



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

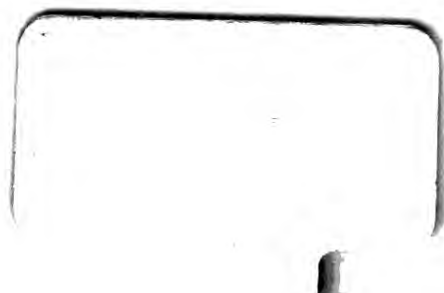


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.





M. add. 110 e 1193



ISOLT OF IRELAND
AND
THE POISON FLOWER

WORKS BY JOHN TODHUNTER

| | |
|--|--|
| LAURELLA AND OTHER POEMS | 1876 |
| ALCESTES, A DRAMATIC POEM | 1879 |
| A STUDY OF SHELLEY | 1880 |
| FOREST SONGS | 1881 |
| THE TRUE TRAGEDY OF RIENZI | 1881 |
| HELENA IN TROAS | <i>performed</i> 1886 |
| THE BANSHEE | 1888 |
| A SICILIAN IDYLL | <i>performed at The Vaudeville</i> 1890 |
| THE LIFE OF PATRICK SARSFIELD | 1895 |
| THE BLACK CAT | <i>performed by the Independent Theatre</i> 1895 |
| THREE IRISH BARDIC TALES | 1896 |
| SOUNDS AND SWEET AIRS | 1905 |
| HEINE'S BOOK OF SONGS: TRANSLATED | 1907 |
| FROM THE LAND OF DREAMS, with an Introduction by T. W. ROLLESTON | 1918 |
| ESSAYS, with Foreword by STANDISH O'GRADY | 1920 |
| GOETHE'S FAUST, FIRST PART: TRANSLATED, with an Introduction by PROF. J. G. ROBERTSON | 1924 |
| ISOLT OF IRELAND AND THE POISON FLOWER | 1927 |
| TRIVIUM AMORIS AND THE WOOING OF ARTEMIS | 1927 |

ISOLT OF IRELAND
A LEGEND
IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS
AND
THE POISON FLOWER

BY
JOHN TODHUNTER



LONDON & TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
1927

All rights reserved



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|-----------------------------|------|
| ISOLT OF IRELAND | I |
| THE POISON FLOWER | 91 |

ISOLT OF IRELAND

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

MARK, King of Cornwall.

TRISTRAM, his nephew.

KURVENAL, Tristram's squire.

MARIODOC, King Mark's nephew, and brother of Isolt of Brittany.

MELOT, a hunchback. King Mark's jester.

CARADOC, an old sailor, blind of one eye.

LLEWELLYN, a sailor.

MARDOC, a young sailor.

TRISTRAM'S PAGE.

SIR UTRED

SIR HOEL } Knights of King Mark's Court.

SIR HUGH }

ISOLT OF IRELAND, wife of King Mark.

ISOLT OF BRITTANY, King Mark's niece and wife of Tristram.

BRANGWAINE, cousin of Isolt of Ireland.

ENNA, attendant on Isolt of Ireland.

A Pilot, a Herdboy, Soldiers, Sailors, Attendants, etc.

A month elapses between the Prologue and first Act.

Another month between the second and third Act.

ISOLT OF IRELAND

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *The main-deck of a ship on the Irish Sea*

The mast, on which the great striped square-sail is set, L. ; the forepart of the poop, with ladders leading up from the deck, appears R. Between the ladders, in the bulk-head of the poop, is the curtained door of Isolt's cabin. Across the back of the stage runs the port bulwark, the closed gangway in the middle. Left of the gangway, under the bulwark, is a large loose coil of rope. Under the poop, between the door of the cabin and the farther ladder, is placed a movable seat. Aft the mast, a great curtain of painted canvas hung from a rope, which runs from shroud to shroud across the deck, shuts off the forepart of the ship. A gloomy dawn is breaking, the poop lanterns still burning. A dark expanse of sea is visible over the bulwark.

The curtains of the cabin, of some rich stuff, are closed. Three sailors of the watch pace irregularly fore and aft. In the tops a young sailor is on the look-out.

Caradoc. Blow wind, sail ship! A glad man I will be with this voyage well over.

Llewellyn. Cheer up, Father Caradoc! 'Tis the Cornish land will be our bed to-night, my old seal of the sea.

Cara. O ay!—if Cornwall be within cry of these waves.

I have heard tell of the ships that sail for ever, yet never make port.

Mardoc. It is wicked freight they will be carrying.

Llew. What about this fair cargo Sir Tristram is bringing King Mark? [Points to cabin.]

Cara. [Mysteriously.] Isolt of Ireland? Since *she* sailed with us I have heard things on the blast, seen things in the sea—terrible things—O ay!

Llew. A fair face she has; but a foul temper, I doubt—eh, Mardoc, lad?

Mar. Och, man Llewellyn, but I would sooner see the frowns on *her* than the smiles on any other woman whatever!

Llew. Yet Sir Tristram keeps well out of shot of her smiles or her frowns. Spin us the yarn of that; for 'tis five year gone since I have seen a Cornish daisy.

Cara. There is the blood-feud between them—O ay!

Llew. The blood-feud?

Cara. She was troth-plighted to yon Irish giant that Tristram slew—what will be his name?

Mar. Morough.

Cara. O ay! This Morough was her lover. When he came from the Irish king, Angus of the Black Ships—Isolt's father—to get for him the tribute from King Mark, young Tristram challenged him; and they fought in lists on a sandy isle of the sea—O ay!—a sandy isle of the sea. And there did Tristram

IRELAND

Prologue

slay him; and in the casket he brought for the tribute his own head went back to Ireland.

Mar. And in the bone of its brow a splinter of Tristram's sword.

Cara. O ay! And at the sight of it the life went out of the Irish king, for the wrath and shame that was on him. And so ended a bad custom, O ay, indeed! a very bad custom!

Llew. No love is lost then between our new queen and Sir Tristram?

Mar. Love or no love, she will have put spells on him.

Llew. Spells?

Mar. Sir Tristram took a wound from Morough—a magic wound it was, none but an Irish witch could heal; yet healed he was, and the secret of his healing tongue has never told. But from that day the glad song is no more in his heart, and he himself will be looking like a death-doomed man.

Cara. Death-doomed he is—O ay!

Llew. They say there is the second sight in that one eye of thine.

Cara. I saw the shroud at his feet, and now it is risen to his knee. And the death-shroud is at *her* knee too. They will die the one day—O ay, indeed!

Llew. Well, Death will get us all—some day.

Mar. But, Sir Tristram he will be marrying himself against the other Isolt, when King Mark has got this one.

[*Points to the cabin.*]

Llew. The other Isolt?

Cara. Isolt of Brittany—Isolt of the White Hands—
O ay!

Look-out. [*From the tops.*] Land ho! Land on the lee
bow!

Llew. [*Seizing the shroud and leaping on the bulwark.*]
Bravely blown, North Wind! There stands old
Dundagil. How about your bodings now, mate?

Cara. There is no end to Irish Druidries. I have my
bodings still.

Pilot's voice. Stand by your braces, men! Ease away
the sheet!

[Sailors trim braces and sheets and exeunt L.

*[The ship's course is altered and a distant headland
appears on the backcloth L. Brangwaine comes
out of the cabin, looks over the bulwark, and
returning quickly to the cabin calls to Isolt.*

Brangwaine. Land, land, Isolt!

Isolt of Ireland. [*At the cabin-door.*] What means this
cry? Where are we?

Bran. The clouds give way, rent by the rushing north,
and the ships strain for port. I feel my feet almost
on Cornish land.

Is. of I. [*Rushing out.*] Land, land! O never come safe
to land the ship that bears Isolt to Cornwall and
King Mark!

Bran. A black wish on us all!

Is. of I. How long have we been sailing, days or
years?

IRELAND

Prologue

Bran. Three days, three nights, and now the fourth
morn breaks.

Is. of I. Three days, three nights of sailing; and this
dark hour

The first I have looked in the sea's wizard face!
Hark how the keening wind sweeps from the shroud
Lamenting tones, and plays upon the ship
As on a Druid's harp!

[She draws Brangwaine to the bulwark

Look down, Brangwaine:

See how the subtle water, flecked with foam,
Darts from the plunging prow, and speeds by us
Writhing and hissing softly like a snake.
Its horror fascinates. Dost thou not dream
Of rare and delicate deaths, gentler than sleep,
Down, fathoms down, through the green glimmering
sea

Following the diving eye, till wandering light
Swoons, mazed and lost in perilous ways obscure?

Bran. Hush! for the sea may hear. Your mother's spells
Have sunk, ere now, brave ships.

Is. of I. *[Stepping back from the bulwark and sinking
down upon the coil of ropes.]*

O forlorn mother!

Her sorceries have grown tame since Ireland cowers
Before her tributary: she can but brew
Love-drinks and bale-broths every witch-wife knows,
Not storms.

Where are thy spells, mother,

That whispered lightly to the purring surf
 Could sink us now?

Bran. Tempt not the sea, Isolt!

Is. of I. [*Coming forward.*]

Winds, winds of the sea, can ye not hear
 The storm within my breast with sister's cry
 Call you to rage? Hound on your hungry pack
 Of howling waves, white wolves of the grey waste,
 To hunt the staggering ship; whelm in one wreck
 A hundred guiltless, with one guilty head!

Bran. Call not the winds to chafe the spleenful sea:

Is. of I. They hear me not! No more weak blustering
 words.

I have a thing to do—a thing to do!

Bran. What sleepless worm gnaws at your hidden
 heart?

Is. of I. Blood cries for blood. My bridemaid, Ven-
 geance, wakes!

Bran. Did you so love Morough that for his death—

Is. of I. Who told thee I loved Morough, that I hate
 him? [*Indicating Tristram.*]

My heart has grown so poor in natural hate
 That for mere shame I must abhor myself
 Till we rest even with them, head for head.

Tristram. [*From the poop.*] Deck out the ship in all her
 bravery,

Ancients and pennons to the following winds,
 Hoist on the poop the standard of King Mark!

[*The sun shines out. Sailors hoist flags.*]

IRELAND

Prologue

Is. of I. [*Looking at the flags.*] See how this haughty
vassal of King Mark

Triumphs above my captive head, and tames
The servile waves to be the ministers
Of his insulting pageant!

Bran. He ordains
But fitting honours for the chosen bride
Of his great uncle.

Is. of I. O how he honours me!
Three days and nights the melancholy fields
Of ocean we have sailed, and yet not once
Has he with knightly homage kist my hand.

Bran. The custom of his office bids him show
A liege's dread in distant courtesy.

Is. of I. [*With scorn.*] Ay, morn and eve his blunt
squire, Kurvenal,
Comes with scarce-hidden malice in his smile,
To spy if tamely I endure my cage.
I am a queen by proxy, proxy-wooed,
And proxy-wedded; and by rule of state
Should love King Mark by proxy.

Bran. Idle words!
What would you have?

Is. of I. Bid Tristram come to me.

Bran. [*Looking towards the poop.*] How great must be
King Mark, lord of such knights!

Is. of I. [*Turning her back towards Tristram.*]
A doughty champion truly—dares not look
His captive in the face.

Prologue

ISOLT OF

Bran. Dares not?

Is. of I. Ay, dares not!

Bid him on his allegiance come to me,
And with his harp make music that can steep
The present in oblivion—Go—defy him!

Bran. Defy him! Wherefore?

Is. of I. Spend not thy breath, but go!

[*Exit Brangwaine. Isolt turns and looks
at Tristram.*]

Set are the lists of fate, the herald hour
Blows a stern summons on the hastening winds,
And vengeance claims yon death-devoted head,
This death-devoted heart. Would it were done,
And peace for ever sealed between us twain!

Re-enter Brangwaine.

Well? Dares this Cornish lion look on me?

Bran. He lays his homage at his lady's feet,
But duty to his sovereign chains his hand
Fast to the helm, till we ride safe in port.

Is. of I. [*Laughs.*] His sovereign is pale fear, he dares
not look

A woman in the face. Did he not blench,
Hearing my name and message? Did he not blench?

Bran. His face grew pale; but stern his fearless eyes.

Is. of I. 'Twas not so once. His face in peril's face
Kept its own manly red. Many a strange tale
Sleeps in a woman's heart, untold, untold!
He will not come, then?

Bran. He but keeps his vow.

IRELAND

Prologue

Is. of I. What wilt thou wager he will keep it still,
Though I again demand his presence here?

Bran. My girdle against yours.

Is. of I. I'll win my stake.

Bran. Are you so sure?

Is. of I. Brangwaine, dost thou remember
That nameless knight whose magic wound I healed?

Bran. I heard the tale, the man I never saw.

Is. of I. Once, while he slept, his sword did I unsheath
And the gapt blade showed its own secret wound.
Then from my breast, where burning cold it lies,
I plucked this fateful splinter—which gave death
To Morough in his last inglorious field;
And by the token of the sword made whole
I knew his deathsman.

[Showing the splinter in an embroidered case.]

Bran. Tristram!

Is. of I. Ay, Tristram.

Bran. What ransom paid he then his deadliest foe,
To keep his perilous secret so well?

Is. of I. He woke from sleep, and saw me with the
sword

Stand like eternal vengeance over him.

Yet on the sword he looked not; but his eyes

Looked into mine—and after that long look

The sword fell, and I wished him scathe no more

Bran. What spell took hold on you?

Is. of I. Was it not some spell?

Are there not dark enchantments shot in a look?

Yet the new faith bids "love your enemies";
 Fools may! This Tristram took his life from me
 But as a loan I might require again.

Bran. His life?

Is. of I. So hath he sworn. His tenure holds
 But while I keep this shred of his own sword,

[*Showing the splinter.*]

When I put in this pledge I claim in full.

Bran. O fling that ghastly token in the sea!

Is. of I. That splinter gave Ireland to grey King
 Mark.

Bran. King Mark is yours.

Is. of I. Carrion for kites! This bond
 Shall yield me in its quittance blood for blood.

Bran. The blood-fine has been paid for Morough's
 death,

His bones with reverence buried.

Is. of I. Let him rest!
 But for my country's honour gored and slain,
 What blood-fine? For my father's head gone down
 In shame, what blood-fine? For their slights to me,
 What blood-fine?

Bran. Is this passion love or hate?

Is. of I. There was such parting twixt us as when two
 Who haunt each other in the soul of sight
 Must smile with hidden hearts; when every word
 Is dark with things unsaid. It maddens me
 To think how then we parted. And this man
 Comes back—this man to whom I gave dear life—

And haughtily demands me for King Mark—
O death, death to us both!

Bran. Wedding King Mark you heal not one red wound,
But many wounds which drain two bleeding lands.
Surely his very fame blown in her ears
Might win a woman, though your mother's care
Had brewed no love-drink for King Mark and you.

Is. of I. [*Scornfully.*] The love-drink!

Bran. None shall sunder whom it binds!

Is. of I. O careful mother with her beldame's charms!
I would herself had wed this ancient king,
And drunk with him; or thou—Now by the rood
This is thy dream!

Bran. [*Laughing.*] May fate no worse be mine!

Is. of I. There is another potion in thy care,
That which, when it shall spice the brimming mead,
Lives are but bubbles at the mead-horn's brim.
Fetch me the casket which contains that drink—
The death-drink! It enshrines the last stern word
Of mother's love to the new-wedded bride—
It fills my heart with whispers. Darest thou speak
That word, Brangwaine?

Bran. "Better be dead than false!"

Is. of I. O tenderly my mother counsels me!
Fetch here the casket.

[*Exit Brangwaine into cabin.*
Better dead than false!

Enter Kurvenal. He brusquely salutes Isolt.

Kurvenal. My service to you, Princess!

Is. of I. Well, sir? Your message?

Kur. Fair landing after foul voyage! 'Twill be anchor down with us anon, and then after long tossing we shall ride safe in the shadow of King Mark's land.

Is. of I. What more?

Re-enter Brangwaine with the casket. She remains in the background.

Kur. My noble master, Sir Tristram, bade me say, that being safe over the sea we must now go ashore; and as we have decked the ship out in all her bravery, so we must make ourselves brave in holiday weeds and holiday faces.

Is. of I. Oh, for that you must trust my vanity!

Kur. I thank you, madam—and so I take my leave of you. [*Going.*]

Is. of I. Stay, sir! Can you vouchsafe me a word more?

Kur. As many as you please, an they be brief.

Is. of I. I would speak with Sir Tristram.

Kur. That's as it may be.

Is. of I. What must be shall be. As thou lovest thy master, give him this token [*gives the splinter*], and say I await his coming.

IRELAND

Prologue

Kur. As I love my master? I'll do it. May all your days be happy! [*Exit Kurvenal.*

[*As Brangwaine comes forward with the casket, a rocky promontory appears close to the ship on the backcloth R.*

Is. of I. The casket!

[*Brangwaine gives her the casket. She opens it.*

In which phial hides the juice

That gives to mortal hearts immortal sleep?

Bran. The death-drink! Ask not that!

Is. of I. I need not ask;

For now I well remember 'tis the golden.

Is it not so?

Bran. Yes.

Is. of I. 'Tis well shrined. The best

Should hold the best. Pale silver is too mean

To shape the flower whose honey cloy's desire—

[*She takes the golden phial and gives the casket back to Brangwaine.*

Have this still in thy care. There lurks more danger
Within, than in this physic for hot blood.

Bran. You tread the ways of madness!

Is. of I. Peace; no more!

Fill me with sparkling mead my golden cup.

And set my table here, the cup upon it!

Bran. Isolt! what would you do?

Is. of I. Drink peace with Tristram.

Away!

[*Exit Brangwaine into cabin.*

To die! To still the bounding veins
 Of passion in full ache! In the sick world
 Where age binds youth, and the false marriage bed
 Is but love's death-bed, what is there left to do
 But stop the beating heart? [*Calls.*]

Brangwaine, the cup!

*Re-enter Brangwaine. She places the table and sets
 the cup upon it.*

Is. of I. 'Tis well. Now, quick, Brangwaine, my
 broidered mantle

My royal brooch, my tire! I must make ready
 To meet my royal bridegroom like a queen.

