morn.
'Tis natural that noble souls should dwell
'Twixt noble features, but the maimèd soul

Should ever be found in the distorted shape.
But I had loved as never man hath loved
Did nature only plant me sweet at first.
(*to his Knights*) And now I die, and blessed be my death,
More blessed far that I had never breathed.
Murder and Treason were my midwives dire,
Rapine and Carnage, priests that shrive me now.

Enter VIVIEN, *disguised as a Squire*.

VIV. Mordred! thou diest!

MOR. Who art thou?

VIV. I am Vivien.

MOR. Hence, hence, viper! thou incarnate fiend!
Not natural woman, but Ambition framed,
And all lust's envy. Thou wert unto me
A blacker blackness. Did an angel come,
And whisper sweeter counsel in mine ears,
And trumpet hopes that all were not in vain,
But thou wouldst wool mine ears with malice dire,
And play upon the black chords of my heart.
Hence, devil! hence! Mar not my closing hours.

VIV. Oh, woe! woe!

[*Steals out*.

MOR. (*to the Knights*) Now bear me slowly to great
Arthur's side
And let me place my hands upon his breast,
For he was mine own father! Alas! Alas!
So hideous is this nature we endure.

[*The Soldiers place him by* ARTHUR.

How calm he sleeps, Allencthon, as those should
Who die in glorious battle. Dost thou know,
O mighty father, that thine ill-got son,
Ill-got of nature and mysterious night,
To mar thy splendor and enwreck this world,
Now crawls to thy dead body near his death,
As would some wounded dog of faithful days
To lick his master's hand? Blame not, O King,
If thou somewhere may know what I here feel,

Thy poor, misshapen Mordred. Blame him not,
The turbulent, treacherous currents of his blood
Which were a part of thine, nor let one thought
Of his past evil mar thy mighty rest;
He would have loved thee, but remember that.
Now, past is all this splendor, new worlds come,
But nevermore will Britain know such grace,
Such lofty glory and such splendid days.
Back of the clang of battle, back of all
The mists of life, the clamor and the fall
Of ruined kingdoms built on human days,
Arthur! Merlin! Mighty dead, I come!

[*Springs to his feet.*

Ho! Horse! To horse! My sword! A trumpet calls!
A Mordred!

[*Dies.*

CURTAIN.

DAULAC

An Historical Tragedy of French Canada in Five Acts.

PREFACE.

THE personality and achievement of Daulac des Ormeaux make him the most chivalrous figure in Canadian history. There is a quieter and more insistent heroism in the lives and deaths of such men as Brébœuf and La Salle. But the "forlorn hope" of the little band of the Long Sault has no parallel in our New-World annals.

This play, also, endeavors to depict the ultimate triumph of the fate of an unsuspecting innocence over the wiles and plots of a clever and scheming malice, and to show that the final heroic deed was but the natural outcome of an unusually noble nature in the personality of Daulac.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DAULAC, *the Hero of the Long Sault*.
DESJARDINS, *a scheming notary*.
THE SIEUR D'ELENE, *uncle to Daulac*.
MAISONNEUVE, *Governor of Montreal*.
FILLET, *a French innkeeper*.
A King's Officer.
PORNAC, *servant to Daulac*.
PIOTR, *servant to Desjardins*.
Seventeen Young Men of Montreal.
HELÈNE, *niece to D'Elene*.
FANCHON, *her maid*.
A Mother Superior.
Nuns, women and girls.
Men, old and young; priests, soldiers, Indians and servants.

DAULAC.

———

ACT I. SCENE 1.

PLACE—*A chateau in France.*

TIME—*Night in Autumn. The wind howls loud out of doors and rain beats at window, right.*

SCENE—*A room in the chateau, showing a curtained entrance to bedroom at middle back, in the apartments of the* SIEUR D'ELENE. *Furniture quaint and old, with rich decorations; doors to left and right, chairs and sofa.*

Enter, from middle back, the SIEUR D'ELENE, *a feeble old gentleman, wearing a rich dressing-gown and walking slowly with a cane. He is slight and stooped. He hobbles to a window and looks out.*

D'EL. This night is like my spirit, filled with age
And haunting voices calling from the past.
All the world is bleak with age and woe,
And I am feeble, like a candle lowered
Into its socket. Only regret and longing,
Only regret and longing dwell with me,
Dwell with me.

[*Drops into chair.*

Enter, at left, HELÈNE, *his niece, a beautiful young girl. She comes in quietly and looks at him.*

HEL. Poor uncle! (clasps her hands) Poor uncle!
Of late he broods alone in solitude,

And seems to avoid me. Some haunting, saddening thought
Weighs down his spirit.
[*Goes forward and places her hand on his shoulder.*
Uncle, do you know me? your Helène!

D'EL. (*shakes his head*) Nay, nothing, now, save winter,
age and death.
[*She goes round and sits at his feet on a stool.*

HEL. Uncle, uncle, I am your own Helène.

D'EL. (*strokes her hair feebly*) Yes, yes, my child,
your hair is like the raven's,
But mine is bleached like winter's wasted snows.
You are all I have left, all I have left.

HEL. Uncle, I love you, you know I love you well.
Would comfort your age; let me share your sorrow.

D'EL. Look up, my child; your face to-night brings
back
That sweet look which filled your angel mother's,
My dead child-sister. I never loved another.
She used to sit as you sit by me now,
But she is gone. Soon I will follow, too.

HEL. O uncle, put this gloomy spirit by.
It wrings my heart to know you suffer pain.
Smile on your Helène, tell her you are happy,
[*Rises and puts her arm around his neck.*
And she will laugh and then be happy, too.
[*Sits again and takes his hand in both of hers.*

D'EL. Sorrow, child, Sorrow is Age's sister.
The autumn bleak that beats at yonder pane
Is fit alone to echo back my heart.
Speak not to me of gladness. Close around
Stand all the ghosts of this grim, ancient house
To tell me it is ended. Never child of mine
Will laugh athwart its rooftree. Nevermore
Henceforth devote alone to gloom and woe.
Happiness and smiling greet these walls.

HEL. O uncle, uncle, you were not always thus.
And in this atmosphere of sombre gloom

I, too, grow old and sad. Oh, why not send,
Oh, why not send for Daulac?

D'EL. (*trying to rise, in great agitation*) Daulac!
Daulac! Speak no more of Daulac!

HEL. (*frightened*) O uncle, uncle, what has Daulac
done?

D'EL. He is the root of all my heart's disease,
The bitter cause of all my spirit's winter.
Ingrate and viper, warmed at this old heart!

HEL. Uncle!

D'EL. Nay, girl, speak not his name, if you would keep
The only love that holds me to the living.

HEL. What mean you by these dread and awful words?
Daulac! What has Daulac done? Your words
Fill me with fear and anguish.

D'EL. (*gazing at her sadly*) So, girl, you love this
Daulac?

HEL. He is my cousin, we have lived together
As girl and boy. He is all nobleness—
Believe me, uncle—he is all nobleness,
So much that woman would desire in man,
So much, so much, I cannot help but love him.
[*Hides face and sobs.*

D'EL. Yea, curse him, curse him. Every word you
speak
Makes him the graver sinner in my sight.
(*aside*) I cannot reveal all to so pure a soul.
This sweet girl-nature, like a limpid brook,
This trusting spirit he has played with. No,
He is no heir of mine. I cut him off.
I will not weaken. This poor girl's confession
But binds my will the firmer. Helène!

HEL. (*looking up*) Yes, uncle!

D'EL. Desjardins comes to-night; some business,
Some special business. I would be alone.
I'll need two witnesses, so leave you two

Servants within hearing should I ring.
Now say good night, my child.

HEL. O uncle, I dread to leave you in this mood.
Heaven keep you, my more than father, yet
Forgive me if I say it once again,
Be kind to Daulac.

[*Tries to put her arms about him.*

D'EL. Child, I love you, but you go too far.
Nay, nay, not Daulac. I cannot tell you all.
I have resolved. Kiss me, my child. Good night, good night.

HEL. (*aside, going out*) O Heaven, be with us. I am sore afraid
Some terrible business fatal unto Daulac
Doth happen here to-night.

[*Exit.*

D'EL. (*rises*) Ha, I am old, my fingers are but bones,
My legs but tottering crutches, and my soul
But shrunken, wasted water. But my will
Is firm, is firm! This ingrate Daulac, yea,
I'll disinherit, disinherit him.
The girl shall have it all, shall have it all.

[*Totters to window.*

O mad, lone night, in all your haunting voices,
What hope bring you to me?
Only death, only death, only death!
I will go in. The girl shall have it all!

[*Totters to door at middle back.*

Enter DESJARDINS, *a notary, cloaked and with a sword.*

DES. This is a night, a fit and proper night
For projects such as mine. Would such were ever,
All seasons Autumn, every night like this.

[*Goes to window, draws blind and looks out. Rain and gust blows against window.*

Ha, ha, it meets me, gives my spirit greeting!

Cruelty to cruelty, ice to ice,
So storms it at my heart, ha, ha, ha, ha!
Howl storm! beat gust! Sweep out and wreck this world.
Murder the hateful memories o' summer,
The gaudy splendors of the nauseous year.
She loves me not, I am not lovely to her,
So wreck all beauty, lay all sweetness low.
Ha, ha, do your work as I'll do mine.

[*Leaves window.*

Murder, murder, 'tis a serious thought;
One to be well considered. Perchance the greatest
Of all the arts, were it but deftly done.
Heh, heh, Desjardins, Desjardins,
No bungling, or this serious business were
Better undone than badly! But a weak old man—
'Twould almost seem a single puff of air
Would blow the spark from such a heap of ashes.
Ha!

[*Gets behind a curtain.*

Re-enter the SIEUR D'ELENE.

D'EL. I will to bed, to bed. Why comes he not?

[*Goes slowly to the window.*

Oh, such a night! the world is aged like me,
Blown by the storms of a too rugged fate.
I'll to bed, to bed. Why comes he not?

[DESJARDINS *steps forward.*

DES. I have come.

D'EL. Oh, 'tis you, Desjardins. O Desjardins, 'tis an awful night, an awful night!

DES. Here is the will.

D'EL. Ready so soon?

DES. Yea, ready to sign. Did you not expect me?

D'EL. Yea, I will sign it, I will sign it.

DES. Need I read it?

D'EL. Nay, I am tired. Doth it fill all the conditions?

DES. Yea.

D'EL. Leaves it all to my niece?

DES. Yea, of a certainty.

D'EL. Then give it me, I will sign it. O Daulac,
Daulac, you might have loved me better!

DES. Have you the witnesses ready?

D'EL. Yea, the two servants.

DES. Then call them in.

[D'ELENE *rings a bell; two servants enter.*

DES. (*to servants*) This is your master's will, do you understand?

Servants. We do.

D'EL. Where will I sign, Desjardins?

DES. Here.

[D'ELENE *signs the will with a trembling hand; servants affix their marks. Exeunt servants.*

DES. (*aside*) 'Tis done, 'tis done!
(*to* D'ELENE) You are weary, I had better go.

D'EL. Yea, Desjardins, I in truth am weary,
But my mind runs still on Daulac. Tell me, now,
Think you truly I have done me right
In this sad matter?

DES. Certainly, certainly. To bed, to bed;
You grow more weak and childish in your age.
Speak I not truly, would you not relent?

D'EL. Nay, I am strong, I am strong.

DES. Well, then, good night, good night, and may you rest.

[*Exit.*

D'EL. Good night, Desjardins. Desjardins! wait, Desjardins!
Oh, he hath gone, and he hath taken the will.

I'll see to-morrow, 'chance I'll change that will.
O Daulac, Daulac, my dearer than son!
I'm strong, I'm strong. He's right; to bed, to bed!

[*Goes slowly behind the curtain. After a slight interval the room grows darker. Re-enter* DESJARDINS. *The storm still continues, with patter and gust at the window.*

DES. Well, well; well, well, this is a serious matter!
Well done or not at all, that is the dixit.

[*Peers out of the window, then comes back and goes behind the curtain, then steals out again.*

He sleeps like any cradled nine months' child.
Curse these old men, they ever grow so healthy.
He just stirred once, and mumbled in his dreams
That cursèd name Daulac! How I hate it!
He'll repent him, will he? Not this side of Hades.
[*Lays his sword on the table.*
My grandsire was an armorer at Cologne;
My father knew his passes, though a notary,
And I know mine. I'm but a notary,
No lordly soldier with a martial bearing,
Yet often in the middle of our practice,
When, blade to blade and watchful eye to eye,
I taught Daulac those defter under-strokes,
Hath this same devil prompted me to kill him.
Not yet, not yet; but be my work to-night
To put yon senile babbler out o' sight.
He'd burn that will, would he? He'd make a new one?
Nay, nay; nay, nay, he shall not make a new one!
[*Takes up sword, then lays it back on the table.*
Nay, not that way, it leaves too red a witness.
'Twill keep for cursèd Daulac when his fate
Meets my necessities. There's a cleverer way.
Not thus, not thus; we lop off youthful trees
But pluck the old ones upward by the roots.
Weeds choke out blossoms; ergo, I'm a weed.
I'll choke out this old blossom, thus, aye thus!

[*Clenches his fingers as if strangling something, and steals out into the bedroom; after an interval returns, dragging the body of* D'Elene, *drops it on the carpet and steps back from it.*

Ha, ha! 'tis done! 'tis done! He never stirred,
To cry or groan, or call out "cruel murder!"
But went out voiceless in a single gasp;
As snuffs a candle, thus his light went out.
Ha! I'm an artist! From a whimpering ancient,
A poor, worn bundle of human sighs and groans,
I've made yon wondrous silence now before me.
Rage, storm! howl, night! crack your mad cheeks in
twain!
You cannot wake him! He is marbling now
Into that long, last, kind serenity.
Blow, night! rage, storm! he hath long past thy terrors.
Billow the oceans, batten the ruined lands,
Terrorize monarchs, make heroes quake i' their beds,
But he's invincible! Nay, you cannot shake him.
All else is puerile, naught is great but death.
Ha, ha! 'tis done! I stay here over long,
Too filled with pride in mine own handiwork.
Now life! now life! for I've a life to live,
Though but a notary. Halloo! halloo! help! help!
Your master is dead! Rascals, wake up! your master
Has ta'en a fit! Help! help! before he's mortal!
He'd change that will, would he? he'd change that will!
Ha, ha; ha, ha! Now, Daulac, I have matched you!

[*Servants rush in, calling.* Helène *runs in and falls in grief on* D'Elene's *body. Exit* Desjardins *on other side.*

Curtain.

ACT II. Scene 1.

Place—*Front of an inn in a forest.*

Time—*Some days after Act I.*

Enter, from left, Fillet, *a short, stout innkeeper, carrying a table too big for him. He places it.*

Fil. Here! (*hurries out left and returns with a chair, places it at right of table*) Here, for the gentleman, one louis. (*hurries out again, returns with another chair, places it at left*) This for the lord, two louis d'or, ha!

Enter Desjardins, *booted and spurred, with sword, and whip in hand.*

Des. Not yet?

Fil. Nay, master.

Des. Master?

Fil. (*bowing*) Sir!

Des. Sir?

Fil. Sieur!

Des. (*more angry*) Sieur?

Fil. (*almost touching the ground*) My lord! (*aside*) Two louis d'or.

Des. My lord, the devil!

Fil. Yea, your majesty. (*aside*) Nothing!

Des. Wine, quick!

Fil. Yea, sire! (*goes out bowing behind and yelling within*) One bottle for his majesty the devil!

Des. Scoundrel!

[*Exit* Fillet.

The devil was ever notary to a fool,

And I'm the devil. This dead dotard uncle
And orphan niece were waxen in my hands;
And now to trap this Daulac in my snare.
How I do hate him only heaven doth know,
Or fitter hell, for am I not the devil?
His luck against my cunning, chance for chance,
I'll match him yet. Why doth not Piotr come?

Enter PIOTR *running, at right, breathless; falls, clutching his breast, at* DESJARDINS' *feet. As he runs he knocks over* FILLET, *who enters at same time, spilling wine.* FILLET *looks around in disgust.*

DES. Quick, knave, quick! the letter!

PIO. (*fumbling in his breast*) Here, master, here!

DES. (*opening quickly and reading*) Ha, ha! 'tis done,
'tis done, the *lettre de cachet*.
It means his banishment and deep disgrace.
(*to* PIOTR) Who gave you this letter?

PIO. The Duke's own man, master.

DES. And when do the officers arrive?

PIO. To-morrow. Master, I faint!

DES. Wine, quick, wine.

[*Goes on reading letter.*

FIL. (*who has been sighing over the decanter*) Yea, sire, yea.

[*Exit shaking his fist at* PIOTR.
(*calling*) One more bottle for his majesty the devil!

Re-enter with wine; PIOTR *takes it at a gulp.*

FIL. Thou mindest me of a cowherd's lanthorn.

PIO. Why?

FIL. Thou art so transparent! Say, (*aside*) be he
thy master, boy?

[*Pointing at* DESJARDINS.

PIO. Yea, old firkin-sides.

FIL. Then art thou damned indeed.

[*Exit at left*.

PIO. Yea, not like thee, but for my leanness.

DES. (*coming to centre*) Doth he not come yet?

PIO. Who, master, who?

DES. Why, who else but Daulac?

PIO. Not yet, master.

DES. Not yet! not yet! A soldier should be prompter.
A like gallant is this to win his lady.
Had I his fortune-given mask of form,
His mock-heroic ways, his poet face,
I would not dally all my days at Paris,
But with quick siege and sans all ceremonie
I'd win her to my liking. Heaven, earth, hell!
How I do hate him!

PIO. Say, master!

DES. Well, rascal?

PIO. Old firkin-sides taketh thee for the devil.

DES. What think you?

PIO. Naught, seeing if it be so I be damned.

DES. Like you my form?

PIO. May he never come in worse.

DES. Look here, master Piotr, a word with you:
I've half suspicioned you these many days;
Indeed, I chose you for a rogue's whip-lash.
Now, hearken, rascal: if you at my bidding
But crack anon to suit my spirit's will,
Your fortune's made; but if you do but fail me,—
You'll meet the very devil.

PIO. Yea, master, I understand. I am the lash, you snap me, and someone else gets hurt. Ha, ha, that's it!

DES. Yea, you've caught it. But, to change the subject, how does the sprightly Fanchon?

PIO. (*in amazement*) Ah, master! how knew you that I love Fanchon?

DES. Am I not the devil?

PIO. But she would no more have me than Mademoiselle would give a thought to you.

DES. Fiends of hell! what said you, rascal?

PIO. (*aside*) Now the bung is out of the barrel! (*to* DESJARDINS) I—I did but remark that she won't do the love business with me. She prefers a basket paunch to a bean pole, and so favors that fool, Pornac.

DES. So that's the trouble, is it?

PIO. Yea, master. That's what makes me so thin; that she likes me not for my leanness but makes me the leaner, so that her distaste but aggravates the disease, so to speak.

DES. Oh, that's nothing.

PIO. Nothing, master? Nothing? Yea, that's me, or what I will be if this wasting of affections and flesh keeps on. Nothing!

DES. I but meant, rascal, that it is all right.

PIO. Oh, it is all right, is it? (*counting on his fingers*)
See: Nothing is all right, all right is nothing.
That's me, or I am no logician.

DES. I mean to say, fool, that she shall marry you.

PIO. Master, master, say that again. Marry me—who?

DES. Fanchon.

PIO. Fanchon? Look here, master. You may be the devil, and his uncle to boot, but you can't move a maid's mind, let alone Fanchon's. Why, master, she keeps me dancing to her changes like a turkey on hot irons. Nay, nay, master.

DES. Pshaw, she's but a woman! Changeable as the moon
On moving water. Truthful as the lie
That trembles on the breathings of a slander.
Keep your courage, man, do my bidding,

And leave the maid to me.

PIO. But, master, she loves Pornac.

DES. Love? She'll love you just as well.
I know a woman.

PIO. Well, if you do, then all that I can say is, you're devilishly more devilish than the devil. (*aside*) But I have my doubts.

DES. Fanchon is like her mistress. She will go
Which way the other. That's the way she's blown.
Love's not in this. Mad'moiselle's uncle dead,
She's by my schemes the mistress of his fortunes,
And Daulac by the same brave fact a pauper.

PIO. A pauper? the Sieur Daulac a pauper?

DES. What else? 'Twas I drew up his uncle's will.
What would you call that man who stands therein
Sans land, sans houses, monies, destitute?

PIO. A pauper, master. *Ergo*, he has nothing, therefore he is nothing. That's like me.

DES. Well, such is Daulac.

PIO. And, master, you did this?

DES. Yea.

PIO. Then—you—are—the—devil!

DES. Now, hearken, sirrah, that you know my power,
Remember I am your master and dread mine anger.
Now, next to win the mistress. When that happens,
Be you but with me, you shall have the maid.
Do you mark me, sirrah? Now go. Send me yon
Barrel-paunch.

PIO. Yea, I mark you. (*aside*) But be you devil or no,
I much misdoubt me if you do know Fanchon.
I like this not, I like it not, I smell murder
Or something deeper here. I'll watch this devil
Whom fate hath made my master.

[*Goes out calling*.

Firkin-sides, firkin-sides!

Re-enter the Landlord.

FIL. (*bowing low*) Yea, your majesty.

DES. Whom do you take me for? the devil?

FIL. Who else?

DES. Look you here, scoundrel, do you know this name?
[*Whispers in his ear.*

FIL. (*retreats, trembling with fear.* PIOTR *comes in, listening*) Nay, your majesty, not here, he comes not here!

DES. Yea, and to-night.

FIL. To waylay this lord? Then this means murder.

PIO. (*aside*) Yea, so say I. Monsieur Daulac, you are more than dead if I do not save you.
[*Exit.*

DES. Now, villain, this will pay you.
[*Gives a purse.*

FIL. (*going out*) But murder, murder, murder,
Oh, murder!
[*Counts gold.*

DES. Ha, ha, I'll have him sure. All cannot fail.
I'll slay him here to-night, or, missing that,
The officer from Paris comes to-morrow
With *lettre de cachet* wheedled from the King,
Banishing Daulac from these shores forever.
Ha, ha! the Duke doth hate him for that lunge
He gave him in that secret midnight duel.
So gains his vengeance granting my poor prayers.
Even kings are workable to the devil's arts.
This last disgrace will wreck him; meanwhile I
Will come back here to-night in cloak and mask
And see if fate dare give him to my blade.
With these two villains to aid me I may do it.
Ha, ha! Why, here he comes at last, at last.
Damn him! damn him! How I hate his face!

Enter DAULAC, *booted and spurred, with sword and military cloak.*

DAUL. Desjardins, Desjardins!

DES. Welcome, Daulac, mine own noble friend. This is a meeting.

[*Grasps and wrings his hand.*

DAUL. Welcome, Desjardins, wisdom's counsellor,
The brother-confessor to my many follies.
The cynic chider, he who hath forgiven
More in mine acts than ever Heaven can.—
O my friend, had I one thousandth part
Of all the wisdom under your brain's roof,
I would not be the reckless soul I am.
Well, well! Heaven ne'er made two single souls alike.
You'd laugh, Desjardins, did you hear my follies.
I've fought six duels, old comrade; ponder that—
And come off in them all without a scratch,
Save in the first, and that was but a prick,
Healed up in a week—and all for why
I know not, save that chivalry wanes at court,
And men will slander women in my presence.

DES. I heard you pinked the Duke?

DAUL. (*starting*) You heard that?

DES. Ha, ha! a rumor, but 'tis a dangerous business.

DAUL. When a man insults a woman, be he King,

[*Lifts his hat.*

He answers to my sword.

DES. (*taking snuff*) Ha, ha! Yea, yea, brave, brave, but dangerous.
(*aside*) As you will find.

DAUL. O Desjardins, think me not all lightness;
Amid the court I sickened of its follies.
Its shallow conceits and hollow mock of worth,
Where arrogance and cringing joined in one,
Janus-like, in every soul I met,
Till all my spirit in a ferment burned.

DES. For paths of glory?

DAUL. Yea, friend, you read me right. Some day, somewhere,
I know not where, only in dreams that come,
I will loose my spirit battling on some field
For France and glory.
But tell me, mine old friend,
How be it that I meet you on my way?

DES. I came to meet you.

DAUL. To meet me! that was kind. God bless you, friend!
[*Wrings his hand again.*
And how is Helène?

DES. She is well.

DAUL. And happy?

DES. As her circumstances grant.

DAUL. And my uncle?

DES. He—is—well.

DAUL. Poor uncle, I have often grieved him sore,
And now I'll grieve him sorer: I can never
Give up in life the great career of arms
To settle down to humdrum country life,
And, beating my sword into a gentle ploughshare,
Play me the squire of vineyards. Nay, Desjardins,
For I was born a soldier. In my cradle
My spirit must have run on war's alarms
And drained its ardors from my mother's breast.
Yea, you have known it, Desjardins, my true friend,
And how it had but one sole rival thought.

DES. And that?

DAUL. My love for Helène.

DES. (*aside*) Curse him! does he dare to prate of that?

DAUL. Yesterday in Paris the Sieur de Condé,
Who sails anon to try his soldier's fortunes

Beyond the rim of ocean's western verge
In those new lands discovered by Champlain,
Did bid me share his perils, and perchance
The glory or death that fate will grant him there.

DES. (*aside*) This is my chance. (*to* DAULAC) You agreed?

DAUL. Nay, I did neither say him yea nor nay.

DES. And why?

DAUL. My love for Helène drew me hitherward,
And bound my feet to France's holy shores,
While glory pointed promising toward the West.
But Helène conquered.

DES. (*aside*) S'death, I'll crush him now!

DAUL. And then I thought me of my poor old uncle,
How he would grieve; I could not break his heart.

DES. (*aside*) Now the dagger goes home.
(*to* DAULAC, *solemnly*) 'Twill break no more.

DAUL. What, what! did you not say he was well?

DES. Yea, well indeed, for, Daulac, he is dead.

DAUL. (*rising*) My uncle dead! My God! When did he die?

DES. Four days ago.

DAUL. And—

DES. Was buried yesterday.

DAUL. And Helène?

DES. Is heiress to all his fortune.

DAUL. Great heavens, Desjardins, what doth all this mean?

DES. It means but this: your uncle for some time
Has marked your course in anger, and at last,
Thinking you unworthy of his trust
Willed all his wealth to Mad'moiselle Helène,
Cutting you off without one single louis.

DAUL. Then I am ruined!

DES. Yea, ruined.

DAUL. And this is why—

DES. I came to meet you.

DAUL. To break it to me, ere I saw Helène.
(*taking* DESJARDINS' *hand*) Thank you, friend. God
knows I need a friend
In this hard hour. Not that I grudge the wealth.
Heaven is witness, I joy for Helène's sake.
She in her pure and simple womanhood
Is fitter trustee to that splendid wealth
Than such a spirit as I, but O great God!
That he, the uncle that I have always loved,
Should die without forgiving, nay, with thoughts
Unmerited by my worst and wildest follies;
Should think me so unworthy of his love,—
'Tis this unmans me.

DES. You know me, Daulac, one sans aspirations,
Believing only what my reason holds,
Deeming not overmuch those attributes
Of love, hope, glory, friendship, as men mouth them,
Save as poor ebullitions of the moment,
Gendered in foolish souls that know not life
And its gray, stern realities, and would not
Be o'erhard on you in this bitter hour,
Save to remind you, you have one thing left
'Mid all this wreck of earthly hope and fortune,
Which is—

DAUL. Mine honor. I would die for it.

DES. Then you must die to love.

DAUL. O Desjardins, this worst final stroke!

DES. You are a man of honor. She is rich
And you a pauper.

DAUL. Yea, you are right, so infinitely removed
Is Helène from my hopes that Ind to Ind
Were nearer. O inexorable fate,

Thou mockest me, miserable! I will go and die.

DES. Daulac, methought thou wert at least a man.

DAUL. I am a man; for that dread reason I
Do suffer all the torments of the damned.
Man, man, cannot you see I am shut out
From all I love best? It is easy seen
That you have never loved. O Desjardins,
Your coldly calculating nature views
This life as but a problem to be solved
Like an equation. He hath never suffered
Who never loved.

DES. (*aside*) I never love? Yea, I can hate, too.
(*to* DAULAC) You wrong me in your heat of suffering,
Daulac.
Heaven knows I meant but for the best.
I thought you strong, but see I was mistaken.
There is a way: forget this barrier fate
Hath built between you; go to her, and if
She truly loves you nought can come between
Your mutual happiness.

DAUL. And lose mine honor?

DES. Yea, what is honor but a thing to prate of,
But never practised in this material world?

DAUL. Never, Desjardins! Since this one short hour
Helène is dead to Daulac. Whoe'er may hope
To win her happy, Daulac never can.
Nay, brightest honor, thou captain of my spirit,
Beloved of heaven and worshipped of holy men,
Without thee love were never love at all,
But life's poor semblance.

DES. I did but plead for your own happiness;
But now you've forsworn love for glory's sake,
What is your purpose?

DAUL. There's but one pathway in this world for him
Whom love hath banished, that which leads to death.
I have decided; this new western world
Will coffin Daulac from his many woes.

DES. Then you go to Canada?

DAUL. It is my object, if such as I can hold
A living interest.

DES. (*aside*) 'Twas an easy victory. I'm rid of him.
(*to* DAULAC) But will you send no message to your
cousin? No last farewell?

DAUL. Farewell to Helène? Desjardins, I cannot go
Before I see her pure, sweet face again.
This much I owe to nature, come what will.

DES. (*aside*) He'll weaken, will he? be a man of
straw
For all his protestations? Never, Daulac!
You have too good a foe to forfeit now
Your boasted honor.
(*to* DAULAC) Do you not fear that in this tender meeting
(Man is but flesh and woman over-loving)
That this same honor boasted now so loud
May not get worsted?

DAUL. Never, Desjardins!

DES. (*aside*) Ha, ha! we'll see! The devil is a sceptic,
Or else this world were all an innocent place.
(*to* DAULAC) Do you return with me?

DAUL. Nay, friend, forgive me my weak human nature.
Leave me a space to wrestle with my sorrow,
And I will follow.

DES. (*aside*) Now I'll see the poison work this side,
I'll go prepare the lady, till the rift
In this sweet lute spills all the music out.
Piotr, Piotr!

[*Exit, calling out.*

PIO. (*outside*) I'm coming, master.

DAUL. Now must I make the soldier shame the man,
And in one short hour change this throbbing nature
Into the semblance of a heartless stone.
O Helène, next to Heaven thou wert to me.
I placed you in that niche in my heart's temple

Where blessed thoughts and sacred only dwell.
And now perforce I must crush out this being,
Tear out this bleeding heart with these two hands,
And still its beat forever. O great Heaven!
Let not one single tender sigh of hers,
One last sweet glance of sorrow, melt my soul
From out this marble semblance of a man.
I'll go to her, but I will go as stone,
All passion dead as I am dead to her.

[*Sinks his head on table. The stage grows darker.*

Re-enter PIOTR, *rushing in.*

PIO. Danger, danger! Draw and guard yourself!

[*Rolls under the table.* DAULAC *leaps to his feet and draws. Enter two assassins, with* DESJARDINS *cloaked and masked. They all attack* DAULAC. *He fights the three.*

DES. Ha, ha, ha!

PIO. (*under the table*) Murder! murder!

FIL. (*at side, calling*) Murder! thieves! murder!

[*They fight harder.* DAULAC *kills one, then wounds the second, fighting his way out.*

DES. Damn him! damn him! he still lives, still lives!
But wait! the *lettre de cachet*! ha, ha, ha!
I'll have him yet! I'll have him yet!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*A room in the Chateau.* FANCHON *at work.*

FAN. Well, if I'm not the most bewildered girl!
Two lovers are mine, but which of them to choose

I know me not, for if I choose this one
The other suffers. If I say Pornac,
I pity Piotr. If I choose Piotr,
I think of Pornac. Ten times a day I try
To choose in this wise, counting on my fingers:
Piotr, Pornac, Pornac, Piotr,
Pornac, the odds have it. It is Pornac.
But when I favor Pornac it is Piotr.
Heigho, heigho! what is a maid to do
When man, poor, silly man, doth come to woo?
Nor is there much to choose betwixt the two.
Pornac is stout and ruddy, full of mirth,
But too familiar; doth not reverence enough.
Piotr is lean and tall, but much too backward.
I hate a roisterer, but I dread a muff.
If one were only what the other is not,
The other only what the—(*starts*) Ha, what's that?