[Exit Brangwaine. Isolt gazes at the phial.

O shrine of rest! My eyes looking on thee
 See but blue lurid flowers, my bridal flowers,
 That ominously wave o'er drowsy roots
 Whose clotted venom I hold cloistered here.
 I see my mother dig them at full moon
 In her witch garden, muttering magic words—
 Come, Wolfbane, whose blue flowers with trembling
 hand

I dared to pluck, a child, be thou the bale
 Of Tristram and Isolt!

[She pours the contents of the phial into the cup.

'Tis done; and now

This empty tribute to thy waves, O sea!

[She flings the phial into the sea.

Re-enter Brangwaine with mantle, etc.

Bran. [*Looking at the cup.*] Isolt! Let me but know—

Is. of I. Be wise, know nothing.

[*She casts off her mantle.*

Slip off this belt! My girdle—set it straight.

Good haste, no hurry.

Bran. O, my fingers tremble!

Is. of I. I tremble not; have thou no dread!

[*Brangwaine clasps the girdle, brings forward a chair and Isolt seats herself.*

My mirror!

[*Brangwaine gives her the mirror, and proceeds to adjust her tire, and fix the golden apples at the ends of her long plaits of hair which she brings over her shoulders.*

Is. of I. Do I not look the bride for a great king?

Bran. I never saw such stern eyes in a bride.

You cannot think of death?

Is. of I. [*As Brangwaine puts on her armlets.*]

Nay, of rich life

That bursts the bondage of this common clay

And wings eternity.

[*She rises.*

[*Brangwaine puts on the mantle, etc. Isolt laughs.*

This Tristram scorns us.

[*Suddenly clasping Brangwaine in her arms and kissing her.*

Farewell, Brangwaine!

[*Kissing her again.*

This kiss take to my mother.

Tell her how dearly I thank her for her cure
For wanton blood. Better be dead than false!

Bran. [*Struggling to reach the cup.*] O, this is madness!

Is. of I. Touch not that sacred cup!

If thou but spill from it one golden drop,
May devils dash thee from thy hopes of heaven!

*[She thrusts Brangwaine away to C., glances at the
poop, and takes the cup.]*

Sir Tristram quits the helm! These weeds away!

*[Brangwaine takes up the old mantle, belt, etc., and
exit into the cabin as Kurvenal enters from the
poop.]*

Kur. Sir Tristram comes!

Is. of I. I am here to give him welcome!

*Enter Tristram moodily, Isolt's token in his hand. He
salutes Isolt.*

Kur. [*Aside, and plucking him by the sleeve.*] Ware
danger, Tristram! Trust not woman's tongues!

Tris. Leave us alone. See all prepared for anchoring.

[Exit Kurvenal, L.]

Madam, you send for me in pressing terms.

Is. of I. Nay, in more pressing terms I sent before,

And yet you came not. Why am I flouted thus?

How is it, sir, that for three weary days

You break not, to beguile my melancholy,

With harp or song, or any cheerful speech,

The long monotonous chanting of the sea?

Tris. Even as you know, I am dear honour's thrall.

Is. of I. What hold'st thou in thy hand?

Tris. My, life, I know,
Perchance my death. If so, here is my sword—
Avenge your lover!

[Kneels and offers his drawn sword.]

Re-enter Brangwaine.

Is. of I. Sheathe it—that blade remembers
It once from my weak hand fell at a look.

The past is dead, drowned in this loving-cup.

[She takes the cup. He rises and sheathes the sword.]

Come, drink forgiveness of thy thousand wrongs!

Bran. [Aside.] It is the love-drink!

Tris. Though it be death, I'll pledge thee!

Bran. [Who has drawn gradually nearer.] Tristram,
drink not!

Is. of I. Peace, fool! See, Tristram, thus I drink to thee!

[She drinks. Brangwaine sinks back on the seat and covers her eyes.]

Tris. Hold! I demand the cup!

Is. of I. Nay, have no fear!

I will not stint thee of one rightful drop.

[She hands him the cup.]

Tris. [Raising the cup.] Peace be between us two!

[He drinks.]

Is. of I. That peace is made—

Now, Tristram, look thy last upon the sun,

For there thou hast thy death.

Tris. [*Setting down the cup.*] That needs no word.

Pilot. Clear the anchor! Bring her to the wind!

Strike sail!

Sailors. Ay, ay, sir!

[They lower the sail. The ship comes round. The rocky promontory disappears L. and Dundagil Castle appears on the backcloth R. Short symphony during which Tristram and Isolt remain gazing at one another.]

Tris. Can this be death, which fills my veins with fire,
And chants within the chambers of my brain
Forgotten songs of love? Isolt! Isolt!
What hast thou done?

Is. of I. I know not what—blind work!
We are the fools of fate! Tristram!

Tris. Isolt! *[They embrace passionately.]*

Is. of I. Sink, world, away; this is the glorious dawn
Of love's eternal morning! Honour and shame
Are but grey ghosts, the minions of dead Time,
And we, Time's outlaws, on a mightier stream
Than sweeps down his vain tide customs and kings.

Tris. Isolt, my bride, my queen! There is no law
Can bind us now, save one, laid on us two
By Love, the first and last and best of gods!

Pilot. Let go the anchor!

Sailors. Ay, ay, sir!

[The anchor is let go. The ship gradually gets stern-way on her until brought up by the cable. Distant trumpet heard.]

IRELAND

Prologue

Tris. [*Starting.*] Yon trumpet breaks my dream, I
must be gone!

*[Tearing himself from Isolt, he rushes on to the
poop. Isolt reels backwards, sees Brangwaine
and seizes her by the arm.]*

Is. of I. Traitress! What drink was that?

Bran. It was the love-drink!
Blame your dark thought: in fear I changed the
draughts.

Is. of I. This is thy sin, not mine; thou shalt
atone it.

Bran. Oh, kill me not!

Is. of I. Nay, thou shalt live to save me.

Bran. Ah, how? What must I do?

Is. of I. That thou shalt know;
But first swear by the stone of Destiny
That stands on Tara's hill; by heaven and hell,
To do my bidding.

Bran. Yet, before I swear,
Tell me what dreadful thing I have to do.

Is. of I. [*Clutching her by the throat.*] Swear! Swear!
or by the rood I'll strangle thee;
Tear thy false heart from that white breast of
thine,

Or hale thee by the hair to the ship's side,
And fling thee to the sea! Swear! Swear, I say!

Bran. I swear.

Is. of I. By every oath!

Bran. By every oath!

Is. of I. [*Releasing her.*] Save me, Brangwaine! There
is no second way.

By thee I have become the thing I feared,
His, his, body and soul, his bride—unwed.
Be thou King Mark's.

Bran. What would you have me do?

Is. of I. But a light penance.
Fill, in my place, the arms of Cornwall's king.

We have one height, one mien, almost one shape,
Complexion, Irish voice. Day barely knows
Each from the other. Night's dull eye confounds us.

Bran. This cannot save you from suspicious eye;
My fault will come to light.

Is. of I. What if it should?

Bran. This were foul sin; show me some innocent way!

Is. of I. Where all is foul the lesser foul is fair;
Come, thou hast sworn.

Bran. [*Weeping.*] I knew not what I swore!

Is. of I. Yet thou didst swear! There is no other
way.

Tris. [*From the poop.*] No! clear the gangway! Guards
ho! man the deck!

The king comes!

[Isolt and Brangwaine retire to the cabin. The gangway is opened, and the guards rank themselves on either side. Enter Tristram and Kurvenal bearing Tristram's shield and pennon. A loud flourish of trumpets is heard, and is answered from the poop.]

Go, Kurvenal, be herald to the queen
Of the king's near approach.

Kurvenal. [*Goes to the door of the cabin.*] Madam, the
king!

Re-enter Isolt and Brangwaine.

Tris. [*Aside.*] Isolt, the world's upon us, full of eyes.

[Isolt bows. The king's barge appears at the gangway, and while the bridge is being prepared for the king to come on board, the fool Melot skips over the bulwark and approaches Isolt and Brangwaine with quaint gestures and grimaces.]

Melot. My fair greeting to King Mark's queen! But
by my cockscomb I have two minds in me which of
you to choose for my mistress; for one of you is as
like the other as two swans on a lake!

Is. of I. What misshapen piece of God's handiwork
art thou?

Melot. [*Strutting about.*] The king, madam.

Is. of I. Or the king's fool?

Melot. Say the king's king, lady; for when the king's a
fool, the fool is king.

Tris. Begone, fool!

[As Tristram raises his hand to strike the fool, he ducks with a shriek of laughter, and runs up the steps to the poop on the front of which he sits with his feet dangling over the deck.]

Prologue

ISOLT OF

*Enter King Mark from his barge, leaning on Mariodoc,
two pages bearing his train.*

Soldiers and Sailors. Hail to King Mark!

*[A flourish of trumpets. As Tristram leads Isolt
forward to meet King Mark, the curtain falls.]*

END OF PROLOGUE

ACT I

SCENE I

A great hall in King Mark's castle. Low vaulted ceiling, roof supported on thick columns, with Celtic capitals formed of grotesque heads with quaintly interlaced beards, intertwined monsters, etc. In the middle of the R. wall an arched doorway leading to Isolt's apartments. In the L. wall, more towards the back of the stage, three great arches open upon a corridor. Between the springing of the R. and middle arch is an image of St. Germain of Cornwall, a hanging-lamp burning before it. Over the central arch hangs the banner of King Mark (a white horse argent upon a crimson ground). Over the door of Isolt's apartments, the banner of Ireland (a golden sunburst on a dark blue ground); over the door to the apartments of Isolt of Brittany, Tristram's banner (a golden lion rampant on a green ground). All the entrances are hung with rich curtains embroidered with Celtic patterns. On a dais against the wall, L., are two chairs of state with the arms of King Mark emblazoned on a shield on the wall above them.

TIME: *Afternoon*

Three knights, Sir Utréd, Sir Hoel and Sir Hugh, discovered standing by the dais, on the steps of which Melot sits, cracking and eating nuts. Enter from the back, Mariodoc.

Mario. Well, sirs, what do you think now of this dotage of King Mark?

Utréd. We have seen it with amazement.

Mario. This Irish witch plays with him as if he were her hooded falcon.

Hugh. And Tristram, they say, wears *her* like a glove on his hand.

Mario. Oh, he is still the king's proxy!

Hoel. But are these rumours true?

[Melot cracks a nut and laughs.]

Mario. Trust the fool to pick the kernel out of the nut.

Melot. *[Throwing away a nut.]* This should be the King Mark of nuts. 'Tis a blind one!

Mario. You see how Tristram flatters his uncle, fawning the hand that slew his father—if old tales be true

Hoel. If he held the king guilty of his father's death, he would have avenged it openly. There is no baseness in his nature. But who heeds this old wives' gossip?

Mario. Oh gossip is the crude gold of truth, which the monks alloy in their chronicles!

Hoel. If Tristram be in fault, as you say, it is some strange love-madness has fallen upon him.

Mario. Love is but a toy! Can he still believe the

monkish story of his father's death? Do you think he plots no revenge, dreams no ambitious dreams?

Hoel. He lives in fantasy, and plots nothing.

Hugh. Yet he may be dangerous. There is wild blood in him. His father was an unbaptised heathen when the monks came in with King Mark, and the Druid gods fled before the blessed Cross.

Hoel. Well, sirs, it is you who brand King Mark with the mark of Cain—not Sir Tristram.

Mario. Oh, sir, I hold King Mark fully justified in anything he may have done in the cause of true religion, though he had slain a score of brothers, Christian or Pagan. He stands assoiled of our Holy Church, and we pledged to guard his saintly head from treachery. Well, we have had a month of wanton revelry over these two marriages, King Mark's and Tristram's.

Hugh. But now the honeymoon begins to wane.

Mario. Ay, if the king were as tired of Isolt of Ireland as Tristram is of Isolt of Brittany. What should a man do who sees his sister so neglected—his king so betrayed?

Utred. Put a sword in his tongue, and a tongue in his sword.

Hoel. *Can* he so deceive the king, and so abuse your sister? Tristram!

Mario. Why not, man? There is nothing so bad it cannot be done in this world of unchastened flesh. Tristram? This vainglorious maker of love-songs loves Isolt, my sister, merely by the bond; Isolt the

queen, *par amour*! But my sister shall be avenged, and myself, too. I am as near in blood to the king as this upstart—and his elder in arms to boot. [*To Melot.*] And now, my little cock-sparrow, what news of that Irish sweetheart of thine?

Melot. If no news be good news, it will not be so bad. It is no news that Enna is the queen's woman, therefore a woman, whoever makes an offer for her. It is no news that you are a bigger fool than me; for you would send a fool to woo a woman with two empty hands. [*Holds up his hands.*] She may come peeping here, to spy if the coast be clear for her mistress, before you have time to grow much wiser.

Mario. [*Giving him a necklace and armlet of pearls.*] Shut thy fist on these.

Melot. Aha! The first pearls of wisdom you ever let fall when I was by! [*Trumpet heard.*]

Mario. The king's trumpet!

[*Mariodoc and knights move up stage and are about to go out, when Melot sees Isolt of Brittany, who appears at the door of her apartment, R.*]

Melot. [*Plucking Mariodoc by the sleeve.*] Here comes your sister, with salt water in her eyes.

[*Mariodoc makes a sign to knights, who bow and exeunt at back. Melot skips up to Isolt of Brittany.*]

Melot. Fair princess, I kiss your white hands! How does your noble husband, Sir Tristram? There is

IRELAND

Act I. Sc. i.

a fear on me that though a married man, he would be still a knight-errant.

Is. of B. Begone, fool! I am in no jesting mood.

[*She sighs.*

[*Exit Melot.*

Mario. [*As she approaches him.*] A month's bride, and more full of sighs than a week's widow. It means—what?

Is. of B. I cannot tell.

Mario. Tristram neglects you?

Is. of B. He is always gentle and courteous—yet——

Mario. He loves you not too well?

Is. of B. He—I know not what to think.

Mario. Think that your man has roving eyes.

Is. of B. Roving eyes?

Mario. Ay, and a roving heart behind them. There is more than one Isolt in the world.

Is. of B. No, no—not that! I'll not believe it!

[*Flourish of trumpets heard.*

Mario. The king comes. If Tristram be in his train, speak to him. Bid him take you from the court.

Is. of B. Oh, if he would!

Mario. I will draw the king away. Retire and watch.

[*Exit Isolt of Brittany, L.*

Enter from the corridor, King Mark, Tristram, king's page, knights and attendants.

King M. [*To page.*] Say to the queen that I would speak with her.

[*Exit page, R.*

Tristram, I owe thee debts whose mounting sum
 Only my love can pay; and this thou hast.
 In blood almost my son, thou art to me
 More than to many a father many a son,
 For thy desert is more; and those broad lands
 Of Lyonesse, which I have given thee now
 With my fair niece, Isolt of Brittany,
 Count but thy patrimony.

Tris. Oh, my dear uncle,
 Your gracious goodness far outpays my worth!
King M. Pay but thy worth, and all I have were thine!
 For thou hast given me youth, youth in the heart
 And youth's bold fires renewed in every vein.
Tris. If I bear fruit, I am but a fruitful tree
 Set in your orchard, yours with its increase.

Re-enter page with Brangwaine.

King M. What now, Brangwaine?
Bran. The queen, my lord, entreats you
 To pardon her a while.
King M. Why tarries she?
Bran. [*Smiling.*] To-day, Sir King, we find her hard to
 please,
 Her tire-women have used their utmost art;
 Yet naught contents her. Thrice within this hour
 She has changed her robes and jewels—all's amiss.
King M. [*Good-humouredly.*] Then when she comes
 she should abash the sun.

IRELAND

Act I. Sc. i.

Bran. She bids me say that when you take the air
Upon the bastion, she will wait you.

King M. She shall be warned. Let her not fail me then.

[*Exit Brangwaine R.*

[*King moves down stage followed by Mariodoc and knights. Tristram remains in the background absorbed in thought.*

King M. Well, sirs, how looks it for our sport to-night?

Utred. O'er the sunk sun the clouds in lurid glow,
Menace a tempest from the Irish Sea.

Hoel. The fishermen come scudding from the banks,
Following the sea-fowl, that with inland scream
Whiten the coast with wings, lured by the
herring.

Mario. Till the moon change the tempest holds aloof.
What if a capful gather in the clouds,
Enough to wrestle with the murmuring boughs
And scatter dancing moonlight thro' the woods?

King M. Our horns shall blow, then. All assemble here.
What, Tristram, sad? [Turning to him.

Tris. [*Still in the background—starting.*] My lord, like
the sweet fall

Of a remembered tune, the gentle thought
Of your most royal bounty wakes in me
That sadness which still haunts the soul of joy.

King M. I know the tune of thy most loyal heart.

Mario. He is but a harp for brooding fantasy
To sweep with wandering fingers into song.
Humour his mood, my lord.

King M. In happy time!

Tristram, we leave thee to thy mystery.

Tris. With your good leave, my lord.

[*Bows to king.*

[*Exeunt king, Mariodoc, knights and attendants.*

[*Tristram stands before Isolt of Ireland's apartment R., then turns away with a sigh and seats himself in one of the chairs on the dais, L. Isolt of Brittany appears at the door L. and watches him while he remains in thought. Then she comes timidly forward a few steps and speaks.*

Is. of B. Tristram! dear lord!

Tris. [*Shuddering.*] What are thou?

Is. of B. Thy Isolt!

Tris. [*Without looking at her, his head supported on his hand.*] Isolt? 'Tis a sweet name.

Is. of B. [*Coming round and facing him.*] It is my name.

Tris. [*Looking up.*] Will the king hold his purpose for to-night?

Will he go hunting?

Is. of B. That should'st thou know best.

But wherefore?

Tris. [*Rising.*] Wherefore? I would hunt with him.

[*He comes down from the dais and paces restlessly.*

I love a noble burst under the moon,

When I sit horsed upon a dream, and hear

The hounds, far off, bay through the steaming woods.

Nay—I am sick of hunting, sick of dreams;
Would there were wars, new wars!