Enter PIOTR.

PIO. Fanchon!

FAN. Sir, you here?

PIO. Yea—that is, I think so—that is—I'll go and see.
[*Turns to go*.

FAN. Noodle!

PIO. Nay, but, Fanchon—(*aside*) She ever mocks me thus.

FAN. Nay, noodle. Say, why are you always going?

PIO. I know not, save that I am always coming.

FAN. Well, solemn sir, what do you want of me?

PIO. I came—I came—to—to see what you were doing.

FAN. Well, I was at a poor business,
Balancing two peas within a pod.

PIO. Ah!

FAN. And I found them, just like two peas,
Too much alike.

PIO. Well, I must go.

FAN. Don't be in a hurry. What's the news?

PIO. Fanchon, there is only one bit of news for me to tell you, and—and—when I see you it all flies out o' doors and leaves me.

FAN. Ah!

[*Toys with her apron.*

PIO. Fanchon!

FAN. What?

PIO. I—I—I have come to—to—ah—protect you.

FAN. You? to protect me? For heaven's sake, from what? You protect me? Then heaven help me!

[*Rises.*

PIO. Stay, O Fanchon, stay. Oh, stay! Oh, do! Oh, stay forever!

FAN. Nay, 'twould be too tiring, but I will consider.

PIO. Dear girl!

FAN. But on one condition.

PIO. Any condition and all conditions, but name them.

FAN. 'Tis but one.

[*Toys with her apron.*

PIO. Name it, angel, but only say you'll stay.

FAN. Don't angel me! Yes, I will stay, if you—if you—

PIO. Speak, Fanchon, speak!

FAN. Well, I will stay if you do—go away.

PIO. (*rising*) The devil! I am a poor fool.

FAN. Yea, now you speak the truth.
(*puts handkerchief to her face*) Oh, my!

PIO. Fanchon, what aileth thee?

FAN. (*trying not to laugh*) I—I—I (*mocking* PIOTR) think I've got something in my eye.

PIO. What, what? not a cinder? (*aside*) I'm sure
it's not a man.

FAN. Yea. (*aside*) And if you're a man you'll try to take it out. (*moves over to his side; he edges from her*) Don't move, sir. Now, take this, then. (*twists handkerchief into a point*) Do you see it?

[*Placing her face near his.*

PIO. Nay, I see it not.

FAN. (*aside*) Dolt! Idiot! (*to* PIOTR) Place your hand on my shoulder, thus. Come nearer and look again.

PIO. (*uneasily*) Nay, I am near; I tell thee,
Fanchon, thou art mistaken. There is nought.

FAN. I tell thee I am not mistaken. (*aside*) Idiot! can he not see beyond his nose? (*rising in anger*) I must go in.

PIO. Yea, so must I. I will come again.

FAN. Nay, nay, never! Stay away, away,
I tell thee, thou lean—lean gawk!

PIO. Well, well, I have angered her!

[*Exit.*

FAN. (*stamping her foot*) Fool! idiot! dolt! not to see, not to see! Here comes the other; free enough, but not so welcome.

Enter PORNAC.

POR. Ha, ha, my Fanchon!

[*Runs to kiss her; she eludes him. He chases her round the table; she stops.*

FAN. Sir!

[*He turns to catch her; she slaps his face.*

Take that—and that!

POR. Why, Fanchon, 'tis not your wont to greet me
thus!

FAN. Well, it will be in future, thou bloated freedom!
Learn to keep thy place.

POR. When? Ha, ha! what's up? what's up? what's up?

[*Exit*.

FAN. If this had but the other's person, the other this one's spirit, betwixt them they might be a fairsome man. If ever a girl were burdened it be me!

Enter HELÈNE, *dressed in mourning garb; slowly seats herself at the table in an attitude of grief*. FANCHON *approaches her*.

FAN. Mistress, it grieves me much to see you thus.

HEL. O Fanchon, Fanchon, I fear my heart is broken!

FAN. Nay, lady, speak not thus; temper your grief
To what is fitting. Nature never intended
That youth should spend itself in useless grieving.
Men cannot live forever; your poor uncle,
My honored master, had passed the allotted age.
This is not natural.

HEL. You wrong me, Fanchon. Heaven knows my woe,
Though it be deep and natural, I feel
Hath cast its weight on Heaven for my uncle.

FAN. Then why this grief, these tears, this air of woe?
O my mistress, forgive your simple Fanchon,
If in her love she fear that you may weaken,
By too much grief and sad, uncertain vapors,
That dignity, that presence which is yours
As heiress, mistress of this high estate.
Madam, forgive these words, for Fanchon loves you.

HEL. O Fanchon, 'tis this very terrible wealth,
This heirship, that is now my present curse.
Oh, why did Heaven bring me on this earth
To stand betwixt a noble man and all
That should be his by birth and heritance.

FAN. Mistress, the Sieur Daulac, that is a man!

HEL. O Fanchon, I do fear 'twill break my heart.

FAN. It was a wondrous madness in your uncle
To use him thus; it passes my poor reason,
Unless, perchance, it was—forgive me, madam!

HEL. Whom?

FAN. That notary.

HEL. What notary?

FAN. What but one who creeps into a room
With his two sinister eyes before he enters,
Whose hand is like a dead man's at the touch,
Whose glance a poison, whose whole attitude
A cringing arrogance. There is something, madam,
About that man that makes the spirit sick
To look upon him.

HEL. Who is this notary you rail against?

FAN. M. Desjardins.

HEL. Fanchon! How dare you? He, my uncle's friend,
So grave and wise and thoughtful for his years,
Whose slow precision and whose cynic smile
Are rooted deep in duty.

FAN. Forgive me, madam, if my woman's heart
In love for you outran the menial bounds;
But though it grieve you, I would warn you, madam,
Against that man.

HEL. Fanchon, another slander such as this,
And we are parted. Tongue shall never speak
Nor mind conceive, by any consent of mine,
That heart unloyal which my uncle trusted.

FAN. Forgive me, madam, punish your poor Fanchon,
Do anything but drive me from your presence.
For all her faults, her rude outspoken thought,
Your Fanchon loves you.

HEL. My almost sister, you are now forgiven.
If you've a heart, oh, pity your poor mistress
In her mad sorrow, you who know her secret.

And is it crime in me, a simple maid,
To open my heart to you, a sister woman,
And say to you and Heaven how I love him?
Nay, I were not woman, nature had made me
Distort, unnatural, did I not feel
A pride amid my blushes at his name.
And now, O life, O terrible, cruel fate,
Thou put'st a barrier 'twixt us, this dread hate
That he must hold for me who, like some thief,
Some bold brute robber, now hath come between
Him and his heritage. Yet, could he know,
I'd walk a beggar 'neath the stars this night,
Yea, live in rags and own a menial's fate,
To know him mine. O Daulac, Daulac!
(*a sound without*) Go, Fanchon, straight, and see if he
doth come.
I'll cure this matter, this shall never stand!
O uncle, uncle, could you be so cruel?
They'll see that I've a mind, though but a woman.
A nunnery is my hope, mine only hope.
I'll die a maid that he may have this wealth.
[*Looks toward the door.*
He comes, he comes! How can I meet this man
Whom I have wronged, and yet do love so true?
Oh, he'll have justice, or I am no woman!

Enter DESJARDINS.

Welcome, sir, though you are over late.
(*seeing* DESJARDINS) Oh, 'tis you!

DES. Yea, mademoiselle, 'tis but the courier;
The king comes after.

HEL. The Sieur Daulac is slow in coming, sir.

DES. Yea, mademoiselle, we ever travel slow
To that we dread approaching.

HEL. You have informed him of his uncle's death?

DES. Yea, mademoiselle, and of his disinheritance.

HEL. (*starts*) And how took he it?

DES. Not well, my lady; who ever welcomed the sun
That ushered in the hangman?

HEL. Desjardins, as my uncle's trusted friend,
As Daulac's friend, as mine, I bid you hearken:
I have a way to mend this cruel matter.

DES. (*aside*) As Daulac's friend; yea, as Daulac's friend,
She has a way. Confound these obstinate women,
She shall not find a way, I'll stop all roads
That lead to Daulac's fortune.
(*to* HELÈNE) A way, madam? So interest in our noble,
Impoverished friend has made of you a lawyer?

HEL. Yea, I renounce this fortune, all these lands;
They are not mine, but his by truest right.

DES. And you?

HEL. My heart leans toward a cloister; I a nun,
All this would pass to Daulac.

DES. (*aside*) A pretty simpleton, a charming fool!
Well, by my soul, who can count on a woman
When sentiment enters with a handsome man?
She a nun? Not if I confess her.
(*to* HELÈNE) Mademoiselle, your feelings wrong the dead.
To him who fathered, loved you all these years,
Owe you no duty? That he is scarce cold,
The coffined clay scarce rounded on his grave,
Ere you would tumble his wisdom to the ground
And scatter his wishes to the winds of heaven.
And all for what?

HEL. For justice!

DES. Justice? (*aside*) If this same cousin were wry and shrunk of limb would he get justice? Heaven protect the ugly that goes as man when woman dons the ermine.

HEL. Monsieur Desjardins, you know I loved my uncle
And reverence his memory; but this will,
This monstrous will—I cannot yet believe
It was his love, his wisdom ordered it—
I will not take the cruel advantage it gives

And ravage Sieur Daulac of his rights;
And you—you think this cruel indenture just,
That cheats your friend?

DES. Lady, methinks your feelings wrong the dead.

HEL. Nay, never reverence for the holiest dead
Dare bid me wrong the living.

DES. Mademoiselle,
I have no right of feeling in this matter,
I'm but in this the humble notary,
The slave that pens just what the hand hath willed,
But I would be full lacking in that sense
Of what I owe your uncle and mine honor
Did I refuse, because my feelings urged,
To do my duty in this present case.
Aspirations are for your soldiers, lady;
Not for the common, plodding, parchment drudge,
The notary. But, being the notary, I
Must point to you the duty which is yours.
This will is plain, no matter who has feelings;
You are, besides, a ward and under age;
So did your folly wish to squander all,
You could not do it.

HEL. O Heaven!

DES. Yea. Further, as the humble notary,
I must speak plainly.

HEL. Speak! I bid you.

DES. You are my ward for one full year from this,
Under this will, and therefore 'tis my duty
To tender you advice: I long have known
The love you bear for Daulac.

HEL. Monsieur Desjardins, you presume!

DES. Lady, 'tis but the notary.

HEL. Go on, sir, but be careful.

DES. Well, this same love—forgive the notary, lady—
How know you 'tis returned?

HEL. Monsieur! this from you?

DES. 'Tis but the notary, lady. True, he hurts,
'Tis but the bungling surgeon at the best;
But let me warn you; young, impressionable,
Susceptible to all that charms in man,
What know you of men's ways, their arts to please
Where smiles are easy spent and broken hearts
Too quick forgotten? Now, if I know Daulac
As man knows man from boyhood up to youth,
His one true love, his mistress, is his sword.

HEL. Sir, this is cruel.

DES. Cruel, lady; so is the shining lance
That wounds to save the sufferer. If your love
Hath gone such lengths, you might even buy him,
I will not nay it; but you must acknowledge,
If love be like a magnet, we have seen
But little of this Daulac here of late.

HEL. Enough, sir, notary or no,
You speak me not as father would dare speak.

DES. Forgive me, lady, I but do my duty.

HEL. Pardon me, sir, but methinks that in
The notary you outrage the man.

DES. The man, madam, the man is ever outraged
In this poor, shifty, cringing, scheming world,
Where none so free that he may love his neighbor.
Adieu, I hurt you, madam, I will withdraw;
You look for braver company.
(*aside*) The mine is lit, I've touched her woman's pride.
Ha! Daulac, Daulac, come and conquer now!

HEL. Nay, good Desjardins, stay and be my friend.
Fear not for Helène d'Arno, she will ne'er
Let foolish feeling wrong her sense of duty
To those she loves and her own womanhood.

DES. I will return with Daulac, madam, should you wish.

HEL. I do wish it, sir, if you will come.

[*Exit* DESJARDINS.

They think I have no pride! wait; they shall see,
Rather than buy a lover I will die
A single maid. Now to be ice and snow
And frigid, stately dignity to this lover
Who came so tardily that ruin and death
Showed him the roadway. He shall never know
The foolish thoughts that I have squandered on him.

Enter DAULAC *and* DESJARDINS.

O woman's pride, help me to be proud,
Imperious, cold and just; but melting never!
[DAULAC *advances and kisses her hand.*

DAUL. Helène!

HEL. Daulac, my cousin!

DAUL. (*aside*) Cousin?

HEL. I never thought I should have met you thus.

DAUL. Nor I, but all are mortal; my poor uncle,
God knows I hold nought towards his memory
Save truest sorrow. Heaven is my witness,
He might have taken all away from me,
Had he but left his pardon.

HEL. O God! O God! Cousin, my heart is broken.
I you have wronged, Heaven knoweth, all unwittingly.
Had I the power to give you what is yours,
I'd rather die than leave things as they stand.

DAUL. Helène, my cousin, if poor words of mine
Can ease your sorrow, carry to your grave
That Daulac's thoughts of you were thoughts of blessing.
Adieu, Helène, the playmate of my youth,
When I am far perchance you will remember.

HEL. Wherefore away? Is this not yet your home?

DAUL. Sweet cousin, to-morrow I leave these shores
forever.

HEL. (*aside*) Heaven help me, Heaven help me now!
(*to* DESJARDINS) Cruel sir, cruel sir, you had not told me

this!

DES. Not even the notary, believe me, madam,
Were surgeon to such a wound.

DAUL. Sweet cousin, you who always bade me courage
When only in hope I waged me deeds of glory,
Will you not bid me Godspeed even now?

HEL. Sir, I, a soldier's daughter, cannot say
To you, a soldier, any word but Godspeed.
But is there not assistance I can give you?
Monies, credit, all are at your service.

DAUL. Helène, I am a soldier; my poor sword
And sense of honor are my sole fortune now.
If you would of the riches of your heart
But loan anon a single kindly thought,
A tear, perchance a prayer sent up to God,
For Daulac in his wanderings, he'd be your debtor
Deeper a thousand times than if you showered
The wealth of Ind upon him.

HEL. You have my prayers, my wishes. (*aside*) Oh,
help me, God!

DAUL. Farewell, Helène, God keep you. Fare you well.
[*Kisses her hand.*

DES. (*aside*) Why come they not? Why come they not?

Enter an Officer of the King and two attendants.

Officer. Mademoiselle, your pardon. (*to* DAULAC) I
would speak
With the Sieur Daulac.

DAUL. Speak, I am he.

Officer. Pardon, lady, this most painful business,
But I do bear an order from the King,
Monsieur Daulac, asking for your sword.

DAUL. The King! my sword! My God! what new
misfortune?

DES. (*aside*) Ha, ha, ha!

Officer. Here is the order, sir, commanding that you be cashiered and banished.

DAUL. Cashiered and banished?

Officer. Yea, to America.

DAUL. Banished, cashiered, ruined!
[*Clutching at his heart.*
What unseen hand hath done this? What malignant influence
looms about me?

DES. (*taking his hand*) This hand, at least, is yours
until the end.

HEL. Daulac, Desjardins, what doth all this mean?
Disinherited, cashiered, banished! Farewell, hope!

Officer. Yea, further, sir, your sword. You are my prisoner while on these shores.

DAUL. Not that, not that disgrace!

Officer. Men, arrest your prisoner!

DAUL. Nay, I'm a noble. Whate'er his reason be,
The King can do no wrong. I go with you.
My gentle cousin, a long, a long farewell!
[*Goes out with bowed head.*

DES. And now 'tis time for the notary to go, too.
[*Exit.*

HEL. Daulac, Daulac, I love you! O my God!
I might have saved him! What have I not lost?
And all for woman's pride!

CURTAIN.

ACT III. Scene 1.

Place—*Montreal, Canada.*

Time—*One year later.*

Scene—*A room in an inn.*

Enter Desjardins.

Des. Well, here's a pretty pass, to let this woman
Slip through my hands like this: first 'twas Daulac,
Now 'tis the Church has got her. Nothing suits
But she must come to Canada like the rest
Of those poor fools who, lacking misery,
Would seek it in these savage-haunted wastes.
She tells her beads and sighs 'tis Heaven draws her,
But I have my suspicions it is Daulac.
That man, that man! have I not cause to hate him?
Since his departure she hath never smiled,
But mopes and prays to Heaven. Business, business
She will have none of. I have noticed, too,
She has grown half-suspicious of myself,
And such a scornful icicle hath grown
That all my cunning, all my arrogance
Hath not sufficed to make me hint my love.
Nay, Desjardins, caution, perseverance,
These are your arms to fight with, you are but
A plodding notary, but Hell's my pledge.
I'll have her yet, and avenge myself on him
If I've to win the poles to 'complish this;
No seas, no rimless oceans shall prevent,
No savage hordes of earth's most desolate waste
Will daunt my vengeance; say she yea or nay,
I'll go with her.

Enter Piotr.

Des. Well, what have you discovered?

PIO. Daulac is here, master, in this very inn.

DES. What are his prospects?

PIO. They say he is the governor of an island.

DES. And Pornac?

PIO. Is here, too.

DES. Does Daulac know of the Lady Helène's arrival?

PIO. Nay, master, not by me.

DES. Nor through you, rascal?

PIO. Am I not narrow enough?

DES. Scarcely for my purposes.

PIO. (*aside*) Then will I be wide for some one else's.

DES. Have you carried my orders?

PIO. Yea, master.

DES. Then watch and bring the Governor to this room.
We have a meeting here which, when 'tis ended,
Will settle this same Daulac.

PIO. But Fanchon, master, when shall I have her?

DES. I tell you, do my work, and when 'tis ended
You shall have your Fanchon, and for my part
I wish you well of her.

PIO. (*aside*) You wish me well; then I am cursed,
indeed!
(*to* DESJARDINS) But when, O master, when?

DES. Go to the devil!

PIO. I'm gone there now.
(*aside*) I do his work, but me he never pays,
Save in fine promises;
"To-morrow it will be fine, next day 'twill shine,"
Doth never help the growth of grass to-day.
This working for the devil is unlucky.
If this goes on I'll choose another master.

[*Exit*.

DES. (*rings bell; enter waiter*) Wine!

Servant. How much, my lord?

DES. Two bottles, quick, of your best.

Servant. Yea, my lord.

[*Exit*.

DES. So Daulac is a Governor. If he knows
She has given her money to the Church,
And that she's here, then all my schemes are foiled.
He'll win her in the face of all my plans.
Nay, he'll die first, if it comes to that.
I'll kill him—but of that more anon.
I'll trap him first, this dreamer, in his dreams.
I'll seethe him in the milk of his own glory,
Or I'm no notary; get him from my path,
She soon will tire of this religious waste,
And back in France, I'll trust my skill to win her.

Enter PIOTR, *followed by* MAISONNEUVE, *the Governor.*

Governor. You are the gentleman who sent this letter?

DES. Yea, sir, and at your service; and, methinks,
One who can give assistance to you now,
And this poor colony. Be seated, sir, and pardon
My sending for you to this common inn,
But matters of state know not of the conventions.

Enter Servant, with wine.

Governor. How can you aid? My very coming here
In answer to this letter you have sent
Shows my extremity. Necessity knows no custom.
If I have read your letter aright, you have
Some business to disclose.

DES. Some wine, my lord?

Governor. Thanks, monsieur.

[*Drinks*.

DES. Well, now to business. Coming to the point,
I understand this colony is decimated

And slowly wasted by two insidious foes,
Disease and the savages.

Governor. From the first we are recovering; but
The savages, I fear, will be our doom.
Daily we hear the fearful war-whoop sounding,
Nightly my people are butchered in their beds,
Till hope is wasted; and, I fear, ere long
France's lilies will wither from this coast.

DES. Have you no plan to tide this terrible fate?

Governor. I see no way; and now a fearful rumor
Hath reached me that a thousand Iroquois
Do purpose besieging us in this our hold.
And do they enter here and see our weakness,
Then we are lost.

DES. Have you no soldiers?

Governor. A few, such as they are; but what are they
without a leader?

DES. This is my cure. 'Tis a leader you want.
If you are with me, I do know your man.

Governor. You offer, sir? you are yourself that man?

DES. Nay, nay, my lord, I'm not so tired of life.
Like you, monsieur, I am a man of peace;
But love naught better than setting others fighting.
The man you want must be a reckless devil,
Full of the vapors, moon-sick like a lover,
Who yearns for danger as young ducks for water.
Just such a man I know to fill your wants,
Ripe like an apple, ready now to drop
Into your basket do you promise glory.

Governor. Who is this man?

DES. Do you know of one Daulac?

Governor. Not the Sieur Daulac, he who owns an
island,
A seigneury far up the river shore?

DES. The very man.

Governor. They say he plays the hermit with one man
And a few Hurons whom he hath befriended.

DES. He is your man. If you would save your trade,
Your Church, your very Governorship itself,
You'd better use him.

[*Exeunt both.*

Enter DAULAC *and* PORNAC. DAULAC *sits at a table.*

POR. This room is yours to-night, the inn is full.
To-morrow you can have a better one.

DAUL. 'Tis well enough; what more does soldier want?
A place to eat and sleep and wake and think,
But not to die in.

POR. You have not eaten, master?

DAUL. I want nothing.

[*Leans his head on his hand and sighs.*

POR. (*aside*) My poor master, he groweth daily worse;
Love-sick at heart, this life is killing him.
There is no murdering here, save taking of scalps,
And that the howling, painted paythens do.
Oh, saints betide that ever we came here!
This land of peace will be the death of him.

DAUL. Look here, Pornac, I saw the priest this even;
This marriage market goeth on to-morrow.
Are you still minded in the same opinion
As to this wiving business? Are you sure
You have got cured of Fanchon?

POR. Fanchon, master! Fanchon is an angel,
And ever will have first place in my heart,
But she is absent, and upon her place
There sits a fear that we may never meet,
And a more fearful fear that every night
My scalp-lock will be shriven from my head,
So that each morn I find it there in wonder.
Now, for to medicine this same fear of mine,
I have prescribed unto myself a wife.

DAUL. Ha, ha, Pornac, 'tis a strange protection.

POR. Not if you know it; she will either keep away savages,
Or fear o' them by her company; fears, like troubles,
Should hunt in couples, master; or else my fear of her
Will drive out fear of them, so it's all the same.

DAUL. But a woman, Pornac, a woman is to be protected,
Not a protection.

POR. Not so, master. Barring their fear of mice, gray hairs
And wrinkles, I often think they out-courage men.

DAUL. Then you are sure of happiness, Pornac, without Fanchon?

POR. If Fanchon were here I would love her truly;
But Fanchon absent is another matter.
Nay, nay, I will risk it, 'tis the way of nature.

DAUL. Well, Pornac, have your will; remember to-morrow,
The Jesuits' church. Now go, I'd be alone.

[*Exit* PORNAC.

My interest in that poor fellow's affairs
Doth make me for a moment half forget
Mine own poor miseries, but once alone
They all come crowding back a thousandfold
To torture my spirit. O Helène, Helène,
Fair spirit of the past, your memory
Fills all my heart to-night. Glory's touch
Is dimming fast; this is no soldier's land.
The men seem ever palsied with a fear
Like Damocles' sword that hangs above them,
Just waiting to descend. The Indian,
Though cruel in his instincts, I admire;
He is a worthy foe, dreading nor death
Nor torture. Yet meseems the men
I see around me are not dead to honor.
Were they but once aroused, had I the chance,—
'Tis maddening to daily have to hear
Of families butchered, fields despoiled, and men
Carried away to fates of horrid death.

(*a knocking*) Ha, who is that? Come in.

Enter DESJARDINS.

What! good Heaven! 'tis Desjardins!

DES. Yea, Daulac, 'tis I.

DAUL. When did you arrive?

DES. In the last ship.

DAUL. And—and—I fear to ask you, Desjardins, but how is Helène?

DES. Oh, she is well.

DAUL. And happy?

DES. As any other mad woman.

DAUL. What mean you?

DES. She talks of giving her property to the Church.

DAUL. Then I may hope, Desjardins, I may hope.

DES. (*aside*) Curse him, he would hope yet, would he? (*to* DAULAC) Nay, Daulac, she is dead to you.

DAUL. Has she entered a cloister?

DES. Daulac, be a man, and think no more of Helène,
She is dead to you, but think of glory.

DAUL. Of glory?

DES. You know the state of this poor colony?

DAUL. Yea, indeed, but even now I chafed
At mine own weakness to better its condition.

DES. Why not act then?

DAUL. Who am I, a single unknown man?
Had I a commission!—

DES. I bring you that commission, or rather the man
Who alone can grant it.

DAUL. Who?

DES. The Governor; he awaits you.

DAUL. Where?

DES. Here in this inn, presiding o'er a council
Suddenly called to settle this grave matter.

[*Both go out.*

DAUL. God bless you, Desjardins, ever my true friend,
my noble friend.

[*Goes out first.*

DES. (*going out behind*) Yea, we will see.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT III. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*Montreal.*

SCENE—*Interior of a convent. Night.* HELÈNE *is discovered kneeling in prayer. Procession of nuns pass in middle back past entrance, going to prayers. Music in distance. When nuns have passed, chanting heard in chapel at back.* HELÈNE *slowly rises and advances to centre.*

HEL. Heaven protect me, keep my maiden thoughts
In troth to him I love. Oh, guide me, Thou
Who guidest all poor stumbling human feet
To paths of peace.

[*Pauses in meditation, then sinks into a seat.*

FANCHON *rushes in, screaming, and falls sobbing at her feet.*

FAN. Mademoiselle, mademoiselle, save me! save me!

HEL. Why, Fanchon, what is the matter? Tell me,
Fanchon.

FAN. That horrible marriage market! Save me! save
me!

Enter a Nun.

Nun. Mademoiselle, this girl is disobedient.
'Tis the law of the colony, she must present
Herself within the marriage mart to-morrow;
And, now, do what we can, she doth protest.

HEL. Leave her to me, she is over-wrought.

[*Exit Nun*.

FAN. O mistress, save me! I would rather die
Than stand there in that place and be the barter
Of any yokel who may fancy me.
Are women cattle, that they treat us thus?

HEL. Fanchon, compose yourself, you are distraught.
You overrate the dangers of this course.
To shame the woman is not required of you.
There is no reason under Heaven why,
If some good youth should seek your hand to-morrow,
You should not accept him.

FAN. Yea, my lady, well you know there is one.
My love for—for—

HEL. Pornac?

FAN. Yea.

HEL. Fanchon!

FAN. I cannot help it, mistress; ask me else,
But this I cannot.

HEL. But you have promised, Fanchon. By deceit
You won your passage; 'tis against the law,
Your coming, save for purposes of marriage.

FAN. How about your own position, madam?

HEL. Fanchon!

FAN. Forgive me, lady, but when you speak me thus
You lose your Fanchon. I am but a woman
Who, like the she-wolf battling for her cubs,
Defends her love. Is love but for the mighty?
Believe me, madam, wherever woman is woman
Love is but love; there are no golden barriers;
This world is common when you touch the heart.

My only object was to be with you;
I could not let you travel forth alone.
If I lied, madam, it was because I loved you.

HEL. Then you love Pornac to such extremity?

FAN. That I will have none other.

HEL. Then, Fanchon, none shall have you, trust to me.
Do what I tell you, go with me to-morrow,
And stand this ordeal that unmaids you so,
I'll stand your side, and, hap no miracle,
Though all the world should clamor nay upon it,
I'll keep you single.

FAN. Heaven bless you, mademoiselle, Heaven bless you!

HEL. I have my sorrow, Fanchon, as you know;
Though in the public eye we're deemed but barter,

Enter Nun, who stands apart.

The willing slaves of easy circumstance,
Yet to a real woman who hath loved,
And proved that love, no holy sacrament
Can be more sacred than that worship of hers.
Good night, Fanchon, pray to Heaven in peace.
Believe me true, there's a divinity
Encloses in a golden mercy those
Who dwell in aspiration. Good night, Fanchon,
And trust in God.

[*Kisses her. Exit* FANCHON *with Nun.*
How the true, simple love of yon poor maid
Doth touch my spirit to tears and makes us equal!
How that strong throb of womanhood in her
Doth make her great and raise her to a majesty
A sceptred queen might envy! Oh, we women
Have but one nature. Wisdom may outwit us,
Truth slander us, Philosophy prove us shallow,
But first and last and always we have Love.

Enter the Mother Superior. A chant rises in chapel at back.

Mother Superior. My daughter, are you rested?

HEL. Yea, madam, in body, but not in my heart;
I sought these shores to cure a grievous wound,
But here it bleeds even more.

M. S. My daughter, trust in Heaven; forget these longings
That make you earth's and keep your heart from God.
You have a sorrow, it brought you to these shores,
Forget it in the work He'd have you do.
My heart yearns toward you, you who are alone
Amid these savage wastes where cruel men,
More savage than the savage, wage their wars
For what earth gives them. You are ill protected.
Come, be my daughter; at the feet of God
Lay down your aches, your longings and your fears.
Look how the tender Mother looks upon you,
Sorrowful for your sorrow. Gaze, my child,
She calls you from your sorrow to her peace.

HEL. You half persuade me, did I think it right,
But I have something here within my heart
That mocks her peace.

M. S. My daughter!

HEL. Nay, 'tis not evil, but as strong an influence
To keep me from her and this holy life,
For it is love.

[*Weeps.*

M. S. Love, my child, this life is built of love,
Is moulded on it. In your love for others
You do perfect your own. Hearken to yon sounds
Of Heaven's praise. Turn your heart to Heaven,
And be my daughter.

HEL. I know not what is best, your spirit calls me
One way to peace; my heart is torn the other.
O mother, pray for me!

[*Suddenly shots are fired outside, a war-whoop rises. There is a terrible uproar, and the nuns all crowd forward in terror.*

All. The savages! the savages!

M. S. Hush, my children, put your trust in God!
He will protect you. Do not shame our cloister
By these poor terrors. Back unto your prayers!

[*The firing rises louder, and war-whoops shrill and hideous are heard. The nuns huddle together and shriek.*

M. S. Where is Sister Marie?

A Nun. Out! She went to see a dying woman.

M. S. Not out in all this? Why did I not know?
We must, we must find her!

[*There is a knocking heard at the door, and a woodman and a priest come in, carrying the nun in a dying condition.*

M. S. O my child, my child, my noble child!

MARIE. Yea, mother, poor Marie, going back to God!
(*tries to smile*) Moisten my lips, mother, it will all
Soon be over. They did not get him, though.

Priest. It was a little lad, a poor wee lamb,
That she was bringing home, when they attacked her.
She fought for him; we came scarce in time
But to die with her, when the Sieur Daulac
Rescued us all, but not before this saint
Had got her death!

HEL. (*aside*) Daulac!

MARIE. Father! Mother! I die. O Christ, receive me!

[*Dies. The procession of nuns forms, headed by the stretcher with the body, and passes out into chapel chanting the Miserere.*

HEL. Daulac! out there! in all that danger!

M. S. (*coming back*) My child, this rude interruption
must not break

My pleading with you. Yon poor soul is in Heaven.
Yours is yet unsaved.

[*Chanting dies away.*

HEL. Mother, I cannot, cannot, cannot answer now.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT III. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*Interior of a drinking room in the same inn, Montreal. Several young men and an old man discovered drinking in sombre silence.*

Enter an Old Man who sits down at a table and calls for wine, rapping his stick on the table.

Old Man. A stoup of wine, good wine, for I can pay for it. My son Jacques is a good son, none better, so I can pay for it.