Is. of B. That would not I.
Dost thou not love me, Tristram?

Tris. Ay, by the bond
That makes us one, I love thee—as myself!

Is. of B. Why am I then killed with cold looks?

Tris. Why? why?

That is the world's one everlasting wail,
It sighs in every wind, and the vext sea
Speaks it in thunder. Why? Silence itself
Is vocal in that never-answered word.

[He stands still and listens.]

Hark, how the sea-fowl scream about this tower!
There will be storm at changing of the moon.

Is. of B. *[Laying her hand on his arm.]* O, Tristram,
thou dost love me! Must I beg

Even for the crumbs of love's own daily bread?

Tris. Why shouldst thou beg? Women should grant,
not beg. *[Looking sadly at her.]*

A woman's love! What is a woman's love
That it should make men traitors to themselves?

[He gently disengages himself, and again paces to and fro.]

Is. of B. Is this my Tristram of the pleading harp?

Tris. Time is too short with his revealing hours
To bare the mysteries of our mortal clay.

What women be I know not; but I know
 Each man is double. Thinkest thou I am Tristram?
 Poor child, thou art deceived! I am not he.
 Where is thy lord? Go seek him in thy chamber!

Is. of B. My chamber?

Tris. Ay, let him not find me here.

[Looks round him with increasing agitation.

That other Tristram frights me.

Is. of B. Oh, what means this?

Tris. It is a warning of near death, when men
 See their own spectres. There! He comes again!
 With my own face he sternly looks on me!
 Speak to me! Call me traitor!

[To Isolt of Brittany.

Dost thou not mark

How his rebuking eyes abash me? Go!

He becks thee from me—go!

Is. of B. Nay, I see nothing.

Is this but madness feigned to put me by?

Tris. Ask me not what it is—let me get hence!

*[As Tristram is about to go out at back, re-enter
 Mariodoc, meeting him.*

Mario. A word with you, Sir Tristram of Lyonesse!

*[Tristram impatiently pushes past him
 and exit.*

Oho! Sir King that is to be; but we are not king
 yet!

*[Mariodoc comes forward observing Isolt of Brittany
 who stands in dumb amazement.*

IRELAND

Act I. Sc. i.

Mario. Well, sister, what of your suit?

Is. of B. Oh, do not ask me!

[She grows faint, Mariodoc leads her to the door of her apartments and speaks as she goes off.]

Mario. Something's amiss; but it shall be righted.

[As he comes back Melot skips in from the corridor.]

Melot. Hide, hide, if you would see sport! She will come now.

[He drags Mariodoc into the corridor, and they hide behind the curtains. Enter from Isolt of Ireland's apartments, R., Enna. As she looks cautiously round Melot runs up to her; Mariodoc remaining, observes them from the back.]

Melot. My thousand welcomes to you, my Irish daisy!

Enna. *[Starting with a scream.]* Oh, you ugly little scorpion! What is it you want with me?

Melot. It is your love I want, thief of my heart! Your love!

Enna. It is the white wish of my heart you may be hanged!

Melot. Hang me first, so you will love me after. But it is yourself is the gallows I would like to be hanging on for ever! *[He winds a long plait of her hair round his neck and looks up at her with mocking entreaty.]*

Have pity, beauty of the world! Have pity!

[Enna struggles to free herself, and he kneels, clutching at her skirts.]

Melot. You have taken the heart from my breast, and left a stone in the place where it was.

[Pretends to weep.]

Enna. Leave me go, you foul goblin!

[Melot rises and looks at her with threatening grimaces, then takes his bauble and draws a circle round her on the ground.]

Melot. Oh, go! If it is leaving me you would be. But out of that magic circle you'll never stir till I say *Almodoth!* See how it flames!

Enna. *[Terrified.]* Flames? Oh, you have put sorcery on me!

Melot. Oho! Will you be cruel still? *[Grimaces.]* Well, I have been cruel in my day. *[Struts round her.]* Many's the fair woman I have betrayed. It is the gay goblin I have been.

Enna. *[Laughing hysterically.]* Where was the woman could love a misshapen thing like that?

[Points at him.]

Melot. *[With a touch of real feeling.]* Take your finger from me! The more should be your pity for my misfortune, you swan of the sweet music! Faggots and fire were my mother's gossips when *I* came into this bad world. But what's that to you or me? *[Laughs bitterly.]* Will you dare to scoff at Creation's masterpiece? *[Struts and leers.]* Am not I a man?

Enna. Ay, if a man would happen to get made in the Devil's image.

Melot. *[Seizing her hands.]* It is an enchanted prince

IRELAND

Act I. Sc. i.

I am, charmed in this ugly shape by a Druid's curse. Kiss me thrice, and you shall see me transformed.

[He pinches her arm. She screams.]

Kiss me, Beauty of the World, and I'll let you go.

[She bends to touch his forehead with her lips; but he draws her head down and kisses her on the mouth.]

Enna. Ugh!

Melot. The first kiss! The other two may wait. I wouldn't give the scraping of a trencher for a woman's love; but do my bidding, and you shall have——

Enna. What?

Melot. Stoop the rosy shell of that little ear to my mouth.

Enna. Is it bite me you would?

Melot. No—not even kiss you, on the honour of a king!
[She bends down.]

You shall have—Tristram's love.

Enna. *[Startled.]* Sir Tristram's?

Melot. Oh, I can read your thoughts, my hidden flower of the woods! But first it is that proud witch, Isolt, we must put out of your road for you.

Enna. My mistress?

Melot. She is a crow to a swan when *you* are in the one place with her. But 'tis black the swan will be getting that consorts with crows. *[With solemnity.]* If you hate sin, give me a clue that will lead the

king to find out falsehood—and you shall have all that women desire.

Enna. Oh, you imp of the devil! Let me go, out of this!

Melot. Oh, you lost angel! Stay and be tempted back to grace! [*Showing the pearls.*] You shall have these.

Enna. I would not sell my mistress for—for anything you would offer me.

[*Exit Mariodoc behind, laughing.*]

Melot. Sell? Small fear I have you would do that. But will you see a noble king betrayed, and you eating his bread? And you holding the tongue you say your prayers with, and helping her to deceive him?

Enna. I am in two minds what to do.

Melot. Do right—walk in the path of virtue, and you will find it your path to fortune. Here are the first drops of the shower of good luck that is over you. [*Clasps the armlet on her arm.*] Look how well they become that white arm—and this, my swan of the white neck!—this [*shaking the necklace before her*]—this for proof of—you know what.

Enna. Well—to none but the king will I tell it.

Melot. To the king, then—to the king! [*Waves his bauble.*] *Almodoth!* You are free! Go and tell her the coast is clear!

[*He makes her a mocking bow as she steps out of the circle and exit R.*]

Melot. I must wipe the silly magpie's kiss from my lips for fear it would corrupt my virtue.

[*Wipes his lips with his cuff.*]

IRELAND

Act I. Sc. i.

Enter R., Isolt of Ireland and Brangwaine. Melot dances before them with ape-like grins and gestures, then exit at back.

Is. of I. This elvish dwarf had malice in his face,
His eyes are death's cold beacons.

Bran. You sport with danger
Using the king with such a frank disdain.

Is. of I. I have no skill in feigning, and grow sick
Of breathing sleek hypocrisy for air.
O God! I must break forth or die!

Bran. Fly then!
While time holds back the blabbing hour—fly now!

Is. of I. Perhaps?—The king suspects me, does he
not?

Bran. And with good cause, madam.

Is. of I. How now, Brangwaine?
What ails thee?

Bran. Oh, I cannot bear it longer,
Would I had died, ere sworn myself your slave,
To practise treason the most damnable!

Is. of I. Worse didst thou do to me, changing the
draughts.

'Tis but soft penance I have laid on thee;
For the grey king has found my proxy fair!
Thou hast a woman's craft to play for power,
And art half amorous of the greybeard's fame:
Play well, thou winn'st a crown.

Bran. I would not win
With such a crime the crown of all the world—

Feel myself such a wanton!

Is. of I. [*Kissing her.*] Thou art none.

There is no wanton, save the bride who loathes
To yield herself, yet yields.

Bran. My sin's as foul!

Is. of I. Not thine the fault, nor mine. His, his, 'tis his
Sin against youth and love. Think what foul wrong
This dotard does me, binding my young life——

Bran. Dotard? I tell you were ten thousand Tristrams
Laid in one scale, the king but touched its brother,
His worth would make them but a feather's weight.

Is. of I. Ha! Thou dost love this king?

Bran. That love redeems me.

You have torn my secret bleeding from my heart.
Would I could tear that heart out of my breast
To lay in expiation at his feet!

Is. of I. Pay with my blood, not thine! I might have
seen——

The more fool I—a woman trust a woman!

Bran. I never wronged you, nor will wrong you now,
Though sick with fear I play your desperate game.

Is. of I. Forgive me then, I'll trust thee—one bold
stroke

Even now may set us free.

[*Tristram's harp is heard preluding.*

'Tis Tristram's harp. It speaks in sad accords.

Go, bring him here! Say I must speak with him.

[*Exit Brangwaine.*

He comes as though the longing of my heart

IRELAND

Act I. Sc. i.

Thrilled all the air with its one ceaseless cry:

“I want thee; come to me!”

Re-enter Brangwaine with Tristram and page.

Tris. Take my harp, boy; wait in the corridor.

[The page takes the harp and exit into the corridor.

Isolt motions to Brangwaine. She retires R. and watches.

Isolt! I live once more.

Is. of I. Oh, my life's lord!

My breast is earth waiting the touch of spring;

Comfort its cold, for I am sick with longing.

But now, no time for solace of sweet words,

Each moment is a traitor. Oh, my love,

We must fly, fly to-night!

Tris. To-night? 'Tis sudden.

Is. of I. It must be dared.

Tris. I was o'er-ruled by thee,

When in our first glad hour under green boughs

I whispered: We must fly!

Is. of I. I was a fool,

Ten times a fool, to bid thee wed that woman.

Tris. Why didst thou?

Is. of I. Oh, thought of thy coming years

Made me in this too hard against myself!

I was too weak. These long, long days I have raged

A jealous woman, jealous, Tristram, jealous!

Tris. Thou hast no cause. O for a word of flame

That should outlive the stars, to speak my love!

Is. of I. The sun is back in heaven. But hark! Tristram,
I doubt Brangwaine.

Tris. Brangwaine?

Is. of I. She loves the king.

Tris. We should have feared this. We must fly.

Is. of I. To-night.

May it be done?

Tris. [*Calling the page.*] Here, boy! It may be done.

[*The page enters. Tristram gives him his dagger.*

Off like an arrow! This to Kurvenal,
And wait me at the fountain by the wood
With what he gives thee.

[*The page about to go.*

Stay! Hast thou, Isolt,

One woman thou canst trust?

Is. of I. Enna, my maid;

A simple thing that came o'er seas with me.

Tris. Then at the fountain let her meet my page.

Is. of I. [*Calls.*] Enna!

[*Enna comes. Isolt speaks to her aside.*

Tris. [*To page.*] Give her the token sent by Kurvenal.

Page. I will, my lord. [*Enna bows and withdraws.*

Tris. Off, then, wings at thy heels! [*Exit page, L.*

Is. of I. What signifies this dagger message?

Tris. "Danger!"

This month, by Kurvenal's hut in the woods
Swift horses in their stalls stand day and night,
And in a lone cove of the southern coast,
Manned and in trim for sea my warship waits.

Is. of I. O bravely done! And I? What is my part?

Tris. The king will hunt to-night. Keep thou thy chamber

Till the loud horns grow faint in the far woods,
Then steal to Kurvenal's hut. I'll meet thee there,
And then to sea, for love and liberty!

Is. of I. The sea! O listen, Tristram, how it calls us!

The waves grow wild, seeking us on the shore,
And the wind whistles, eager for our sail.

I'll trust no soul, but go alone.

Tris. So best.

Is. of I. But for the token sent by Kurvenal?

Tris. If all be well, two aspens twined in one,
Their heart-shaped leaves like lover's trembling hearts.

Is. of I. Our old sweet pledge of secret meeting!

[*Laying her hand on his shoulder.*] Tristram,

Can all the future hold diviner bliss

Than those brief hours that were—so long ago?

Tris. Has Love no word but one, or that one word

May he not speak it in a thousand tones?

Death steals into the heart when passion cloys.

Is. of I. A great word, death; familiar to my soul

As love's most inward song—

[*Draws phial from her bosom.*

See, Tristram, here

I keep that love-drink we have drained not yet.

Tris. There are fresh fields to walk in ere that day,

Life on the budding moment richly lives;

Act I. Sc. i.

ISOLT OF

Let us not sicken o'er to-morrow's fruit.

[Isolt returns the phial to her breast.]

Is. of I. To-day—to-night! What is the sign of danger?

Tris. A dead branch.

[Trumpet heard.]

Bran. [Coming down stage.] The king's trumpet!

[Exit R.]

Tris.

We must part!

Is. of I. 'Till night, then nevermore perchance.

Tris.

Farewell!

Is. of I. Farewell! I shall be sick and sick indeed,

Until I kiss my ease in those green hearts.

And then into the air, Tristram, with thee,

Out, out, into the air, freedom and love!

Tris. Good speed!

Is. of I. Farewell!

[Exit Tristram behind.]

[Re-enter Brangwaine with Isolt's ladies in waiting.]

As she places a splendid mantle on Isolt's shoulders she says in a low voice.

Bran.

Remember—you may trust me!

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I. *The Great Hall* (as in Act I)

TIME: *Evening; torches in sconces on the walls are lit.*

Knights, ladies and courtiers discovered awaiting the king's entrance. Three knights of Mariodoc's party stand together near footlights, R. Enter from the back Mariodoc and Melot, laughing. They come down stage to where the three knights are standing.

Mario. [To knights.] Tristram to be the king's heir, if he should have no son! How do you like that?

Knights. Not at all.

Mario. Give me your hands, then, and Tristram shall go down. [To Melot.] Out with thy news, changeling!

Melot. Crown me king of all fools; for the fear is on me I may be catching the plague of love. But the maid is ours, and I am not half as much married as my uncle Mark or my cousin Tristram—as yet.

Mario. [Laughing.] Oh, you should have seen this goblin wooing. The Devil making love to Eve in the bishop's miracle-play was but a blind worm to this little snake. Well, I have sown the seeds of suspicion in the king's mind; yet they do not thrive—

the soil is so rankly overgrown with folly's weeds.
But now we shall have proof, if the world last
another night.

Hoel. You are certain?

Mario. Enough to convince a saint. But he will hear
no truth from me. You must lead the onset, and I'll
spring the ambush.

Utred. I will broach it to the king, myself—if you
do not.

*[Flourish of trumpets. Enter King Mark and Tristram
attended. Melot stands whispering to Mariodoc.]*

King M. 'Tis such a perfect night as well might shame
Even sluggards from their beds. Is it not, sirs?

Mario. Perfect, Sir King, for woodcraft.

[The king seats himself on dais.]

King M. How swift the clouds

Drive past the sailing moon! I love to hear
The hounds' bold music in the sighing woods
On such a night. Now, Tristram, thou and I
Will try our final match of gallant craft.

Tris. You are two points ahead, my lord.

King M. Three, three!

I promise thee that if thou winest of me
'Twill prove a feat of labour. Come, confess
I am as young a fellow for my years
As thou for thine.

Tris. Younger, my lord, in heart.

King M. In this I fear thou art a courtier, Tristram.

Will the queen hunt to-night? Why comes she not?

Bran, her great hound, is brother to the winds;
We cannot breed such dogs in Cornwall here.
Why comes she not?

Tris. My lord, I cannot tell.

Enter Brangwaine from Isolt's chamber, bearing the king's cup. She stands before the king below the dais. The knights whisper furtively and smile.

King M. 'Tis but Brangwaine. Comes not the queen,
Brangwaine?

Bran. The queen is sick, my lord, and keeps her
chamber;

But with her duteous homage sends this cup.

King M. By heaven, I'll take it from no hand but hers!

Pardon this heat; the deputy is fair:
None fairer or more worthy, if in sooth
It must be so.

Bran. It were, my lord, I know,
An honour to my loyalty and love,
Too far beyond my merit, thus to serve you.

King M. Tristram, go thou; say I await the queen
To send me to the saddle blithe of cheer.
If she be sick indeed, I will not ride.

[Exit Tristram, R.]

King M. Brangwaine!

[He beckons to her—she ascends the dais and they converse apart.]

Bran. My lord?

King M. If rightly in thine eyes
I read thy heart, I have one faithful friend.

Bran. Oh, my dear lord!

King M. I am sore perplext, Brangwaine.

With such base whispers in the air, the queen
Should for no petty cause give envious tongues
Such theme to wag upon.

I have grown grey in wars, am nothing skilled
In women and their ways; and yet, believe me,
In the white sanctuary of a pure heart
Have knelt to womanhood, as the Holy Grail
That holds the world's redemption. But now, now,
These scurrile whispers wake some doubt in me.

Bran. Of what, my lord?

King M. What should thy innocence know
Of thoughts like these? What mystery's here,
Brangwaine?

Enter Tristram, Isolt of Ireland and Enna. Isolt whispers to Enna, who goes out at back. As she passes Melot, he shows her the necklace, with a meaning glance.

Bran. The queen, my lord!

King M. [*To Brangwaine.*] I'll talk with thee again.

Isolt, I thank thee for this courtesy
Though it be somewhat tardy.

Is. of I. [*Seating herself languidly.*] Oh, my lord,

I crave your pardon that I am not well.

[*Melot laughs and slips out behind.*]

King M. That needs no pardon. Think me not unkind
That I have asked thee for one gracious glance

Of thy sweet eyes. If thou be sick indeed
I would not rob thee of one moment's rest.

Is. of I. My lord, I am your handmaid.

King M. Nay, my love,

Thou art my queen; not in mere outward state,
But in the cloistered stillness of my soul
Where every lovely and most loyal thought
Is thy perpetual homage.

Is. of I. My lord,

I pray you spare me from your train to-night;
My present languor would but mar your sport.

King M. Be free in this, as in all else that's honest.

But thou art pale. I fear thou art not well.

Is. of I. 'Tis nothing—it will pass. But I am here
To be your cupbearer.

[Takes the cup from Brangwaine, and the king and she stand up.]

Health to the king!

[She sets the cup to her lips.]

Good luck, good sport, and prosperous return!

[She hands the cup to the king.]

King M. To thee, Isolt!

[He drinks.]

O, my sweet wife, my heart is in that pledge!
Our sport will lack its choicest of delight,
Lacking thy presence.

Is. of I. I am sorry, sir,

To vex you; but I pray you give me leave—

[He hands her down from the dais.]

Act II. Sc. i.

ISOLT OF

King M. Since it must be, good-night, and healing
sleep

Wait on thy pillow! *[He kisses her.]*

Is. of I. You are kind, my lord.

Good-night!

*[Exeunt Isolt of Ireland and Brangwaine.
Tristram accompanies them to the door
of Isolt's apartments and then returns.]*

Enter a herald, who approaches the king and kneels to him.

Herald. My lord, two Knights of King Arthur's Table,
Sir Brian and Sir Bors, bring you gentle greeting
from their lord, King Arthur, on the occasion of
your marriage, with many precious wedding gifts.

King M. My brother Arthur! My most gracious lord!

This is a happy omen. Bid them welcome!

Let them be feasted well. Thanks for thy news.

[Herald rises, bows to the king and exit.]

King M. Go, Tristram, greet for me these noble knights;
Give them great thanks; see them well entertained.

Anon I'll come in person to the board,

And pledge them in a spicy loving-cup.

[To the courtiers.] Attend Sir Tristram!

*[Tristram bows and exit, attended by the
courtiers.]*

*[Mariodoc and his party linger in the background as
King Mark comes down stage. Enter Melot, who
converses with Mariodoc. Mariodoc then nods
to Sir Utréd, who approaches the king.]*

King M. [*Aside.*] This sickness of the queen! How like
a cloud

It hangs o'er all the house and o'er my spirit!

Utred. My lord!

King M. What, what?

Utred. I am very loath, Sir King,
To break upon your hour of merriment;
But duty, and the love I bear your person
Make longer silence merely treachery.

King M. Speak out, Sir Knight, and quickly, as thou
lov'st me.

Utred. Give me a gracious hearing, then, my liege,
For your own honour's sake.

King M. What of my honour?

Utred. In plain words, you are much deceived, my lord,
By those you hold most dear.

King M. I have heard such things
From currish tongues; but from a loyal knight——
Make good thy word, or I am bound to hold thee
But a base recreant and a slanderer.

Utred. You have heard truth, my lord. You hear it
now,
I dare maintain it.

King M. Scandal grown so bold!
This must be sounded to the very mire.
Sir Mariodoc!

Mario. My lord?

King M. Hast thou set on
This knight of my own train to—— Oh, 'tis foul

If envy, brooding o'er its base conceits,
Spit its own spleen to blacken innocence!

Mario. Your knights, as I, in loyalty and love
Would have the king to know what most concerns
him,

And what all know save one, the king himself!

Sir Tristram loves the queen, the queen, Sir Tristram!

King M. What! All know this? Speak you, and you!

Hoel. My lord,

This I have heard, and I believe 'tis true.

Hugh. It is the common talk!

King M. The common talk?

The common scandal! [*Aside to Mariodoc.*] Yet it well
might be—

Her beauty? O, what may not beauty do,

To drive a young man mad! But she, my wife—

Young, young, and ripe, warm, amorous flesh and
blood;

And I am old.

Mario. My lord, is there no whisper in your mind

That secretly chimes with the common tongue?

No memory of a tone, a sigh, a look,

That may give challenge to your dauntless trust?

King M. She should have hated Tristram, as I deemed
Blood-feud between them.

Mario. Yet she hates not *him*.

King M. [*To Mario.*] This have I seen loom in the
vague of thought,

Marvelled, and let it sail aloof. I have been

Too trustful, given temptation a free walk.

This fault was mine. [*Sadly.*] Well, sirs, I thank you
all

For timely warning. Tristram shall go hence,
Home with his bride, before—'tis not too late?

Mario. It is too late, Sir King.

King M. I'll not believe it.

*[Mariodoc makes a sign to Melot who goes out and
presently returns with Enna.]*

Men may be tempted sorely, yet not sin,
Being in grace—'Tis malice in your eyes
Makes you see the full-blown flower of sin
In the close bud, perchance not even the bud.

Mario. Our malice is but faithful love to you.

I here impeach Sir Tristram as a traitor.
Ay, King; and dare avouch it in his teeth
If such need were.

King M. Proof, proof! Give me some proof,
Or, by the holy oil of mine anointing,
Thy head shall pay the slander! If this be true,
Death! aim thy swiftest arrow at my breast!

Mario. You *shall* have proof, my lord.

*[He motions to Melot, who brings Enna, who wears
the necklace, forward.]*

King M. [*To Mario.*] Tristram! I read no falsehood in
his face

When he was here but now. And she, she, she,
Can sin so black inhabit form so fair?

[Seeing Enna.]

The queen's own woman! Well, what is thy tale?

Enna. No tale that I will be long telling, my lord.

This—[*showing the aspen twigs*—]—was given me by Sir Tristram's page.

King M. And the meaning, the meaning?

Enna. The token of the green hearts—that they will be meeting to-night.

King M. Meeting? Who?

Enna. Sir Tristram and the queen.

King M. For the first time?

Enna. No, nor the second either, my lord, by the hand of my truth! [Holds up her hand.]

King M. The worst, tell me the worst. Have they met—often?

Enna. Often, my lord!

King M. Met often—when? Where?

Enna. At night—in the queen's chamber.

King M. [*Aside to Mariodoc.*] The queen steal from my side. That could not be!

Unless—there are enchantments that may make
The senses specious liars, cheat the brain
To give a body to its bodiless thoughts.

She comes of Druid race. [Aloud to *Enna.*]

If thou be perjured, wench, the fiery stake

Were scant requital for so torturing me.

Enna. It is the white truth, great king, I am telling you.

King M. Where do they meet?

Enna. In the queen's chamber; but to-night, my lord,
I think

They will be planning to go from you.

King M. I will not hunt to-night.

Mario. My lord, are you yet convinced?

King M. Not yet, not yet.

Mario. Then, my lord, I most earnestly beseech you, let the hunting go forward. Send this girl to her mistress with the token in her hand; and if I give you not full proof of their guilt ere dawn, take my head.

King M. This must I do, or live upon the rack.

Thou wretched go-between, off—do thy task!

If what thou sayest be false, by heaven, I'll have thee

First strangled and then burnt; if thou speak'st true

I will enrich thee with a marriage-portion,

That thou mayest fool some husband. Get thee gone!

Melot. [*To Enna, as she goes out.*] Get but this portion, and I'll have thee; and take a husband's chance of being fooled.

[*Exit Enna.*]

Mario. My lord, your noble guests await you. 'Twere well

You strove to meet them with a smiling face.

King M. Sir Knight, a king can bear him like a king.

END OF SCENE I

SCENE II

A glade in the woods. Kurvenal's hut, L., a great stag's antlers fixed over the door. Before it is an open space with heather in bloom. From the door a path leads through the heather into the wood at the back of the stage R. R.C., under tall bracken which stretches away into the woods beyond, lies a felled oak-log, and behind it in the bracken stand some young oak-trees. Another path from the door of the hut passes in front of the felled tree, and leads out into the woods R. The back-cloth shows an oak-wood with undergrowth of bracken and holly. It is early autumn, the bracken is just beginning to turn. Moonlight from R. illumines the front of the stage and Kurvenal's hut, the back and R. of the stage being in shadow. A high wind is heard in the trees.

Enter from the hut, Kurvenal. He looks anxiously round and sees Caradoc who enters R. upper entrance.

Kur. Ho, Caradoc!

Cara. It will be just me.

Kur. The horses are saddled these two hours or more; and yet they do not come. What a night!

Cara. And it will be wilder yet, for the autumn gales are upon us.

[Horns heard in the distance.

Kur. There goes the hunt. Will they pass this way?

[Listens.

Cara. May be ay, may be no.

[After a pause the horns are heard more faintly.]

Kur. No, they are taking the way by the wolf's glen.

Well, this is a mad business. How's the sea?

Cara. O, ay, the sea—I was just——

[He slowly sits down on the log R.C.]

Kur. *[Listens again.]* Hark! someone comes.

[Goes up stage with his sword drawn.]

Enter Tristram from behind the hut.

Sir Tristram!

Tris. Ho, Kurvenal! Has she come?

Kur. Not yet.

[They gradually come down stage as they talk.]

Tris. Not here? It grows late and time presses. Where is my page?

Kur. At watch in the woods. Did you think to go aboard to-night?

Tris. Aboard? To sea, to sea!

Kur. Then the Lord have mercy on our souls! If we needs *must* go to sea, let us take our swords in our teeth, and swim for it at once.

Tris. Is it so bad? *[Caradoc approaches]*

Kur. Here comes our old sea-dog. Ask him what he has seen.

Tris. Well, friend, what news? How looks the sea?

Cara. *[Taking off his red cap and fumbling with it as he speaks.]* Oh, the sea! I was just coming from our skipper to tell your honour how it looks. Oh, master,

but it looks bad enough—bad enough it looks.

Oh ay!

Tris. What, there's a sea on?

Cara. A sea, master? Oh, ay, there's a sea on to frighten a mermaid or a bull seal.

Kur. What did I tell you?

Tris. [*Makes an impatient gesture.*] And the ship, the ship?

Cara. Oh ay, the ship—that's what I came to tell your honour. She began to drag her anchors, and the skipper he ran her ashore and beached her.

Tris. The ship ashore! No putting to sea to-night, then, with treble pay for all hands?

Cara. Put to sea is it? A right whale could get no offing such a night as this. No, nor for a week's time if this blows its bellyful. There are things crying in this gale, bless you, that—Oh, ay!

Tris. What things?

Cara. Drowned souls, maybe, or maybe worser things. Voices and prophesyings they have, for the ears that can hear them.

Tris. Where are the men?

Cara. Safely housed, master, in the boat-house, asleep or spinning yarns over a driftwood fire. There are things to be seen in a fire of wreck timber, master, eerie things—oh, ay! I saw a bloody sword in the flames to-night.

Kur. Well, I have seen many a bloody sword in my day; but not in a driftwood fire.

IRELAND

Act II. Sc. ii.

Tris. [*To Cara.*] Go forage in the hut for some food,
and a draught of good mead.

Cara. [*Aside to Kurvenal, as he goes to the hut.*] The
shroud at his breast already. It mounts apace, oh, ay!
[*Exit into the hut.*]

Tris. How the lone moon fights with the scudding rack!
'Tis a wild night; the wind leagued with the sea,
The sea with the rude rocks, and all with fate.

Kur. Where did you leave the hunt?

[*The moon is obscured.*]

Tris. In the Wolf's Glen.
This gathering darkness chills like heaven's own
frown.

Not come! What subtle treachery of the woods
Stays her entangled feet? The wings of night
Beat slow with leaden languor, like the pulse
Of a man dying, every weary throb
Counted upon my heart. What unseen eye
Is fixed on me with furtive malison?

Kur. No more sick fancies! I'll go watch.

[*He retires up-stage, looks round and again comes
down.*]

The queen!

*Enter by the path R., Isolt of Ireland. As she approaches
Tristram, the moon shines out.*

Tris. Isolt! At last!

[*Kurvenal retires and keeps watch.*]

Is. of I. O night, sweet secret night,
Seal treachery's eyes! [*They embrace passionately.*

Free, free, and in thine arms!

Tris. Thou dost renew the world, and budding spring
Invades again sere autumn's fated realm.

Yon trees, that loomed but now like spectral foes
Ambush'd in darkness, bend their guardian heads
Through the enchanted gloom, where glows thy face,
To keep love nested in sweet solitude.

Is. of I. Come life, come death, I give myself to thee,
My rest, my home—sole haven of my heart!

Tris. Come life, come death, I pledge myself thy love,
Whelmed in the bliss of one adoring thought.

Thou art the eternal bride my being claims.

Is. of I. Thou art my life and I am lost in thee.

Tris. Heart to heart, spirit to spirit, two mingling
flames!

Is. of I. One life, one love, one pulse, one ecstasy!

[*Symphony.*

[*Tristram releasing her—they move apart. A pause*
—*Isolt looks round her.*

Is. of I. O blissful night!

As through the woods I came, the forest balm
Breathed to my quickened sense one splendid word,
Liberty; life's full pulse stormed in my blood,
I never lived before, ne'er loved before.

Tris. O that this moment might stretch out long years,
And we live on as now! It would fill time
But to behold the rapture of thy face.

Is. of I. I stood and listened to the chanting wind
That bowed the trees, and searched me through and
through

Like the invasion of some glorious thought.
I flung myself upon it, let my soul
Be lifted as a leaf, and, borne away,
Rest on its passion like a soaring bird.
I seemed to wing winds, free as themselves.
O Tristram take me, let me sail with thee
Beyond the utmost reaches of the world.
Away with thee, away—sail evermore!

Tris. The wildness of the winds is in thy words,
My ocean child, and the salt ocean wind
Has revelled in thy hair. The sea, the sea!
There sounds the note of danger, which thy sight
Had lulled to sleep with old forgotten things.
Sit down awhile.

[He leads her to fallen tree.]

Isolt, our destiny
Hangs in time's murmuring loom, a web half woven,
That in a moment may be ravelled up.

Is. of I. [*Half rising.*] O, we must fly! 'Tis late, we
must begone!

Tris. [*Restraining her.*] Nay, sit and hear. We cannot
sail to-night.

Is. of I. Not sail!

Tris. The wind's our jailer, and the rocks,
The mad waves thunder on, our dungeon walls.
But now a gaunt, grim-favoured mariner,

Came to me, like a wraith out of the sea.

Our ship's ashore. *[A pause. Isolt sits brooding.]*

Is. of I. The sea, the sea! Tristram, the sea's our fate.
What must we do?

Tris. Get presently to horse
And push for Launcelot's hold.

*[Sheet-lightning begins to flash in the background.
Isolt starts up.]*

Is. of I. The lightning! See!

Tris. The king's great angel draws his threatening
sword—

That was the flash.

Is. of I. No, no, it is my heart
That fills all heaven with palpitating flame;
Its own defiant lightnings are unsheathed
For battle with the thunderbolts of doom.
'Tis but the pale reflection thou seest there.

Tris. Thy blood made bold the Irish warrior-queens,
Their haughty spirit lives again in thee.

*[Distant thunder heard. A vivid flash shows the
face of Melot who peeps out from the tree-stems
at the back, makes a gesture of triumph and
retires.]*

Is. of I. Let us take horse, and through the gathering
storm,
Ride forth rejoicing.

Tris. Ho, there! Kurvenal!

To horse, to horse! *[Distant horns heard.
Kurvenal comes down-stage.]*

Kur. 'Tis the returning hunt.
They make for home before the blinding storm.
Let them go by. Here's safety for a while.

Tris. That is good counsel.
[He takes Isolt's head in his hands and gazes into her face.]

O my matchless one,
That rapture of revolt is in thine eyes,
Those glorious eyes, that might abash the stroke
Of Death himself!

Is. of I. My love! Pulse of my heart!
I dare not think what thou hast lost for me!

Tris. All's nothing, wanting thee. I would lose heaven
For that new world I find within thine eyes.

Is. of I. Tristram, dare we live on? Can love endure
The changing seasons of our aftertime,
And fear no winter?

Tris. Oh, love lives in change,
And every moment holds eternity,
A babe re-born upon its passing breast.

Is. of I. They say men die at turning of the tide.
Comes there no hour at turning of Love's tide,
When lovers ought to die?

Tris. Let life make answer!
[Tristram's page suddenly rushes in from back.]

Page. Sir Tristram, arm! The wood is full of men,
Bowmen and spearmen in a deadly ring
Close in on every hand.

Tris. Ha! Treachery!

Quick, Kurvenal, my casque and coat of mail!

[Kurvenal runs to the hut.]

Is. of I. And arms for me! I'll be thy squire. Arms!
arms!

Tris. My warrior love! Break through? Perhaps—
or die!

[As Kurvenal brings Tristram's armour, Melot skips in laughing. Caradoc stands at the door.]

Melot. Faggots and fire for the witch! Faggots and fire!

Kur. *[Stabbing him.]* That for thy currish tongue!

Is. of I. Hold!

[Melot falls with a shriek.]

Kur. He betrayed us!

Melot. Curses upon thee, coward! O that I might live
to see— *[Isolt looks at him scornfully.]*

Is. of I. Poor heap of malice, thou art paid too late!

Melot. O pity me, lady pity me! I am but a poor fool
—a child—a sick child. Hide my blood, I faint at
the sight of it.

*[He dies. Kurvenal hands Tristram his helmet. He
throws it down as the king enters, surrounded
by Mariodoc and knights, with drawn swords.]*

Tris. Too late—the king! Now is love's doomsday come.

Is. of I. One kiss—the last!

*[They embrace hastily, then remain standing side
by side.]*

Mario. The proof, Sir King!

*[King Mark approaches sorrowfully and stands
gazing silently at Tristram and Isolt of Ireland.]*

I here proclaim thee, Tristram,
A most foul traitor.

[He goes up to Tristram who draws his sword.]

Yield thy recreant sword!

Tris. To the king only. Back! I would not slay thee.

[As Tristram lowers his sword, Mariodoc makes a hasty thrust at him, wounding him in the side. Tristram disarms him. Mariodoc retires leaving the sword where it fell.]

Is. of I. O Tristram, dost thou bleed?

Tris. A scratch, no more—
Dealt by a trembling hand. No hurt at all.

King M. Here is my breast. Stab, Tristram! Aim that sword

Which gave thee knighthood, at my heart. Let forth
With its last desolate drops, the bitter grief
Thy sin hath planted there. The stroke of steel
Were but my ease, weapons can wound no more.

Tris. My liege! my liege!

[He surrenders his sword to the king, who takes it mechanically.]