[*A waiter brings in the wine; the other old man looks up with a disconsolate sigh.*

Old Man. Well, good neighbor, why don't you drink, man? Why so down? Hast the megrums, neighbor?

2nd Old Man. Who can drink and be merry, with this cursed state o' things? Grim murder fills the air. There is scarce a man of us but hath lost a son or a brother. Who can drink at such a time?

Old Man. Tut, tut, man! life is life, an' let death come as it will, let it find us merry. Drink, drink, I say! that's my Jacques' creed; live and let live, nohap who may die. So here, a drink all round.

2nd Old Man. Nay, nay!

Old Man. You will not, hey? Here, come, be merry! Here, let's drink a health: let it be my son's. A jollier lad and a better son ne'er was begotten. (*all sit silent*) Then you will not,

cowards? Then I'll drink it alone. Here's to one who is no coward!

[*Rises with cup in his hand. Just then a bell tolls; he sits down suddenly.*

2nd Old Man. There goes another. Where will this end? Twenty bodies brought in yesterday; sixteen to-day. Where will this end?

Old Man. Just so long as you are cowards. Yea, I will drink!

[*A man comes in suddenly and, seeing the old man, starts back, then whispers to a man near the door; a hurried whisper goes round the room. All gaze in horror at the 1st Old Man.*

A Young Man. They are bringing him here; for God's sake get the old man out!

Another. Can we not stop them?

Another. 'Tis too late now, they are at the door.

Old Man. Will you not drink, cowards?

All. Nay, nay.

[*The door opens. Enter four men, carrying a stretcher, with the face covered.*

Old Man. (*starts back*) Ha, who is it?
I will drink; men must die. So here is Jacques' health!

All. Nay, nay.

2nd Old Man. Nay, for Heaven's sake, nay! For your own son?

Old Man. My son? my—Jacques? You lie! Jacques, Jacques? (*goes near corpse*) Jacques?

A Young Man. Nay, old man! nay, old man, I will.
[*Pulls off cloth.*

Old Man. Jacques! O my God!

[*Falls on the body in terrible grief.*

Enter DAULAC *and the Governor, followed by* DESJARDINS.

Governor. Another instance of this terrible condition.

DAUL. (*going forward*) Good father, who is this?

Old Man. My son, sir, my son! I did but drink his health, and now they say he's dead! O God, dead! He who was so merry, sir, so merry, and so good to his poor, foolish old father! Jacques, speak, speak! 'tis your father! O God!

DAUL. Good father, he died a soldier's death.

Old Man. Jacques a soldier! Nay, sir, Jacques was a woodman. I was a soldier, but he was brave, sir, Jacques!

Governor. Some one take him home.

Old Man. Nay, nay, I will stay with Jacques.

DAUL. (*aside*) This breaks my heart.
(*to Old Man*) Good father, I did know your son; he
was brave and noble, though scarce more than a boy.
Such a one as I would choose for brother had I choice.

Old Man. Nay, sir, you are a great lord, and poor Jacques but a woodman.

DAUL. Nay, father, but a soldier like yourself,
And my sole lordship this good, faithful sword.
Could I have saved your son I would have done it,
But he is dead.

Old Man. O sir, you are a good and noble man. Oh, do not mock me, say he is not dead.

DAUL. (*aside*) This goes beyond the natural; my heart
bleeds.
(*to the crowd of young men*) Is there a man here who will follow me? I swear this must be ended though I die. Will no man follow me?

[*The young men one by one rise and crowd around him, drawing their swords.*

All. We will.

DAUL. To death?

All. To death!

DAUL. Swear it!

[*Holds up cross of his sword; each man comes in turn and kneels before it, kissing the symbol*.

Governor. (*aside to* DESJARDINS) This man is mad! Sixteen men to go against eight hundred Iroquois. I'd have given him a good company had he but waited. If ever a man courted death this one does. He is mad!

DES. No madder than you or I. But 'tis his bent,
And they his friends that let him follow it.
Perchance this man was born for this. Who knows?
See how they crowd around him, and how each
Did volunteer the moment he convinced them.
A natural general this, I warn you, Governor,
Don't now disown him.

Governor. But such an army! Were it not he looks
So noble, in his face such hero valor,
I'd laugh at the whole matter. Such an army!
A tanner, two shoemakers and a clerk;
Three squires fresh from the anvil, and the rest
Woodcutters, idlers, sans the thing they need,
A knowledge of warcraft. If their madness last,
They are all dead men.

DES. What matter a thousand lives if you but save
The colony. If this man be mad,
'Tis not our matter.

Governor. 'Tis gone beyond me now, but 'tis a pity.
He is so noble it doth seem like murder.

DES. And if it be, what else is any war
But licensed murder? You will hang a man
For but one thousandth part of what a nation
Does in the name of glory.

Governor. Well, well, I save my fort; but who are you?

DES. Oh, me? Oh, I'm—I'm just a notary.

Governor. I will speak; this man is mad.

DES. Nay, nay, not so, not so, 'tis you are mad.

Governor. (*to* DAULAC) Are you mad, sir? These men are not soldiers.

DAUL. Monsieur le Gouverneur,
It is not soldiers now New France doth need,
But men!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV. Scene 1.

Place—*Near the Jesuits' Church, Montreal.*

Scene—*The marriage market.*

Enter a company of young men, followed by a company of old men who are lame, halt and decrepit.

Young Men. (*singing*)

Good-bye to single life,
No longer we are free;
The King says we must marry,
So married we must be.

Old Men. (*singing*)

Good-bye to single life,
No longer we are free;
The King says we must marry,
So married we must be.

Young Men. (*in derision*) Ha, ha, ha!

Old Men. (*sourly*) Ha, ha, ha!

1st Young Man. Heaven help the women.

1st Old Man. Mere boys, mere boys!

Young Men. Ha, ha, ha!

Young Men. (*singing*)

We who are young and careless
Will sup with Mistress Sorrow;
Amid the cares of wedded life
We'll bid gay youth good morrow.
Good-bye, gay youth,
We'll age in sooth
Before a week to-morrow.

Old Men. (*in chorus*) Mere boys!

[*Old men now march past.*

Old Men. We who are young and careless, etc.

Young Men. Ha, ha, ha!

1st Old Man. Who ha, ha's me? I'm of age!

1st Young Man. Yea, you'll qualify!

1st Old Man. Am I not sound? Have I the rickets? the spavin? the rheumatics? Nay, who says I can't marry?

2nd Young Man. Well done, young Lothario. How old are you, youngster?

2nd Old Man. He is old enough to keep a wife, which same I much doubt thou art.

2nd Young Man. Who consulted you, sprightly Winter?

2nd Old Man. (*in a rage*) Winter! Winter! I'll winter thee could I get at thee.

3rd Young Man. Worry him not; he hath cut his wisdom teeth.

2nd Young Man. Cut his wisdom teeth? They have cut him long ago and left him in the lurch.

Enter a short man with one arm and a wooden leg.

Short Man. Is there a widow left, or are they all gone? I want to get a widow.

1st Old Man. Widows? Hem! too old, too old!

Short Man. You believe that extremes should meet, hey? But is there a widow? I must have a widow.

[*Hobbles out*.

[*A bell rings. A young girl goes past with a pensive air. Two more go past with a self-conscious air and a toss of the head. A couple of fat widows now go past with a languishing look at the young men. Two sour old maids come next, with a look of scorn for the old men, who shout in derision*.

Old Maids. One leg in the grave, the old wretches!

1st Old Man. You needn't fear, ladies; your age protects you.

Old Maids. Horrid!

[*Exeunt both*.

[*A bell rings. Exeunt young men and old men, all singing, "Good-bye to youth," etc., etc., the most decrepit bringing up the rear. Enter suddenly, running, a callow youth*.

Callow Youth. Are they all gone? all gone? Jean! Finette! Marie! Are they all gone? I've got the stove and a wash-tub, and I'll soon be rich. Oh, they'll all be gone, the girls, they'll be all gone!

[*Runs out*.

Enter PIOTR *and* PORNAC, *by different ways, both in a hurry. They run against each other; both fall*.

POR. Ha! 'tis thou, scum!

PIO. Rat!

POR. (*rising*) Don't rat me!

PIO. I'll teach thee to scum me!

POR. Yardstick! beanpole!

PIO. Potbelly! swine!

Both. (*edging off*) Ha, ha!

POR. (*disdainfully*) I would spare thy terrors, coward.

PIO. (*the same*) I scorn to vantage by thy tremblings, craven.

[*Exeunt both in a hurry by different ways*.

[*Rise inner curtain, men and women discovered ranged on separate sides of the room. A bell rings. Enter an official, who hammers with a baton on a table*.

Officer. I declare the market open.

[*Reads from a list*.

Number one: Jeanne Pierrotte, stand forward.

[*An old maid comes forward. Officer continues reading.*

Jeanne Pierrotte, spinster, over forty.

JEANNE. It's a lie!

Officer. But a fair housekeeper, though sharp-tempered.

1st Old Man. Too old!

Other Old Men. (*in chorus*) Too old, too old!

Officer. This woman has a good dowry in gold.

1st Old Man. Ha, ha! she is not so formidable. Fair one, would you consider my youth and loveliness?

Old Maid. Dotard, marry a scarecrow? Not me.

1st Young Man. 'Tis a tidy sum. Sweet angel, would you consider?

Old Maid. O sir, spare my blushes.

1st Young Man. Don't mention them. (*aside*) They're spare enough. Is it a match?

Old Maid. I'm yours.

[*Faints in his arms.*

1st Young Man. (*supporting her out*) Now for the dowry.

Officer. (*reading*) Marie Denoit, widow, small dowry, fair looking, healthy.

[*A fat widow stands forward.*

1st Old Man. Madam, can we do business?

Fat Widow. Well, I should say not.

1st Old Man. Madam, I have a friend here who will speak me better in your eyes.

Fat Widow. What friend?

1st Old Man. In this bag. (*shakes bag, making gold clink*) Hear him speak, madam!

Fat Widow. It doth sound kindly. Is there much?

1st Old Man. More than much. What is your mind?

Fat Widow. I will consider.

1st Old Man. Then you are won.

Fat Widow. Have you had experience?

1st Old Man. Much, madam, I have buried my fifth.

Fat Widow. Then I will be your sixth!

[*Exeunt both, Fat Widow carrying bag.*

Officer. (*rapping with baton*) These be all the dowries. I now declare the marriage market open for general arrangement.

[*Men and women pair off in earnest consultation. The short man with a wooden leg limps by with a young girl.*

Short Man. I have a cow and a field of corn, and will soon be rich.

Girl. But I would as lief marry a deal table.

Short Man. Consider now, I would make you happy.

Girl. With that leg and that arm? Never!

[*Turns to leave him; he tries to kneel to her, but falls over and cannot get up. An old maid tries to help him, but he waves her off with strong objection. He escapes and leaves the old maid alone. Just then the callow youth rushes in.*

Callow Youth. Are they all gone, all gone? Are the girls all gone? (*starts on seeing the old maid*) Yea, I knew it, I knew it.

[*Turns to go out.*

Old Maid. Nay, there is one, there is one! Oh, leave me not!

Callow Youth. Oh, thunders, no!

[*Rushes out followed by Old Maid.*

Enter PIOTR *and* PORNAC *by different doors. Enter the Mother Superior*, HELÈNE *and* FANCHON. PIOTR *and* PORNAC *both start and fall on their knees before* FANCHON.

Both. O Fanchon!

FAN. I cannot marry you both.

POR. Then choose.

PIO. Yea, choose.

FAN. Then I will have Pornac.

POR. (*squeezing her hand*) Angel!

[*Exit* PORNAC *and* FANCHON.

PIO. Well, I am a fool! 'Tis the devil's wages.

[*Exit.*

Enter DAULAC *and* DESJARDINS *by different doors.*

DAUL. Pornac, Pornac! (*sees* HELÈNE) O Helène!

HEL. Daulac!

DAUL. This is happiness!

[*Kisses her hand.*

HEL. Daulac, could I tell you how I have wronged you!

DAUL. And I have wronged myself by losing you! O Helène, I have loved you!

HEL. Have loved me?

DAUL. And do now, as merciful Heaven knows, Helène.

[*Folds her in his arms.*

Mother Superior. Stay, stay, sir; this maiden is in my charge.

DES. And you, sir, wed to glory!

DAUL. But Heaven says nay, for love hath conquered both. Helène, my love, would you marry me had I but one hour to live?

HEL. Daulac, I would rather die with you than live without you.

DAUL. Then you are mine, and you shall be my wife. By Heaven I swear it!

DES. (*aside*) Fiends of hell, he shall not! He shall not, for I also swear it!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 2.

Enter DESJARDINS *with a letter in his hand.*

DES. I am still triumphant. Peal out, bells!
Blow, blatant music! I have that about me
Will spill this melody in the middle tune.

Enter HELÈNE, *veiled, leaning on* DAULAC'S *arm.*

DAUL. Helène, my wife at last, sweet welcome home.
[*Kisses her.*

HEL. My husband!

DES. (*coming forward*) Madam, I would congratulate you.

HEL. Thank you, Desjardins.

DES. (*to* DAULAC) And you.

DAUL. (*takes* DESJARDINS' *hand, still holding* HELÈNE'S)
Thank you, old friend, this is true happiness:
The woman I love my bride; the life-long friend,
The man I honored, joining in my happiness.
My heart's too full for utterance.

HEL. Yea, thank you, Desjardins, this kind hour
Seems too much filled with blessing. I will go
And supplicate Heaven that its joy may last.

DES. (*detaining her*) Yea, madam, happiness is all

at most
Anticipation. Scarcely do we lift
The cup we dreamed of to our thirsting lips,
Than some cruel fate, with rude, arresting hand,
Doth dash it from us. Madam, you do well
To doubt its reality.

HEL. Sir, you are pale. Daulac, my husband, I will go and pray.

[*Goes to a prie-dieu at one side and kneels with her back to them.*

DAUL. Desjardins, by your manner and your looks, You bring some desperate business.

DES. (*giving him letter*) Forgive my intruding on an hour like this,
This ravaging a bridegroom from his bride,
But the occasion urges. (*aside*) Now we'll know
How he doth like the issue of his promise.

DAUL. (*opens letter and reads slowly in gradually growing horror and amazement*) Great Heaven! from the Governor!

DES. Yea, did you not expect it?

DAUL. (*reads*) "The Iroquois are forming in large numbers on the Upper Ottawa. Your plan to proceed to Long Sault and stop their progress is now necessary, if to be attempted at all. The young men await you in the Church of the Jesuits, ready to take the oath you suggested and proceed at once to the Long Sault. If you now have any doubts as to the wisdom of your proceeding, I would advise you to await further developments, but there is no doubt that the Colony of New France was never in so great a danger.—Faithfully yours, Maisonneuve, *Governor*." My God! my God!

DES. Then you repent your proposal?

DAUL. O Desjardins, so soon, so soon!

DES. Then you will not go?

DAUL. Can you not feel for this, mine agony?

The woman I have loved so many years,
To have to leave her at the altar steps
To go to death.

DES. How many have loved as truly all their lives
Never to get that far, and yet men say
There's a God in Heaven.

DAUL. O Desjardins, think me not a craven
If in this hour I'm but a suffering man,
Hounded by fate into so cruel a corner
That seems me man was never cornered so.
Look on her, Desjardins, kneeling like a spirit
New shrived for Heaven, praying that Heaven to keep
In hallowed bonds her golden happiness,
Breathing on innocent lips, whose every breath
Is but an incense of divinity,
Over and over the hallowed name of wife.
And all the while you stand like some grim fate
Urging on me to kill those very prayers
And, playing the robber, wreck that happiness.

DES. Be careful, or she will hear you.

DAUL. Hear? She cannot hear us. So hallowed is
this love
In woman's innocence on her wedding night,
That, believe me, Desjardins, she is deaf to earth;
She is so far away, her heart's in heaven.

DES. Yea, 'tis a pity, 'tis a veritable pity
To spoil so rare a picture, but meanwhile
The Governor waits. You are a soldier, sir.
There are two roads, they will not go together:
Glory or love, which will you choose to-night?
The occasion waits.

DAUL. Then it shall wait no longer, I have chosen!

DES. Ha! now which? Have I studied this man
Full half a lifetime to discover now
Some unseen flaw in all that open nature
That yet may defeat my hopings? Oh, this minute,
It seems the longest I have ever lived.
Speak, Daulac, speak and break my heart or lift me up to

heaven.

DAUL. Desjardins, have you loved me all these years
And not yet know me? Have we been such friends
That even a doubt in this supremest hour
Should pain you with a single shuddering fear
Lest I should wreck on such a shoal as this?
O Desjardins, Desjardins!

DES. Then you choose glory?

DAUL. Nay, I choose love.

DES. Oh, I am mated by this paper man,
This poor stuffed idol, even my suspicions,
Mine evil instincts that would dare impugn
The very angels of heaven, did not dream
This froth of honor would blow on the wind,
This fountain of glory fall at the first spout!
O human wisdom, poor, weak, servile wit,
Now I discard you. I will go a fool!
I am checkmated (*aside*) by the very weakness
I thought to play on.

DAUL. Desjardins, Desjardins, you have read me wrong!

DES. Would to mischief I could read you right!

DAUL. Upon this night, this holiest night on earth
To me that fate e'er brings to erring man,
Would you say "Glory"? What is glory, I say,
To him who loves? If you would have my answer,
(*pointing to* HELÈNE) There is my glory. All of earth's
wide dreams,
All majesties, all vistas of my youth,
Are concentrated on her rose-red lips
When she speaks that word "husband"!
Nay, Desjardins,
The bitter struggle in my heart to-night
Is 'twixt love and love, the human love
That which doth bid me stay, the higher love
That would not let me make her soul a bait
To trap mine honor. The higher love doth conquer.
I have chosen. Give me but a moment
To bid farewell.

DES. (*aside*) Then I have conquered!

DAUL. Helène!

[*She starts. He goes to her and raises her.*

Helène, my love, I must leave you now.

HEL. When? now? But you will come to me soon?

DAUL. Yea, my love, forgive this parting now.

HEL. Before you go, let me say that one word,
It is so sweet, you know, to woman's heart,
"My husband!"

DAUL. My wife, my wife! (*kissing her*)

[*Exit.*

DES. I grieve to part you from so new a husband.

HEL. (*as if waking from a dream*) Did you speak?

[*Suddenly she sees the letter which* DAULAC *has dropped.*

That letter! what means it?

[*Goes to pick it up, but* DESJARDINS *intercepts her.*

Sir, give me that letter.

DES. I cannot, madam.

HEL. Was it not to my husband?

DES. It was, madam.

HEL. Then I must see it. Am I not his wife?

DES. He would not have you see it.

HEL. Sir, you insult me with your reasons. They must be
Cruel ones would keep the knowledge of
Her husband's absence from his new-wed wife.
Sir, I demand it, I must have that letter.

DES. Madam, did it never strike your fears
That in your husband's love you had a rival?

HEL. Sir!

DES. Nay, madam, you mistake; 'tis no woman.

HEL. (*stamping with her foot*) What mean you, sir? You insult me with enigma.

DES. I mean that Daulac, who loves you so well, Loves glory more.

HEL. Glory? What mean you? I scarce understand.

DES. If you will come with me and trust my word, I will show whereof I mean.

HEL. Go with you, sir? Nay, I will not leave here Till my husband comes.

DES. Then you will have it, madam!

[*Gives her letter.*

Read your letter.

HEL. (*reads the letter*) O cruel Heaven! Daulac! Daulac!

[*Falls fainting to the ground.*

DES. O God, I have killed her! I who love her so! Helène! Helène! She moves not. Dare I kiss her? Just one light kiss, I will but touch the dews Of her sweet lips! Nay, nay, I dare not now. He! he! love her! He knows not of love! Ha, she revives! Helène!

HEL. Sir, did you speak? Where am I? Daulac! Oh! (*rises*) Now I remember. Have I fainted? Nay, You need not help me; I will go with you.

DES. Are you recovered?

HEL. I am a soldier's daughter. It was a weakness, A foolish weakness that doth shame us women. Give me that letter. Thank you. We will go.

DES. Are you prepared?

HEL. Have I not said it?

[*Points to the door. Exeunt both.*

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*A gallery or alcove of the Jesuits' church. The interior of the church is seen in the background.*

TIME—*The same night.*

Enter priests and acolytes. Music and chanting is heard in the distance. Enter DAULAC *and the seventeen young men. They all kneel. The Priest comes forward. Enter* DESJARDINS AND HELÈNE *in the shadowed foreground.* HELÈNE *sees* DAULAC *kneeling.*

HEL. (*starts*) My husband!

DES. Yea, madam, see his face; his features rapt
On deeds of glory, battle's rugged perils,
Have lost the lover-look that gazed in thine
But these short moments since. Gaze thou and see
How far away is Daulac's heart from love.
So far is he, that yon sweet hour ago,
Yon lover-kiss still trembling on thy lips,
To him were never given.

HEL. Nay, cruel man, see, even now he prays.
My name upon his lips looks up to God.
Let me go to him!

DES. 'Twere sacrilege, the grossest sacrilege!
You would not stay him. Did he love you true,
He'd die before he'd ever use you thus.

HEL. He loves me yet! O God! he loves me yet!

DES. And yet upon his very wedding night,
Yea, from the shadow of the altar itself,
He'd go to this.

HEL. I'll not believe, though all the fiends of hell
Do jabber it in mine ears but Daulac loves me.

[*The Priest in the distance administers the oath to* DAULAC.

Priest. My son, your heart is consecrate to God.

Sacred to this purpose, alienate,
By this dread oath from all that dwells in life,
From father, mother, brother, sister, wife.

HEL. (*starts forward with a cry*) Daulac, O Daulac!

DES. (*pulling her back*) Nay, madam, are you mad?

HEL. I tell you, let me go! He is my husband!

[DAULAC *sinks once more in prayer. The Priest administers the oath to the others in turn. Then the priests, soldiers all pile out of the church.*

HEL. O God! O God!

DES. Are you satisfied?

HEL. He loves me still! I cannot but believe
You are some wizard, some horrible conjurer,
Who with an evil dream doth visit mine eyes.
I'll not believe upon my wedding night
That I'm forsaken. God would not permit.

DES. By all that's holy, all that's pure and true,
That Daulac to whom a little hour ago
You promised wifehood is dead to earth and you.
Think not of him, O Helène; in this hour,
Hour of my triumph, turn your eyes on me,
I who have loved you, not as yonder shadow,
But as a man, a soul of flesh and blood,
Whose very fancies tingle at your name.
Who all these years has plotted, waited, schemed
To get you; would go to nether hell
And suffer all the agonies of the damned
To catch one little smile of kind regard,
One token of your love.

HEL. Daulac! Heaven! I am going mad!

DES. Nay, nay, repulse me not. O sweetest of women,
Give me but one small crumb of all you've wasted
On that cold statue. I will make you happy.
We will go back to France. Nay, say it not!
Don't curse me, Helène!

HEL. Back, insulter! Leave me, monster! Go!

DES. Yea, name me monster, name me what you will.
Am I that monster? Why? Because I love
Your womanly, sweet perfections, your true self.
Nay, rather, he who having gained such a prize,
And envied of earth and Heaven, should so prove
Trebly a monster as to cast it off.
O Helène, Helène! had it been my fate
Like yonder Daulac, to have won your heart,
Not all the glory, all the honor prized,
Had come between us.

HEL. Man, or rather devil, let me pass!

DES. Madam, be I devil, or what you like,
I am not lightly scorned. Beware my hate.
Your noble Daulac is no longer yours
This very night, devoted to New France,
The victim of his folly and my wiles,
He goes to death.

HEL. O Heaven, Heaven, save him! Daulac!
[*Falls in dead faint.*

DES. So let her lie. Yon lovely drift of snow
That froze my hopes. Why did fate make it so,
That she, all Spring to Daulac, to me all Winter.
O angel perfections, hair and curvèd mouth,
Sweet eyes all hidden, splendid pulsing breast,
Be fate but kindly, I will melt you yet.
Meantime I take this memory of your splendors.
[*Slips her wedding ring from off her finger.*
Now I must go. I'll haunt him till I know
That he is dead. I'll brave the painted storm
To see him ended, he whom I do hate.
[*Exit.*

Enter Mother Superior.

HEL. (*rises*) Madam, where am I? Yea, now I remember.
It all comes back. Oh, tell me, tell me true,
Is this a dream, a hideous midnight dream?

Or is he dead to me?

M. S. Yea, my child, Daulac is dead to thee.

HEL. Dead? dead? to me? Then tell me, holy mother,
What God would have me do.

M. S. Submit to Heaven, my child.

HEL. Nay, he's my husband still. I'll go to him.

Enter DAULAC.

Daulac!

[*Flies to his arms.*

DAUL. (*kissing her brow*) Then you know all?

HEL. Yea, all.

DAUL. My poor, poor love!
This life is not all harvest, some must lose
Where others garner. Had I stayed with you,
The agonies of butchered women and children
At night and morn had ever come between
Our holiest love. God asks this sacrifice,
That, loving you, my bride, my sweet Helène,
I go to death.

HEL. Yea, Daulac, it is fated, but once more
Take me into your arms and kiss my lips,
And call me wife.

DAUL. O my love, my wife!

HEL. My husband, farewell!

DAUL. We will meet in heaven!

HEL. Soon. (*exit* DAULAC) O Daulac, Daulac!

Enter FANCHON.

FAN. O my mistress!

HEL. O Fanchon!
Did ever Heaven ask so much of woman?
And, O my Fanchon, that horrible Desjardins,

He—he—made love to me!

FAN. Oh, I have known him long; he is a devil.

HEL. I kept this fact from Daulac; I would never
In this dread hour prevent him in his duty,
But I've a duty I do owe to him.

FAN. Yea, madam, to retire and pray for him.

HEL. Nay, he shall have my prayers, yea, even now
With every breath goes up a call to Heaven.
But I'm a soldier's daughter: where he dies,
I am his wife, I'm going to die with him.

CURTAIN.

ACT V. SCENE 1.

PLACE—*The Long Sault, a sheltered spot near the fort.*

TIME—*Night.*

Enter HELÈNE *and* FANCHON.

FAN. O madam, stay not in this terrible place.
Death creeps about us, looks us in the face.
Oh, stay not, this is death.

HEL. Yea, all life, too; back, back, the way you came,
Or this same death you prate of in his net
Will mesh another victim!

FAN. O noble lady, what is this poor longing,
This love of life and heat and moving sound,
That makes us cowards to the crowding dark?
I sorrow to leave you, yet I dread to die.

HEL. Quick! haste, or 'tis too late. Fear not for me!
Quick! kiss me, Fanchon; now good-bye, good-bye!

FAN. Forgive me, madam, that I love to live.

HEL. Go! go! May you be happy, happy as I.

FAN. O madam!

HEL. Farewell!

[HELÈNE *pushes her out; she goes out sobbing.*

Oh, now I've reached my zenith as a plotter;
Could I but make a noise I'd like to sing,
Or lilt and dance around, like any child.
'Tis strange, with death about me like a wall,
There creeps across me this fantastic mood;
But I could laugh and sing and cry by turns,
For I am his, he cannot send me back.
Yea, I will die first. O you foolish world!
Little you know what woman will do for man;
'Tis said by shallow-pate philosophers
That there be nothing equals woman's wit,
That renders woman so unconquerable.

'Tis something 'twixt her two breasts planted deep,
Pulsating her whole being, called the heart,
And be she guided thus, what menaces
The dreams of subtlest intellect crumbles down
To airy nothings at her constant will.
O stars! that rise and know me true to him,
Ere you do set, will see us die together!

[*Footsteps heard. She gazes swiftly about her and glides into a shadowy corner. An Indian war-cry is heard in the distance.*

Enter DAULAC *with cloak and sword.*

DAUL. Another dawn will usher our souls to Heaven.

Enter DESJARDINS *disguised as a Huron chief.*

DES. Ha, ha, ha!

DAUL. Avaunt, Fiend!

DES. (*advancing into the light and opening his blanket*) Know you me not?

DAUL. 'Tis you, Desjardins? Methought you were the Huron
In paint and feathers hidden from my ken,
But now you laughed as harshly as the fiend
When he mocks mortals ushered into hell.

DES. 'Tis well said, ha, ha, ha!

DAUL. What mean you? Why this coming in a mask,
When you, by joining in our open act,
Had shared our glory? I had not dreamed you martial,
But rather subtle, wise and full of cares,
A friend to moor to in the deeps of life;
But now I greet you sudden built about
With unsuspected virtues. Welcome, friend,
A soldier hand I give you in this breach,
Where ere another sunrise we will sleep
To save our loved New France.

DES. Nay, nay, not yet until you know the truth!

DAUL. The truth?

DES. I am no soldier full of oaths and follies,—
Glory I crave not, knowing its poor lease;
Country I own not save where I may thrive.
I'm not so drunk with patriotic dreams
To snuff my candle in such breach as this.
Nay, Daulac, you are wrong; on other matters,
'Twixt me and thee, I come to thee to-night.

DAUL. What mean you, Desjardins? why this sinister
mask?

DES. Are you a dauntless spirit?

DAUL. Whatever Daulac's faults, and he hath many,
No mortal ever turned him where he faced!

DES. Then know the truth: this is the true Desjardins;
The other was the mask.

DAUL. The mask?

DES. Yea, the mask. Thou need'st all thy bravery,
Whereof in pride thou boastest thyself possessed.
'Tis easy dreaming; full many hearts are brave
When glory and achievement lie ahead,
Like splendid hills, topped by more splendid sunset,
Making a crown of memory o'er their deeds,
Where immortality lights them to their rest.
But when in starless midnight, all unwitnessed,
The sharp encounter runs, with shaking shame,
And hideous obloquy and dead men's bones,
Then who is brave, who glory-hearted then,
When cruel death camps round the ebbing hours,
Bidding to silence?
Ha, ha, with thee it is another matter,
Yea, 'tis a sterner road to travel then.

DAUL. I know not if thou art mine olden friend,
Who counselled me oft upon my youthful follies,
Or whether thou art some fiend, in my last hours
Sent hither in shape of him to shake my spirit;
But man or devil, I do say to thee,
Thou canst not daunt me.

DES. Wait, wait, speak not so fast, my noble soldier;
Desjardins' vengeance hath not burned in vain.
Wait, wait, thou gilded idol, blinded fool,
Till thou hast met the master of thy fate,
Then thou wilt tremble!

DAUL. Desjardins, chance before the dawn I die,
But tell me what dread sin I sinned against you,
That makes you such a devil in this hour?

DES. Ha, ha! 'twill take some time, but could I spread
This hour of agony over many years,
For bitter ages, I would die anew,
To see you suffer as you will to-night.
You think you are a hero, you who are
A poor tricked creature, taken in my cunning.
You ask how you have sinned. In your whole being!
You crossed my nature since your earliest years.
All that you had I lacked, I speak it plain,
And hated you with an instinctive hate.
You little knew the hell that walked your side,
The enemy that crept into your life,
That probed your very weakness, searched your follies,
Studied the deep recesses of your nature,
To take you in this final trap at last.
Had I not reason? What you had I envied,
The form, the spirit, the charm that dazzles men
And leadeth women as the magnetic needle
Is drawn to either pole. Had I not reason?
You had what my soul lacked!

DAUL. Great God! Great God! Can such a nature be?

DES. Great God? What hath a God to do with thee?
You cheat your spirit with a vain conceit
That Deity hath guided all these years
Your being to this one great act of glory,
This splendid deed of high heroic valor,
Wherein through death you hand your memory down,
Immortal and resplendent to all days.
But know the truth: 'twas I, not He, who guided
Your poor fool-nature, blinded, to this pass,
Where men will laugh to scorn the self-built hero,

Taken at odds in his own childish dreams,
Aping in play the demi-gods of Greece,
Uselessly ending, in fountain spout of glory,
A self-marred life he did not dare to live.

DAUL. There is a something in your very voice
That freezes my being. No thousand thirsting tongues
Of angry, eager steel poised at my heart
To drink its fountains had power to wake the dread
My spirit feels to know that all these years
Your soul has been so near me. Of a truth,
We live next door to beings all our days,
Quaff social beakers at the self-same inn,
Tread the same streets with similar joys and cares,
Share the same roof, yea, even board and bed,
From eager youth to pining, palsied age,
To part as strangers at the very end.
Yea, sooth, it is indeed a wondrous world.
But to be shown long after many years,
The path you treaded nightly cunningly hid
A precipice to gulf you at the end,
Is not a thousandth part so dire and dread
As this unmasking of a hidden hate.
God knows I am a poor slow-minded man,
Following one impulse all my days:
If I have had the folly to dream of fame
Beyond my merit, Heaven hath rebuked me daily.
I know not of your subtle sophistries
That seek below the surface to confound
The simple-minded, who have only duty
To light them on to what is best in living;
I may not ken your wisdom, mayhap I am
O'er-blinded by my passions to achieve,
Treading the path of those who went before;
But I know this—that in my poorer insight
The simple following of those noble voices
Who point in lofty dreams to aid our fellows,
Is greater far than all the deep intrigue
Builded of all the sophistries of hell.
I am a simple soldier without wisdom,
Save that which serves for valor; without knowledge,

Save what a man should know; but I am certain
What I have done is right in eye of God,
And my best instincts:—though I die to-night,
This sleeping world, this mighty-brooding mystery,
That dreams in awe of its own majesty;
Those wondrous rolling orbs that light each other
Along the endless ways of outer space;
All tell me I am right and whisper comfort.

DES. Ha, ha! this demi-god, he is above me,
Out of my reach, my envy cannot touch him.
Wait, wait, till I do tumble his soul to earth!
(*to* DAULAC) Wait, wait, my Daulac, how about Helène?

DAUL. She is an angel, far beyond your hate,
Or my poor love.

DES. Beyond your love, perchance, but not my hate.
Have you never in your innocence dreamed
The one supremest reason why I hate you
Is that I love Helène?

DAUL. You—love—Helène?

DES. And why not? May the moth not love the star?
The bat bathe in the moonlight with the eagle?
Yea, I have loved her, secret, all these years.
'Twas I who separated you in France,
Drove you out here, trapped you into this corner;
And now I tell you, petted fool of Heaven,
I am your master, I will wed her yet.

DAUL. O God in heaven, tell me is it true
That yonder devil is not flesh and blood,
But some grim phantom?

DES. Yea, more; to teach you what a patch your honor,
When 'tis too late to mend it; would you know it,
She's not all yours!

DAUL. Devil, your life shall answer, pollute not
That angel memory by such hellish slander.
Though I be sworn to Heaven a million times,
I am yet a man!

[*Draws sword.*

DES. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I fear you not!
You are too great a soul to trample a gnat
That stings like me; know you your marriage ring?
[*Holds the ring up*.

DAUL. Great God! It is! It is her wedding ring!
What mist is this that creeps before my spirit?
Nay! nay! I am forsworn! By earth and Heaven,
She is as pure as that same Heaven itself,—
And you a liar!

DES. (*starting back*) I am a liar, aye. Ha, ha; ha, ha!
What proof have you that I am what you say?
Yea, die in doubt. Here is your wedding ring.
You trusted Heaven! Where is your wife to say
I am a liar?
[HELÈNE *comes out and confronts him*.

HEL. That Heaven you slander takes you at your word,
And I am here.

DES. Great God! Curses! curses! I am beaten,
Yea, beaten, beaten, at the very last, and by the woman!

DAUL. Helène!

HEL. (*rushing into his arms*) Yea, Daulac, Helène, come to die with you.

DAUL. My love! my angel love!
[*A gun is fired*. HELÈNE *screams*.

HEL. Daulac, I die! I die!

DAUL. (*supporting her to a heap of fir*) O God! she is shot!

HEL. Kiss me, my love, I could not live without you.

DAUL. O Helène! tell me that you do not suffer.

HEL. Nay, Daulac, I die happy in your arms.
[*Dies*.

DAUL. (*laying her gently down*) Dead! Oh, dead!
O universe of love so soon extinguished!
(*turning to* DESJARDINS *and drawing his sword*) Now,
Devil, to settle with you.

DES. Yea, yea; this is the work I'd fain be at.
(*draws*) Now, vengeance, vengeance, match with Daulac's fate!

DAUL. Desjardins, though it be my latest hour on earth,
I could not die till I had finished you!

[*They fight long and hard*. DESJARDINS *wounds* DAULAC.

DES. Ha, ha! Mine, mine!

DAUL. No, by the stars of heaven, no! Take that—aye, that!

[*Runs* DESJARDINS *through*. DESJARDINS *falls and lies on ground, gasping. He tries to get up, then crawls toward* HELÈNE'S *body*.

DES. Yea, mine! Yea, mine! in death! in death!

DAUL. Back, back!

[*Prevents him*.

DES. Curse you! curse you!

[*Dies*.

[*A loud war-whoop rises, and Indians with raised hatchets rush in from all sides*. DAULAC *lifts* HELÈNE'S *body and, placing his foot against* DESJARDINS' *body, turns, takes sword in hand and confronts them. They all start back in tableau*.

DAUL. O loved New France, my own beloved New France,
I die, I die for thee!

CURTAIN.

MORNING.

A Tragedy in Five Acts.

PREFACE.

THIS play has no historical foundation. It is set in a remote period anterior to Christianity. But its theme is plainly modern, and deals with the tremendous problems of modern society. The belief in God and a larger hope, as vitally affecting man's whole life, actions and ideals here, is the central problem of the play. The question, "Is the worldly cynic right or wrong in his summing up of human nature?" is destined finally to settle the fate of our whole modern civilization.

Without the feeling of the wide sky overhead there could never be the comfort of the sheltering human roof; and without the larger belief, centring in the idea of God, there can be no hope for the stability of human ethics and institutions. Then, which ideal is to prevail in society, that of the cynic or that of faith and hope—Vulpinus or Leonatus?

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LEONATUS, *a noble-minded citizen and merchant of Avos.*

VULPINUS, *a clever and scheming citizen, who is envious of Leonatus and would supplant him.*

PROTINUS, *the chief of the nobility of the city, and father of Varra, who loves Morning.*

SLINK, *a creature of Vulpinus.*

BLUFF, *steward and secretary to Leonatus.*

GROWL }
SNOUT } *Plundering schemers who would oppress and rob the city.*
GROSS }

High Priest of the city.

VARRA, *a young noble, in love with Morning, daughter of Leonatus.*

DESPOND, *a young noble, the friend of Varra.*

POSE }
LANGUID } *Two decadents who affect the society of the city and preach despair and rottenness.*

MORNING, *a beautiful young girl, daughter of Leonatus.*

LUPINA, *a clever and beautiful woman, who loves Varra and schemes with Vulpinus.*

Priests, lords, merchants, people and mob.

MORNING.

———

ACT I. SCENE 1.

PLACE—*House of* VULPINUS *in the city of Avos*.

TIME—*Mythical*.

Enter VULPINUS, *alone*.

VULP. He must not prosper. Every honor he wears,
But makes my toil the harder. Nature dread
Did fashion deceit to make my soul its dwelling.
I am a man! although I doubt all men.
I practise that I believe not, where others believe
But practise not. Men's follies add a zest
To foster mine ambitions. Thus I stand:
I leer at life, but rattle its dice along
To hinder happiness, and ink my soul
In petty evils where I shirk the large.
The kind of man I am I'd have you know,
Modern in all things, rounded by a wall
Of small conventions. What is life but this?
Comfort and safety, these two make a world;
Much to cavil at, little to uphold,
With just a spice of what the gods call sin
To build a conscience whereon I may play
The devil's tune played since this world began.
Life a sensation finely tempered out
To fibred hardiness, desire a flame
To warm your hands at, yea, but not to burn in.
Your heroes, statesmen, poets! All veneer,
Cloaks of folly or of humbug all,

To cheat the pride and hide the animal.
Now, he is such, this aged Leonatus,
Trusting, impassioned, impractical in all,
Building high dreams of human consequence,
Deluded by dead histories of old ghosts
Of high achievement, rearing up a dream
That man is godlike, stranding in a mire
Of present impossibilities. Now, me,—
I meet the present, watching for the lie,
To make it slave to opportunity.
To-morrow is to-morrow. Fair or foul,
Kind or sinister its face may be—
But safer far to sip the sure to-day.
I never gained, but eke I never lost;
It is a motto in our family.
I never worked a grossly hideous deed;
In wisdom's plot it is not necessary
To him, secure, who sanely bides his chance
To climb those ladders of human lust and blood
Built 'gainst the walls of this world's power and weakness.
I deal not with heroics or ideals;
Fancy or emotion savor not
The sauce that my mind stews in, rather fact—
Cold, hard and brutal, never-bending fact.
The past and future lumber not my dream.
Heredity? Who follows far his tree
May meet a gallows. Better kill the past.
Little it matters us, who find it hard
To kill the present. Now, this kind of man,
This vague, high dreamer, with his skyward gaze,
His bubble words, I ne'er could understand.
He runs too wide, not broken to the traces,
Where ploughs the furrow of this practical world.
He mocks your hopes, your schemes, you cannot use him.
In short, not biddable to the common mind,
He smacks of lunacy. Now, such a man,
To reach the coping-stone, the leadership,
And wield the sceptre I have waited for,
'Tis mad confusion! Gods! were there a God
I'd say he played me false, to see this man,
Without one scheme, one crooking of his thumb,

Rise up and near the place my whole life's aim
Hath burned to reach. Haply, indeed, yea,
There is no God, and I am in the right,
Strong in the false, the scheme, the lurking plot,
That moves the issues of this foolish world.
Wreck him? Yea, I will. I'll use this world
To confuse its high imaginings; its base mud
To kill its miasmas that do rise therefrom.

Enter SLINK.

Here comes my plodding ass with golden ears.
(*to* SLINK) How go my slow ambitions?

SLINK. Well, well, my master, solidly and sure,
As build my fortunes, who do help you to them.

VULP. You ne'er forget yourself.

SLINK. 'Tis my one sure protection. They who crawl,
'Chance may not tumble, but may lose themselves
By overforgetting.

VULP. Were it not greater yet to lose your fame
In a greater greatness?

SLINK. Your preachments may for others, such poor babble
May catch the silly world, but not for Slink,
Who knows you well. I trust me to the ground
Of solid substance. Put that in your reckoning.

VULP. Beware, you, Slink! I, who do doubt all things,
Doubt even dust. This puffball of existence,
Beware its haze, it may deceive you yet.

SLINK. Yet all its dust prevents you not to kick it
At opportunity. Nay, you cannot shake
The groundward citadel of my solid hopes.
Were all the office of high existence held,
Virtues, prerogatives, in the nether balance,
I'd take my gold.

VULP. And drop the plaudits and the gaudy show,
The stilt-walk of this life, in either slime?

SLINK. Yea, all of it. 'Tis too hazardous.

VULP. Of truth thou art material, but thou art
That iron-ballasted man to do my work.

SLINK. Yea, master, and to get paid for it.

VULP. Yea. (*aside*) But my certain, never-soaring
friend,
The devil at my elbow, he will see
Thy cellar floor will sell thee in the end,
And send thee floundering in that very mist
Thy soul abhors, where my doubts even drift.
Not even a toad shall be allowed to stand;
'Twould damn my philosophy. (to Slink) Now to business.
Where are our sensible friends, the men of plots?

SLINK. Even now they come.

VULP. And primed?

SLINK. Even to the touch-holes, each a ready flame,
To thunder at your concussions.

VULP. 'Twill do. But how of this proud girl,
This Morning?

SLINK. She is beyond me. Where she swims in light
I may only tiptoe, blink afar.

VULP. Curse her! curse her! but even her I doubt;
She is a woman!

SLINK. But a large one, far too white and high
For our poor counsels. Yea, she makes me burn
Even in her twilight. She will not leave her father.

VULP. She is a woman. The force that built this world
Up out of slimy mud, bred butterflies
To feed on carrion. Fear you not this Morning,
She is a woman—

SLINK. And loves Lord Varra.

VULP. Sirrah! you hound! you keep your reptile place,
Or I will crush you into that same dust
Your soul is made of!

[*Leaps at him.*

SLINK. Master! Pardon, pardon!

VULP. Ha! Yea, yea, I am indeed a fool.
A frenzied fool, my wise and trusty Slink.
'Twas but a weakness, a passion of the moment
That stormed and caught me. Did I fright thee, Slink?

SLINK. Yea, master, such a madness in thy face,
Thine attitude, it seemed me that thou wert
The devil's whirlwind roused to sweep me off
And end my plottings.

VULP. 'Twas but a passing fit. But mind you, Slink,
I will yet trample her, and him, her author,
Yea, all of them. Doubt I heaven and hell,
And clouds and sun, the very earth itself;
At least, at least, my soul, be sure of this,
Thou'lt drink thy vengeance!

SLINK. (*aside*) He feels, this devil feels; then, mark
my wisdom,
For all his plots he, too, is lost, is lost!
Amid this vague uncertainty I alone
Walk safe, in soundness.

Enter LUPINA.

LUP. Hail, most Cautious! learned Lupinus, hail!
Where is thine egg that hatches certain plot,
That crows loud downfall?

VULP. (*rising*) Hail, most splendid and rarest!
To what high, golden favor of the gods
Do we owe this visit?

LUP. Since when hath Vulpin called on any gods,
Save those of evil? Flatter you not so high.
If such there be, who stand in splendid white,
They stand there but to damn.

VULP. What new, green jealousy, of envious life,
Hath added this tart of canker to thy tongue?

LUP. Jealousy! jealousy! who dares match Lupina
With such a word?

VULP. Nay, I but wondered. Who wears your loveliness
Need fear no rival, be she goddess or woman.
But what of Morning?

LUP. Ha, thou acid! there thy gratings bite.
I hate that woman with as deep a hate
As thine ambitions—

[*Pauses*.

VULP. Ha! Well?

LUP. To supplant her father!

VULP. Enough! enough! we understand each other.

LUP. May I speak here?

VULP. This is my Slink, as safe as mine own shadow.

SLINK. Yea, safer!

LUP. I know him well. He oft hath tendered me
Duties for golden favors.

SLINK. (*aside*) It is a way I have, for the material
To grant the immaterial, for the solids
To give away the shadow, ha, ha, ha!
Slink, Slink, my soul, sound sense begot thee.

[*Rubs his hands*.

LUP. (*to* VULP.) My time is short; what is thy subtle
plan,
Thou master of plots?

VULP. 'Tis subtler than your deepest thoughts do dream.

LUP. Then is it placed in hell or lower down.

VULP. It is but this: His power is built on strands
Of vague traditions of the public mind.
A wintry eminence that my flame of spite
May melt in mistiness. He represents
The popular ideal of all that's good,
Strong with the people, priests and monied men,
For such vague virtues as honor, rectitude,
Piety, and an unrivalled credit,—
In short, to sum up, they, for myriad reasons,
Worship in him what they are not themselves.

Now, I do know this rotten, humbug world,
This cancerous garden called Society,
This animal, conglomerated self,
Where each doth dream that he can sin in secret,
And borrow from the common cloak of virtue
Which squat convention mantles over all,
Patched up of creed and cant and wherewithal
Mock-modesty doth curtain the obscene—
I know this myriad maggot's shallow wit.
They trust in him because he *lives* their dream;
But when in true coined words he utters it,
'Twill startle them to dread of his bare presence.
Iron is a virtuous force until we dread
That it may fall upon us. Powder a friend,
Till wakens a horrored hint unto our souls
That it may blow us up. So 'tis with these.
As I know life, the bare and brutal truth
Is the most heinous creature blinks the day.
Now, mark me, madam, give me your wit's aid,
And I will such a picture to you show
Of this base world's adherence, love's decline,
You will marvel at it. I will teach you how
The popular god is but an idol gilt
With self-deception; but the pinchbeck mirror
Wherein the public love to glass themselves,
All pure and upright, void of what they are;
Which when it mirrors their true hideousness,
They'd straightway shatter it, as doth the African
Destroy his fetish.

LUP. Ha, thus you would? You'd kill him through his virtues?
But what of Morning, will she give Varra up?

VULP. Nay, he will give her up. He is too proud,
Too much the patrician he to graft the wreck
Of such a ruined tree.

LUP. And then?

VULP. Then, madam, your own force, your woman's wit,
Must garner in this Varra. Mine to destroy,

Or build mine own.

LUP. Yea, I am with you just as far—as far—

VULP. As you can trust me. So far I with you.

LUP. And that is just—

VULP. As our self-interests' roads do lie together.

LUP. Had you been but a man, you might have been
A soul worth saving.

VULP. And what now, madam?

LUP. Failure incarnate.

VULP. With these deep schemes, these plots to build
My fate?

LUP. I half believe me yet that you will fail.
Schemes deep as yours, built on more solid base,
Have basely crumbled. Your very eternal doubt,
Your sinister scoff at all that's worth the living,
But makes me doubt you. You are but the shell,
The puffball mock of some prenatal man
Who wasted his all in some anterior world,
And here sits sneering, gnawing, day by day,
A mask of emptiness.

VULP. Nay, more than that. I have in me the acid
That eats on bitter things. I am a file
That, evenly oiled, doth gnaw the iron of life
To show its qualities. Even I serve my purpose.

LUP. Well, fare you well, and do you serve me now,
You may convert me.

VULP. Nay, rather Varra.

[*Exit* LUPINA.

SLINK. I like her not.

VULP. She is an embodied passion; fear her not.

SLINK. She minds me much of lightning, so uncertain
Where she may strike.

VULP. Then her uncertainty saves—

Enter GROWL, SNOUT *and* GROSS.

Welcome, good gentlemen, upon the hour;
You show your qualities.

GROWL. I hope we can be trusted.

SNOUT. We are nothing if not practical.

GROSS. Business, then pleasure, close each other run,
But not together.

VULP. What is your world?

GROSS. Apart from business, gold and all it brings.

GROWL. A pipe and my old cash-book are enough;
So keep your world, it is but sorry stuff.

VULP. You show me spirits safe, akin to mine.
I speak you plain, I am a man of action.
My creed is fact, my religion common-sense.

SNOUT. Good!

VULP. Now, hearken. In short, as men who serve the public,
You have ambitions!

GROWL. We are not here for nothing.

SNOUT. Life is our oyster.

GROSS. Yea, we would open it.

VULP. With a silver knife.

SLINK. (*aside*) Yea, with a golden one.

VULP. Now, in public matters where your interests lie,
You have your plans.

GROWL. We have, be we not cheated fools; as practical men
We have our plans.

VULP. Then fare them well, when old Leonatus rules.

SNOUT. Leonatus?

VULP. Yea, Leonatus.

GROWL. Leonatus, yea, just the man we want
To blind the public while we soak the lucre
Down out of the treasury.

VULP. Then you mistake your man!

GROSS. Bah! He is too credulous to worry us,
A turret cock to flaunt and bellow words
While we work i' the cellar.

SLINK. (*rubbing his hands*) Yea, i' the gold-pits.

VULP. 'Tis just where you are fools, you little know
The insensate soul of this inflated idol.
He'll wreck your fondest and your richest dreams
To gain the popular plaudits. Nay, believe me,
As practical men you want a practical leader.

GROWL. What is your plan?

VULP. To make this marplot impossible.

GROWL. Impossible?

SNOUT. Impossible! Leonatus impossible; thou art
mad!
Why, sirrah, he owns the city!

VULP. Nothing more than each of us might own
Had we the wheedling of this foolish public.
I want your backing. Do you give me aid,
We'll open this people's coffers with our nails.

SNOUT. Yea, we are yours!

GROSS. Yea, doubly so.

GROWL. Your plan! Speak out, your plan!

SNOUT. Yea, read your plan, wise builder of our
fortunes.

VULP. My plan is this. To-morrow, in council
gathered,
To choose the city's chiefest senator,
By my connivance secretly arranged,
This old Leonatus will so loose himself
Of infidelities and doctrines dire,

The city will stand astounded, men and gods
Parting in horror from his ruined house.

GROWL. You will do this?

VULP. I will; but come and see.

GROSS. And your reward?

VULP. I'd take his place! (*all start back*) Dost doubt my ability?

GROSS. Thou art our man, if thou canst make this wonder,
For evermore.

SNOUT. Yea, we will work thine orderings, do they bring
Us near the coffers.

GROWL. Yea, use us well, but play us false and hell
Will seem too mild to what thy fate shall answer.

VULP. Nay, fear me not; we are in one ripe cause
That soon will shake its golden fruit upon us.
Now gather all the looser, baser sort,
And when I signal, howl this idol down. [All drink wine.
We'll build this government for the men of sense,
And bury the fools who'd cavil at our intents
In their own follied thunders.

All. (*drinking*) Death to Leonatus, life to the coming rule,
The rule of practical men!

CURTAIN.

ACT II. Scene 1.

Place—*Home of* Leonatus *in the city of Avos*.

Enter Bluff.

Bluff. Welcome to-morrow, when through his master's name
This Bluff shall rule this city.

Enter a Priest, a Merchant and a Lawyer.

Bluff. Good morrow, gentlemen, what is your will with me?

Priest. We would see your lord.

Bluff. (*aside*) Yea, all come to him now. This is my day,
To-morrow ascends my prime. This day three days
I will be half a god. (*to them*) He now is absent,
But will soon be home.
Could you your business speak, I, as his agent,
Am in his confidence. Yea, with all modesty,
Hold even powers.

Priest. (*aside*) This is our man. (*to* Bluff) Sir Bluff, a word with you.

Bluff. (*aside*) Sir Bluff! I am risen already.

Priest. Your lord we fear, for all our confidence,
But respect your wisdom. Use your power with him
And you may use us.

Bluff. Honors, I am your servant, your very humble,
The servant of the city and the people,
Being my master's. Speak, what is your will?

Lawyer. You know the public purpose?

Bluff. I know somewhat. We feel our responsibility,
But, being modest, we will do our best.

Priest. For this same honor that we all do wot of,
I need a pledge that he will aid the priesthood,

And keep them in their struggle with the people.

BLUFF. Then you shall have it. Name this special need
And it is yours. (*aside*) Promises are like June plums,
they rot
Ere you can pick them. I will give away
More than Melchizedek, who gave Abram
The spoils of his enemies.

Priest. I represent the priesthood of the city.
We ask a tax, a heavy tax on all,
To build our temple.

BLUFF. Then is it built, I make my vow, my lord.
You know my lord is pious, and if not,
His servant is.

Priest. We know him honorable, spoken well of all,
Therefore he gets our votes. But on this pledge,
Most noble sir,—

BLUFF. (*aside*) Most noble! I am risen to the stars.

Merchant. And I stand here to voice the monied men.

BLUFF. Most honored, I hold your purse.

Merchant. Scarce yet, illustrious!

BLUFF. Illustrious? and I have married a wench!
The daughter of a barber heckles me!
Henceforth I'll know myself; she'll know me proud!
(*to Merchant*) Well, noble sir, your servant, the people's
servant,
Awaits your will. You spake of monies?

Merchant. The hand that holds my money holds strong
power,
And knows in privy when to give or take.
You know full well we hold your master's credit;
Did we withdraw he were a ruined man!

BLUFF. (*aside*) And I a tailless kite that's lost its
string.
(*to Merchant*) You would not, noble sir? You would
not?

Merchant. Nay, he is ours, but for the monied element
We ask a tax to suit our special good.
On this alone, and this, he is elected.

BLUFF. 'Tis easy, sirs; my master's will is yours.
Who are indeed, if you are not, the people?

Priest. In sooth we are; see that our will is carried,
Most noble Bluff!

[*Exit all but* BLUFF.

BLUFF. Sir! Illustrious! Noble! I am made!
I'll divorce my wench and marry a great lady,
Breed senators and daughters to the crown.
The die is cast; betwixt the church and state
This rising Bluff is destined to be great.
I'll get me armor, glaze it on my shield,
And quick forget that I was misbegotten.

Enter LEONATUS. BLUFF *bends very low*.

Hail, Leonatus! most noble master, hail!

LEON. Bluff, forbear thy crazes; anger not
Deity with thy mawkish love of pride.
Honor on honor, we still are under God.

BLUFF. (*aside*) He ever crushes me where others raise.
I am myself save only in his presence.
He hath no sense of fitness for a man
Who climbs such golden splendors. (*to* LEONATUS) Yea,
my lord,
But 'tis a mighty office, this, my lord.

LEON. All life is great, is sacred to that man
Who holds responsibility. It is not
The millions to tread that makes an emperor, but
The will to rule himself.

BLUFF. I much do fear me thou art pitched too high
For this plain city.

LEON. Nay, never too high for truth, too lofty for love.
Who have been in mine absence?

BLUFF. A deputation of the state who voice

The priesthood and the merchants, who would pledge
Your piety and your interest. (*aside*) Speak I plain,
I'll break their eggs before the brood is hatched.
Vague words spell loud, but oft mean less than silence.
(*to* LEONATUS) In short—that is all—

LEON. I honor the priesthood so far as they are God's.
I am a merchant; they know mine honesty.
I keep their interests and the public weal.

BLUFF. I told them so. I spoke you well, my master.
Was I not right?

LEON. Yea, speak for me as I will speak to-morrow.
Where is my daughter?

BLUFF. She hath gone out, my lord.

LEON. When she comes in, see that you send her to me!

BLUFF. (*going out, aside*) He soars too high. I fear
we ride too rash,
But Bluff will cling his neck though he doth topple.

[*Exit*.

LEON. Heaven is too good; it makes my head a folly.
Those plaudits ring me yet; where'er I passed
'Twas Hail, Leonatus! Will not she be happy,
My well-beloved, my pure, sweet daughter, Morning?
Now calm my mind and honesty keep my heart.
I stand at brink of some weird eminence,
Too high for what is mortal. I must hold
The iron in me up unto one high thought
Of one grave purpose; truth be with me now,
Nor mock me, if amid this iron of life
I had a dream for my sweet daughter's sake,
To build a future and an honored house.

Enter VULPINUS.

VULP. Hail, Leonatus, aged in honor and wealth,
Most happy of men! Even thou, Leonatus,
Must feel a vanity.

LEON. And did I, were it not a natural feeling?

What man reached honors honestly who ne'er felt
Their golden radiance, but tempered surely
With iron responsibilities?

VULP. Then I've a doubt if there be not a rift
'Twixt true success and solid piety,
This life ne'er crost.

LEON. Vulpin, it seemeth me for all my years,
Thou art the older by an age of ages.
Didst ever enjoy a passion, indulge a hope,
Or feel a touch of springtime in thy blood,
A glad enthusiasm or an ecstasy?
Is life all evilment? Then wherefore live?

VULP. It is this very doubt that keeps me living.
My doubt of life but breeds my dread of death.
Did I doubt nothing I would die to-morrow,
To dare the next span of immortality.
But I doubt all things, even mine own self,
And chief of all I doubt thee and these honors
Life gilds about thee, that their base is true.
I doubt the source of thy vague reputation,
That very honor which men laud thee for.

LEON. If all were like thee, life would sink in ruins.

VULP. And better it did. If thou didst only know
This rotten apple to which thou art the bloom,
This fetid carcase that gilds thee as its horn,
Thou wouldst then wonder at thy credulity.

LEON. Nay, I know it not, nor would I know it
As thou dost know; better an age of dark
Than knowledge such as thine.

VULP. Then thou wilt know to-morrow.

LEON. To-morrow?

VULP. Yea, then indeed, if thou art what thou sayest.
I tell thee, Leonatus, to-morrow thou wilt find
Thy senatorship the pledge of foul corruption.

LEON. What meanest thou, thou slanderer of a people?
To me? Leonatus? What pledge have my acts spoken,

That thy foul thoughts should taint the air I breathe
With such insinuation? Begone, thou maggot!
Never! As I am a man, I rule in honor
Or not at all!

VULP. (*aside*) This tower of wrath can thunder at my lance.
(*to* LEONATUS) Then thou wilt never rule; thou canst not scale
This golden public will and keep thy truth.

LEON. I seek it not. If it hath come to me,
It comes through years of honest care and toil
To aid the general good. I follow it not,
But doth it come I take its burden up,
A high responsibility sent from God
Enlarging my work here.

VULP. So far 'tis well. But thou wilt surely find
Thou art not master, where a snarling pack
Of lucre-hunters squabble at thy heels;
Where at thy councils plot and treason sit
To use thine honesty or to tear it down;
Where louse-like creatures dwell in their conceits,
Who live on public folly, parasites
Who batten on the revenues, keep the keys,
Nohap who rules, and lackey at all doors
That lead to loud preferment; Janus-like,
Sponging for party at the state's expense,
So that they prosper, nohap who may sink
Or rise to splendors. Further, thou wilt find,
Man is so blinded, these political leeches
Are stronger even than the public rage
Which party lulls or reddens at its will.

LEON. Where I do go justice shall go with me,
And simple truth. These should rule a world.
The people ask for right, and they shall have it,
Or I'm no senator.

VULP. Or what the priesthood call it. Dost thou think
That thou canst rule without a priest or merchant
Buzzing like carrion flies at either ear?

LEON. Yea, under God. The priesthood are His teachers
Where they are right, but human liberty asks
No final judge but man's God-given conscience.

VULP. Then thou art not orthodox.

LEON. I believe in God and His eternal laws,
Founded on justice, truth and liberty.

VULP. Hast thou any favored classes?

LEON. None. I am for the man, the man alone.
The ruler of a state should rule for all,
Meting out, in equal measure parcelled,
Perfect justice, perfect liberty.

VULP. Wilt say all this to-morrow?

LEON. Yea, and more.

VULP. Then wilt thou never be a senator.

LEON. I cannot believe it that the people lie
In such corruption as thy mind doth picture;
That they reject all honor, truth and right.
Thou art a crow, a bird of carrion mind,
Perched upon thy sordid limb of life,
Seeing ever only the rotten side.

VULP. Each soul is free to see as sense dictates.

LEON. God made the dome-walls of this splendid world,
Carpet it as you may. I choose to dream
Its vaster splendors in His vaster light—
That man is built in visions of splendid might,
And not in sinister smallness, shrivelled up
In base conceptions.

VULP. Wait, thou wilt see to-morrow, and if thou dost?

LEON. Then let it come. I only will do right
And leave the rest to God.

VULP. Thou leavest much to God. Even thy daughter
Would not do so much.

LEON. My daughter! my daughter, sirrah! what of her?

VULP. She is our fairest, worthy of all pride,
Worthy a throne. And yet, and yet, Leonatus,
Thou wouldst wreck her fortunes.

LEON. Thou hast me there upon the weaker side.
I would go far, short of dishonor's gate,
To make her happy. Do you think her set
So strong upon this?

VULP. So strong upon it that her very life,
Her happiness, is founded on it. Do
You call yourself her father and not know
Your daughter's life, her hope, is in this Varra?

LEON. Yea, I have seen it. Doth he make her happy,
'Tis all I ask.

VULP. But wherefore all so blind as not to see
That in your daughter he marries not alone
The woman he loves, but the future senator's daughter?

LEON. Sirrah, read your evil side o' life,
But slander not young Varra! Did I dream
He held my daughter such poor property
As second to advantage in this world,
I'd rather see her dead, a thousand times,
Than wed, his wife. Nay, thou lovest to cavil.
Even to hearken to thine evil thoughts
Insulteth all that's living. Thou dost go
About earth's gardens seeking for her blights,
Her poison flaws, revelling in defect.
Were I as thee I'd seek some speedy death
And quickly end me. Life is not one ill,
One grievous fester, poisoning this world;
But built of purpose, splendid, vast in promise
For him who walks in reverence.

VULP. Thy aims are high.

LEON. I speak not for the brutal, but the men
Who hope and feel and love and hate, and toil
Toward life's white headlands, fixed on its white stars.

These are my mariners, battlers on the road
From past to future.

Enter MORNING.

MORN. Father, they said you wanted me.