King M. What word is native to the lips of men,
Keen as an angel's falchion that can pierce
The mail of sin that sheathes thee, prick to life
Conscience, where yet perchance she sickly dwells.
O Tristram, Tristram, what a fall is thine!
Worse than man's first from Eden; yea, more like
His, who betrayed his Master with a kiss.

[Tristram remains silent with bowed head.]

Thy treachery poisons the sweet air of heaven,
 Makes life a wandering horror, and the earth
 A quagmire overgreened with rank deceits.
 I stand amazed at it. Is God a lie?

Tris. I am a tree, by a resistless flood
 Uprooted and swept down! No man more true,
 Till Fate unsphered me with a mightier love!

King M. Thou dost blaspheme the sacred name of love
 In such vile use.

Is. of I. [*With scorn.*] How canst *thou* know that spirit,
 That wind, that fire, that hurrying destiny?

King M. O thou unblushing shame, thou subtle plague,
 Painted so fair, sin hath a face like thine!

Is. of I. Sin, sin! I had forgot that doleful word—
 That name, that spectral fear. Talk'st thou of sin?
 Sin follows sin, as wolf the wolf to prey,
 Thy own grey sin the leader of the pack.

King M. Oh, thou hast made my heart a torturing cell,
 Where only groans inhabit. Murderess of love,
 Murderess of trust in man, and faith in God,
 Look on the wreck thy wantonness hath wrought!

Is. of I. Count it but vengeance, vengeance for my
 land,

And my own wrong. Thou won'st me as a slave,
 The slave will take the slave's way to be free.

Tris. Enough of words. Uncle, the fault is mine,
 Yet, were all told, I never meant thee wrong.

Is. of I. Tristram, thou didst me wrong. A man may
 give

All to his friend, his goods, his hopes, his life,
Not his own bride. But now we two must die.

Tris. Mine is the sin, uncle! Now, as thou lovest me,
Strike; let my blood cleanse my dishonoured sword.

King M. My hand would honour thee in such a death,
As when I struck thy knighthood on thy shoulder.
It were no punishment for thy foul deed,
If tempting rage moved me to smite thee now.

[Tristram suddenly reels back and points to the sword used by Mariodoc.]

Tris. Isolt! What sword is that?

[Mariodoc laughs.]

Is. of I. *[Picking up the sword].* Morough's!

[She flings it away.]

Fate, fate!

Tris. The venom'd blade has done its work anew.

Its fire is in me! King, I demand my death;
Let one atone for both! O—were all told!

[He sinks on the ground. Isolt with a cry of despair throws herself down beside him, and takes his head on her lap. The king sheathes his sword and stands over him.]

King M. Be banished to thy lands in Brittany;
And if thou livest, yield thee to my mercy.

[Tristram faints. The spectators close around as the curtain falls quickly.]

CURTAIN

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE I

Isolt's chamber.

The scene represents a small vaulted chamber. In a recess at the back, Isolt lies on a couch. A silver lamp suspended from the ceiling lights the chamber. An arched doorway L. leads to an ante-room. Another R. to an inner room.

Enter Brangwaine, L.

Bran. Madam! Isolt!

Is. of I. [*Without stirring.*] Who speaks that woeful name?

Bran. 'Tis I. Will you not rise, and let me robe you?

Is. of I. Is there no rest for me even in this grave,
Where I lie ages dead? Let common souls
Garment their bones in flesh, and rise again,
When the great angel sounds; I will not rise
Till he can bid the yesterdays of time
Troop at his summons, wake the hawthorn-buds
Of summers dead, wake my dead hopes, dead joys,
To breathe and sing in the glad world I knew.

Bran. The king—the king comes now to visit you.

Is. of I. The king! Poor ghost! It is a thousand years
Since last I heard him gibber. O Brangwaine,

The saint has her white robe; dearer than life
 She guards its whiteness from the smutch of sin;
 I was the saint of joy, and clothed myself
 In love's supreme delights; and now, now, now,
 Behold my splendid robe tattered and frayed,
 Not to be patched again.

[Sinks back on the couch.]

Enter Enna, L.

Enna. Madam, the king!

Is. of I. Let the king enter!

*Enter King Mark alone, L. He motions to Brangwaine,
 who retires, followed by Enna.*

King M. Isolt!

[Isolt rises and faces him—a pause.]

Is. of I. I am here. You come, I know, to pelt me
 With stones of righteousness. Pelt and begone!

King M. I see thee, and just anger bows the head
 To weep in pity's train.

Is. of I. I ask no pity.

Prepare the stake, the faggots; let me leap
 Into the core of fire, burn out this pain

Within me, life! What fire can sting like this?

King M. There's grace in true remorse, my erring wife.

Is. of I. Erring? I erred, indeed, erred into wedlock!

King M. Mad words!

Is. of I. That was my only sin.

King M. Still shameless?

Is thy heart flint? Hast thou no word, no tear,
Not one, to announce in thee repentant mind
And justify forgiveness, which still yearns,
Like a grieved angel, o'er that fallen head,
And bids me, sinful man, show mercy now.

Is. of I. Sir King, I am innocent.

King M. Innocent? Oh!

Yet thou didst love me once, by all sweet tokens
That ever woman gave. And then, turn wanton!

Is. of I. You are deceived! I never loved you, sir.

King M. What! never loved me? Sorceress, for what
end

Hast thou enslaved me?

Is. of I. Speech is vain. The curse
Of Babel heaps confusion on our tongues.

King M. If there be witchcraft here, it must be purged.

Is. of I. The fire, the fire, ay, give me to the fire!

So man's vile justice still on woman falls.

Take my defiance and begone from me!

Re-enter Brangwaine.

King M. [*To Brangwaine.*] There is madness in her
looks and in her words!

Bran. My lord, a holy friar waits without.

Sent by the archbishop.

King M. In good time he comes,

So, let him enter, bring him here, Brangwaine.

[*Exit Brangwaine. A pause.*]

*Re-enter Brangwaine with Kurvenal disguised as a friar.
He salutes the king.*

Kur. I am armed
In faith, my lord, and trust to win the fight.

King M. [*Looking at Isolt of Ireland.*] May God have
mercy on this erring soul!

[*Exeunt King Mark and Brangwaine, L.*
Is. of I. Well, friar, be brief, if thou wouldst have
me bear,

Without a groan, the torture of more words.

Kur. Madam, I *will* be brief.

Is. of I. In what saint's name
Comest thou to conjure devils out of me?

Kur. [*In a low voice.*] Tristram lives.

Is. of I. Tristram! Bait'st thou with *his* name
Some holy snare to mesh my unwary feet?
That were foul treachery, friar.

Kur. [*Putting back his hood.*] Beware of me
If the hood make the friar! If not, why, trust me.

Is. of I. Kurvenal! Thou here? And Tristram, Tristram
lives?

Or dost thou lie? Didst thou not say he lives?

Kur. Lives, madam, but in such unhappy case,
Death were a life more wholesome.

Is. of I. Sick of his wound?

Kur. It preys upon his body, as remorse
Upon his soul, defying surgery.
It is but Tristram's ghost that thinly pines

On his pain-shaken couch, whereby weak life,
Pale as death's handmaid, faltering stands.

Is. of I. O God!

And I not there! Where lies he sick? Who tends
him?

Kur. In his wife's castle by the Breton shore,
Nursed by his wife, Isolt.

Is. of I. His wife, Isolt!

Ay—'tis her right: she tends him night and day,
Looks on his dying face, and when he calls
Upon her name, *she* comes and smiles—bends o'er
him

With ministries of love, and feels him hers.

I see it, and am in hell. Why comest thou hither
To fill my breast with its eternal fire?

Kur. He prays you, by your love, to come to him.
She adds her prayer.

Is. of I. She—adds her prayer? To me?
How if I will not come?

Kur. Then frankly, madam,
I can but pray that you may live in bale.

[Isolt laughs bitterly.]

Kur. If this be woman's love, a plague upon it;
I'll keep my cowl.

Is. of I. Still blunt, my trusty squire?

Kur. Your art—your art alone—can heal this wound,
And will you let him die, the world's best knight,
Like a sick hound? Shall I go back and tell him
I sued to you in vain, that he must die?

Is. of I. Die—in her arms? The thought's a red-hot
knife

Stabbing my breast. How may I scape from this?

Kur. Change garments with Brangwaine.

Re-enter Brangwaine.

Bran. Time flies!

Is. of I. [*To Brangwaine*] Brangwaine? Oh, may I trust
thee?

Kur. May you trust her, madam?

Would every woman were as staunch as she!

Is. of I. Tristram, I come, I come! O winds and seas,

Be gentle now, and waft me to my love!

My true Brangwaine!

Bran. 'Tis the last sin, Isolt,

That even my foolish love may do for thee.

Kur. Come, Night sweeps forward on her sable wings,

We must ride faster than her hooting owls

Swoop under branches, till we reach the coast—

And then, ho for the sea!

[Isolt and Brangwaine change mantles.]

Kur. O Tristram, Tristram,

Live but to-morrow by, and fill thy years

With famous tales of mighty deeds achieved!

[Symphony.]

Is. of I. [*Embracing Brangwaine.*] Farewell, dearest

Brangwaine, never was woman

To woman true, as thou, sweet friend, to me.

Bran. Farewell, Isolt. Ride fast, all must be told

When the king comes, and finds me in thy place.

Is. of I. Then with my mantle take my place indeed,
Reign here in Cornwall.

Bran. Ah! What shrift may follow
Upon confession is a thing to dread,
Not to be jested on!

Is. of I. I did not jest.
May all good angels give thee all the bliss
Thy dreams e'er promised, so farewell!

Bran. Farewell!

[Exeunt Isolt and Kurvenal, R.]

How oft I have mused upon the fateful hour
Somewhere in ambush for me, dreamed it by,
Moment by moment. Now it comes, I know
'Twill come in alien guise, looming more strangely
For the fantastic visions of my mind.
Well, well Isolt, I yet may wear thy crown.

Enter Enna, L.

Enna. Madam, the king!

Bran. I wait upon his will.

[Exit Enna.]

Grant me, sweet saints, courage and woman's wit!

[She throws herself on the couch. Enter King Mark.]

He pauses, gazing at her.

King M. Isolt!

[Brangwaine prostrates herself at the king's feet.]

O can thy haughty spirit bow

In true repentance? Miracle of grace!
 But kneel to heaven, not to me; who am bowed low
 Under the whips of shame. Rise up, and speak
 One mitigating word, that may atone
 Thy fatal beauty with my outraged love.

Bran. Let me lie here in penance at thy feet,
 I dare not even look on thee.

King M. Rise, Isolt!
 Thou hadst strange accusation in thine eyes,
 When last they blazed on me; give it a tongue,
 That I may stand accused of mine own conscience,
 If e'er in act or thought I have done thee wrong.
 God has so humbled me, I would cut off
 The hand of my offence, and enter maimed
 The kingdom of His grace.

Bran. No wrong, my lord,
 Ever didst thou me!

King M. Rise, then rise!
 [*He raises her and recognises her.*
 Brangwaine!

Where is the queen?

Bran. My king, curse, kill me;
 But first hear out my tale—

King M. [*Sternly.*] Where is the queen?

Bran. Fled with the friar.

King M. The friar?

Bran. 'Twas Kurvenal
 Disguised.

King M. Fled, fled! To horse!

Bran. [*Clinging to him.*] King, hear me first!

The queen is innocent—mine is the fault.

King M. Innocent harlot! What! are ye devils both?

Bran. Mine was the sin. Hear from a soul in torment

The utter truth; not Tristram and Isolt

Are false, but I, Brangwaine.

King M. Riddles, more riddles!

Enna!

Re-enter Enna.

Go, bid my page summon the grooms
To saddle my best horse. Call out my guards
And bid them mount in haste to ride with me.

[*Exit Enna.*

And now thy tale. Isolt is innocent,

Thou guilty? Make this plain—ay, make this plain.

Bran. As o'er the seas we came, she drank with

Tristram,

Knowing not what she did, the magic draught

Her mother had prepared for her and thee.

King M. What was this draught?

Bran. A cup of sorcery,

A love-draught brewed with potent spells, and spiced

With magic herbs; which when they drank, their
blood,

Quick with the flame of love's eternal spring,

Ached in their glowing breasts, till the sweet sin

Seemed but the passionate flower of life's delight.

King M. How came they by that cup?

Bran. They took it blindly

From these weak erring hands, drank, and so fell.

King M. Thou hast done this! O for what spite,
Brangwaine,

Hast thou made league with devils, in fair souls
To sow this crescent flame? Thy deed confounds
The ken of insight with its traitor face.

Bran. I was the handmaid of my evil star.

Isolt, in wifely duty, would have drunk
The cup of peace with Tristram, and mistook
The phials.

King M. [*Apart.*] Fate! O Fate! O my lost wife!

She never loved me, never, never, never!

Yet she could sing the very tune of love

In my enchanted ear, in her young arms

Fold me, till—O false harlot! Fool, O fool!

I will turn anchoret. Let me never more

Feel the sweet softness of a woman's breast.

Lewd fires of hell seethe under, and its touch

Is mere damnation! [*He moves towards the door.*]

Bran. Oh, stay! my lord, my lord,

Hear me once more!

[*Clutches his mantle and falls on her knees.*]

King M. What, woman, art thou there?

I had forgot thee. More? Ha! Is there more?

What worse abomination makes thee pale?

Bran. The queen is innocent.

King M. Darest thou so lie?

Bran. She never did deceive thee with false love,

King M. Not she?

Bran. [*Rising.*] I swear to thee it was not she
That—loved thee so.

King M. Not she? What sorcery then
Out of the impassioned air bodied her warm?

Bran. I was that guilty, yet most loving woman
Who gave thee—what she ne'er even feigned to give.

King M. Thou, thou, Brangwaine!

Bran. Thou hast my secret now.

King M. What shall I do with thee?

Bran. [*Sighing.*] Even what thou wilt,
I know that I have lost the dearest thing
Ever I had. I stole it like a thief,
And like a thief must answer for my deed.
I knew I had to suffer; but I loved—
O how I loved!

King M. Yet like a living lie,
Didst thou creep to my breast, flatter me blind.

Bran. The sins we do, we see but from within—
See through the thick heartbeats, plumed like eagles,
That were in others carrion birds. But oh,
Here I lay bound, the slave of secrecy!

King M. I must have full confession from thy lips.
How came this crime to pass?

Bran. To save worse sin,
The sin thou didst in ignorance deem the queen's.
She with fierce threats, by solemn oaths, constrained
me
To hide her love's default. But soon—ay, soon,

I sinned with all the passion of my heart.

King M. Thy fault is but the blemish of a flower,
Matched with the ghastly horror that but now
O'erwhelmed me. Yet I am like one suddenly waked,
Who finds the ravishing music of his dream
But the sweet inward echo of a tune
Of the mere world, that woke him. Woman, woman,
Give me that dream again!

Bran. Would I could give thee
More, more than—I have given, my blood, my soul,
I, but the mere occasion of thy dream,
Not even that dream, which fades and nevermore
I can make live again. Well, cast me forth
Like Hagar. Righteous Abraham had less cause.

King M. O tangling briar, whose blossoms were so sweet,
I cannot drive their odour from my sense!

Bran. Then a last grace, I'll not be banished now.
I am mad for some swift death, demand it thus!

*[She throws herself passionately into the king's arms.
He puts her away gently. She sinks on the couch
and covers her face with her hands.]*

King M. Thy love may win thy pardon, be content!
"Sin follows sin, as wolf the wolf to prey"—
So by her sinful tongue was I rebuked.

Enter Enna.

Enna. My lord, your knights are mounted.

King M. Let them wait! *[Waves his hand to Enna.]*
[Exit Enna.]

Shall I, a sinner, stained with my brother's blood,
Which now Tristram, his son, blindly avenges,
Be slower than just God, who has pardoned me,
To pardon? Yet my crime gave, by God's grace,
This realm to Christ. Marvellous are His ways!

Bran. [*Not looking up.*] Sir, I know all, know you for
what you are.

Repenting sin, the sinner grows a saint.

King M. Come, rise, Brangwaine; for thou shalt ride
with me.

The Holy Church must counsel me for means,
That may redeem this ruin of our lives.

*[He raises Brangwaine. As the stage is darkened
the scene changes.]*

END OF SCENE I

SCENE II

*A weed-grown platform in the castle of Isolt of Brittany.
The sea with coast-line of receding cliffs is seen over a
ruined parapet in the background. L. a tower of the
castle with arched doorway. On an angle in the parapet
R., a small turret with steps leading up to it.*

*Tristram lies upon a couch L.C., Caradoc watching beside
him. The sunset-glow falls from the R. upon Tristram
and the tower at the L. side.*

Cara. The sunset, O ay, the sunset. I have seen many

a one in my day; but never a one like this. The dumb spirits of the air speak to me now, gathering and whispering, over Tristram's sleep. Night and sleep, night and sleep! Every morning brings at last but night and sleep. That is the weird of man.

[Distant tinkling of cow-bells heard. They come nearer gradually. Bag-pipe heard.]

The cow-bells, O ay, the cow-bells. That is evening's voice. *[He looks over the parapet.]* So, my pretty little milkers, there you come; and there you will come, to-morrow and to-morrow, though Tristram live or die. *[The herd-boy sings.]*

HERD-BOY'S SONG

I

King Hoel sailed with his warmen bold,
 Ulalu! Sing Ulalu!
 To woo the Queen of the Isles of Gold,
 Elalu loro, Ulalu!

II

He sailed away in the days of yore,
 Ulalu! Sing Ulalu!
 But home to his land came nevermore,
 Elalu loro, Ulalu!

[As the song ends Tristram wakes.]

Tris. Isolt!

Cara. What cheer, dear master? You have slept long.

Tris. Ho mate! How heads she now? Are we making land?

Cara. On land, master. 'Tis shore we are now. O ay!

Tris. [*Half rising and looking round.*] Where am I? Oh, I remember. Go watch, go watch—scan the sea for a sail. Comes she not yet?

Cara. Ay, she will come sure enough. She will come to you even if it were from the ends of the earth. But 'tis early to expect her yet. The channel is full of baffling winds, master, O ay, baffling winds. But she will come sure enough.