LEON. Yea, so I did; but here is this Vulpinus
Would make me think these glories all a rainbow
Shattered in its own sunlight.

MORN. Ah, Vulpinus!

VULP. Madam, hail!

MORN. Let me look into thy very soul!

[*Gazes at him.*

VULP. What see you there?

MORN. I see a muddy pool, wherein a serpent
Goes coiling ever, biting its own tail.

VULP. Ha! ha! (*uneasily, aside*) With what a scorn
she scorns me! (*to her*) But, madam,
At least I am that one true thing, myself,
You will give me credit.

MORN. I'll credit you for nought, you are too much
In debt to nature for what she first did lend you.

VULP. Then I am bankrupt.

MORN. Bankrupt? Hadst thou feelings thou mightst be pitied.

VULP. And what of you?

MORN. (*coldly*) I am my father's daughter.

VULP. And heiress to life's unhappiness. Fare you well!
(*to* LEONATUS) Fare you well, Leonatus, till to-morrow!

[*Exit.*

MORN. Father, why hold that horrid man so close
Upon your confidence? He is a breathing sneer,
A creeping hatred of the very sun
And all that's holy. Life must breed a curse

Where his soul enters.

LEON. I like him not; and yet I see in him
A subtle, keen and iron-pointed wit.
Throughout our city he doth hold a power
Would make another man.

MORN. I like him not; his eyes hold such an envy
Of all our happiness. I sometimes fancy
He means no good and tenders you a harm.

LEON. Fear not, my child. I fear nor him nor other.
Be we but true to our own higher selves
No spirit of ill may harm us. Now, my child,
We will forget him in the dream of good
The morrow brings us.

MORN. Yea, father, my heart is glad to know that you,
The honored and the wise, are chosen thus
To fill the civic chair. It gives me joy
To know you are my father.

[*Kisses him.*

LEON. This is my happiest moment: even the plaudits
Of old and young, of splendid and of wise,
When I sit yonder, crowned in sceptred state,
Were not so sweet as thus to know your love.
I only pray that in this white old head
There may be wisdom; in this worn old heart
True purity to rule this people well.
But, Morning, my daughter, what of thine own heart?

MORN. Father?

[*Looks down.*

LEON. Come, come, my daughter, trust your fond old father.

MORN. Father, what mean you?

LEON. You know I have a rival; what of Varra?

MORN. You know I love him, father!

LEON. How much, my child?

MORN. As much as my mother, who gave her love to

thee.

LEON. Yea, I am happy in your happiness,
And will be happier soon; to-day his father
Bespoke me on it.

MORN. Father?

LEON. All is arranged; to-morrow the chief senator
Proclaims his daughter trothed to young Lord Varra;
Mine honored office mates his noble house
And makes us equal.

MORN. But father?

LEON. Morning, my child, I have watched you all these years,
Have seen you grow before me like a flower;
So like your mother; it would break my heart
To know you were not happy.

MORN. Father, I love you so, I'm not afraid
To say to you that only Heaven doth know
How much I love him.

LEON. Oh, my child!

MORN. Father, forgive me if I speak the truth.

LEON. Then you could not give him up?

MORN. Father, what mean you?

[*Starts back.*

LEON. Nought, my child; but did some terrible dream,
Some barrier of human iron of life,
But come between you, could you give him up?

MORN. Father! Ask me not: this is
Too terrible!

LEON. Could you not, Morning, for thy conscience' sake?

MORN. O nature, nature, this is too, too dread!
Father, my father, why must you try me thus?

[*Weeps.*

[*Voice of* VARRA *outside, calling.*

LEON. Ha! there he is! Kiss me, my child, and go!

Love calls, love calls, this other love must go.

MORN. (*going, then coming back*) Father, you
understand! you understand!

LEON. (*embracing her*) I do, my child, I do; now
go, now go!

MORN. Nay, I will not; he must come here for me!
Here at your heart!

Enter VARRA.

LEON. Hail, Varra!

VAR. Hail, Leonatus! Hail, my sweet, true Morning!

LEON. Take her, Varra, the sweetest, purest bud
That ever loved a childish, weak old man.
I give her to thee, and as thou dost serve her
May God serve thee!

VAR. I meet the event; the gods have given me that
Which only gods deserve!

[*Goes out with* MORNING.

LEON. Yea, as he treats her, let his fate treat him.
I had not dreamed it was as deep as this!
I live it over all again in her.
She is my child; God help her if he be
A shallow surface! This indeed doth make
My path the harder. Yet, in face of all,
This direst consequence I will meet to-morrow.
Senator or no, Leonatus will be
True to his God, his people and himself.

CURTAIN.

ACT III. Scene 1.

Place—*A public hall in Avos.*

Enter a crowd of citizens and retainers, Councillors and the Lord Protinus, *father to* Varra, *who ascends a throne. Priests in a crowd on one side; merchants in a crowd on the other. Enter* Vulpinus, Slink, Snout, Growl, Gross, *followed by a rabble who scatter through the audience. Enter several ladies, among them* Morning *and* Lupina; *and, with several friends,* Leonatus, *followed by* Varra *and* Bluff, *who stand apart.*

(*Loud cries outside*. Hail, Leonatus, hail!)

Protinus. Most noble lords and citizens of Avos,
We are in session now assembled here,
Under the gods, in this fit public presence
To choose our city's chiefest senator.
The people's choice is he who rules himself,
In face of gods and men well thought of all
In piety and rule of public deed.
We have one such, the good Leonatus.

(*Voices*. Hail, Leonatus!)

Vulp. Most noble lord!

Prot. Speak, what is thy will?

Vulp. It is a custom, by our ancient laws,
That when the city chooses its chief lord
To that high office honored by yourself
And others noble, to the public weal;
That he should pledge him to the public mind,
Here 'mid the priests and citizens of the state;
And, should a doubt arise of his integrity,
He may be challenged by the several guilds
Which represent us.

Prot. This custom of late, it seems me, hath been honored

More in the breach than in its strict observance.

VULP. Our ancient customs should not thus decline;
They stand for freedom and the public weal.
It is a sign of lack of piety,
A falling off from those old holy laws
By which we showed obedience to the gods.

Chief Priest. He speaketh truth. The city groweth too lax.
To keep the public faith from falling off
Into a warping infidelity,
'Tis needful that our rulers show their trust
In those dread doctrines of our ancient faith.

Other Priests. 'Tis right and just; and we, as one, demand it.

PROT. 'Tis but a form. We grant it, reverend sirs.
Leonatus, our city's trusted son,
Honored and reputed all these years,
Will gladly meet this custom.

LEON. 'Tis my wish, most noble Protinus.

GROWL. And I, who speak for several ancient guilds,
For safety of old customs and old rights,
Would also question Leonatus.

PROT. Your prayer is granted, though 'tis obsolete;
No ancient law unchanged must go unchallenged.

VULP. Yea, wise Protinus, piety and prudence
Would help us 'scape the penalties of the gods.
These holy men who wait on Deity
And veil its thunders, should we not respect
Their high prerogatives?

BLUFF. O rare Vulpinus! thou pillar of religion!

A Councillor. This mocking giber hath grown sudden pious!

VULP. And these most powerful merchants! Owe we not
A gratitude from the city which their toil
And care and wit and opulence hath built?

PROT. (*aside*) It is an able advocate he grows!
I had not thought he had it in his brain.

A Councillor. But the people?

Priests and Merchants. We are the people!

PROT. Most noble Leonatus, stand you forth in presence
Of these true senators of our ancient city
Who choose you for this high and ancient office,
The greatest in their gift. We honor you,
Our gravest and our noblest citizen,
Well known among us; upright, wise and pious;
Fulfilling your duty unto gods and men.
Ere we administer the final oath,
Standing there before Almighty Heaven,
Speaking as only to the holy gods,
See that you answer to the councillors
Who give you challenge.

Councillors. Hail, Leonatus!

BLUFF. He is a god, and I his chiefest servant!

LEON. Most noble Protinus, lords and fellow-councillors,
For this I thank you. If I have a thought,
It is my sense of great unworthiness
For this high office. It I never sought:
But, seeking me, I take it with a prayer
That truth be mine, and grave responsibility.
This is mine answer to your sober choice.
(*to the High Priest*) Now, Reverend Sir, I wait your pious question.

High Priest. Leonatus, our city's faithful son,
Amid the power and splendor of this world,
Which shifts and passes, men should never lose
Their sense of duty to the immortal gods.
Now we, who represent the ancient creeds,
Those truths which, crumbling, Heaven would fall upon us
In direst anger—we, the holy priests,
In name of Heaven and gods demand a tax,
A heavy tax, be laid upon our city

To rear once more the ruin of our temple.

LEON. A tax! you ask a tax?

High Priest. We do, my lord.

LEON. You do not mean revival of that tax,
That tyrannous burden our fathers abrogated
In the last revolution!

High Priest. We do, my lord. The times are ripe again.
The gods have waited. Now we must regain
Our olden powers, our ancient privileges.

LEON. I grant it not. I never will rebind
Old tyrannous burdens on a franchised people.

High Priest. The people, Leonatus! We speak for the people.
We who rule their fears, who loose or bind,
Who hold their dreads and hopes, who guide their minds,
We are the people!

LEON. 'Tis mad! 'tis tyrannous!

High Priest. Tyrannous, sirrah! Dare you say religion
Can act a tyranny?

LEON. Most Reverend, whatever is unjust
Creates a tyranny.

VULP. Ha! he blasphemes!

BLUFF. My master! He beards the priests! Oh, he is lost,
And I am misbegotten!

High Priest. Leonatus, you dare? You dare think thus?

LEON. I dare but think the truth.

High Priest. I ask you here—you who do dare assume
The highest office religion allows the State
To grant you—here, in presence of your peers,
What is your duty to the holy priesthood?

LEON. To follow their teachings in so far as they
Are God's.

High Priest. So far as they are God's? Man, you
blaspheme!

Councillors. Can we have known this man?

VULP. He shows himself! Soon will he be as bare
As any waste land.

BLUFF. Now am I damned, who tagged to such a
master!

LEON. Blaspheme, forsooth! Am I a waking dream,
Or you the phantoms, that truth should be a lie?
I speak but my convictions. I am here
To deal in rectitude.

PROT. Leonatus, beware! You go too far!

LEON. I go too far? If but to reach the truth
Affronts this dizzy eminence, I am
Too low for it.

High Priest. What is your creed?

LEON. My creed? You ask my creed? You who have
lived
So close to my ambitions all these years;
Have weighed my deeds, my aims, mine every act
In life's sharp balance; have known me from my birth;
Do ask my creed?—then I refuse to answer!
Here is my life, its pages all these years,
Doth it not tell you? Then no lie of mine,
Lanterned in the very light of truth,
Could climb unto your favor.

High Priest. Then you are infidel?

LEON. If but to love the truth, to hate the lie,
To seek for Deity in every door of life
Is to be infidel, then I am infidel.

High Priest. Then you have a faith?

LEON. I have a faith, a dim but trusting faith,
That they who climb to God must reach to Him
Across the nobleness and self-denial,
The glory, honor and truth and high resolve

And all that lifts and makes a splendor here.

High Priest. Then you would fight the priesthood?

LEON. I fight nothing that is true and pure.
Only the evil.

High Priest. Then our tax is evil?

LEON. What else but evil which would oppress a city
And sink its liberties?

High Priest. This man blasphemes the gods!
[*Uproar among priests*.

PROT. Leonatus, this is terrible! We had not thought
That you were such a man!

VULP. (*aside*) Nor did he know it himself—who
readeth now,
Who would be mover of the mob's wild will,
His true picture in the public heart,
And damns himself in the doing.

LEON. Nor I myself. Have I a single friend
Who will say my words are truth?
[*His friends all leave him*.

All. We cannot! we cannot!

GROWL. My lord, I, too, would ask Leonatus
Would he be favorable to a public tax
To encourage business.

LEON. What! Another tax? What gross madness this
Of grim oppression now hath caught you?

GROWL. Then for the merchants I would speak, my
lord,
We are with the priests.

PROT. Leonatus, you are discarded!

LEON. This is a marvellous world!

VULP. (*aside*) Now is my chance! (*to Senators*)
Most noble Senators,
This tax is just. The city must be ruled
By prudence and wisdom. Poor Leonatus

Sees but in visions. We who deal with facts
Read stern necessity in the public needs.

Priests and Merchants. (*urged by* GROWL, SNOUT *and* SLINK) Vulpinus! Vulpinus! Give us the wise Vulpinus!

PROT. Vulpinus is elected.

All. Hail, Vulpinus!

PROT. Vulpinus, take my chair; I give you place;
Your wisdom is your power. (*to* LEONATUS) Leonatus,
We must hereafter be as strangers. You
Have read yourself a fool.

LEON. A fool, to love the truth! to keep the right!
Heaven be merciful to a poor old man,
Rebuked by superior evidence that this world
Is not what he would have it! Is there no friend
Would even whisper me right?—is there not one?

A Councillor. Leonatus, we dismiss you. You are mad,
Or have a devil!

LEON. Nay, I am rock to this. Though all alone,
I keep the truth.

VULP. My lords, I have a painful duty to perform.
There is another law among our statutes,
That if a man who be proved infidel
Shall be convict of any overt act
To seize high office, under these our laws
He shall be outlawed, his goods confiscate,
And he condemned to banishment or death.

[*Many start*.

PROT. Is this the edict?

VULP. It is, my lord. 'Tis graven in our laws.

MORN. (*starting in horror*) Father! oh, my father!
(*to* VULP.) Thou subtle devil! Now I sound thy deeps!
But, be it for ages, thou shalt not succeed!
(*to the Priests*) You would not do this! See, he is my father!

VULP. Hold her back! (*ascends the rostrum*) We
will be merciful.
We will 'void death and grant him banishment.

LEON. Nay, grant me death! I would not live one
hour,
Knowing this world at its face value now!

MORN. Father!

LEON. My child, keep firm and trust in God. These
fiends
May work their worst: I conquer in the end.

VULP. Lord Priest, do your duty. By our law
The infidel is by a special curse
Shut out from all. Do you pronounce the ban.

LEON. Curse me, banish me, do what you will:
Bastioned in truth, these white old hairs defy you!

High Priest. (*coming forward and lifting his hands*)
Back from him! He is outcast from his kind!

MORN. (*throws herself on her knees*) Nay, nay, do
not this ill! He never wronged you!
You know not all the good that he hath done.
The poor should rise in blessing at his name.
He is a simple man, whose pious heart
Hath ever leaned toward truth. Ye would not curse him?
By my youth, a daughter's tears, I beg you
Do not this hideous act! 'Twill bring a curse
On your whole city!

High Priest. Back, girl, you plead in vain!

MORN. Then I appeal to Heaven from your ill.
Yea, I look up
From your injustice to the heart of God!

VULP. Remove the girl!

MORN. Father!

VULP. Now draw the line!

[*The High Priest and Priests circle about* LEONATUS.

High Priest. Henceforth thou art accursed, from thy race
Shut out, from kindred, friendships, fellow-men;
The very dogs shall shun thee on the street.

MORN. Nay, father!
[*Would go to him*. VARRA *would hold her back*.
(*to* VARRA) And thou?

VAR. I love thee, Morning! Stay, oh, stay with me!
I love thee as my life; but he is doomed.

MORN. And I love thee: wilt thou, then, come with me?

VAR. Where?

MORN. There where my father stands!

VAR. I dare not! 'Tis too terrible! O Morning,
I cannot go!

MORN. Never!

[*Rushing forward and clasping her father, who stands alone*.

Though all forsake you, you are not alone!

LEON. Great Heaven, be kind! My daughter, my poor daughter!

MORN. (*turning to the High Priest and speaking in loud command*) Now, Sir, God waits! Now curse his daughter, too!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV. Scene 1.

Place—*House of* Varra *in the city of Avos.*

Time—*A year later.*

Enter Varra *alone.*

Var. Now I am damned by mine own puerile nature;
And for a base, brute cowardice of the blood,
An innate fear, a credulous heredity,
Have lost forever a flower and star of women.
Why have I sunk to shame my manhood thus,
Which stood upon foundations of a soul,
Strong, clear, emancipate from superstition,
To be the puppet of a weak convention
Which drags the dregs of our humanity down?
I am no more that Varra that I was,
But some poor shadow of my former hopes.
I wake at morn heart-hungered for her voice,
That ever haunts me as the evening wind
Or stars of midnight, ever elusive, raised
To some far height. This is my destiny,
To writhe forever upon this bed of death
Of my poor hopings, dregs of a weak soul
That knew not truth and golden opportunity;
And call forever in vain on one loved name.
Morning! lost, true Morning!

Enter Pose, Languid *and* Despond.

Var. (*coldly*) Good morrow, gentlemen!

Lang. Ah, we are short this morning!

Pose. Rather should you say, our friend is not in form.

Desp. (*to* Varra) What demon hath seized you?
You are not yourself.

Var. Say, rather, Varra now hath found himself
A hollow cocoon, blowing in the wind
Of some dead wasted summer, whence hath flown

That shining golden chrysalis of youth,
Oh, never to return!

LANG. Ah! why not summon your doctor? Bleeding
and physic
Will medicine you unto a lighter spirit.
Would hear Pose's sonnet?

VAR. Fiends of darkness! No! I am quite damned
already!

POSE. Yea, hear it, Varra. It hath just the touch
To ease you from those grosser common feelings
And lift you to that fine artistic mood.
A flout on feelings! What are feelings but
The uses of art? The impression is what we want!
Color, rhythm, nature's greens and violets:
The pose, the form, the effect, the true perspective!
Art is this, never to express
The common, the formless; ever to eschew
The painful, or those horrid things men call
Realities. It deals with sweet suggestions
Of soul impressions, caught from azure edges
Of the inevitable.

VAR. Stop him!
Or crush him with a bootjack! My whole soul
Lifts its gorge to hear him. This base art,
Which stands to-day for all that's base in life,
That fills the bill to all that's shallow and sensual,
That never knew a pure or holy feeling,
That shrivels nature's splendors down to "tone,"
Her greatest dreams to base inanities,
In name of literature; so far removed
Are its disciples, false, from love and life,
That if they ever knew the real and true,
Their souls have long forgotten. This, your art!
It stands for will to paint this pinchbeck city,
Its putrid sores and festering emptiness,
And catalogue its vile enormities
As pale impressions, symbols of somewhat
Which neither reason nor holiness ever knew.
Heaven as far from you as its great blue,

Even hell too real to harbor your vile crew.
Ye are a nastiness, where lack of thought
Is gravest sin; where shallow conceit skips in
Those perilous paths angels would fear to tread.
You chronicle life's greatness in your jargon,
Jabbering the letter who never the spirit knew,
But fled from its pure wings as from a horror.

LANG. Our Varra is crazed! What will Lupina say?

POSE. I am o'erwhelmed! This will spoil my spirit
For most a week. This philistine tirade
Doth shatter the idealities!

VAR. Begone, ye painted dolls, ye pointed beards!
Weak, strutting chatterers in the form of men!
Effeminate slanderers of the man that was!
Base canters of a vilest cant, more base
Than base religion! Louse harpies on this heap,
This carrion heap of what was once a mountain
Of human greatness! Ye who have helped to damn
Weak souls like mine!

[*Exeunt* POSE *and* LANGUID, VARRA *driving them out*.

DESP. Varra, my friend, what means this sudden frenzy?

VAR. Would Heaven there came a whirlwind would
sweep out
That purblind crew and all their shameless kind,
And clear this world of carrion. Would to Heaven
That I were man to do it!

DESP. Why, late you honored those men, you called
them friends.

VAR. Did I? Then I was fool who stooped so low;
In manhood's name, they never were my friends.
Doth not each strut the dandy, puerile fop,
Each face enmask the mummery and the lie,
That barren lack of all which is sincere
And truly noble? Why doth not life awake
And break these butterflies upon the wheel
Of some rude overthrow?

DESP. You do surprise me!

VAR. Yea, I do feel like one of sudden waked
From some foul sleep, to find his best life's morning
Gone on ahead, and he left far behind!

DESP. Couldst thou not rise and overtake it yet?

VAR. Overtake! Couldst overtake the wind
That blew rose-petals round thy golden youth,
That waked the sunbeam mornings long ago;
The streams that sang thy childhood to the sea;
Those splendid sunsets dipped beyond life's ocean?
Then might I catch my longings! Nay, we are
But broken towers of dreams that might have been;
Poor waifs of some old manhood on the shore
Of human wreck that never harbored men,
Save old Leonatus!

DESP. Leonatus? Thou, too, hast harbored him
In higher thought?

VAR. Despond, dost thou not know he was our greatest?
Too splendid, towering, vastly capable,
For this doomed people who hath sunk to sleep
All self-compunction. He was in truth a man,
Who faced the morning, while the cringing bats
Blinked round the twilight where his loftier gaze
Read higher hopes above the lower moan
And iron writhings of the surfs of life.
Yea, Despond, mark you well, he was a soul
Who would be all or nothing! Compromise?
He? Never! He was all of the mountains, looking up
To their great tops; where in earth's vaster dooms,
Ever the great ones, splendid of old days,
Went out with God alone. So he hath gone,
Lost, lost to us and this poor city's doom.

DESP. Then we are done. This canker eats my heart,
Forever and forever; day and night,
I hate myself, and all that dwells therein.
My soul is all a furnace of revolt
Against all nature. And this mood of thine
Hath opened my floodgates, erstwhile closed by shame.

VAR. Thou, too, hast suffered in long-passioned silence!

DESP. Yea, truth!
Alone we came into this world; alone
We tread its awful corridors; alone
We go blindfold adown its dusks of death.
No loneliness so lonely as this dread
Soul-loneliness:—Varra, I am resolved
To end this being!—

VAR. Nay, nay; thou shalt not. Thou art in a sleep,
A moral sleep, wherein the soul doth walk
As one who dreams!

DESP. Once I was all a visionary spirit,
Filled with rich dreams of loftiness and love
That made life splendid, till I met Vulpinus.

VAR. Vulpinus! He, that arch-conspirator!
That toad upon this dunghill of our dreams!
Who hath the keys of vile iniquity,
And battens his iron doors on our poor hopes!

DESP. I loved a maid; I thought her all life's good,
Its beauty and its morning dream to me.
Thou knowest the thrill! I lived upon her presence,
As flowers dwell in the sunlight, satisfied;
Till this Vulpinus slowly sowed a seed,
A graft of hideous doubt within my soul
And wrecked its morning.

VAR. He lied!

DESP. Nay, he never lied!
Love was too strong to break upon a lie.
His genius was to show the evil side;
And truth grim evil's surest instrument
When subtly used. He but showed me truth,
And opened mine eyes.

VAR. Opened your eyes to what?

DESP. He showed me she was mine in seeming only;
That though I should possess her evermore,
She was not mine, but, like a vagrant wind,
There lived an hundred adulteries in her eyes,
Each day and hour, to pleasure other men.

VAR. But, she was yours?

DESP. In person only, and her wifely will
Would have been mine; but those rare finest fancies,
Those blossoms of love, longings of heart and brain,
I could not claim them, they were never mine.
I am not a brute. I could not wed a maid,
Were she however sweet and pure in act,
And dutiful and fond in outward mien,
And feel that somewhere hidden in her soul
There burned ideals of some possible man
I could not realize. 'Twould breed a madness,
A dread confusion, wrecking heart and brain
And all existence.

VAR. Then 'twas this wrecked you?

DESP. I ne'er was wrecked who ne'er was in a storm;
But, all unlaunched, upon the shores of being
I lie, unheeding all, unheeded still.
Unto the brute I could not all descend,
So drifted idly, neither good nor ill;
A creature without effort, aim or will;
But ever at my heartstrings that old pain
At this dread life and its brute mystery.

VAR. Thou art a spirit marred by maladmixture
Of Nature's elements. Let me patch thee up,
And launch thee on this sea of our rude woes,
And make an end with me, or, striving, dare
Grim, muffled destiny.

DESP. What meanest thou?

VAR. I mean to late achieve, with broken wing,
That flight of daring our spirits had long essayed
Had we been like Leonatus.

DESP. What flight of daring?

VAR. This vile Vulpinus must be hounded down
From off his dunghill of this city's ill,
Where, foul usurper, he hath perched o'er long.

DESP. And you! you would do this?

VAR. The people call me. Even in my sleep
I hear the cry of suffering multitudes,
The credulous poor, long battened on by leeches,
Sinister, sensual, of the public blood.

DESP. And who will back you?

VAR. The people. They shall bleed
To purge this cancer that doth need the knife.
Hourly from each home there rises up
A piteous cry to Heaven, shaming our silence.
I, too, loved a woman, as thou knowest,
But ruined my life and lost her by my folly.
We are but wrecks, but perchance we may yet
Tumble this heap of our foiled destinies.

DESP. Yea, I am with you, failure that I am.
It is but death, and come it in what form,
Its face is welcome.

VAR. Then come to-night. The truth I tell you now.
The city is aroused. A loyal band,
Stern and resolved, do rally at my back
To wreak grim vengeance on Vulpinus' horde
And restore Leonatus, whom they now deplore
And greatly long for. Bring a trusted friend,
If thou hast any. We will pitch our fortunes
On this rude downfall.

DESP. But what of this thy marriage? Hast no thought
Of fair Lupina?

VAR. Lupina? In this going she will go.
Forced was she on mine idle apathy.
But now I'm roused, I'll lift a sea of troubles
And throw them from me. Am I yet a man
Who dreamed of Morning, would take this passion-flame
To cherished wifehood? Be upon the hour;
To-night at midnight Vulpin's sun doth set.

[*Both go out.*

[*Stage darkens. After a pause, sounds without as of men fighting, clash of arms and battle calls. After a time,*

enter VARRA *and others, with swords, and assisting* DESPOND, *who staggers, sword in hand.*

VAR. We triumph at last. The city now is ours,
And vile Vulpinus fled! How that loved name,
Leonatus, did fire the multitude
And sweep oppression back like some foul tide!

DESP. (*feebly*) Ah, Leonatus!

VAR. But thou, my friend!

[*Supporting him as he falls*

DESP. Hath won his end at last.
The loneliness is ended; gladly now
Into the greater loneliness I go.

[*Dies.*

VAR. (*laying him tenderly down*) High, life-marred
spirit, too late I knew thy worth;
But art a conqueror even in thy death!
(*rising and turning to his followers*) Now we go forth
to find Leonatus,
Our city's greatest. He shall be our King!

All. Leonatus! Leonatus!

CURTAIN.

ACT V. SCENE 1.

PLACE—*A hut in the forest*.

TIME—*Autumn evening*.

Enter, from forest, LEONATUS, *aged, feeble and poorly clad, carrying a bundle of sticks. He proceeds to build a fire*.

LEON. I am a poor old man, a poor old man,
Outcast, forsaken! God has rebuked my pride.
I am so old, so feeble and so old,
Cast off and beggared in my wintered age!
Is there no one to chafe these poor old hands
That erstwhile granted favors?

Enter MORNING.

MORN. Father, what do you?

LEON. I am Leonatus the woodgatherer, dost know,
my child?
Who, once a senator, angered the awful heavens
By his presumption. Do you know me, child?
Though cursed and outcast I am yet your father.

MORN. Father! hear me, father! I love you yet.
[*She kneels and takes his hands*.
Believe me, father, I am yet your daughter.

LEON. Nay, I am outcast, none dare love me now!
But let me whisper it, child: though they deny me,
I yet believe in God! Ha, ha! Hush, hush!
The stars might hear me, the icy-fingered night
Might cruelly punish!
[*Whispers*.

MORN. O terrible nature, white and pitiless stars,
Undying, mighty ones who measure all,
And sift the futile through the million years,
Is there nought in your majesty and power
To help this poor old man? O God! O God!

Father, come within!

LEON. Nay, Morning, let me stay. I love this night;
It is not human, it hath a kindly look;
It speaks me peaceful, eyes me not askance,
And makes me one with all its majesty;
Holds recompense unto the poor old man
For all that love hath suffered, life hath lost.
God is not merciless, dost thou think, my child?

MORN. Nay, father.

LEON. Why did they drive me out? Why is this winter
So cold and pitiless to these poor old hands?
They never denied any, never hurt a soul;
I ever did love my fellows! Why am I
The spite and sport of ice and wind and snow,
A palsied spectre? Speak to me, my child.
I am so lonely, so close moored to death,
So much a shadow wandering 'mid the shadows,
I may not know the evil from the good,
The night from morning. Did God punish me
For my presumption? Or are their lies a truth,
And life a mockery? Nay, my child, they lied.
In face of woe, in spite of hunger, pain
And frost and cold, and this dread, icy night,
I do believe, I do believe in God!

MORN. Father, forget your woes. Let us within.
Here comes a stranger!

LEON. Let them come! yea, let the whole world come,
And buzz its devil doubts about mine ears;
I do believe, I do believe in God!

Enter VULPINUS, *alone, as a fugitive, disguised.*

VULP. (*discovering them*) Good even, friends!
(*aside*) Ha! this the natural end to trusting honor!

LEON. Aye, who art thou dost call Leonatus friend?
If thou dost, knowing, thou art anomaly!
The very icy winds that walk this night
Give him the shoulder. The fire should warm his chaps

Flickers askance; the very storms of heaven
Beat on him pitiless, all nature joined
In iron league to flout his miseries.
Yea, who art thou, bold one that darest come
With that word friend?

VULP. I am one who calleth no one friend
Save cheating opportunity—My name? Vulpinus!

LEON. (*rising*) Ha, ha! I know thee now! thou art
that fiend,
That acid tongue, that lie upon the lips,
Forged out of cant to make this world a hell
And good men blaspheme God. Wert thou my son,
I'd damn all marriage, batten up its tides,
And stop its issues. I would rather breed
That hideous thing the idiot than thy kind.
Thou art that bane crept in the milk of life
To turn the truth to crooked, the love to hate.
Begone, thou blot! Accursed as I am,
My soul abhors thee!

VULP. And this is all from kind Leonatus,
Most fortunate, most high Leonatus?

LEON. Fortune is a jade. But who art thou
To dance upon my miseries? Were I young,
I'd show thee, viper, Leonatus had an arm
To back his honor.

MORN. Father, come in! Sir, leave us; he is mad
With age and misery, and your presence wracks him.

LEON. Yea, go! Why stand'st thou there, thou
monster dark,
To weight my spirit down? I call on God
To judge betwixt us!

MORN. (*to* VULPINUS) Wilt thou not go? Hast
thou not even yet
Glutted thine envies, or doth thy spirit seek
A dreader vengeance?

VULP. (*to* MORNING) My curse is this: forever
insatiate,

Not all the ills of this besotted world
Could make Vulpinus happy. And thou thyself,
Dost thou, too, still believe?

LEON. Begone, thou darkness! Anger me not down
To thy base levels.

VULP. (*to* LEONATUS) Dost thou believe that this
relentless force,
That raised thee up from out thy mother's womb,
Built thee to pride and arrogance of man,
To buffet thee back to that thing which thou art,
Baffled of all thy highest; dost thou dream
This weird, dread force hath got a beating heart
Like thine within it? Doth it pity the lives
It crushes every heart-beat? Can it weep
For man's poor million miseries? Tell me now,
Thou festering breath, thou ruin of a tree
All dead at top, thou remnant of a life,
Canst thou believe in God?

MORN. Torment him not, nor beat about his age,
Thou bat of bitterness. Dost thou not see
His poor spent spirit flutters above its doubts,
To rest in God!

LEON. Yea, she speaks truth. I am a weak old man,
A feeble wreck of life's poor promises;
But God is kind, yea, kind, though man be cruel.
Ha, ha! you mock me, scoff me, sneer me down,
Would turn my trust to folly, make me dream
This life a lie! The very winds of heaven
Would freeze me to it. The very stony stars
Would iron me to it. The pitiless icy night
Would shrivel my spirit to it,—all in league
With hellish doubt and damned obliquity
To make me doubt the Highest. Even, my child,
Thou shalt not do it; even thy sorrowful eyes,
Thy broken loves, thy daily silent patience;
Thou famished, glaring Hunger! thou pale Want!
Back, back, all spectres of this hideous world!
In spite of all, in spite of all, I trust.
You shall not bear me down.