Tris. Away—away! Scan the sea!

[Caradoc mounts on the turret of the parapet and looks out.

Comes there no sail?

Cara. I see but the lonely waste of blue water, and the channel swell breaking on the cliffs, as the tide makes to the flood; and the white companies of the gulls. 'Twill be slack water anon. No sail, yet, master. But she will surely come. O ay! she will come sure enough.

Tris. She does not come, she does not come! [*Sinks back on the couch.*

Cara. [*Approaching him.*] Master! Sir Tristram! Gone back to the land of dreams. Well, 'tis better so. But Death will keep his offing from him till *she* comes.

Enter from the castle L., Isolt of Brittany.

Is of B. Tristram! Still sleeping? Caradoc, is this but sleep?

Cara. He spoke to me but now—bade me look out over the sea for a sail.

Is. of B. Leave me now, good Caradoc, I will watch alone. Go back to the landing-place. See that all is ready. *[Exit Caradoc.*

She comes now. Will she come? Do I desire it?

O God! in my devotion's agony

I schooled myself to humbleness, and prayed

That she would come, begged her to heal this wound

Which gave him to my arms, to have him, hold him,

Care for his wants, tend him as a mother tends

Her sick child! Oh, he stirs.

Tris. Isolt! Isolt!

Is. of B. I am here, Tristram!

Tris. Go, go! scan the sea!

Ye have no eyes.

Is. of B. *[Retiring, but looking back at Tristram.]*

She hath stolen before my face

The jewel of my love, left me to clasp

This ruined casket; with my unpitied tears

Claim what is most mine own, bitterly know

I am but his body's gaoler, while she reigns,

Queen of the world of dreams wherein he lives.

Better still sicken with him day by day,

Ebb with his life, ere healing come through her.

Tris. Caradoc! Kurvenal! Where are these traitors?

Is. of B. Tristram! what wouldst thou?

Tris. *[Starting up.]* Hark it is her voice—

She calls me o'er the seas. Launch my swift galley,

Run out the oars, men, hoist the bellying sail;
I'll rove till Doomsday o'er the waste of waves,
And the black rover, Death, shall board me never,
Until I find her. Ho! To sea, to sea!

[He rises and walks feebly towards the centre of the stage.]

Is. of B. [Supporting him.] Nay, thou art still too weak!

Tris. [Struggling with her.] Lay not thy cold white hands upon me. Off!

Is. of B. Let me but lead thee to thy couch again.

Tris. Thou art a ghost, thy touch chills my sick blood.
I will not dance with thee. I know the measure
Which thou wouldst have me tread, down to the grave.

The music ends in dirges, and the lights
Are but corpse-candles held in dead men's hands.
Off! Off, I say! *[He thrusts her back and stands alone.]*

Is. of B. Tristram!

Tris. Where is the sea?

I'll dance there with the waves. They leap for ever
To the brave tune of life. O weak! too weak!

[He staggers, and Isolt of Brittany supports him to the couch.]

Is. of B. I will go watch the sea.

Tris. I hear its voice!

The winds blow fair?

Is. of B. O yes, the wind blows fair!

[She ascends the parapet and looks out.]

[*Aside.*] A sail! Almost in port. That ominous bird
Of the blue waves, so small a hand's-breadth hides it,
The ship of doom! It should o'ershroud the skies
With night, appal the deep with moaning thunder!
The silence is more fearful. O for a spell
To sink it now, though with it sank the world!

Tris. Comes there no sail?

Is. of B. [*Coming to him—aloud.*]

Patience awhile. I thought—'twas fantasy!

Tris. What hast thou seen?

Is. of B.

The white wing of a gull.

Tris. No more?

[*Groans.*]

Is. of B. If 'twere a sail?

Tris.

Do not lie to me.

It is a ship—she comes! At last! At last!

Is. of B. I thought but now I saw a distant sail.

Tris. Death aims his last keen arrow, winged with joy,
Against my weakness. Come, Isolt, Isolt.

Bring me life's healing flame! Tell me she comes!

Is. of B. There are an hundred ships upon the sea,
And one alone is hers.

Tris.

Go, look again!

[*She goes to the parapet.*]

Is. of B. The phantom thing has left the field of sight
A void of heaving waves. The near cliff hides
Her nearness from mine eyes. Her eager feet
Even now are tingling for the touch of earth;
Nay, the swift keel has grated on the strand
By this; she treads the Breton grass, and speeds

Up the slope, to take my citadel
With passionate assault. No help, save death!

[Looking at Tristram.]

Tris. [Half rising.] What seest thou?

Is. of B. Naught—only the waste of waves.

There is no sail.

Tris. False, false! She will not come.

Death winds his final challenge, and the blast

Cracks the strong will to live. I plunge alone

Into the abyss of night.

[He sinks back on the couch.]

Is. of B. [Rushing over to him.] O leave me not!

Love, take me with thee, me, thy wedded wife.

[She throws herself down by the couch, clasps him in her arms and lays her head on his breast.]

Enter Caradoc.

Cara. Madam! Sir Tristram! 'Tis the queen, the queen!

Is. of B. Ay, let her enter now.

[Exit Caradoc. A pause.]

Then re-enter Caradoc with Isolt of Ireland and Kurvenal. Isolt of Ireland advances quickly to C., then stops, gazing at Tristram.

Is. of I. Tristram! 'Tis I—Isolt!

Tris. Whose voice was that?

Is. of I. [Coming nearer.] Tristram!

Tris. [Struggling to rise.] What weight is on my breast?

Off! Off!

Thou nightmare! It is she, she calls—Isolt!

[He flings Isolt of Brittany off, and rises and walks firmly to Isolt of Ireland. They embrace.]

Is. of I. Tristram, I come to heal thee.

Tris. Oh, my love,

Thy arms, thy eyes indeed! My queen, my star,
My health shines in those eyes, and I am healed.
Let us to sea, we'll give the slip to death
And sail for ever—Ah! it is too late!

[He staggers and falls back into Kurvenal's arms. Kurvenal lays him down on the couch.]

Is. of I. He swoons. I have the cordial here. O
Tristram!

Tristram! *[Coming close.]*

Kur. Madam, this clay was Tristram.

Is. of B. Death, I thank thee!

[She laughs, kisses Tristram and sinks down by the head of the couch.]

Is. of I. *[Passes behind couch and stands near the head gazing at Tristram.]* I keep the last kiss of thy
living lips,

And will not kiss thee, dead. By your leave, lady,
I would but look upon the face I loved.

'Tis an old tale, no need for jealous hate.

Tristram, we drank together once, but now

I drink alone. The love-drink brought us death;

I pledge love in the death-drink.

[She drinks the death-drink and gazes in Tristram's face.]

IRELAND

Act III. Sc. ii.

Enter through archway behind, R., King Mark and Brangwaine with knights and attendants.

Now I give place.

[Isolt of Ireland passes to lower end of couch.

Lie by thy husband's side,

Let me, his mistress, at my lover's feet

Take the great rest of death. Hark how the sea

Mourns more divinely than a thousand harps.

It is the dirge of Tristram and Isolt.

[She kneels at Tristram's feet.

TABLEAU

[King Mark approaches and stands behind the couch at Tristram's head, R. He draws his sword, kisses the cross of the hilt and lays it on Tristram's breast. Brangwaine draws near. Isolt of Ireland looks up, smiles and sinks dying at Tristram's feet. King Mark remains standing, extends his hands over Tristram's dead face in benediction. The others kneel: Kurvenal, R. of King Mark slightly up-stage behind and R. of Isolt of Brittany; Caradoc, L. of foot of couch, behind and L. of Isolt of Ireland, by whom Brangwaine has knelt, supporting her in her arms. The knights and attendants form a semi-circle behind King Mark and Kurvenal.

FUNERAL MARCH. SLOW CURTAIN.

THE END

THE POISON FLOWER

(Suggested by Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter*)

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

GIACOMO RAPPACCINI, a Doctor of Medicine in the University of Padua.

GIOVANNI GUASCONTI, a Student of the Humanities.

CELIO RUFFINI, a Student of Medicine.

BEATRICE, Rappaccini's daughter.

LISABETTA, an old servant.

The scene is laid in Padua in the latter half of the Fifteenth Century.

THE POISON FLOWER

SCENE I

Guasconti's Chamber in the Palazzo Mattei.

The scene represents an apartment with walls panelled in cedar to three-quarters of their height. Above the paneling is a frieze of stamped leather. The coved ceiling is painted with arabesques. In the R. corner at back of stage the R. wall forms a re-entrant angle: on the wall facing footlights of the angle so formed hangs a mirror; in the other wall of the angle is a secret door leading to a spiral staircase which descends to Rappaccini's garden. At back a window with leaded glass looks into the garden. On the back wall in the corner L. hangs a crucifix. A door L. near footlights leads to an ante-chamber. Beyond the door a table stands against L. wall, and above it a shelf with books. An arm-chair stands in front of the table, another chair between the table and the door, and a third chair against R. wall near the mirror. A curtain is drawn across the window.

Enter by the door L., Lisabetta ushering in Guasconti. He places his cloak, sword and hat upon the chair by the door, and looks round.

Guas. Heigho!

Lisa. *Gesù, Maria!* What a sigh from a young breast!
Are these apartments not to the gentleman's mind?

Guas. Somewhat gloomy perhaps.

Lisa. Ah! the gentleman is from the south, I see.

Guas. From Naples.

Lisa. His honour must love learning to come all that way to Padua to study. But the good God sends us His sunshine here as well as in the south. There!

[*She draws back the curtain. The sunshine streams in.*]

Guas. Ay, that is more cheerful. Whose arms are these?

Lisa. Why, whose but the Count Mattei's.

Guas. This, then, was his own house?

Lisa. O surely, surely! These are his excellency's own apartments, the only part of the *palazzo* he keeps now. But he comes seldom to town, and quits us soon.

Guas. *Absit omen!* [*Looking out of the window.*] But what a quaint old garden! Is this the count's?

Lisa. Ay, surely, the count's it is. But it is the queer pot-herbs grow there now. [*In a low voice.*] 'Tis given over to Signor Rappaccini, the famous doctor; and there he works early and late, and they tell strange stories of his doings among the baleful plants he grows in it.

Guas. Rappaccini? I have heard his name. He must be curious in poisons. A terrible garden indeed.

Lisa. Poisons or cures, God knows. But they do say— [*crossing herself*]—that God Almighty never made half the wicked-looking things that grow in that garden.

Guas. It might well be.

Lisa. Is there anything further his honour commands?

Guas. A flask of good wine, dame. I expect a friend.

FLOWER

Scene I.

Lisa. That you shall have, signor, and welcome.

Exit Lisabetta. Guasconti, leaving the window, draws the arm-chair away from the table and seats himself.

Guas. In Padua, at last in Padua!

So far upon the high road of my hopes,
Yet now—[sighs]—The musk of cobwebbed ancientry
Breathes from the dusky panel of these walls.
This chamber haunts my sense with silent speech,
Words that veil mysteries, like the blanching tale
A ghost would tell, but may not.

[He rises and takes down a book from the shelf.

All I see

Is new, and yet familiar; and I act
As on a stage, the memory of a dream.

[He gazes at the crucifix.

Each moment whispers: "This thou hast lived
before."

[He turns towards the corner where the mirror hangs.

A mirror should hang here: and here it hangs!
How pale and strange my face looks! I'll not gaze,
Lest shuddering expectation make me mad.

[Beatrice's voice is heard singing in the garden.

BEATRICE'S SONG

*Heap me a mound of holy spice,
With camphor, sandal, cinnamon,
Gums and rich balms, like that whereon
The magian phoenix burns and dies!*

Scene I.

THE POISON

*There let pale women hush their cries
To do in desolate array
Soft rites, and chant low litanies,
Till thunders roll around the skirts of day:
Then fling the torch and come away,
Come away, and leave the kindled pyre
Where love lies dead, that was the world's desire.*

*[Guasconti listens intently, then runs to the window,
opens the casement, looks out, and draws back
disappointed.]*

Guas. I knew I should see nothing. But that voice!
Earth has her siren; all my senses sing,
And the lone caverns of my inward ear
Sound on, like musing shells that lull themselves
To sad content with ocean's lingering boom.
O rich remembrancer of worlds unknown
For which I am long homesick, sing once more!
[He draws the arm-chair to the window and sits.]

BEATRICE'S SONG [*farther off*]

*The aloe feels the year of years,
Wakes, and the wandering bees it calls—*

[He looks out again, the song ends abruptly.]

Guas. I knew I should see nothing, save the glow
Of noon o'er that dread garden, where I see
Each venomous thing sprouts rankly as the weeds
Upon forgotten graves. In the deep hush
No cricket's tune is heard, only the stir

FLOWER

Scene I.

Of some quick-darting lizard. Sleeping snakes
Bask on hot stones, coiled furies, in the sun,
Enough to furnish cold Medusa's hair;
And snake-like plants, nameless in mortal tongue,
Pant from their gorgeous flowers, drinking the blaze.
Subtle intoxication. I grow faint
With the sweet horror. O that song! that song
Voluptuous Lilith sang o'er Adam's sleep
And flushed his blood with sensuous sorcery!

[A knock heard.]

Come in.

*Re-enter Lisabetta with wine and flowers which she sets
on the table.*

Lisa. The wine, signor.

Guas. Thanks, dame.

Lisa. And I have made bold to bring your honour
some homely flowers from wholesome gardens, to
brighten up the chamber.

Guas. *[Rising and coming forward.]* A thousand thanks,
good mother.

Lisa. *[Placing the flowers in a vase.]* Lilies of the
Madonna—there is no poison in them I warrant you.

[Beatrice sings.]

Love is reborn, that is the world's desire.

Guas. What rare creature sings in the garden?

Lisa. *[Crossing herself.]* Sings, signor? Holy Virgin, and
you have heard Rappaccini's daughter sing?

Scene I.

THE POISON

Guas. She or some siren.

Lisa. That bodes no good, for they say her song can drive men mad.

Guas. Well, well, be that as it may. When my friend comes, show him up. Thanks for the flowers.

Lisa. Now St. Anthony of Padua be your guard, young man!

Guas. Amen, good dame. *[Exit Lisabetta.*

If 'twere my fate to see her?

[He returns to the window.

Lords of life,

'Tis she! How all the garden's potencies
Burn clear in her, the goddess of the garden!
She treads the earth like purple Ashtaroth,
The splendid flower of earth's dread motherhood,
Yet virginal as lilies of the chamber
Where Mary knelt, and heard the angels' "Hail!"
Oh, she draws near! her subtle effluence fills
The air with rapture! Nay, I dare not look,
Lest I should meet her eyes.

[He draws back from the window.

Yet I will dare—

I must—these flowers shall be my messengers.

[He takes a spray of lilies from the vase and looks out.

She doth enrich the sunshine, for its flame,
Transfigured in her blood, glows on her cheek,
And in her beauty wins superbest life.

Voice of Bea. Hail, hail, my sister splendour!

Guas.

Oh, she speaks!

FLOWER

Scene I.

What mystic rite she does I know not, gliding
With sinuous course, a flower among the flowers
Which as she bends mingle their breath with hers.
Horror grows beauty, poison hath no bale,
But finds a wholesome use now she is by.
What doth she now?

[He leans out of the window, then draws back

What rank two-natured thing
Is that huge plant wherewith she stands commingled,
Branches and arms?

Voice of Bea. Embrace me, sister mine!
Give me thy deadly kisses, which are life
To the unmated passion of my heart.

[Guasconti looks out again.

Guas. She kisses those dark flowers, whose lurid hues
Glow like the wedded colours of her gown,
Purple and orange. Now the rites are done.
She goes. Now must I dare it. She looks up,
Her lips half parted in a wondering smile.
Hail, mystery of the garden, lady, hail!

Voice of Bea. Hail to thee, stranger youth! What is
thy name?

Guas. Giovanni dei Guasconti. And thine, thine!

Voice of Bea. Beatrice Rappaccini.

Guas. Beatrice!

[Aside.] O more to me than Dante's Beatrice!

[He lets the flowers fall from the window.

Take these pure lilies and remember me,
If I should never see thy face again.

Scene I.

THE POISON

Voice of Bea. Thanks for thy flowers, Giovanni dei Guasconti,

And yet they shoot a pang into my heart.

Guas. Thou wilt not go?

Voice of Bea. The powers I serve constrain.

But we must speak once more. Farewell! farewell!

Guas. Farewell! So swiftly gone? She laid my flowers Upon her breast, and straightway she grew pale.

And they, I saw, or else my sight was dazed,

They withered at her touch—Some wine, some wine!

[He sits at the table, pours out wine and drinks. A knock. Then re-enter Lisabetta, ushering in Ruffini.]

Lisa. Signor Ruffini!

[Exit Lisabetta.]

Guas. Ah, Celio!

[He rises and grasps his hand.]

Ruff.

Thou look'st strangely.

Guas.

Nay, be welcome.

Ruff. And welcome thou to Padua!

Guas. *[Bringing forward a chair.]* Sit and pledge me.

[They sit and drink to each other.]

Ruff. To the grave Muse of the Humanities,

And thy fair nuptial with her! Lord, I have climbed Higher than Helicon to reach thy eyrie,

And I arrive still panting. *[He looks around.]*

But, sweet saints!

How com'st thou here, Giovanni? These are surely—

Guas. The Count Mattei's chambers.

Ruff.

Knowest thou, then.

This Count Mattei?



FLOWER

Scene I.

Guas. He was my father's friend.

[*Ruffini rises and looks out of the window.*]

Ruff. Oh, thou art fooled—betrayed! 'Tis as I thought,
This window looks on Rappaccini's garden.

Guas. Well, what of that?

Ruff. I tell thee there's no chink
In all the town that on the accursed place
Yields an eye's peeping, save this window here.
Its fellows, see, along the garden front,
Are all made blind with solid masonry.

[*He comes back into the room and begins tapping
the walls with his dagger hilt. In the corner
where the mirror hangs he pauses.*]

Ay, here's the secret stair, this panel slides—
So—*facilis descensus!* 'Tis locked now,
But——

Guas. How! A secret passage to the garden?

[*He drinks nervously.*]

Ruff. Ha! thou may'st well turn pale! This Count
Mattei

Is that grey sorcerer's famulus, his gull.
All his estates and fortune are sequestered
For Rappaccini's use.

Guas. And he, what is he?

Ruff. A sorcerer, man, a sorcerer, in whose hands
This garden's hoarded poisons are the tools
Wherewith he works. They say he has a daughter——
Why leaps the blood into thy kindling cheek?
Thou hast not seen her?

Scene I.

THE POISON

Guas. Well, suppose I had?

Ruff. Then art thou lost, soul, body, all that makes
A man a man. Better thou mad'st thy mistress
The vilest——

Voice of Rappa. Beatrice! Beatrice!

[*They start up and look out.*]

Ruff. His voice! Oh, look you there! Mark that black
spider

Which in the garden spreads his web for thee.

Guas. What wears he on his face?

Ruff. A glass mask. See
How delicately poisoners handle poison.
He fears the thing he gloats on, gloves his hands,
A guard upon his face. They say he feeds
His hell-brood with men's flesh, pours infants' blood
For waters on those beds of death——

Guas. Mere slander:

I see no blood. Sweet heaven, she comes again!

Ruff. Back from the window! O thou flower of sin!

Guas. She seeks the fountain.

Ruff. I did ne'er believe it;
But there the monstrous mandrake grows indeed.
What is that image with the awful face
Which 'midst the thronging branches sits en-
throned?

Guas. 'Tis pale Persephone, the triple queen,
Potent in earth, and heaven and deepest hell.

Ruff. Ha! saw'st thou that?

Guas. What? I saw nothing.

FLOWER

Scene I.

Ruff. Nothing?

How when she plucked the glowing purple flower——

Guas. I thought the shuddering plant gave a deep groan.

Ruff. And from the severed stalk fell goutts of blood.

One on that lizard on the fountain's rim

Dropped, and the beast writhed, and anon lay dead.

Guas. I saw but the swift pity in her face.

Ruff. Ha! there again. Those butterflies!

Guas. They drop

Out of the air——

Ruff. Slain by her venom'd breath.

Guas. It cannot be.

Ruff. O thou weak, amorous fool!

That vampire Succuba is poison-proof,

Because she feeds on poisons. Back, man, back!

The swart enchanter shot a furtive look

From his snake's eyes at thee.

Guas. I felt it not.

Now they pass out of sight. Let us sit down.

[He retires from the window. They sit and drink.]

For God's sake, Celio, tell me what strange tales

Are current of this garden? Rappaccini?

What secrets has he read behind the veil

That covers Nature's face?

Ruff. That the Devil knows.

Well, heaven be praised, I am not of his sect,

But orthodox, of old Baglioni's school.

Guas. Is there, then, controversy 'twixt the pair?

Scene I.

THE POISON

Ruff. Good Lord! the world rings with it. They have
ransacked

Old classic dunghills for opprobrious terms
To daub each other with.

Guas. What is the issue?

Ruff. A hundred several issues—this in chief:
This Rappaccini with rank heresy
Would postulate a dual sex in God.

Guas. A dual sex?

Ruff. His lewd philosophy
Turns all on sex; and, further, he proclaims
The female elder in its origin,
And nobler in its essence—heresies!
But we have swung him in three several tracts,
And have the latest word.

Guas. But for his practice?

Ruff. They say—— *[He drinks.]*

Guas. What do they say?

Ruff. He would search out
In life's red core the mystery of evil,
By cursed means.

Guas. What means?

Ruff. He would explore
The principle of life, track generation
Through earth's protean forms, watch it in operance,
Where like the Ancient Snake it eats the dust
And works through cosmic change.

Guas. A glorious aim.

He has dared nobly.

Ruff. Has dared damnably
For a fantastic dream. A vaulted cell,
Deep underground, he makes his laboratory;
And there, they say, with purposed cruelty
He tortures living things, and with the dead
Works impious enchantments. Marry, his philtres,
Elixirs, balsams, salves have wrought, they say,
Strange cures.

Guas. Some dim remembrance comes to me:
Did he not stay the plague in Padua?

Ruff. Ay, so the vulgar deem. This and his interest
With some lewd potentates whose debauchèd blood
He has renewed with his foul wizard's broth,
Have kept him from the sorcerer's rightful doom.

Guas. But tell me, Celio, of that magic plant
Which o'er the fountain casts its evil shade.

Ruff. I never yet gave credence to the story
Till now. 'Tis his new Eden's tree of life,
Sprung from the old root of knowledge. In his
tractate,

De Sexu, he discourses in vague jargon
Of such a plant, which he names Ashtaroth.

Guas. Ashtaroth? Yes, that name! what notes he by it?

Ruff. [*Laughing.*] Why, womanhood, whose essence,
earth's rich blood,
Is symbolled in its colours.

Guas. It moves my soul
Like wizard's words, with an ecstatic dread

Ruff. Bah! 'tis mere folly.

Guas. But this poison-flower,
Whence hath it sprung? From what mysterious seed?

Ruff. The fairest woman in fair Italy
Fled from her friends for love of this grey ghoul,
To share his secret-lore; young, highly born,
A widow left well-dowered, and thronged about
With suitors, gave her beauty to this wretch,
Was Rappaccini's mistress.

Guas. She was then——

Ruff. Thy Beatrice's mother. But still worse.
I ne'er believed the tale till now. She died:
Or as some say, with a new babe unborn
Was confined quick there by the marble fountain,
In yon great marble tomb. See where it stands,
That monstrous plant, fruit of its cursèd womb.

Guas. O horrible! yet the horror fascinates.

Ruff. Thou shalt not stay to nurse thy soul's sick
dream.

Come, thou shalt share my chamber for to-night.

Guas. No, no, begone—leave me alone—my fate
Is in that garden.

Ruff. Come with me, Giovanni!

Guas. Nay, Celio, do not vex me: for by Bacchus
A foot I will not budge! Here is my home.

Ruff. By Bacchus and his vats, thou art an ass!
Come, I can show thee women in this town
To whom thy siren is a rustic jade.
I'll steep thy sense in pleasures that shall make
This garden fade with dreams forgotten.

FLOWER

Scene I.

Guas. Pleasures?

Ruff. Sin wholesome sins that are youth's natural spice,
And leave mere outward smutches, which but show
Upon the man some varnish of this world.

Guas. I hold in loathing every vulgar pleasure.

Ruff. Good Lord! when virtue leads men to the devil,
It grows a fiend; and now thou hast a devil
Which I would fain cast out. Dice, drink, be wanton
In human fashion, revel it like a man;
But deal not in unnatural sorceries,
Lose not thy soul, Giovanni.

Guas. Oh, that soul
Is lost indeed, which dares not shape itself
In action by the laws of its own being!
Life holds eternity, there is no other.

Ruff. Madman, abjure thy rash impiety!
Come with me.

*[Seizing Guasconti by the arm, he endeavours to lead
him away.]*

Guas. Never!

*[He frees himself, snatches his sword from the chair
and draws it.]*

Hence, upon thy life!

Ruff. There is no parleying with thee in this mood;
But I will save thee yet. Farewell, my hero,
Heaven keep thee in thy wits. *[Exit Ruffini L.]*

Guas. Amen! Amen!

We are both mad. So madmen carp at madmen,
As poison wars with poison. I could weep now

Scene I.

THE POISON

Over the wretchedness of mortal life,
Where pleasure grovels in a filthy sty.
But here's my world. How shall I enter? How?
 [*He taps with his dagger upon the secret door.*
Beat out my life upon this iron door
Like a caged bird. [*Knocking heard.*] Come in!

Re-enter Lisabetta with a letter

Lisa. A letter for Signor Guasconti.

Guas.

Thanks, leave me.

[*Exit Lisabetta.*

What subtle perfume steals into my sense
From this white packet? Wax, yield up thy secret.
 [*He opens the packet and reads.*

“SIGNOR GIOVANNI DEI GUASCONTI,—If thy soul
be pure and thy heart bold to explore the mysteries
of my realm, the way is open to thee; the key is in
thy hand. Wear this talisman upon thy breast.—
BEATRICE.”

A heart-shaped talisman; upon the obverse,
Graved in a scroll, the legend: *Medicatrix*
Naturæ Vis. Upon the reverse—what?
Beatrice's name. And here the key, the key!

DROP SCENE FALLS

SCENE II

Rappaccini's Garden. Afternoon.

Across the front of the stage runs an arcade of marble arches on light pillars, in the style of Fra Giocondo, the spandrels decorated with medallions, forming a corridor, the floor of which has a tessellated pavement. Through the arches is seen the garden, a broad walk R. running to the back of the stage, between flower-beds; a row of termini on one side. Half-way up the stage a second walk, with high hedge of box, crosses it at right angles. At the back of the stage a marble staircase leads to a grove of ilex-trees on a higher level. A palace front is seen behind them. A fountain L. with a marble sarcophagus, out of which grows the great poison-plant. Behind this a statue of Persephone amid cypresses. A doorway R. leads to Rappaccini's house. A bench just within the arcade faces the footlights. A brazen incense-burner, in which incense is burning, is placed on the ground near the fountain. The curtain rises to solemn music, showing the stage darkened by an approaching thunderstorm, with flashes of sheet lightning.

Rappaccini is seen coming slowly down the main walk, Music.

Rappa. Elohim! Elohim! Ye elemental powers
Who walk in darkness, yet are purest light,
Inspire me now! I go to my great proof.

Scene II.

THE POISON

[He approaches the fountain, and stands with folded arms, gazing at the sarcophagus. Distant thunder heard.]

The hour should now be almost come. Maria!
Canst thou speak yet?

Voice of the Dead Woman. I hear thee. All is well.

Rappa. O most victorious martyr, holiest saint,
Now is our triumph near! Speak, will the Magi
Come to the mystic nuptial, when the blood
Weds with the fire? *[Thunder.]*

Voice. They will surely come.

Rappa. Who shall renew the world?

Voice. The Reconciler.

Rappa. Darest thou yet speak his name?

Voice. Incarnate Love.

Rappa. Tarrys he still?

Voice. He treads the opposing ways.

Rappa. When shall they meet in one?

[A loud peal of thunder.]

Voice. Darkness o'erwhelms me,
And silence dumbs my tongue. Farewell! Farewell!

[The music ceases. The storm passes slowly away.]

Rappa. Enough that thou hast spoken. Beatrice!

[Beatrice appears from the house R.]

Bea. My father!

Rappa. Now creation's mystery
Waits its apocalypse. My Beatrice,
Daughter of the world's destiny, conceived
From the beginning for the world's release;

Mother of its crowning race, new Eve, earth's queen,
Fed from the flowers of this mysterious garden,
With the sweet honey which has made men mad,
But now shall make them gods, be wise to-day.

Bea. What must I do, dear father?

Rappa. What thou wilt.

Be free to obey the voice of thine own heart;
And the great Magi, who are lords of life,
Endow thy soul with wisdom.

[He lays his hands on her head.]

Bea. Thou art moved,

My father, past all wont. Is there some danger
To me or to thy great designs through me?

Rappa. Yes, there is danger. Canst thou keep the path?

Bea. With exultation, wheresoe'er it lead.

Point me the way.

Rappa. The hour brings its own light.

Walk in that light. For death, or the new birth,
This youth comes to the trial; and this hour
The choosers of the bridegroom choose thro' thee.

Bea. I lean upon their arms and have no fear.

Rappa. 'Tis bravely spoken. Come, take up the brazier,
Feed it, and where thou knowest, set it still burning.

[Beatrice takes up the brazier, and exit into the house R.]

My lamp of life is flickering to decay.

Yet I shall reach the goal. I must, I must!

[Exit, following Beatrice. A pause. Music, during which the sun shines brightly out.]

Scene II.

THE POISON

Enter into the corridor, L., Guasconti. He passes into the garden and walks about examining the flowers.

Guas. On wings of wild desire I entered here,
A few tumultuous pulse-beats past; and now
A deadly numbness masters heart and soul.
The unholy power hymned in Sidonian groves,
Works in the curious breeding of these forms
Unnatural intermixture. Tigerish things,
Alluring flowers breathing voluptuous dreams
Of sumptuous Babylonian harlotries,
Bask in these closes, where the gendering sun
Glow like the thirsty fires of hell. No wind
Of wholesome passion stirs my lethargy.
Is this the garden's curse? [*He sits upon the bench.*]

Enter Beatrice from the house. She stands gazing at him, then speaks.

Bea. I am here, Giovanni.

Guas. Save me! I sink in an enchanted sleep.

Bea. 'Tis the dull apathy of death in life.

The talisman! Sirocco never breathed
On man such deadly languor as these flowers.

[*He kisses the talisman, rises slowly, turns and looks at her.*]

Guas. And never where the rosy feet of morn
Print first the chestnut glades of Apennine,
Fell healing dew more soft than from thine eyes.

Bea. Oh, I am glad, and bless the gentle powers

That gave them healing, thee to feel it so.
Come, let us talk. I have a thousand questions
To ask of thy strange world.

Guas. But first of thine?

Bea. If thou wouldst learn this garden's hidden lore,
Turn to the ancient wisdom of my father.

Guas. Nay, let me be thy pupil, only thine.
Art thou not skilled in deep philosophy,
Able to teach with thy mellifluous breath
Truths more recondite than enriched the tongue
Of virgin-sages in their later Greece?

Bea. [*Smiling.*] Nay, I am no fair sage.

Guas. Art thou not then
Mistress of magic learning?

Bea. O believe not
The tales they tell in the misdeeming world
Of me and of my arts. Judge me alone
By what thine eyes attest.

Guas. Prescribe my creed;
Bid me believe thy lips and not mine eyes,
And I'll believe them.

Bea. [*Agitated.*] What lurks in thy thought?

Guas. I saw—or thought I saw——

Bea. [*Sternly.*] Give it no tongue,
If it be evil count thine eyes but liars.
The things we see are symbols void of sense
Until the soul interprets. Read me then
By the quick-throbbing flame within thy soul.

Guas. I'll read thee by the splendour of thine eyes,

Scene II.

THE POISON

Which are deep wells of light, fed from the springs
Of thy divinest spirit.

Bea. Well, let us talk
Of the great world that lies beyond this garden.

Guas. Is it to thee a world unknown?

Bea. I know it
But in dim pictures of the magic glass,
Wherein I have seen sad things, conned tragic tales
In act before mine eyes.

Guas. What hast thou seen?

Bea. The world, I find, is but a poison-garden
Far worse than ours; for here my father's art
From venomous roots distils balsamic dews
Which have the power of healing. There it seems
The sweetest joys are seed of deadliest bale.

Guas. Sad wisdom, learnt too early!

Bea. Is it wisdom?
I never talked before with anyone
Out of that world. My father, like a stranger,
Visits the ways of men, feared and not loved.
Stern and strange even to me, who love, not fear,
him.

Guas. Oh, what a lonely life thou hast led here!

Bea. Yes, very lonely, now I feel how lonely.

Guas. Would that my poor desert might crave a
glimpse

Of the rare treasures of thy maiden thought,
Locked in the unopened casket of thy mind!

Bea. View them but as the treasures of a child.

I'll tell thee first how first upon my spirit
 Fell the great shadow of the wings of death,
 There to abide. It was an April morning,
 And I, a tiny child, had run alone
 Into the *bosco* which o'erglooms the garden,
 Where, in the shade of the dark ilex-trees,
 Pale cyclamens, like tender flames of spring,
 Pierced through the rotting leaves.

Guas. I did not dream
 That in these precincts grew such harmless flowers.

Bea. [*Sighing.*] They grew there once, but now they
 grow no more.

Guas. A theme of sorrow. Well?

Bea. Night's hoary dews
 Lay thick on the young grass and fallen leaves,
 Drenching my feet, which stirred at every step
 Fresh vernal scents; and all the bliss of spring
 Ached in my dancing blood.

Guas. Sweet Beatrice!
 Thy words are odours breathed from childhood's
 fields,
 In the rich balm of thy perfumèd breath.

Bea. [*Aside.*] Oh, he can drink the poison of my breath
 And take no hurt! [*Aloud.*] I filled my baby hands
 With cyclamens, and down yon marble stair
 Danced in pure ecstasy, down into the sunshine,
 And past me as I came dashed a sweet pair
 Of Love's brown birds, the wooer and the wooed,
 Winged with the joy of life into this garden.

Guas. And then——

Bea. They wooed no more. I saw them flash
Into the bower of such a parasite
As thou see'st there, that gaudy vampire thing
Whose clinging sucks its victim's life away.
Then——

Guas. What befell?

Bea. They dropped like arrows spent
And on the walk lay dead. And a great awe
Fell on me, though I thought they did but sleep;
For I knew sleep, while death I did not know.

Guas. Poor child!

Bea. My treasured bunch of cyclamens
From my hot hand fell withering on the walk,
And their two tiny bodies, warm as life
Still, with their passionate blood, I tenderly
Took up, and soothed their helpless wings, and laid
Softly each drooping head, and sped within
To show them to my nurse.

Guas. And she?

Bea. She told me
The tale we all must hear and wonder at.

Guas. That we are as the birds?

Bea. I questioned her
If death were in the world as in our garden.
She told me how I was her fosterling,
And her own son, the babe she had forsook
To nourish me, had died. And I know now
I was his parasite.

Guas. Nay, think not of it
With self-accusing.

Bea. 'Tis the commonplace
Of nature, we are all but parasites,
We live upon each other, and the strong
Eat up the weak.

Guas. Too long thou hast dwelt alone,
Companioned by dark spectres of the mind.

Bea. I have seen life within the magic glass,
The prey of madness, and disease and death.

Guas. What fascination drew thee thus to pore
Upon the wounds of life?

Bea. It is the hope
By which I live that I was born to bring
Some ease to the sick world; for all the sorrows
That haunt the house of tears ache in me still,
Like the seven swords piercing Our Lady's breast

Guas. Even such a moment's passion I have known,
But like a coward shrank from the great cross
Whereon the world is crucified. I thought
Joy is man's rightful heritage, and I
The prince of that lost kingdom—give me joy!