MORN. O nature, nature, how long will this last?

LEON. They called me senator. Even thou, Vulpinus!
Ha, ha, thou doubter, thou didst laugh at me!
But see me now, even now, in all my glory!
Ha, ha! God is good!

VULP. (*aside*) 'Tis a hideous madness! I have
seen enough.

[*Would go*.

Enter VARRA, *Nobles and Retainers*.

VAR. Caught, thou fox, at last!

[VULPINUS *would flee: is stopped*.

VAR. Morning!

MORN. Varra! At last! at last!

[LEONATUS *comes feebly forward*.

VAR. Leonatus, the city from her sink
Of vile corruption hath risen to a sense
Of conscience of her sin, and sends for thee
To be her Senator!

LEON. Senator! yea, Leonatus is Senator! Good
morrow, gentlemen!
It is a sweet, glad summer. I am old,
And heaven biting, but this my daughter here
Will show 'tis summer.

VAR. What dread horror is this?

MORN. He hath been troubled thus. It soon will pass;
Sorrow and care and his infirmity
Have wrought upon him.

VAR. Great heaven! Good citizens, we have much to
answer!

LEON. Yea, much to answer, we all have much to
answer.
Believe me, friends, we are all good citizens;
Leonatus did ever love your city,
And built its virtues. Sit you down, good friends.

I am no lord, but just a poor old man
Whom his loved city, in mistaken dream,
Did banish for his misdeeds. Believe me, friends,
They did not mean it; God for some good reason
Did blind them to it. Look not so cold upon us,
We will not stay; yea, we will go without,
Where our poor woes and wants may not offend you.
Come, my sweet daughter, take your father's hand!
We are alone, the very inclement night
Doth freeze us, the stars refuse us bread,
The world is aged and ruined, dread and dark,
My poor limbs fail me. All, yea, all but God!

[*He staggers; they hold him.*

(*half rising up*) Nay, nay, you lie, you doubters; back of all
This wintry age, this iron of dread and dark,
I see a glimmer. I do feel a dawn
Breaking! breaking!

[*Dies.*

CURTAIN.

HILDEBRAND.

An Historical Tragedy founded upon the
life and character of the great
Pope Gregory VII.

PREFACE.

HILDEBRAND, who, as Gregory VII., was perhaps the greatest of all the Popes, was one of the strongest personalities in European history. Few men have had so powerful and so enduring an influence on the spiritual and social conditions of the modern world as he has had.

This tragedy grew out of the author's admiration for the great and dauntless spirit of the man, whose famous answer, "I am Rome"—flung back, in his lonely banishment, at those who would have had him temporize with Henry of Germany, so that he might, at least, die in Rome—is one of the greatest rebukes to "compromise" in all history.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HILDEBRAND, *Pope Gregory VII.*
HENRY IV., *of Germany.*
PETER DAMIANI, *a monk* (*friend of Hildebrand*).
GERBHERT, *a married priest of Milan.*
ARIALD, *a decretal preacher* (*lover of Margaret*).
ARNULPH, *a decretal preacher.*
BRUNELLI, *a cardinal.*
Bishop of Bamburg.
WOLF, *Lord of Bamburg, a German noble.*
Two Burghers.
BRUN, *a monk.*
WAST, *a monk.*
An Abbot.
A Warder.
Queen of Germany.
MARGARET, *wife of Gerbhert and daughter of Hildebrand.*
CATHERINE, *mother of Margaret and former wife of Hildebrand.*
Cardinals, Lords, Bishops, Soldiers, Monks, Burghers and Pages.

HILDEBRAND.

———

ACT I. Scene 1.

(*Rise outer curtain.*) *An inn-yard in Milan. Two Burghers discovered seated at a table, drinking.*

1st B. Well, well, these be the strange days indeed, indeed!

2nd B. (*rather drunk*) How now, neighbor Burnard, how now?

1st B. Heard'st thou not the news, good neighbor? But with thy nose always i' the wine-pot thou canst not know anything aside its rim.

2nd B. Wine-pot, wine-pot, thou sayest! ha, ha! nose i' the wine-pot, thou sayest! 'Tis better than sticking it into every business save thine own, hey! neighbor Burnard? But what be this news that would keep the nose out o' the wine-pot?

1st B. There be a new Pope at Rome, the monk Hildebrand. How like you that?

2nd B. God keep us all! Now thou dost say it? It seemeth they be making new Popes every Michaelmas. This were no reason for to keep the nose outside the wine-pot. Here's to his health, God save him! 'Twere a merry grape was squeezed for this, good neighbor. Here's long life to thee an' the Holy Pope, and especially to the royal Henry. Soon may he come to Italy.

1st B. It be said Henry cannot sleep o' nights i' his bed for the making of this same Pope, Hildebrand, or Hellbrand, as some folks call him. But hast thou heard the greater news?

2nd B. Nay, what now? Nothing be new now. Nothing be new, along o' fighting and preaching and damning in the

Church and State. Nothing be new save drinking, and that be ever new. Ha, ha! What else be new?

1st B. 'Tis concerning this same scarce-baked Pope, this Hellbrand. 'Tis said he hath sworn by the mass and all the saints never to rest until he hath unwived all the priests i' Europe. How like you that, good neighbor Burnard?

2nd B. Ho! ho! 'Tis a good joke. Unwive the priests! 'Tis a good joke. 'Twere well for me and thee did he swear a vow to unwive all the burghers i' Milan. 'Twould gie one I know more peace i' his bed o' nights. 'Tis the priests ever have all the good fortune i' Europe. Ah me, ah me! 'Tis ever so.

1st B. Yea, but there's more news yet, good neighbor. This same Hellbrand, which be a good name for him if he be Pope, hath sent out two wondrous preachers, endowed with uncommon powers of tongue and orders, to spread this same doctrine in all Italy and throughout Europe; an' it be said they took fearsome oaths, on pain of eternal damnation, not to rest till they had done so; an' further, 'tis said they be here to-night to preach i' the market.

2nd B. I' Milan?

1st B. (*rising*) Yea, i' Milan, here, i' the square.

2nd B. Well, now! It do be passing strange! Well, now! It be an ill law, and he be a damn liar who saith not. A most unnatural law, for our good pastor. Were it my case, now, it were fitting, (*1st goes out*) who taketh a lecture every midnight near upon cock-crow, such as no Pope's bull could outwit in language an' rhetoric. Say, good neighbor, what thinkest thou? Might I not be made a priest? What be qualifications? Ha! he hath gone! I could drink with an abbot, yea, an archbishop. Yea, I'll see this same Hellbrand about the matter; it shall be done, ha, ha! it shall be done!

[*Reels out.*

(*Rise inner curtain.*) *The market-place.*

Enter several jolly Monks.

1st Monk. (*sings*)

Ours be a jolly life,

No care nor ill have we;
We neither toil nor starve nor beg,
But live right merrily.

All. No wife to scold, no child to squall,
An' put us on the rack;
We drink good wine, we kiss the maids,
An' the Pope is at our back.

2nd. So here's unto the jolly monk, [*All grasp hands*.
And here's to him, alack! [*All clench fists*.
Who'd turn him from his board and bunk,
For the Pope is at his back.

All. The Pope is at our back, good Frères,
The Pope is at our back;
We fleece the churls, we scorn the King,
For the Pope is at our back. [*All pass on*.

Enter a great crowd of Burghers, men and women, who fill the market. Enter ARNULPH *and* ARIALD, *the decretal preachers.* ARNULPH *ascends a pulpit to harangue the crowd.*

ARN. Know ye, Citizens and Burghers of Milan, that whereas in the past, by reason of evils and curses, through the power of the Devil, Holy Church hath fallen into abomination, to the shame of men and sorrow of Heaven, it hath here, now, and at this time, behooved her to cast off certain of these abominations, to wit, especially that most heinous sin, whereby the priests of the altar do, without grace and carnally given, co-habit in concubinage with those weaker vessels, even as do the common and unsanctified of humanity; wherefore know ye, Citizens and Burghers of this city of Milan, that the Holy Father doth now and at this time, by me and through me, instruct you each and collectively, of the dreadful enormity of this most damnable sin, whereby the holy priesthood is made of none effect, and Holy Church doth languish in weakness and vassalage to the princes and lords of this carnal world,—know ye,—

A Burgher. Most reverend Doctor, cut ye short the "know ye's" an' the "wherefores" and th' "verbiations" an' the

"latinities" an' come down from your high-flown rostrum an' tell us the Church's will. We be plain men.

Other Burghers. Well done, Big Gellert. Thou art in the right of it. Bravo, Gellert!

Ar. Insolent lump! Wouldst thou interrupt a doctor of Holy Church?

Gellert. Holy Church confound him and thee, too, thou sour-faced varlet! Who's a-talking of Holy Church? He is but a stray rooster from some mad convent, an' thou his mate ranting on a mad doctrine. Holy Church teacheth no such sinful doctrine. Be we fools?

Burghers. Well hit, Big Gellert, thou canst give him the latinities of it. Hit him back, old pigeon!

Arn. Beware, thou impious mountain of mortality, an' ye foolish burghers, lest ye insult in me a power that is behind me.

A Clerk. Come, come, get thee down; we want no such strange doctrines. We have had clergy, good men with wives and chicks i' Milan, these centuries back, an' we be no Sodom.

Arn. I know not your customs, but in the name of Holy Church, I, Arnulph, hereby command ye, on pain of deepest Hell hereafter, that ye abstain from all masses made or performed by any priest who continues in this unholy state, for I tell you, be he priest, archdeacon, bishop or archbishop, he is accursed, and doubly accursed.

Gel. Thine be a big curse, indeed, an', by 'r Lady, thou mouthest it well.

Clerk. Dost thou tell us our good pastor be in mortal sin because he liveth with a good wife as do other men?

Arn. Have I not said it?

Gel. Then art thou a brazen liar, an' comest thou down I will give thee the non of it on thy brazen chops, thou leather-lunged varlet of Satan!

ARN. Dog of Hell, the arm that toucheth me Heaven will wither!

[*A great clamor arises*

Enter GERBHERT, *the Parish Priest*.

GERB. What meaneth this disturbance i' my parish? I thought I ruled a peaceful, God-fearing people, an' not a brawling rabble.

GEL. Pray, good father, 'tis yon loud-mouthed dog of Satan hath insulted you and all Milan by his mad heresy.

GERB. Insulteth me, good Gellert? (*to* ARNULPH) Who are you who without my license come disturbing my flock with thine unseemly harangues? Come down from yon pulpit! (*to the crowd*) Good people, in God's name, go home.

ARN. Nay, I will not come down till I have delivered this my message to this foolish mob, an' to thee, thou carnal-minded priest. In the name of the Holy Church I exhort ye—

GEL. He saith, Pastor Gerbhert, that thou canst no more make masses, being a wedded man.

GERB. (*to* ARNULPH) Be this true?

ARN. It is true, by the Mother of God. An' thou wilt feel it, too, ere thou art an hour older.

GERB. Nay, man, thou art mad! this cannot be!

AR. 'Tis even so as we be Holy Church's men.

GERB. Ha! art thou not Ariald, once of Rome?

AR. Yea, I am that same Ariald.

GERB. Then tell me, Ariald, by our one-time friendship, that this man be mad, an' his message but a foolish doctrine.

AR. Nay, Gerbhert, but 'tis thou art foolish, an' this law but too true; thou must obey.

GERB. Then will I fight this mad heresy, this inhuman code. That we must give up our wives an' babes, our pure homes, an' all that is holiest on earth! Nay, it cannot be! 'Tis devilish!

AR. But thou must obey or be driven out.

GERB. Ariald, thou knowest my Margaret, thou knowest her sweet nature, her holy conversation. She hath no devil, that her loving should make me unworthy.

GEL. 'Tis damnable, good father. But give me the word, an' we will trounce them out o' the market.

Enter MARGARET, *the Priest's Wife*.

MAR. Gerbhert! Gerbhert! Good citizens, have you seen the pastor? Mother Bernard, poor soul, needeth the last rites; she be dying.

GEL. Aye, thou wert ever an angel of mercy from heaven to the sick an' poor.

MAR. What aileth thee, Gerbhert? What may be the matter?

GERB. Come hither, Margaret. This man telleth me
So strange a thing, I know not if he be mad
Who sayeth it, or I who hear his words.
He sayeth I am no more a priest of God
While I'm thy husband.

MAR. Not priest of God while thou art husband? Nay,
But he is mad indeed, for thou art both
A good, kind pastor, as these people know,
And, as I know, a good and loving husband.

GERB. He saith 'tis some new law within the Church.
He saith in sooth, sweet Margaret, I must either
Put thee away or leave the priesthood.

MAR. An' what say you, my Gerbhert?

GERB. That I will fight it to the bitter end.
I will be both, or there's no God in heaven.
Ariald, thou knowest my good Margaret,
The woman of my choice, my youth's one love,
I will not give her up. The Holy Father
Shall know of this strange doctrine. He shall judge
'Twixt thee and me.

ARN. Know then, thou carnal priest, that even now
He hath decided; 'tis by his own will
That we be here. Here is his written word.
[*Holds up the Pope's bull*.
Yea, further, you shall choose you even now.
Thou shalt not shrive yon dying woman till
Thou hast renounced this woman.

GERB. My sweet Margaret, put your trust in me.
(*to* ARNULPH) Thou cruel preacher, show me yon
dread bull,
Whose horns do even now rend me. Tell me now
'Tis but a lie and not great Hildebrand's.
I knew him once, he seemed a kindly man,
And never one to part a wife and husband.

GEL. Let me see yon paper, let me see thou liest.
Nay, 'tis the Pope's name. This be a damned world!
Good Father Gerbhert, tell us if this paper
Be what he saith.

[*Hands paper to* GERBHERT, *who reads*. MARGARET *goes near* GERBHERT.

GERB. Margaret, come not so near; O Margaret, come not so near,—I love thee, Margaret—but—O my God!

MAR. Gerbhert, Gerbhert, thou wilt not desert me!
Remember our sweet babe.

AR. Margaret, touch not that man. He is God's own. Leave him.

ARN. Even so. Wouldst thou curse him with thy
touch?

MAR. Evil man! Good friends, forgive my misery!
But even now, as I did pass our home,
I left his little one, and mine, asleep,
His sweet face pillowed on his rosy arm.
I bent and kissed him, he did look so like
His father. And now, good friends, forgive me; it is but
A passing madness, but it seemed these men
Had built a wall of hideous black between

Me and my husband.

GERB. Margaret, back! as thou lovest me!
Nay, touch me not, I am a banished man.
Good friends, brave Gellert, pardon my poor feelings,
For I am now afflicted by dread Heaven
For some gone, unknown sin of my past youth.
Perchance I murdered one in hideous sleep,
Strangled some infant on its mother's breast,
Violated some pure sanctuary,
That this dread blackness lieth on me now.
O Margaret, thou art springtime vanished past,
And this be autumn, all dead leaves and rain,
With all of mem'ry's summer 'twixt us twain,
To think and dream forever. Forgive, my friends,
This weak unseemliness in me, your pastor.
I ever did love mercy, dealt but tardily
With those who seemed to suffer more than sin,
Looked up to heaven and led my people, trusting;
And now I am brought beneath the crudest hand
That ever pointed two roads to a man.
Arnulph, Ariald, forgive my former heat,
You do but your bare duty. Friends, they're right,
And I, your whilom pastor, in the wrong,
For I mistook the face of earth's poor love
And dreamed a stair of human happiness
Did lead to heaven. See me now rebuked.
'Tis the Pope's will. Arnulph, read thou this.
I charge thee, as the pastor of this parish,
That you leave out no word, however hard,
Nor soften down one sentence of this curse
Or its conditions.

ARN. Of a surety I'll not.

AR. He shall not! And, hearken you, good people, do you listen!

MAR. Gerbhert, come home! I will not hear that curse
That parts us twain. My breaking heart, it seems,
Doth hear our baby cry.

ARN. Silence, woman!

MAR. You would silence the angels. Work you this deed,
I tell you, man, you shut all Heaven out
And let in Hell; you desolate glad homes
By your brute ministry that knows not love.

ARN. The love of Heaven knoweth not carnal love.

MAR. Forgive me, sir! Stern sir! would woman's tears
But move you, would woman's pleaded prayers
But change you to the softest kindly thought,
I would beg of you, read not that dread curse!

ARN. Silence, woman!

GERB. Margaret, by your love for me, be silent.

ARN. (*reads*) In the name of God, amen: Gregory the Seventh by the will of Heaven, Pope, Vicar of Christ, successor of Holy Peter, sendeth greeting to all Christian peoples, and commandeth, that any priest living with a woman in the so-called marriage state shall be accursed: that any person who receiveth at his hands any or more offices of Holy Church shall also be accursed. That furthermore, all offices so exercised by him shall not only be rendered null and void of all good effect, but shall rather be regarded by Holy Church as acts accursed. That this same law be proclaimed in all parishes throughout Christendom. Know ye that this be my will.

Signed,
GREGORY.

MAR. Gerbhert, O God, Gerbhert, where art thou?

GERB. Margaret, touch me not; we must obey
When Heaven speaks.

MAR. Not when it utters thunders such as this.

ARN. Choose, Gerbhert, 'twixt this woman and thine office.
Take her with thee to Hell, or both win Heaven.

GERB. I have chosen. Let me go and die!

MAR. O Gerbhert, come and kiss our little babe,

Say one good-bye, to home, before you go.
I'll not detain you, I say it on my knees,
I'll not detain you.

GERB. Margaret, would you curse us with your love?
I can hear the Holy Father's voice,
Though he's in Rome, saying nay, nay, to thee.
Farewell, Margaret, we will meet in heaven.
[*Goes out with* ARNULPH *and* ARIALD.

MAR. Nay, I am mad, 'twas this o'er-nursing did it.
Gerbhert, tell me, tell me, I am mad.
Good friends, oh, pardon your poor Margaret.
Oh, who will lead me home!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT I. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*Home of Pastor Gerbhert.*

Enter CATHERINE, *mother to* MARGARET.

CATH. What can keep her, what can keep her? Oh, here she comes.

Enter MARGARET, *weeping.*

MAR. Mother, mother, take me, take me home.
Home? Where be home? Are not these walls familiar?
Did they not mean the place where we had dwelt,
And hoped and loved? And what are they made now,
But empty phantasies of a broken past?
O mother, mother, bring me to my child.
The world is dead, the world is aged and dead!

CATH. My God, my God, Margaret, are you mad?

MAR. My husband! Oh, my husband!

CATH. Gerbhert! What of Gerbhert? Is he dead?

MAR. Aye, dead to me.

CATH. You speak in riddles, daughter.

MAR. Life is a hideous riddle unto some,
That it were better they had never solved.

CATH. Margaret, I am your mother. Tell me quick,
Gerbhert, where is Gerbhert? Will he come?

MAR. He will never come. O mother! mother!

CATH. What are your words? Where hath he gone,
my child?

MAR. How can I tell you? 'Tis the Church's will
That he must leave me, I must be no wife,
Or he no priest. The holy Pope hath sworn it.

CATH. The Pope! The Pope, you say?

MAR. Aye, the Pope.

CATH. Nay, not the Pope. You are dreaming, dreaming,
child;
This working with the sick hath turned your brain.

MAR. Nay, mother, 'twere a blessing were I mad.
'Tis only but too true, I heard it now
Out in the market. Gerbhert heard it, too,
And he hath gone. O God! yes, he hath gone,
And on his face the doom of Death was writ.

CATH. Mother of Heaven! and it hath come to this!
Is there no God, that men in Heaven's name
Break up earth's homes, and make a waste like this?
Daughter, Margaret, where hath Gerbhert gone?

MAR. Let me die. But let me die in peace.

CATH. Nay, nay, this shall not be, this hideous law
Must drift aside. Daughter, hearken me.

MAR. There is no hope. The Pope hath willed it so.

CATH. Nay, he will hear me, I will make him hear
I have a secret you have never known,
Nor any in Italy.

MAR. The Cardinals at Rome will never hear thee.

Gregory will never, never hear thee.
'Tis vain.

CATH. Fear not for me; I will at once to Rome
And crush this evil matter, get his will
To bring back Gerbhert. If he will not hearken—

MAR. We can but die!

CATH. I will go and make all matters ready,
So early dawn surprise me on my journey.

MAR. Nay, mother, leave me not. I feel as though
All life were desolated. Leave me not.
[*Her child cries within.*
Yea, my sweet, fatherless babe, I'll come to thee,
Not all Rome's Popes can say nay, nay, to that.
[*Goes within.*

CATH. (*going out*) O thou that cursed me in my early days,
And cast this shadow all across my life,
Wilt thou now add this sorrow to mine age?
And darken my last years? Is there no God?
O Night, who art the same, whose stars look down
On peace and madness, human joy and pain,
If there be help within thy mighty depths
For earth's poor creatures, help me, help me, now.
[*Goes out.*

Enter ARIALD.

AR. She is alone. My power, this is thine hour.
Margaret! Margaret!

Enter MARGARET *eagerly.*

MAR. O Gerbhert! have you come?

AR. Margaret!

MAR. Sir!—Oh, cruel disappointment! I had thought
It were my husband.

AR. 'Tis but a friend.

MAR. Then, friend, bring back my husband, bring him

back!
On my knees I beg it.

AR. I may not, Margaret; Heaven only hath power
To stay your parting. Think no more on Gerbhert.

MAR. Then wherefore here?

AR. In pity for your sorrow I have come.
A wedded woman, yet no longer wed,
So young and fair, so helpless to protect
Yourself and child against this wicked world:
Yea, I would help you.

MAR. My heart, had it but room for else than sorrow,
Would thank your kindness. You can help me best
By bringing back the father of my child,
The friend who one-time loved you.

AR. It cannot be. In all things else than that
My power can help you. You sin grievous sin
When you still mourn him.

MAR. Nay, nay, if sin, then life is all one sin,
One hideous hell, and God but a great devil.

AR. Woman, you blaspheme.

MAR. Nay, rather thou blasphemest, teaching me
That human love be contraband to heaven.
Not all your Popes and Cardinals standing by
Can make me, looking on my baby's face,
Forget his father.

AR. Margaret, by this love you bear your child,
Forget this Gerbhert. He was never yours.
By right divine he ever was Holy Church's.
You only damn his soul do you succeed.

MAR. Never! never! This be hideous, hideous!
My womanhood calls out against this lie.

AR. If you are wise you will forget this man.
I tell you he is dead to you and earth.
A few short years for prayer and cloister tears
Are all that's left him. Margaret, you are fair,
And young and budding for the joys of earth.

Forget this Gerbhert. There are other men
Would seek thy love.

MAR. What mean these words? Insult not this my sorrow.

AR. Margaret, if thou wouldst only trust me,
My love is thine.

MAR. Thou devil!

AR. Margaret, know my power. Thou art alone,
With me to make thy life a hell or heaven.

MAR. Nay, I have God. O Heaven, show thy face
Through this dread blackness!

AR. Not God nor any can give thee succor now.
Thy husband dead to thee for evermore,
Choose! Black Starvation knocketh at thy door!
Pity thy child if thou wilt not thyself.
I have long loved thee. Margaret, trust to me;
Bethink thee of thy child.

MAR. Out! out! blasphemer! If the Church be vile,
If justice swept from earth and pity dead,
Though devils walk this world, though God be gone,
Know there be left one righteous woman's scorn
For such as thee!

AR. When thou dost see bleak desolation come,
Gaunt, burning hunger fill thy baby's eyes,
Thou'lt come to me.

MAR. If thou be Satan, thou black Prince of Fiends,
Thou wearest this man's form, thou firest his heart.
(*to* ARIALD) Go! go! ere I forget my womanhood.

AR. (*going out*) Remember!

MAR. If there be nothing in this world for me,
I have a friend no priest nor Pope can take,
Whose name be Death.

CURTAIN.

ACT II. Scene 1.

Place—*A room in the Papal Palace at Rome*.

Enter Hildebrand *as Pope and* Peter Damiani, *a fanatic*.

Hil. Know, Peter, I am of one single purpose,
To make all Europe bow to Gregory's knee,
To build the power of God o'er human thrones,
And humble kings to Christ by me, His Legate.

Pet. Now, thou art Hildebrand.

Hil. To make the Crown subservient to the Cross
In all things; kill out simony;
And make the Church sole granter of all fiefs
In bishopric or abbey; hold all kings
In spiritual feudality to my will,
To wear or doff their crowns at word of Heaven,
As represent in me, God's vicarate.

Pet. There spake Peter, indeed.

Hil. For this same reason I carry this purpose now,
To separate humanity from the Church,
And re-create a world within this world,
A kingdom in these kingdoms, alienate
From all the loves and ties that weaken men,
By rendering all the priesthood celibate,
Espousèd only unto Holy Church.

Pet. Wilt carry this purpose to the bitter end?

Hil. Yea, will I, unwive I half the world.

Pet. Now will God's kingdom rise and Hell's go down,
With man's presumption. Now we'll get our hands
Clutched at the throats of all these bloody princes.

Hil. Yea, Peter.

Pet. Ha, ha! thou, too, hast caught a hate for kings.

Hil. Who ever saw a monk who loved a king?
The king was ever our natural enemy.
But see in me no heaven-brooding monk,

But many men in one, a pope, a king,
A fierce ambition, like a burning flame,
To put these times and peoples 'neath my feet,
And conquer empires to my finger's will,
So that I nod, and all kings nod with me.
This be the ruling passion of my life.
It saved me from the common daily sins.
Dost thou know, Damiani, I once loved
A woman, even as other men have loved;
Did marry her, o'ercome by human passion;
But, driven by the demons of my fate,
Fled from her sight unto a monastery,
Where nights of prayer and fasting weaned my heart
To larger hopes and cravings. Never since
Have I set eyes upon my youthful love,
Nor heard of her, though sometimes in my dreams
She comes back like a nightmare to my heart.
'Tis strange that Heaven makes our being so.
But she hath gone, a phantasma upon
The fading walls of my heart's memory.
I will not dwell upon her.

PET. Gregory, thou wouldst do well to keep
A guard upon thy passions.

HIL. Dost know me, Peter? I am Hildebrand.
The ages after they will know of me
As one who ruled himself and all the world
With iron hand, who changed the course of nature,
And rode unmoved o'er rivers of human tears
For God's high glory.

PET. Unwive the priests! Unwive the priests! 'Tis my life's passion.

HIL. Peter, Peter, thou art o'erhard on woman;
She is not all the devil thou hast thought her.

PET. Yea, devil! devil! Mention not the name!
They are all devils, even thy holy Princess.

HIL. Peter!

PET. Yea, Gregory, I say it to thy face.
'Tis not the Pope she leans on, 'tis the man.

I tell thee, Hildebrand, Beatrice loveth thee,
And thou art Pope. O Woman, Woman, Woman!
Thou Satan's influence to damn this world!

HIL. Ah, Peter, thou much mistakest Beatrice!
If ever a daughter of the Mother of God
Did move with saintly footsteps o'er this earth,
'Twas Beatrice. All holy homes of God
Within her happy Duchy rise to bless her.
The grateful poor who dwell in her own cities
Would do her reverence. Peter, thou art mad
On this one subject. Now to another matter.
Here is the map of Europe, all mine own.
The red Wolf of the Normans he may growl,
The Tigers of the south may snarl and whine,
But all are mine, are mine! I hold all sheep,
The many flocks that go to make my fold.

PET. Yea, thou wilt shear them, Hildebrand.
But what of Henry?

HIL. That name! that name! I would that this same
Henry
Were shut in hell! Of Europe's many kings,
This Henry is the one I fear the most.
These dogs of Italy, hounds I hold in leash
To tear each other when they'd throttle me.
The Norman William hath his own affairs.
He is a heathen hound whom I would use
To keep my Christian sheep in quiet fold.
France hath her ills whereof I know full well,
But Henry! Henry is the name I hate!
His is the other name that stands for Rome.
My hope is this, if I can only put
This arrogant emperor underneath my foot,
As this same parchment, (hear it crunch and crack!)
So I'd crush him and make me emperor,
Then mine would be the single will of Europe.
This is my aim.

PET. Why dost thou pander then? He laughs at thee
And all thy legates, moves his licensed way
As though no Mother Church held holy sway

In his dominions, selleth bishoprics
And abbeys, and, making mock allegiance,
Laughs in his sleeve at thee, the Pope of Rome.

HIL. Let him laugh, his scorn will eat him yet.
The day will come when he will cease to laugh,
For I am Hildebrand, I bide my time.
I hold a physic that will purge his pride
Of all its riches.

PET. Give him that physic quickly, Hildebrand.
Thou art not fierce enough. Use, use thy power
Ere it deserts thee. What be this power?

HIL. The Papal curse.

PET. Yea, use it, Gregory, use it even now.

HIL. Wait, Peter, thou wilt see a picture yet,
Wilt hear a music that will like thine ears,
Thou wilt see Henry, monarch of half Europe,
The man who scoffs at monks, and uses men
As players would poor chessmen for his use
To play with, thou wilt see this man
Shorn of his greatness, blasted like some trunk
Out in a wasteland, suing with suppliant knee,
And begging his royalty from the carpenter's son.

Enter a Page, who kneels.

Page. Your Holiness, ambassadors wait without with letters from Normandy.

[*Presents letters.*

HIL. (*reads*) To his Holiness, the Lord Pope of Rome, William of Normandy sendeth greeting. Holy Father, thine obedient son and ally, William, Prince of the Normans, who is about invading England for the purpose of putting the outlawed Saxon under the power of Holy Church, would humbly beseech thy immediate public blessing on his undertaking. This land be sworn by Harold in fief to William, on the bones of holy saints.

[Signed] WILLIAM.

HIL. Ha, insolent!

PET. Writeth he thus to the successor of Peter?

HIL. Insolent! Ally, ally to me, Gregory!
Immediate! poor suppliant truly this!
Ah, Europe, Europe, thou art hard to grind!
This rude wolf would make a bargain, aye,
'Tis little he doth care for Holy Church.
He'll filch my England's abbeys, waste her towns,
To fill his Norman lusts. Yet he is strong.
I'll use this wolf to bow the Saxon neck.

PET. Send him thy curse.

HIL. Nay, Peter, he would laugh and throat it down
In Rhenish flagon. What cares he for Popes
But for his uses? I will send my curse
Some other day; to-day will go my blessing.
My curses I have need of for this Henry.
(*to Page*) Show them in.

Enter Ambassadors.

HIL. You come from Normandy.

1st Amb. Yea, my lord, we would pray your Holiness' blessing.

HIL. Then you have it.
My heart is ever with my Norman children.
Would that they loved war less and peace the more!
O Angel of Peace, when wilt thou compass Europe?
Tell William he is my well-beloved son,
High in my favor; take my blessing to him.
God's mercy goes to England when he goes,
And Holy Church's curse on all his foes.

PET. Amen!

Amb. My lord, our thanks. We are blest indeed.

HIL. (*to Page*) Bring hither our most rare and costly banner.

[*Page brings banner.* HILDEBRAND *takes banner.*
May all who fight beneath thee ever conquer,
And Heaven strike the foe that meeteth thee.

(*gives the banner*) Take this banner to our well-beloved
William of Normandy, and say thus to him,—
That sending him this we make him William of England.

Amb. We will, your Holiness.

HIL. My blessing with you. By Him who maketh
kings,
Go you propitious.

[*Exeunt Ambassadors*.

HIL. They came in proud, they went out meek enough.
Give me but time and I will tame all wolves
From Alps to Apennines.

Enter Page.

Page. More ambassadors await without, your Holiness.

HIL. From whence?

Page. Germany, your Holiness.

HIL. Ha, ha! now we meet another matter.

PET. Now thou growest iron.

HIL. Yea, then I gave with smiles what I owned not;
Now here with sternness I would hold mine own.
There is no Pope while there's an Emperor.
'Tis my chief creed. Give me the letter.
(*reads*) Ha, what be this? Refuses to retire
The German abbot he made without my leave,
Tells me that being king he holds in fief
All power of benefice. The hound! the hound!
I'll make him stoop. I'll crush his pride out yet.
Yea, more; he says he's coming soon to Rome
To take his crown of Empery at my hands,
Then craves my blessing, sent him with all speed,
"Your filial son." A filial son, indeed!
A son of Hell, was fitter sonship. Peter,
This king makes me a devil.

PET. Send him thy curse, thy ban; 'twere fitting answer
To such a message.

HIL. Nay, I will try him yet; not that last move
Till lesser fails. Call in the Cardinals.

Cardinals file in, Ambassadors are brought in.

HIL. You come from his Majesty of Germany?

Amb. We do, your Holiness.

HIL. It grieves me much that our unfilial son
Should keep from Holy Church those ancient powers
Given to her of old and handed down,
Gifts to Peter.

Amb. What be these powers, your Holiness?

HIL. Powers of right, powers of gift, powers of office,
Powers to loose and bind, lift and lower, bless and ban.

Amb. Hath she not yet those powers, my lord?

HIL. Nay, nay, and never shall, until she may
Enforce those powers, by other stronger powers.
Abbeys, bishoprics, priesthoods, whose are these?
Peter's or Cæsar's? Gregory's or Henry's?

Amb. The king saith not, my lord.

HIL. Tell Henry, our undutiful son, so soon
As he doth show his fealty to the Church,
By rendering up to her those pristine gifts
Of benefice, and giveth to her hands
What unto her belongs, so soon will she
Grant him her blessing. Tell him mighty Peter,
Christ's Vicar and ambassador of God,
Speaketh by me, the seventh Gregory,
Calling unto him to do my will,
Or dread my curse.

Amb. Yea, my lord.

HIL. Tell him that He who makes and unmakes,
Lifts and lowers, thrones and dethrones,
Speaks by me.

[*Exeunt Ambassadors, Cardinals and* PETER.

Page. The Countess of Canossa awaits without, my lord.

HIL. Show her within.

Enter BEATRICE.

HIL. My gentle countess, saintly Beatrice,
Welcome to my first royalty of Heaven.
Thou comest to me as cometh the evening star
After the heat and turmoil of the day,
Shedding the beauty of thy womanliness
On my rude cares. How fares Canossa?

BEAT. O Hildebrand, I come to thee no star,
But rather, as a brook to some great river,
I flee me to the succor of thy presence.

HIL. Doth he so use thee, our one flower of women?
The brute! the beast! hath he maltreated thee?

BEAT. Nay, not that yet, but leagues him, much I fear,
With that mad King of Germany.

HIL. Henry, again!
Wait a little yet, we'll heal that ulcer.

BEAT. You know poor Bishop Goodrun: he is dead.

HIL. Nay, when died he? He was a goodly priest,
But scarce a zealous pastor. So he's gone?

BEAT. When I would come to thee to fill his place,
Canossa, with a loud and brutal laugh,
Says, nay, the Emperor must fill the chair,
And at his prayer the licentious Prince hath sent
One of his courtiers, some rude, worldly man,
To fill the benefice. He laughs at thee,
And puts thy new reforms to open scorn.

HIL. Wait, sweet Beatrice, water not thy face
And weaken not my heart with thy sad tears.
Canossa knoweth not he hath an enemy
More deadly than he fears, who is a devil.
Did I but let him loose and he would sweep
Earth and Italy clear of such Canossas.
O Beatrice, this is a world of woes,
And I, being many men, have many woes.

I climb so many hills my feet grow weary;
Now, I'm a king and fain would rule this earth,
Now am a saint and fain would purge its ills,
Now am a priest and fain would throttle its wills,
Again the man with all a man's desire
To feel and hate and love as other men.
O Beatrice, I would I were deep heaven
To wear so pure a star upon my breast.
When I see thee, this world with all its cares,
Its hard ambitions, hates and hellish battles,
Doth vanish past, like day at evening's hour,
When only sweet thoughts stay. Must go so soon?

BEAT. Yea, my lord, but I will come again.

[*Exit*.

Enter an Abbot and several Monks dragging an old man with a long beard, who is accused of witchcraft. The Abbot and Monks fall on their faces. The old man stands.

HIL. Stand! (*they all stand up, trembling*) Who be this?

Ab. Most Holy Pope, Vicar of Christ, Lord of the Church, Keeper of the Keys—

HIL. Nay. Make thy speech brief!

Ab. Most Holy—that is to say, we are accursed!

HIL. Even so. Ye look it. Proceed!

Monks. Yea! yea! um! um!

Ab. Yea, Most Holy, we be much accursed by reason of yon cursed—

[*The old man takes out some tablets and, seating himself on the floor, proceeds to calculate*.

Ab. Yon, yon—

HIL. Say on, sirrah! Accursed? hast lost thy tongue? (*Abbot and Monks all groan*) Speak on, or means shall be found to make thee!

Ab. Nay, nay, Most Holy! He be cursing us now wi' his deviltries. I may not mention his name because of the blight. Wilt thou not bless me so that I may proceed unharmed?

HIL. (*makes the sign of the cross*) Yea, 'tis done. Proceed.

Ab. (*growing bolder*) Yon cursed dog of a sorcerer hath bewitched us all.

Monks. Yea, yea, Most Holy.

HIL. He hath then but little to do.

Ab. Nay, Most Holy, he hath done much.

HIL. (*to Wizard*) Stand up!

[*The Wizard remains sitting, gazes at* HILDEBRAND, *then at Monks, then returns to his calculations*.

HIL. Wilt thou stand up? (*to Monks*) Make him!

Ab. and Monks. Nay, nay, he be making devil's wheels at us now; even now we be dead men.

[*The old man finishes his calculation, then rises slowly and approaches* HILDEBRAND.

Wiz. Hast thou sent for me?

HIL. Who art thou?

Wiz. I am the centre, Macro, acro, Magister, ha, ha, ha!

HIL. (*to Abbot*) What hath he done?

Ab. Oh, oh, Most Holy, everything.

HIL. Name his offence.

Ab. He hath lamed Brother Benedict, rheumed Brother Isaac, physicked Brother Petrice, hath slain Brothers Wildert, Gebert an' Andrice, hath tied us all up by the heels to the devil, an' hath bewitched the whole convent.

HIL. (*to Wizard*) Hast done this?

Wiz. Hast done what? Mensa, mensae, mensae, ha, ha, ha!
[*Sits down and proceeds to make angles and circles*.

Ab. He be ever like this, Most Holy, as thou seest.

Hil. Will he not understand? I would know his manner of thought.

Ab. It is by reason of his magic and his great age, Most Holy.

Hil. How old be he?

Ab. Some say one thousand, some five hundred, but the most three hundred and fifty years, Most Holy.

Hil. Nay! How do you converse with him?

Ab. We hang him by the thumbs till he answer, that be one way.

Wiz. (*shakes his fist at Abbot*) Macro, acro, sacro, ha, ha, ha!

Hil. This man be mad.

Wiz. Yea, all mad, mad, prayers, fasts, prayers, saints, tinkle, tinkle, all mad, yea, they are all mad, acro, macro, I am the centre, hear me!

Hil. Didst thou bewitch these?

[*Pointing at Abbot and Monks*.

Wiz. Ha, ha! All swine, all swine!

Hil. Dost thou hear me?

Wiz. Ha, ha! three fat, three lean, one ascragged, antimonium a portion, nutgalls two portions, soak till midnight and go to couch with much fasting. Wouldst thou more?

Ab. Thou seest, Most Holy, he hath a devil. This same did slay three of our brothers with his devil's antimonium or some such potion.

Wiz. They did desire to be fat. I did but potion them. 'Twere not my fault that they died of overfeeding.

Hil. Antimonium? Where didst thou get thy use for such a potion?

Wiz. By watching of the swine at their feeding. Some of this did by chance get mixed with their provender, and those that did eat of it grew quickly corpulent, and I—thought me—

HIL. 'Twould suit the monks?

Wiz. Yea, but they overfed—

HIL. And died?

Wiz. Yea.

HIL. But these others—they accuse thee of their disorders.

Wiz. (*to Monks*) Feed less, drink less, toil more, sleep less. Go not with the women, an' your curse will leave you, ha, ha!

Ab. Nay, he hath a devil. We be Church's men.

HIL. Ye look it. What else doth he?

Ab. He maketh magic. He hath a devil's wheel, and he hath blasphemed, saying he knoweth how many times the spoke of a wheel goeth to make the rim, thus meddling with matters abhorred. More, he saith the world be a ball, an' floateth on nothing, the which we know to be a foul lie, seeing the Fathers have taught it be flat and standing on the foundations with hell beneath.

HIL. (*to Wizard*) Be this true?

Wiz. Yea, I am Magister, know all, cure all.

HIL. Canst thou cure disease?

Wiz. What wouldst thou have? Hast thou a flux, a frenzy, an evil eye, a gnawing of the tooth, a rheum, a discord, a gravel, a dysentery, a dropsy, a nightmare, an' I can cure thee? The heart of a hen, the eye of a dragon, the tooth of a snake, the nose of a beetle caught 'twixt dusk and sunrise, all be preventative against mala, medicanta. Yea, for all frenzies, camel's brain an' gall, rennet of seal, spittle of crocodile, an' blood of turtle, taken with much prayer, be certain remedies.

HIL. Indeed, of a verity, man, thou art much accursed with knowledge.

Wiz. Ha, ha! Wouldst try me?

HIL. Nay, I be well. And thou sayest this earth be a sphere?

Wiz. Yea, 'tis truth. See here.

HIL. And it floateth on nothing?

Wiz. Yea, yea, wouldst thou not learn? Wouldst thou not listen?

HIL. Ha!

Ab. Thou seest he hath a devil. He honoreth not even thee, Most Holy.

Wiz. (*to* HILDEBRAND) Wilt thou not listen? Art thou also as these fools? An age of fools! An age of fools! Macro, acro, I am the centre.

[*Falls to calculating anew.*

HIL. Peace, peace, sirrah! I would hear thee again on this strange matter. Thou shalt stay here. (*to the Abbot and Monks*) And ye, back to your monastery, and do as he saith, feed less, drink less, toil more, sleep less, and go not with the women, and I will remove your curse. Now begone!

Ab. and Monks. (*bowing out*) O Holy Father, we be much accursed!

Wiz. (*shakes his fist at them*) Acro, macro.

[*They flee in great terror.*

Enter PETER.

PET. More woes, more woes, more woes, another woman!

Enter Page.

Page. A strange woman would see your Holiness.

Enter CATHERINE, *wrapt in a cloak. She advances and throws the cloak off.*

HIL. Catherine!

CATH. Hildebrand!

HIL. 'Tis thou!

CATH. Yea, my lord. Thy former loving wife!

[*Kneeling at his feet.*

O Holy Father, by all the love that once
United our two hearts, I plead with thee,
Have mercy on the daughter of thy love.

HIL. My daughter! nay, woman, not so, not so!

CATH. Yea, I have sought thee out these many years,
Did track thee to thy monastery, then here.
Oh, save thy daughter, mighty Hildebrand!

HIL. (*turns and covers himself with his cloak*) O
woman, woman, I know thee not. Away!
I know not wife save only Holy Church.

PET. Away! away! cursed woman, away!
Presume not on Christ's Vicar, the great Pope,
The father of his people and the world.

CATH. Oh, me! accursed me! I come not here
To curse thee, nor to bless, nor yet presume
To dare pollute thy state by name of husband—
'Tis only but a common, human word
Belonging to the poor ones of this world—
But to beseech the Holy Pope of Rome
To cover with corner of his mercy's mantle
The daughter of his loins.

HIL. O Peter, Peter, take this woman away!

PET. Begone, woman! Thou art sacrilegious.

CATH. Nay, spurn me not; she is my only daughter,
I pray thee help her. 'Tis a little thing
For thee, who hath so much of worldly power,
To lift thy hand and by a single word
Restore her happiness.

HIL. O woman, woman, what is it thou wouldst ask?

CATH. She is our daughter, awful Hildebrand,
Married short time unto that goodly priest,
Gerbhert, of St. Amercia, at Milan.

HIL. O God! O God!

CATH. He is a holy clerk, well bred in orders,

Of good repute among his loving people
Who look up to him as their father in God,
Dwelling among them as the beckoning hand
Leading to heaven.

HIL. O God! O merciful God!

CATH. They have a little babe, a sweet, wee mite
Just come from Heaven.

PET. Hence, scorpion! know ye not this is the Holy Father?

CATH. Remove this curse those terrible monks have placed
Upon his priesthood.

HIL. O woman, I cannot! I cannot!

CATH. By all our former love! They cannot part!
He holds her as the apple of his eye;
She sees in him the man that God hath given.
Remove this awful curse.

HIL. Woman, thou speakest to a columned stone.
I am a marble. If I have a heart,
Thou'lt hear it beating, rock within this rock.
Thou art a sea that beatest my sides in vain.

CATH. Do I hear thee aright? Art adamant
Unto this piteous pleading of my heart?
Thou sendest thine only daughter, our sweet child,
Out into defenceless misery, breakest her heart.
Unnatural, unnatural, unnatural!
It seems but yesternight they said good-bye,
And now she sits and rocks her child and saith
Over and over again its father's name.

PET. Go, woman! he is dead to thee and thine.

CATH. Hast thou no pity? Hast thou not one sigh
For this thy work?

[HILDEBRAND *stands silently with his back to her, his cloak wrapt about his face.*

Hast thou no pity? By all our past, one word,
One parting word!

PET. Thou speakest to a stone. Go!

CATH. O Agony, O Misery, Blackness, Hell,
There's no hope now!

[*Goes out wringing her hands*.

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT II. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*The German Court, a room in the castle*.

Enter the Queen and an Attendant.

Att. This way, your Majesty.

Queen. You speak me majesty. I am no Queen,
The lowest woman in this mighty realm,
Reigning in some humble herdsman's heart,
Might top my queenship now. O Henry, Henry,
What is there in my face, my form, my spirit,
That you should scorn me? Hath my essence changed
Since by the holy altar facing Heaven
We plighted wedding troth; to less and less,
That you should hate me?

Enter BISHOP OF BAMBURG.

My Lord Bishop!

[*Kneels*.

BAM. (*lifting her*) Nay, humble not thy lonely majesty,
Thy stately womanliness, most noble Margaret,
By such poor acts.

Queen. O Bamburg, be my angel, my good guide,
Leading me by roads to Henry's favor.
Bring back his heart to its one-time allegiance,
And make earth's springtime laugh for me once more.

BAM. Nought in all my bishopric hath grieved me
Like this strange act of Henry's. I have spoke him
Happily in all save only this.
Patience, my lady, patience, look to Heaven.
Perchance some day he'll know thy noble heart.

Queen. O Bamburg, as the Queen of this great realm,
More sacred, as the mother of his child,
I beg you get me audience. Did I plead,
His heart might soften.

BAM. Madam, thy wishes are to me commands.
I fear me much the issue in his mood;
But be my head the penalty, I will bring
You to him.

[*Exeunt both*.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 3.

PLACE—*An audience room in the castle*.

Enter Attendant. *Enter* HENRY *in haste, with* GILBERT, *a Lord*.

HEN. Now, by my crown, I'll harry those villains out.
(*to the Page*) Quick, wine! (*to* GILBERT) You say this
news be true.
This Saxon Rodulph would pluck Henry down,
And wear his Empery. Ha, this likes me well!

GIL. 'Tis said, your Majesty, the Saxon towns
Have all revolted.

HEN. And Rodulph leads them!

Enter BAMBURG.

Well, Bamburg, have you heard the latest news?
The North's revolted. Rodulph heads the Saxons

To conquer Germany and take my crown,
And on it all, this bold, insulting letter
Reads me a lesson from His Holiness,
Yon arrogant priest, the scheming Pope of Rome.

BAM. Henry, as your father's oldest friend,
As your most faithful subject, I would plead,
Be not o'er-hasty in this sudden business.

HEN. Bamburg, I am sick of being a child.
You drive me mad by your pacific measures.
While you are dallying they will ride me down
With squadrons and with curses. Nay, no more!
I'll ride me north and show mine enemies,
I'll bring yon Rodulph's head upon a pike-pole.

BAM. What of this Roman message?

HEN. Call in the messengers.

Enter a Cardinal and a Roman Bishop.

(*to Ambassadors*) Go you to Rome?

Card. Yea, your Majesty.

HEN. Go, tell your master, if he be the Pope,
That I am Emperor, who can lift him down.
Tell him, in spiritual matters, Henry bows
To his opinion; in matters temporal, never!
This is my answer. Now, safe speed you Romewards.
[*Exeunt Ambassadors.*

BAM. Your Majesty before you go will see
But one more suppliant.

HEN. Nay, Bamburg, nay, not now, I'm hurried.

BAM. By my love, I beseech you!

HEN. Is it so urgent? Well, be hasty, Bamburg.
My troops await me, and my sword-arm aches
To hack yon Rodulph.

Enter Queen, veiled.

Who be this?

BAM. One who deserves your patience and your love,
If you love aught on earth, proud Henry.
Go you not forth to battle with your foes
Till you have made your spirit's peace with her,
Your realm's Queen, the mother of your child.

HEN. Bamburg, Bamburg, you trifle with my kindness.
This goes too far, know you that I am King!
One word and I will hale you to a dungeon
For this insult.

Queen. Henry, my lord, one word before you go:
What have I done to gather all this hate?

BAM. Your Majesty may sever my poor body,
Mend you your love. Kill me, Henry, but
Murder not by scorn the noblest love
That soul hath nourished. By these wintry hairs,
Though thou dost slay me, I will tell thee true,
By this one act thou dost un-king thyself.

HEN. No more, by heaven, no more! I know her not.
When will my subjects treat me less the child?
I am no ward now, and I ever hated
This foolish, enforced marriage. Let her Majesty
Get to some retirement. She demeans
Herself by these forced meetings.

[*Exit*.

Queen. O Bamburg, I have lowered my queenliness
And cheapened my womanhood. I will no more.
Take me away.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 4.

PLACE—*A monastery near Milan. Night*.

Enter two monks, BRUN, *a fat little monk, and* WAST, *a tall, lean one, with an extremely ugly face*.

BRUN. How he doth take on, this new friar Gerbhert. I had not thought a man would lose his appetite for any woman.

WAST. Ah, Brun, you gluttonous men know not of love. Such dangerous passions are beyond thy ken. Lacking the attractive, the magnetic, you descend to lower pleasures. Now, look on me, a victim to woman's fancy. Within these walls I find a haven from woman's importunities.

BRUN. Verily, brother, thou must have slain hearts.

WAST. It was my daily sorrow, so many beauties sought me. I could not walk the streets but I were pestered. It did sorrow me much; I could not pity all the passions I awoke, so fled me here, sacrificing my prospects, my youth, my person, rather than light fires I could not quench. (*eyeing himself in a metal hand-mirror*) Alas, alas, Brun, my beauty falleth off sadly of late.

BRUN. Yea, thou hast a haggard cast to thy looks. It wonders me much where all thy provender goeth, it doth thee so little service.

WAST. Ah, Brun, Brun, so many broken hearts, so many tender reminiscences. But thou canst not touch my feelings. Yea, Brun, didst thou but know the former dignity, the port, the carriage of my person; the flash, the majesty of my eye; the symmetry, the moulding of my form, thou wouldst but marvel at this ruin I am.

BRUN. I doubt it not, old sucker, but let not thy former beauty fret thy present comeliness out o' countenance.

WAST. Nay, brother, I will so endeavor, but I am ever on the tremble lest some one of those former victims, in cruel desperation maddened, may find me here and seize my person. Brun, wilt thou protect me in such extremity—wilt thou, brother?

BRUN. Yea, that I will, thou wreck of former perfection. If any misguided person of that unfortunate sex be so seized by distraction as to make formidable attack upon thy classic person, she doth so on her peril, I promise thee, old much-afflicted, my hand upon it. Be the bottle finished?

[*A knocking is heard without.*

WAST. What be that sound? 'Tis she, 'tis she, at last! Oh, me! Oh, me! what will I do? (*gets behind* BRUN) Brun! Brother! wilt thou protect me?

BRUN. Confusion take thee, Wast! now be a man.

WAST. Yea, yea, I be a man, that be my sorrow. Ah, oh, what sh—all I do?

[*Tries to hide himself in his cowl.*

Enter other Monks in great confusion.

All. What be that noise? what be th—at no—ise?

One Monk. (*peers through the wicket and starts back in horror*) 'Tis a—O blessed Peter, 'tis a woman!

All. What shall we do? O blessed Peter! what shall we do?

WAST. I am undone, undone! my fatal beauty assails me even here.

BRUN. Wast, quit thy folly; go close to the gate and question her wants.

WAST. Not me, not me! not for all heaven's riches!

All. Nay, nay, let her not in. [*Knocking continues.* Let us pray, brothers, let us pray! [*All huddle together.*

BRUN. Then if ye will not, then I must, ere the Abbot comes.

Monks. (*fleeing*) Nay, nay, let her not in, a woman! a woman! a woman!

Enter Abbot.

AB. Stop, fools! (*all stop*) Be it the devil at your heels, ye flee so quickly?

All. A woman! a woman!

[*Exeunt Monks.*

AB. (*to* BRUN) Open the gate. [BRUN *opens gate.*

Enter MARGARET, *worn by illness and starvation.*

AB. Woman, what want you here?

MAR. I want my husband.

[*At the back of the stage, in a dimly-lit cell, behind a grating*, GERBHERT *is seen kneeling. He rises at sound of* MARGARET'S *voice, a Monk holds a crucifix before him and he sinks back.*

AB. Whom do you call by so profane a title within
these holy walls?

MAR. My husband, Gerbhert, vicar at Milan. Oh, let me see him; our little one is dying. Where doth he linger aliened from his home?

[GERBHERT *comes forward again, the Monk lifts the crucifix and he goes back wringing his hands.*

AB. This is his home; he knows nor wife nor children.
You must go hence.

MAR. If I called out unto these barren walls,
And had they but a heart to hear my prayer
Beneath their stony hardness, they would open
To let me see him.

AB. You must go forth, you blaspheme these pure
precincts.
Woman, go.

MAR. Nay, drive me not thus forth, O holy Abbot,
By all you love, revere and hope on earth,
Drive me not forth, tear down this hideous wall
That hides me from my husband, let him know.
'Tis only for a little, little while.
Did he but know our little one was ill
He'd hasten in the first impulse of sorrow;
At its slight cry he'd be all shook with pity,
And now it's dying. Gerbhert! Gerbhert! come!
Where are you, Gerbhert?

AB. You must go hence, or I will force you hence.

MAR. I have no soul to curse you, your own soul

Be its own hell for this unnaturalness.
(*going out*) I come, my fatherless one, to die with thee!
To die with thee!

[GERBHERT *bounds forth*.

GERB. Margaret! (*shakes the grating*) Margaret!

[*The Monk raises the crucifix, and* GERBHERT *follows it slowly out*.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT II. SCENE 5.

PLACE—*Audience room in the Papal Palace*.

Enter HILDEBRAND, *wearing his purple robe of state, and with him* PETER DAMIANI. *Enter a Page*.

Page. An ambassador waits without, your Holiness.

HIL. From whence? Germany?

Page. Yea, my lord.

HIL. Ha, now, the tide went out, the tide comes in. 'Tis but the spray to mine own thunders. Now we'll hear his answer to the Papal curse.

PET. Wilt thou receive a message from one accursed? He is no king, no ruler any more. This is no embassy.

HIL. Perchance it may be prayer for pardon. Henry knoweth by this the power of Hildebrand.

Page. My lord, it be but a rude petitioner.
He tells no beads, nor maketh any prayers,
But rather stamps an' mutters, raves an' swears,
And sendeth Rome an' all her cardinals
To hell twice every minute.

PET. Hale him to prison, the loud, blaspheming hound.
The damp of some rock cell would bring him round
To proper reverence for thy holy office.

He may intend a murder on thy person;
Let him not in.

HIL. Nay, but I will. Like master, like his dog,
I fain would see the issue of this cursing.
Yea, I would see this German foam at mouth.
Fear not, I'll match him. Call the cardinals in.

[*Exit Page*.

Enter Cardinals, who stand behind the Pope. Enter the Page, followed by the German Ambassador, who remains standing.

HIL. (*to Cardinals*) On your lives keep peace whatever he doth do! Leave him to me. (*to the Ambassador*) Kneel!

Amb. Nay, I'll not kneel to thee or other man
Till I have said my message.

A Cardinal. Kneel, impious man, 'tis the Lord Pope.

PET. Hale him out! German dog! blasphemer!
He hath insulted the Holy Father.

Amb. (*draws*) Come on, ye cowardly monks, I scorn ye all!
Were he a king I'd bow my knee to him;
An emperor, an' I might buss his hand;
But only Pope! why, popes have bribed me vain
To slay your betters.

HIL. Silence: am I Pope indeed? Why blame this man,
When ye, obedient, insult me with your clamors?
(*to the Ambassador*) Hail you from Germany?

Amb. I do, proud priest; my name is Wolf of Bamburg,
Cradled in a nest that ne'er knew fear,
Bred of a breed that hath a joy of killing.
'Tis not a monk would make me tremble here.
My time is short, I would repeat my message.

HIL. What be thy message?

Amb. 'Tis to thee, proud priest, an' it doth come from Henry.

HIL. Speak!

Amb. Henry of Germany, whom, in thine insolence,
Thou cursedst with thy foulest blasphemies,
Sendeth me, Wolf of Bamburg, unto thee,
To hurl thine arrogant curses in thy face,
And tell thee thou art no pope but a common priest,
Who stolest thy popedom.

PET. Hale him out, tear him to pieces!

[*A great clamor rises. The Cardinals would attack him.*

HIL. Silence! on your lives! This man is mine! (*to Ambassador*) Speak on!

Amb. He further saith to thee, thou bastard Pope,
As Emperor of Rome, come down, come down!
And leave that chair thou foully hast usurped,
And I, his servant, say to thee, come down!

All Cardinals. Devil! German dog! Tear him to pieces!
[*All rush forward.*

HIL. (*tears off his robe and throws it over the Ambassador*) Back! or fear my curse! Who strikes at that
Strikes me!

All. Nay, this is a devil!

HIL. Were he Satan himself, beneath that robe he were
As sacred as God's holiest angel!
(*to Ambassador*) Go, man, and tell thy master, who is no king,
That Gregory hath one single word for him,
And that is pity. Let him ask his God
To pardon him as I do pardon him.
I lay no curse upon the innocent.
When he comes penitent to me in tears
I will receive him. Go!
[*Exit Ambassador.*
(*to Cardinals*) Have ye no reverence for Gregory that
Ye should revile revilings in this house?
God's ministers should ever be men of peace,
And not a maddened rabble. As our Lord,

In that last season of His great martyrdom,
Bade holy Peter sheathe the angry sword,
So I rebuke ye. Had he slain me here,
You'd not have touched him!

[*Exeunt Cardinals*.

PET. Hildebrand, sometimes it thinketh me
Thou hast a magic; thou art the strangest Pope
Yet seen in Rome. That man, who came blaspheming,
Went out your slave.

HIL. Ah, Peter, know, we must meet fools with guile.
'Tis better to be subtle than be strong.
I sometimes dream the greatest innocence
Is but the mantle to the deepest guile,
And men but stab the deeper when they smile.

CURTAIN.

ACT III. Scene 1.

Place—*A deserted camp*.

Enter Henry, *alone*.

Hen. What is a king's weak royalty to this Power
That lifts the crowns from kings and plucks them down
From earth-built majesties? I yesterday,
Who wore a crown and called me Emperor
To these dominions, held a people's fear,
To bind or loose betwixt my hollow hands,
Made and unmade, held life and death in fee,
Made dukedoms tremble at my royal coming,
And at my beck squadroned the earth with armies,
Am at his word a lonely, outcast man,
A stranger to the lordships of command,
Holding less power than doth my meanest subject.
Then did all eyes but follow at my glance,
All hands lift to the twitching of my thumb.
Did I but hate, a thousand scabbards clanged
To do me vengeance. Had I a single longing,
A myriad hearts trembled to beat my bidding.
But now I am so mean, earth's very slaves
Might pass me by, nor think to do me reverence.
What is this one man's Power, this mighty Will,
That lifts its hand, saith suddenly yea or nay,
And peoples forget their duty to their lords,
And nobles forfeit reverence for their kings,
And all of royalty's golden splendor is wrecked
And shattered like a rainbow in a storm!
O Gregory, O Gregory, thou awful man,
Didst thou but speak I might become a clod,
Or weed, or senseless turf beneath thy feet!

Enter the Bishop of Bamburg *and a Noble*.

Come now and strip me, let my very life
But follow my royalty.

Bam. O my poor liege!

Lord. Yea, they have left him lone enough, indeed.
Damn this Pope's cursing!

HEN. Why call me liege? The King hath gone, my lord.
He went out yesterday when Gregory's curse
Filled all this precinct. I am only Henry,
A leprous, palsied, outcast, damnèd man.
Where are my servants? Have they fled me too?

BAM. They have, my liege!

HEN. Gregory, thou mighty monster, what art thou?
Thou art not God, for God at least is kind.
Thou art not nature, its workings are too slow
For such a sudden miracle. Why dost thou not
Take even my sight and hearing? It 'mazes me
Those be not fled. Yea, even my taste and smell,
What blasphemous ministers these that do my bidding
Against thy mighty word. Take all, take all,
And let me die.

BAM. Sire, lose not your courage. Even yet,
A few of us, for love of Heaven and thee,
Defy this haughty prelate. Shake at Rome
Defiance of her curses. Though a million curs,
With tail 'twixt legs flee at a bit of writing,
Forget that they are men because one man,
Who thinks him God, would shake with his poor thunders
The cowards of Europe; know that there be yet
A few hearts left thee. Gregory takes thy crown;
He hath not got thy manhood, that obeys
The laws of thine own nature. Show this priest,
This blasphemous usurper of our humanities,
That he may strip the moss but leave the tree
Of all thy kingship standing.

Lord. Yea, my liege, some swords be left thee yet.

HEN. And ye still own me? Fear ye not this curse,
That blacks the world, the very earth I stand on;
Unkings me all, annuls my fatherhood,
Blasts all mine organs, refts me from my kind.
The very heaven must shut from me its light,
The stars no more look kindly, Night no more

Give me her holy balm, sweet, blessed sleep.
Nor friend, nor child, nor wife, this drives me out
Beyond the human? Say ye even yet
That ye do own me? This doth much amaze me!

BAM. We love thee yet, and own thy majesty,
And kneel to thy allegiance.

HEN. If this were real, Henry's heart could weep
With human gladness, but 'tis merely fancy.
You'd shrivel up like podshells were you men.
The very ground I stand on is accursèd.
No more may flowers therefrom, but only thorns
And noisome weeds proceed. Away! away!
Ere ye be cursèd.

BAM. He seemeth distracted.

Lord. This curse doth lie full heavy, of a truth.
Damn that Pope! If I but get to Rome
There'll be two Popes. I'll slice him i' the middle.
Yea, I'll create a fleshly schism 'twill bother
These foul, lewd priests to reckon.

BAM. My lord, great Henry, hearken to thy friend.
'Tis Bamburg, he who loved thee as a child.
Dost know me?

HEN. It seemeth I know thee, Bamburg, or ought to
know,
Did not this haze of hell o'erweight me down.
I thought thee fled. Why dost thou stand with me?
Knowest thou not that I am one accursed?

BAM. Hath nature no pity?

HEN. Were it the Queen alone who fled, I'd bear it.
I never treated her as she deserved.
She was too kind; I used her brutal, Bamburg,
I used her brutal, she who was so kind.
Her voice was soft, but this my heart forgot
In that forced marriage. Had she fled alone
I had not minded, but the ones I loved,
The men I made and builded, raised them up,
Who drank my cup, took honors from my hand,

And made the heavens ring with their acclaims
Were I victorious: that all these should melt
Like some magician's smoke at Gregory's word,
'Tis monstrous; yea, so monstrous, that meseems
The heavens be turned to iron, and yon cold sun
Be but a tearless socket turned upon me;
And Pity and Mercy, all those kindly ministers,
Fled from the universe where Henry stands.
Yea, Bamburg, had the mighty Lord of all
Such power of unrelenting as this Gregory,
The very fountains of nature would dry up,
The kindly elements refuse their office,
And morn and even, noon and cooling night,
With blessed dews and sunlight, cease to be;
Till earth would stand one shrivelled chaos under
The pitiless heaven that looks on Henry now.