Bea. How may we win the world that heritage?

Guas. Oh, I know now, love is the only joy
In earth or heaven. Thou, Beatrice, thou
Art my lost kingdom's queen, and winning thee
I win my heritage. Crown me, Madonna!
Here, as thy knight, I kneel and kiss thy hand.

[He kneels and tries to take her hand. She recoils.]

Scene II.

THE POISON

Bea. Nay, touch me not. Alas! what shall I say?
There lies invisible betwixt us two
A gulf as deep as death.

Guas. Oh, let me cross it
Borne on Love's wings.

Bea. It may not be—not yet.
As well the torrid and the frozen zone
May meet in one, as thou and I. Not yet—
Perhaps——

Guas. I'll dare more than Leander did
For Hero.

Bea. That was pastime for a boy
To the strange peril thou must face for me.

Guas. For thee, for thee! this challenge of my love,
So sweetly, gravely given, wakes a wild hope
That thou wouldst fain be won. O Beatrice,
I grow too bold! Pardon the audacious dream
Thou hast inspired.

Bea. Our voices rang so clear
Across the gulf, misted with morning dreams,
I had almost forgotten that my love
Were scathing fire to thee. Yet hope, and dare.

Guas. I am a moth whose passion for a star
Pants in the sightless frenzy of its wings
For mere annihilation.

Bea. O my beloved!
Would I might give——

[She suddenly presses her hand to her heart.]

Guas. What sudden pang assails thee?

FLOWER

Scene II.

Bea. The garden claims me. O my sister flower,
When till this day ever did I forget thee?
And now I had forgot.

[She approaches the fountain; Guasconti rushes forward.]

Guas. The flower, the magic flower! Grant me but one,
One splendid bloom, my lilies are o'erpaid.

[He attempts to pluck a flower.]

Bea. Back, for thy life!

[She seizes his hand, he recoils with a cry.]

Guas. Ah! my hand burns!

Bea. No more?

I have not slain thee! Oh, thou art pure in heart.

Guas. The searching fire shoots through me, vein by
vein.

'Tis agony and yet I do not die.

Bea. It is the cleansing alchemy of love.

The sun within thee burns in his own fires,

And I, the o'erwintered earth, await his beams.

Guas. I will endure and wait the destined hour.

Bea. I have waited long to hear the bridegroom's voice;

Now there come whisperings, as of vernal winds,

In budding trees. My father bade me live

As one predestined to a glorious task,

The healing in the world of love's deep wound.

Guas. We must go forth, the bridegroom and the bride,
To win earth's kingdoms.

Bea. Canst thou read my thoughts?

Yet, yet—we must part now. Dear love, farewell

Scene II.

THE POISON

If thou canst trust me still, meet me to-morrow.
Come when the sinking sun leaves the young moon
Pale on his glowing throne.

Guas. My faith in thee
Stands firm as Atlas; not a single star
Shall fall from our love's heaven. Drive quickly,
moon,
Bring with thy dragon steeds our meeting hour.

*[As he passes into the corridor, Rappaccini appears
at the door R. Beatrice slowly follows Guasconti,
kissing her hand to him.]*

Bea. Farewell!

Guas. Farewell!

*[Exit Guasconti, L. Rappaccini, advancing, looks
after him.]*

Rappa. The powers have made their choice: he does
not die.

They shall go forth to purge the festering world,
Saving and slaying, death to evil things,
And healing to the chosen ones of God.

DROP SCENE FALLS

SCENE III

Rappaccini's Garden. Sunset.

Enter into the corridor Guasconti, a bunch of lilies in his hand.

Guas. I voyage still between two worlds of dream,
Myself a dream! In Padua streets to-day
Men were as ghosts to me; and they, I felt,
Looked on me with scared eyes, as on a ghost.
It is almost the hour.

Enter Ruffini

Ruff. Giovanni!

Guas. Ha!

Celio! how com'st thou here?

Ruff. Why, like thyself,
By the secret stair.

Guas. Hence, on thy peril!

Ruff. No;
I come to save thee, and by heaven I will,
Spite of that hoary devil, Rappaccini,
And his witch-daughter.

Guas. Thou blasphem'st a saint

Ruff. A saint? O madman in an opium dream
Besotted by the drug that poisons thee!

Guas. Never so rich in health as I am now.

Ruff. So say they all. It is the gravest mark

Scene III.

THE POISON

Of thy disease. Hast ever heard the tale
Of the fair woman whom an Indian prince
Sent as a gift to conquering Alexander?

Guas. Spare me the tale, for it concerns me not.

Ruff. Nay, listen! listen! She was fair as dawn,
She was arrayed like sunset; and her breath
Sweeter than spiced Arabian winds.

Guas. Her breath?

Ruff. Intoxicating perfume, richer, mark me,
Than Persian roses breathe in Gulistan.

Guas. Intoxicating perfume?

Ruff. Rarest jars
By Orient craft wrought from earth's finest clay,
To hold the absolute essence of the rose,
Shame not the pottery of a peasant's wheel
As she the journey-work of Nature's hand.

Guas. Thou art no Hafiz, Celio, and her charms
Grow fulsome on thy tongue. A loftier strain;
Oh, she would tempt an amorous conqueror
To lose the world for her, and think it—pshaw!
Come to the moral *but*—but this rare creature
Was—what?

Ruff. As dangerous as the poisoned rose
Sent by a Borgia to some honoured friend

Guas. Yet Alexander died not.

Ruff. Alexander
Had a most sage physician in his train,
And took his timely warning, shunned the witch
As Death's twin sister; else she had dumbled indeed

Earth's thunders round the car of Macedon,
Sooner than wine and fever.

Guas. By what sign
Did this physician mark her down a witch?

Ruff. Even by her breath.

Guas. Her breath?

Ruff. She had been fed
On poisons from her birth, until to her
Poison was elemental in her blood,
Her kisses death. She was a poison flower.

Guas. This is mere fable.

Ruff. Fable? So thought I,
Until I saw—— [*Rappaccini crosses the garden.*
Look there!

Guas. 'Tis Rappaccini.

Ruff. This garden is a purlieu of that cell
I told thee of; here, as on some poor dog,
Some captive thing that whines and licks the hand
That dooms him death, he practises on thee
Some damned experiment.

Guas. On me?

[*Exit Rappaccini L.*

Ruff. Ay, thee.
Thou didst not note, but I did, how his gaze
Was bent on thee as thou didst walk to-day
Across the market-place, with such a look
As he might fix upon a mouse whose blood
Held poison from his limbecs.

Guas. Idle dreams!

Scene III.

THE POISON

Ruff. His eyes were scalpels, cutting to the soul,
And on his thin lips gleamed a passing smile
Of inward triumph.

Guas. 'Tis thy fantasy.

Ruff. My conquering Alexander, trust me, no.
This garden is thy India, and in me
Hear thy physician. O my dear Giovanni,
I am here at deadly peril to myself
For love of thee! This Rappaccini's daughter
Is such a poison-flower, as beautiful
And deadly as that witch of classic tale.

Guas. [*Turning angrily.*] 'Tis false! I am not poisoned
by her breath.

Ruff. [*Recoiling.*] Far worse. Changed by its hellish
alchemy,
That subtle perfume which so drugs the air,
I faint in a voluptuous lethargy—
It is not from the garden. 'Tis thy breath,
Thy poisonous breath.

Guas. [*Horried.*] My poisonous breath? O God!
It is not true.

Ruff. Here, put it to the proof.
See this foul spider, sitting in her maze;
Breathe on her.

[*Guasconti breathes on the spider.*

See, she fiercely agitates

The web and grows invisible. Again!

[*He breathes again.*

She drops suddenly dead. Art thou still doubtful?

FLOWER

Scene III.

Guas. [*Laughing hysterically.*] Ha! ha! Can I kill thus?
I'll rage like death
On all mankind.

Ruff. [*Avoiding him.*] Oh, this is terrible!
[*Guasconti looks at the flowers in his hand.*]

Guas. These flowers? Dead! dead!—all blasted by my
touch!

[*He flings them away into the garden.*]

There, let her take this bridal gift from me.

Ruff. Listen, Giovanni; does this Beatrice
Return thy love?

Guas. I did believe so. Fool!
Yet, yet—Oh, innocence dwells in her face,
Like the sweet sky in crystal water, Celio!

Ruff. Well, grant her innocent; but her vile father
Plots for thy ruin. He would hold thee here
An alien from the world, to be her mate.

Guas. Is this the gulf, O God, is this the gulf
That I would overpass?

Ruff. But if she love thee
Thou mayst redeem her to the wholesome world.

Guas. How? how?

Ruff. Baglioni sends thee by my hand
This antidote, so potent it can quell
All Rappaccini's poisons, like the snakes
Swallowed by Aaron's rod.

[*Beatrice appears in the garden.*]

Bea. Giovanni!

Ruff. Hark!

Scene III.

THE POISON

Guas. It is her voice; the garden's ancient spell,
Which fascinates and kills, rich in its flute.

Ruff. [*Gives the phial.*] This delicate piece of gold-
smith's artistry

Is but the precious rind which holds immured
A juice more precious. Take it, drink with her,
Or, if she drink not, slay her with thy sword.

Bea. Giovanni! Come, the hour is overpast,
My love, I wait for thee.

Guas. I'll go to her
With eyes unsealed, thanks, Celio, eyes unsealed,
And prove her love by this, thy talisman.

Ruff. Go, in God's name. I dare no longer bide.

[*Exit Ruffini. Guasconti enters the garden.*]

Bea. Giovanni! Oh, 'tis thou? Late, late, my love!
How I have waited for this holy hour.

Guas. Well, it has come.

[*They pace in silence, side by side.*]

Bea. [*Shivering.*] How cold the sunset falls!

Guas. Yes; it is cold.

Bea. My heart is full of love,
And yet I have no words.

Guas. [*Bitterly.*] What, not a word,
Though for thy sake I have outswum Leander
And passed the gulf?

Bea. The gulf?

Guas. [*With fierce irony.*] Ay, my sweet bride,
Let us make merry. Deck with flowers the charnel,
Set forth our wedding banquet, let us quaff

FLOWER

Scene III.

Healths to each other out of brimming skulls,
Deep healths in wolfsbane and mandragora.

[He inhales the odour of the flowers.]

For see with what a craving appetite
I pasture on thy poisons.

Bea. Dear Giovanni,
Jest not so wildly.

Guas. *[Approaches the poison flower.]* Now, my queen
of flowers,

The secret of the garden. I demand
My last initiation. What strange sin
Gave this bright horror birth?

Bea. No sin, but love.
A human spirit, sister to my own,
Lives in its life. It is my father's child
Sprung from my mother's tomb.

Guas. *[With horror.]* That tale is true!
O womb of earth! I have seen battlefields
Where men long sown revisited the sun
As melancholy weeds: but in this garden
There's magical husbandry. Thy father's child?

Bea. Reverence in her creation's mystery,
Which he hath fathomed as no man before.

Guas. The sweat of awe is cold upon my body,
Yet all my blood cries out in wild desire
For but one flower.

Bea. I know not if I dare.

[Rappaccini steps out from behind the fountain.]

Rappa. Yes, Beatrice, hear the bridegroom's voice;

Scene III.

THE POISON

Give him the flower, for he may wear it now.

*[Beatrice plucks a flower and places it in his breast.
He stands entranced.]*

The hour is come, the blood weds with the fire!

*[He extends his arms over them, as in blessing, then
exit into the house.]*

Guas. *[Recovering.]* Ashtaroth! Ashtaroth!

Bea. What means that cry?

Guas. What part had I in these unhallowed rites?

Her blood is in my veins, leavens my blood

With poisonous fire. I am accurst, accurst!

Bea. Giovanni! Speak to *me*, one word to me!

Guas. Dost thou not see me hang on the world's
cross,

Cast out, accurst, alone?

Bea. Nay, I am with thee.

Guas. Mock, then: I am the scapegoat of the world,
Yet work no man's redemption through my pangs,
Like the poor thief, who went the devil's way,
Who gave him pity?

Bea. Would I might understand.

I knew there dwelt a doom within the flower:

But deemed that love——

Guas. *[Laughing.]* Thou canst not understand!
There yawns the gulf again, as deep as hell.

Bea. There is no gulf love cannot overpass.

Kiss me, Giovanni. We are made one through love.

Guas. Kiss thee! O thou she-Judas! Can thy kiss
Sunder me more from the fair world of men,

Than all this poisonous change thy arts have wrought?

Bea. Giovanni!

[She recoils and seems about to weep.]

Guas Wilt thou weep? Have sirens tears?

Can those who trade in shipwreck pity the drowned?

Bea. O Virgin Mother, look on me, thy child;

All thy seven deadly swords are in my heart!

Guas. Ha! canst thou pray? Thou witch whose very prayers

Infect the winds with poison! Ay, let us pray,

Let us to church and dip our tainted hands

In holy water, set our deadly lips

To sacred chalices, our orisons

Like muttered spells infect the blessed bread,

That heavenly offices work fiery death!

Bea. O God! O God!

Guas. Well said! Blaspheme his name,

Sign crosses in the air, let our foul plague

Light in redemption's symbol on men's heads,

Smite Padua like a curse, heap every street

With festering corpses!

Bea. Oh, what have I done

That thou appall'st me with such words of hate?

Guas. What hast thou done? Made *me* even as thou art,

A thing more deadly than the basilisk.

Bea. But not to thee—I am not this to thee!

And yet some sudden horror frights thy love

Into abhorrence. Thou hast stabbed my heart

Scene III.

THE POISON

More cruelly than with swords. Oh, leave me now,
To die with my dead hopes—go thou thy way.

Guas. I leave thee! I! Art thou so innocent?
Behold! These gnats that spring and sink again,
A cloud of rhythmic life over the fountain,
Be as a city of men within whose walls.
We two walk like the pestilence. Behold!

[He breathes upon the gnats.]

Bea. Slain by thy breath! Oh, doomsday shoots a glare
Of light into my soul! My father's art!

Guas. Ay, his black magic that hath made us two
The things we are; outcast beyond the ban
Of lepers' cells.

Bea. I knew not what I did.
Ah me! I was so lonely in this garden!

Guas. So thou didst lure me here, as flies by flowers
Are caught with poisonous honey. Well, thou art
Alone no longer.

Bea. Never so alone!
My poor Giovanni, I begin to fear
Thy heart holds deadlier poison than this garden
Ever brought forth.

Guas. My heart?

Bea. The black mistrust
That is love's bane. Woe's me! With what pure faith
I trusted in thy faith. I dreamed thy love
Would clasp me all the closer, though the flames
Of hell should roar and rage against that faith.

Guas. Am I a god to bear such things and blench not?

Bea. I knew men were not gods, yet saw the god
In just the one man out of all the world,
Thee, thee, mine own! Now thou hast killed my heart,
Kill then this wretched body. Give thy hate
Full wing to swoop in any fierce revenge
It craves to assuage it. Only let my blood
Break this foul spell. It can, and set thee free.
Go back into the world, dwell with thy kind,
And keep no soil of my forgotten love.

Guas. [*Kneeling.*] If in this fiery trial of my faith
I have reproached thee for thy father's sin,
Forgive me, Beatrice, for my love
Assoils thee of that sin.

Bea. Too late, too late!
Alas! forgiveness is a bitter sweet.
Bruise but a butterfly's soft feathery wings,
It pines an alien in the sunny air;
Never glad flight again. So pines my soul.
Yet it is sweet, Giovanni, from thy love,
Not from thy hate, I may demand my death.

Guas. Death, death! Thy words are mad. Could I
transcend
The faltering virtue of our mortal nature?
I love thee still.

Bea. As men love captive things.
I must be free.

Guas. O yet there is a way
To life, love, happiness. I had nigh forgot
This phial. Here I hold a precious juice,

Scene III.

THE POISON

Sent me by old Baglioni, which can make
Thy father's poisons tame.

Bea. Doubt my own father?
That's little now. [*Smiling.*] Baglioni's antidote?
I dreamed, fond I, love was the antidote
For the most virulent poison of the world.
Must I drink this, Giovanni?

Guas. For my sake,
In earnest of thy love. Oh, we will drink
Together, thou and I, and go forth healed
Into the world!

Bea. To love, then, and thy health!
*[Music to the end of the scene. Beatrice drinks and
hands Guasconti the phial.]*

Guas. And this to thee, to thee! [*He drinks.*]

Bea. *Ave atque vale!*

Guas. No funeral words. Await our happy change.

Bea. It comes, Giovanni. Here, here, in thine arms,
One moment close to thee, let me dream out
The foolish happy dream. Yes, thou and I
Have stretched our longing arms across the gulf,
And touched, touched once. Ah! could love do no
more?

I fear I have wronged a noble heart in thine.
No time to weep all well!

*[She frees herself and stands a moment her hand
pressed to her heart.]*

Guas. What ails thee?

Bea. Death.

FLOWER

Scene III.

So poison casts out poison.

[She reels suddenly and falls.]

Guas. What have I done?

Bea. Made thy face but a memory: for mine eyes

See only night, and lose thee evermore.

Thy hand, reach me thy hand.

Guas. *[Kneeling beside her and taking her hand.]* My love! My love!

Bea. Oh, I am swept away from thee, away

Into the vast.

Guas. Fool! Fool! Mock me, ye fiends.

Beatrice!

Bea. O farewell! We two may meet—

Perchance—long ages hence— *[She dies.]*

Guas. Wilt thou escape me?

Through life's dark postern slip into the void?

See, I plunge after, and will follow thee,

Æons on Æons, till my flaming feet

Bear me to thy pure presence. Speed me, God!

[Crosses himself.]

Sweet, let me sip from thy untasted lips

Death's drowsy wine. *[He kisses her.]*

Lend me thy breast, my love,

To pillow my last sleep. I come, I come!

The moth dies in the star.

[He dies. Rappaccini appears behind in the garden.]

Rappa. The wedding banquet waits. Come in, my children.

CURTAIN

MADE AT THE
TEMPLE PRESS
LETCWORTH
GREAT BRITAIN