BAM. 'Tis the Queen that we be come about, my liege;
'Tis she hath sent us.

HEN. To mock my sorrow with false courtesies,
To note my shame and carry to her ears
My misery. O iron ones, have ye
No mercy left?

BAM. Nay, nay, my liege, curse not, but hearken me.
The noble woman we call Germany's Queen
Sendeth unto Henry greeting thus:
Though thou hast not an army thou hast love;
Though thou hast not a subject, yet a king
To her alone, her king of kingly men;
Though thou art cursed she still will keep to thee.

HEN. Oh, this is worse than cursing. Can kind Heaven
Hold such a blessing for a wretch like Henry?

BAM. It can and doth. Her Majesty waits without.

HEN. O Bamburg, I cannot see her; her true love
Would so shame all my falseness, all mine ill,
It seems her love would slay me.

Enter the Queen.

Queen. Henry!

HEN. My Queen!

[*They embrace*.

Gregory, O Gregory, where is thy curse?

MAR. This is our child, look up, look up, my liege;
Thy subjects may desert thee, Heaven doth not.

HEN. Gregory, O Gregory, where is thy curse?
It seemed so heavy an hour ago that earth
And very heaven were weighted with its murk,
Yet now it lightens. I am a man again!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT III. SCENE 2.

(*Rise outer curtain*.) *A yard outside the castle at Canossa*.

Enter two Monks telling their beads.

1st M. By'r Lady, 'twas a rare sight, a rare sight!
'twas never known afore, nor ever be again in Europe.

2nd M. He comes again this morn; 'tis three days since
He's stood i' the courtyard suing Gregory's favor.

1st M. The king of Europe! This be the Church's hope.
May every season send us such a Pope.
I must within ere Brother John doth make
A fast which little fits my hunger's constant ache.

2nd M. 'Twixt heady wine an' table well provide',
'Tis a faring world till coming Eastertide.

[*Exeunt*.

Enter two Soldiers.

1st S. This Gregory hath given us such a sight
As makes all Germany ashamèd for.

I'll nevermore hold jealousy of kings.
Better to bed upon old soaken straw
An' be a targe for pikepoles than a king.

2nd S. He looked as though the whole world shot its darts
On his bare forehead.

1st S. Yea, an' his poor Queen, didst see her sue
Upon her knees to gain her lord's admission.
May such a sight ne'er greet mine eyes again.

2nd S. See, now they come. It shames my soldierhood
To see a king ensuffer such dishonor.
He is no Pope would hold so black a malice,
To pluck from hell. Let's out.

[*Exeunt both.*

Enter HENRY, *attired in rude clothes, bare-headed and bare-footed, with a wisp of straw about his waist, and with him the Queen in black.*

Queen. This way, my lord; perchance his stony heart,
So beat upon by storming of our tears,
May soften its adamant.

HEN. 'Tis for Germany and thee I do this penance,
And for our sweet boy's kingship; I myself
Am all so calloused o'er by utter spite
Of too much curses showered by popes and fate,
It cares me little. Let the world go wrack,
The elements mingle in a loud confusion,
The maddened seas batten the ruined lands,
The forests shed their knotted limbs, the year
Be now all mad November. I am but
A wasted trunk whereon no brutish fate
Can wreak its malice. I am so annulled
Were all the devils of hell incarnate popes
Thundering anathemas on my stricken head
'Twould not appal me. I am come to this.

Queen. Thou wilt meet him fairly, thou wilt think
Not on thy woes, but on thy dear son's hopes?

HEN. Fear not, Margaret, meeting such a devil,
Who thinketh him a God, but I'll dissemble.
I'm not the olden Henry that I was.
Mine inward pride will make mine outward meeker,
Subtilty with subtilty I'll match
To wipe out this dishonor.

[*Knocks at the gate.*

Enter Warder.

Warder. Who be ye?

HEN. Henry of Germany, whose November storms
Have stript his summer's royalty.

Warder. What would you within, Henry of Germany?

HEN. Knowest thou not, O man, I am a King,
Though crownless in these bleak, inclement times,
And this my sorrowful Queen. Wouldst thou not
Do her meet reverence?

Warder. We know no king but the Holy Pope of Rome.

HEN. I seek his presence. These three pitiless days,
All unavailing I have battered here,
Humbling my royalty to his stern commands.
Were these gates less stony they would open.

Queen. O warder, mercy! Pray the mighty Pope,
A moment's audience. I am a stricken woman,
And this my husband, who, once called a King,
Now doffs his kingship, garbed in penitence.
Hath he no pity?

Warder. His Holiness hath hearkened to your suit,
And, be thou penitent, would pardon thee.
These be my orders; pass you now within.

[*Opens gate.*

Queen. Now, blessed be Heaven! Henry, sink thy
wrongs
In thy son's future.

HEN. Sink my wrongs? They have sunk so low
That lower I cannot. Heaven but grant me space

Till I avenge me.

[*Exeunt both*.

(*Rise inner curtain*.) *A chapel in the castle*.

Enter HILDEBRAND *attended by Cardinals*. *Enter* BEATRICE *and her train*. *Enter* HENRY *and the Queen as before*. *The Queen kneels*. HENRY *stands*.

Queen. (*to* HENRY) Kneel! kneel! or all is lost.

HIL. Kneel, proud man, to Heaven.

HEN. Yea, I will kneel to Heaven (*kneels*), (*aside*) but not to thee.

HIL. Henry of Germany, usurper, know that thus
Doth Heaven chasten Holy Church's foes,
Not in hate or malice, but in love,
That showing earth more perilous, heaven be safe,
Because of thy disloyalty to the Church,
Usurping those her ancient, holy rights,
Not holding thy kingship as given from her hand,
Hath angry Heaven stripped thee of thy crown,
Thy people and thy sceptre, rendering thee
The scornèd of the meanest outcast wretch
That hugs his rags in human wretchedness,
Abhorr'd and despised of those who once
Courted thy favor. Take this cruel lesson
Home to the prideful chambers of thy heart,
And know kings henceforth but as mortal men,
Their power ephemera of a summer day,
Be they not fief to Heaven. By thy penitence
Sincere in this dread, humble hour of thine
Thou wilt become the vassal of high Heaven,
Mending thy future from thy sinful past.

HEN. (*aside*) Great God! am I a king? What is a king?
Is he a dog to dare be spoken thus?

Queen. (*aside*) Henry, for the love of Germany,
Me, and thy child, keep but thy patience now.
(*to* HILDEBRAND) O Holy Father, curb thine awful anger,
Remove this curse that weighteth Henry down,

Makes him a fearful leper to his kind.
Restore his people's favor, thou hast the power,
And thou wilt do it.

HIL. Madam, thou true daughter of the Church,
Hath this man used thee well that thou shouldst sue
For him our favor? Hath he not been false
To thee, to Germany and Holy Church?
Thou art a woman, use a woman's art,
Break his presumption, soften his rude heart,
And we will soften ours. Meantime, to thee, (*to* HENRY)
I would despatch my duty as high Pope
O'er my poor people, in this woeful world.
Know you, Henry of Germany, once a king,
But now a suppliant outcast at my feet,
Abandoned, abhorred of all true Christian men,
The scorn alike of lowly and of high,
Know you I would be merciful a little.
For this cause I will now come down, come down,
As you through yours once blasphemously demanded,
From out my holy chair of sainted Peter,
And be, like you, a single, naked man,
Leaving my cause with yours to mighty Heaven.

Cardinals. O noble soul! O noble, princely heart!

An Abbot. Base prince, base prince, 'tis more than thou deservest.

HIL. Know, therefore, now, in presence of these men,
Members immaculate of Holy Church,
That thou, through thy base agents and by mouth,
Didst charge me, Gregory, Prince of God on earth,
And Vicar of the mighty risen Christ,
With crimes unworthy of my holy state,
Heinous and awful, so hideous in their sound
That they were better nameless, the tongue would fail
To use its office, giving them to the air.
Know, furthermore, that I, in my high office,
Have placed thee under ban of Holy Church,
Shut out, abhorred and excommunicate,
Because of sins committed at thy hand,
Abhorrent and accursed in their nature,

Of which, God knows, I have the truest witness.

[*Goes to an altar and, taking a consecrated wafer, returns with it in his hand.*

Now, Henry of Germany, men may lie,
And even Popes be sinful, flesh is frail;
But Heaven at last will judge betwixt us two.

[*Raising the wafer. The Cardinals all draw back in fear.*

If I be liar in the smallest part,
Deceitful or malicious in that judgment
Wherewith I have judged thee, heaping crimes
Unspeakable, abhorrent on thy head,
May listening Heaven, which is only just,
Strike me, impious, with its awful thunders
While I eat this.

[*Breaks the wafer in two and eats half. A cry of wonder comes from the Cardinals. There ensues a pause of a few seconds, then he holds out the broken wafer to* HENRY.

Henry of Germany, wilt thou do the same?

HEN. (*starts back in confusion and horror*) Nay, nay,
'tis impious! 'tis impious!

Cardinals. Guilty, guilty!

HEN. (*aside*) What influence be this I fight against?
This devil doth ever place me in the wrong.

HIL. Henry of Germany, wilt thou perform the same
And leave thine innocence to the power of Heaven?

HEN. (*stands boldly up and confronts* HILDEBRAND)
Most mighty Gregory, Prelate of Holy Rome,
Though to refuse thy gage be to acknowledge
His consciousness of human frailty,
Henry of Germany, whate'er his sins,
Hath too much sense of Heaven's mighty justice
To desecrate the eternal bending Ear

By such blasphemings. I am no priest of God,
I am no Pope, august, infallible,
But only a weak and fallible, sinning man,
As Heaven knoweth. But in this grave matter,
If thou be right and I be wholly wrong,
Heaven knoweth already without such dread presumption.
'Tis not for Church but men you judge this issue,
Hence, I demand a larger audience,
Tribunal more public than these witnesses,
Impartial, unprejudiced toward my wrongs,
So be I judged, it be not in a corner.
Meanwhile, if I have erred, in my new kingship
In word or deed against thy holy office,
Here as a faithful son of Holy Church,
By that great love I bear for Germany,
By that dread duty I owe my wife and child,
I crave thy pardon and beseech thy blessing.

[*Kneels*.

HIL. Henry of Germany, thou standest now
Rebuked of Heaven before the eyes of men.
As I had power to place thee under ban,
Alienate from Holy Church and men,
So I withdraw that ban from off thee now.
Arise, my son, in thy new penitence,
The Church commands thee, rise and go in peace.

[HENRY *stands. The Pope and Cardinals pass out*.

HEN. 'Tis off! 'tis off! I am a man once more.
Out! out! let us without! I cannot breathe
In these dread walls!

CURTAIN.

———

ACT III. SCENE 3.

A poorly furnished room. MARGARET *seated by a meagre fire, nursing her sick child*.

MAR. O Gerbhert! Gerbhert! in what living stone
Are you entombed, dead to our sorrow now?
Ah, my poor baby, fatherless, fatherless now!
Dying! dying! Like a pallid candle,
I watch your little spark to less and less
Go slowly deathwards. Hark! I hear a step!
Hush your moans, my babe. Was it your cry?
Or but the wind, the icy, winter wind,
The cruel midnight, eating with icy tooth
The hearts of mortals?

Enter ARIALD.

AR. Margaret, I have come!

MAR. Yea, so have Misery, Despair and Death,
Your kindlier brothers. Hunger may be gaunt,
But he is honest. Death be terrible,
But he hath mercy on the pinchèd cheek
And cruel, tortured heart; but who art thou?

AR. Knowest me not, Margaret?

MAR. I know the Pope, who is a monster stone
That all the world like some poor, maddened sea,
Might beat against and break and break in vain;
I know earth's misery, its inhuman silence,
Where gaunt and shadowy eyes glare round and watch
The slow, brute process nearer, day by day,
Of hunger gnawing at the walls of life;
But thee I know not, thou art far too dread
For my poor knowledge. When I see thy face
This earth doth seem a hell and God a devil.

AR. Margaret, forswear this maddened mood.
Catherine, your mother, killed herself
By her own folly, hoping against hope.
Bethink you of your child. You murder it
In killing my poor hopes. Give me thy love,
And life to thy sweet babe. Be not so cruel.
You forced me to this; I would not have stirred
One finger to molest you or your child,
Had you not by your beauty raised in me

A longing for to own you, call you mine.
Gerbhert never loved as I have loved;
It eats me like a wasting all these years.
Had I been Gerbhert, master of your love,
And this my child, I would have fought the world
Ere I'd have left you, dared both Hell and Heaven,
Rather than let one furrow groove your cheek,
One sorrow rack your soul. O Margaret, Margaret,
Say but the word, that I may save thy child.
Give me the right to fan that poor flame back,
And thine old beauty to its former glow.

MAR. Blackness! blackness! I grope! I grope! I grope!
Forgive me, Heaven, forgive me! There is no Heaven!
There is no God! The universe one cave,
Where I, a blinded bat, do beat my wings
In wounded darkness. O my child, my child!
Some one must save thee!

AR. I am the only answer to thy prayer;
If there's a God, He speaks to thee through me.
Margaret, Margaret, thou wilt come with me.

MAR. What shall I do? Is there no other voice?

AR. Yea, thou wilt come. Thou wilt forget all this
In future happiness. Come, my Margaret!

[MARGARET *rises to her feet as if to go with him, then stops.*

Nay, nay, I am thine answer; God saith yea to this.

MAR. O God! O God! (*to* ARIALD) Thou hast thine answer now!

AR. Margaret!

MAR. God sends thine answer now. My babe is dead!
[*Falls heavily to the ground.*

AR. (*stealing out*) Beaten, beaten, beaten at the last.
I almost believe me, even evil me,
There is a God!

CURTAIN.

— — — —

ACT III. SCENE 4.

PLACE—*A battlefield*.

Enter troops marching. Fighting begins in the distance. Enter two officers.

1st O. This is the final chance for Germany.
Be Henry now defeated on this field
He loses empire; Rodulph holds the west.

2nd O. Woe with poor Germany, her lands lie waste,
Her cities either sacked, or, armèd forts,
Withstand the common foe; her King outcast,
Battles for his rule with his own vassals.

Enter HENRY *with a few knights*.

HEN. This way, this way, the enemy press back.
One struggle now for Germany and my crown!

[*All pass out*.

Enter WOLF *of Bamburg, with the head of Rodulph*.

WOLF. Ha, ha! thou thing that wert a Pope's retainer,
Roll there the nonce an' mix thee with the dust,
Thou that daredst a king's prerogatives.

Re-enter HENRY.

Victory, sire! victory!

HEN. How now?

WOLF. I bring thee, not thy crown, but rather the head
That would have worn it. Knowest the face?

HEN. Rodulph!

WOLF. Even so; his army be repulsed,

And Germany is thine to rule once more.

Enter Soldiers.

HEN. Good lords and generals, fellow-countrymen,
The enemy to all our peace is dead,
His army routed and the battle ours.
The God of battles now hath smiled our way.
We will henceforth resume our royal sway.
See that our pardon be proclaimèd wide
To all who lay down arms or join our ranks.
Meantime we bury this defeated rebel,
And with him memory of this evil time,
Then hence to Rome to make our Empery strong.
Know henceforth, lords and generals, Henry stands
The champion of Europe's civil rights,
The friend of liberty and trampled man.
Nor shall this sword be sheathed till Germany
And Italy, yea, all of Europe's soil,
Be freed from sway of proud, pretentious priests,
And peace, humanity and freedom reign.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV. Scene 1.

Place—*A fortress near Milan, where* Gregory *is in exile.*

Enter Margaret, *crazed, with her dead babe in her arms.*

Mar. They would have stopped me, but my love's good cunning
Did cheat them all. O my sweet, waxen babe,
The Holy Father, he will tell me true,
And make thee smile again, thou art not dead,
They lie who say thou'rt dead. Here cometh one

Enter Hildebrand, *much older looking, accompanied by* Peter.

Who hath a holy face, he'll speak for me
Unto the Pope to make thee smile again.

Hil. Nay, Peter, they may rail and rail at me,
Strip all my wealth and make them fifty Popes,
They shall not shake me.

Pet. Gregory, Gregory, ponder well thine answer.
Remember, if thou art the real Pope,
Thou art not in Rome.

Hil. Wherever I am, Rome is! They may drive
Me into farthest banishment, they but put
God's holiness from out their precincts. I am Rome!

Mar. Good Father!

Pet. Woman, what wantest thou here?

Hil. Drive her not out, Peter. See, her reason,
Like me from my high Papacy, is exiled
From her poor body. I would speak with her.
Sorrow and defeat make men more kindly.
(*to* Margaret) Daughter, wouldst thou speak a word with me?

Mar. Sir, I would see the Pope, but his attendants
Would drive me out, and my sweet baby here.

They say he's dead and he will smile no more.
'Tis but because that terrible Pope had laid
His curse on us my babe will never smile.

HIL. Poor girl, thy child is dead.

MAR. Nay, nay, 'tis only this dread, awful curse.
You are a kind old man, you'll go with me,
And plead with me unto that terrible Pope,
To make him take this curse from off our lives,
And make my baby smile.

HIL. What curse, my daughter?

MAR. Take me but to him, I will tell it all,
But here my mind forsakes me. Someone said
I was his daughter, but they must have lied.
God would not make a father so unkind
To curse his only daughter, kill her joy,
And make her baby like my baby here.

HIL. O God, O God, it cannot, cannot be!
A mist seems growing up before mine eyes!
Peter, Peter, this is mine own daughter.

PET. Yea, she is distract. These women ever
Do come betwixt us and our sight of heaven.

HIL. My daughter, know thy father. I am the Pope.

MAR. Nay, nay, but thou art kindly, hast no heart
To lay a winter like is laid on me.

HIL. Nay, daughter, I am he, that awful man,
I am Pope Gregory.

MAR. Then if you be, take off this hideous curse,
Make my babe laugh and crow and stuff his hands
In rosy mouth, and speak his father's name,
Then he will come. They say thou hast God's ear,
And He will do it.

HIL. O Peter, Peter, this would break my heart
Were I but human.

PET. Send her away. Thou canst do her no good.
The child is dead, and she hath lost her reason.

Much must be suffered here that good may come.
Send her away.

HIL. Nay, Peter, I have worked full o'er-enough
For Holy Church, this much God asked of me,
He did not make me butcher to my child.
Hildebrand in sorrow finds a heart.
Out, out, thou cruel man, for one short hour
Let me forget the Pope and be a father.

[*Exit Peter.*

MAR. Holy Father, make my baby smile,
And God will thank thee by a mother's heart.

HIL. Daughter, God will make thy baby smile,
When thou and I and others like us smile,
And we have put aside this earthly dross
That weights our spirits down, in His Great Judgment.

MAR. O Father, thou art kind, and thou wilt do it;
Thou hast all power, all Heaven-given strength,
To bless, to ban, to slay, to make alive:
Oh, bring my baby back to me again.

HIL. Daughter, I am but a weak, despised old man,
One poor enough in even this life's powers
To make him jealous o' yon sweet, sleeping babe
Whom the angel of death makes waxen in thine arms.

MAR. O Father, tell me not that he is dead!

HIL. Margaret, Margaret, this is not thy babe,
But some sweet marbled mould of what he was.
I know a bank where we will plant this blossom,
And water it anew with our poor tears.
Could I as easy bury my black griefs,
And all the storm-cloud passions of this life,
God knows, I'd make me sexton to them all.
Come, let us out.

[*Exeunt both.*

Enter PETER *and a Bishop.*

PET. He hath gone out with some mad woman but now,
He gets more in his dotage day by day.

I cannot move him; thou canst try thy power.

Bishop. If he would only come to terms with Henry,
And patch this foolish quarrel, the Church is safe,
And if not, then—

PET. Then what?

Bishop. He must be brought to make his abdication.

PET. He'd die first ere he would do either.
Here he comes.

Enter HILDEBRAND *bearing the dead body of* MARGARET.

'Tis the mad woman.

HIL. Come, help me lay her here. She was my
daughter.

Bishop. Is his Holiness mad, that he uttereth thus
Such scandal 'gainst the Church's dignity?

HIL. Nay, rather found his reason for an hour,
Like other men through earth's humanities.
Mine arrogance did dream I was above
Men's humble sorrows. See my soul rebuked.
She bore it, Peter, till the first clod fell
Upon yon little blossom, then she shook,
And when it passed from sight her soul passed, too.
I fear me much we blunder out God's truths,
And mar His angels with our brutal laws,
And change His temple to a prison house.
She was a blossom, Peter, so like her mother.
I'll bury her out there beside her babe,
And when the winds shake and the roses blow,
They'll know each other as their angels know
Each other in heaven. Would I were sleeping, too!
Dost know mine age, Peter? I am over sixty.

PET. Your Holiness forgets. The bishop would speak
with you.

HIL. Forgive me, bishop; aye, 'tis thou, Brunelli.
What is thy business?

Bishop. Your Holiness must pardon my intrusion
On this o'er-sad occasion; important matters
Must be their own excuse. I will speak plainly:
One by one your party leaves you; soon
You will be desolate. Our only chance is now.

HIL. Ha! now? And now!

Bishop. You must meet Henry.

HIL. Never!

Bishop. Then, Peter, tell him, for I cannot.

PET. The matter, Gregory, is, in short, thou must
Plant Empery upon bold Henry's head
Or lose thy tiara.

HIL. Never, as I am Pope, I will do neither!
Though I am wasted, agèd, worn and weak,
Deserted by false friends and hireling hounds,
I still am Gregory. Never hand but mine
Can dare uncrown me. Let him dread my curse
Who'd force me to it. Yea, that hand will shrivel
Ere it uncrowns me. People the world with Popes,
There's but one Peter. Look on this my sorrow,
Embittering with its pangs mine olden age,
And know what I have done for Holy Church.
By that sweet face that lieth there in death,
A martyr, if ever was one, to God's great cause,
I bid you go and tell proud Henry, yea,
And all those false, foul prelates of the Church,
That Hildebrand, who crushed out his own heart,
To keep the right, will die as he hath lived.

CURTAIN.

———

ACT IV. SCENE 2.

PLACE—*A chapel close near the castle. The grave of* MARGARET *and her child marked by a cross.*

Enter HILDEBRAND *leaning on the arm of* PETER.

HIL. Little did I dream that it was I
Would be the first to go. O Peter, Peter,
This world-ambition hath eaten up my heart,
And my life with it. Better to be there
Where she doth lie than to be God's Vicar.

PET. Gregory, if you would only compromise,
And meet the wishes of the Cardinals,
And temper Henry, you might die in Rome.

HIL. Never, never! better end me here,
Than give my life the lie. Do they their worst,
What I have lived for, I will die for, too.
Better the Church go crumble all to ruins,
And Europe be a field of ravening wolves,
Than compromise be purchased at such price,
And sell the Church's right to impious hounds,
And make the temple of God a den of thieves.
Go, Peter, go; your heart is like the rest.
Go, leave me, I am but a poor old man,
Weak, palsied, leaning slowly to my tomb.
I need no friend, God will be merciful.
Though cold and rude earth's loves, I can but die.

PET. Thou knowest, Gregory, I will never leave thee.

HIL. 'Twill not be long, and then they'll have their will.
O Europe! Europe! Peter, wilt thou see
That this place is kept sacred. Yon rose-tree
Kept watered, and yon twin-mound holy,
Till thou dost die?

PET. I will.

HIL. She was my daughter, Peter, and like her mother,
And the poor babe, it looked so sweet in death,
Mine age went to it. O Damiani,
These women and children twine about our hearts.

PET. Wilt thou go within?

HIL. Methought I heard one hum an old-time tune.

PET. Nay, Gregory, thou meanest a chant or hymn.

HIL. Nay, Peter, but a simple ballad tune,
That I loved long ago. Know thee, Peter,
All music is of God, and it be holy.

PET. What be that noise? (*rising*) Who be those
coming here?

HIL. Peter, thou wilt keep this place?

PET. Hildebrand! Hildebrand! Gregory! dost thou
hear?
Many cardinals and bishops come this way.

Enter Cardinals, Bishops and Lords.

CARDINAL BRUNELLI—Your Holiness!

HIL. (*rising suddenly and waving his hand imperiously*)
Back! back! this ground be holy!

BRU. We be come, my lord—

HIL. Back! back! or fear my curse. Sully not
These silent, dreamless ears with impious words
Of earth's ambitions, Church's greed and curse.
Desecrate not this peace with life's mad riot.
'Tis dedicate to memories alone
Of youth and innocence. [*They fall back; he goes forward.*
What be your will?

BRU. May it please your Holiness, we come from Rome.

HIL. I am Rome! And when these old walls crumble,
Rome hath fallen, till another be built.
'Twill not be long.

PET. Know, lord cardinals, that the Holy Father
Is indisposed. Complete your business.

HIL. Nay, not ill, but rather worn of life
And its vexatious evils, foolish toils.
Aye, lord cardinals, weigh you my curse so heavy,
That ye have come so far to crave my blessing?

BRU. We come, my lord, to heal this cruel schism
That rendeth Holy Church and maketh mock
Of Peter's chair throughout all Christendom.

Henry of Germany—

HIL. Silence! or I'll forget the Church's good,
And curse her Cardinal. Name me not that monster,
Save in anathema. Look on me, Brunelli,
And these poor hands wherein life's blood runs cold,
So that they scarce can lift in Church's blessing;
Look on my face and see Death written there,
In plainest charactry. Yet know, proud cardinals,
I still am Peter till my latest breath.

[*He staggers*. PETER *catches him in his arms*.

PET. Great God! he dies! Help! help! lord cardinals,
help!
The greatest soul in Europe passeth now.

HIL. (*staggers to his feet*) I am going, Damiani.
Heard you sounds
Of rustling pinions? Did you know a presence
That darkened all the horizon with its wings?
Nay, I can stand alone. Unhand me, Peter!
Lord cardinals and prelates, to your knees!
Take you my blessing, 'tis my latest hour!

[*All kneel*.

All ye who have been true to Holy Church,
Take my last blessing. All who have been false,
Take ye my—Catherine! Catherine! O my God!

[*Dies*.

CURTAIN.

Some Press Notices of the Poems of Wilfred Campbell.

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"Nature poet, prophet of the Anglo-Saxon race, deep in the deepest problems of our day, Campbell appeals to many tastes. He has well won the enviable place he holds among the singers of this generation. His work always has meaning and beauty; sometimes it rises very near to greatness. The lyric gift is truly his; his range of feeling and fancy is wide, the form it takes in his artistic, sensitive hands are many and varied."—*The New York Evening Mail, in a review of Wilfred Campbell's "Collected Verse."*

"Mr. Wilfred Campbell needs no introduction, at this time of day, to anyone sufficiently interested in modern poetry to read it. He voices clearly, and with strength and sweetness, the eternal appeal from life and nature. He has points of kinship with Wordsworth and Arnold; he thinks and feels as they might have thought and felt, but thought and feeling and utterance are none the less sharply and finely individual. There is tenderness and dignity, splendor and sonority, in the 'Elegiac Verses,' in the Sonnets, the Patriotic Poems, the Dramatic Verse, the Poems on the Affections; but on the whole, for a certain haunting music, a certain sheer getting to the heart of life, perhaps you will go back to some of the lyrics in the two sections of Elemental and Human Verse and the Nature Verse. Nothing could well be more exquisite in its kind than 'The Spring Spirit,' with its rapturously wistful opening, or than the 'Song.'"—*The Bookman, London, Eng.*

"It is among the most characteristic in the Victorian Anthology, and that is what tells for a poet after all."—*Edmund Clarence Stedman.*

"He is to be placed in the very front of our Canadian singers. Three grand specimens of earlier work are included: 'The Dreamers,' 'The Last Prayer,' and the dramatic monologue, 'Unabsolved.' 'Orpheus,' a beautiful, melodious and yet simple setting, challenges comparison with Milton's famous lines. 'Bereavement of the Fields' worthily takes its place beside the other greater elegies of the English language. In technique and melody it ranks very high, and the reviewer has found by experience that audiences never fail to appreciate to the full the wistful beauty and justice of the poem. The last scene from 'Mordred,' a drama far too little known, and also songs from the same drama, have a lyric quality of the very highest order."—*Prof. Horning, in the Globe.*

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"The foremost living Canadian poet."—*Spectator.*

"Mr. Campbell's message is not for Canada alone, deep-rooted as is his devotion to the splendid land that gave him birth; it is a message to British men and women the world over, from Ottawa to Delhi, from Vancouver to the Cape. It has the fire and zest in

it which belong to the highest kind of young life, born of the early days of great nations. Chaste as Galahad, but throbbing with the splendid virility of youth, the soaring idealism of the ardent preacher, it is a message of which we have a need here in the ancient centre of a world-wide dominion. . . . Every page among the three hundred of the volume tempts one strongly to quotation. . . . This volume of 'Collected Poems' is a work which should become as well known in England as across the Atlantic. England should cherish so true a poet of Empire."—*Standard, London*.

"He has great gifts, and, we hope, a long career in front of him. In days when the stream seems to be running dry in the old country we are all on the watch for a new poetry from the new countries, and Mr. Campbell comes to us with both promise and performance."—*Westminster Gazette*.

"Has the interest which always belongs to the books of this strong and original writer."—*Nation, New York*.

"The world will stand still and listen to him some day."—*Editor Athenæum, London, England*.

"Is one of the real living poets to-day in the English language."—*Sir W. Laurier.*

"In this dainty volume Canadian verse has reached its highest expression."—*Methodist Magazine*.

"In strength and depth scarcely matched by any of his contemporaries."—*Toronto Globe*.

"Foremost among English poets of Canada."—*Montreal Life*.

"The interpenetration of the soul of man and the soul of the physical world may be taken as the predominant thought of Mr. Campbell's work."—*Chicago Dial*.

Some Opinions of "Mordred."

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Miss Louise Imogen Guiney, the exquisite American lyric poet, and a scholarly critic, wrote of "Mordred":

> "It is literary and it is human. I do not think it a common occurrence that a poet should be, on the face of it, thoroughly poetic and plainly of the only lineage, the Elizabethan, and at the same time not artificial in feeling, not set upon exploiting himself, not removed from the great fountains of simplicity and life at first hand."

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the last of the great New England group of literary men, wrote of "Mordred":

> "Your treatment of the Arthurian legend at first repelled me a little, to tell the truth, as Shelley's 'Cenci' does, but with every reading this has diminished, and I feel its power more and more. Compared to it, the treatment of your Lancelot in 'A Dread Voyage and other Poems,' is smooth and Tennysonian, though that, too, is most pathetic. This ('Mordred') is grim and unflinching, but very strong. I think that 'Mordred' is a wholly new creation, and his final yielding a most daring and touching outcome: it was impossible to foresee what you would do with him. The other characters are also touched with much vigor of characterization. You certainly have the dramatic quality in a high degree."

The Editor of *Walsh's Magazine*, in a review of "Mordred," said:

> "Unless I am greatly mistaken, the tragedy 'Mordred,' the first of those in this work, is by long odds the greatest work yet accomplished by any Canadian poet. . . . While the part of Mordred is maintained in fitting strength throughout, it should not be over-looked that the minor parts are fashioned by the hand of a master. . . . We have here a work of very uncommon merit. Not the least of its literary beauties is the steadfast adherence to the plain Saxon forms of speech . . . which gives us a new taste of the delights of the Elizabethan dramatists, namely, those crystal clear expressions which, in Shakespeare and his contemporaries, gather the perfect thought into the perfect line."

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Poetical Tragedies*, by William Wilfred Campbell.]